Bolshevik bargaining in Soviet industry: communists between state and society in the interwar USSR*

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Yiannis Kokosalakis

Room K117, School of History, University College Dublin

y.kokosalakis@ucd.ie

I

By the time the Primary Party Organisation (PPO) of Leningrad's enormous Kirov factory convened its third general conference in May 1941, workers in the Soviet Union had become subject to a set of progressively tighter labour laws which had effectively militarised industrial life, culminating in the criminalisation of quitting one's job introduced in June 1940. An influential tradition of social historians has viewed this legislation as the victorious conclusion of a decade long process of class struggle waged by the Soviet state against its workers since the launch of rapid industrialisation in the late 1920s. Within this framework, factory administrations were viewed as disciplinary instruments of surplus extraction, with Moshe Lewin describing the directors who ran them as "small Stalins", industrial autocrats for whom "rudeness was a virtue".[1]

Against this backdrop, the contribution of Kirov's director Isaac Zal'tsman to the PPO conference appears somewhat curious. For although Zal'tsman began his report with an unremarkable enumeration of problems holding back plan fulfilment, he quickly went off on a tangent about workplace culture. Having been criticised earlier by one comrade Gorbachev

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about his manners, Zal'tsman promised the audience that he was working on his behaviour, as evinced by the fact that he had "recently started to shave and dress properly". The director was then interrupted by Iakov Kapustin, a former Kirov worker then serving as Leningrad city committee Party secretary. Kapustin mocked Zal'tsman for his scruffiness, remarking that going by his clothes, one could never tell that he was the "director of such a big factory". In response, Zal'tsman promised to "quickly bring himself to order" eliciting, according to the stenographer, laughter from the floor.

This bizarre exchange is difficult to square with the image of the director as a factory tyrant charged with driving the workforce to ever intensifying backbreaking effort. Why would Kapustin, a city-level official of the Communist Party, ridicule the director of a major industrial enterprise before a five-hundred strong audience of his subordinates, at a time seen as the apogee of Soviet labour authoritarianism? Even more incongruous with the purported spirit of the time were Zal'tsman's subsequent remarks regarding the state of labour discipline in the factory. Rather than cracking the whip, the director admonished the conference delegates against the evil of "over-zealousness" in applying punitive measures against offenses like tardiness or truancy:

> I am obliged to say that there are incidents of over-zealousness. For example, worker Vasiliev's wife died and he came to work in distress. At the shop […] he was declared drunk and prosecuted. I signed the relevant order myself. Only the next day was the matter cleared up and the order annulled. In the same shop […] worker Zhernovskii was not informed that his day off had been moved from the 27th to the 30th. He was working a nightshift [on the 26th] and he didn't come to work on the 27th. The superintendent reported him for prosecution but attached a document confirming that Zhernovskii's truancy was not his fault /laughter/. Comrades, we must fight against such over-zealousness in the most decisive manner.[2]

Zal'tsman's attitude becomes more comprehensible if we consider the context of his talk. For although the director was addressing an audience composed almost entirely of his subordinates, the PPO conference was Party business. Delegates were there in their capacity as communists, comrades in the exalted task of leading Soviet society in a world-historical transition from capitalism to communism. More mundanely, they were there as people who, in addition to their professional activities, had chosen to play an active part in the implementation of Soviet state policy.

The ubiquitous presence of the Communist Party in Soviet society was a fundamental institutional feature of the USSR, with its system of organisations extending through factories, public administration, the military and almost every other social setting. Nevertheless, the particular role played by the Party rank-and-file in the tumultuous transformations of the Soviet interwar years has so far been ignored by accounts of this period. To a large extent, this reflects epistemic biases in the relevant historiography. For most of the Cold War, Western scholarship on the USSR turned around an often acrimonious debate between the totalitarian and revisionist schools, roughly corresponding to political and social historical approaches. For the totalitarian school, the Soviet state exerted complete control over a society at the mercy of Bolshevik ideological dictates. Revisionist scholars pointed out that the realities of Soviet society complicated and often frustrated policy initiatives from the top. [3] Within this dichotomous conceptual framework, there was little space for considering the Party as an institution distinct from state administration. Indeed, it has been explicitly argued that the Party was not a political institution in any meaningful sense and could not have been one in the context of a single-party state.[4]

Scholarly interest in Soviet state-society relations declined after the fall of the USSR, as the field followed the broader "cultural turn" in historical research.[5] A new generation of scholars employed methods from literary studies such as discourse analysis to explore a

different set of questions regarding identity and the lived experience of the Soviet subject. Historians of Soviet subjectivity demonstrated that the state and its citizens interacted within a shared framework of cultural norms and ideological values, in what one major contribution described as Stalinist civilization.[6]

Its fruitfulness notwithstanding, the cultural historians' focus on the individual amounted to a reorientation away from the state-society problematic.[7] Nevertheless, their insights into the contestability of Soviet discourse fed into a renewed scholarly interest into the design and concrete operation of Soviet political institutions.[8] In this historiographical context, the lack of research into the structures of the Party – the ideological institution *par excellence* – is a conspicuous gap in the literature.

Based on a micro-historical study of the Kirov factory, this article argues that the PPO was a fundamental element of the Soviet political system, whose central place in the nexus of state-society relations offers a unique vantage point from which to reconsider the central question of the classical debate of Soviet historiography. Focusing on the highly ideological environment of the Party, this article also contributes to the further integration of the insights of the cultural turn into the study of state-society relations, by exploring how official discourse shaped the demands and expectations of rank-and-file members, while also being manipulated by them. The account offered in the following pages contributes to the further dissolution of the totalitarian/revisionist dualism by showing that the chief instrument of top-down ideological control was simultaneously the main channel through which Soviet society exerted influence over state policy. It demonstrates that the dispute on primacy in the state-society relationship that animated most of the totalitarian-revisionist debates can be fruitfully replaced by examining the concrete way in which this relationship played out within the institution that was specifically designed to mediate it, that is the Communist Party.

The implications of this argument extend beyond Soviet historiography to the broader scholarship on the history of revolutions. Traditionally, this literature has concentrated on the social, political and intellectual circumstances that created the preconditions for revolutionary conflicts and the ways in which these were transformed during the revolutionary process.[9] A different approach has concentrated on the cultural dimensions of revolutionary change, as well as the conceptualisation and commemoration of the same by contemporary and subsequent actors.[10] More recently, scholars have attempted to integrate these perspectives by examining pre and post-revolutionary institutions as loci and products of contested political strategies, cultures and ideologies.[11] The story of the Kirov PPO is a contribution in this direction, demonstrating how the Bolsheviks' Leninist concept of revolution as a world-historical process guided by a conscious collective agent assumed institutional form in the presence of the party at all levels of the Soviet state.[12] The effect of this was to ideologically sanction social conflict at every level of the Soviet system. In industry, where Party saturation was traditionally higher, communists played an active role in the concretisation of planning goals, the promotion of production activism initiatives and the overall implementation of the state's economic policy, while at the same time being scathingly critical of management and ably defending their workplace interests as labourers.

This article therefore also contributes to the literature on the formation of Soviet industrial relations. Studies of Soviet industrialisation reflected the totalitarian/revisionist historiographical divide, albeit in a modified form. Although the social-historical nature of the topic mitigated against some of the more sweeping totalitarian generalisations, the traditional school of labour historiography alluded to above fit in well with the broad contours of the Cold War mainstream narrative. In this model of Soviet industrial relations, a powerful bureaucratic elite used the state apparatus to subjugate Soviet workers into a new system of exploitation.[13] Other scholars however pointed out that the chronic labour shortage that plagued Soviet

factories, as well as the multitude of official and unofficial channels for bargaining, provided workers with a significant degree of power in the workplace. Drawing inspiration from E. P. Thompson's commitment to restore the agency of grassroots actors to historical memory, this social-contractual model viewed workers as junior partners to, rather than victims of the state.[14] Neither framework devoted much consideration to the particular role played by Party organisations in the formation of Soviet industrial relations, except in so far as their leading bodies cooperated (or colluded) with management to keep factories running or the workers in line, depending on the model. In either case, the Party was analytically subsumed under the state administration.

Drawing on the records of the Kirov PPO, this article will provide an alternative view of the Soviet industrialisation process placing the party at the centre of analysis. The account begins from the winding down of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the late 1920s and follows the process of industrialisation through the 1930s and up to the German invasion of the USSR in 1941. It will be shown that throughout this tumultuous period, the PPO provided the political space within which the many conflicts of the Soviet factory were played out and contained. Alongside the social-contractual model, this article argues that Soviet workers did indeed operate in relative autonomy from the state. However, this was predicated on active support for the state and the taking on of specific tasks in its service via party membership. Rather than stressing structural factors or forms of resistance as sources of workers' power, this account highlights the extent to which active engagement with the Soviet system on its own terms was entirely consistent with workers' pursuit of their immediate interests. This was not therefore the autonomy that is gained by carving out a niche, but that inherent in the delegation of certain powers from an authority to its functionaries.

By institutionalising activism at the very heart of industrial relations the communist party ensured that, to borrow a phrase from Thompson, the Soviet working class would be present at

its own making. The centrality of industrialisation to Stalin's revolution from above lends this fact significance exceeding the bounds of labour history, prompting us to consider the mutual constitution of the workers' state and the society it governed. Maker of the first Soviet tractors, Kirov was at the cutting edge of the interwar transformation of the Soviet economy.[15] It also boasted amongst the highest levels of party saturation in the country, making it an ideal site for observing the activities of communist workers, foremen and functionaries.[16] This case study of Kirov's communists can thus provide valuable insight into the nature of the interwar Soviet polity.[17]

II

The initiation of the market-based NEP in 1921 was a turning point in the transformation of the Bolsheviks from a party of insurrection to one of government. Having abandoned expectations for a quick transition to a commune-like society, Lenin's party turned to the task of creating the institutional framework for administering their new state. Committed to their Marxist worldview, the leadership simultaneously sought to strengthen the bonds between the Party and its natural constituency, the industrial proletariat. A series of recruitment drives initiated with the 1924 "Lenin levy" succeeded in more than doubling the Party's membership, attracting at least 600,000 new working-class members by 1927.[18]

At the same time, the combination of the ideological confusion sown by the retreat signified by the semi-capitalist NEP, the political vacuum created by Lenin's death and the economic hardship of the post-Civil War period, undermined the cohesion of the leadership. The 1920s were thus marked by a series of political struggles that concluded with the consolidation of power by Stalin and his allies.[19] The PPO emerged as distinct level in the Party apparatus within this context, with a draft statement of the Party Central Committee (CC)

published in October 1924 explaining that cells were the fundamental element of the "party organism" through which the party "connected to the masses".[20]

The Party grassroots thus became a battleground for the leadership struggle, with the contesting factions seeking to mobilise the rank-and-file against the CC majority. One of the most prominent of these clashes unfolded at the 14th Party Congress in December 1925, when Leningrad boss and Communist International chair Grigorii Zinoviev deployed the Leningrad Party Organisation to launch a challenge against the CC line. Zinoviev and his allies relied on the strong anti-NEP sentiment of the heavily proletarian Leningraders, who were resentful of the moderate industrial growth foreseen by NEP and alarmed at the emergence of new bourgeois elements in town and countryside. The CC succeeded in seeing off Zinoviev's challenge, but not before some of its most prominent members toured Leningrad to win back the city's PPOs factory by factory. The Kirov plant, then known as *Krasnii Putilovets* (KP) was the site of the final and most decisive of these political battles.[21]

Recognising that Zinoviev's initial success had been due to legitimate concerns of the rank-and-file, the Party leadership adopted a conciliatory approach in response to the crisis. Taking over as Leningrad regional secretary in 1926, Sergei Kirov sought to reassure the membership that the leadership was on their side, sharing their commitment to strong industrial growth as an essential element of socialist economic policy. In addition, he initiated an extensive programme of cultural and educational activities that aimed to bring the rank-and-file closer to the mainstream by providing communist activists with the necessary skills to participate in the Party's political life.[22]

This would prove to be a delicate balancing act. Soviet industry continued to be beset by chronic deficiencies, including capital shortages and persistently low labour productivity. In response, the April 1926 CC plenum formulated a new economic initiative known as the

Regime of Economy. Unlike previous attempts to save resources by putting pressure on wages, the resolution that introduced the Regime of Economy explicitly stated that the current level of workers' earnings was to remain unaffected. Measures to improve productivity, would instead include strengthening labour discipline and rationalisation of the working day. At the same time, the resolution pointed at other aspects of the production process that could benefit from greater frugality, like administrative expenditures.[23] Feeding into already tense relations between workers and management, the question of where the most economising was to be made quickly became a matter of dispute at Party meetings throughout the country.

Aware of the political sensitivity of "economising" in industry, Sergei Kirov visited KP to personally report on the new policy. He sought to reassure the factory's thousand-strong Party group that the discipline of the Regime of Economy was not to be imposed on labour alone, but on the administration as well. Thus, Kirov told the assembled communists that "[e]very plan goes through twenty revisions before being implemented. The state apparatus must be brought to order".

Ivan Gaza, the new Party secretary at KP struck a less conciliatory tone. Speaking of a series of slow-downs that had taken place in the factory in connexion with some industrial disputes, Gaza claimed that rank-and-filers had often been found to be the main leaders, wryly commenting that "having learned at the Party school that communists are the vanguard of the proletariat, it appears that they think that if workers want to kick up a row they have to step in and do it for them".[24] This careful balancing between appeasing anti-managerial sentiment and the need to maintain basic labour discipline in the enterprise became the main theme of KP party meetings for 1926.

A slight shift of the scales can however be observed in the general assembly of June 1927.[25] By that time, the Regime of Economy had been succeeded by a new industrial campaign for the Rationalisation of Production. Unlike its predecessor, Rationalisation was

meant to be achieved by technical and organisational measures alone. Socialist rationalisation, it was argued, could not proceed at the expense of the country's working class as in the capitalist world. It should instead contribute to the improvement of workers' living standards and the expansion of the range of opportunities available to them.[26] This political recalibration at the centre strengthened the hand of party militants on the shop-floor.

Giving his annual report on the work of the organisation's bureau, Gaza presented figures showing that overhead costs had fallen by 2.8% over the preceding year.[27] He then reported approvingly that there had been no labour disturbances during the same period, attributing this achievement to improving relations between workers and management.[28] Despite these positive developments, Gaza followed up with what seemed like an unprovoked attack on management, echoing many of the rank-and-file criticisms that had been levelled at the administration in previous meetings. The party organiser criticised management for its behaviour towards workers' correspondents *(rabkori)*, suggesting that they were seen as "too inquisitive".[29] Gaza stated that the bureau did not share this view and signalled further disapproval of administrative practice saying that "we differ with the administration on the question of the fight against bureaucratism. They say there isn't such a problem. We disagree."[30]

Rising to speak after Gaza, Chervinskii stated that management was trying to suppress the *rabkor* movement, including its communist caucus. He then accused management of dragging its feet on bureaucratism, claiming that the tractor shop employed one administrator for every five workers. To applause from the floor, he added indignantly that the shop-level bureau had informed the administration of the problem, but they had chosen to sit on their hands. Grachev, the factory director, was then personally attacked by Ruzin for his "impermissible" treatment of the *rabkori*.[31]

The most comprehensive account of the problems facing the organisation and the factory was however given by Ter-Asaturov, the draughtsman of the tractor department. He argued that the low skill-level of the membership was the organisation's greatest handicap in its struggle to control the administration and called for the full communisation of the administrative apparatus. Ter-Asaturov went on to argue that persistent problems in political work, like the low-attendance of work-place meetings by members and the sluggish growth of Party membership, were directly linked to the problem of bureaucratism. He contrasted the approachable manner of managers in 'other factories' with that of KP staff who could never find the time to speak to workers.[32] Bureaucratism was finally condemned in the meeting's final resolution as a symptom of the persistent predominance of old regime specialists in the factory's white-collar staff.[33]

By 1928, rank-and-file feeling towards the factory administration had turned unequivocally sour. The publication of the Shakhty affair in the Donbass on 10 March came shortly after a new bout of labour unrest that had taken place in connexion with the campaign for a new collective agreement.[34] At the general meeting which met to discuss the results of the April CC plenum, Grachev was denounced as a demagogue by Sokolov who went on to ridicule the incompetence of the factory's technical staff: "They are refitting the cranes in our workshop and all the workers are laughing. It's obvious that they are doing it wrong, but the specialists won't listen to us."[35] A worker from the tractor workshop, Kairov criticised the casual attitude specialists displayed towards their work but suggested Grachev was getting too much of the blame, proposing instead to have "the technical director give a report and grill him".[36] The whole factory was declared a "small nest of sabotage" by one of the notes given to the main speaker, because of the undue influence of the administration over the party organisation.[37] The campaign of self-criticism *(samokritika)* launched by the Party leadership in June only emboldened the militants.[38]

The closing period of the NEP thus saw the KP Party collective become dominated by moods that were increasingly hostile to the factory's managerial personnel. The ever-expanding activist base of the organisation used its status to press the demands of workers in explicit opposition to those of the perceived bureaucrats that made up the enterprise's administrative staff. To their superiors' chagrin, communist activists did not refrain from leading their colleagues in industrial action in order to secure a better deal. But as hostility towards the NEP grew amongst the Party's top leadership, the gap between rank-and-file moods and the political mainstream narrowed. In attacking bureaucratism, rank-and-file communists were not breaking party discipline but implementing party policy. Significantly, the activists were to a large extent anticipating, rather than responding to leadership initiatives. Communist workers saw the centre shift from a political line demanding tight labour discipline and favouring amicable relations between workers and management, to one calling party members to battle against "wicked bureaucratism" and "bureaucratic degeneration".[39]

Thus *spetseedstvo,* the anti-intellectualist practice of specialist-baiting that had been the scourge of many an engineer throughout the NEP period, became sanctioned by and institutionalised within the party collective, the very organisation charged with resolving social contradictions on the factory floor.[40] At the same time, communist specialists like Ter-Asaturov joined the fray to propose what amounted to their promotion – the communisation of the apparatus – as the only solution to bureaucratic mismanagement. On the eve of Stalin's revolution from above, the KP Party group provided the organisational and ideological framework for the formation of an alliance of militant workers and low-ranking technicians that would go on to become the protagonists of the First Five Year Plan.

Despite their growing hostility to management however, communist activists did not transform the organisation into a mere forum for complaints. Throughout this period, the rank-and-file maintained a strong interest in the economic aspects of factory life as well as a

reflective attitude on the organisation's place within it. We have already seen that the communist workers of KP were able to frame their concerns in the terms of the state's own economic policy and that they did so with considerable skill and confidence. This, however, is only part of the story. Party members spent a considerable amount of their time attempting to provide solutions to everyday problems of production, often in contexts where little political gain could be made by their efforts to do so. Communist workers were expected to and did take active part in production conferences not only to rail against the incompetence of managerial personnel but also to highlight and troubleshoot technical and organisational issues in their shop.[41] Similarly, workshop-level party meetings devoted significant amounts of time on the development and improvement of production conference work.[42]

Discussion of problems of the productive process was not however confined to production conferences and shop-level meetings. As the decade drew to a close, technical issues such as fuel deliveries or the transport of materials became increasingly more prominent in the organisation's general meetings and less distinct from the party's own organisational affairs.[43] By the time the First Five Year Plan was launched in late 1928, the alliance of workers and technicians that had taken shape within the organisation was not only hostile to managerial personnel but also confident in its ability to replace them.

III

The vast transformative effects of the First Five Year Plan (FYP) on industry and society have been the subject of so much scholarly research that reviewing them here would be neither practicable nor particularly illuminating. It is, however, worth providing some detail on the specific effects of the Soviet industrialisation drive on Leningrad industry to better appreciate the conditions in which the KP party organisation had to operate in 1928–1932.

Rapid industrial expansion brought about a sharp increase in the numbers of the industrial workforce. This was particularly pronounced in Leningrad, where 133,000 workers entered industry in 1930 alone. Heavy industry grew most of all, with some 46% of all Leningrad workers employed in the metal-electrical sector and machine-builders jumping from 23% to 31% of the total workforce in 1928-1932.[44] The workforce of KP more than doubled, reaching a total of about 21,000 around 1931.[45] New arrivals from the countryside accounted for much of this increase, with 55% of trade-union members in 1931 being of peasant origin, compared to 9% in 1930.[46] Women also entered industry en masse, making up 43.5% of the entire workforce by 1932 compared to 37.1% in 1928; the relative increase was greater in the male-dominated metal industry, from 9.1% to 23.5%.[47]

The transformation of Soviet industry only served to complicate the chronic confusion afflicting the system of remuneration. Leningrad's 14 trade–unions recognised 29 different 1st bracket wage rates.[48] At the same time, the plan's prioritisation of capital investment over the production of consumer goods exerted strong pressures on living standards and shortages in foodstuffs necessitated the introduction of rationing already in 1929, well before famine struck in 1933.[49] The functioning of the rationing system was far from ideal and the shortages and quality of the food distributed led to considerable industrial unrest.[50] These factors combined to give rise to one of the main features of Soviet industrialisation, the extremely high rates of labour turnover.[51] Along with the deskilling of the now younger and less experienced working class, high turnover induced directors to over-hire in order to secure their enterprises against the labour shortage, thus exacerbating the problem.[52]

Having spent the last NEP years as both critics of management and troubleshooters of production, KP party activists now found themselves confronting rapidly changing realities. The technical process of production and the very physical space of their activity was about to change as the plan targeted the factory for full re-equipment.[53] The organisation would have to

operate within and assimilate a larger workforce with little experience of factory life within the context of unprecedentedly demanding labour conditions. The initiatives undertaken by the central party leadership in response to the myriad of problems thrown up over the course of the first FYP served to further complicate an already confused situation. In industry, the most significant of these was the introduction of *edinonachalie*, or one-person management.

The resolution introducing one-person management in Soviet industrial enterprises was adopted by the CC on 5 September 1929.[54] Earlier scholarship regarded this as a pivotal moment in the consolidation of the command economy and the creation of the class of "small Stalins".[55] Subsequent works took a different view, suggesting that *edinonachalie* was intended to establish proper accountability for the performance of industrial enterprises by clarifying the specific responsibilities and prerogatives of management vis-à-vis the party and trade–union organisations.[56]

Events in KP seem to support the latter view. Party meetings at KP in 1929 did not display the same toxic attitudes towards the factory administration as those of the last NEP years. The mobilisation of party activists for the industrialisation drive, as well as the intra-party crisis over the collectivisation of agriculture focused shop-floor politics on all-Union affairs. General assembly meetings in May and November gathered to discuss and condemn the views of the Right Opposition, thus temporarily displacing the party-management conflict from the centre stage of factory politics.[57]

The truce was short-lived. Although KP overfulfilled its 1928/1929 target of 3,000 tractors, the following year the factory's beleaguered administration attracted the wrath of the authorities after the enterprise failed to meet a significantly raised target of 12,000. Throughout the first quarter of 1930, the Party organisation attacked the administration for failing to meet its monthly targets. In June 1930, KP's technical director V.L. Sablin was arrested on charges

of sabotage along with the director of the tractor department and several engineers. Though not charged with a crime, Grachev was relieved of his duties in September and replaced by Karl Martovich Ots.[58] To better appreciate the extent to which the power of the party organisation undermined the authority *edinonachalie* was meant to confer upon the director, it would be useful to consider Ots's first experience of a party conference at KP.

Ots presented the main report to the organisation's 7th conference on 2 October 1930, only a week after Grachev's departure. Chairing the meeting, the party organiser Alekseev opened the session by informing those present that the plan had been fulfilled by only 92.1% and the organisation should use the final quarter to overcome the persistent problems of truancy, faulty output *(brak)* and labour turnover, using the trusted weapon of *samokritika*.[59] The new director then took the floor to present the factory's production plan. He began by stating that fulfilment up until then had in fact been 87% and declared that in order to fulfil the plan, the factory would have to produce 47% more items than in the previous quarter.[60] Ots conceded that output was constrained by the limiting factors that plagued Soviet industry as a whole, like labour shortage and skill depletion. Moreover, the factory's rapid expansion had been disproportionate, with auxiliary shop capacity lagging significantly behind that of processing shops.

Having indirectly made the point that output could not be immediately increased by expanding the available workforce, Ots drew the obvious conclusion that the targets would have to be met on account of an increase in productivity. In order to dispel any doubts as to whether this would involve labour intensification and a tightening of discipline, Ots spoke of the labour shortage as "artificially created", further explaining that he meant this "not in the literal sense, but in the sense that people do not want to work themselves too hard".[61] He went on to provide an example of how carelessness and lax attitudes towards work were undermining plan fulfilment in the factory's paramount shop:

> It must be said that even now, at a moment when the whole country has its eyes fixed on us […] when everyone's attention is on the tractor shop […] not everyone's attitude to their work is as it should be. […] I was there last night at midnight, during shift change, and for 40-50 minutes the place was in a complete mess. Some people were chatting, some machine-tools were being cleaned, and some others weren't.[62]

From his perspective, the new director was making a perfectly reasonable assessment of the situation. He had limited time to rectify the situation that had cost his predecessor his job, so that the increase in productivity necessary to meet the tractor target would have to be achieved with the available capital and labour resources. Addressing the chaotic conditions prevalent on the factory floor was an obvious place to start. Unsurprisingly, the party members who rose to speak after Ots were not of quite the same opinion.

The director's report was followed by the presentation of a counter-plan by the factory's control commission (VKK). The reporter, Bolsunovskii, began his contribution on the familiar theme of managerial incompetence:

> It would seem that a counter-plan must be put forward in opposition to something, that is, the plan of the administration. But this is not the case because even today, the administration was unable to provide figures on this quarter's plan because it doesn't have them. The VKK was established on June 7 to work out a plan for 1930-31. It was put together in time but as you can see today, [the administration cannot] present a plan for the whole year.[63]

Bolsunovskii went on to present the adjusted targets. Overall output was projected to be 38.5 million roubles, over the administration's target of 36 million. Labour productivity would rise by 27%, not 20% as forecast by the administration. Bolsunovskii argued that the counter-plan's more ambitious target could be met by means of the elimination of truancy and

brak. This, he argued, was possible if the party mobilised the factory's public opinion for this goal. To this end, he demanded that the shock–work movement should be expanded to include more workers. By placing responsibility for the plan on the rank-and-file, Bolsunovskii argued, it would be possible to meet the new targets.[64]

The call for higher targets was echoed by Marmel' who argued that even the counter-plan's revised quarterly target of 3,600 tractors was pessimistic, as the factory could purportedly produce 1,500 per month on average. Marmel', who worked at the old forge shop, argued that it was possible to increase the production of wagons from the 75 ordered by the administration to 90, provided that the shop was relieved from orders for smaller items that other shops could produce internally. In order for the required increase in productivity to take place, the administration would also need to address "some of the faults of the previous administration", specifically the lack of concern about the shop's aging equipment which was in danger of complete breakdown. Demonstrating considerable skill in Bolshevik rhetoric, Marmel' drove the point home: "There have been considerable advances…but we have now come up against what must be called objective conditions. We must get rid of objective conditions comrades."[65]

In his concluding remarks, Ots responded to some of the points raised by the other speakers and answered questions from the floor. One of these asked whether the new director intended to manage the factory from his office, "like Grachev", or on the factory floor, alongside the shop's communists. Ots answered that one is only a red director who spends at least four hours per day on the floor and promised to follow that rule. Bolsunovskii used his concluding timeslot to challenge Ots to fulfil the plan: "We have equipment and contracts, let's fulfil the plan, if you please".[66]

Whatever the original intent of the decree on *edinonachalie*, Ots's first contact with KP's communist rank-and-file suggests that he had not been invested with the powers of an industrial autocrat. Instead, according to the stenographic record Ots comes across as a pragmatic administrator, who having realised that meeting production targets was only conceivable on the basis of unpopular measures of labour intensification was trying to secure the support of the institution charged with maintaining the good will of workers both within the factory and society at large. The KP Party organisation however was not forthcoming with this support. The rank-and-file, had not become more open to directorial initiatives since the removal of the previous administration. It is more plausible to suggest that KP worker-communists experienced the removal of those whom they had for years denounced as incompetent or dangerous as a victory. In this case, the confidence of the rank-and-file in its political power would have been strengthened, as would the conviction that *edinonachalie* did not in any way entail an erosion of workers' control as mediated by the party organisation.[67]

This would account for the confidence with which speakers like Bolsunovskii and Marmel' presented their own suggestions without any significant scale back of anti-managerialism. It does not, however, explain the content of these suggestions. For if in the late NEP-era communist activists were trying to defend against labour intensification by pointing to managerial incompetence as a greater cost to the economy than lax labour discipline, they were now attacking the administration by demanding what seemed conspicuously like *greater* intensification.[68]

The traditional conceptual scheme of Soviet labour relations could presumably explain this odd behaviour of party activists as a result of the subordination of the party organisation since the introduction of *edinonachalie* to the autocratic authority of the director. On this view, the counter-plan and interventions from the floor could be interpreted as providing political cover for the director, who was after all arguing for more modest goals. Such a reading of the

activists' behaviour is however difficult to sustain given the account of party-management relations in KP presented so far, especially regarding the fate of the Grachev-led administration.

Instead, it is more plausible that the root of this change in rank-and-file attitudes lies in the shift of the boundaries of industrial politics caused by the launch of the first FYP. During the late NEP period, when the primary objectives of the party's economic policy were to rationalise production and economise on added costs, communist workers had been able to point to the chaotic state of the managerial apparatus as a more pressing problem than truancy or other labour discipline weaknesses. This was no longer possible by the time Ots took over from Grachev in 1930, as the imperatives of rapid industrialisation left little space for rationalising and economising practices. The industrialisation drive had also made labour intensification inevitable and opposition to it politically hopeless.

At the same time however, the FYP had opened new possibilities for worker activists. Massive levels of investment made it possible to address long-time structural and organisational problems on the shop-floor. By speaking about their potential for greater output, party members like Marmel' were effectively raising the profile of their workshops and attracting attention to real problems like aging equipment. As well as being detrimental to plan fulfilment, such problems affected workers in more immediate ways. Old equipment was prone to stoppages, which could severely affect the income of workers on piece rates.[69] The often chaotic and cluttered state of shop-floors often was a cause of serious, sometimes lethal accidents.[70]

Bolsunovskii's call for an expansion of the shock-worker movement, echoed by other contributors, can be interpreted in a similar manner. Although shock-work was in the last analysis a form of intensification, shock-workers were entitled to a range of perks and benefits like higher rations and priority access to the city's limited housing stock.[71] Thus, Bolsunovskii

was able to call for higher targets on the basis of greater efforts on the part of workers, while at the same time effectively pushing for greater access to very scarce consumer goods. In doing so, he was entirely in line with party policy on the shock-work movement which demanded that it should eventually embrace all workers.[72]

This is highly illuminative regarding the way in which party organisations operated in industrial enterprises like KP. Although composed almost entirely of factory workers who were very keen to defend their interests, the KP party organisation was not a trade–union.[73] It was instead a component part of the All-Union Communist Party whose stated mission was to lead Soviet society in the transition to communism; its task was to oversee this process in the crucial setting of a major industrial enterprise. The organisation derived its authority within the factory from this. Its influence over management derived from being embedded in a hierarchy parallel and at every level senior to the state. Furthermore, red directors like Ots owed their positions to their party membership and were thus beheld to the party as much as to the state economic administration. Because of this, it was essential for factory directors to maintain good relations with their party organisations in order to run their enterprises and keep their jobs.

If however the peculiar political ecology of Soviet enterprises placed significant constraints upon the power of management, it also set definite limits to the scope and nature of acceptable labour activism. For the corollary of politically mediated influence in the workplace was that the very institution acting as the instrument of this influence was also responsible for promoting the unpopular aspects of party policy. This placed the party's rank-and-file membership in a rather contradictory position, whereby their role as defenders of their fellow workers' interests was coupled with their task of promoting breakneck industrialisation.

The tension between the demands of the industrialisation drive and the immediate interests of workers at the point of production put significant strain on the relationship between

the Party and its constituents. Throughout the First FYP period, the KP party organisation faced significant difficulties both in mobilising the support of the factory's workers and in maintaining discipline within its ranks. Apart from the perennial problems of labour discipline, party meetings at all levels expressed concern about the declining popularity of production conferences as well as mass campaigns like the subscription drive for the industrialisation bond.[74] Complaints about falling wages became a recurring theme in the question notes of the period and there were at least a few cases where the wisdom of rapid industrialisation was questioned.[75]

Nevertheless, despite the resentment that the hardships of industrialisation generated amongst significant sections of the rank-and-file, the organisation managed to emerge out of this period relatively unscathed. The purge of 1929, intended among other things to relieve the party of members who were not strongly committed to the goals of the socialist offensive, made a very small dent on the KP organisation. Of its membership of 3133 only 143 or less than 5% were expelled. Of these, some 47 were automatic expulsions, consisting either of those who had consistently failed to attend party meetings or let their membership lapse by not paying subscription dues. A further 13 were expelled for drunkenness and 18 for concealing their class background. Even assuming then that the remaining 65 were all expelled for open and/or active opposition to party policy, they would still make up a mere 2% of the overall membership.[76]

This small rate of attrition reflects the fact that workers who wished to exert influence in their workspace were in a far better position to do so from within the party organisation than from the outside. We have already seen how worker-communists called on party ideology to draw attention to their concerns and promote their interests within the factory. Party membership did not however simply provide a rhetorical space from which to issue demands. At least since the NEP-era, rank-and-file activists had played a central role in resolving technical problems that came up in the production process. As bottlenecks, stoppages and

breakdowns multiplied during the first FYP, so did workers' initiatives in response to these. This period witnessed the mushrooming of specific work-teams whose task was to resolve such problems. The value of these tug-boating and turnkey brigades as they came to be known is demonstrated by their official incorporation into the shock-worker movement. Although party membership was not a requirement for participation, communists were expected to take a leading role in these activities. Very often, Party membership came as a consequence of active engagement as shock-workers were targeted for recruitment by the party's industrial organisations, sometimes *en masse* as in the case of KP's 3rd mechanical shop.[77]

As the FYP drew to a close, the rationalising functions of shock-work brigades became more pronounced than the target busting feats they had originally become famous for. As the ranks of *udarniki* expanded to include ever greater numbers of workers, the title came to be little more than a formality.[78] Despite the authorities' complaints about the phenomenon of pseudo shock-work the movement's mass expansion ended up having a positive long-term effect on the development of Soviet industry. As the movement grew, the shock-work brigade became synonymous with a stable unit of workers, replacing the multitude of forms of labour organisation that Soviet industry had inherited from the pre-revolutionary period such as the paternalistic *artel'*, as well as experimental forms like production communes and collectives.[79]

The rationalisation of organisation, exertion and remuneration that was achieved as a result of the formation of the stable work unit in Soviet enterprises was described by one incisive study of Soviet labour relations as a victory for both workers and the state.[80] Rank-and-file party activists played a decisive role in making this possible. At a time of intense social upheaval, communist workers took the lead in organising shock-work brigades by recruiting actual or imagined norm-busters from their shops. Party members also seized every opportunity to argue that disappointing production results were not due to skivers or enemies amongst the workers but because of worn equipment, lack of materials and faulty planning, responsibility

for which was invariably laid at the feet of management. Thus, throughout the period of the 1st FYP rank-and-file communists acted as a bridge between industrial workers and the state, preventing the opening of a major rift between the Party and its core social constituency. This they achieved by using the authority of their position to cushion the effects of the state's policies on themselves and their co-workers. This authority derived from the fact that they were themselves part of the system, not only as trusted troubleshooters in the production process, but also as the main ideological conduit between the Party leadership and the broader population. However, as the contours of party policy changed with the completion of the 1st FYP, the nature of rank-and-file activism would also have to adapt.

IV

If the aim of the 1st FYP had been nothing less than the complete transformation of the USSR's productive base, the 2nd FYP faced the slightly less ambitious but still formidable task of bringing the products of the industrialisation drive to bear on production. The so called 'good years' of Soviet industrialisation saw a relative decline in the production of capital goods and armaments and a proportional increase in investment in the consumer goods sector. Aiming at the consolidation of the achievements of the expansionary development of the preceding period, the party's industrial policy included plans for significant changes to labour organisation in order to rationalise the production process. With respect to shop-floor level labour relations, the most significant aspect of the party's industrial policy was its renewed emphasis on technical competence and organisational efficiency, which in turn implied greater managerial authority and responsibility as well as the side-lining of some of the more conflictual forms of shop-floor activism in favour of a tightening of labour discipline. This shift in outlook amongst the leadership had already been signalled by Stalin in a speech to industrial executives delivered in 1931. This listed six new conditions within which Soviet industry was

developing and an equal number of tasks to be tackled. Amongst these were the limitation of labour turnover, the training of working-class technical cadres and importantly, a more conciliatory approach to old regime specialists who had demonstrated their loyalty to Soviet power.[81] November 1932 saw the introduction of stricter labour legislation, enabling management to dismiss workers for one day's unjustified absence and transferring control of workers' ration books from consumers' cooperatives to enterprise administrations.[82] The resolution passed by the CC Plenum of January 1933 formalised the new direction of industrial policy, declaring the 2nd FYP to be one of "mastering" and "organised consolidation" of the new enterprises created by the previous FYP.[83]

At the start of the 2nd FYP then, the party's industrial policy was returning to the main principle of the pre-*samokritika* era, namely the pursuit of productive efficiency through discipline and clear delineation of responsibilities in production. This political shift was reflected in the 11th conference of the KP party organisation which met on 26 March 1933 to discuss the progress of the factory's production plan.

Delivering the main report, Ots spoke of the achievements of KP during the 1st FYP and praised the factory's tractor and turbine departments for the progress made in the "mastering" of new technology. Predictably however, there were several issues in production that demanded the organisation's attention, including rising unit costs and the familiar problem of stoppages, amounting to 2.9% of worktime for the reviewed period. He went on to single out the metallurgical and 1st Mechanical shops as facing particularly challenging tasks regarding the organisation of production in the coming period.[84]

In contrast to the organisation's 7th conference of 1931, Party members from the shops did not attempt to deflect the director's criticisms by directly attacking managerial incompetence. Instead, they focused on the achievements of their shops and attributed

problems to factors beyond their control. Studenikin, from the old forge claimed that the shop had made great steps in combatting the extent of faulty output. This, he suggested, was achieved through campaigns by the shop's *Komsomol* group which worked hard to promote workplace orderliness and the rationalisation of the working day. At the same, time, workers producing high amounts of *brak* were brought under the supervision of more experienced employees. As a result, it was claimed than in one case, a worker who produced 65kg of faulty forged pieces the previous month had since produced none.

Things in the steel-making shop were going less smoothly. Berlin, a delegate from the shop, deflected criticism about the pace of plan fulfilment by pointing out that the whole factory experienced supply problems. Stoppages at the shop were due to the fact that it was impossible to keep the furnace in constant operation without a reliable supply of magnesite. Berlin criticised the bad state of account keeping in the factory which made it impossible to produce reliable inventories stating bluntly that the extent of useless paper-pushing at KP had "become ridiculous". The steel shop representative ended his contribution by demanding that Ots make good on his promises to reduce white collar staff and warning that if such plans did not go through, it would not be possible to speak of victories at the next conference.[85]

At the evening session, Titov from the turbine department took the floor to report on the progress made by the department and respond to some of the criticisms made in its direction by members of the administration. Titov claimed than in 1928 prices, productivity had risen by 6% while unit costs per turbine had been decreased by 30%. In response to comments made by a member of the administration to the effect that the turbine department did not "pay enough attention" to its set tasks, Titov returned the criticism:

> The leadership of our factory does not take into account the enormous importance of turbine production. If you are aware of the state of Leningrad industry […] then you should know

> what strain Leningrad' power stations are currently under. […] Comrade Ots suggests that the turbine department should take care of its instruments. But the department is making its own instruments because of the lack of special equipment.[86]

Meiulans, a delegate from the metallurgical department spoke along similar lines. Although he accepted that the department had been performing very badly and made up a significant part of the factory's overall *brak* and losses, he questioned whether the factory administration paid enough attention to metallurgy:

> … I must tell comrade Ots, the government and Party have issued a declaration calling for a turn to metallurgy but, so far, the administration has not done so. … The supply of materials is unsystematic. We only get help from the administration, particularly Ots, only when the factory shuts down. Then Ots himself gets this or that material necessary for metallurgy.[87]

After a few more contributions and a guest speech by a military officer reminding workers of the significance of the plant for the defence of the USSR, Ots took the floor to deliver his conclusive remarks. The director responded personally to Titov stating that he protested too much. The turbine department, Ots went on, had enough support as demonstrated by its 400 hundred strong administrative apparatus and should "kindly work". Responding to Meiulans's complaints, Ots commented that if he "turned his face" to metallurgy, he would be turning his back on turbines. He would therefore not turn in any direction but get on with work as should every factory department.[88]

The resolution passed in the end was, in the habitual manner, a compromise document including references to all problems of factory life that had been highlighted during the discussion.[89] In this respect, there was nothing particularly new about the organisation's 11th conference. It is however this absence of significant change that is of interest here, as this grassroots-level continuity was being maintained within the context of a significant

recalibration of industrial policy. At the same time as CC resolutions and the stricter labour legislation enacted by the government were signalling a shift towards a more productivist outlook on the part of the leadership, the basic contours of factory-level Party politics remained essentially the same as they had been since the beginning of the period examined here. The red director tried to get communist workers – nominally his comrades, but functionally his subordinates – to work harder and get their colleagues to do so too in order to meet the factory's persistently elusive targets. As they had done consistently since at least 1926, communists from KP's shops responded by pointing out that they were already working hard enough, accomplishing significant feats in production and that whatever problems there were in fulfilling the factory's production plan were either due to economic factors beyond anyone's control, or due to managerial incompetence. What had changed were the terms in which the rank-and-filers made their case, a process similar to that of five years earlier when the launch of the 1st FYP had closed off the possibility of openly opposing labour intensification while at the same time enabling a frontal assault on managerial authority through the *samokritika* campaign. Now, the more technocratic orientation of the 2nd FYP period necessitated the moderation of anti-managerialism but also enabled a defence of shop interests articulated along the lines of a more business-like focus on achievements and possibilities of improvement in production in accordance with the demands of the plan. The exchanges between Ots and his comrades appear here as a discursive contest over the particular meaning of party slogans like "face to metallurgy" and pieces of public knowledge like the importance of the energy sector.[90]

This suggests that regardless of the political winds prevalent at the top, the nature of the party organisation as a political space where the conflicting interests of labour and management confronted each other remained essentially unchanged. This is because this conflict was not predicated upon any of the centre's political initiatives but on the economic realities of a rapid industrialisation drive which even at its most moderate pace, put extreme pressure on workers

while also making huge demands of managerial personnel. What could, however, be affected by political initiatives was the relative intensity of this conflict on the factory floor. As the good will of the central leadership towards administrative staff was heavily dependent on economic performance, the truce between management and communist workers was as precarious as the sustenance of satisfactory output rates across Soviet industry.

The remaining years of the 2nd FYP would place this truce under new stress. Although a number of economic indicators were improving in 1934, the breakthrough in labour productivity expected by the country's leadership had yet to materialise.[91] The plan foresaw that over 40% of industrial growth for the 1932-37 period would be due to an increase in output per worker, in sharp contrast to the investment-led growth of the 1st FYP.[92] The persistence of the familiar problems of the Soviet production process however cast doubts on the feasibility of such ambitious improvements.[93] Combined with increased pressure from the industrial and defence commissariats for more investment, the unsatisfactory pace of labour productivity growth convinced the leadership to abandon the financial restraint of the original plan for a significantly larger investment budget for 1936.[94]

The Stakhanovite movement of super-productive workers emerged within this context, less than two months after the politburo meeting on 28 July 1935 had approved the new investment plan for the following year. Although Stakhanovism had antecedents in the shock-work movement of the 1st FYP, the initiative for this specific form of labour activism belonged to Konstantin Petrov, the party organiser of the Central Irmino mine in the Donbass where Aleksandr Stakhanov performed his legendary shift on 2 September.[95] The mobilising potential of Stakhanov's feat was quickly grasped by the party leadership who made sure it received maximum publicity in the press. Stakhanovism grew rapidly over the next months and by November 1935, the movement had gained such prestige that the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovite Workers was attended by the full politburo and addressed by Stalin.

Nevertheless, there is substantial evidence that Stakhanovism met with at least some opposition from the country's workforce. In his classic study of the movement, Lewis Siegelbaum has identified a number of sources for this opposition. Some of these, like the perception of Stakhanovites as rate-busters whose activities would end up in a general raising of norms, were similar to the causes of opposition to shock-work. Unlike shock-work however Stakhanovism emphasised technical competence over physical exertion, making aspiring Stakhanovites more dependent than their predecessors on external factors, like the provision of favourable working conditions by their superiors and the competent performance of auxiliary tasks by fellow workers. The significance of this is that it expanded the pool of potential opponents as auxiliary workers resented the prestige and benefits awarded to Stakhanovites for what they saw as a collective effort, while most foremen were probably not very keen to take on further responsibilities in order to provide their subordinates with the opportunity to earn sometimes double their own salaries. This is reflected in the fact that some 50.8% of convictions for anti-Stakhanovite offenses at regional courts were given to workers and a further 20% to foremen or brigade leaders while 11% of all convicts were party members.[96] Anti-Stakhanovite offenses ranged from malicious slander to physical violence and murder, while potential penalties included anything from probation to capital punishment. The extremity of such cases and the fact that offenses against Stakhanovites were often driven by motivations irrelevant to Stakhanovism itself caution against extrapolating from figures on offenders about the overall reception of the movement.[97] What is important for the purposes this inquiry is that there were material reasons for many workers and foremen to oppose Stakhanovism just as there were solid reasons for many workers to aspire to Stakhanovite status. It was precisely this kind of conflict of interests that the presence of the party on the shop floor was meant to mediate.

Indeed, Stakhanovism at the Kirov works does not seem to have become immediately popular amongst the party's rank-and-file. The protocols of shop-level party meetings held in the autumn of 1935 suggest that leading communist workers were frustrated by their comrades' underperformance and general lack of interest in the movement. At a meeting of the cold-stamping shop organisation, the secretary reported that the leading Stakhanovite brigade was one whose foreman was not a communist, while the shop's trade-union representative complained that some communists had even mocked Stakhanovism.[98] The Party group of the 2nd mechanical shop described the pace of the movement as extremely unsatisfactory and instructed its members to popularise Stakhanovism amongst workers by publishing the higher earnings of Stakhanovites and work with the shop's administration to review the pay of auxiliary personnel and expand the progressive piece rate system.[99] Similar concerns were raised at the metallurgical construction shop, with the superintendent Kulichkin admonishing communist activists to give Stakhanovism the attention it deserved. This view of the movement's predicament was not one shared by all party activists. Several communists attending these meetings objected to accusations of indifference arguing instead that whatever problems there were in the development of Stakhanovism in their shops was the fault of their superiors. At metallic constructions, Alekseev argued that foremen bore prime responsibility for the obstacles faced by Stakhanovism such as the lack of clear pay rates and the existence of "boring forms" which put workers off the movement. Alekseev further claimed that foremen avoided popularising the movement stating that he had been awarded a bonus of 25 roubles for labour rationalisation but this was done "somehow secretly, without telling anyone". Another participant at the meeting, Bobrov supported Alekseev citing the example of the smith Alekhanov, who was not listed as a Stakhanovite despite regularly exceeding production norms. Skokov expressed the argument implicit in his comrades' contributions in a more succinct manner stating that "the essence of the Stakhanovite movement consists in raising the

productivity of labour […] The system of labour remuneration in our department does not stimulate the raising of labour productivity".[100]

Discussion sessions in other shops were conducted along similar lines, with the timidity of foremen and issues of remuneration providing the common theme on which the speakers developed their contributions.[101] This peculiar form of buck-passing is a familiar process that we have observed throughout the period examined in this article. It is worth noting however that this is here taking place at the very bottom of the party and factory hierarchies. This not a case of departmental representatives defending their shops' interests vis-à-vis the factory administration, but of rank-and-file workers negotiating their terms of employment with their immediate superiors, a negotiation made possible because of the political imperative of supporting the development of Stakhanovism. Less than two months after the publication of Stakhanov's record, party activists at Kirov were already warning about what we have already seen were amongst the main constraints on the growth of Stakhanovism, the opposition of foremen and auxiliary workers. Communist workers like Skokov let their superintendents know that unless they were provided with reasonable working conditions and attractive pay rates, they would not be able – or willing – to exceed their production norms and they would therefore not achieve Stakhanovite status. As every Party member knew from experience, such a failure in policy implementation could draw the attention of their superiors, themselves reasonably worried about catching the eye of the authorities who even during the most specialist-friendly phase of the 2nd FYP never quite stopped being on the lookout for recalcitrant officials.[102]

This practice took on a darker dimension as the Stakhanovite year of 1936 was succeeded by mass repression in 1937. Stakhanovism emerged at a time when specialist-baiting was officially discouraged and technical competence was overtaking the ability to "storm" as the defining feature of the model worker. As we have already seen however, the mistrust of

workers towards the administration was not predicated upon the political signals emanating from the centre but had been a permanent feature of industrial relations on the factory floor at least since the beginning of the period examined here. It was the scale of this mistrust, as well as the way in which it could manifest inside the party organisation that the political initiatives of the leadership determined.

This is consistent with the views of a number of scholars who have argued that Stakhanovism provided the background to repression in industry by creating multiple opportunities for conflict between workers and management, which fed into the waves of denunciation that fuelled the violence.[103] Following the Union-wide trend, 1937 at the Kirov works saw allegations of blocking Stakhanovite initiatives merge into accusations of wrecking and industrial sabotage. During a meeting of the factory's 3rd mechanical shop, a recent promotee named Vetiutnev came under fire for allowing "wrecking" to take place in the shop. Kotliarenko warned party members that there were many enemies of the people in their factory and accused Vetiutnev of underestimating the threat of wrecking while letting the Stakhanovite movement fizzle out without leadership. Spitsa, a worker who took the floor after Kotliarenko, suggested that part of the blame for the shop's failures should be attributed to the factory's new director, Ter-Asaturov, who having placed Vetiutnev at this post did nothing to check up on the shop's progress. "Essentially", he went on, "willingly or not, everything has been done so that the plan would not be fulfilled". Spitsa finally claimed that nothing had been done to improve the workplace and wondered if this was because "they" could not or did not want to do so. His rhetorical question elicited a quick response from the floor with a participant interrupting to state in no uncertain terms that it was because they did not want to.[104]

It is hardly surprising that party members like Spitsa seized the opportunity provided by the changing political climate to launch attacks against the administration. What is worth noting here however is that, as demonstrated by the shop meetings of October 1935 discussed above,

party activists had already identified the main potential obstacles to the then nascent Stakhanovite movement in the usual suspects of bureaucratic administrators and foremen at a time when the party leadership was still committed to a technocratic orientation in its industrial policy.

This suggests that in spite of the promotion of professionalism and managerial authority by the leadership for at least a few years, the outlook of rank-and-file communists had not changed substantially since the 1st FYP. Much as had been the case with the introduction of *edinonachalie* into the factory, Party members manipulated a political initiative which the leadership had hoped would rationalise the work-process and raise productivity to improve their position as workers with respect to the administration. The technical expertise required to make Stakhanovism work thus ended up making it possible to hold experts and foremen responsible for its failures, just like the authority bestowed upon directors by *edinonachalie* ended up making them responsible for failures in plan fulfilment. In both cases, it was the activity of communist workers in their capacity as enforcers and troubleshooters of party policy that undermined the position of managerial staff and made them targets for the authorities. Once the party began looking for wreckers rather than solutions to industrial problems, political discourse on the factory floor changed seamlessly from allegations of incompetence to accusations of sabotage, as exemplified in Spitsa's statement that intentionally or not, his shop's plan was being sabotaged.

The stabilisation of industrial relations that had been amongst the priorities of the party's economic policy for the 2nd FYP thus met a sticky end in 1937 in a violent conclusion to a process which, although initiated with benign intent, was badly suited to promote industrial peace. In the end, from the workers' point of view, Stakhanovism went much the same way as shock-work, with the expansion of the movement making Stakhanovite status progressively less meaningful with respect to remuneration and benefits.[105] In its short heyday however

Stakhanovism gave rise to a new round of *spetseedstvo* which, for a different set of reasons, turned bloody. Undoing the damage this caused would be one of the main themes of the party's industrial policy in the run up to the Second World War.

V

The end of mass repression roughly coincided with the launch of the 3rd FYP in 1938. The rapidly deteriorating international environment led to an enormous increase of the relative weight of the arms industry in the economy.[106] At the same time, the massive expansion of the armed forces during this period led to a renewed intensification of the labour shortage that had plagued the Soviet industrialisation effort from the beginning.[107]

Given these economic realities and the extent to which the repressions of 1937 had destabilised industrial administration throughout the country induced the party leadership to embark once more on a campaign to raise the authority of specialists and administrators accompanied by a number of measures to enforce stricter labour discipline on the factory floor. As argued earlier, there is consensus amongst labour historians that the 3rd FYP period saw the introduction of the harshest labour laws to date, culminating in the June 1940 law making quitting illegal.

Siegelbaum has argued that the party's post-1937 industrial policy represented a closing of ranks with management and a return to "the status quo ante".[108] This is perhaps true, but as this account has shown, the status quo ante at the Kirov works was hardly one where discipline reigned supreme. The previous pro-managerial initiatives of the party had had partial success in suppressing some of the most extreme cases of industrial strife but did not transform the party organisation into a disciplinary instrument. The evidence suggests that this did not change substantially after 1937.

The organisation's 1st All-Factory conference held over seven days from 19 to 25 April 1938 is indicative of the limits of the ability of leadership initiatives to transform political dynamics on the ground. In line with the resolution of the January 1938 CC Plenum, one of the main themes of the conference was the denunciation of slanderers who had purportedly been responsible for the expulsion of honest communists as well as the rehabilitation of their victims.[109] Indeed, Nikolai Es'kov, the former organiser of the 1st mechanical shop who was now the organisation's acting secretary, spent at least a few minutes of his opening contribution on this subject.[110] Nevertheless, Es'kov insisted that the significant delays in plan fulfilment the factory was experiencing yet again were to a large extent due to the perfidious activities of a "trotskyite-bukharinite gang of fascist agents" that had been allowed to operate by enemies within the PPO steering committee *(partkom)*, such as the purged former director Ter-Asaturov.[111]

If the intention of the leadership had been to rebuild the authority of administrative personnel and limit the extent of industrial strife, it failed to communicate this to the Kirov plant organisation. For although it could be argued that rehabilitating a relatively high-profile victim of repression would have been politically difficult, it is harder to explain Es'kov's attacks on the plant's *new* director, Viktor L'vov. The acting secretary went in almost the same breath from blaming the disgraced – and executed – Ter-Asaturov for production failures to accusing L'vov of not taking decisive measures to improve a series of problems he was perfectly aware of.[112]

Es'kov's criticisms were however mild in comparison to the attack launched against L'vov and other members of the administration by a rank-and-file member named Fedorova. Fedorova made a caustic, lengthy speech in which she accused by name several members of the administration of inappropriate lifestyles and questionable uses of socialist property. It is worth quoting at length, as it contains a rare combination of themes explored in this article:

> Let's take for example the use of our light transport. […] I do not want to say there exists still the Ter-Asaturov method, but our method is similar to the old method. […] Our cars are assigned to engineers etc. but they are mainly used by their wives and families. Zal'tsman's wife lives opposite the House of Soviets and we know that one hour of such a car costs 80 roubles. Well just before the New Year she used the car for four hours in order to go round every market to find herself a fir tree. I think that we should take into account here that we do not elect engineers to the Party Committee in order to give such examples to the non-partyists who are observing us. […] And yourself comrade L'vov. When we elected a new *partkom* we screened everyone carefully. Ter-Asaturov turned out to be an enemy of the people. He spent 160,000 roubles of the public purse to decorate his apartment. And L'vov's wife calls a car and our enterprise pays the driver's overtime. […] And then you can see cases like for example N. V. Volkov, whose heart bleeds about work, he asks for a car to get him to Smolny to sort out fuel supply problems, and they tell him that all the cars are assigned. Turns out there are no cars for such cases but there are for wives. […] You get decent salaries, hire a taxi and drive your wives around. […] This is nothing to laugh about comrades and if it isn't wrecking then, at the very best, it is bad management. […]Wherever you look, disgraceful things are happening.[113]

Fedorova's intervention linked managerial malpractice to political malevolence but also something more fundamental; failure to be a good communist. Embezzlement of factory property was doubly reprehensible when there were committed activists who devoted serious efforts to fix pressing problems, only to be thwarted by the brazen indifference of their superiors. This was an ethical, rather than strictly technical or political criticism. Similar views underlay warnings to previous directors against spending their time locked up in their offices. These were not challenges to the office of director as such or its privileges but admonishments of officials who failed to live up to their implicit reciprocal commitment to the construction of socialism. This suggests that an industrial moral economy was a strong element of the wold-view of rank-and-file communists.[114] Scholars of Soviet subjectivity have shown that

communist ethics were an important element in interactions among individuals and in their encounters with the state.[115] Within the context of the PPO however, discursive appeals to communist ethics carried particular weight because they touched upon the addressee's moral right to membership and evoked the consequences of expulsion. Fedorova's speech was so powerful because it combined a moral appeal with a thinly veiled and credible threat of state violence. This was only possible because of the institutional nature of the Party as supreme guide of state power at all levels.

Although other speakers' contributions were not as vitriolic, Fedorova was far from alone in expressing disapproval of managerial behaviour. What is more, notwithstanding the several outbreaks of laughter amongst the audience recorded by the stenographer, it is unlikely that the engineers and administrators attacked by Fedorova would have been entertained by the parallels she drew between their behaviour and that of their ill-fated predecessors. After all, the acting head of the party committee had also warned the director against neglecting his duties, a point he reiterated responding to a note during his concluding remarks a few days later.[116] In line with the all-Union trend however, accusations of wrecking became rarer after 1938. Nevertheless, although conflicts between workers and industrial cadres became non-lethal in their intensity, they reverted to the familiar manner of buck-passing and mutual accusations of incompetence.[117]

This detente notwithstanding, there are strong indications that managerial authority at Kirov remained severely constrained and had hardly recovered its pre-Stakhanovite level by 1941. By 1939 the Kirov works had once more a new director in Isaac Moiseevich Zal'tsman the former head engineer of the factory who had been a subject of Fedorova's criticism a year earlier.[118] Zal'tsman's administration came under intense scrutiny during a rare stenographed session of the *partkom* that took place on 25 September 1939 on the subject of a recent fire in one of the factory's warehouses.[119] Zal'tsman's contribution to the meeting was limited to a

short introductory speech in which he affirmed that fire safety was a "cardinal matter of factory work".[120] Following this Vladimir Drabkin, the enterprise's trade-union chair, invited the head of the factory's fire brigade, Iushkov, to report on the incident. Iushkov prefaced his report by stating that he along with the trade-union group had tried to put pressure on administrators that "did not implement our measures" and had even brought that matter to the attention of the NKVD.[121] He then went on to give a detailed account of the fire's development and after rejecting a number of possible scenarios left open the possibility of sabotage.[122] The members of the committee who spoke after Iushkov, including the secretary, vice secretary and a superintendent who had been assigned to investigate the issue, all agreed that sabotage was the most likely cause of the fire.[123] Drabkin then suggested that the supervision of the implementation of safety measures be assigned to himself personally. The *partkom* accepted his self-nomination and went on to pass a resolution criticising the factory administration for "not devoting sufficient attention" to the factory's water supply, "despite repeated warnings from the *partkom*".[124]

Whether the matter was pursued further is unclear, but Zal'tsman remained in his post reflecting the by then much more benign attitude of the state towards industrial cadres. What is interesting about this episode however is that it also demonstrates the extent to which the Party's function as an instrument of political control persisted even during a time when the party leadership was signalling and effecting a pro-managerial line. Despite this turn at the top, the immediate response of the *partkom* to a potentially important problem was to blame the administration. That the *partkom* secretary at the time was a CC-appointed organiser Vladimir Stepanovich Efremov may or may not have moderated the attack on Zal'tsman but Efremov himself said nothing in the director's defence, instead joining in the criticism of the other members.[125] This was hardly a resolute defence of management.

A few months later, Zal'tsman's status within the factory would suffer a further blow when the organisation's 2nd All-Factory Conference, held in February 1940, did not elect him to the new *partkom* despite his candidacy.[126] The election took place after two days of discussion in which remarkably little was said about labour discipline despite the conference taking place a mere week after the Red Army Winter War breakthrough of 11 February. Although the factory's obligations towards the war effort figured prominently in Efremov's main report, the problems he identified in production were primarily organisational in nature and therefore easily framed as administrative failures.[127] Thus Buter, the open-hearth shop delegate who took the floor immediately after the secretary could complain: "We are so close to the front, but we have stoppages because of the lack of mazut oil, despite there being some in the factory."[128] Babaev, the secretary of the party bureau of the 2nd mechanical department went a bit further, saying that "comrade Zal'tsman is a young director, he needs to be helped at work. For this reason it was necessary to demonstrate the director's shortcomings…Not a word was said about him…Comrade Efremov will have to speak about this in his closing remarks."[129]

If the anti-managerial contributions of the speakers on the first day of the conference could be attributed to their possible detachment from the political mainstream as very busy people engaged in war-time production, the same could not be said for the intervention of the district secretary Iakov Kapustin, a native Kirov worker who had served as *partkom* secretary in 1938–9.[130] Kapustin criticised Zal'tsman's "method" and admonished Efremov that a CC organiser should closely supervise the director of such an important enterprise.[131] Using rhetoric that was indistinguishable from that of the decade-old self-criticism campaign and too much applause from the floor, Kapustin added:

> We must sweep all of our departments with a party broom. Comrades say that… the system is too cumbersome, there are many spongers of various kinds, many inspectorates, who do

> nothing, but get money. Is it not time then to go through the whole apparatus with a party broom and clear out people who get money illegally... For this is a disgrace – the office has turned into its own kind of department, with a superintendent, a deputy and a ZiS car. Shouldn't we go round these departments and clear out some people from there with an iron party broom?[132]

With this being the political tone of the conference, it is not difficult to see why Zal'tsman would fail to get elected to the committee. It is however harder to explain why a district-level official would actively incite anti-managerial feelings by making such a contribution at a time generally seen as the apogee of Soviet industrial authoritarianism. It may be that Kapustin's long past as a worker in the factory had made him inclined to take a hard line against the administration when problems arose. If this were so, then his was by no means an isolated case as many low-ranking functionaries of the time had spent considerable time as workers at the bench.

It is however unlikely that Kapustin would act purely on the basis of his personal views if he knew them to be at odds with Party policy. It seems more plausible to suggest that in fact, his actions were fully in line with what was expected of him and others in his capacity. For although the leadership did want to tighten labour discipline and restore managerial authority after 1937 it never seemed to think of party activism as being counterproductive to this goal. As late as February 1941, the 18th VKP (b) conference sough to expand Party control over industry by creating new secretarial posts at the city and regional levels to oversee specific industrial sectors. At the same time, it instructed party organisations to establish "permanent control over the work of enterprises" and "increase the masses' labour activism in every possible way".[133] The CC proceeded to call for a new Union-wide competition on 16 June 1941.[134]

Even then on the eve of the Great Patriotic War the party leadership remained firm in its conception of party activism as complementary to its objective of establishing order within industry. Kapustin's behaviour becomes more comprehensible in this light. If the enterprise was lagging behind in its production plan (which it was) and if Kapustin's task was to remedy this by, among other things, inducing the party organisation to be more active in its involvement in production matters, there was no better way to do this than by attacking management for taking advantage of its privileges while also doing a bad job. For the preceding fifteen odd years, greater party involvement had meant precisely that.

VI

A year and a half after Kapustin threatened the factory administration with the proverbial Party broom, the Kirov PPO held its 3rd All-Factory Conference, with which this article opened. It should be now clearer why despite being armed with the provisions of the draconian labour legislation of the 1940s, Zal'tsman addressed the organisation in such a timid manner. Rather than being an industrial autocrat, Zal'tsman was constrained by the complex political environment of the PPO which, as a Kirov native, he knew had never been particularly intimidated by managerial authority. If in his capacity as director Zal'tsman was responsible for the performance of his factory, as a communist he also had to abide by and promote the policies of the All-Union Communist Party.

As this account has shown, the party's industrial policy during the period examined oscillated between the two extremes of mass activism exemplified by *samokritika* and military-like industrial discipline culminating in the June 1940 law. Thus, the regime of economy was followed by the campaign of *samokritika* and the shock-work movement, which in turn gave way to an attempt to re-establish order in the workplace after the completion of the 1st FYP. This came to an end with the promotion of the Stakhanovite movement of record-breaking leading to a re-emergence of specialist-baiting which then merged into the blood-letting of

1937. During the period 1938–1941, the Party's industrial policy again assumed a disciplinarian character, seeking partly to undo some of the damage done in 1937 but also responding to the imperatives of a rapidly deteriorating international environment.

A long tradition of scholarship has interpreted these developments as milestones of a process of class struggle between Soviet workers and the state, one which the latter decisively won in 1940. The problems of this interpretation should by now be much clearer. For as the KP/Kirov case demonstrates, far from acting as an instrument of labour discipline, the party organisation, one of the pillars of the Soviet polity, was the main institutional obstacle to the consolidation of managerial control in Soviet industrial enterprises. Throughout the period examined here, communist workers and party full timers acted as an opposition to the administration on the factory floor, whether in the form of deflecting managerial demands for labour intensification or demanding adjustments to wage policy. When tensions ran high, some were not above making thinly veiled threats of violence. [135]

That Soviet workers were not helpless against the ever-increasing demands of the state apparatus is not in itself a novel insight. What is more interesting in the account offered here is the fact that the primary channel through which KP/Kirov workers could cushion the effects of state economic policy was their participation in the institution that set its priorities. Significantly, the rank-and-filers' activities were rarely ever contrary to party policy. The central leadership not only abandoned its disciplinary policies periodically for campaigns of labour activism but insisted on qualifying even its most authoritarian decrees with calls for the party to whip up mass participation. They simply never saw the two as mutually exclusive.

To a significant extent this reflects the ideological outlook of the party leadership. Stalin and his comrades were after all communists who thought in the same terms they used in their public pronouncements.[136] It made sense for them that their socialist policy objectives would

be furthered, not hampered by the involvement of working-class communists. At the same time, more pragmatic motivations may also have been behind the reluctance of the leadership to take any decisive measures against the disruptive activities of their rank-and-file comrades. The account offered in this article began with the KP/Kirov party organisation emerging from a bitter conflict that had seen the factory's workers join Grigori Zinoviev in open rebellion against the Central Committee. The leadership responded to this by getting the rank-and-file more involved in the everyday business of running the enterprise. This indicates that the lesson they drew from this affair was that diffusing social tension by letting grievances be aired within the party was much more prudent than letting them build up by attempting to enforce strict discipline. Indeed, the evidence suggests that labour unrest declined throughout the USSR in the last years of the 1920s, just as the political environment of the PPO was taking shape.[137]

Ultimately, there is no way to determine the relative extent to which the leadership's permissive attitude towards the rank-and-file was ideologically or pragmatically motivated. The story of the Kirov PPO does however prompt us to consider a different issue. This regards the function of the PPO as a conduit for the active participation of workers in the formation of a new system of Soviet labour relations. Within the context of the organisation, communist ideology and party policy provided a framework of engagement for management and labour. Because this framework was political, its participants could contest both its concrete outcomes and its broader contours. Communists could argue that turbine production should be prioritised due to Leningrad's energy needs or that Stakhanovism should be promoted by improving remuneration. They also used *edinonachalie* as an opportunity to exert pressure on management and denounced the factory's top executives for violating the perceived terms of the moral economy governing socialist industrial relations. Party activism may not have given Soviet workers much input in policy formulation, but it provided them with definite influence over its concrete outcomes.

This was a corollary of the distinct kind of industrial relations being established by the Soviet state, where planning targets replaced market forces and political mobilisation became an ineluctable part of the production process. It was a story neither of resistance, successful or ill-fated, nor of smooth integration, as communist workers fought and negotiated the terms of their integration into the labour relations of the Soviet state. This point has broader implications for our understanding of Soviet state-society relations. Industrialisation was perhaps the most spectacular of the revolutionary changes initiated by the Soviet state but it was not the only one. The party and its grassroots membership were among other things involved in the collectivisation of agriculture, literacy campaigns and the development of paramilitary institutions.

The story of Kirov's communists therefore prompts us to rethink the question of primacy that animated the totalitarian/revisionist controversy. Scholars working within the totalitarian paradigm argued that the power of the state over society was for analytical purposes boundless and consequently framed their scholarship around the intentions of state actors. By contrast, revisionists sought to demonstrate that social realities constrained the power of the state and even forced policy changes, even if ultimately policy initiatives came from above.

As J. Arch Getty pointed out at the time however, revolutionary societies like the USSR resist a clear distinction between state and societal levels of analysis.[138] Revolutions are after all processes of rapid change in the relationship between societies and the states that govern them.[139] This article has shown that the fluidity of this relationship received institutional form in the ubiquitous presence of the Communist Party. The rapid industrialisation of the USSR was a policy initiative conceived by the party leadership and implemented by the state apparatus. Communist activists were expected to assist in the realisation of the leadership's objectives by making sure that the factory administration was meetings its targets and fulfilling its plans. In providing workers with a political remit to check on their bosses, party activity

blurred the boundaries between the two and ultimately the ability of the state to implement policy as originally conceived. The party was thus both subject and object of the massive social transformations it unleashed. Instead then of a mere extension of the state apparatus, this article has shown that the communist party was a complex political entity and a key institutional legacy of the Russian revolution.

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[1] Moshe Lewin, 'Society and the Stalinist State in the Period of the Five Year Plans', *Social History* 1, no. 2 (1976): 139–75, 72–3.
[2] Central State Archive of Historical-Political Documents (TsGAIPD), f. 1012, op. 1, d. 1287, l. 113. All translations are my own, with minor editorial interventions to the stenographic transcript.
[3] Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (Oxford, 1995); Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionism in Retrospect: A Personal View', *Slavic Review* 67, no. 3 (2008): 682–704; David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (New York, 2009).
[4] I.V. Pavlova, *Stalinizm: Stanovlenie Mekhanizma Vlasti*, (Novosibirsk, 1993); Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century* (London, 2005); A. James McAdams, *Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party* (Princeton, 2017).
[5] James W. Cook, "The Kids Are Alright: on the 'Turning' of Cultural History", *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (2012): 746–71.
[6] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkley, 1997); Anna Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 1 (2000): 119–46; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA, 2009)
[7] Laura Engelstein, 'Culture, Culture Everywhere: Interpretations of Modern Russia, across the 1991 Divide', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 2 (2001): 363–93, 380–2.
[8] Peter Holquist, '"Information Is the Alpha and Omega of Our Work": Bolshevik Surveillance in Its Pan-European Context', *The Journal of Modern History* 69, no. 3 (1997): 415–50; Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). Samantha Lomb, *Stalin's Constitution: Soviet Participatory Politics and the Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution* (Routledge, 2017).
[9] William E. Lipsky, 'Comparative Approaches to the Study of Revolution: A Historiographic Essay', *The Review of Politics* 38, no. 4 (1976): 494–509; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge, 1979); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, C. 1760-1840* (London, 2009); R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton, 2014).
[10] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, (Berkley, 2004); Orlando Figes and Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford, 2015); Denise Y. Ho, *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao's China* (Cambridge, 2017).
[11] Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar: Violence and the German Revolution of 1918-1919* (Cambridge, 2016); Gail Bossenga, 'The Nobility's Demise: Institutions, Status, and the Role of the State', *The American Historical Review* 124, no. 3 (2019): 942–49; Jens-Uwe Guettel, 'Reform, Revolution, and the "Original Catastrophe": Political Change in Prussia and Germany on the Eve of the First World War', *The Journal of Modern History* 91, no. 2 (2019): 311–40.
[12] De facto established with victory in the Russian Civil War, the Bolshevik monopoly on political power was formalised in article 126 of the 1936 Constitution stating that: "[t]he most active and conscientious people amongst workers and toilers unite in the communist party, the vanguard of toilers in their struggle for the victory of communism and the leading force of all toilers' organisations in the USSR" Iu. S. Kukushkin and O. I. Chistiakov. *Ocherk Istorii Sovetskoi Konstitutsii* (Moscow, 1987), 310.
[13] Solomon Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1951); Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928-1941* (London, 1986); Kevin Murphy, *Revolution and Counterrevolution: Class Struggle in a Moscow Metal Factory* (Chicago, 2007);

Jeffrey J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge MA, 2009).
[14] William Chase, *Workers, Society and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918-29* (Urbana, 1987); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941* (Cambridge, 1988); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain;* Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class* (Pittsburgh, 1998).
[15] Clayton Black, "Manufacturing communists: 'Krasnyi Putilovets' and the Politics of Soviet Industrialization, 1923-1932" (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1996)
[16] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 480; op. 2, d. 1012; d. 1478, ll. 7, 14; *Leningradskaia Organizatsia KPSS v Tsifrakh, 1917-1973* (Leningrad, 1974), 69–70.
[17] Naturally, all caveats regarding the generalisability of case studies apply. The USSR remained a primarily rural society during the examined period while other branches of industry had lower levels of Party saturation. The Kirov case is valuable not because it is representative, but because it offers a view of communist activism in near ideal conditions. It can therefore provide a useful reference point for further research.
[18] John B. Hatch, 'The "Lenin Levy" and the Social Origins of Stalinism: Workers and the Communist Party in Moscow, 1921-1928', *Slavic Review* 48, no. 4 (1989): 558–77.
[19] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *On Stalin's Team: the years of living dangerously in Soviet politics,* (Princeton, 2015), 22–44.
[20] *Pravda*, 7 October 1924
[21] Clayton Black, 'Party Crisis and the Factory Shop Floor: Krasnyi Putilovets and the Leningrad Opposition, 1925-26', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, no. 1 (1994): 107–26. KP was renamed Kirov after the murder of Lenin party leader Sergei Kirov in 1934.
[22] Yiannis Kokosalakis, '"Merciless War" Against Trifles: The Leningrad Party Organisation After the Fall of the Zinoviev Opposition', *Revolutionary Russia* 28, no. 1 (2015): 48–68.
[23] *KPSS v resoliutsiiakh*, vol. 4, 8-17.
[24] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 266, l. 42.
[25] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 418, l. 103. The exact date is not given, but 1,409 people were noted to be in attendance.
[26] *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, vol. 4, pp. 161-167.
[27] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 418, l. 104.
[28] Ibid. l. 106.
[29] Ibid. l. 109 Workers' – and peasants' correspondents – were grassroots volunteer journalists that reported on various aspects of everyday life for the local and national press. For a fuller discussion, see Jennifer Clibbon, *The Soviet Press and Grass-Roots Organization: The Rabkor Movement, NEP to the First Five Year Plan* (Toronto, 1993).
[30] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 418, l. 109.
[31] Ibid. l. 117–118. First names and patronymics are not usually provided in the stenographic records.
[32] Ibid. ll. 121–123. Ter-Asaturov's description of 'other factories'' managers as having their 'doors open' to workers was entirely in line with the popular image of the good red director. See on this Diane P. Koenker, "Factory Tales: Narratives of Industrial Relations in the Transition to NEP," *Russian Review* 55, no. 3 (1996): 384–411.
[33] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 418, ll. 131–132.
[34] *Pravda*, 10 March 1928. The terms of the collective agreement were attacked in the notes written during the report on the campaign at KP in April. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 549, l. 3. For a detailed discussion of norm-setting during the NEP, see Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Soviet Norm Determination in Theory and Practice, 1917–1941," *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 1 (1984): 45–68, 47-52.
[35] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 549, l. 10.
[36] Ibid. l. 11.
[37] Ibid. l. 16.
[38] *KPSS v resoliutsiiakh*, vol. 4, 338-342
[39] Ibid., 339.
[40] On *spetseedstvo*, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Cultural Revolution as Class War" in Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, 1978).
[41]TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 312, ll. 17-19.
[42] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1. d. 287, ll. 22-24.
[43] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 550, l. 37.
[44] *Istoriia Rabochikh Leningrada. 1703-1965.*, vol. 2 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972). p. 211
[45] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 801, l. 8.
[46] *Istoriia Rabochikh Leningrada*, p. 213.
[47] Ibid. p. 216.

[48] Ibid. p. 218.
[49] Osokina, *Za Fasadom*, 57-58.
[50] Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, pp. 83-84. It is worth noting that this was more pronounced in industries with lower levels of party-saturation. Rossman, 'The Teikovo Cotton Workers' Strike', 48-52.
[51] Between May and August 1930, the 20 most important construction projects in the USSR recruited 200,374 workers. Over the same period, 133,031 quit their jobs. Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, 61.
[52] According to the administration, the factory was 'making up its full complement of labour power by recruiting and taking on unskilled labour, who gradually settle in and assume the place of skilled workers'. Ibid. p. 58. In the 4th quarter of 1931 alone, the wage fund in Leningrad was overspent by 30 million roubles. *Istoriia Rabochikh Leningrada,* 211.
[53] *Piatiletnii Plan Narodno-Khoziaistvennogo Stroitel'stva SSSR*, 3 vols (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Planovoe Khoziaistvo', 1930).
[54] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh*, vol. 4, 556-562.
[55] Lewin, 'Society and the Stalinist State', 173.
[56] Hiroaki Kuromiya, 'Edinonachalie and the Soviet Industrial Manager, 1928–1937', *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 2 (1 April 1984): 185–204. For a discussion focusing specifically on KP, see Clayton Black, "Answering for Bacchanalia: Management, Authority and the Putilov Tractor Program, 1928-1930," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies,* 1508, (2002).
[57] The November meeting was held on the 28th and addressed personally by Kirov who reported on the CC plenum that had taken place on 10-17 November and resolved to remove Bukharin from the Politburo. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 675, l. 17.
[58] Black, 'Answering for Bacchanalia', 1, 25.
[59] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 801, ll. 3-4.
[60] Ibid, ll. 6–7.
[61] Ibid, l. 8.
[62] Ibid, l. 11.
[63] Ibid, l. 14.
[64] Ibid, ll. 15-19.
[65] Ibid, ll. 20-21.
[66] Ibid, ll. 39-41.
[67] This interpretation is supported by the content of the *edinonachalie* resolution itself which criticised management for ignoring the 'productive initiative' of the masses and the 'entirely correct' resolutions of party organisations. Reflecting the political ambiguities of the first FYP era, the resolution also criticised the 'direct interference' of party organisations in the operational work of factory administrations. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh,* vol. 4, 556–557.
[68] Counter-planning commissions invariably discovered 'hidden reserves' allowing higher production rates. In the *AMO-ZiS* automotive plant in Moscow, the counter planning commission presented a plan for 7,900 cars for 1930-31 in response to the administration's plan for 6,400. Straus, *Factory and Community,* 146.
[69] Siegelbaum, 'Soviet Norm Determination'., passim.
[70] One of the notes to Ots specifically raised the question of clutter in relation to workplace safety, linking it to two lethal accidents in the iron-rolling workshop. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 801, l. 38.
[71] On the housing crisis, see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism,* chapter 6.
[72] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh*, vol. 5, 109–112.
[73] Soviet trade–unions were closely integrated with the Soviet state leading several labour historians to dismiss their ability to promote workers' interests. For a nuanced account, see Diane P. Koenker, *Republic of Labor: Russian Printers and Soviet Socialism, 1918-1930* (Ithaca NY, 2005). The complex relationship between trade–unions and PPOs exceeds the scope of this article but deserves further research.
[74] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 550, l. 25 and d. 710, l. 2.
[75] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 675, l. 4.
[76] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 679, ll. 18, 141.
[77] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 846, l. 5.
[78] During the 1st FYP period, whole factories could receive the shock-work designation *(udarnie)*. According to a report given at a meeting of KP's shock-worker foremen, 10640 of the factory's 15000 workers were *udarniki* in 1930. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 846, l. 1.
[79] The *artel'* was a group of workers headed by an elder *(starshina)* who distributed tasks and pay to members of the group. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis,* 33. Production collectives were work units where pay was distributed according to three, rather than the official eight skill brackets.. Straus, *Factory and Community,* 147–8. Communes were the most egalitarian type of work unit, with members paid according to their number of dependants. Siegelbaum, 'Production Collectives and Communes', 65.
[80] Straus, *Factory and Community,* 154–155.

[81] *Pravda*, 5 July 1931.
[82] The extent to which this latter provision was an integral part of labour policy or an improvised measure in response to the 1932–33 famine has been disputed Robert Beattie, "A 'Great Turn' That Never Happened: A Reconsideration of the Soviet Decree of Labor Discipline of November 1932," *Russian History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 235–57, 250.
[83] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh*, vol. 6, 17-18.
[84] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2 d. 616, ll. 4-6.
[85] Ibid, ll. 38–41.
[86] Ibid. l. 50.
[87] Ibid. l. 66
[88] Ibid. ll. 81-84.
[89] Ibid. l. 106.
[90] Scholars of Soviet culture have stressed the ambiguities of meaning in public discourse as an important element in the formative process of Soviet identities but also in the interaction between citizens and the state. Sean Guillory, 'The Shattered Self of Komsomol Civil War Memoirs', *Slavic Review* 71, no. 3 (2012): 546–65; Malte Griesse, 'Les mémoires de la Révolution russe en Union soviétique: espace guerrier ou espaces publics?', *Sens Public* n° 15-16, no. 1 (2013): 85–105. The speeches cited here suggest that the contestation of meaning was not limited to sacrosanct concepts like Revolution and Communism, but also manifested itself in more quotidian contexts.
[91] In the iron industry for example, the 1st FYP revised optimal target of 10 million tons smelted in 1932-33 was finally met in 1934. Allen, *Farm to Factory*, 93. Similarly, a good harvest in 1934 made possible the abolition of bread rationing in 1935.
[92] Davies and Khlevniuk, 'Stakhanovism and the Economy', 876.
[93] At KP, the party organisation's 14th conference held in March expressed concern at the factory's failure to fulfil its plan for February and called all workers to 'battle against *brak*'. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 939, ll. 103-5.
[94] Mark Harrison and R. W. Davies, "The Soviet Military-Economic Effort during the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-1937)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 3 (1997): 369–406.
[95] Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 69.
[96] Ibid, 190–204.
[97] Siegelbaum concluded that there "seems no more reason to accept the prevailing Western view than there is to agree with the Soviet contention that, among workers, only 'backward' elements […] opposed Stakhanovism". Ibid, 193.
[98] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1051, l. 42.
[99] Ibid, l. 163.
[100] Ibid, ll. 59–60.
[101] A significant obstacle to the overfulfilment of norms, stoppages were also a threat to the income of workers on piece-rates. Since 1932, workers were paid one-half or two-thirds (depending on sector) of their norm rate for periods of inactivity if they were not responsible for the stoppage and not at all if they were. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, p. 103.
[102] Despite signalling a more technocratic orientation in the party's industrial policy, the January 1933 CC resolution did not fail to inform party organisations that 'merciless battle against all manifestations of opposition to party policy by the class enemy' was a necessary condition for the success of the plan. *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh*, vol. 6, 21.
[103] Goldman, *Terror and Democracy*, 55-94, idem, *Inventing the Enemy*, 81-139, Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 249 and *passim*, Robert Thurston, "The Stakhanovite Movement: The Background to the Great Terror in the Factories, 1935-1938," in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, ed. J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning (Cambridge, 1993), 142–60; Roberta Manning, "The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936-1940 and the Great Purges," in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, ed. J. Arch Getty and Roberta Manning (Cambridge, 1993), 161–141.
[104] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1060, l. 1. Mikhail Ter-Asaturov, the young draughtsman who we saw arguing for the communisation of the administration earlier in this chapter had by that time replaced Karl Orts as director.
[105] Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 280-1.
[106] Andrei Markevich, "Planning the Supply of Weapons" in Mark Harrison (ed.), *Guns and Roubles: The Defense Industry in the Stalinist State* (New Haven, 2008), 107-110.
[107] The number of serving military personnel trebled from 1,433,000 in 1937 to 4,200,000 in 1941. Manning, "The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936-1940", 132.
[108] Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism*, 264.
[109] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh*, vol.

[110] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1467, ll. 37-45.
[111] Ibid, ll. 23-24. Among other things, the disgraced party members were said to be guilty of 'putting the brakes on the Stakhanovite movement'.
[112] Ibid, l. 24. Problematic areas included a full list of the labour-organisation improvements that Stakhanovism was predicated on, like 'organising technology properly' and 'correct organisation of remuneration policy'.
[113] Ibid, ll. 95-98.
[114] For a recent theoretical explication of this Thompsonian term, see Norbert Götz, '"Moral Economy": Its Conceptual History and Analytical Prospects', *Journal of Global Ethics* 11, no. 2 (2015): 147–62.
[115] See for example the striking letter to Marfa in Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 218–9.
[116] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1467, l. 312.
[117] This is demonstrated in the protocols of several production and Stakhanovite conferences held in late 1938 and 1939. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1099 and d. 1707.
[118] L'vov was removed from the factory in 1938 to serve as People's Commissar of Machine Building. Zal'tsman was promoted from shop superintendent to head engineer sometime during the purges of 1937. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1467, l. 26. He therefore had less than two years' experience in that post before becoming director. Such dazzling rates of promotion were not atypical during this period, both due to the decimation of the ranks of industrial cadres by the repressions and the massive expansion of technical positions which had reached a ratio of 110 per 1000 workers in 1940 from 70.5 per 1000 in 1936. Bailes, *Technology and Society*, p. 289.
[119] *Partkom* sessions were normally minuted in the form of protocols, not transcripted. This transcript is titled 'Transcript to Protocol No. 80'. TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1688, l. 1. The stenographer's presence suggests that the fire attracted the attention of higher powers.
[120] Ibid. ll. 1-3.
[121] Ibid, l. 3.
[122] Ibid, l. 8.
[123] Ibid, ll. 8-19.
[124] Ibid, ll. 24-27.
[125] Ibid, l. 22.
[126] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1954, l. 9.
[127] Ibid, l. 28.
[128] Ibid, l. 72.
[129] Ibid, l. 84.
[130] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1478, l. 1.
[131] TsGAIPD, f. 1012, op. 2, d. 1954, ll. 128-129.
[132] Ibid, l. 132.
[133] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh*, vol. 7, 192.
[134] Ibid. 209. Although this campaign was disrupted by the German invasion of the USSR six days later, the CC renewed it in 1942, 283–300.
[135] It is worth stressing this point as even scholars who have noted the disruptive effect of party activism on managerial authority have tended to think that these tensions declined after 1932. See for example Catherine Merridale, *Moscow Politics and the Rise of Stalin*, (Basingstoke, 1991) 187–9.
[136] Erik van Ree, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism*, (London, 2002).
[137] Andrew Pospielovsky, 'Strikes during the NEP', *Revolutionary Russia* 10, no. 1 (1997): 1–34; Kevin Murphy, 'Strikes During the Early Soviet Period, 1922 to 1932: From Working-Class Militancy to Working-Class Passivity?', in Donald Filtzer, Wendy Goldman, Gijs Kessler et al (eds.) *A Dream Deferred: New Studies in Russian and Soviet Labour History* (Bern, 2008), 171–92.
[138] J. Arch Getty, "State, Society, and Superstition," *The Russian Review* 46, no. 4 (1987): 391–96, 394
[139] The classical statement of this view is in Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 4.