

“NASHA Pravda, NASHE Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in
Contemporary Russia”

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ABSTRACT
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“NASHA Pravda, NASHE Delo: The Mobilization of the Nashi Generation in
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(Under the direction of Robert M. Jenkins)

This thesis examines the mobilization apparatus of Nashi, a pro-Putin Russian youth social movement organization, from its formation in March 2005 to the present. The work explains how the organization orients itself within the socio-political field of contemporary Russia and how these orientations allow it to mobilize youths towards the achievement of its goals, namely, the support of the political modernization program of Russian President Vladimir Putin and the training of the next generation of the Russian “elite.” Three components of Nashi’s mobilization are analyzed: the formation of an effective collective identity and ideology; orientations to other actors within the socio-political field, with special emphasis placed on its relationship to the administration of Vladimir Putin; and interactions with the Russian media.

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Introduction

As the second week drew to a close, the rumors began to circulate, and the procession of Kremlin-connected speakers, including Vladislav Surkov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and Aide to the President and political strategist Gleb Pavlovskii did little to discourage them: President Vladimir Putin would be next. While attending speeches and political workshops, as well as concerts by pop groups Zemfira and B2, the estimated 3,000 “commissars” (*komissari*)¹ gathered at Lake Seliger, near Tver’, for Nashi’s² two week “Seliger-2005” camp anxiously awaited an appearance by the president himself.

As it turned out, the camp ended without a presidential visit. However, on 26 July 2005, one day after the closing ceremony, 56 commissars arrived at the Zavidovo presidential residence outside of Moscow to meet with the president. For several hours, Putin strolled around the presidential grounds with the doe-eyed youths. “Without a doubt, you will be

¹ A note about transliteration: throughout this thesis, I use the Library of Congress standard for transliterating Russian into English (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/russian.pdf>). However, in certain instances, such as surnames and the names of organizations found frequently in the press, I defer to commonly used spellings.

² “Nashi” roughly translates as “Ours.” “Nashi” is also the name of a 1991 film by Russian filmmaker and politician Aleksandr Nevzorov that defends the actions of the Soviet OMON, the Interior Ministry’s paramilitary police force, in the violent dispersal of pro-independence rallies in Lithuania in 1991. Nevzorov declared his intention to create a post-Soviet national identity for Russia. “Nashi is a circle of people – let it be enormous, colossal, multimillions – to whom one is related by common language, blood, and motherland.” Quoted in “The Hunt for a National Idea,” by Julian Evans. *Eurasian Home*. 31 August 2005. <http://www.eurasianhome.org/en/?/en/comments/authors/author5/10>. Despite this rhetorical link and some similarities between Nashi’s ideology and that of Nevzorov, there is no known connection between Nevzorov and the youth organization Nashi.

able to influence the situation in our country,” he told them. “If you think outside the box, then you will be able to help lead the state, the society, and the government.”³

Though this session received a lot of coverage in the press, it actually was the second meeting between Putin and representatives from Nashi, the first having occurred on 30 May 2005, when 12 commissars met for almost two hours with Putin at the Kremlin. Such direct presidential contact was extraordinary, especially coming fewer than six months following Nashi’s official launch by the youth organization “Moving Together” (*Idushchie Vmeste*) on 1 March 2005. In a matter of months, Nashi had moved from workshops filled with enthusiastic youths formulating the organization’s potential slogans (“Forward with Russia!” and “We Will Resurrect the Country!” among them) to multiple meetings with the very apex of Russian state power.⁴

The youth democratic movement Nashi (*molodezhnoe demokraticeskoe dvizhenie “Nashi”*) lists among its goals the protection of Russia from “liberals,” “communists” and “fascists,” all of whom Nashi believes threaten the personal freedom of Russian citizens or the sovereignty of the Russian state. The organization’s goal is to help protect the nation from such enemies, who seek to dominate and subvert Russia and turn it into the antithesis of Nashi’s own ideal: a strong and free country with a market economy and democratic institutions. “A country may not be free while its citizens are oppressed,” the organization writes in its manifesto, issued in April 2005.⁵ Nashi’s self-publications talk a lot about whom they oppose, and fit these contemporary struggles within the framework of Russia’s

³ “Moskva, 26 Iiulia – Prezident Rossii Vladimir Putin vstretilsia vo vtornik s predstaviteliami molodezhnogo dvizheniia “Nashi,” <http://www.nashi.su/smi/93138578>.

⁴ “‘Our People’ Stand Up for Putin,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/4491633.stm>, 4-28-05.

⁵ “Manifest molodozhnogo dvizheniia ‘Nashi,’” <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/83974709>.

history. The organization's manifesto speaks of past glories of the Russian people, notably the fight against the Germans in the Second World War, and its determination to resurrect Russia and to guarantee its rightful place in the pantheon of nations.⁶

In addition to describing whom they are against, the organization pays much attention to its own self-perceptions and the affirmative goals that it espouses. "We are those who believe in the future of Russia, and consider her fate to be in our hands," the organization states. "Every generation has a chance to quit unnoticed, or to change the world."⁷ This drive to not go unnoticed and to act to affect their nation at the national and local level is the message that Nashi's members championed in 2005, a point the organization continues to emphasize. Nashi claims that it exists to mobilize youths in the defense of Russia from harmful influences, as well as to help Russia reclaim its position as a world power, what the organization calls Russia's rightful place at the center of world culture and civilization.⁸

But it would be wrong to think of Nashi as simply a social organization ostensibly concerned about the future of Russia. It is decidedly a political organization. A stated goal is for its members to eventually integrate themselves into the political elite and work towards what they claim to be essential political "modernization." Throughout its brief existence, it has enjoyed strong, if indirect and at times unclear, connections to the Kremlin. It is no accident that Vladimir Putin met with Nashi representatives on multiple occasions. The involvement of Vladislav Surkov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and Aide to the President, in Nashi's activities is especially notable. Seen

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

widely as a patron of the organization, Surkov's comments about Nashi in the Russian and international press have been a major boon to the organization's standing. It can be deduced that Surkov was heavily involved, if not in the foundation of Nashi, then certainly in its promotion and its ability to gain access to the president himself.

Vasilii Yakemenko, the 34-year old leader of Nashi, is also important in any analysis of the organization and its mobilization success in 2005. Yakemenko, along with his brother Boris, founded Nashi's antecedent, Moving Together, in 2000, before rolling out Nashi in early 2005. In addition to his involvement with these organizations, Vasilii worked for a time in the presidential administration of Vladimir Putin, in the Department for External Relations. While his time at the Kremlin was short-lived, he did develop ties to Surkov, as well as to Gleb Pavlovskii, a long-time Kremlin insider, who was instrumental in founding the pro-Putin United Russia party. Such political connections, as I will demonstrate, have much to do with the success of Nashi.

Forming politically oriented youth organizations was somewhat of a cottage industry in Russia in 2005, with Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov and Sergei Mironov, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation and cofounder of the Russian Party of Life, among those who entered the fray.⁹ Youth wings of established parties across the political spectrum mobilized young people to rallies, demonstrations and other events. The National Bolsheviks (*Natsional-Bol'sheviki*) deployed members in several attention-grabbing stunts throughout the year. The United Russia party founded a new version of its youth wing, replacing Youth Unity with the new, "anti-racist" Young Guards (*Molodaia Gvardiia*).

⁹ Schreck, Carl, "Luzhkov Aims to Harness City's Soccer Fandom," *Moscow Times*, 23 August 2005; Boykewich, Stephen, "Mironov's Power of Life Criticizes Nashi," *Moscow Times*, 29 August 2005.

However, it was Nashi that drew the most attention, and for good reason. A spin-off (some might say mutation) of Moving Together, Nashi managed to recruit upwards of 50,000 participants for a rally in May 2005 commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War.¹⁰ The “Our Victory” (*Nasha Pobeda*) rally and the Seliger-2005 camp were the two major events the young organization staged, but many of its actions were less ambitious. Although the rallies grab the headlines, Nashi’s everyday activities included working with orphanages and performing social work in the pattern of the Soviet *subbotnik*, a day of volunteer labor spent cleaning parks or schools. A component of its program was oriented around educating its members as to practices and strategies for organizing Nashi’s future activities, as well the development of leadership skills. In all, after its first year of existence, Nashi can claim chapters in twenty-two Russian cities. While the events that garnered the most attention in 2005 were those organized at a national level, much of Nashi’s activity took place in local chapters, a characteristic that continues to this day.

The success of Nashi in mobilizing¹¹ large numbers of youths on the national and local scale is due in part to the efficacy of its tactics, rhetoric and image in capturing the attention of Russian young people, whose interest in the political process is hard to pinpoint. A study conducted in 2004 on the eve of the presidential elections offers insight into the political attitudes possessed by Russian young people aged 16-34. Among the

¹⁰ “Moskva: ‘Nashi’ v gorode,” <http://www.nashi.su/smi/86724533>.

¹¹ In general, when I refer to “mobilization” in this thesis, I am referring to an organization’s ability to attract participants to its given activities and the processes through which this participation is achieved. “Mobilization” in the field of social movement and collective action scholarship also refers to “the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action.” Jenkins, J. Craig, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9 1983, 532.

findings was that youths tend not to participate in regional elections, though that does not hold true for presidential contests. The poll, conducted by the All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (*Vserossiiskii Tsentri Izucheniia Obshchestvennogo Mneniia*), indicated that 73 percent planned to vote in the presidential election, whereas only 47 percent intended to vote in the local contests.¹² In fact, 57 percent of young people aged 18 to 35 voted in the presidential contest, compared to 42 percent in the parliamentary elections of December 2003.¹³ Despite a willingness to vote on the national level, this participation does not correlate with widespread support for Russia's established political parties. When asked "which political party is closest to your views," the party that fared the best in the poll was United Russia, which polled 20 percent of the respondents. A greater percentage (23 percent) replied "difficult to say," while 25 percent simply said "none."¹⁴

While Russian youths tend to be suspicious of parties, other political entities fare better. Eighty-two percent of respondents viewed Vladimir Putin favorably, while the president's administration and "state institutions" also fared well, with 58 percent and 57 percent respectively.¹⁵ The political profile of Russian youth from this data indicates an interest in the political process, though the traditional avenues for direct, active involvement beyond simply voting - political parties - hardly seem to be garnering their support. Despite the presence of youth wings, political parties in the early 2000s failed to recruit youths into the

¹² Zorkaia, Natalia and Nadia M. Diuk, "Values and Attitudes of Young Russians." *Russian Social Science Review*, 45:5 September-October 2004, 15.

¹³ FOM: Public Opinion Foundation (Russia), http://bd.english.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/civil_society/elections/presidential_elections/voter_turn_2004/ed041231

¹⁴ Zorkaia and Diuk, 14.

¹⁵ Diuk, Nadia. "The Next Generation." *Journal of Democracy*, 15:3 July 2004, 61; Zorkaia and Diuk, 12.

wider activity of the party organization. While political parties experienced difficulties attracting the participation and loyalty of youth in contemporary Russia, youth-oriented social movement organizations in general, and Nashi in particular, had success in mobilizing large numbers of participants. The question, then, is why was Nashi able to attract the interest and participation of young Russians? What mechanisms did it exploit for mobilization? What do these mechanisms suggest about the current social and political situation in Russia?

Social scientists examining organizations such as Nashi look at several factors that can contribute to an organization's ability to mobilize individual actors to advance its aims. I wish to examine Nashi's use of these mobilizing mechanisms in an effort to understand not only Nashi itself, its genesis, its evolution, and its prospects for continued activity, but also its place within the wider socio-political field of contemporary Russia. By analyzing Nashi, and the actors with which it interacts, I hope to shed light on the current social and political situation in Russia, as well understand some of the trends in Russian politics as we approach the 2008 presidential election. An examination of Nashi, due to the relations it has with several actors within contemporary Russian politics and its own tactics and rhetoric, allows for a discussion of power relations, post-Soviet identity, and media development, among other topics of analysis. Nashi's apparent success in 2005 at the expense of party-related youth organizations points to deficiencies in that system of youth political socialization. In short, an analysis of Nashi allows for a broad discussion of contemporary social and political life during the Putin Administration in 2005.

Before I undertake this discussion, I will sketch out a framework for analysis that emphasizes Nashi's location within a complex and multi-polar action system of

interrelations between actors in the social and political field. My first task is to define some terms. I consider Nashi to be a “social movement organization” that seizes upon claims made by a larger “social movement,” and orients itself primarily towards the political field of Russian society. Nashi executes a variety of activities in order to achieve its goals, some of which are large-scale public mass-actions, and some of which are smaller, less publicized activities open only to its members. All of these activities however can be considered “collective action.” Nashi is a social movement organization that organizes collective action to achieve its goals, which are consistent with a broader social movement.

As McCarthy and Zald write, “a social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society” upon which individuals at times act in a more or less organized manner.¹⁶ Actors within a social movement work towards those ends in a variety of ways, some collective, and some individual. One way through which many individuals act together to achieve these ends is through a “social movement organization.” A social movement organization “is a complex, or formal, organization,” which identifies with aspects of the social movement and organizes individuals to achieve those changes in social structure or reward distribution in society.¹⁷ Social movement organization activity is not the only way in which individuals act in concert to achieve the ends of a social movement. Any action in which multiple individuals act in concert is “collective action.” Collective action is a phenomenon in which “a number of individuals [exhibit], at the same

¹⁶ McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 82:6 May 1977, 1217-8.

¹⁷ Ibid. 1218.

time and place, behavior with relatively similar morphological characteristics.”¹⁸ While “collective action” is a term that may certainly apply to social movement organizations, it is incorrect to suggest that collective action always refers to social movements or social movement organizations. Collective action is a tool employed by a social movement organization to achieve the ends and goals of the social movement. The broader field of social movement theory in part seeks to examine the motives, structures, actors and relationships between actors in social movements.

In analyses of social movement organizations, social scientists focus on an organization’s actions within “a field of opportunities and constraints”¹⁹ and the organization’s relationships to its “constituents,” “adherents,” the “bystander public,” and its “opponents,”²⁰ as well as the organization’s ability to operate in a field of limited monetary and human resources. These “opportunities and constraints” include an organization’s relationship to the state; the media and other actors within political society,

¹⁸ Melucci, Alberto. *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. John Keane and Paul Mier, eds. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, 18.

¹⁹ “Opportunities and constraints,” is a term Melucci uses to explain the assets and liabilities possessed by actors participating in collective action. For the purposes of this thesis, I use “opportunities and constraints” to represent the factors that aid a social movement organization’s ability to mobilize, or hinder the same. These factors can be created by the organization, such as its collective identity, or it can be exogenous, as in a political or social event that make an organization salient or, alternatively, irrelevant. A social movement organization’s activity in the “field of opportunities and constraints” represents the organization’s ability to operate within the parameters set by these opportunities and constraints.

²⁰ McCarthy and Zald, 1221. McCarthy and Zald use these terms to classify actors in mobilization efforts of social movement organizations. I differ somewhat from their definitions. For the purposes of this thesis, I will define “constituents” as youths aged 16 and above to whom Nashi targets its recruitment; “adherents” as those constituents who have adopted Nashi’s ideals as their own, and participate in Nashi’s activities; and the “bystander public” is individuals who are not targets of Nashi’s recruitment efforts, but whom Nashi still seeks to influence. At the very least, Nashi hopes not to alienate the bystander public from its activities. “Opponents” can be constituents who disagree with Nashi’s goals and/or activities, and seek to combat their influence, either through social movement organizations or other means. In competition for constituents, however, “opponents” refers to youth social movement organizations that are hostile to Nashi’s stated goals. Nashi also competes for resources and constituents with social movement organizations that share some or all of Nashi’s stated goals and ideologies. A good example of this is Molodaia Gvardiia, the newly reformed youth wing of the United Russia party. While these two organizations share many of the same goals, they do compete for limited resources and constituents.

the political opportunity available at the time; and the motivational mechanisms employed to mobilize individuals to participate in such collective action. A social movement organization works to position itself with regard to other actors within this field of opportunities and constraints in such a way as to maximize the positive influence these actors can have on its mobilizing structures and the advancement of its stated goals and minimize the negative effects. Likewise, these other actors treat social movement organizations in a similar manner, negotiating with, embracing or opposing a social movement organization depending on their own needs and advantages.

A far as mobilization is concerned, it is important to remember that Nashi does not exist in a vacuum. The field in which Nashi operates is populated by a host of activities, organizations and events that compete for loyalty and participation of the populace. Nashi's competition consists of not only rival youth social movement organizations, but also non-political, non-social outlets, or even stasis – participation in nothing at all. Nashi's task is twofold: mobilize youths to act in the socio-political field, and then draw them into their own organization.

An organization interacts with members of the four classifications of individuals and actors -- constituents, adherents, the bystander public, and opponents -- in different ways. It seeks to convert non-adherent constituents into adherents. It seeks to expand the participation of adherents, transferring the low-risk “unspecialized labor of supporters” into more involved work within the organization.²¹ Finally, it seeks to engage the bystander public, who “are not opponents” of the movement, but who merely “witness social

²¹ Jenkins, 533.

movement activity.”²² An organization must complete this negotiation while mitigating the effects of its opponents -- opposing social movement organizations who seek to influence a similar constituent pool, or individuals hostile to its stated aims and goals -- who seek the same pool of limited resources.²³

Taken together, the study of social movements and collective action seeks to explain why and how individuals who are not making contentious claims – that is, seeking to achieve a certain political or social goal -- begin to do so by examining the methods of various organizations and groups, as well as the context in which those organizations and individuals reside.²⁴ The success of a social movement organization is also based upon its ability to develop “purposeful orientations” within the field of opportunities and constraints and exploit these orientations to attract participants.²⁵

In this thesis, I examine Nashi using frameworks provided by scholarship on social movement organizations and collective action. My purpose is twofold. First, I wish to provide a description of Nashi and its activities. While Nashi garnered much attention in the Russian press in 2005 and sparked debate and discussion amongst observers of the Russian socio-political scene, little is known about it among the English-speaking audience. I wish to add such a description of Nashi to the literature. Moreover, Nashi has not been the subject of academic analysis, and this examination will be the second component of this thesis. Using the frameworks provided by scholarship on social

²² McCarthy and Zald, 1221.

²³ Ibid. 1221.

²⁴ McAdam, Douglas, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 34.

²⁵ Melucci, 25.

movement organizations and collective action, I will argue that Nashi's ability to mobilize successfully, in contrast to other Russian youth social movement organizations in 2005, was due to its ability to maximize its advantages and minimize its liabilities within the field of opportunities and constraints. I seek to do this by examining 1) Nashi's goals and tactics and creation of a unifying collective identity among its participants; 2) its relationship to other actors within the field of opportunities and constraints; and 3) its interactions with the Russian press, a means through which social movement organizations inform "elites and mass publics" about its actions, as well as form positive "morale and self-image."²⁶

In Chapter One I discuss Nashi's ideology, its stated goals, its organizational structure, and the relationship between its rhetoric and actions. Nashi is a young organization; while many of the press accounts of the organization and its activities gave quick summaries of its ideological program and identity, a full discussion has not been conducted. I wish to add to the literature an in-depth discussion of its rhetoric, symbolism, and ideology and discuss how these components of the organization enable it to "communicate, negotiate and make decisions" about how, when, and for what purpose to act.²⁷ I will examine this collective identity to posit how Nashi was able to create the emotional investment amongst its members to mobilize them to the organization's events in 2005. Much of this analysis will come from Nashi's own publications: its press releases, manifestos, and websites, as well as its activities and events. I will pay close attention to the tactics it used to create perceptions of itself within the organization, strategies on which the organization still relies. How does Nashi perceive itself? What does it do to further those perceptions?

²⁶ Jenkins, 546.

²⁷ Melucci, 35.

How did those perceptions attract participants? How do these perceptions work to mobilize youths under Nashi's banner? What is the breakdown of Nashi's federalized structure, and how does this division serve the mobilizing mechanisms of the organization?

In Chapter Two, I will examine Nashi's relationship to a multitude of actors within the wider socio-political field. I seek to explain how Nashi oriented itself towards other actors, and how these orientations aided its mobilization and activity. This discussion also seeks to explain why Moving Together, Nashi's antecedent, ceased to be relevant to the wider socio-political field, despite its apparent strength between 2000 and 2003. Analyzing Moving Together's missteps and Nashi's apparent correction of these deficiencies will shed light on the ways that a social movement organization can navigate the socio-political field to aid its ability to redress the grievances of the movement with which it is associated. This theme of comparing Nashi to Moving Together will be apparent throughout this thesis, as it allows for a cogent and clear discussion of the opportunities and pitfalls for a social movement organization as it orients itself to other actors within the socio-political field.

A key component of this discussion will be the effect that outside events can have on an organization's ability to operate and mobilize its adherents to collective action to accomplish its goals. These environmental factors, such as political events, can hinder a social movement organization's efficacy or they can aid in its mobilization. How do such events aid or inhibit a social movement organization such as Nashi? How do these factors alter political opportunity? How did Nashi seize upon the opportunities afforded to it by outside events? I will demonstrate how such factors led to Moving Together's loss of momentum, and how Nashi sought to design its programs to address those deficiencies.

After this discussion, I will turn to Nashi's relationship with other actors in the socio-political field. Much was made of Nashi's supposed relationship with Putin's Kremlin. At the very least, there was tacit support for Nashi in the Putin Administration, notably in the visible presence of Surkov in Nashi's activities. How did these relationships aid or inhibit Nashi's activities? How did these relationships attract participants? Why did Moving Together cease to be the mobilizing powerhouse that it once was and give way to Nashi, an organization which is in some ways similar and in others quite different? What did the state have to gain from its support of Nashi's activities? More importantly, how did Nashi negotiate among other actors in the field of opportunities and constraints to mobilize Russian youths? What does Nashi's relationship to the state say about the socio-political situation in Russia in 2005? What does this relationship indicate about Nashi's and the state's relations to the environment in which they reside?

Nashi's connection with the state is especially interesting from the social movement organization perspective, given Nashi's support for the political and social program of Putin's Russia. Generalized characterizations of social movement organizations -- especially youth organizations -- vis-à-vis the state tend to stress their oppositional nature. However, Nashi is far from an oppositional organization. As I will demonstrate below, it positions itself as an enthusiastic supporter of the current regime, and explicitly states that it is in favor of the status quo, with some caveats. The language Nashi uses in explaining whom they are against focuses on nameless "bureaucrats," "oligarchs" and "fascists" whom they perceive to be sabotaging the program put forth by Putin. Rather than call for a change of the existing order, Nashi hopes to cleanse the current system of the detritus that threatens the positive program put forth by the government. A discussion then of Nashi's

goals concerning the state, and the reciprocal goals of the state towards Nashi should be the subject of inquiry.

I will tackle the section relating to Nashi's orientations and relationships with actors within the socio-political field by examining Nashi's own publications. Additionally, I will use press coverage from Russian and non-Russian outlets to examine these relationships. While it is true that Nashi is a young organization, press coverage of it was widespread in 2005.

I will also examine the relationship between Nashi's founder and leader, Vasili Yakemenko, and Vladislav Surkov. Both Yakemenko and Surkov played a role in the creation and propagation of Nashi, and the proximity of them to Putin indicates a close relationship between Nashi and the highest levels of the Russian government. This intersection of personalities is also an intersection of Nashi's activities and those of the state. By looking at this relationship, I hope to shed some light on the interactive relationship not only between these two men, but also between Nashi and Putin's government.

For my third chapter, I will consider Russian press coverage of the organization and the interactions between Nashi and various press outlets in 2005. The importance of the press in a social movement organization's efforts to mobilize participants and negotiate its claims cannot be overstated.²⁸ A social movement organization has the ability to market itself in order to create the desired mobilization factors; however, this ability is limited in scope. Once an organization's publicity needs have developed beyond simple word of mouth, it depends upon the media to disseminate information about its activities and actions in order

²⁸ Marx, Gary T. and Douglas McAdam. *Collective Behavior and Social Movements: Process and Structure*. Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1994, 104-105.

to help advance its claims. The press allows an organization to attract a larger audience. Favorable or unfavorable coverage can have a great effect on the efficacy of a movement. It is important to consider here the wider context that press coverage plays in this socio-political field. The media can alternately aid and inhibit a social movement organization's ability to convey its message to constituents and the bystander public. How much importance does Nashi place on the media? How does it interact with media outlets? What are the motives of various Russian newspapers in reporting positively or negatively on Nashi's activities? How does Nashi contend with negative portrayal? What does Nashi's relationship with the media say about its orientations within the socio-political field? How do the actions the organization takes relate to its understanding of the effect media coverage can have on a social movement organization?

Nashi is a young organization to be sure, and while its activities in 2005 garnered much attention, it is certainly possible that, like its predecessor Moving Together, it will be unable to sustain this momentum. Regardless of Nashi's future, which I will discuss in my conclusion, an analysis of its rhetoric, ideology and activities, its interactions within the socio-political field, and its media relations is important to the discussion of social and political life in contemporary Russia. A close analysis of a social movement organization offers insight into power relations, popular sentiment, and political participation in a society. An examination of Nashi allows for a discussion of these factors, among others, within the social and political context of Russia under Vladimir Putin. I am confident that this contribution to the literature on youth political activity and contemporary Russian politics will be a useful one.

Chapter 1 – Formation, Goals and Tactics: Nashi’s Mobilizing Structures

“Moving Together was unsuccessful because... you don’t build anything serious on profit alone. Money, of course, is important, but only after ideology. And to find ideologically suitable people, you have to start by putting the finishing touches on that ideology, and to transmit that marketing strategy while searching for young people who share that ideology.”

-- Viktor Militarev, Vice President, Institute of National Strategy²⁹

A key component in the success of a social movement organization is its ability to form a coherent ideology³⁰ and identity among its participants. A movement organization’s ability to mobilize its adherents and convert constituents rests partly on the “collective incentives” that an organization creates and manipulates.³¹ By doing this, a structurally successful organization is able to conflate the self-interest and “internalized values and sentiment” of its constituents with the goals of the movement and the organization.³² This ideology, identity, and conflation are recruitment mechanisms to attract new participants, as well as transfer low-activity participants into positions within the organization with

²⁹ “Novoe molodezhnoe dvizhenie dolzhno stat’ siloi, kotoraiia budet protivostoiat’ revoliutsii;” <http://www.kreml.org/interview/80191430>.

³⁰ “Ideology” for the purposes of this thesis refers to an interpretive framework that a social movement organization uses to approach the world in which it resides. A social movement organization uses this ideology to frame its assertions, actions and goals. Nashi uses the Russian word *ideologiya* throughout its manifesto.

³¹ Jenkins, 538.

³² Ibid. 538

greater responsibility and commitment. An organization's first task then is to create identity. While scholarship on collective action discusses many forms of identity formation vis-à-vis mobilization, one action of particular importance is the usefulness of appealing to an existing identity in order to mobilize a new group of actors. As McAdam et al. write, "while new identities emerge during contentious episodes, most individuals initially join the fray through interactive appeals to, and successful appropriation of, existing identities."³³ Furthermore, movement organizations that focus on "purposive and solidarity incentives," "preexisting or 'natural' groups," and "linking the vision of change to preexisting group culture" tend to be more effective.³⁴ All of these tactics represent the formation of a collective identity that bonds participants together through a combination of self-interest and internalization of a group's ideological goals, and the creation of an emotional investment, which "enables individuals to recognize themselves in each other."³⁵

Nashi's immediate ability to offer an appealing coherent ideology, which I will discuss below, is partly the result of its growth out of the Moving Together organization. Nashi's leaders announced its formation via a press release issued through the Moving Together website, and that organization's leader, Vasilii Yakemenko, was immediately elected to take the helm of Nashi. It was because of this relationship that Nashi was able to achieve a running start. In many ways, Nashi is a retooled Moving Together, its leadership able to build on the success of that movement in mobilizing Russian youths while having learned from its mistakes.³⁶ Moving Together's ability to attract attention to its often outrageous

³³ McAdam et al.; 56.

³⁴ Jenkins, 538.

³⁵ Melucci, 35.

³⁶ I will discuss Moving Together's transition to Nashi in greater detail on pages 48-52.

activities in many ways made it a victim of its own successes. For every mass rally in support of Putin it organized, there was the negative coverage generated by its more controversial cultural crusades, such as when members gathered in Moscow in June 2002 to publicly destroy copies of novels by Vladimir Sorokin, an event Vladislav Surkov labeled “disgusting.”³⁷ Even among sympathetic audiences, Moving Together’s choice of tactics caused unease.

But even more so, Moving Together was ideologically weak. With so much of its focus aimed at the lionization of Putin, its ideology was reduced to a single man. Militarev, the Vice President of the Institute of National Strategy, and a Russian political analyst, characterized it as “Putin is our president and Putin is always right.”³⁸ Nashi’s early success, and its ability to immediately form a coherent ideology, suggests its leaders agreed with Militarev’s critique.³⁹ While Nashi were as unabashedly pro-Putin as Moving Together, it defined its goals in less concrete terms, aligning itself not with the fortunes of one president, but with a broader -- even romantic -- vision of nation. I will argue that Nashi’s formation of ideology and its construction of a collective identity represent a key

³⁷ “A Talk with Putin’s Inside Man,” *Business Week Online*, http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2002/nf20021021_0216.htm.

³⁸ “Novoe molodezhnoe dvizhenie dolzhno stat’ siloi, kotoraiia budet protivostoiat’ revoliutsii;” <http://www.kreml.org/interview/80191430>; Yakemenko defended the heavy Putin stress in 2001 when he said that a “movement, especially a youth movement, needs certain things: there should be a leader...an idol. And without Putin, the creation of such a movement was unrealistic. There was no unifying figure.” When pressed about what would happen to Moving Together if Putin were to resign, a somewhat flustered Yakemenko replied, “Putin, whether or not he resigns, will remain in our hearts. The president will go, but the people will remain.” Quoted in Corwin, Julie A. “Russia: ‘A Youth Movement Needs A Leader.’” *Radio Free Liberty*. 21 April 2005. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticleprint/2005/04/9ea4ff48-d348-4624-8203-64cf632aae48.html>.

³⁹ This immediacy also suggests that Moving Together’s weaknesses were well known and that an alternative organization was being organized, despite Yakemenko’s statements as late as February 2005 to the contrary. See Corwin, Julie A., “Analysis: Walking With Putin,” *Radio Free Liberty*, 2 March 2005. http://www.ncsj.org/AuxPages/030205RFERL_Putin.shtml.

source of its success, and this ideology and identity are inherent in its choice of symbols and tactics. I will detail in this chapter Nashi's self-perceptions, and illustrate how Nashi's choice of tactics served those goals in 2005.

In order to provide the context in which Nashi conducts its activities, at both the local and the national level, I examine a particularly important tract that Nashi has published: its manifesto ("*manifest molodezhnogo dvizheniia NASHI*"). This document describes the world in which Nashi places itself, and defines who it is, whom it is against, and where it intends to go -- or as Nashi sees it, where it intends to take Russia. Nashi's manifesto is a call to arms, detailing the problems and the potential solutions Nashi makes its mission to provide. The document provides Nashi's ideological *raison d'etre*. Analyzing its contents will provide insight into the motivational factors behind its tactics.

Nashi published the manifesto in a section of its website called "Our Truth."⁴⁰ The document, the organization claimed, was the product of discussion clubs and conferences, which Nashi organized prior to its unveiling on 15 April 2005 at the first National Congress of Delegates, held at the Moscow Academy of Sciences.⁴¹ It is in "Our Truth" that Nashi outlines the main components of its activities at the national level. In addition to ideological tracts such as the manifesto, Nashi includes accounts of their Our Victory events, as well as published statements of several of the organization's national commissars about the purpose of the organization. Additionally, this section includes instructions on how to become a member of Nashi. The themes detailed in these documents -- among

⁴⁰ "Nasha Pravda," or "NASHA Pravda" as written on their website; the organization capitalizes every form of the Russian word "nash" in the documents published on their website.

⁴¹ "NASH komissar Mikhail Kulikov: Pora rasstavit' vse tochki nad 'i!'" <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/85865531>

them patriotism, respect for history, the generational component emphasized in their reverence of World War II veterans, and their self-defined mission to save Russia for future generations -- highlight what Nashi deems the most important facets of their organization and the prism through which their activities should be viewed.

A. *Manifest Molodezhnogo Dvizheniia "NASHI"*

Nashi's manifesto is an amalgamation of diagnosis and prescription, placing contemporary Russia within a historical context while speculating on the various paths that the nation might take, whether as a result of their action, or their failure to act. As a document, it has several functions, the first of which is this contextualization. It also defines the world in which Russia existed in 2005. It outlines an idealized version of Russia, which Nashi makes its mission to realize; it describes the obstacles in the way of that realization; it illustrates the process through which such realization will be achieved; and it outlines Nashi's role within that process. The final section outlines the specific actions Nashi proposed to take to realize this transformation of Russia into "the country of our dreams."⁴² I will ask the reader to bear with me as I dissect this document, as it is a blueprint for the entire organization. All of Nashi's activities have their genesis in this document, and it is impossible to fully understand and evaluate Nashi without a rigorous discussion of the manifesto.

In addition to these diagnoses and prescriptions, Nashi's manifesto is a document that defines identities. It frames who Nashi is, whom it is against, and from whom the

⁴² "Manifest molodozhnogo dvizheniia 'Nashi,'" <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/83974709>.

organization descends. What are these identities? How does the deployment of these identities encourage those who are not making contentious claims to do so? How does Nashi frame its actions? In its manifesto, the organization does this by appealing to the emotions brought about by the Russian reverence of the World War II generation, an appeal that, to be sure, was also employed by the Soviets in the decades following the conflict.

The Great Patriotic War is the pivot in the discussion of three cataclysmic events that Nashi cites as the major events of the Twentieth Century, all of which either established a value that Nashi embraces or created a conflict that Nashi works to resolve. These three events are the October Revolution, the Great Patriotic War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In addition to being three events that continue to have an effect on the psyche of contemporary Russia, these events also introduce a generational component to the discussion that Nashi seeks to use for its advantage. Each of these events, Nashi suggests, offered a challenge to successive generations, with varying results. The October Revolution, “the worldwide political event of the Twentieth Century,”⁴³ introduced the values of social justice and equal opportunity for all the world, Nashi argues, a development which was forever tainted by the early Soviets’ (or the generation of Nashi’s great-grandparents) failure to account for the importance of personal freedom in social development. Thus, in the final analysis, this generation failed, and as a result, communism brought to Russia an “economic and political dead-end” and stunted modernization.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

While Nashi's manifesto contends that this generation failed, the same cannot be said about the following generation, the grandparents of Nashi's members. Though the Soviet government was incapable of initiating true modernization, Russia was still able to defeat Germany. Nashi's primary goal in invoking the generation that fought the Great Patriotic War is to stress the importance of generational responsibility. This is a theme that the organization comes back to repeatedly. Today's generation of young people has an obligation to defend the sovereignty of the Russian nation "like our grandfathers did sixty years ago." Moreover, it follows that "a renunciation of responsibility is a renunciation of freedom," the implication being that the World War II generation had taken responsibility for defeating Russia's enemies and safeguarding freedom, and that theirs must likewise do so.⁴⁵

The Russian victory in World War II was a victory for the idea of national determination. Having defeated the hegemonic colonial power of Nazi Germany, Russia guaranteed the sanctity of values such as self-determination and "the right of every people to free development."⁴⁶ However, though the defense of national self-determination was the World War II generation's gift to the world, such a gift was squandered by the generation that followed, in part due to the deficiencies of the economic and political system created by the Soviets, and in part because the succeeding generation (that of Nashi's parents) failed to take responsibility for guiding the ship of state. The generation of Nashi's parents "has lost faith in Russia and her perspectives." Many looked to the West

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. It is worth mentioning that while Nashi is ready to admit certain failures of the Soviet government as it relates to modernization, it curiously fails to mention Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe when bemoaning the "colonial" and "hegemonic" impulses of which the Nazis were guilty.

to provide a model for post-Soviet Russian economics and politics, a move Nashi derides as “facsimile” and a failure to take responsibility for their own country. Nashi suggests that such a rejection of “historical responsibility” by a generation of “defeatists” led to a “crisis of Russian statehood” and a society that is “disintegrating,” whose hallmarks are “the destruction of common values,” the “growth of distrust and indifference towards each other,” and “a weakening of the ethical norms and standards,” which has led to a weak state plagued by corruption.⁴⁷

Russia in crisis is foundering, Nashi suggests, and this is a potentially fatal development. Because of Russia’s geographical location, it is surrounded by rival powers. With such a weak state, Russia is as vulnerable to outside enemies today, as it was in the past, when Hitler and Napoleon sought to conquer her. Additionally, Russia’s post-Soviet situation is analogous to the Times of Troubles, the period following the death of Ivan the Terrible, when there was crisis of Russian state leadership and a vulnerability to outside influence and corruption on a weakened Russian state. Nashi contends that following independence from Soviet domination, Russia was in a position to complete the modernizing task ignored by the Soviets; however, due to “defeatists,” what evolved was nothing more than “oligarchic capitalism” aided and abetted by an economic, political and cultural elite who declined to take responsibility for the future of Russia, replacing the False Dmitris of the Times of Troubles with the false promises of Westernization, or alternatively, extremism.

The nature of the opponents, Nashi argues, is as confusing as the times. Much of Nashi’s comments about its political opponents in the press in 2005 centered around a seeming conflation of all opposition under the rubric of “fascism,” ignoring the political

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and philosophical differences between groups and individuals Nashi singled out for derision that make unity a difficult and improbable enterprise. Nashi recognizes the somewhat troublesome nature of this banner definition in its manifesto, but solves the problem by declaring this opposition to be the result of “an unnatural union” which consists of “liberals and fascists, Westernizers and ultranationalists, international money and international terrorists.” The constituent components of this union seek to take Russia down an equally unnatural path towards Western “facsimile,” or look to take advantage of the “societal chaos” that occurred during the 1990s for their own nefarious ends.

What is the glue that holds together such an unlikely group? Nashi lists the supposed benefits each interest group gains by fostering Russia’s instability, but likewise implies that they act in a concerted manner. If this is the case, why and how do they act together? What rallies this “unnatural union” to put aside its many differences to act in concert across ideological lines? The answer is simple: Vladimir Putin. As I wrote earlier, Nashi is unabashedly pro-Putin as *Moving Together* was. Where Nashi differs is in how Putin fits into their wider ideology. As Militarev scoffed, much of *Moving Together*’s ideology could be reduced to “Putin is our president and Putin is always right.” Nashi takes a more nuanced approach. The organization is quick to define its support for Putin not in terms of “Putin the individual, but the support of his political course,” which is “directed towards the protection of the sovereignty of the country,” and concerned with economic and political modernization, which will provide “stable, non-violent development, [and] the achievement of [Russia’s] future global leadership.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ibid.

If Putin is the greatest challenge facing this unnatural union, where does Nashi fit into the equation? What is its role? Nashi believes that without its help, the Putin revolution will “peter out.” “The efforts of one person,” the organization writes, “are not enough” to affect the change necessary to right the Russian ship of state. The enormity of the task, coupled with the “rabid resistance” from “internal and external opponents” makes it imperative that Putin receive concerted support. And who would be better to aid in this battle than the young generation, those who have the most at stake, those who are “historically responsible” for seizing the initiative in the defense of Russia, just as their grandfathers did during the Great Patriotic War? “The future of our country is our future,” the organization writes. Russian youth are the “most concerned” party in the future modernization of the country. The Putin revolution is therefore Nashi’s revolution.

If the Nashi generation is one that is prepared to take “historical responsibility” to free Russia from this unnatural union and lead Russia to its rightful place in the pantheon of nations, how exactly do they envision that place to be? What is the “country of our dreams?” First of all, it is a stable country. Though Nashi talks about “revolution,” the organization is careful to stress that it does not intend to overthrow the existing government. The Nashi revolution will be “a revolution in content, but not in form.” “Our task is to strive for dynamic changes” and encourage a revolution in governing that will enact “modernization.” The organization’s tools will be “our initiative and energy.” “[It] does not follow that we must demolish the existing government” Nashi stresses. “[p]olitical stabilization is the most important condition for the economic development of

the country.” Demolishing the existing government would interrupt political stability, which, coupled with a weakened state and society, may be catastrophic.⁴⁹

I will discuss below how Nashi intends to carry out its “revolution in content.” First, I wish to talk more about what that revolution will bring. I have already discussed Nashi’s perception of its enemies, and how that point of view relates to the overarching sense of history the organization injects into its manifesto. I will now sketch out Nashi’s goals, in an ideological sense. What is the Russia “of our dreams,” apart from the assertion that it is the opposite of what liberals, fascists and oligarchs wish to construct? If Putin, with the help of Nashi, succeeds, what will Russia look like? What values will it embrace?

In its historical sketch, Nashi writes that the October Revolution, despite its numerous negatives, introduced the notions of equality and social justice to Russia. Moreover, despite the excesses of the Soviets and a distinct lack of respect for personal freedom, the Russian people still answered the call to defend Russia from outside invaders and in the process guaranteed the rights of nations to self-determination. In viewing the past, Nashi sees that actors at different times have made a choice between having a strong state, and respecting the importance of this personal liberty. “Communists and fascists are ready to sacrifice personal freedom of citizens for the sake of achieving a great state,” whereas liberals value personal freedom but at the expense of a strong state. Nashi sees this as a false choice. “Personal freedom and national sovereignty are two sides of the same coin,” they write. “The two sides...are indivisible. A man may not be free if his country is oppressed. A country may not be free while its people are oppressed.”

⁴⁹ Ibid.

What are the other values Nashi hopes to instill? In addition to personal freedom and national sovereignty, Nashi places a great importance on “fairness.” “Fairness is when a young and talented person from the most far-flung village has the chance to receive an education in the best institute of higher learning,” Nashi writes. However, “it is not fair” for “a loafer” to receive a publicly funded education because of bribery, or another form of corruption. The state should be supportive of those members of society who work hard and still have fallen on hard times, yet “it is not a fair society that helps a young drunk who is living on the bill of his pensioner parents.” Nashi draws a line between those who take advantage of social programs and subsidies and the oligarchic capitalists, who “parasited” the Soviet inheritance for their own personal gain.⁵⁰ Society should be benevolent to those in need, and “one person should not be indifferent to other people,” The “support of other citizens is the norm in relations between people.” Moreover, this support should come freely from citizens. It should not be coerced, but should be the natural extension and result of the society Nashi hopes to construct. Nashi sums up its troika of values as freedom -- both personal and the freedom of the nation-state from outside influence; the fairness of society; and solidarity among the people.⁵¹

Nashi espouses other values as well. When discussing Russia’s geo-political situation, the organization retreats to the fortress-like imagery of being surrounded by aggressive foreign powers who seek to steal the Russia’s inherent wealth. While the group is cognizant of the dangers of this central location vis-à-vis the rest of the world, they also see an advantage: Russia is a nexus where all religions and peoples of the world live amongst

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

one another. “Eastern and Western Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism all come together in Russia,” Nashi notes. This cultural diversity is a pillar of strength and a characteristic that makes Russia a great nation. The group bemoans the “clash of civilizations” it accuses ultra-nationalists in Russia of fomenting.⁵² Such a clash, which has already “killed” the Soviet Union, not only works against the inherent strength of cultural diversity, Nashi argues, but it also threatens Russia’s territorial integrity, a key component of sovereignty.⁵³ In order for Russia to be strong, society must embrace all people of the Russian Federation.⁵⁴

How does Nashi propose to instill these principles and achieve a free and fair society that values solidarity and respects cultural diversity? How does Nashi hope to defend Putin’s modernization program from the “unnatural union” of internal and external enemies that either by ignorance or design hope to forestall Russia’s progression from the chaos of the immediate post-Soviet years to the society it envisions? How does Nashi intend to rise to the occasion and take historical responsibility like its members’ grandfathers did sixty years ago? The organization offers a three-step program to this end. The first task is to preserve “the sovereignty and unity of Russia.” The second is to implement “the modernization of the country.” The third is to form “an active civil society.”⁵⁵

⁵² “Ultra-nationalists” refers not only to Russian (“*russkii*”) nationalists, but also to leaders of ethnic minorities whom they accuse of fanning the flames of ethnic conflict within the Russian Federation.

⁵³ Ibid. The language about territorial integrity clearly is in reference to Chechnya. Nashi generally has little to say about the war in Chechnya; however, the group heralded the founding of a local chapter in Groznii in the summer of 2005.

⁵⁴ Nashi’s publications use the word “*rossiiskii*” when referring to “Russian,” a term that implies all peoples of the Russian Federation, as opposed to “*russkii*” which denotes only ethnic Russians.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

The first task sees Nashi acting as a stopgap against the further fragmentation of Russian society by uniting the youth of Russia under the auspices of a “socio-patriotic movement.” Both ultra-nationalists and outside powers hope to see the divisions sown among the Russian Federation’s many ethnicities lead to its break up, much as the Soviet Union split into its constituent parts. Nashi is able to help unite the nation by spreading its ideology among youth and uniting them under a common banner. “We must wake up the interest of our peers towards public life and politics,” and “make our values attractive to youth.” “We must stand against fascism in all its forms, spread the ideas of unity of races, religions and cultures for the good of our common motherland.” In order to do this, Nashi proposes to “go to every institute of higher learning, technical institute, poly-technical university and school” with their message and “be examples” by spreading “among our contemporaries the feeling of historical responsibility for the fate of our country.” If successful, Nashi argues, not only will it have stemmed the tide of ethno-societal divisions and thwarted the attempts of Russia’s enemies to dissolve the Russian Federation, but also it also will have recruited “one million” young people to the Putin Revolution who will act as a base of support for his modernization programs.

If the first proposed step is one that has a defensive component to it, Nashi then states the positive steps it wishes to take that, having prevented the breakdown of unity among the peoples of Russia, will ensure the modernization it proposes and sees Putin as providing. As I wrote above, Nashi talks about a “revolution in content but not in form.” It does not propose overthrowing the existing government. It instead wishes to take it over by changing the makeup of the bureaucracy, and what it calls “the economic and administrative elite of the country.” This elite in 2005, Nashi claims, is composed of

“defeatists” who failed in the test of historical responsibility and whose actions, or inactions, endanger the sovereignty of the Russian Federation while handing its resources over to oligarchs. The Nashi Generation of leaders -- placed in positions of this elite by means of the electoral process, job-placement programs, youth initiatives and social mobilization -- will be different from this current generation in ideology and outlook. Gone will be the unmotivated and corruptible actors in the political, economic and social organs of the nation. In their place will be Nashi-trained idealists.

What is the Nashi Generation? What qualities do its members possess, and by extension, what qualities does the organization suppose the current generation of elite lacks? In order to “change the format of political thought” the next generation of leaders must

- 1) Be Patriotic
- 2) Possess “Historical Optimism”
- 3) Possess “Strategic Thought”
- 4) Be Socially Responsible
- 5) Be Open to “the New”
- 6) Be Constructive

Finally, members of the Nashi Generation must be able to “rally like-minded people around the tasks of modernization and direct the energy of the team towards the resolution of these tasks” while being professional “in their sphere of action,” whether that sphere is in government, the business world, or an educational setting. Nashi proposes that participation in its organization, as well as its “‘supermodern’ educational programs” will mold young individuals into the next generation of Russia’s leaders.

The first two tasks Nashi proposes to carry out are primarily focused on its own organization: the propagation of its ideals and recruitment of members, and then, having accomplished this, deployment of those individuals into the spheres in which Nashi perceives the battles for modernization to be fought. The third and final task, with which

the organization closes its manifesto, announces Nashi's goal to form "an active civil society." The modernization initiatives it hopes to realize will not succeed without the support "from below." This is a theme that echoes an earlier pronouncement about the importance of society acting justly and fairly on its own accord, and not as the result of "coercion" from the state. It further defines the Nashi Revolution as one that engages all levels of society, a revolution in the social as well as in the political sphere. Nashi believes that its platform will be unsuccessful if it lacks public support. Indeed, it may even prove to be impossible. As a result, Nashi cannot simply focus on its own members and their actions within the economic and political elite. It must work to influence society as well.

The notion of civil society is a complicated matter, and an in-depth discussion of its formation and activity in contemporary Russia is outside the scope of this thesis. Even Nashi does not explicitly spell out what it means by the term "active civil society." Its discussion mentions few of the traditional hallmarks of civil society, such as the activity of non-governmental organizations or other groups. Nashi's definition of "active civil society" seems to revolve around its own activities, and its interaction with individuals outside the organization, via "discussion clubs in institutes of higher learning," "civil debates," "mass actions," or "everyday work with the organs of state power and public organizations." Nashi defines an "active civil society" mostly by saying what it is not; Russia lacks an active civil society and Russia also suffers from "despondency, dependency, apathy and the inability to self-organize." Therefore, the opposite condition, which Nashi intends to initiate, is what it perceives to be an active civil society. Mostly, Nashi views civil society as another tool in its arsenal with which to battle its enemies. Having aided in the formation of an active civil society, Nashi will be confident knowing

that when it makes “specific demands about the removal of specific bureaucrats from power,” Nashi will have “thousands of young people” standing with it. “Every oligarch or bribe-taker, street punk or member of a totalitarian organization” will be aware that Nashi is ready to “clash” with them. Forming civil society then is more about propagating its own messages to a broader population.

Taken together, Nashi’s manifesto stresses a variety of sometimes competing and contradictory norms, among them the importance of Russian national sovereignty; social justice; equal justice; modernization; stability; personal freedom; cultural diversity; patriotism; and “an active civil society.” Nashi closely links these values and ideals to those Vladimir Putin supposedly espouses as well, and implicitly or explicitly declares that its opponents, whether “fascists,” “liberals,” or “Westernizers,” are antithetical to these principles.

This is Nashi’s program. This is “Our Truth.” In this section there are other documents detailing Nashi’s goals and ideology, ranging from the practical (statements by its national commissars) to more abstract approaches (Boris Yakemenko’s florid “The Path for Russia”) but all repeat the same points stressed in the manifesto. Taken together, these documents and publications represent the ideological blueprint for Nashi’s activities and events as the organization seeks to advance its claims and mobilize Russian youths towards the attainment of its goals. From “Our Truth,” I wish to now turn to “Our Deeds,” (*NASHE Delo*), and examine how Nashi acts according to this ideology and identity.

B. Activities and Events: Transforming NASHA Pravda into NASHE Delo

In my discussion of Nashi's activities, both national and local, I seek to demonstrate how Nashi translates its manifesto into action. Each event that I will describe has its roots in the language of the manifesto. Furthermore, I will argue each serves a mobilizing function according to scholarship on collective action, from the identity formation of the Victory Day celebrations to the ritualization activities employed by local, citywide chapters. For the analysis of local chapter activity, I use anecdotes from Nashi's Vladimir chapter. This organization is typical of the regional activity of Nashi, and as representative as any.

It is no accident that Nashi's first large-scale event was the Our Victory celebration on 5 May 2005, during which commissars from all over the country convened on Leninskii Prospekt in Moscow to meet with veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Between fifty and sixty thousand youths gathered for the event that ranged in tone from somber remembrance to red meat rally, replete with cries to continue the fight for "the independence of our Motherland!"⁵⁶ Nashi claimed that the event drew participants from more than thirty regions of Russia. The youths, clad in white t-shirts bearing red stars on which was written "Our Victory" and waving the red and white Nashi flag, listened to speeches by several of Nashi's national commissars, Yakemenko included, and met with World War II veterans, several thousand of whom joined the youths in their march down Leninskii Prospekt. In a particularly symbolic event, the veterans presented the young participants of the action with medals in the shape of a 1940s-vintage shell casing on which was engraved "Remember the War, Protect the Motherland!"⁵⁷

⁵⁶ "Nashi Supporters Pack Leninsky Prospekt;" <http://www.brandcount.ru/eng/news/nashi.shtml>.

⁵⁷ "'NASHA POBEDA': Veterany peredali 'NASHIM' estafetu bor'by za nezavisimost' Rossii." <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/86659600>.

This act was one of several meant to indicate the passing of the torch from one generation to the next, and to symbolize the Nashi Generation's resolve to take the "historical responsibility" the group defines in its manifesto, just as their grandfathers did during the Great Patriotic War. The martial music blaring from louder speakers, the Nashi flags that resembled Tsarist-era naval banners, and speeches whose language was heavy with references to battle and struggle all recalled past eras of glory, and reminded the participants that such glory and prestige was earned through struggle, a struggle that is still salient in contemporary Russia. "We will have to defend this independence [won by the veterans during the Great Patriotic War]," Yakemenko told NTV television during the event, "in business and the economy, in the factories and (university) lecture halls."⁵⁸ Nashi used this rally not to call its members to armed battle against its opponents, but to conflate the struggles against yesterday's fascists on the battlefield with the contemporary fight against the modern fascists Nashi details in its manifesto. "We will make Russia a strong and great country again!" the group writes in its account of the day's events. This struggle, a descendent of the struggle against fascism, is assured by the Nashi Generation's decision to take historical responsibility. "While hundreds of thousands of our kids remember the war and protect the motherland...Russia will be a great, free, and independent country!"⁵⁹

The Victory Day Rally capped off a busy week for Nashi, during which the group opened a museum about the Great Patriotic War in Grozny and organized artillery salutes

⁵⁸ "Russian Pro-Kremlin Youth Group Stages Mass Patriotic Rally in Moscow," *Mosnews*, <http://www.mosnews.com/news/2005/05/16/nashiakt.shtml>.

⁵⁹ "'NASHA POBEDA': Veterany peredali 'NASHIM' estafetu bor'by za nezavisimost' Rossii;" <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/86659600>

to veterans in Riga, Vilnius and Tallinn.⁶⁰ Nashi also claimed that its members spent the weeks preceding the Victory Day observation erecting more than 1800 memorials to “heroes” of the war across the country.⁶¹

While remembrance of the war is certainly widespread in Russia, it would be incorrect to simply view these activities as the organization taking part in an occasion observed throughout the country. Coming so soon after the establishment of the movement, and being the first time the organization received widespread coverage in the press, the Our Victory events planned and carried out by Nashi are a key component of the identity formation the group employs for mobilization purposes. As McAdam et al. write, identity formation as a mobilizing structure often builds upon existing identities.⁶² The desire of Nashi to build upon the traditional reverence afforded by Russians of all social and political strata represents a push to equate in the minds of the populace, as well as its own members, the goals of Nashi with the struggle of a symbolically strong event.

Certainly, this is nothing new. The official veneration of the World War II generation became ingrained in Russian life in the decades following the war.⁶³ In the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, reverence for the veteran generation and the victory over fascism became arguably more entrenched, changing from a source of pride that the Soviet regime transformed into shared collective consciousness, to, as Gudkov

⁶⁰ “15 Maia patrioticheskaia atsiia ‘NASHA POBEDA,’” <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/86597128>; Nashi emphasized in both its own publications as well as in press accounts of the artillery barrages that the Baltic states refused to honor Russian veterans who still live in the former Soviet republics.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² McAdam et al.; 51, 56.

⁶³ For a discussion of Soviet use of the war as a means to rally the public towards its own agendas, see Tumarkin, Nina, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia*. New York: BasicBooks, 1994.

writes, “the only positive anchor point for post-Soviet society’s national consciousness.”⁶⁴ Nashi’s goal is to play to the emotions traditionally associated with the war, and convince its constituents and adherents -- as well as the bystander public -- that it is in the same tradition, thus forming its own identity based on an existing one.

If Nashi’s first major event sought to establish the identity of the organization as one that seizes the baton of historical responsibility from the generation of their grandparents, the Seliger-2005 camp, which Nashi conducted for two weeks in July 2005, was concerned with their own self-organization, and their stated goal of effectively forming a youth movement to spread their “ideological influence” among Russia’s youth.⁶⁵ As Nashi states in its manifesto, in order to effectively organize the defense of Russia from its enemies, and be in a position to support Putin’s modernization policies, a youth vanguard is required. The camp at Lake Seliger was intended to train the most dedicated of this vanguard, the regional commissars,⁶⁶ in political action, as well engage them in discussion and debate about how best to carry out Nashi’s programs.⁶⁷

The camp was at times militaristic, with commissars gathering at 8 a.m. for a five-kilometer run, and at times reminiscent of an ordinary summer camp, with ping-pong matches and boating on the lake, as well as the requisite discussions of “beer and girls.”⁶⁸ Two commissars constantly stood guard beside an eternal flame in honor of fallen veterans

⁶⁴ Gudkov, Lev, “The Fetters of Victory,” first published in *Neprikosnoyennij Zapas* 40. <http://eurozine.com/pdf/2005-05-03-gudkov-en.pdf>.

⁶⁵ “Manifest molodozhnogo dvizheniia ‘Nashi.’” The Seliger event, it should be said, garnered as much, if not more, press coverage as the Victory Day march.

⁶⁶ I will discuss the breakdown of Nashi’s commissar hierarchy on pages 41-42.

⁶⁷ Boykewich, Stephen, “3,000 Nashi Commissars Go to Camp,” *Moscow Times*, 18 July 2005.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

of the Great Patriotic War.⁶⁹ A group of volunteers left the camp temporarily to help restore the nearby Nilova Pustin monastery as a sign of gratitude to the Orthodox Church for the use of some of the land on which Nashi conducted the camp.⁷⁰ The days were capped off with concerts by popular Russian rock bands.

This at times incongruous mix of the whimsical and solemn dissipated as the camp progressed, the tone becoming more serious. Nashi claimed that during the course of the camp, the 3,000 participants attended more than 870 hours of lectures and 400 separate classes, seminars and workshops.⁷¹ Yakemenko characterized the camp as an educational project, designed to train Nashi's members for their future roles in the elite of the country, the first step of the "change of format" the organization describes in its manifesto.⁷² "Comrades, this is about the future. We need new methods, new ideas."⁷³ Teams of commissars from different regions met for discussions that ranged from the philosophical ("USA – Ally or Enemy?") to the practical ("Should the Nashi movement become a political party?").⁷⁴ Commissars attended workshops on public speaking, and one titled "The Psychology of the Organization of a Propagandistic Campaign."

There were also speakers. Gleb Pavlovskii, a Kremlin insider who serves as advisor to Putin's chief of staff Dmitrii Medvedev, spoke to the assembled group and warned them of

⁶⁹ Evans, Julian "How Putin youth is indoctrinated to foil revolution," *Times Online*, 18 July 2005. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-1698334,00.html>

⁷⁰ Boykewich, 18 July 2005.

⁷¹ "'NASHI' realizovali unikal'nyi obrazovatel'nyi proekt – Vserossiiskii molodezhnyi lager' 'Seliger – 2005;'" <http://www.nashi.su/work/92814896>.

⁷² "Infiltrators Share Pro-Kremlin Youth Camp Experience on Russia TV," REN Television, 18 July 2005.

⁷³ Quoted in Boykewich, 18 July 2005.

⁷⁴ "Dvizhenie 'NASHI' dolzhno stat' politicheshoi partiei?" <http://www.nashi.su/sel/91952541>.

the possibility of an event similar to Ukraine's Orange Revolution occurring in Russia, and suggested it was up to Nashi to prevent it.⁷⁵ "We need to prepare a politically literate generation," to prevent such mischief, Pavlovsky opined. "Your job is to defend the constitutional order if and when the coup comes."⁷⁶ Vladislav Surkov strolled around the grounds with Yakemenko, dropping into the various workshops for question and answer sessions with the excited youths. The effects on the youth gathered seemed positive. "I've seen people transform in front of my eyes," said one 19-year old participant.⁷⁷

Perhaps the only thing that marred the event was when three members of the liberal organization Youth Yabloko infiltrated the camp. They managed to stay for three days before being detected. Yabloko claims they were forcibly expelled; Yakemenko denies this.⁷⁸ "Let them come for a week and debate with us...Politics is all about the free exchange of ideas."⁷⁹

The purpose of this "educational project" and the "free exchange of ideas" at the Seliger camp was to mobilize the most committed members of the organization and provide them with the tools to carry out Nashi's activities in cities throughout Russia. Among Nashi's

⁷⁵ Evans, *Times Online*, 18 July 2005.

⁷⁶ Boykewich, 18 July 2005; Evans, *Times Online*, 18 July 2005.

⁷⁷ Boykewich, 18 July 2005.

⁷⁸ Barabanov, Il'ia, "Kak 'Nashi' provodiat leto," *Gazeta.ru*, 13 July 2005. This was not the first time Youth Yabloko tried to covertly attend a Nashi function. Il'ia Yashin, the organization's leader, snuck into Nashi's organizational meeting (dubbed "Russia's New Intellectual Elite") on 28 February 2005. Upon being recognized, Yashin claims a member of Nashi denounced him as an "enemy" and proclaimed to the gathered audience, "These are the people you will fight." Yakemenko denies that Nashi forcibly expelled Yashin, but did concede that he was dropped into a snow drift. Quoted in *The Standard*, 8 March 2005, <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/stdn/std/Focus/GC08Dh02.html>. Additionally, a member of the National Bolsheviks covertly attended Nashi's first meeting of regional delegates on 15 April 2005. Faking an illness, the activist, Ol'ga Shalina, ascended to the stage and threw a bottle of water and a microphone into the surprised audience before being removed by security. "Znai Nashikh!" <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/84397501>.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Boykewich, 18 July 2005.

goals is to act as examples for Russian youths to follow, and to organize a socio-patriotic movement to unite young Russians around the banner of Putin's modernization campaign. Nashi's organizers hoped that the 3,000 attendees from forty-five cities throughout Russia would take the lessons learned from the workshops and speakers back to their hometowns and put them into practice in Nashi's local organizations.

It is to these local organizations that I will now turn my attention. While the purpose of Our Victory and rallies like it are in part to galvanize recruits in mass organizations, as well as attempt to foster a positive perception of Nashi among the populace, much of a young person's initial contact with Nashi is through the local organizations. Nashi has chapters in twenty-three cities and towns throughout Russia. Before I examine the activities which Nashi carries out on a local level, I would like to briefly describe Nashi's organizational structure.

On 15 April 2005, nearly 700 youths from thirty regions of Russia gathered in Moscow for Nashi's first conference of delegates. Though Yakemenko announced Nashi's formation in early March 2005, this gathering in April represents the true beginning of the organization from an operational standpoint. The most pressing task of this meeting, which lasted for nearly ten hours, was the election of Nashi's federal commissars (*federal'nie komissary*). The organization elected five federal commissars for terms of eighteen months: Yakemenko, Natal'ia Lebedeva and Aleksandr Gorodetskii, both from Moscow, Mikhail Kulikov of St Petersburg, and Sergei Kuz'menko of Nizhnii Novgorod. Yakemenko polled the most votes among them, and thus is recognized as the first among equals of the five federal commissars. The federal commissars are tasked with organizing the national activities of the organization, as well as acting as the movement's public faces.

In addition to this national leadership cabal, there are the regional commissars (*regional'nie komissary*). It was the regional commissars who participated in the Seliger-2005 camp. The regional commissars are the most committed participants in the organization who run the local chapters. It is the responsibility of these regional commissars to adapt the ideology and activities of the national level to more local concerns. Additionally, the regional commissars played a role in mobilizing participants for the Our Victory mass action. Below the regional commissars in the hierarchy are the local level activists (*storonniki*). These are youths age sixteen and older who “share the ideals and tasks of the movement, and who participate in the program for activists ‘Know Nashi,’” which Nashi uses to offer membership in the movement.⁸⁰ This program is rather simple, and consists primarily of a short questionnaire. Upon submission of the required information, an interested youth attends a meeting of the local chapter at which they are requested to propose ways to improve the organization, as well as describe how they see themselves within the broader activities at the local and national level. While the bar for admission into the organization is rather low, the completion of the questionnaire and attendance at local meetings allows the activist to participate in the full range of educational and social activities carried out at the local level. It is to these local events that I will now turn.

The local chapters of Nashi have several important purposes. First, within the ideological framework of the organization at a national level, the activity of the local branches serves to orient society towards what Nashi sees as “just society,” where “the fate of one person is not indifferent to other people, where help and support of other citizens is

⁸⁰ “NASH komissar Mikhail Kulikov: Pora rasstavit' vse tochki nad 'i!'”
<http://www.nashi.su/pravda/85865531>.

the norm in relations between people.”⁸¹ Additionally, the local organizations seek to advance Nashi’s goal of creating an active civil society to further the modernization of the country, a component of which is a “social solidarity” that will cure a Russian society “sick from despondency, dependency, apathy and the inability to self-organize.”⁸² The local chapters seek to do this by organizing activities reminiscent of Soviet *subbotniki*, or days of volunteer labor, when citizens gathered to work on projects that ostensibly serve the public good. The Nashi equivalent sends volunteers to care for orphans, to organize blood drives and to complete similar projects. Moreover, local chapters are able to better organize these actions of public improvement because they are acting within the communities they know. As one regional commissar put it, local chapters are able to see the “sick places” within a community, and point the appropriate channels towards the resolution of such problem areas. “I, for example,” he said, “ride the trolleybuses, and know that half of them are unheated.” Members of Nashi’s regional chapters “understand municipal problems,” and can point Nashi’s resources towards these areas of deficiency.⁸³

The local chapters also conduct activities to advance Nashi’s goal of training the next generation of Russia’s leaders to replace the current generation of “defeatists.” If Seliger-2005 sought to train the most committed regional commissars, it is the lectures and symposiums held locally that hope to propagate those lessons to the future “elite” of the next generation. These “master classes” resemble those given to Regional Commissars at Seliger in the summer of 2005. Common themes include acquisition of knowledge about

⁸¹ Manifest molodezhnogo dvizheniia Nashi. <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/83974709>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “‘NASHI’ ne idut bez Putina,” Molodezhnogo Dvizhenie “NASHI,” g. Vladimir; http://www.nashi33.ru/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1135697466&archive=&start_from=&ucat=6&

Russian history and theories on the formation of public opinion, as well as the requisite courses on “anti-fascism.”

Not every event is so serious. Much like the Seliger camp had a social component to it, so do the activities of the local chapters. In November 2005, the Vladimir chapter of Nashi organized a bike trip through the woods outside the city. Two commissars, both veterans of the Seliger-2005 camp, led more than ten *storonniki* on the trip, all the while telling stories and anecdotes about their experiences at Seliger-2005 and demonstrating the camping skills they acquired. On an even lighter note, the same chapter held a video game competition at a local computer club, during which fifty participants raced against each other in pixilated hot-rods on computers screens. Billed as an alternative to “drinking beer,” the competition attracted around 100 spectators in addition to the participants.

From a theoretical point of view, the local activities -- from the educational symposiums to the *subbotniki* to social and sporting events local chapters hold -- seek to ritualize the movement and establish a base of support that can be mobilized into mass actions when needed, such as the Our Victory rally or another event in the future. Participants in a collective action, once identifying with that action and becoming embedded within that movement via identity formation and social interactions, are therefore able to be mobilized into mass collective action for the furtherance of the goals of the organization.⁸⁴ Participants in an organization, upon adoption of the identity of the organization, “undergo modifications of their boundaries and attributes as they interact” that move them to act “within broadly defined scripts and organizational constraints.”⁸⁵ A Russian youth, having

⁸⁴ McAdam et al.; 56-58.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 56-57.

adopted the ideological identity of Nashi via the movement's propaganda and as a result of participation in the ritualizing events that the local chapters conduct, can thus be mobilized through the broader mechanisms of the movement, or transformed from low-risk, unskilled participation and attendance to a greater commitment to the actions and events of the organization. Nashi's *storonniki* are grounded "in ties created by previous contention and/or routine social life" of the organization.⁸⁶ In most cases, an activist's interaction with the organization is via the local chapter. Being embedded within that hierarchical structure, however, places them within the mobilizing mechanism of the entire movement, and as a result, local participants are tied to collective actions at the national level. Nashi gains strength by organizing locally and creating relationships, between the *storonniki* and the regional commissars, as well as in a structural sense between the center and the periphery of the organization. It is via these processes that local organizations provide much of the organization's strength.

I have attempted in this chapter to link Nashi's ideological pronouncements with the formation among its adherents of a mobilizing identity and to demonstrate the way this identity, along with its activities and events, allows Nashi to mobilize within the field of opportunities and constraints. Further, I have shown that different activities employed by Nashi are meant to provide different results, from solidifying the ideological rhetoric, creating a sense of collective identity, and fusing the peripheral and national initiatives into a broad plan of action. I wish now to turn to Nashi's relationships with other actors within the socio-political field and sketch the field in which Nashi orients itself in the hopes of lending context to the activities and events that Nashi perpetrates.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 58.

Chapter 2: Nashi and the Socio-Political Field: Actors and Opportunities

While my analysis in chapter one focused on Nashi's activities, ideology and identity, the next two chapters of this thesis are concerned with the organization's relationships with other actors in the socio-political field, and the effects such relationships have on Nashi's ability to mobilize and the character of that mobilization. I hope to show in the remaining chapters of this thesis how a social movement organization interacts with other actors in the socio-political field, and how this interaction guides and inhibits an organization's actions and mobilization. The activity of a social movement organization in the "field of opportunities and constraints" is a sum of the organization's goals, its means and resources, and its environment.⁸⁷ A social movement organization such as Nashi in this "multi-action system" is, in part, dependent on the availability of resources and the relative favorability of the environment in which it resides.⁸⁸ The efficacy of the organization is dependent on its satisfaction of these "multiple and contrasting requirements," meaning resources and opportunity.⁸⁹ At the same time, an organization can make up for a deficit of a given

⁸⁷ Melucci, 26. There is a wide variety of definitions used for "resources" in literature on social movements, social movement organizations and collective action. The term can refer to financial and infrastructural means. The term can also refer to labor and leadership. For this thesis, I take an umbrella approach and consider all of the above when using the term "resource."

⁸⁸ Ibid. 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 27.

requirement with a surplus in another.⁹⁰ The effectiveness of a social movement organization is never accidental, and it is never assumed. A social movement organization achieves whatever unity it has, and participates in actions it chooses not by chance, but due to the ability of the organization to orient itself within this multi-polar action field, and exploit the opportunities afforded to it by that field by means of its goals, resources and environment. At the same time, the organization must minimize its liabilities within that same field. A social movement organization needs this “social construction,” and continually negotiates within these dimensions to enable mobilization.⁹¹

I will demonstrate in this chapter how this field guides, informs and alters Nashi’s actions and ideology. I will also argue in this chapter that Nashi’s relationship with the state, itself one of the mitigating actors within this field, provides it with access to resources which support mobilization. The fact that its goals intersect to some degree with those of the state also aids Nashi’s mobilization. In my examination of this relationship, I also provide an analysis of the state’s motives in supporting and enabling Nashi. To begin, I will examine how errors in negotiating this multi-polar field can negatively affect a social movement organization and analyze how Nashi steers through this environment, in contrast to its predecessor, Moving Together.

A. Moving Together to Nashi: the transformation of a social movement organization based on the effects of the wider socio-political field

If Moving Together suffered from a lack of a coherent ideology, the organization’s fall from grace was also due to other factors as well. As I noted above, the antics the

⁹⁰ Jenkins, 532.

⁹¹ Melucci, 27.

organization perpetrated to “cleanse” Russian culture of “pornographic” influences by destroying the books of Sorokin and Viktor Pelevin managed to alienate fervent high-profile supporters such as Vladislav Surkov. If such activities caused alarm among sympathetic actors within the Putin regime, it is reasonable to deduce that they also reflected poorly upon the organization in the eyes of its constituents and the bystander public, thus weakening the ability of the organization to mobilize.

Several additional factors worked to the detriment of Moving Together, all of which had to do with the organization’s relationships to other actors in the socio-political field, and/or the environment in which it resided in late 2004 and early 2005. The first is the prominence achieved by Moving Together’s “opponents” -- opposition youth organizations -- that competed for the same constituents as Moving Together. Seeking to take advantage of the negative effects created by Moving Together’s notoriety, opposition youth movements sought to recruit Moving Together’s constituents into their own ranks. Organizations such as the National Bolsheviks and Youth Yabloko were particularly active in 2004.

The National Bolshevik Party, the brainchild of radical writer Eduard Limonov, has been active in Russian since 1994, though its ideological roots go back further than that. The organization claims upwards of 30,000 members, and despite official condemnation and the brief jailing of Limonov, the organization remains operational. It specializes in rather outrageous displays of anti-politics, among them throwing mayonnaise on prominent public officials, an act the organization calls “velvet terror.” In 2004 and 2005, the organization increasingly allied itself with Youth Yabloko in opposition to the Putin Administration, which considers the National Bolsheviks a terrorist organization. Youth Yabloko, headed

by Il'ia Yashin, is the youth wing of the liberal Yabloko Party. Youth Yabloko seeks to mobilize youths to achieve the group's "Five Priorities of Our Generation," among them reforming education, labor, and the army, protecting the environment and creating civil society.⁹²

New groups sprung up as well; some, such as *Skazhi Net!*⁹³ worked to publicize anti-Putin activities and demonstrations throughout Russia; others, such as *Idushchie bez Putina* sought to organize youths dedicated to a liberal platform of ideals, similar to Youth Yabloko. These groups, most obviously *Idushchie bez Putina*, or "Moving without Putin," positioned themselves as alternatives to Moving Together, whose name they were obviously punning. Moving Together faced a recruiting roadblock: a combination of competition for constituents and bad press.⁹⁴ Its abilities to negotiate within the field of opportunities and constraints diminished to the point that its weakened ideology was not enough to ensure mobilization.

Other factors within the multi-polar action system contributed to Moving Together's loss of initiative, and these factors point to the importance that the socio-political environment can play in a social movement organization's development. The success of Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine's Orange Revolution highlighted the impact that mass-actions can make in political situations. Many of those who gathered to protest the election returns showing a victory for Viktor Yanukovych were members of the youth organization *Pora!*⁹⁵ As in Georgia in 2003 and Serbia in 2000, youth organizations seemed to galvanize the

⁹² "Five Priorities of Our Generation," <http://www.yabloko.ru/Union/MMYA/five.html>.

⁹³ "Say No!"

⁹⁴ I will discuss the press' role in this field in detail in Chapter 3.

⁹⁵ "It's Time!"

population towards regime change. Closer to home, the rallies against Putin's altering of the country's pension scheme in January 2005, in which Youth Yabloko were conspicuous participants, represented a direct challenge to the regime. If the major domestic crises faced by the Putin regime since he took office were the Kursk disaster and the Beslan hostage standoff, this was the first that directly related to one of his own policies. Putin's popularity, while strong, was threatened.⁹⁶

It was soon after these dual events that Moving Together announced the formation of Nashi. With its heavy emphasis on patriotic instead of cultural issues, Nashi sought to transform the faltering mobilization capabilities of Moving Together into a more disciplined, structured and "radical" youth organization capable of preventing "the development of an event along the Ukrainian and Georgian scenario" in Russia.⁹⁷ It is reasonable to judge that the leaders of Moving Together, many of whom moved with Yakemenko to Nashi, judged that that organization was incapable of organizing opposition to these anti-Putin youth organizations, especially in a crisis situation, such as occurred in Ukraine or Georgia. Due to a combination of ideological deficiencies, potential alienation of patrons, constituents and the bystander public due to the lack of saliency of its platform, and the changing socio-political environment, Moving Together ceased to be the mobilization force that it was in 2002. "Moving [Together]' is not capable of fulfilling the task of renewing the country," Yakemenko concluded in March 2005.⁹⁸ Faced with the

⁹⁶ According to a poll conducted by the Levada Center, Putin's popularity fell from 84 percent to 65 percent between November 2004 and January 2005, a period concurrent the events in Ukraine (which probably had little to no effect on the results) and the change in the pension scheme. See "Putin's Performance in Office," Levada Center; <http://www.russiavotes.org>.

⁹⁷ "Iduschie vmeste' noshli vroz;" http://www.gazeta.ru/2005/03/16/oa_151394.shtml.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

organization's inability to achieve its goals effectively, he changed his focus to a new organization that he reasoned was better equipped to navigate the multi-polar field of opportunities and constraints.⁹⁹

B. Nashi's Leadership and its Effect on Mobilization

The suddenness of Nashi's emergence with a ready-made ideology and its ability to stage massive rallies like the Our Victory event and the Seliger-2005 camp indicates that the organization had well-developed sources of financing and networking capabilities, in addition to other resources crucial to mobilization. One of the resources the organization had at its disposal is the cadre of leadership transferred from Moving Together, Yakemenko in particular. Leadership cadres of new organizations tend to come from the fragmentation of prior organizations.¹⁰⁰ So too did a portion of Nashi's leadership, who came from Moving Together. Though Moving Together did not fragment per se, Nashi certainly did not emerge out of nowhere, and the ability of its leaders to seize on "major interest cleavages and [redefine] long-standing grievances in new terms" points to the importance that the leadership cadre has to the organization.¹⁰¹ By adopting some of Moving Together's tactics, while discarding some of the more controversial activities that

⁹⁹ When Yakemenko left Moving Together to concentrate on Nashi, he stressed that the two organizations would not merge and that Moving Together was still a viable organization, dedicated to carrying out its cultural program. Though the organization still exists as of this writing, it no longer conducts mass actions as it did in its prime. Also indicative of the effect that this multi-polar action system can have on a social movement organization is the formation of a new anti-Putin youth organization "Oborona" ("Defense"). Founded on 25 February 2005, it is composed of activists from Youth Yabloko and Moving Without Putin, and models itself after Otpor, the youth organization active in the Serbian movement against Slobodan Milosevic, and Pora, which was active in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

¹⁰⁰ Jenkins, 531.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 531.

organization perpetrated, Nashi's leadership cadre was able to utilize some of the "major cleavages" of Moving Together's program – reorienting Russian society away from outside influences and stressing Russia's centrality in its own fate – while discarding the elements of its program which alienated the bystander public and constituents, or narrowed its focus to the fate of a single president. Whereas Moving Together sought to save Russia via a cultural program, Nashi focus was on patriotism, anti-fascism, education and social service. The result was "teams of adolescents in t-shirts reading 'Everything is on track!' running en masse to Nashi."¹⁰²

The catalyst for much of this exodus was Yakemenko himself. Yakemenko is the uncontested leader of Nashi. Though technically he is only one of five federal commissars, it is hard to imagine a scenario in which he would not be in a leadership position in the organization. If a leadership cadre is a fruitful resource for a social movement organization's ability to carry out its program, it is prudent to examine the motives of that leadership. While it may be impossible to deduce his motives entirely, Yakemenko's activities with Moving Together, his subsequent employment at the Kremlin, and his eventual involvement in forming Nashi indicate a transformation from a simple activist to a professional movement organizer, to the benefit of the organization and himself. Yakemenko insists he began Moving Together with his brother Boris simply because they were impressed by Putin, and that they decided to form a youth organization supportive of his presidency strictly because of that admiration. However, it was this early movement

¹⁰² "Idushie vmeste' poshli vroz'," http://www.gazeta.ru/2005/03/16/oa_151394.shtml. The t-shirts in question were signature apparel for Moving Together rallies. Emblazoned with a portrait of Putin, the accompanying catch phrase "Everything is on track!" in Russian is "Vse Putem!" a pun on Putin's name.

organization activity that led to Yakemenko's "discovery," and to a short stint at the Kremlin working in the Department of External Relations.

It is reasonable to suggest that his experience with Moving Together allowed him to initiate contacts that furthered his political and social goals, and quite possibly benefited him financially.¹⁰³ Regardless of this potential motive, his public statements suggest that he sees Nashi as a necessary organization for youths struggling to find their place in contemporary Russian society. In youth organizations, young people "simply find the answer to the question 'What is there that I can do?'" Faced with many choices, from Molodaia Gvardiia, the new youth wing of the United Russia Party, to the National Bolsheviks, Yakemenko believes youths will choose that organization which best satisfies their needs. In this marketplace of youth social and political organizations, there must be a choice that offers a chance "to become a first-class administrator," which is what Yakemenko contends Nashi provides.¹⁰⁴

To be sure, Yakemenko is not solely interested in satisfying such a need. He is contemptuous of non-Nashi youth organizations, and his rhetoric decrying the Orange Revolution indicates that he certainly sees Nashi as a guarantor against such a situation occurring in Russia. He believes youth are an "effective instrument" that politicians will use to achieve their political ends. Yakemenko, due to his experience with Moving Together, considers himself in a position to guide youth down what he believes is the

¹⁰³ *Moskovskii Komsomolets* intimated that Yakemenko concluded he could earn more money as an organizational leader than a Kremlin bureaucrat. See Corwin, "Russia: 'A Youth ...'" To be fair, *Moskovskii Komsomolets* has run numerous articles written by Mikhail Romanov, a frequent critic of Yakemenko and Nashi. Indeed, Romanov, along with Il'ia Yashin, was thrown out of Nashi's founding congress in February 2005. For more discussion on Romanov's coverage of Nashi, see pp. 75-76

¹⁰⁴ "Vasiliii Yakemenko: 'Molodezh' – eto effektivnyi instrument," <http://www.strana.ru/stories/05/08/25/3630/264232.html>

proper path, for their good, and for the good of Russia. “The politicization of youth doesn’t just happen,” he told *Strana.ru* in November 2005. Yakemenko hopes to intercept youths before they are swept up by supposedly improper political or social ideals.¹⁰⁵

As far as the mobilization of Nashi is concerned, Yakemenko has value as the head of the leadership cadre of federal commissars. In this role, Yakemenko is able to not only bring “organizing facilities”¹⁰⁶ to the nascent movement organization, but his ability to exploit institutional contacts and resources also is a distinct advantage for Nashi.¹⁰⁷ As Jenkins writes, “forging alliances with polity members” “creates a qualitative increment in the returns” for a social movement organization, and “shelters the movement against repression.”¹⁰⁸

C. Nashi and the State: A Confluence of Interest

Yakemenko’s role as leader of the organization, and the experiences and skills he brings to the leadership cadre are invaluable to Nashi in its efforts to mobilize youths and work towards its stated goals, and to provide them with an organization that guides them down the proper political path. However, it is in Yakemenko’s relationship to the Putin regime, the organization’s entrée into the polity, that his real value emerges. I would like now to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Jenkins, 530.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 530-531.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 531, 546. Some scholars suggest that a social movement organization is “unlikely to mobilize without the initiative of entrepreneurs” and that organizations that are especially dependent on such organizational resources tend to be those that wish to redefine “long-standing grievances in new terms.”

examine Nashi's relationship with the state, and examine the state's potential motives for embracing a movement organization such as Nashi.

Discussing Nashi's relationship to the state using the frameworks provided by contemporary movement scholarship is potentially problematic due to their tendency to focus on social movement organizations that are oppositional to the state. In the oppositional paradigm, a state's relationship with a social movement organization is combination of cooption and mitigation: states employ "tolerant tactics" to negotiate with movement leadership when possible, and options that are more repressive when mass action demonstrations potentially damage the state's interests. The relationship between states and social movement organizations then becomes, from the state's perspective, an exercise in damage control, with states seeking to bargain with opposition leaders when possible, and to crackdown on mass-actions with varying degrees of repression when not.¹⁰⁹

This duality represents one potential relationship. However, another is more apt when examining Nashi's relationship to the state. A state can lend support to a social movement or a social movement organization when their goals intersect, as they do in the case of Nashi and the regime of Vladimir Putin. Even if it is nothing more than moral support, a state's embrace of a social movement organization's goals can reap dividends for both the state, by encouraging supporters of the regime who share a similar goal, and the

¹⁰⁹ Marx, Gary T, and Douglas McAdam, *Collective Behavior and Social Movements: Process and Structure*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994, 99; Della Porta, Donatella, "Social Movements and the state: Thoughts on the policing of protest;" in McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 68. This relationship is true as well in considering the state's relationship to social movements in general. The presence of social movement organizations is not necessary for those conditions to occur, and the state can and does negotiate with non-organizational social movement actors.

organization, by providing morale to spur organizational and mobilizing efforts.¹¹⁰ The state then acts as a resource that aids the social movement organization. In this model, Nashi and sympathetic actors within the government represent what Tilly calls “polity,” which is a term used to describe the intersection and interactive relationship between an organization and the state, and coordination of action, even if loose, by these actors.¹¹¹ Nashi in this model acts as a “member of polity,” or “a contender which has routine, low-cost access to resources controlled by the government,” with which the government and the organization as a coalition coordinate their actions to achieve common ends.¹¹² Such a coalition is advantageous to a social movement organization, in that it allows for greater “returns from collective action,” and such “recognition pays off in collective access to jobs, exemptions from taxation, availability of privileged information, and so on.”¹¹³ Nashi’s relationship with the state allows access to both monetary and non-monetary resources, which aid its mobilization. Nashi’s links to the state and the relationships between the two that result in this polity coalition thus become an important target of analysis.

I would like to discuss briefly more concrete state-connected resources afforded to Nashi. Since Nashi’s inception, press reports in Russia and abroad have speculated widely about the level of Kremlin involvement in Nashi’s organization and finances, and Nashi’s at times vague responses have done nothing but fuel this speculation. For his part,

¹¹⁰ Marx and McAdam, 100.

¹¹¹ Tilly, Charles. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1978, 52.

¹¹² Ibid. A “contender” is “any group which, during some specified period, applies for pooled resources to influence the government.” Contenders are oppositional, in which case they are referred to as “challengers;” or “members of polity,” which have access to governmental resources. Such a relationship can be between a government and a movement, or between the government and a movement organization.

¹¹³ Ibid., 125.

Yakemenko cites an unspecified “group of Russian companies” as the source of Nashi’s finances, and added that he is “certain that the fatherland’s large companies will support us.”¹¹⁴ Concerning the financing of events such as Our Victory and Seliger-2005, Yakemenko said, “We ask [such businesses] to support the creation of a new political and managerial elite for the country. If they refuse, it’s considered unpatriotic.”¹¹⁵ Patriotism aside, federal commissar Mikhail Kulikov offers that businesspersons and “employees in the educational sphere” are sympathetic to Nashi’s program and work to provide financing accordingly.¹¹⁶ Kulikov calls suggestions that Nashi’s manifesto is the product of Kremlin insiders “complete nonsense.”¹¹⁷

Regardless of whether the Kremlin had a hand in Nashi’s finances and construction of ideology, it is clear that the Kremlin took an interest in the activities of Nashi in 2005, and in its potential as an organization. It is in the involvement of Vladislav Surkov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and Aide to the President, with the organization that the relationship between Nashi and the state becomes clear. Seen widely as a patron of Nashi, Surkov has been connected to Nashi since its inception, and prior to that worked with Moving Together. Surkov’s involvement, however difficult it is to ascertain completely, and his working relationship with Yakemenko, represents the most direct link between Nashi and the state.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Corwin, “Russia: ‘A Youth Movement Needs a Leader.’”

¹¹⁵ Evans, “How Putin youth...”

¹¹⁶ “NASH komissar Mikhail Kulikov: Pora passtavit’ vse tochki nad ‘i;”
<http://www.nashi.su/pravda/85865531>

¹¹⁷ Ibid. This suspicion is not unique to Nashi. Moving Together faced similar questions about the source of its program and ideology.

Surkov, 41, is a somewhat shadowy figure himself. Although his official biography on the Kremlin's website says he was born in the Lipetsk region, Russian newspapers reported in 2005 that in fact he was born near Groznii, the son of a Chechen father and a Russian mother, and that his birth name was Aslambek Dudaev.¹¹⁸ Surkov began a career in business as the Soviet Union fell apart, and rose to high positions in Rosprom and Alfa Bank in the mid-1990s. In 1999, he entered politics in the Presidential Executive Office, eventually becoming Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office and Aide to the President in early 2004. It was in his governmental capacities that in 2001 he first met Yakemenko, then the upstart leader of Moving Together.¹¹⁹

Surkov has many responsibilities at the Kremlin, but among the most important are his tasks concerning coordinating the president's contacts within the government, as well as with political parties, public and religious organizations and trade unions, and his direction of Putin's media contacts along with Aleksey Gromov, the presidential press attaché. He has been instrumental in recent years asserting executive power in Russian governance and pushing through Putin's economic reforms.

In 2005, Surkov took the helm in creating an ideology associated with patriotism and a strong executive. This push coincided with the events in Ukraine and the backlash against Putin's altering of the pension scheme in January 2005, which represented a significant dent in the armor of Putin's once unassailable public opinion ratings. Surkov's acceptance of the necessity of such an ideology was new to him. In 2002, he seemed to indicate that he did not believe Russia needed a national idea to replace Soviet ideology. When asked

¹¹⁸ There is no close relation between Surkov's paternal family and former Chechen president Dzhokhar Dudaev.

¹¹⁹ Corwin, "Russia: 'A Youth...';" "The President of Russia," <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/subj/22172.shtml>

about a proposed plan to fill the empty square once occupied by a statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, founder of the Cheka, the first manifestation of the Soviet secret police, outside the Lubyanka, the headquarters of the KGB in Soviet times and today still occupied by the FSB, Surkov said the square should remain empty. Deflecting suggestions from interest groups across the ideological spectrum about what should take the place of the statue toppled by anti-Soviet demonstrators in 1991, a debate that became somewhat of a cultural and ideological metaphor for post-Soviet Russian consciousness, Surkov demurred. “Let nothing be there,” he said. “We can survive.”¹²⁰

That seems to have changed. Surkov began to suggest in 2005 that he stands for the concept of “sovereign democracy,” a strong state that respects personal freedom.¹²¹ Moreover, he has decried the effectiveness of the bureaucracy, calling its members “archaic” and suggesting that new blood is needed to modernize the country and cast off the Soviet legacy.¹²² In October 2004, concurrent with the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, he told *Komsomol'skaia pravda* that a “fifth column” of liberals working in concert with Western governments sought to undermine Russian state power.¹²³ Surkov’s change in rhetoric and the similarities between it and Nashi’s manifesto are interesting to say the least. Given the involvement of youth in both the anti-Yanukovich Orange Revolution and the pensioner rallies in Russia, it seems Surkov concluded that co-option was the best route

¹²⁰ “A Talk with Putin’s Inside Man,”
http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/oct2002/nf20021021_0216.htm.

¹²¹ “Vladislav Surkov’s Secret Speech: How Russia Should Fight International Conspiracies;”
<http://www.mosnews.com/interview/2005/07/12/surkov.shtml>.

¹²² “Speigel Interview with Kremlin Boss Vladislav Surkov: ‘The West Doesn’t Have to Love Us;’”
<http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/spiegel/0,1518,361236,00.html>.

¹²³ “Analysis: The Burden Of Maintaining The State Has Been Laid On Our Shoulders;”
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/russia/2005/russia-050209-rferl01.htm>.

for the state to take in such matters. As he told *Business Week* in 2002 in reference to Moving Together, “the government needs the support of the streets, too.” This desire for the support of the streets, the role youth played in upheaval deemed dangerous by the Putin regime, and the recent interest of Russian youths towards politics adds up to a need for the Putin administration to offer an outlet for sympathetic youths to show their support. “We almost lost the youth in the nineties,” he told *Der Spiegel*. “[T]his is something we must address.”¹²⁴

Whether or not Surkov was directly involved in Nashi’s organizations and activities, it is clear he saw Nashi as part of the state’s addressing of youth political activity. Nashi, however, was not the only avenue by which Surkov hoped to influence Russian youth. As Nashi was officially announcing its formation, Surkov began work on another front, inviting members and representatives from seven popular Russian rock and roll bands, several of whom would later play concerts at Seliger-2005, to a discrete meeting at a hotel in Moscow in April 2005. None of the parties involved seemed very interested in detailing the topics of discussion. According to press reports, the role that popular rock acts played in entertaining the youths gathered in support of the Orange Revolution was discussed, with Surkov pleading with the musicians to decline to participate in a similar hypothetical event in Russia, and at “to remain neutral at least” in any such situation.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ “Speigel Interview...” In the same interview, Surkov did not deny a suggestion that he founded Nashi. In part of a question about Nashi’s activities, the newspaper began, “To provide for future party cadres, you founded the new youth organization Nashi,” an assertion Surkov did not dispute.

¹²⁵ O’Flynn, Kevin, “Putin tries to enlist rockers against revolution” *Sunday Telegraph*, 3 April 2005. The willingness of pop acts to perform for anti-regime demonstrators may have nothing to do with ideology. According to *The Moscow Times*, many Ukrainian bands expressed a willingness to play a hypothetical rally in support of Yanukovich had “the price been right.” See O’Flynn, Kevin, “Rock Stars Recruited to Fight Revolution” *The Moscow Times*, 31 March 2005.

This effort by Surkov to guide youth opinion coincided with a measure by the Russian government to support patriotic education around the country. The “The State Program for the Patriotic Education of Citizens” allocated 497.8 million rubles (\$17.5 million) to fund military-style training in schools; organize patriotic song writing contests; and encourage youths to participate in events memorializing military victories, all with the aim of making patriotism “the spiritual backbone” of the nation.¹²⁶ Although the bill was designed to encourage patriotism at all age levels, youth were a particular focus. A portion of the funding would go to the establishment of regional offices that organize events to encourage patriotism.¹²⁷

What this adds up to is an enthusiasm on the part of the state to encourage activities and organizations that have a patriotic component, and to co-opt those who might shape the opinions of youth. It is more than just conjecture then to suggest that, given the timing of the events, the rhetoric of government representatives at the Seliger-2005 camp, and the activity of Surkov in Nashi’s activities, that the state saw an interest in harnessing youth opinion to buttress itself against a potential Orange Revolution-type situation. In Nashi, it saw an organization sympathetic, by design or otherwise, to its aims and ideals, with the mobilizing capacity to turn out thousands of youths for mass-actions, youths who might otherwise rally to oppositional causes. As Vladimir Frolov of the Fund for Effective Politics says, Nashi’s “job is to preempt...if push comes to shove, Nashi’s job will be to

¹²⁶ “Gov’t gives \$17.5m for patriotic education.” http://top.rbc.ru/english/index/shtml?english/2005/07/19/19120014_bod.shtml; Rosenberg, Steve, “Russia Launches Patriotism Drive,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4698027.stm>.

¹²⁷ Torbakov, Igor, “Rebirth of Agitprop: Russia’s Spending on Patriotic Propaganda Will Triple,” http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407&issue_id=3411&article_id=2370052.

occupy every public square in front of every public building of importance,” so that “CNN would have a nice picture with the Kremlin in the background.”¹²⁸

The Kremlin has less dramatic interests in the mobilization capacities of Nashi – witness the organization’s participation in the Moscow City Council elections in December 2005, when 3,400 commissars worked in polling places conducting exit polls. Nashi’s participation, in which they worked under the auspices of United Russia and the Party of Social Justice, represented the organization’s first foray into electoral politics. Nashi announced that the experience was a success, and that it allows the organization to build towards mobilizing 100,000 commissars to actively work in similar capacities “to ensure free and democratic elections” in the parliamentary elections of 2007, and the presidential election in 2008.¹²⁹ The Kremlin undoubtedly would be interested in the active support of 100,000 presumably sympathetic youths integrated into the electoral system.

Apart from the resources the state gains from Nashi, the organization’s close proximity to the state reaps mobilizing fruit as well. Leaving aside the alleged financial and infrastructural resources that the Kremlin may be making available to the organization, Nashi’s ability to identify closely to a popular president allows it to conflate support for the president with support for Nashi. The photographs from the meeting between Nashi’s commissars and Putin at Zavidovo in July 2005 represent a powerful marketing tool at the organization’s disposal. The organization was able to show its constituents the close relationship it had with a politician popular amongst those constituents. Furthermore, the

¹²⁸ Lavel, Peter, “RP’s Weekly Experts’ Panel: “Nashi” – building civil society or a Kremlin jackboot?” <http://www.untimely-thoughts.com/index.html?art=1899>.

¹²⁹ “‘NASHI’: 100 tysiach nabliudatelei – k 2008 gody!” <http://www.nashi.su/work/104223010>

organization's adherents were able to identify with the prestige of their organization. High morale is a useful tool in any mobilization capacity.

I have shown in this chapter how Nashi navigated the "multi-action field" in which it was situated in 2005, and how it formed, developed, and acted according to opportunities and constraints allowed by its environment and other actors in this field. The increased prominence of Moving Together's competitors due to more favorable conditions of the socio-political field challenged Moving Together's mobilization. Nashi formed in response to this competition, and the changed environment, which was colored by the events in Ukraine and Russia in late 2004 and early 2005. I have shown how Nashi's relationship to the state affects its mobilization, and how Nashi and the state both had a stake in reacting to the changed environmental factors and the perceived threats from rival youth organizations.

I have shown that Nashi's close relationship to the state offered advantages to both the organization and the state itself. Thus, the relationship becomes symbiotic: the social movement organization moves itself into the orbit of a politician popular amongst its constituents in order to aid in the recruitment of them into adherents, and the state is able to count on the organization and its mobilization capacities in times of need, whether in a crisis situation or merely during routine electoral activity.

I wish now to turn to one other actor in this field and discuss how Nashi's relationship to it affected its mobilization, and how Nashi worked within these opportunities and constraints: the media. If a social movement organization wishes to expand its activity beyond its original pool of constituents, and to reach a wider audience to which it can make its claims, it will need the help of the media. A social movement organization certainly possesses the ability to shape its marketing campaign in order to reach its constituents in

efforts to convert them to adherents. However, at some point, its capacities become exhausted, and the role of the media becomes important. Moreover, as an actor itself in the socio-political field, the media is in a position to affect positively and negatively a social movement organization's mobilization. It is to this interaction that I now turn.

Chapter 3 – Nashi and the Media: Promoting the Good, Mitigating the Bad, Avoiding the Ugly

“You should attentively pay attention to criticism in the press,” Natal’ia Timakhova, Head of the Administration of Press-Service for the President of the Russian Federation told the audience that gathered at the National Institute for Upper School Administration in November 2005 to hear a lecture titled “The Position of Public Action in the System of Mass Information.” “Your task,” she advised attendees, among them one hundred and fifty Nashi commissars, “is to communicate in an open and honest dialogue,” with journalists “not only to defend your point of view, but also...to transmit [that point of view] to the people.”¹³⁰ Following the public portion of the lecture, the commissars met privately with Timakhova to conduct a workshop on interacting with the press effectively. Nashi’s own coverage of the event mused that “in the near future,” Nashi commissars will begin training for work in the presidential press-service.¹³¹ Nashi’s enthusiasm for the workings of the press system, and the way that public action is covered by the media, is not isolated to this single event. To be sure, Nashi is keenly aware of the way that the media, as both an actor and an observer within the socio-political field, can influence, and be influenced by, others negotiating within the opportunities and constraints that affect political and social

¹³⁰ “NASHI komissary proidut strazhirovku v press-sluzhbe Prezidenta RF,” <http://www.nashi.su/news/103086310>.

¹³¹ Ibid.

mobilization. I will discuss in this chapter how Nashi negotiated with the press in 2005, and how its interactions with the media aided its mobilization and its work to achieve its stated goals, and how the organization recognized the effect negative press coverage could have on its activities. Nashi has since its inception constructed a media campaign designed to maximize positive coverage of its events, while minimizing negative portrayals, all the while demonstrating an acute understanding of the strengths and weakness, promises and pitfalls of the way the media covers the action of a social movement organization. To a certain extent, press coverage is outside the control of an organization. Therefore, a social movement organization's media strategy is successful when it advances the organization's agenda and reaches its constituents, the bystander public and adherents, while mitigating the effects of negative press coverage, which can aid its opponents, and alienate those same groups. This internal and external use of the media for dissemination of information about its goals and activities, and its own image construction, is a key component of a social movement organization's ability to mobilize.¹³²

I will detail Nashi's media strategy while arguing that the attention the organization pays to the press is one of the components of its overall mobilization strategy. However, before I discuss the specifics of Nashi's interaction with the media, I need to first sketch out the ways that the press behaves as an actor in, and chronicler of, the socio-political field.

A social movement organization's relationship with the media has two dimensions: the orientation of its actions and events to the characteristics of media coverage; and the attention a social movement organization pays to the ways it can influence and control

¹³² Jenkins, 546; Klandermans, Bert and Sjoerd Goslinga, "Media discourse, movement publicity, and the generation of collective action frames: Theoretical and empirical exercises in meaning construction," in McAdam et al. *Comparative...*; 319.

media coverage, while minimizing the negative effects of unfavorable treatment that are outside of its control. One is based upon a passive, observing role played by the media, and the other recognizes that the media is at times an actor itself in the socio-political field, in addition to mere chronicler.

How do social movement organizations orient themselves towards the media? The first way is by recognizing the limitations and characteristics of its coverage. By its very nature, the media is event-oriented. That is to say, coverage emphasizes action at the expense of context.¹³³ With this in mind, social movement organizations must design their media strategies around events that attract media coverage, and simultaneously create their own context through actions and images. One way the organization accomplishes this is by embedding its events with as much symbolism as possible, allowing the organization to transmit messages through images, symbols and brief slogans, thus providing a degree of context not conveyed by the media treatment. This is often at the core of a socio-political actor's broadcast media strategy, as broadcast media is the most context-deficient, and is largely limited to short, action-oriented segments.

While creating a media strategy that maximizes coverage and creates context can aid a social movement organization in its mobilization and in advancing its claims, there are limits with which the organization must contend. Media coverage can also have a negative effect on a social movement organization, and the organization must include strategies for mitigating these effects in its overall media campaign. Unfavorable editorial content or a negative slant in the portrayal of the organization in print and broadcast media can damage

¹³³ Jenkins, 546.

the image of a social movement organization.¹³⁴ Moreover, the media can provide “a biased and ridiculed picture of the movement, [obstruct] mobilization, and [influence] conflicts within the movement.”¹³⁵

With these pitfalls in mind, a social movement organization’s strategy vis-à-vis event-oriented media coverage is to plan and initiate events that will be interesting enough to attract coverage, without making those events so sensational as to negatively affect public and media opinion. If the events seem disruptive or illegitimate, public support for the organization may wane, as happened to Moving Together.¹³⁶ The organization is thus constrained between the poles of media interest and potential public disaffection. As Jenkins writes, a movement organization “must therefore walk the fine line between outlandishness (which alienates third parties but secures coverage) and conventionality (which may be persuasive but is ignored by the media).”¹³⁷

Another pillar of a social movement organization’s media strategy is its orientation towards media outlets that are more discourse-based and perhaps less action-oriented. This tends to be an orientation towards the print media, which, while certainly attracted to “newsworthy” events, can at times be involved in public discourse as much as it is in reporting the news. Not only do they have editorial pages that take sides in political contests, but also print media outlets can base their story selection on issues their editorial boards or ownership groups wish to promote or limit.

¹³⁴ Marx and McAdam, 106.

¹³⁵ Klandermans and Goslinga , 319.

¹³⁶ Marx and McAdam, 106; I discuss Moving Together’s unfavorable press treatment and the organization’s decline on pp. 72-73.

¹³⁷ Jenkins, 546.

Print media in Russia is as much an actor in the socio-political field as it is a chronicler of that field. The media landscape is often an arena in which political actors battle with one another, at times reducing a publication to little more than a mouthpiece for a political perspective. This tendency has to do with the economic difficulties faced by Russian press outlets in the mid- to late-1990s, as well as the traditions of the press in Russia and the Soviet Union, where governmental agencies, trade unions and the Communist Party itself sponsored and controlled newspapers. Even today, it is important to remember that “independent” publications have a political bias to them. In Russia, an independent newspaper’s muckraking has little to do with the standards of the public good and seeks primarily “to influence the political elite” and advance the fortunes of its patrons.¹³⁸ While at times these efforts coincide with the desires of mass opinion, that role is secondary. It is common for political actors to purchase favorable coverage of events or activities, and the editorial tone of a newspaper is often designed to echo the perspective of a political or economic patron.

The media in this function represents a conduit through which socio-political actors work to affect and influence public discourse.¹³⁹ This discourse is a way the public participates in discussions of political and social issues and is as much a part of political society as more electoral avenues, such as voting or party participation, or socio-political avenues, such as involvement with a social movement organization. This discourse represents another arena in which social movement organizations must interact with the actors I have cited throughout this thesis: constituents, adherents, the bystander public and

¹³⁸ Zassoursky, Ivan, 83.

¹³⁹ Klandermans and Goslina, 319.

opponents. A social movement organization's relationship with the media is proactive and strategic, as it attempts to use the media as a conduit for disseminating its own views, at the same time recognizing that it must also contend with the efforts of opponents and other actors negotiating similarly with the media. A social movement organization hopes that media coverage of its activities will rally constituents, the bystander public, and political and social elites to the efficacy of its claims, and away from the countering claims of its opponents.¹⁴⁰

A. Nashi's Media Strategy

From the outset, Nashi's relationships and interactions with the media suggest that the organization's leadership understands the role that press coverage can play in achieving its goals and positively affecting its mobilization capabilities. The organization also seems to understand the varying strategies a social movement organization must employ to account for the divergent event and discourse orientations of different media agents. Nashi's first act was to use the media for self-identification and publicity. Yakemenko announced the organization's birth in a Moving Together press release issued on 1 March 2005, in which he briefly outlined the reasons he was leaving Moving Together in order to lead Nashi. He also used the opportunity to quickly define Nashi's attributes and cast the new organization's opponents in a negative light. This announcement represented the first shot in a salvo of media events and releases Nashi organized in the first two months of its existence. The initial media campaign included interviews with national commissars, press

¹⁴⁰ Marx and McAdam, *Collective Behavior and Social Movements*, 105-106.

releases, publications and profiles, culminating with its first large scale events in spring and summer 2005, Our Victory and Seliger-2005, both of which were covered heavily by the Russian (as well as international) press.

Nashi proved to be savvy in using media to advance its goals of establishing its own identity and fostering an atmosphere conducive to its mobilization goals. A good example of this practice was the Our Victory event in May 2005. This event was large and grandiose and was guaranteed significant press coverage. Cognizant of this, Nashi made sure to saturate the event with a heavy degree of symbolism that would immediately be recognizable to the bystander public and its constituents. I wrote in chapter two that it was no accident that the first major event Nashi staged emphasized the organization's supposed connection to the generation of the Great Patriotic War. Not only was this connection crucial to the identity formation of the organization amongst its adherents, but it also served the same purpose towards the bystander public and its non-adherent constituents as well. Given that this event more than likely would be these actors' first exposure to the organization, and that this exposure would come via media outlets, Nashi had to be sure that the message it wanted to convey, and the emotional linkage it sought to make between the generations, was embedded in the symbolically rich pageantry in context-deficient media coverage. The flags resembling Tsarist-era naval banners, the images of Nashi commissars parading with veterans, and other elements of the event, in addition to serving the identity formation, were part of a media strategy that symbolically introduced the organization.

In the weeks surrounding the event, Nashi arranged for interviews with press outlets that sought further to drive home its primary themes in an effort to propagate itself.

Yakemenko and other national commissars granted interviews with print and television news sources at both the national and local level. Among those outlets targeted by Nashi were *Komsoml'skaia pravda*, a national tabloid known for covering topics of interest to youths. Boris Yakemenko's "The Path for Russia" was published in this paper in April 2005. Additionally, Vasili Yakemenko and national commissar Natal'ia Lebedeva participated in a press conference at the newspaper's headquarters. *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in particular has covered Nashi in a favorable manner. In addition to the press conferences and interviews noted above, the newspaper has published sympathetic accounts of Nashi's founding conference and Seliger-2005. The tone of these articles is generally favorable and positive, detailing aspects of Nashi's program and activities, sometimes in language taken directly from Nashi's publications.

The choice of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* as the conduit for this media campaign was no accident, and hints at Nashi's strategy for navigating the component of a movement organization's media strategy that recognizes the media's role in public discourse. Beyond the press' role as a chronicler of a social movement organization's activities is the recognition that the media is an actor itself in the socio-political field. Some press outlets will be sympathetic to an organization, and some will ally themselves with an organization's opponents. In *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, Nashi has an ally in this field that allows Nashi to control the message it wishes to convey.

Komsomol'skaia pravda, originally the press organ of the Komosomol youth organization, became an independent media outlet following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It advocated in its pages the democratic and economic reforms championed by the Yeltsin regime. However, the paper balanced this support with its often-scathing criticism

of Yeltsin's conduct of the first war in Chechnya. Much of this began to change in the mid- to late-1990s, when the economic conglomerate OneksimBank purchased the newspaper in 1997. After this acquisition, the newspaper's critical coverage of the war in Chechnya waned, and the paper drifted towards a more tabloid-style format, its front pages filled with sensationalism.¹⁴¹ OneksimBank's ownership of the newspaper seems to have softened the critical tone of its coverage, and reoriented its perspective towards a more conciliatory view of power, likely due to the desire of OneksimBank to curry favor with the Kremlin. While it is difficult to ascertain with certainty what the newspaper's relationship with Nashi is, it is reasonable to assume that this desire on the part of the publication to be non-confrontational with the political elite in Russia leads to its favorable coverage of organizations and events that are pro-regime.

Nashi compiles favorable press coverage of its events, grandiose and pedestrian, in a page on its web site called "NASHI in the System of Mass Information" ("*NASHI v SMI*"). Perhaps the most frequently updated page on its site, it serves several purposes. The coverage the organization chooses stresses the events the organization carries out that it considers most important. It allows the organization to disseminate information about itself in a positive light. The site presents curious parties visiting the site with more than forty pages of positive press coverage focusing on national and local initiatives. Moreover, the events Nashi chooses to include focus on the themes in which the organization places great import: whether it is images of Nashi marching with veterans, donating blood or other local and national initiatives the organization carries out.

Adherents visiting the site are able to see what their comrades throughout Russia are doing, down to the local level. Not only can this foster morale amongst its adherents by

¹⁴¹ Zassoursky, Ivan. *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharp, 2004, 29-30.

stressing the breadth of action Nashi carries out throughout the country, it also can foster cross-chapter participation in each other's events, such as when several *storonniki*, or local-level activists, from Voronezh read about a Nashi-sponsored picket against the governor of Perm' and promptly set out to participate in the event.¹⁴²

Nashi does not care for all press coverage however. Keen to mitigate the potentially damaging effect negative media coverage can have on a social movement organization, Nashi must contend with negative coverage in unsympathetic news outlets. The reaction of the organization to unfavorable coverage is indicative of the sensitivity the group has towards its image in the media. Among media sources that are unsympathetic to Nashi is *Moskovskii komsomolets*, a tabloid that is similar in scope and demographic to *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, but which has a much wider circulation.¹⁴³ *Moskovskii komsomolets* was an independent and democratic publication in the early post-Soviet years that generally supported the Yeltsin regime, though with some caveats. In the mid-1990s, it too changed the course and tone of its coverage, but in the opposite manner as *Komsomol'skaia pravda*.¹⁴⁴ *Moskovskii komsomolets* criticized the Yeltsin administration harshly for its conduct of the war in Chechnya, and the oppositional tone has stayed with it to this day. It managed to avoid being purchased during the media consolidation frenzy of the late 1990s and has positioned itself as the most widely read newspaper in Moscow, with

¹⁴² O'Flynn, Kevin, "Wanted: Along with their political naivety, the Nashites all had a fresh, innocent look about them, as if they were on a school camping trip;" *Moscow Times*, 10 February 2006.

¹⁴³ Vartanova, Elena; "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged," in Nordenstreng, Kaarle, Elena Vartanova, and Yessen Zasoursky (eds.). *Russian Media Challenges*. Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2002, 34.

¹⁴⁴ Zassoursky, 58; 228.

a daily-circulation above one million per day.¹⁴⁵ The newspaper recently sought to expand its influence outside of Moscow by publishing regional editions in cities throughout the Russian Federation. Due to its popularity, it has become something of a political force in the Russian capital, and, as Zassoursky claims, favorable or unfavorable coverage within its pages can “decide the fate of almost any electoral campaign in the city of Moscow.”¹⁴⁶ With the money the newspaper is investing in its regional branches, it is clear that the newspaper hopes to expand that influence outside of the Russian capital.

One particular writer for *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, Mikhail Romanov, is especially skeptical of Nashi, regularly referring to its members as “*Nashisti*,” a sobriquet that sounds as similar to “fascist” in Russian as it does in English. Romanov’s depictions of the organization in the numerous articles he wrote about the group in 2005 ranged from the mocking to inflammatory. In an article titled “Putin Played a Dirty Trick on Nashi,” Romanov paints the organization as nothing more than naïve dupes that Putin is merely using for political support, all the while embarrassed by their slavish devotion.¹⁴⁷ In a more serious tone, Romanov also publicized several incidents in which political activists across the political spectrum, from liberal chess champion Garry Kasparov to members of several youth communist organizations, reported being attacked by unknown assailants, whom they accused of being Nashi thugs.¹⁴⁸ In the former, the attackers struck Kasparov over the head with a chessboard. In the latter, Romanov reported that several young men wearing t-shirts emblazoned with the Nashi logo attacked the leftist youths as they left a meeting in

¹⁴⁵ Zassoursky, 228.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 228.

¹⁴⁷ Romanov, Mikhail, “Putin Polozhil ‘NASHIM’ Svin’iu,” *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 28 July 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Romanov, Mikhail, “Kasparova Odolela Doska,” *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 18 April 2005; Romanov, Mikhail, “Brednoe Poboishche,” *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 31 August 2005.

north Moscow. Romanov himself was allegedly the victim of Nashi violence, having been ejected from Nashi's founding congress in late February 2005 and tossed into a snowdrift by several members of the organization, a charge Yakemenko has not completely denied.

Romanov is not the only journalist from *Moskovskii komsomolets* to cover Nashi, but the frequency of his reports, their often-critical tone, and his association¹⁴⁹ with Youth Yabloko leader Il'ia Yashin clearly touches a nerve within Nashi. As such, Nashi targeted *Moskovskii komsomolets* for retribution for what it calls unfair coverage. In late 2005, Nashi filed a suit against the newspaper, claiming that a Romanov-penned article the newspaper ran on 25 November 2005 was biased and slanderous. Nashi argues that the article, which detailed an alleged secret plan to attack "ultra-rightists" on 27 November in Moscow, was published despite Yakemenko's denials, and that the newspaper allies itself with anti-Nashi organizations such as the National Bolsheviks and Youth Yabloko.¹⁵⁰

The organization's somewhat clumsy handling of negative press coverage indicates the sensitivity Nashi has towards its image in the media. In addition to suing *Moskovskii komsomolets*, Nashi aggressively countered an interview Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov gave to *Nezavisimaia gazeta* in which Mironov strongly criticized the organization. Mironov is generally supportive of Putin, though he did run against him in the 2004 presidential election. His criticism of Nashi in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* was one of several attacks on Nashi made by Mironov himself and his own Party of Life in 2005, most of which intimated that Nashi's activities were antithetical to a healthy political system and resembled those of Hitler Youth or the Black Hundreds, the reactionary organization active

¹⁴⁹ Yashin and Romanov on at least one occasion clandestinely snuck into Nashi meetings together.

¹⁵⁰ "'NASHI' podali v sud na 'Moskovskii Komsomolets;'" <http://www.nashi.su/smi/103593675>; Romanov, Mikhail, "Dzhoker, Marsh pod kover!" *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, 25 November 2005.

in Russia after the 1905 Revolution. His early criticism of Nashi in March 2005 may have been an attempt to stem Nashi's growth before it had firmly established itself.

Yakemenko responded to the interview by calling the newspaper biased against Nashi, complaining it is an ill-informed, sensational and careless member of "the liberal press." Publishing Mironov's comments in the newspaper, Yakemenko continued, is typical of the "Boris Berezovskii-owned" *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, a reference to the exiled oligarch who has publicly clashed with the Putin regime.¹⁵¹ Berezovskii's media group served as a particularly vocal political voice in the late 1990s, offering widespread favorable media coverage of Yeltsin's economic and political programs. Initially a supporter of Putin, Berezovskii's increasingly vocal criticism of the second war in Chechnya and his political clout sparked a clash with Putin, whose administration began investigating Berezovskii's widespread business holdings, leading to his eventual exile. Nashi's sensitivity to negative coverage suggests the organization is aware of the power that press coverage, positive and negative, can have in influencing constituents and the bystander public. Nashi spends much energy cultivating a sympathetic portrayal while aiming to mitigate negative coverage, often by attacking the media outlet as biased or allied with anti-Nashi activists of organizations.

Perhaps the strongest case that can be made for the importance that Nashi gives to press image is that the organization seems determined not to repeat the mistakes of Moving Together in the media battle, much as it attempts to correct some of the deficiencies that organization had in relation to ideology. Moving Together's at times outrageous activities garnered a fair amount of press coverage, which initially was impressed with the ability of

¹⁵¹ "Zaiavlenie: V. Yakemenko Yakemenko v otvet na interv'iu S. Mironova v "Nezavisimoi gazette;" <http://www.nashi.su/pravda/83917409>.

the organization to mobilize large numbers of participants in its activities and sought to understand the motivations of the organization and its alleged links to the Putin administration. However, as the organization's activities got more outrageous, the press became more skeptical. While stunts like filling a replica toilet bowl with copies of "pornographic" contemporary novels certainly fit the paradigm of what a media outlet tends to cover, the content of such activities potentially leads to alienation of third parties, audiences that a social movement organization hopes to influence. Nashi seems to distance itself from its predecessor in this respect. The heavy emphasis in the organization's activities and events on images and symbols with positive connotations in Russian society, such as patriotism and the generation of the Great Patriotic War indicate that the organization's leaders learned from Moving Together's mistakes. While the organization cannot avoid negative coverage completely, it can adopt a pro-active media policy designed to stress its strengths while minimizing its weaknesses.

In sum, a social movement organization such as Nashi must negotiate with the media within the wider socio-political field, and the strategies Nashi and similar organizations use to interact with the media are components of its overall mobilization apparatus. Cognizant of the opportunities and pitfalls presented by media coverage, a social movement organization can design a media campaign that advances the perceptions and stresses the themes the organization wishes to propagate and allows the organization to seek a broader audience to whom it can emphasize those perceptions and themes. It is also an avenue through which the organization interacts with its constituents, adherents and the bystander public in a competition for public opinion with its opponents, who are likewise waging a battle for perception in the press. It is in the media that we find both the identity formation

that I outlined in chapter one, and the interaction within the socio-political field that I discussed in chapter two. While Nashi's media campaign has its weaknesses – the somewhat clumsy reaction to negative press outlets – overall it is an important component of its overall mobilization strategy, and a key element of its ability to advance its claims.

Conclusion

I have shown in this thesis how Nashi orients itself within the socio-political field, how it constructed an ideology and identity to position itself within that field, and how its interactions within the field aid its ability to mobilize. The corollary is that failure to navigate this field and appreciate the opportunities and constraints of that field can lead to a loss of prestige and mobilization capability among Russian youth movement organizations. My goal was to discuss the saliency of certain tactics and relationships for youth organizations in contemporary Russia.

In Nashi's case, the success of its mobilization was, and to an extent still is, due to several factors. The first is the organization's ability to form a collective identity, which allows its adherents to define not only themselves and their own actions positively, but negatively identify their supposed opponents. I argue that Nashi's ability to create a salient ideology was one way that the organization managed to correct a weakness in Moving Together's mobilization strategy. An important component of this identity was the conflation of its members' generation with that of their grandparents, the generation that defeated the Germans in World War II. Nashi uses the identities created with documents like its manifesto to propagate these claims, and the actions the group undertakes stress the themes embedded in their collective identity. This identity formation and its presence in its activities is a means for the organization not only to self-identify, but also to spread its

desired image among its constituents and the bystander public, a process which aids in its mobilization.

The second key to Nashi's success is the organization's ability to orient itself within a wider field of opportunities and constraints and its capacity to forge relationships within that field. These relationships reap dividends for a social movement organization by providing it with resources for mobilization. Also, the socio-political environment is important in the efficacy of an organization such as Nashi. All of these variables contribute to the ability of social movement organizations like Nashi to mobilize effectively within the socio-political field. Nashi's activities are generally consistent with the frameworks offered by scholarship on social movement organizations and collective action. I used these frameworks to examine Nashi's activities within the socio-political field to gauge the strengths and weakness of its mobilization. I noted the decline of Moving Together due to its inability to navigate successfully within this field and discussed Nashi's attempts to avoid the mistakes made by Moving Together. A key element of Nashi's ability to mobilize in 2005 within this field is the organization's relationship to the administration of Vladimir Putin. In Nashi, the administration saw a vehicle through which it could cultivate a patriotic ideology amongst the young generation, perhaps in an attempt to foster sympathy among youth when so much attention had been given to anti-regime youth actions in Ukraine, Serbia and Georgia. The links between Vasili Yakemenko and Vladislav Surkov represent the most direct connection between the Nashi and the state, and it is via this relationship, I argued, that Nashi achieved a deal of prestige that allowed it to mobilize youths in its activities.

The third component of Nashi's mobilization strategy is the organization's interactions with the press. The press is conduit through which a social movement organization can spread its message and reach its constituents and the bystander public and an avenue for boosting the morale of its adherents. A social movement organization plans and executes its media campaign in order to spread its message and identity. Due to certain characteristics of various media outlets, a social movement organization must have a diverse strategy for interacting with the media. Due to broadcast media's tendency to cover action-oriented events that lack context and discussion, Nashi must design events that will attract media attention and embed within those events the images and symbols its wishes to convey. This is a way that the organization deploys the identities that I discussed in chapter one. However, a social movement organization must recognize the dangers inherent in coverage-worthy events, and realize that if an event comes across as outrageous or illegitimate, then coverage can have a negative effect on an organization's mobilization. Nashi again seeks to make up for the mistakes Moving Together made with several of its activities, which garnered press attention but also alienated the populations the organization hoped to influence.

A social movement organization also must recognize that the media, especially in Russia, is an actor within the socio-political field, and due to this characteristic, it must initiate a media-strategy that fosters relationships with sympathetic press outlets, while mitigating the effects of skeptical or even hostile publications. I showed how Nashi uses a newspaper with an interest in a positive relationship to allies of the Kremlin, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, to disseminate the messages it wishes to its constituents, adherents, and the bystander public. Moreover, the organization must contend with

unsympathetic actors who are using the media to define Nashi negatively. *Moskovskii komsomolets*, an independent publication, and one reporter in particular, Mikhail Romanov, published several articles in 2005 that paint Nashi in a negative light, and Nashi's reaction - suing the newspaper -- demonstrates the importance Nashi, like any social movement organization, places on media coverage. Nashi's especially aggressive response indicates that the organization is cognizant of its image in the press, and aware that part of Moving Together's downfall was unfavorable coverage of its events and activities.

A recurring theme throughout this thesis has been Nashi's attempts to correct the supposed deficiencies of Moving Together, an organization that shared many of the same ideological orientations as Nashi, not to mention many of its leaders, in particular Vasili Yakemenko. Moving Together achieved notable mobilization success between 2000 and 2003 but faded from importance due to its lack of salient ideology, a fall from grace within the Putin Administration due to its outlandishness, and the effects unfavorable press coverage had on the organization. What all of this points to is the dynamic nature of the field of opportunities and constraints, that is, a social movement organization must constantly negotiate within that field, and adjust its collective action accordingly if it hopes to achieve sustained momentum. What worked for Moving Together in 2001 was ineffective in 2004, and as such the organization declined in importance. What I wish to stress is that the success of Nashi's mobilization strategy was due to the characteristics of the field that were present in late 2004 and early 2005, as well as the influence of Moving Together's decline, which revealed the mobilization liabilities of that organization. Nashi was in a position to design its identity, ideology, programs and structure its relationships based in part on what worked and did not work for Moving Together.

These characteristics included support and patronage from the Putin Administration, the resonance that notions like patriotism had among Russian youth, and the presence of sympathetic media outlets, not to mention the then recent political fallout due to the Orange Revolution and the aftermath of the pension scheme debacle. Due to Nashi's negotiations within that field and the favorability of the environment, the organization was able to hold mass-action events, like Our Victory, as well as create strong and active local chapters that worked to achieve its stated goals at the local level. So strong did the organization appear to be that President Putin himself endorsed Nashi, meeting with several commissars just days after the closing of the Seliger-2005 camp, and telling them that they represented the future leadership of the country.

There are signs that the success of Nashi's strategy may be coming to an end, and these developments again underscore the dynamic nature of the socio-political field and the necessity of an organization to constantly negotiate within the field of opportunities and constraints, if its hopes to sustain its ability to mobilize large numbers of participants to achieve its goals. Two events in March 2006 suggest that Nashi's negotiations within this field may be threatened. The first was the cancellation of a mass action carnival against racism and xenophobia the organization planned to hold in Moscow on 26 March 2006. According to Nashi, the postponement of the event until autumn 2006 was due to the inability of the organization to transport participants to Moscow from the regions and due to security concerns.¹⁵² For an organization that prided itself on its ability to mobilize youths from more than thirty regions to the Our Victory parade in May 2005, just months after its formation, this is a blow. According to *Kommersant*, the cancellation is due not to

¹⁵² Savina, Ekaterina, "Nashi Stopped from Moving," *Kommersant*, 14 March 2006.

transportation and security problems but because of a lack of support within the Putin Administration for the event, which views Nashi's attacks on "fascism" to be "overplayed."¹⁵³ Losing Kremlin support would be a hindrance to Nashi's organizational capacities. I have argued that the loss of Kremlin backing was a key component of Moving Together's weakened momentum. If the Kremlin has indeed turned its back on Nashi, it could indicate that the Putin Administration no longer regards a large-scale, "anti-fascist" youth organization to be a necessary component of its political base. Having adjusted many of the measures taken to alter the pension scheme in January 2005, and with memories of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine fading, the Kremlin may not view an organization such as Nashi as necessary. Alternatively, perhaps the Kremlin wishes to withhold a measure of support to keep Nashi compliant and under its control. If, as *Kommersant* reported, the Kremlin considers Nashi's focus on "fascism" to be "overplayed," by turning attention towards alternative youth organizations, the Kremlin may be able to reign in some of Nashi's supposed excesses that, if unchecked, could lead to public alienation of Nashi, much as happened to Moving Together, or it might lead to too much independent support, leaving the Kremlin with less control over the organization. Sensing a lack of support from the Kremlin, Nashi may tone down some of its rhetoric in an effort to curry favor with its patrons.

Another recent development indicates that Nashi's position as the most prominent socio-political youth organization is threatened. On 17 March 2006 in Vladivostok, the first congress of Nasha Strana ("Our Country") convened, with representatives of thirteen regions of Russia's Far East in attendance. According to *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, the organization is the creation of the administration of Primorskii Krai and is financed by the

¹⁵³ Ibid.

Far East's fishing industry. The governor of Primorskiĭ Krai, Ser'gei Dar'kin, formerly was the president of the firm "Roliz," and his contacts with his former colleagues in the industry reportedly secured financial support for the new organization. In recent years, Dar'kin has increasingly allied himself with Vladimir Putin, who appointed him governor of the krai in 2005.¹⁵⁴

Nasha Strana issued an open invitation to the Kremlin administration to be present at the conference, and among those who attended were Nikita Ivanov, an official from the Putin Administration who in the past was linked to Nashi.¹⁵⁵ Also attending was Aleksei Chadaev, author of the book *Putin: His Ideology*, which, according to *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, garnered the praise of Vladislav Surkov. The organization also invited representatives of Molodaia Gvardiia, the recently reformed youth wing of the United Russia Party. Nasha Strana conspicuously did not invite representatives from Nashi, claiming that the expense of the tickets was prohibitive, an excuse that, given the attendance of representatives from the administration and Molodaia Gvardiia and the groups boasting of finances from numerous representatives in the fishing industry, seems dubious.

Nashi, for its part, stresses that there is no rivalry between the organizations. The group's press secretary, Robert Shlegel' told *Nezavisimaia gazeta* that the organization is "pleasantly surprised that a movement exists that agrees with us," and that there is no need for competition because Nashi and Nasha Strana "are working in different regions."¹⁵⁶ From an organization that proclaims to be the "All Russian" youth organizations, and has

¹⁵⁴ Melikova, Natal'ia, "Plodites' i Pazmnozhaites'. Molodezhnym organizatsiiam ustroili tarakan' i bega;" *Nezavisimaia gazeta*. 14 March 2006.

¹⁵⁵ Corwin, Julie A. "Russia: Are Soccer Hooligans Being Used By Kremlin?" <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/09/e107c9f7-58e0-48e9-9112-31a1b90c0dab.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Melikova.

in the past repeatedly stressed the importance of working across the breadth of Russia, this is a striking admission. Nashi issued announcements on its website detailing its desire to work in the future with *Nasha Strana*, as well as another recently formed organization *Novie Liudi* (“New People”), whose headquarters are in Volgograd. Moreover, Nashi denied claims made in *Gazeta.ru* that Yakemenko was involved in a dispute with “curators from the Administration of the President” and was about to resign from Nashi.¹⁵⁷

Nashi’s denial of a rumored schism between Yakemenko and “curators” in the Kremlin raises the question of the importance that leadership plays in youth social movement organizations in contemporary Russia. I wrote in chapter two about the resources Nashi possessed due to Yakemenko’s history with *Moving Together* and his relationship to Vladislav Surkov. These experiences and connections proved to be an asset to Nashi’s mobilization in 2005. The frameworks of social movement organizations and collective action I employed in this thesis stress leadership’s importance in the efficacy of an organization’s mobilization but classify it as one of many resources. It might be the key component when speaking of such organizations in Russia, at least, pro-regime organizations. Certainly, Nashi could not be classified as a grass roots, bottom-up organization; its leadership, and that leadership’s links to the Kremlin, was always at the forefront. Threats to the prominence of that leadership then could severely handicap Nashi’s future mobilization to the extent that a strong collective identity and press strategy, other resources Nashi utilized for mobilization, may not matter. If Yakemenko’s star has indeed fallen, it might then lead to Nashi’s demise or at least a decline in its ability to mobilize.

¹⁵⁷ “Zaiavlenie komisarra Dvizheniia ‘NASHI’ Alekseia Mitriushina po povodu stat’i Il’I Barabanova, rameshchennoi na saite ‘Gazeta.Ru;” <http://www.nashi.su/news/112582007>.

These developments represent challenges to Nashi's strategy to mobilize youths towards its goals and indicate the changing socio-political field in which social movement organizations reside. The sudden prominence of alternative youth organizations that seem to have the support of the Putin Administration suggests that the administration no longer sees Nashi as an appropriate vehicle through which it can nurture youth political support, or instead sees it as one of several organizations worth supporting for various reasons. Moreover, given that Molodaia Gvardiia, the youth wing of the United Russia Party, attended the founding congress of Nasha Strana and Nashi did not may indicate a shift in the perceived role that pro-government youth social movement organizations play from the perspective of the political elite. It may be that the threat from a potential Orange Revolution-type event is no longer acute, and the administration is looking to support a youth organization that can better integrate young people into party politics, as opposed to simply mobilize them to stave off any sort of anti-regime mass actions. Molodaia Gvardiia in the first months of its existence offered youths similar rhetoric and tactics as Nashi but its orientation to an established political party is a characteristic that Nashi cannot boast. It is also possible that the Kremlin's strategy is to nurture both organizations. This strategy allows the Kremlin to cultivate a party-based youth organization that could be mobilized for political support in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2007 and 2008, while garnering the support of a more mass-action based group like Nashi in the event of an Orange Revolution-type situation.

However, it is still too early to judge whether Nashi has lost the momentum it possessed in 2005. Nashi may alter its strategies to take advantage of new conditions within the field of opportunities and constraints. If Molodaia Gvardiia's popularity grows, Nashi may

deduce that its best chance for survival would be to become a party organization. The question of whether or not to link itself with electoral politics has always been near the surface, given the organization's work under the auspices of United Russia conducting exit polls in the 2005 city council elections in Moscow and some of the workshops the group conducted at Seliger-2005. It is also possible that Nashi will not modify its activities, after which it could indeed follow Moving Together into irrelevance. Regardless of the fate of Nashi, youths represent an important constituency in contemporary Russian politics, and the Kremlin seems intent on achieving their support with its strategies centered on fostering patriotic sentiment, what Fish referred to as Putin's "practical ideology," or the lauding of concrete institutions "to build an inclusive sense of national belonging."¹⁵⁸

This interest and involvement on the Kremlin's part towards youth and youth organizations may be the most interesting facet in the consideration of socio-political youth movement organizations in Russia under Putin. I used the frameworks provided by scholarship on social movement organizations and collective action in order to examine Nashi in contemporary Russia, and for the most part, these frameworks proved to be useful for analysis. However, where Nashi differs from many of the organizations looked at in this field of study is that it is not a grass roots, bottom-up organization. Instead, it is an entity constructed by elite actors not involved in protests or mass-actions and it drew much of its initial strength from established resources and connections. While I believe Nashi is subject to the forces of the opportunities and constraints that aid or inhibit a movement organization's mobilization, I recognize that the decisive factor for pro-regime

¹⁵⁸ Fish, M. Steven. "Putin's Path." *Journal of Democracy*, 12:4 October 2001, 74.

organizations in Russia, like Nashi, is likely to be whether or not that organization garners and sustains the support of the Kremlin leadership.

Nashi's fortunes in 2006 and beyond may not hinge solely on its ability to navigate the field of opportunities and constraints, but also, or maybe primarily, on its relationship to one actor in particular in that field: the state. Nashi's future may depend on whether or not it fits into the plans that the Kremlin's leadership has for interacting with and mobilizing youth for its own ends. In this sense, the relationship between Nashi (and other Russian pro-regime youth organizations) and the Kremlin seems to fit into a wider trend of the Kremlin managing organizations and institutions in order to control them and mobilizing them if and when they need support in a given endeavor or event, whether this means participation in standard electoral politics, rallying sympathetic youths in a hypothetical Orange Revolution-type event, or staging a demonstration that stresses values the regime hopes to promote. Nashi's dependence on the patronage of the Kremlin is another example of the Russian state managing institutions and creating a top-down civil society that many scholars believe exists in contemporary Russia. Other such examples include state control of press outlets, a structured party system, laws that govern and restrict the operations of non-governmental organizations, and the administration's attacks on the oligarchs.

Regardless of the implications of Nashi's rise in 2005 and its future, the activity of youths in organizations such as Nashi may have an effect on their future participation in politics. Studies of youth participation in political organizations recognize the link between early, formative political activity, and future involvement in the political sphere.¹⁵⁹ It could

¹⁵⁹ Hooghe, Marc, Dietlind Stolle and Patrick Stouthuysen. "Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium (Flanders)." *Party Politics*, 10:2 March 2004, 196.

be that the participation of a *storonnik* in Nashi's activities in 2005 will lead to a life of political engagement, even if Nashi's existence turns out to be relatively ephemeral.

One of the final campaigns Nashi undertook in 2005 was a blood drive called "NASHI Donory" ("Our Donors"). Begun in Moscow, the campaign soon spread to seven other Russian cities. Nashi was very proud of the event, repeatedly issuing press releases detailing the multitudes of commissars who signed up and participated. The organization published several photos of its members, reclining in clinics throughout Russia, wearing their Nashi t-shirts, arms outstretched with needles protruding from their veins. Whether Nashi manages to successfully navigate the socio-political field and continue the momentum it achieved in 2005, or if it fades into oblivion, it seems clear that one way or another, the Nashi Generation will find a way to give blood in service of their country.

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