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THE ROLE OF SOCIALIST COMPETITION IN ESTABLISHING LABOUR DISCIPLINE IN THE SOVIET WORKING CLASS, 1928-1934

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SOCIALIST COMPETITION

Introduction

Among the most striking features of the Soviet industrialisation drive during the period under review that distinguish it from corresponding developments in other countries was the role accorded to socialist competition. The importance attached to this phenomenon by the Party leadership and the speed with which it spread through Soviet society are attested to by the fact that at the beginning of 1929 the term 'socialist competition' (sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie)[1] had yet to be coined, whereas by the end of that year it had already become an integral and, as it transpired, permanent feature of Soviet industrial relations. This Chapter examines the origins, aims development and characteristics of socialist competition with special reference to its role in the establishment of labour discipline.

Although socialist competition has been studied only scantily in the West,[2] there is an extensive fund of material on the subject in the Soviet Union.[3] The periodisation of socialist competition most favoured by Soviet labour historians is as follows:[4]

1917 to 1928	the Maturity of the Prerequisites for Competition
1929 to 1935	the Shock Worker Movement
1935 to 1957	the Stakhanovite Movement.

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1 This term is sometimes translated as 'socialist emulation', a useful distinction from 'capitalist competition' and one that embodies the notions of comparison and example. See, for example, Article 15 of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR, Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Moscow, 1982, p.20. However, the term 'socialist competition' has become so widespread in Western works on the subject that I have elected to use it throughout.

2 The best known work on the subject remains Solomon Schwarz, Labor in the Soviet Union, New York, 1952, although even he devotes little space to the phenomenon. See pp.188-193.

3 A good bibliography is contained in I.E. Vorozheikin, Ocherk istoriografii rabochego klassa SSSR, M. 1975. pp. 271-280.

4 See, for example, N.B. Lebedeva, 'Noveishaya istoriografiya sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v SSSR', in Voprosy istorii, I976, no.2, p.49.

Thus, the Soviet historian is at pains to stress the continuity in the development of the movement, an argument that, as will be demonstrated, does not bear close scrutiny.

In this section I shall suggest an alternative periodisation of socialist competition that may be summarised thus:

1918 to 1920	Early Manifestations of Competition and Shock Work
1926 to 1928	the Development of Prototypes of Shock Work and Competition
1929 to 1931	the Shock Worker Movement in the Socialist Offensive
1931 to 1934	Socialist Competition aimed at Raising Skills
1935 to 1941	the Stakhanovite Movement.

It should be noted at the outset that, although the shock worker movement (udarnichestvo) became a prominent feature of socialist competition during the first five year plan, the two movements have quite different antecedents. Moreover, it was the shock worker movement, often referred to as the 'brain child' of competition, that was spreading most rapidly in the years immediately prior to 1929, the year of 'the great breakthrough' (velikii perelom).

The concept of utilising competition among workers as a means of raising labour productivity was not in itself new. Such pioneers of industrial organisation as Robert Owen had tested the idea, but found it wanting.[5] More importantly, it had been rejected as a viable component of modern industrial relations by such an advocate of scientific management as F.W. Taylor, whose theories influenced Lenin considerably.[6]

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5 Sidney Pollard, 'Factory Discipline in the Industrial Revolution', in The Economic History Review, vol. XVI, no.2, December 1963, p.267. Pollard makes the point that Owen's methods were not copied because they ran counter to the accepted beliefs and ideology of the employing class, which regarded the workers as poor due to their own inadequacies. loc. cit. Naturally, this was not the case in the USSR in the period under review.

6 F.W. Taylor, Scientific Management, New York, 1947, p.37. For detailed analyses of Lenin's views on Taylor see Robert Linhart, Lenine, Les Paysans, Taylor, Paris, 1976, especially Part Two 'Lenine et Taylor'; Charles S. Maier, 'Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920's', in Journal of Contemporary History, 1970, vol 5, no.2, pp.51-60; Kendall E. Bailes, 'Alexei Gastev and the Soviet Controversy over Taylorism, 1918-24', in Soviet Studies, vol. XXXIX, no.3, July 1977, pp.373-394; Zenovia A. Suchor, 'Soviet Taylorism Revisited', in Soviet Studies, vol. XXXIII, no.2, April 1981, pp.246-264.

This notwithstanding, in the very first months of Soviet power Lenin had perceived a potential application for competition in Soviet industry. As early as January 1918 he had written an article entitled "How to Organise Competition"[7] in which he elaborated his views on the concept. The work was not published at the time however, probably due to the fact that it was never completed,[8] but its subsequent publication in January 1929 was instrumental in the launching of the nationwide campaign for socialist competition (a term, it should be stressed, that Lenin did not use himself).

However, in an article that was printed at the time, "The Great Beginning" (Velikii pochin) published in July 1919,[9] Lenin welcomed warmly the first manifestation of competition in Soviet Russia: the subbotnik (voluntary labour day) at the Moscow Sorting Station on the Moscow to Kazan' railway on 12 April 1919.[10] Moreover, the 9th Party Congress in April 1920 passed a resolution, clearly bearing Lenin's influence, on the role of competition in raising labour productivity:[11]

> "Alongside agitational and ideological influence on the working masses and repressive measures directed at persistent idlers, parasites and disorganisers, a powerful force for raising labour productivity lies in competition."

Although Lenin's hopes for competition were not realised in his lifetime, his concept of competition as a force was utilised from 1929 by Stalin, not initially, as will be shown, for raising productivity, but as a means of establishing within the work force a level of labour discipline that would be commensurate to the raising of labour productivity. It will

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7 V.I. Lenin Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 5th edn., vol.35, M. 1962, pp.195-205.

8 L.S. Rogachevskaya, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR: istoricheskie ocherki, 1917-1970, M. 1977, p.6n. Another source indicates that the work was discontinued due to the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. See E.H. Carr and R.W. Davies Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929, vol.1, London, p.515.

9 V.I. Lenin, Polnoe Sobranie, vol.39, M. 1963, pp.1-29.

10 D. Ovcharov, 'V.I. Lenin o vsemirno-istoricheskom znachenii pervykh kommunisticheskikh subbotnikov' in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel' i organizator vsenarodnogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v SSSR, M. 1961, p.10.

11 Resolution dated 3 April 1920 'Ob ocherednykh zadachakh khozyaistvennogo stroitel'stva' in Resheniya partii i pravitel'stva po khozyaistvennym voprosam, vol.1, M. 1967, p.164.

be argued that in this political and economic task socialist competition proved as effective a weapon as either propoganda or labour legislation. Indeed, in some respects, socialist competition incorporated and displaced the role of both during the early years of the First Five-Year Plan.

THE SHOCK WORKER MOVEMENT IN THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

The separate evolution of the shock worker movement and competition is most evident in the initial development of 1919 and 1920. As noted above, the point of departure in the development of competition was the subbotnik on the Moscow to Kazan' railway on 12 April 1919 in which 13 communist and two nonparty workers voluntarily worked a Saturday for no pay.[1] This velikii pochin spawned similar labour demonstrations the following year and eventually became an annual event. The most notable development of this movement in 1920 was the Labour Month (trudovoi mesyats) that was organised in the Urals from 28 March until 1 May.[2] This was supposed to incorporate Lenin's three basic principles of competition: repeatability (povtvorenie), publicity (glasnost') and the comparability of results.[3] It is instructive to note that, from the beginning any 'voluntary' principle was breached: those that failed to turn up for the two to five hours daily overtime without pay were branded as deserters from the labour front, were expelled from the Party, suspended from their union, displayed on 'black' boards of disgrace or sent before Comrades' Courts,[4] features of competition that were all to re-emerge when the movement became nationwide in 1929.

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1 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964 - dokumenty i materialy profsoyuzov, M. 1965, pp.23-24.

2 A. Fadeev, 'Kommunisty - organizatory ural'skogo trudovogo mesyatsa' in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', pp.60-71.

3 V.I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie, vol.36, M. 1962, pp.60-71.

4 Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel' (A. Fadeev), pp.67.68.

A particular stimulus to competition at this time was the celebration of Lenin's 50th birthday in April 1920.[5] Significantly, the mass movement for socialist competition in 1929 coincided with Stalin's 50th birthday.[6]

Despite the resolution of the 9th Party Congress in April 1920, competition did not become a mass phenomen at this time. The ravages of the Civil War, the militarisation of labour in 1920 and the fatigue through malnourishment of the urban labour force combined to make such initiatives inappropriate. The impetus for competition was finally lost with the adoption of the New Economic Policy in 1921 and, in the following year, the new Labour Code, in which trade unions and workers were not obliged to raise productivity, merely exhorted to do so.[7]

The important distinction between these early manifestations of competition and the simultaneous development of shock work was that the former tended to emanate from above in the form of campaign (albeit at a local level) and was aimed at an overall increase in labour productivity, whereas the latter was directed at tackling urgent problems in industry and represented a response from below to the situation pertaining in the country at the time.

Shock work had quite a distinct, military pedigree. The term 'shock' (udarnyi) appeared in the Revolutionary period when small units of volunteers would undertake particularly dangerous and important missions.[8] The first 'shock' battalions were established as early as May 1917 in the armies of the Provisional Government

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5 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.26.

6 See Trud, 21 December 1929. The adulation surrounding the leader (vozhd') at this time is seen as the beginning of Stalin's 'personality cult' (kul't lichnosti). See, for example, T. Szamuely, 'The Elimination of Opposition between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses of the CPSU', Soviet Studies, vol. XVII, no.3, Jan. 1966, p.337; R. Medvedev, K sudu istorii, New York, 1974, p.302.

7 For an evaluation of shock work and competition at this time see E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1923, vol. II, London, 1952, p.217; For the 1922 Labour Code see Mervyn Matthews, Soviet Government: A Selection of Official Documents on Internal Policies, London, 1974, pp.413-424.

8 A.P. Finarov, 'Kak nachalos' udarnichestvo v SSSR', in Voprosy istorii, 1966, no.10, p.198.

under the command of General Denikin.[9] With the onset of the Civil War, military discipline was spread first to the railway workers, and subsequently to other key industries. Thus, at a time of great danger and need, groups of workers drawn mainly from the ranks of the Party or Komsomol, would volunteer for urgent industrial tasks. The first of these shock groups has been traced to the second half of 1919, and many were still functioning in the summer of 1920.[10] As with the early experience of competition, the voluntary principle proved to be prescriptive rather than ascriptive. As the crisis of the Civil War receded, the urgency of such tasks was diminished and the prime motivation for the shock groups disappeared.[11]

THE ORIGINS OF THE SHOCK BRIGADES

A variety of factors combined to facilitate the reemergence of shock work in the latter half of the 1920's, not initially among the working class as a whole, but predominantly among the urban youth of proletarian backgrounds.[12] By 1926 the first products of entirely

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9 Istoriya grazhdanskoi voiny v SSSR, vol. 1, M. 1935, pp.274-278.

10 Sotsialistocheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR, M. 1973, p.44; Voprosy istorii, 1966, no.10 (A.P. Finarov), p.201.

11 This despite an interesting instruction issued by the VTsSPS bureau of production propaganda on 18 December 1920 on the formation of 'Production cells' (proizvodstvennie yaicheiki) at enterprises to organise competitions, shock groups which "by their own example will demonstrate to the rest of the working masses how much it is possible to increase labour productivity" and lead the campaign against absenteeism and violation of labour discipline, in Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.30.

12 For an interesting article that argues this point see Hiroaki Kuromiya, 'The Crisis of Proletarian Identity in the Soviet Factory; 1928-1929' in Slavic Review, vol. 44, no.2, Summer 1985, pp.280-297. His findings are supported by the results of an investigation carried out by Moscow's regional trade union council and Komsomol, which stated "it was not fortuitous that socialist competition began amongst the Komsomol and spread from there to other groups of workers. The young leading workers, who had not inherited from the capitalist factory old habits (and the force of habit is the most terrible thing), naturally found it easier to master the new tasks and new forms of socialist labour." The authors add that the young, unskilled workers from the countryside were the least involved. Moskovskie udarniki za rabotoi: po materialam obsledovaniya MOSPS i MK VLKSM, M. 1930, p.6.

Soviet schooling were joining the work force, a group that shared neither the sense of alienation to the Soviet factory experienced by the peasant recruits to the working class, who were beginning to enter the work force in ever increasing numbers from 1926, nor the restrictive customs and practices of the mature proletarian workers. This latter group had enjoyed an unprecedented period of rights since the adoption of the 1922 Labour Code and the Party leadership was becoming increasingly worried at the failure of exhortations to increase labour productivity, cut production costs and tighten labour discipline. The first warning on alleged falling levels of discipline had been voiced in 1925[13] and in the following year the Party had issued a decree on "The Struggle for the Regime of Economy".[14] This was followed in March 1927 with a further Party decree "On Questions of Rationalising Production",[15] a rallying call that was to generate a tangible response amongst the urban factory youth, many of whom had been frustrated by the slow pace and craft attitudes of their elders. This was to develop into an overt conflict between the old and the new in the workshop, a conflict exacerbated by the introduction at precisely this period of such modern production techniques as continous flow processes and conveyor belts. This conflict was to come to a head in December 1928 at the 8th Congress of Soviet trade unions, when Komsomol delegates clashed with the union leadership over the role of shock work.[16]

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13 According to P. Levenstern, 'Zakonodatel'noe regulirovanie voprosov trudovoi distsipliny', in Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, p.54 the term 'labour discipline' had been used first in legislation in the decree of Narkomtrud SSSR of 3 February 1925. The first Party decision to use the term during the reconstruction period would appear to be the resolution of the Central Committee plenum on 9 April 1926 'On the Economic Situation and Economic Policy", in Resheniya...vol.1 p.522.

14 Appeal of the Central Committee and Central Control Committee to all Party organisations, to all Party Control commissions, to all Members of the Party working in economic, cooperative, trade, banking and other institutions, in Resheniya...vol.1, pp.525-530.

15 Decree of TsK VKP(b) dated 24 March 1927, in ibid., pp.605-611.

16 There is a detailed account of this clash at the VIIIth VTsSPS Congress in E.H. Carr and R.W. Davies, Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929, vol.1, London, 1969, pp.552-563.

All these factors resulted in the urban industrial youth and its organisation, the Komsomol, setting the pace in reviving the concept of shock work in the period 1926 to 1928.[17] Even the military link was reestablished when, on 2 June 1928, the Komsomol approved a new khakhi uniform (which was to become a commonplace feature on the construction sites and shock projects of the First Five-Year Plan.)[18] However, even before the shock movement took off, there is strong evidence that the youngsters were generally displaying more idealism and vigour at work than their elders. The most graphic account of this is contained in the short novel "The Exuberant Sun" (P'yanoe solntse) written in 1927 by Fedor Gladkov (the work was soon to be banned and still does not appear in this celebrated author's collected works). In the passage quoted, Sofia Petrovna, an old Party worker with twenty years industrial experience, describes the condition of the working youth:[19]

> These are hard years for our youngsters. They quickly burn out, overwork themselves, suffer nervous breakdowns and, by the time most of them are eighteen or twenty, they are either crippled or dried up, soulless old people. Take this sanatorium: at least a third of those here are Komsomol, and they all look like middle-aged, long-suffering folk who are quite worn out.
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> I can't bear to watch the way we torment horses: we heap 100 poods onto a cart and we're off. The horse strains in the shafts but can't budge an inch, and they torture it with a whip and sticks. It's the same with our youngsters. I can't agree with that, I just can't accept it.

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17 Stalin had given the Komsomol initiative a tremendous boost when he personally addressed its 5th Conference in March 1927 and called for 'temporary sacrifices' from the youngsters. "The history of our Revolution", he claimed, "states that not one major step has been taken without certain sacrifices on the part of an individual group of the working class in the interests of the entire working class of our country...There is no need to tell you that the present insignificant sacrifices will be recouped with interest in the nearest future. This is why I think that we must not hesitate at certain insignificant sacrifices in the interests of the working class as a whole." in I.V. Stalin, Sochineniya, vol.9, 1952, pp.197-198.

18 Komsomol'skaya pravda, 2 June 1928.

19 Fedor Gladkov, Sobranie sochinenii, M - L, 1929, vol.3, p.265.

Just when and where the first shock brigade was formed has been the subject of controversy (and not a little parochialism!) amongst Soviet historians of this period.[20] It is instructive, perhaps, to heed the advice of two contemporary observers of the subject who wrote in 1931:[21]

> "Let future historians argue who was first. For us, living today, it is absolutely unimportant."

A relatively recent history of socialist competition,[22] claims that the earliest shock brigade so far traced is that in the repair shops of the Moscow to Kazan' railway, formed by the Komsomol member, Nikolai Nekrasov, "at the beginning of 1926".[23] However, earlier references places the formation of this group more precisely as July 1926.[24] If this latter date is correct, then one might press the claims of the first youth brigade in the main machine shop of the Zlatoust Machine Works in the Urals that tried unsuccessfully to get the plant management to accept their form of shock work "at the beginning of 1926".[25] Another contender for the title 'first shock brigade' is the collective of girls (the number involved varies from eight to 120!!)[26] at the Krasnyi Treugol'nik factory in Leningrad. In September 1926 the factory management and Komsomol committee reorganised their working procedures

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20 The most favoured candidates are Komsomol groups at Leningrad's Krasnyi Treugol'nik (see note 26 below) and Ravenstvo (see note 42 below) works, on the Moscow-Kazan' railway (see notes 23 and 24 below) and at the Zlatoust Machine Works in the Urals (see notes 34-38 below).

21 V. Afanas'ev and A. Grishkevich, Fakty dva goda sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya, 29.iv.1929-29.iv.1931, Leningrad, 1931, p.23.

22 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit.

23 ibid. p.73; According to Yu. Kulyshev, L.S. Rogachevskaya, Pervye udarnye, M. 1961, p.8, this occurred in April 1926.

24 F.P. Zimoglyadov, Kommunisticheskaya partiya sovetskogo soyuza vo glave trudovoi aktivnosti mass, 1928-1941, M. 1973, p.15; Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em rabochego klassa SSSR (1928-29gg): sbornik dokumentov, M. 1956, p.558.

25 Ocherki razvitiya sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya na Urale (1917-1967), (Sverdlovskii institut narodnogo khozyaistva), vyp.7, Sverdlovsk, 1970, p.37.

26 R.P. Dadykin, Nachalo massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v promyshlennosti SSSR, M. 1954, p.70 notes eight; L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.74, declares 120. It would appear that the original 'shock eight' (udarnaya vos'merka) commenced intensive methods of work which were then spread to the entire workshop.

so that the girls started producing substantially more rubber boots than previously. This reorganisation coincided with the introduction of a conveyor belt into the factory.[27]

The first article on these groups to appear in the national press was printed in Komsomol'skaya Pravda on 27 June 1927 that called the youth brigades of the Urals "the first swallows" in the shock movement. Indeed, it had been this paper that had been instrumental in reviving competition at approximately the same time. On 2 February 1927 it had printed the proposals by the Komsomol Central Committee to organise competitions for the best young workers. There is evidence that such competitions were organised in the Ukraine,[28] Leningrad and Moscow,[29] as well as in the Urals,[30] where by July 1927 the competition had been spread, at least in one instance, to cover all workers.[31] In the Donbas coalfields such initiatives gave impetus to the formation of youth artels.[32]

27 A. Dubin, 'Pervye udarnye Komsomol'skie brigady na predpriyatiyakh Leningrada (1928-1929) in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel' p.104.

28 O.I.Shkaratan, 'Osnovye etapy sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v promyshlennosti' in Istoriya SSSR, 1961, no.5, p.59. (Odessa); N. Nagornyi, 'KP(b)U - Organizator trudovoi aktivnosti rabochykh tyazheloi promyshlennosti Ukrainy v pervye gody industrializatsii (1926-1928gg)' in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.153. (Petrovskii metalworks in Dnepropetrovsk).

29 As early as 5 February 1927, a report in Komsomol'skaya pravda states that such competitions had been held at a number of Leningrad factories including Krasnyi Putilovets, the Stepan Razin and Yegorov works, Elektrosila and Vereteno. Shkaratan (loc. cit.) adds Leningrad's Krasnyi Treugol'nik and Skorokhod works as well as Moscow's Krasnaya Presnaya factory. Lebedeva and Shkaratan place the first production competitons as early as 1924, see N.B. Lebedeva, O.I. Shkaratan, Ocherki istorii sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya, Leningrad, 1966, p.74.
In August 1927 the Presidium of VSNKh SSSR launched a competition for the plant with the best results in rationalising production for 1925/26 and 1926/27. In April 1928 the winners were declared to be the Makeevskii metalworks (Donbas). Among the 89 plants rewarded were Leningrad's Elektrosila and Skorokhod. See Istoriya rabochikh Donbassa, vol.1., Kiev, 1981, p.275; Lebedeva, Shkaratan, op. cit. pp75-76.

30 S.S. Koz'min, 'Deyatel'nost' partiinykh organizatsii Urala po ukrepleniyu trudovoi distsipliny na osnove proizvodstvennoi aktivnosti rabochykh v pervye gody industrializatsii (1926-1928)' in Bor'ba partiinykh organizatsii Urala za zakreplenie zavoevanii oktyabr'skoi revolyutsii i postroenie sotsializma, Sverdlovsk, 1976, p.94 (Zlatoust Machine Works).

31 ibid.p.95 (Nadezhdinsk works).

32 Istoriya SSSR s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei, vtoraya seriya, vol.8, M. 1967, p.413.

At this point it is worth emphasising once more that the shock movement and competition were not directed at the same targets at this stage. The 'best worker' competitions were an attempt to increase productivity amongst all youngsters, whereas the first shock brigades were aimed at utilising new production processes, reducing costs and strengthening labour discipline, as well as increasing output. This becomes evident when one examines the factory most widely acknowledged as "the cradle of the shock worker movement"[33] the Zlatoust Machine Works. From July 1927, so called initiative groups had been organised at this plant, being a transitional form of shock production brigades.[34] However, it would appear that the first group to actually call itself a 'shock brigade' was that formed by Komsomol member, Dudarev, on 15 November 1927,[35] (although another account names the leader as Simonov and notes that there were ten Komsomol members in the brigade not nine as given elsewhere).[36]

It would appear that the immediate stimulus to set up a shock brigade was the introduction of the conveyor belt to the foundry where the group all worked.[37] However, it was doubtless due also to the extremely low level of labour discipline existing in the foundry at that time: "low skills, careless attitudes to work, a high level of defective output, absenteeism, arbitrarily quitting work and hooliganism" all appeared to have been commonplace.[38] The charter of Dudarev's brigade was printed on 22 April 1928 in the newspaper of the Zlatoust Komsomol, Na Smenu . A significant article in the same newspaper on 29 December 1928, at which time it was claimed that 50 shock brigades were operating

33 Izvestiya, 15 January 1930.

34 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.101-102.

35 Ocherki razvitiya, p.37.

36 S. Kolosnitsyn, 'Pervaya udarnaya' in Na putyakh k pobedam, Zlatoust, 1931, pp.5-6. Yet another account notes 9 Komsomol and 2 non-Party members, Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.102.

37 D. Reznikov, Udarnye brigady sotsializma, M-L, 1930, p.10.

38 Na putyakh, p.5.

in the Zlatoust region alone,[39] noted that "shock work arose, grew and spread in an intense struggle with hostile, bigoted and backward elements, in a struggle with old habits and views."

That Dudarev's brigade was not immune to this is demonstrated in the article "Shock Brigades" printed in Komsomol'skaya Pravda on 11 May 1928. The same article notes the simultaneous formation of shock brigades at another Urals plant, the Lys'va metalworks. Despite the fact that Dudarev's brigade cut costs, increased productivity and had an excellent disciplinary record, within 7 or 8 months the factory management had dispersed all members of the group to different parts of the foundry.[40] This hostility from management, as well as from the mature workers, was to characterise the spread of the shock movement during the first years of the Five-Year Plan. However, it is recorded that adult workers first started joining shock brigades as early as the Autumn of 1928, by which time, of course, Dudarev's initiative at the Zlatoust Machine Works had floundered.[41]

Because this experiment in Zlatoust was so short lived, certain Soviet historians maintain that the first real shock brigade was the group of 49 girls at Leningrad's Ravenstvo cotton spinning mill, who formed on 16 July 1928 what they called a model-exemplary group (opytno-pokazastel'naya gruppa),[42] utilising intensified work procedures to increase productivity. This group was still operational when the mass movement for socialist competition got under way in 1929. Indeed, the group had achieved so much publicity that, in May 1929, the factory management made the premature and ill-fated attempt to transfer all its workers on to this method of work and declare Ravenstvo to be the first 'shock' factory in the land.[43]

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39 Ocherki razvitiya, p.38.

40 Na putyakh, p.12.

41 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.104.

42 E.G. Kozhevnikova, 'Udarniki' in Neizvedannymi putyami. Vospominaniya, uchastnikov sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva. (Institut istorii partii Lenobkoma KPSS), L. 1967, pp.126-136. Lebedeva and Shkaratan, op. cit. p.79 call the Ravenstvo youngsters the first complex (skvoznaya) shock brigade.

43 Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.108 (A. Dubin).

The first shock brigades, model exemplary groups, rationalisation brigades and production communes together represented what the young participants themselves called socialist forms of work organisation. At the same time Party and Komsomol organisations were utilising their national and local press organs to publicise such forms and vehicles of competition as production checks,[44] roll calls,[45] production conferences[46] and temporary control commissions.[47] The difference between the forms of competition and the socialist forms of work organisation is that the former was aimed at all workers and the latter, specifically, at the youngsters.

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44 The first public production check (obshchestvenno-proizvodstvennyi smotr) was initiated in July 1926 by the local newspaper Tverskaya pravda. See Pervye shagi industrializatsii SSSR (1926-1927gg), M. 1959, pp.287-288.

45 The first production roll-call (proizvodstvennaya pereklichka) was initiated by the Komsomol of the Leningrad Yegorov works on 13 January 1928. See Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.94-96. Lebedev and Shkaratan, op. cit. pp.77, date this initiative from 3 December 1927, the date I have given is that of the publication of the letter from the Yegorov workers. Pereklichka means an exchange of reports or messages. By using 'roll call', however, I have retained the military connotation which was so ubiquitous in such Komsomol undertakings.

46 Production conferences (proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya) evolved from the production cells created by the VTsSPS instruction of 18 December 1920 (see note 11 above). The first was formed at the Baltic shipyards in Leningrad on 19 April 1924. See A.N. Gutarov, 'Proizvodstvennye soveshchaniya na leningradskikh prepriyatiyakh (1926-1929gg) in Istoriya rabochego klassa Leningrada, vyp.1, sbornik statei, Leningrad, 1962, p.57. In the autumn of 1929, production conferences, which were open to all employees of a given plant, were made responsible for running socialist competition (their leading personnel being drawn from the shock workers at the plant). This was formalised by a joint decree of VTsSPS and VSNKh SSSR of 19 November 1929 which instructed that the chairman of an enterprise's production conference should be appointed Assistant to the Director of that plant with special responsibilities for competition. See, Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta, 19 November, 1929.

47 Temporary Control Commissions (vremennie kontrol'nie komissii) were established after the resolution of the XV Party Conference dated 3 November 1926 'The Results of the Work and Current Tasks of Trade Unions', see Resheniya...vol.1, p.557, probably based on the successful experiment of such commissions from early 1927 in the Urals, see Bor'ba partiinykh organizatsii Urala, p.96 (S.S. Koz'min). The same author claims that they existed at five metalworks by the end of 1927 (including the Zlatoust Machine Works), loc. cit. At this time they were also operating at five Leningrad factories, see Istoriya rabochego klassa Leningrada, p.63 (A.N. Gutarov). The commissions usually consisted of three to five activists elected by the production conference.

Nevertheless, by 1928, there was clearly widespread friction in workshops throughout the country between the old and new attitudes to work as the article in Komsomolskaya Pravda on 30 March 1928 illustrates. As the Komsomol tended to support the new methods and the union leadership oppose them, matters were bound to come to a head at the 8th Congress of Soviet Trade Unions in December 1928. However as the leadership of the AUCCTU constituted a key element of the Right Opposition, which was opposed to Stalin's plan for rapid industrialisation, the dispute became subordinated to the wider argument over the pace of industrial development. On this, political, question the Party had the support of the Komsomol, a fact that was to have a decisive influence on the outcome of the debate on socialist forms of work.

In his report on the work of the AUCCTU at the 8th Congress in December, Mikhail Tomskii the Chairman, was taken to task by a young Komsomol delegate, Zhdanov, for not advocating the socialist organisation of youth work.[48] Tomskii returned to this question in his summing up:[49]

> What, in fact, is this socialist organisation of work by adolescents (podrostki)?... The socialist organisation of work: is it a blessing? If it is then why only for adolescents and not for all workers? You must say distinctly, clearly and simply what the socialist organisation of work is, and if it turns out to be indisputably a good thing, then why aren't you advocating it for all? And have you spoken anywhere of this distinctly? No. You simply pronounce that beautiful phrase. But beautiful phrases can sometimes be extremely beautiful in form, but completely lacking in substance.
>
> At present, in the transitional period from capitalism to socialism, and we are living in precisely this period, we do not yet know what form the socialist organisation of work will take. We can only forecast.
>
> The socialist organisation of work, according to our supposition, will mean that people from childhood will be fully and comprehensively educated, at the same time studying labour processes and the laws of mechanics. I suggest to you that a mature socialist society will be one that is mechanised to the highest degree. I suggest that the socialist organisation of work in the matured form of socialism will exclude all elements of work compulsion and will rest on the conscientious attitude towards socially necessary work operations of an individual with a social, collectivist psychology. People will then work not because they are obliged to do so by the factory rules or the collective agreement, but because, being members of society, they cannot but work, cannot but fulfil socially necessary functions.

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48 Vos'moi s"ezd professional'nykh soyuzov SSSR: stenograficheskii otchet, M. 1929, p.111.

49 ibid. p.191.

Despite the standing applause that Tomskii received at this Congress and the silence which greeted Zhdanov's contribution, it was the latter's line that was to prevail in the very near future.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MASS SHOCK WORK AND SOCIALIST COMPETITION

Several hitherto separate campaigns came together early in 1929 to produce the mass spread of shock work and socialist competition. Youth shock brigades were taking root all over the country, progressively more production competitions and checks were being initiated, the introduction of the seven-hour day and new production techniques provided an extra stimulus to the search for new methods of work, the campaigns for renewing collective agreements, for re-elections to the Soviets, as well as the publication of the control figures for the Five-Year Plan were an added source of enthusiasm, the Party had launched a major drive to improve labour discipline and the political struggle between Stalin's faction and the Right Opposition was reaching a decisive stage. In retrospect, Soviet historians tend to stress the mutual interdependence of all these factors. However, it wasn't until the 16th Party Conference, in April 1929 that this interdependence was first articulated.

It is important to stress that the control figures for the First Five-Year Plan, which had been approved by the Party plenum in November 1928, made no provision for competition or shock work. However, by 29 April 1929, in appealing to the workers of the USSR to join in socialist competition, the 16th Party Conference was unable to declare unambiguously the "competition and the five-year plan are indissolubly linked."[50] In this intervening period the key question of overriding importance became the pace (or tempo) of industrialisation. As all other matters became subordinated to this political question they tended to lose their individual significance.

A good example of this is the appearance of the term 'socialist competition'. The first recorded mention of this in the central press,

50 Resheniya partii i pravitel'stva po khozyaistvennym voprosam (1917-1967), vol.2, M. 1967, p.45.

was a leading article entitled "We are Organising an All-Union Socialist Competition" in Komsomol'skaya Pravda on 26 January 1929. The same newspaper had not employed this term on 17 January in a major feature on shock brigades printed in response to the Vesenkha decree of the previous day, which had endorsed the Komsomol initiative in promoting shock brigades.

This decree was printed in that same issue of Komsomol'skaya Pravda on 17 January, while Pravda that day carried an appeal from Vesenkha Chairman, Kuibyshev, entitled "Closer to Socialist Construction" in which he called on workers to emulate the young workers. A recent history of the Komsomol mistakenly credits Kuibyshev with having coined the phrase 'socialist competition' in this article.[51]

It was the publication in Pravda on 20 January 1929 of Lenin's article "How to Organise Competition" that provided the movement with its initial boost (although there are grounds for arguing that it was aimed as much at rationing and labour discipline). It is my contention that these two articles each provided a part of the movement's name: from Kuibyshev 'socialist' and from Lenin 'competition'. However, there were a number of other campaigns under way at this time which would contribute to the launching of socialist competition and shock work as a nationwide movement: on 25 October 1928, Pravda, had initiated a check on production conferences which was to run over into 1929;[52] at about the same time Ural'skii Rabochii and Sovetskaya Sibir' had launched the Urals-Siberia roll call (pereklichka),[53] on 15 January 1929 the Party newspaper Rabochaya Gazeta had encouraged its readers to organise production roll calls at their place of work; and on 17 January, a Party decree had called for an upsurge of productivity in the Donbas coal mines.[54]

However, in the midst of all this it was Komsomol'skaya

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51 Slavnyi put' leninskogo komsomola:istoriya VLKSM,M,1978,p.207.
52 Ocherki razvitiya, p.42.
53 V. Cheremnykh, 'Nachalo massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v promyshlennosti Urala v 1929g', in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.200.
54 Resheniya..., vol.2, pp. 5-8.

Pravda that first made the vital link between competition and shock work in the article on 26 January, in which "shock groups and youth shifts" are included in the Komsomol's arsenal along with forms of competition. In this article it was suggested that an All-Union competition for young workers commence on 15 March. Two days later the Bureau of the Komsomol Central Committee agreed this plan, forming on 9 February a committee to organise the competition.[55] On 20 February the commencement date was confirmed by a joint Vesenkha, VTsSPS and Komsomol decree.[56]

On 31 January the miners of Gorlovka responded to the appeal by Rabochaya Gazeta by challenging, via the newspaper, the miners of Irminsk to raise productivity, cut costs, improve labour discipline and increase the mass cultural work of its union committee. The Irminsk miners agreed to accept the challenge on 8 February and they were joined on 10 February by the Kuzbas miners and on 16 February by the Moscow coal miners.[57] Also on 31 January the miners' union newspaper Kochegarka carried details of what many observers regard as the very first socialist competition pact, between the miners of the Northern and Shcherbinovka pits in the Donbas in coal getting and reduction of costs.[58] However, as this was only a 'verbal' challenge, the first written pact is generally accepted to be that signed (somewhat confusingly!) also on 31 January between the miners of the Northern pit (Artemsk) and

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55 R.P. Dadykin, op. cit. pp.5-8.

56 On 20 February a joint meeting of the Presidia of Vesenkha SSSR and RSFSR, the Collegium of Narkomput and the bureau of the Komsomol passed a resolution 'On the Organisation of an All-Union Competition in Reducing Output Costs' to commence 15 March. Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta, 21 February 1929.

57 R.P. Dadykin, op. cit. p.89.

58 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.193.

the Central Pit No.1. in Gorlovka.[59] I have come across, however, earlier challenges to competition amongst workers at the same enterprise.[60]

On 11 February the Party's Central Committee officially endorsed the Komsomol's initiative in socialist competition.[61] However, the Party seemed more concerned at this stage with its campaign for labour discipline. On 8 February Pravda printed a letter from the workers of Moscow's Krasnyi Bogatyr plant which called for tighter discipline and more competition. Nevertheless, the major Party document on labour discipline during this period, the letter of the Party's Central Committee to all Party organisations "On the Raising of Labour Discipline",[62] dated 21 February, nowhere mentions competition or shock work. This omission is all the more surprising considering the fact that so many other organisations and groups of workers were linking the concept of raising competition and tightening discipline. Thus, for example, the workers at Leningrad's Krasnyi Vyborzhets plant challenged all other enterprises in the Soviet Union to compete with them in reducing costs by means of raising labour productivity, rationalising the use of manpower and machinery and fully utilising the working day. The appeal was printed in Pravda on 5 March and marked a step forward in the development of competition. Indeed, some observers take this date as being the start of the mass spread of socialist competition,[63] even though the authors of the appeal had not expressly called for anything more than a comparison of methods and results in reducing costs.

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59 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR. M. 1973, p.71.

60 At the Northern pit (Donbas) in December 1928 the face workers Dudkin and Ivanov were competing, see Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.7. On 21 January 1929 weaver Elizaveta Vakhtina spoke at the Lenin Memorial Meeting at Tevinskaya textile mill and said: "On this Historic day I promise in the course of the year to overfulfil the plan and reduce wastage by 5 per cent. I promise to eliminate arbitrary absenteeism and to raise labour discipline. I challenge weaver Goltsova to competition". See Yu. Dubl', 'Sorevnovanie i udarnichestvo kak osnovnoi metod sotsialisticheskogo organizatsii truda', in Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo, 1933, no.12, p.37.

61 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.95.

62 Resheniya..., vol.2, pp.8-9.

63 Ya. Dakhiya, 'Nachalo massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya na promyshlennykh predpriyatiyakh Leningrada (1929g), in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.93; L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.97.

Eventually a pact was signed between Krasnyi Vyborzhets and Moscow's Metallolampa on 10 April and by the end of April the Leningrad factory was also competing with the Podolsk and Kol'chuginsk non-ferrous metalworks. Several other Leningrad factories followed suit: thus, by the end of April, the huge Krasnyi Putilovets works was competing with the Kolomenskoe and Kramatorsk plants.[64]

The Government decree on labour discipline issued on 6 March 1929, failed to make explicit the link between socialist competition and an improvement of discipline at work. This led to conjecture that Rykov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) was less than enthusiastic about competition and like Tomskii, his colleague in the Right Opposition, regarded it as "not a blessing" (eto ne ot khoroshei zhizni).[65]

The main drawback of competition at this stage was the emphasis on inter-factory pacts being launched amidst great publicity with little attention being paid to implementation and results. The situation in Leningrad serves as a graphic example. For although by 15 April 1929 the city had 70 enterprises with 190,000 workers involved in inter-factory competition, the pacts were general rather than specific.[66]

Indeed, Leningrad had already been setting the pace in shifting this emphasis. On 15 March the 2nd Leningrad Regional Party Conference adopted a resolution stressing the need to direct competition at raising productivity and cutting costs within the enterprise by encouraging shock brigades and Komsomol groups,[67] thus implicitly linking shock work with the movement for competition.

This link was further strengthened by attacks on the fixed-term, campaign nature of competition. The first, on 31 March, was an appeal

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64 Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.97 (Ya. Dakhiya).

65 The phrase was attributed to Tomskii by I. Il'inykh, 'Lenin o sotsialisticheskoi distsipliny i sotsialisticheskikh formakh truda' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1934, no.1, p.43. It was quoted by Shvernik at the IX VTsSPS Congress in April 1932, see Materialy k otchetu VTsSPS - IX s'ezdu profsoyuzov, M. 1932, p.23. See Tomskii's speech at the 8th VTsSPS Congress (p. 165).

66 Lebedeva and Shkaratan, op. cit., p.95.

67 Lebedeva and Shkaratan, op. cit., p.95.

by the Moscow Committees of the Party and Komsomol to workers in the capital urging them to organise competition between individual workers and brigades, as well as between enterprises in the same industry. In the swingeing attack on the 'campaign style' of competition the appeal stated:[68]

> "He who undertakes to enter competition and thinks that he will restrict himself to a parade-ground display, instead of organising everyday contests between individual workers, shops and factories, that person is not a builder of the revolution, but a windbag."

This was followed by a decree issued by the Leningrad Regional Party Committee on 2 April that urged workers to treat competition as a permanent method of work and specifically listed the strengthening of labour discipline and the struggle against absenteeism among the most important targets for competition.[69]

If the Komsomol, local Party organs and workers collectives were quick to respond to the call for competition, then the trade unions displayed a noticeable lack of enthusiasm for this new development. It wasn't until 1 March that Trud, the central trade union newspaper belatedly publicised the successes of the youth shock brigades, neglecting to connect this movement in any way with competition. However, on 10 March, Trud published a decree by the Presidium of the AUCCTU "On Socialist Competition", approving the Komsomol's initiative in organising the All-Union production competition amongst working youth and appealed to trade union organisations to support "competitions, production roll calls, shock brigades, technical consultations etc." There is ample evidence, nonetheless, that both the trade union leadership and the union factory committees were dragging their feet over competition.[70] Indeed, the all round

68 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit., p.98.

69 Decree of Secretariat of Lenobkom VKP(b) "On the Organisation of Socialist Competition", dated 2 April 1929 (published on 3 April). See N.B. Lebedeva, Partiinoe rukovodstvo sotsialisticheskim sorevnovaniem, Leningrad, 1973, p.65; This trend was taken a step further when, on 29 May 1929, just one day after the Five-Year Plan had become law, Pravda published an open letter, addressed to the II Plenum of VTsSPS, from the 1st and 2nd Tula metalworks, which urged that competition become a system of work rather than a campaign, advocated that it be organised throughout the Plan and suggested that it be run by production conferences under the auspices of the trade unions.

70 See, for example, Ya. M. Bineman (ed.), Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR, M. 1930, pp.31, 104, 123, 149; F.M. Baganov, 'Razgrom pravogo uklona v VKP(b) (1928-1930gg), in Voprosy istorii KPSS, 1960. no.4, p.71; Voprosy profsoyuznogo stroitel'stva: sbornik statei, Leningrad, 1930, p.7; Kratkaya istoriya SSSR, chast' II, M-L, 1964, p.232.

hostility from management, unions and workmates that had greeted the first shock brigades two years previously, appeared to accompany every new manifestation of competition.[71]

Nevertheless, ever new forms of socialist competition were emerging. For example, the first intra-factory pact containing specific personal obligations was signed by a brigade of pipe cutters at Krasnyi Vyborzhets on the suggestion of their brigade leader, Mikhail Putin.[72] Although the main aim of the pact was to raise productivity by at least 5%, the feature of the pact that proved innovatory (and, incidentally, called forth the greatest hostility) was the decision to voluntary cut their rates for the job by 10%. This form of competition soon caught the eye of Party leaders and factory management alike, who noted not only the 150% plan fulfilment by the brigade in their first month of operation, but also the good disciplinary record and low level of defective output. It is interesting to trace the future careers of these early pacemakers. Putin, a Party member since 1924 became a Hero of the Soviet Union, graduated from the Trade Union Higher School and became head of the All-Union Special Construction Committee. Of the other four who signed the first pact, Kruglov became a civil engineer, Oglobin became a mine boss, Goryunov graduated from the Leningrad

71 D. Reznikov, op. cit. p.24; Metallist, 8 April 1929, p.26; The situation is succinctly portrayed in the following quote: "The organisers of shock brigades in the first years of the new movement met almost everywhere with opposition, hostility, mistrust and conservatism.", in V.M. Kulikov and S.S. Koz'min, 'Bor'ba kommunistov Urala za ukreplenie proizvodstvennoi distsipliny v protsesse sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v 1926-1932 godakh', Iz istorii partiinykh organizatsii Urala, Sbornik 2, Sverdlovsk, 1973, p.85. A similar conclusion is reached by another writer: "The development of socialist competition took place amidst a sharp struggle by the leading workers for the socialist organisation of labour, for a conscious discipline, for higher tempos of production against alien and conservative elements, who firmly hung on to the past. The history of the birth and development of socialist competition is the history of an endless battle of the advanced and progressive against routine attitudes and ossification in production.", in A.F. Rudenko, 'Bor'ba shakterov Donbassa pod rukovodstvom bol'shevistkoi partii za novye formy sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya b 1931-1932 godakh.' (Kharkhovskii gos un-t im. A.M. Gor'kogo), Uchenye zapiski, vol.103, (Trudy kafedry istorii KPSS vol.7), Khar'k ov, 1959, p.121.

72 M.E. Putin in 'Dogovor truda' in Neizvedannyni putyami, p.173. Putin gives the date of this pact as 15 March, although other sources claim it was signed on 15 February 1929, see Leninskii komsomol: ocherki po istorii VLKSM, M. 1958, p.250. Lebedev and Shkaratan, op. cit. p.98 insist that the pact was signed much later, on 13 May 1929. Putin's initiative is certainly not mentioned in the Metallists' Union report on socialist competition, dated 30 April 1929, see Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.232-236. This very detailed report notes the commencement of intra-factory competition on 5 March 1929 (against absenteeism) at the Taganrog metalworks, two days later at the Kiev Cable Works and from 1 April at Moscow's Elektrozavod. ibid. p.233.

Ship-building Insitute and Mokin graduated from a technical institute before being killed in the Great Patriotic War.[73]

Further proof of the awareness of the political significance of the new movement is provided by the signing on 7 April 1929 of the first "economic & political" (khozyaistvenno-politicheskii) pact between nine textile mills in Moscow, Tver and Ivanovo-Voznesensk.[74] Known as the "Pact of the 58,000", the textile workers gave their revolutionary word that they would meet the production plan targets set by their respective enterprises.

This brings into sharp relief one of the weakest features of competition at this stage. Despite the general enthusiasm and glare of publicity that greeted every new initiative, interest seemed everywhere to fall off very rapidly. Amongst the vast literature on socialist competition there is relatively little on the results of that competition. Much more attention was being paid at this stage to ensuring the full participation of Party and, especially, Komsomol members in the movement. This, on 31 March, the Komsomol's Central Committee appealed to all members of its organisation that had not already done so to take an active part in furthering socialist competition.[75]

In spite of the increased general awareness of competition and shock work and variety of forms that it was taking, the decisive breakthrough in the development of the movement had still to take place. The groundwork for this was begun at the 16th Party Conference that convened at the end of April 1929.

SHOCK WORK AND COMPETITION IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE SOCIALIST OFFENSIVE

Just prior to the party conference the Right Opposition made what was effectively to be their last stand against Stalin's faction. At the Politburo meeting on 15 April Bukharin, Rykov and Tomskii had voted for amendments to the Five-Year Plan. At the joint plenum of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission immediately preceding the conference, they had voted against the draft resolution on

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73 Neizvedannymi putyami, p.177 (M.E. Putin); Similar successful careers awaited members of Semen Zhukovskii's brigade at Ravenstvo, see Istoriya sovetskogo rabochego klassa v shesti tomakh, vol.2 (1921-1937), M. 1984, p.253.

74 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit.,p.99. A contemporary account suggests that this pact was never checked, see Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR, (1930), p.195.

75 Appeal to Komsomol members and to working youth who are n ot members 'On the Organisation of Socialist Competition', in Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.208-210.

intra-party matters.[76] As a result, Tomskii had been removed as Chairman of the AUCCTU and was replaced (for the time being) by Dogadov.[77]

Not surprisingly, the concept of socialist competition figured more prominently in the speeches at this conference than it had at the 8th trade union congress just four months previously. One speaker, Larin, who had already made a name for himself by heading the anti-alcohol drive, claimed that the inadequate rise in labour productivity was due to the influx of hundreds of thousands of young workers from the countryside and that the way to solve this problem was through socialist competition.[78] He also accused Rykov of ignoring competition.[79] Shvetsov, a delegate from the Tver' Proletarka textile mill (one of the signatories of the "Pact of the 58,000") declared that "doubters and vacillators would not find support or sympathy in our midst, but will meet with a severe and resolute rebuff."[80]

Among the greetings sent to the 16th conference were those from two Leningrad factories that were in the forefront of socialist competition. Krasnyi Putilovets announced that they now had 28 shock groups, 19 groups countering absenteeism, 18 countering defective output and others amongst its 12,000 workers.[81] Krasnyi Vyborzhets, a plant with 4,500 workers, claimed that hundreds of factories had responded to its challenge of 5 March.[82]

Of course, the main task of the Party conference had been to approve the Stalinist variant of the First Five-Year Plan. However, it is not

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76 Shestnadtsataya konferentsiya VKP(b)-aprel' 1929-stenograficheskii otchet, M. 1962, p.ix. The resolution was passed on 23 April and called upon the trade unions to play the decisive role in socialist competition and to "decisively eliminate all remnants of narrow craft exclusiveness and trade-unionism", see KPSS o profsoyuzakh, 3rd ed., M. 1957, p.333.

77 Voprosy istorii KPSS, 1960, no.4, p.75 (F.M. Baganov).

78 Shestnadtsataya konferentsiya, p.145. Larin was also the main proponent, at this time, of the continuous working week. (See below p.195).

79 ibid. p.146.

80 ibid. pp.571-572.

81 ibid. p.721.

82 ibid. p.725.

without significance that the same conference issued an appeal "To All Workers and Toiling Peasants of the Soviet Union", dated 29 April 1929.[83] The appeal stressed that competition must become a permanent method of work and that trade unions and management organs must encourage competitors so that the whole country would know the examples of the best workers. The Appeal ends with the slogans: "Long live socialist competition! Long live communism!"[84] This document represents the first major attempt to spread competition to all workers and as such its publication is generally accepted to be the starting point of the mass campaign for socialist competition, just as the same conference's Resolution on the Five-Year Plan is regarded as the launching pad of the 'socialist offensive'.

Nevertheless, the leading role of shock work in the movement had still to be determined. The Party was seeking to promote at one and the same time competition between factories and competition within factories. Clearly the initiative in the former, for practical reasons, would be more likely to emanate from the factory management, party, Komsomol and union organisations, whereas the shop-floor worker could best respond, if he or she so chose to do, by joining or forming a shock brigade. However, as the pace of industrialisation gathered, the aims of both became more and more similar until, with the adoption of the "sharpening of the class struggle" theory, they became almost identical (i.e. cutting costs, raising productivity and tightening labour discipline in order to achieve the high rates of growth set).

During this initial stage of the 'socialist offensive' workers could be, and were, in favour of competition between plants, but against shock work, or indifferent to, or against participation in any kind of

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83 Resheniya..., vol.2, pp.71-72.

84 ibid. pp.45. The Appeal warns of 'class enemies', thus bearing a similarity to the content not only of Lenin's "How to Organise Competition", but also to his first draft of "Current Tasks of Soviet Power", see V.I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie vol.36. M. 1962, pp.127-164. Significantly, this draft of the article had been first published only two weeks before the Conference, on 14 April 1929 in Pravda, and had been referred to in his address by Kuibyshev, Shestnadtsataya konferentsiya, pp.71-72

competition. The main objection that the average worker had against the shock brigades from the beginning, was that the increased norms and reduced rates achieved by the youngsters were being passed on by the management to all workers.[85] The literature abounds with derogatory epithets hurled at the shock workers by their older workmates: 'shrimps' (smorchki), 'fanatics' (bolel'shchiki), 'little snots' (soplyaki) and 'traitors' (izmenniki).[86] In this they were often joined by management, union and even party representatives who appeared to regard the shock brigades as a form of 'Komsomol folly' (komsomol'skiye zateya).[87]

Thus, as the 'socialist offensive' got under way, those workers who knew, let alone understood the essence, of competition, might either have been carried along by the wave of enthusiasm and fanfares surrounding the launch, or remained indifferent or hostile. It was when the initial excitement died down and competition began to flag, during the summer of 1929, that pressure was put on the waverers.[88]

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85 Characteristic of the times was the situation at Moscow's AMO motorworks where 'the atmosphere of hostility at times so thickened that the factory Party committee was obliged to pass a decision not to publicise the names of workers who had voluntarily cut their rates to avoid their being persecuted by irresponsible (nesoznatel'nye) workers.' in Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.181.

86 Smorchki at the Stalin metalworks (Donbas) in ibid. p.104; Bolel'shchiki Dnepropetrovsk, S. Bezborodov, Vrediteli u Stanka, Leningrad, 1930, p.73; Soplyaki and izmenniki in Komsomol report, Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932gg. Dokumenty i materialy, M. 1970, p.502; I have also come across the epithets 'condemned men' (smertniki) and 'plunders' (zakhvatciki) at the Kotloapparat works in Moscow, in Udarnye brigady (Moskovskii Komitet VLKSM), M. 1929, p.12, and 'upstarts' (vyskochki) at the Dnepr match factory in Belorussia, Kratkaya istoriya SSSR, p.232.

87 I. Povalyaev, 'Avtobiografiya udarnika' in Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.80; E.G. Kozhevnikova, 'Udarniki' in Neizvedannymi putyami, p.128. Other, similar terms used were 'Komsomol lottery' (komsomol'skaya lotereya) in A. Kapustin, 'Udarniki', M. 1930, p.62 and 'superfluous folly' (izlishnaya zateya) in Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti... (1930), p.164. An assistant foreman at the Krasnyi Profintern works claimed that 'Komsomol' was a hated word amongst old-timers, in N.S. Yarov, Udarnye brigady v Gus'-Khrustal'nom, M-L, 1930, p.5.

88 See below pp. 192-3.

As a follow up to the initial impact of the Appeal, the Party issued a decree on 9 May "On the Socialist Competition of Factories and Plants", which incorporated many of the points made in the earlier document. Thus, it was decreed that the concrete tasks for competition should be "the fulfilment and overfulfilment of the promfinplan, the fulfilment and overfulfilment of established quotas for reducing costs and raising productivity, the improvement in quality of output, the struggle against absenteeism and defective output, the reduction of overhead costs, and the achievement of an exemplary production discipline ..."[89] Responsibility for running competition was handed over to the trade unions, a surprise move in view of the thinly disguised hostility of AUCCTU leaders to competition. True, a member of the AUCCTU Secretariat, Dogadov, had signed a Circular sent to all trade union organisations on 25 March supporting not only the Sovnarkom decree on labour discipline, but also the "Komsomol crusade for a reduction in costs".[90] Moreover, this Circular had preempted the Party Appeal by urging union organisations to involve adult workers as well as youngsters and to reward the most active and disciplined groups of workers."[91]

The Party directive on the role of the unions cleared up the confusion that had hitherto existed over who was responsible for running competition. Many plants had set up so-called "staffs" (shtaby), a form suggested by Pravda during the earlier check on production conferences.[92] Krasnyi Vyborzhets, for example, had a "general staff" of 25 persons drawn from representatives of workers, management, union, Komsomol and production conferences.[93] After the decree of 9 May, the Leningrad Regional Committee of the Party scrapped the "staffs" and handed over control to the factory union committees.[94]

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89 Resheniya..., vol.2, pp.53-55.

90 A. Sokol'skii, Profsoyuzy v bor'be za trudovuyu distsiplinu, M. 1929, p.112.

91 ibid. p.113.

92 V. Ol'khov, Za zhivoe rukovodstvo sotsialisticheskim sorevnovaniem. Opyt Vsesoyuznoi proverki sotssorevnovaniya brigadami VTsSPS, M. 1930, p.16.

93 Yu.K. Bibikov, 'U istokov massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya' (VTsSPS. Vyshaya shkola), Uchenye zapiski, vyp.2, M. 1970, p.144.

94 ibid., p.149. However, the II VTSSPS plenum temporarily allowed some factories to keep their "staffs", which were not scrapped finally until the end of July 1929, I.P. Ostapenko, op. cit., p. 141.

The decision to allow unions to run competition must have been made only shortly before, for as recently as 5 April Pravda had been calling on party organisations to take over.[95] However, with the removal of Tomskii on 23 April, his successor as AUCCTU leader, the aforementioned Dogadov, was able to commence the shift in emphasis in union work away from the defence of members' interests towards the struggle for the Five-Year Plan. Tomskii's removal and Dogadov's accession was formally confirmed at the II Plenum of the AUCCTU on 29 May, when the new leader presented the report "On Socialist Competition".[96] This stressed that "socialist competition must be regarded as the most important task of the trade unions".[97] The report went on to criticise the parade-like quality of much competition and warned managements against entering their factories arbitrarily into competition, without discussing the matter at meetings of workers first. He specifically called upon managements to refrain from giving shock brigades the worst work and to stop passing on their output norms to all other workers. Such acts "tended to create antagonism between the shock workers and the workforce at large."[98] There is certainly a wealth of evidence to back up this last assertion!

By this time the whole country was reading Stalin's first published thoughts on competition, the foreword, written on 11 May 1929 to E. Mikulina's brochure "Competition of the Masses" (Sorevnovaniye mass). In his article Stalin maintains that "Competition is the communist method of constructing socialism on the basis of the maximum activity of the millionfold masses of working people. In fact, competition is the lever with the help of which the working class is called upon to overturn the entire economic and cultural life of the country on the

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95 Although it could be argued that this called upon Party organs to show an example to other workers by taking a lead in competition.

96 Rezolyutsii II i III plenumov VTsSPS. Vos'mogo sozyva. M. 1930, pp.38-51.

97 ibid. p.38.

98 ibid. p.51. For evidence of this see V. Ol'khov, op. cit. pp.17-18; Ot udarnykh brigad k udarnym tsekham i zavodam: Udarnie brigady metallistov. M. 1929, p.29; A.F. Rudenko, 'Nachalo massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v kamennougol'noi promyshlennosti Donbassa (1929g)' (Khar'kovskii gos un-t im. A.M. Gor'kogo), Uchenye zapiski, vol.88, (Trudy kafedry istorii KPSS), vol.6,1957, p.343.

basis of socialism."[99] He then draws a distinction between "the principle of capitalist competition" which is "the defeat and death of some, victory and supremacy to others" and "the principle of socialist competition", which is "the comradely help to those lagging behind from those in the forefront, in order to achieve an overall upsurge." "Socialist competition", he continues, "says that some work poorly, others well, still others better. Catch up with the best and achieve an overall upsurge."[100]

Stalin's article indirectly points to a neglected feature of competition. The aim of competition was not just to determine the best workers, workshops and plants, but also to reveal the worst. By studying the successes and failures in production, discipline, organisation etc., it was hoped to achieve an overall improvement. Many of the first socialist competition pacts stress this element of competition.[101] However, if rewards were to be given to 'those in the forefront' then repressive measures and sanctions could justifiably be applied to those 'lagging behind'. The battle over the setting of work norms: on the 'average' worker, or on the best, which had been raging within Soviet industry throught the 1920's, was about to reach a climax.

All contemporary observers concur that the period from the end of April until early June witnessed a general upsurge in competition.[102]

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99 I.V. Stalin, Sochineniya, M. 1952, vol.12, p.109.

100 ibid. p.110. Stalin's article was published in Pravda, 22 May 1929.

101 See for example, the challenge of the Kamenskii paperworks to the Syas'kii pulp-paper combine, published in Pravda, 21 March 1929; On 2 April 1929 the Central Committee of the Metallists' Union passed a resolution on production competition amongst all working metallists, declaring "we will isolate not only the best plants, but the worst.", Metallist, 30 April 1929, pp.6-7; "Socialist competition reveals the best and worst work collectives" declared R. Krivitskii in 'Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie', Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie, 1929, no.5, p.3.

102 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti..., (1930), p.31. Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, p.516; Data from a Moscow trade union survey conducted in October 1929 illustrates the movement of competition in the capital during the summer of 1929:

	Month in which entered inter-plant competition						
	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.
No of enterprises	22	54	42	24	25	5	14
Workers (in '000s)	32.8	43.3	28.2	10	6.3	2.2	3.7
No. of workers per pact	14960	640	672	411	419	442	265

Source: Byulleten' statistiki truda (MOSPS), 1929, no.10, p.3.

Reports are equally unanimous, however, that this was followed by a significant slacking off in the early summer.[103] Throughout May, in response to the Central Committee's decree, regional party committees were passing resolutions calling for all workers in their localities to enter competition.[104] At the same time Party members were setting up the first adult shock brigades[105] and existing brigades were beginning to voluntarily make cuts in their rates for the job.[106]

As the AUCCTU report on 29 May complained, some managers were using the good results of competition as an excuse to raise norms and/or cut rates. An example of this occurred in May in the Donbas coalfield when the management of Pits 8 & 9 at Gorlovka raised norms and sparked off angry workers' protests.[107]

Certain union committees were no better. On 17 May a plenum of the factory committee at the Zlatoust Machine Works announced that the plant had entered socialist competition and declared the worst workshops 'shock'. In these workshops workers could challenge whomsoever they liked and the shop committee would arrange it. Those challenged, in the words of the author of this account, "often had to be convinced of the necessity of accepting the challenge, after which competition started."[108] Nevertheless,

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103 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.31; V. Ol'khov, op. cit. p.44; Pravda 17 July 1929; Trud, 26 July 1929.

104 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.31; Iz istorii partiinykh organizatsii Urala, p.87 (B.M. Kulikov, S.S. Koz'min); L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.105.

105 Kommunisticheskaya partiya-vdokhnovitel', p.113 (A. Dubin); Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.80 (I. Povalyaev).

106 Most observers agree that this phenomenon started at Leningrad's Karl Marx works on 24 May 1929, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.83; Istoriya SSSR, 1961, no.5, p.62 (O.I. Shkaratan). This was the start of the mass movement in rate-cutting. Prior to this there were reports of rate-cutting from 1st April at the Podolsk machine works and from 1 May at Elektrozavod, in Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.241-242. Even if we take the latest date for the formation of Putin's brigade at Krasnyi Vyborzhets (see note 79 above), his 10 per cent rate-cuts pre-date the initiative of the Karl Marx workers.

107 A.F. Rudenko, 'Nachalo massovogo sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v kamennougol'hoi promyshlennosti Donbassa (1929)' op. cit. (Khar'kovskii gos un-t im. A.M. Gor'kogo), Uchenye zapiski, vol.88, (Trudy kafedry istorii KPSS vol.6), 1957, p.343.

108 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.150.

this factory continued to stay in the forefront of competition and, by June 1929, had 32% of its workers involved in competition.[109] This was reflected in a significant improvement in labour discipline. Thus, if the level of absenteeism for the period October 1928 to April 1929 was 4.3% to all time worked, by May it had fallen to 2.9% and by June to 0.9%.[110]

The same author also notes that, in one workshop, union and party officials had supported those 'backward' workers that opposed competition. Thus, "it was necessary to change the leadership of the union organisation and party collective."[111] This was to happen in factories up and down the country during the summer as the supporters of the Right Opposition and opponents of competition were ruthlessly weeded out. As they were replaced inevitably by those who supported both competition and the adopted pace of industrialisation, the union impact on shock work and competition was bound to grow. At this stage, however, it was still the Komsomol that was setting the pace in competition, particularly in shock work. Virtually all of the shock brigades were still youth brigades.[112]

A category of activists of growing importance at this time were the worker correspondents (rabkory), who worked for the national, local and factory newspapers. These would carry out the dual function of running the various campaigns in their factories that their newspapers had initiated and providing copy on production successes, shortcomings and news. However, they were often regarded as a nuisance and were particularly hated by those workers opposed to competition.[113]

The Moscow Committee of the Komsomol carried out one of few checks on socialist competition in June and came up with a somewhat

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109 ibid. p.151.

110 Iz istorii partiinykh organizatsii Urala, p.87 (B.M. Kulikov, S.S. Koz'min); Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.148-149.

111 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.149.

112 Voprosy istorii, 1962, no.3, p.132 (V.I. Kuz'min); As late as September, in Leningrad out of 1033 shock brigades, 958 were Komsomol or youth brigades, in Istoricheskii arkhiv, 1958, no.6, p.37.

113 V. Ermilov, Byt rabochei kazarmy, M-L, 1930, p.39.

mixed picture. On the one hand youth shock brigades and Komsomol 'conveyors' sprouting up throughout the region, on the other, hostility from older workers and the breaching of the voluntary principle in competition by management.[114] The report also prints the Charter of Komsomol Shock Brigade at weaving mill Dresdenskaya Manufaktura :[115]

1 Support the general line of the Party.

2 Eliminate absenteeism and late arrival, reduce defective output to a minimum and reduce idle time to a minimum.

3 Attend production conferences, engage in social work. The shock worker is an advance guard.

4 Shame those who break the rules and regard them as deserters from the socialist front.

5 Elect a starosta (brigade leader).

Approved by the Party cell, Komsomol, Management and Factory Committee who promise assistance.

In accordance with the Party decree of 9 May, the Supreme Economic Council of the RSFSR on 14 May 1929, called upon managements to take practical measures to assist competition, including the provision of priority funds for housing, cultural and social institutions to those factories that had excelled in socialist competition, as well as money prizes.[116] The failure of management to utilise bonus funds sufficiently was to be a regular complaint in this early period of competition.[117]

The proliferation of decrees and the paucity of checks inevitably led to an inflated picture of competition. This was particularly true of inter-factory competition. By June Krasnyi Putilovets was competing with 12 other plants and Krasnyi Vyborzhets with 14.[118] However, the

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114 Udarnye brigady (Moskomitet VLKSM), op. cit. pp.11-13.

115 ibid. p.23. See also the shock brigade's charter at the Lugansk locoworks in Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti... (1930), pp.165-166.

116 G. Anodin, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie i nashi zadachi, M-L, 1929, p.117.

117 See, for example, the cartoon in Trud, 10 August 1929.

118 A. Dogadov, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie: doklad na II plenum VTsSPS 1.6.29, M. 1929, pp.14-15. These figures would appear to be manifestations of the 'parade-like' form competition took in the early period. Thus, one of the plants that Krasnyi Putilovets was competing with was a sausage factory from the Ukraine! See Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.250. A report in October 1929 by the Leningrad Komsomol states that Krasnyi Vyborzhets was competing with just four plants, three of which had responded to its original appeal in April, ibid. p.304.

warning bells were already sounding. The initiators of the shock work movement, the Komsomol at Zlatoust Machine Works were reported to be "worn out" by June,[119] and throughout that month local Party committees were reporting an alarming falling off in competition.[120]

July was probably the low point of the movement. By then the rate cuts and upped norms were getting through to most workers and the hitherto muted resistance became heard. Within a week of each other early in July, two experienced workers, E. Gozhev, a shipyard worker from Leningrad and S. Pup, a metalworker from Kherson, had letters printed in Trud and Metallist respectively, in which they expounded their opposition to socialist competition.[121] Taken together, these letters represent the views of, if not the majority, then certainly a silent minority of workers.

The kind of worker, in fact, that Tomskii and the old AUCCTU leadership would have considered their natural constituent. It was Tomskii, after all, who at the 8th Congress had argued that:[122]

> "Trade unions unite all workers irrespective of their political and religious beliefs...a worker is a worker in spite of his prejudices."

The letters are worth quoting at length, for they represent rare examples of the kind of opinions that were not to be expressed again in the Soviet press: Gozhev's letter is printed in a column headed "Give Us Your Opinion Of Socialist Competition" and is prefaced by a disclaimer from the editors of Trud , who invite readers to judge Gozhev's views:

> Comrade Editor,
>
> Why is it that so much is written in your newspaper about enthusiastic workers, gripped by socialist competition, and yet nothing is said about the doubts that torment many workers? Why do you give space to descriptions of production successes, yet keep silent over the price that has to be paid for them? I would like to give my views on the matter.
>
> At the Shagov factory, in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 800 weavers refused to take part in competition. They justify this by

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119 Na putyakh k pobedam, p.14.

120 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.31.

121 Trud, 3 July 1929; Metallist, 10 July 1929.

122 Vos'moi s'ezd, p.186.

claiming that there is no way of increasing production as the working day is fully used as it is, and that norms have already been raised. The current working conditions are called 'sweating' as it is, and socialist competition just smells of capitalist exploitation.

As an experienced worker, I fully share this view, and therefore, do not participate in competition myself, and don't try to outstrip others in labour productivity.

These successes that all those shock workers brag about are idle boasts, comrade! Let's suppose that he increases his output and suggests that his norm be raised. It's effective, granted, but superficial. After all, who are these shock workers? Komsomol members, young folk full of strength and zeal with which, understandably, you can move mountains. And their example is followed by some of the hot-headed old-timers who, in their excitement, also produce record output. But how long can this zeal last? One month, two, let's say six months you can work like that before you run out of steam. Yet we workers have to stand on the shop floor for years on end.

I'll give you some facts. A month ago I went to see my wife in the Shchelkovo sanatorium and saw for myself these shock workers. There was this woman shock worker, Nyura, from the Shchel ovo mill: for two months she did 'shock' work, ended up with a nervous breakdown and landed in the sanatorium. There was a weaver there. An old fellow from the Lantsutskii mill. They got him to join the competition for the best weaver; he switched from three looms to four, worked for about two months and his hands started to shake, his nerves had shattered. "No brother", he says, "you can't work like that for long"...

...No comrade, socialist competition is a serious matter. This is something that should be pondered over by every worker who sees things as they are and who isn't carried away by twaddle in the newspapers and noisy agitation."

Riveter E. GOZHEV

As if to underline Gozhev's first point, the newspaper printed, in the column alongside Gozhev's letter, details of voluntary rate-cutting at the Pervomaiskii metalworks in Mariupol', including the feat of a worker in the machine shop there, Gorbachev, who cut his rates per 100 pieces by 20 per cent, while raising his output by 54 per cent.[123]

Within days the replies to Gozhev's letter were being printed in Trud. The most strident was from a group of five workers at Moscow's Krasnyi Bogatyr plant, whose letter was prefaced by the slogan "You Won't Douse Our Creative Fire with Gozhev!" and was headlined "Try and Hold Us Back!"[124]

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123 Trud, 3 July 1929.

124 Trud, 7 July 1929.

> Socialist competition demands much strenuous effort from the working class. Surely Gozhev can see how the workers in factories and plants burn with a creative, Leninist fire and are surging forward at full steam.
>
> Try and stop them taking part in socialist competition!
>
> Try and hold them back! Socialist competition is gripping and gradually infecting the entire proletariat.
>
> This is why we think that riveter Gozhev is wrong. He doesn't have a spark of revolutionary fire in him. But he won't succeed in infecting workers with his pernicious and rotten sentiments.
>
> We have never spared ourselves in socialist competition.
>
> And we won't spare ourselves in the future either.

Semyon Pup has little of Gozhev's articulation, but his letter is no less valuable an account of feelings on the shop floor at this time. Instead of a disclaimer the editors of Metallist preface Pup's letter with a short extract from a letter from another worker (the word is emphasised) from Pup's own factory, the Petrovskii metalworks in Kherson, which states:

> ...There can be few workers who have yet to grasp the importance of socialist competition, and if they haven't, then they are those who do not want to understand, who do not cherish production, who consciously stand aside from socialist construction..."

In case the reader is left in any doubt about the professed editorial attitude to the letter (one suspects that it was printed because it found support in the Metallist's union), the letter was headlined, in inverted commas, "A Toiling Individual" and sub-titled, in parentheses, "Interview with a 'conscientious' activist": The author apologises for being illiterate (the letter is taken down by one Yegor) explaining that he had not been to college but was:

> ...a hundred per cent real, hereditary proletariat, without any admixtures or intellectual blood...
>
> ...So they declare this competition. What is it? To me, illiterate as I am, its like a sort of football match. Who, as they say, can beat who. Krasnyi Vyborzhets, let's say beat the Kol'chuginsk plant or vice versa.
>
> It's an entertaining affair whatever way you look at it, because nobody wants his factory to fall flat on its face.
>
> I'm for it, too...Why not!..
>
> Only this is what I don't understand. Competition, that's one thing, but me, now that's another. Why connect them? Let the directors and them in the office keep score and make decisions to produce more, that's what they are paid for, only leave me well alone.
>
> I bash out my eight hours and then...my dear citizens and comrades, you can go take a ride...We didn't have the revolution

so that we could sit around at all kinds of production meetings after work...Let the engineers do the thinking...

Or look what it's come to at work now...You've only to light up a cigarette and some clown comes flying up all offended. "You remember, comrade, what you voted for at the meeting, don't waste time...work!"

Has he got a screw loose or something? Look, I'm on piece rates, the blockhead, and if I smoke then it's my loss, nobody else's...But I still fulfil the norm...

Or, listen to this: you're not allowed to go absent! Why I ask? Why shouldn't a toiling individual in a workers' state have a day off? Maybe that's the way I am?

There's only one consolation. You can find lads who sympathise, and realise that it's wrong to make fun out of a hereditary, working proletarian...

...I can understand it if you're on piecework and you need the money...then go for it...At our works.., Perepelkin, Vybornoi and Ostrovskii needed some money. They got down to it. And turned out 130 pieces instead of 90...

They wanted to put them on the Board of Honour, as the best competitors, but suddenly they said: "Comrades, you've got 30 per cent brak!"

Well, that's as maybe. Let the quality control look out for that. They let it through, so much the better for us. What do you want? You rush, like a son of a bitch, and you can't turn in brak?

But it's even worse when they pester you with remarks like "I challenge you to cut your rates." Voluntarily! You'd have to be crazy to agree. When the bosses lower your rates we raise a stink for two months, and now we're supposed to cut them voluntarily...

...We all welcome, you understand, competition. More than that...we're interested...who will wallop who? Who'll come out on top...

And from a political point of view, of course, it's not at all a bad thing. Let the former capitalists see how the working class is building up its economy...

But what has this got to do with my pocket? Why can't you smoke a cigarette? And what's it got to do, I ask you, with my rates?...Surely, this isn't what we fought for?

So pass on the message through your journal: competition is one thing, but a worker, a conscious one, that's another...

...Activist, member of the union, and also of Aviakhimos, Mopr,[125] the cooperative, a proletarian, Semyon Pup.

At least three crucial questions emerge from the letters of Gozhev and Pup:

i. to what extent did they faithfully report the situation on the shop floor?;

ii. how representative of the workers at large were the sentiments expressed?;

iii. whom did the Party leadership regard as genuine workers?

Regarding the last question, as we have seen (Chapter Two, pp.41-2), an intrinsic component of the ideology of the victorious Stalinist faction

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125 MOPR - the Russian initials for the International Organisation for the Relief of Revolutionary Fighters.

was the theory of 'the sharpening of the class struggle'. As far as competition was concerned, this concept first found expression in the Appeal of the XVIth Party Conference, which referred to 'class enemies' and called upon workers to overcome 'waverings and hesitations'.[126] By implication only those workers who did could be regarded (by the Party leadership) as 'genuine workers'. Gozhev, Pup and their ilk, irrespective of their 'proletarian'-ness were class enemies.

The first question is easier to answer for there is a wealth of evidence, albeit largely of an anecdotal character, from contemporary observers. Several of the criticisms of socialist competition voiced by Gozhev and Pup were indirectly corroborated at the time, even by leading advocates of the movement. Thus, at a Joint Meeting of the Presidium of the VTsSPS, the Presidium of VSNKh SSSR, representatives of the Komsomol Central Committee, trade union central committees and local union organisations, held in Moscow on 24-25 July 1929, Akulov (VTsSPS) admitted that quality was falling as output rose,[127] an observation that was repeated in the resolution adopted at the end of the meeting.[128] Kraval' (VSNKh) complained that wastage (brak) was increasing as a result of competition.[129]

In an article published shortly afterwards, Kraval' approved the practice of spreading the results of the shock brigades to all workers,[130] and called upon the press to hound all violators of discipline.[131] Moreover, hę identified Gozhev's own factory, the Baltic shipyards in Leningrad, as harbouring 'money-grubbing' workers who reasoned: 'I'm earning alright now, but I'll get more. I'll press on a little because I'm getting third grade. I'll just get to fifth or sixth grade then I

126 Resheniya...vol.2, p.44.

127 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatii, M. 1929, p.35; A meeting of old Moscow metalworkers on 13 June 1929 that discussed socialist competition, specifically drew attention to the danger of impairing quality, see Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.272.

128 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatii , p.139.

129 ibid. p.56.

130 I. Kraval', 'O sotsialisticheskom sorevnovanii' in Bol'shevik, 1929, no.15, p.28.

131 ibid. p.29.

can rest'.[132] Kraval' concluded that 'the major task of socialist competition is the raising of labour discipline',[133] a sentiment that was becoming widespread amongst Party, management and union leaders at that time.

One might conclude, therefore, that the accounts given by Gozhev and Pup were a fair reflection of the situation. However, to what extent were their views typical? To begin with,it would appear that the very fact that they had openly voiced their opposition was atypical. A perceptive Western observer at the time described the situation thus:[134]

> There can be no doubt that most Communists and members of the organisation of Communist Youth, who together comprise 2 per cent of the total population, are sincerely working and enduring hardships today for the sake of future prosperity. The 98 per cent majority, however, who are not sustained by discipline or faith, and do not enjoy the sweets of power, are more concerned with the problems of subsistence...
> ...Workers grumble fiercely as individuals, but collectively they cooperate with the Government secure in the knowledge that they receive first consideration in times of actual shortage.

Although he clearly understates the percentage of Party and Komsomol members in production, his conclusion would still seem to hold good, i.e. that if few workers were actively against Party policy on the shop floor, then it was equally true that, initially, only a minority were actively for it.

This much was admitted at the Joint Meeting on 24-25 July by the chairman, Nikolai Shvernik, who noted that 'in a number of cases only insignificant groups of workers participate in competition, while the basic mass are not involved'.[135] Akulov was even more explicit: 'We still have a significant body of workers who know nothing about socialist competition, do not understand the significance of socialist competition. To this day there is a significant stratum of workers who have not

132 ibid. p.32.

133 ibid. p.34.

134 Bruce C. Hopper, 'The Soviet Touchstone - Industrialization', in Foreign Affairs, vol.8, no.3, April 1930, p.383. This last point is corroborated by a correspondent to an emigre journal who described the old pre-revolutionary workers as apolitical, passive and inert, noting that "they are the grumblers, usually about their daily bread", see Yu.L. 'Pyatiletka i rabochii klass' in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 2 June 1931.

135 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatii , p.4.

heard of socialist competition'.[136]

Clearly, the figure of 2 million involved in competition, advanced by Dogadov at the II plenum of VTsSPS on 1 June, was greatly exaggerated.[137] As he admitted later in the same report, there were cases of factory committees entering competition on behalf of the workers who knew nothing about it.[138] Dogadov too, nevertheless, noted that "socialist competition is better than the campaign for labour discipline that preceded it",[139] an evaluation that was apparently shared by Syrtsov who signed the decree of the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), dated 2 July 1929, which claimed that "socialist competition has revealed all possibilities for tightening labour discipline" and urged that both management and unions organise more propaganda and agitation in favour of it.[140]

This last plea was very necessary, for indifference to competition was not restricted to the non-Party workers. Even the pacemakers of the movement, the Komsomol, were finding it difficult to maintain the enthusiasm. At the Joint Meeting on 24-25 July, Zhdanov, the Komsomol representative, admitted that of his members "the majority were still not in competition".[141] More significantly, the 6th Komsomol Conference, held on 17-24 June 1929, at which one might have expected a major new initaitive on competition, was less than unequivocal in its support for the movement. Indeed, one delegate, Eliseev, stated that "in my opinion, socialist competition means 'squeeze the last drops out of the workers' ".[142]

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136 ibid. p.24.

137 A. Dogadov, op. cit. p.7. The figure given was for 1 May and was taken from a review of competition by the Information Sector of VTsSPS which identified 2,840,000 workers covered by pacts in six basic industries, see Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em , p.236; Kirov, addressing the Leningrad regional union congress on 11 April 1929 was particularly sceptical about the blown-up figures of shock workers at this period, claiming that most were backward, 'didn't want to lag behind the leaders so signed up as shock workers, while continuing to work as before.', Lebedeva and Shkaratan, op. cit. p.127.

138 A. Dogadov, op. cit. p.13.

139 ibid. p.22.

140 Byulleten' finansovogo i khozyaistvennogo zakonodatel'stva, 1929, no.28, pp.26-28.

141 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatii, p.84.

142 Slavic Review, vol.44, no.2, p.289 (H. Kuromiya); The phrase clearly caught on, for it was repeated by an old worker at the Parizhskaya kommuna shoe factory, in Moskovskie u darniki, p.29; See also Sostav rabochei molodezhi, M. 1931, p.98.

The situation described at Moscow's Elektrozavod, a factory in the forefront of competition, was probably typical: "many Komsomol members until recently regarded the shock brigades as a compulsory duty... I joined because the cell ordered me to",[143] and "One must speak the truth, initially the Komsomol organisation at the plant had to wage a battle on two fronts: against the old-timers and against their very own members".[144]

Nevertheless, without wishing to diminish the trail-blazing role of the Komsomol in competition, it is difficult to disagree with a recent Soviet historian of the movement that stresses the decisive importance of Party support.[145] There are numerous accounts of the poor initial participation of Communists in competition. As late as October 1929, trade union surveys had revealed that in Leningrad (for nine unions) only 19 per cent of Party members were competing, compared to 28 per cent Komsomol and 49 per cent non-Party.[146] Figures at the same time for Moscow (for 192 factories) were 11.7 per cent Party, 17 per cent Komsomol and 12.5 per cent non-Party,[147] and for the Nizhnenovgorod region, 14.7 per cent Party and 20.8 per cent Komsomol.[148] These areas, it should be stressed, were in the vanguard of socialist competition.

In summarising the state of socialist competition and shock work in the summer of 1929, it could be said that the movement had established itself throughout the country, but was beginning to flag considerably. Nevertheless, despite the patchiness of the results, a significant rise in industrial productivity had been achieved and absenteeism, the main indicator of labour discipline, had fallen sharply. For the country as a whole industrial productivity rose in the 2nd kvartal (January-March

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143 Yulii Ber, Kommuna segodnya: opyt proizvodstvennykh i bytovykh kommun molodezhi, M.1930, p.7.

144 ibid. p.17.

145 N.B. Lebedeva, 'Partiinoe rukovodstvo...', op. cit. pp.58-59.

146 See Veinberg's speech to the Shock Workers' Congress on 6 December 1929, in Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd udarnykh brigad: sbornik dokumentov i materialov, M. 1959, p.63.

147 loc. cit.; Moskovskie udarniki, p.9.

148 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.373.

1929) by 8.1 per cent, in the 3rd (April-June) by 17.7 per cent and in the 4th (June-October) by 22.7 per cent.[149] Absenteeism had dropped by 25 per cent in 1928/29 compared to 1927/28 (from 6.0 to 4.5 days per worker) and by 20 per cent (2.5 days to 2.0 days) in the period April to October 1929, compared with October 1928-March 1929.[150]

The same was true on a local level. Among Leningrad metalworkers, absenteeism fell by more than 30 per cent in 1928/29 compared to the previous year;[151] at the Elektrozavod works in Moscow, the production plan was fulfilled for 1928/29 by 103.4 per cent, the reduction in costs was 27 per cent and labour discipline, despite the arrival of more than 2000 new workers, held steady;[152] at the Kharkov locoworks in the Ukraine, costs were reduced by 5.71 per cent in the 1st kvartal of 1928/29, 10.56 per cent in the 2nd, 12.53 in the 3rd and 15.51 in the 4th. Absenteeism was reduced by 26 per cent.[153]

Thus, despite the obvious shortcomings of socialist competition, the potential was clearly to be seen. What was required in the summer of 1929 was as effective re-launching of the campaign in which, unlike the first stage, workers would not be allowed to remain on the sidelines.

THE 'GREAT BREAKTHROUGH' IN SHOCK WORK AND COMPETITION

To offset the palpably unsatisfactory state of competition in the late summer of 1929, a number of factors facilitated the new campaign that was launched in August and September.

Most importantly, the political battle with the 'Right Opposition' had effectively been won and the 'shaking up' of the trade union apparatus was underway. The first, practical task of the new VTsSPS leadership was to check those competition pacts that had been concluded during the first stage.

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149 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.71.

150 Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei, M. 1930, p.110.

151 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.336.

152 ibid. p.343.

153 ibid. p.344, p.346.

Secondly, experience was beginning to show which forms of competition were most viable. Thus, if the first stage had been characterised by competition predominantly between plants, the second was to be aimed at encouraging competition within plants, a point explicitly made by Akulov at the Joint Meeting on 24-25 July.[154] Similarly, such ineffective forms of competition as the 'Crusade for the Harvest', launched in February 1929, could quietly be dropped.[155]

A third factor was the better state of preparedness of the mass media for the new campaign. Not only had a number of brochures and monographs on competition been published in the summer,[156] but sets of posters had been printed,[157] radio broadcasts utilised,[158] and a film 'Socialist Competition' had been released.[159] All that remained was to gear up the national and local press for a massive new propaganda campaign in favour of competition.

The final factor facilitating the campaign was the worsening international situation, which in July 1929 led to a veritable war scare on the pages of Trud and other national newspapers.[160] This could not fail to heighten the workers' awareness of the struggle that was purportedly taking place within the factories. This struggle was reflected in the headline in Trud on 30 July 1929 which spoke of 'fighters' (bortsy), 'watchers' (nablyudateli) and 'deserters' (dezertery) on the labour front. Within weeks a perplexed worker had written to Trud asking whether it was permissible to refuse to compete. The reply was ambivalent, allowing that one could refuse, but one must not hinder. Wreckers were to be unmasked as class enemies.[161]

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154 See Trud, 25 July 1929.

155 Komsomol'skaya pravda, 16 January 1929; Bol'shevik , 1929, no.8, p.8.

156 Most notably E. Mikulina's Sorevnovanie mass (see above p.27).

157 Istoriya SSSR, 1961, no.5, p.59 (O.I. Shkaratan).

158 For example, Zlatoust had local radio broadcasts on competition, Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.243 and Mayakovskii read his poems about competition on the nationwide "Workers' Radio Paper" (Rabochaya radiogazeta), Vladimir Mayakovskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol.10, M. 1958, pp.53-55, 77-79, 89-90, 114-115, 347, 350-351, 353.

159 Metallist, 1929 no.24, 30 June 1929, p.28.

160 On 15 July 1929 the TsK VKP(b) issued a decree "On the State of the Defence of the USSR", which launched an arms build-up, see Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza, vol.4, book 2, M. 1971, p.208.

161 Trud, 23 August 1929.

Within a week, on 31 August, Trud had hardened its line, declaring that 'there are no neutrals in the class struggle'.

The breakthrough as far as the press were concerned appears to have occurred at the two meetings of journalists organised in the summer of 1929 by the Agitation & Propaganda Section of the Party's Central Committee.[162] By mid-August the press started to publicise socialist competition in an organised fashion. On 15 August Trud launched a twice-weekly supplement called 'Socialist Competition' and Pravda, on the same day, printed an article entitled 'We must Ensure the Growth of Shock Brigades', which called upon Communists and Komsomol members to play an avant-garde role in this.

Kraval', whose aforementioned article was also printed on this day commended shock brigades for providing examples of a communist attitude to work, stressing that:[163]

> The overall five-year plan for developing our national economy, and in particular the plan for the current, first year of the pyatiletka, and first and foremost, the plan for reducing costs, its most important component, can't be realised unless we are able to ensure the involvement of ever newer masses of workers in a decisive and pitiless struggle against labour indiscipline, absenteeism, drunkeness, theft from work and, in general, licentious attitudes to production.

The press, of course, had hitherto been in the forefront of socialist competition alongside the Komsomol. In the summer of 1929 both the national and local press were launching new initiatives and reviewing previous campaigns. Thus, on the 24 July, Luganskaya Pravda printed an appeal from workers in the locomotive and assembly sections of the local October Revolution plant, calling on all Lugansk workers to fulfil the Five-Year Plan ahead of schedule, in three years![164] On 1 August, the paper toned down this challenge to 'the Five-Year Plan in four years',[165] which was to become one of the basic slogans of the new campaign.

On 9 June 1929 Leningradskaya Pravda had published a suggestion from a worker named Petr Slobodchikov from the local Proletarskii works,

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162 Voprosy istorii, 1962, no.3, p.130 (V. I. Kuz'min)

163 Bol'shevik, 1929, no.15, pp.26-27 (I. Kraval').

164 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.285-286.

165 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit. p.108 (True, the Lugansk workers did add the qualification "and maybe even three").

calling for the organisation of a 'grand communist Sunday' (grandioznyi voskresnik).[166] The suggestion was taken up by VTsSPS, which called upon all union members to hold an Industrialisation Day on 6 August. This appeal was printed in Pravda on 27 July, alongside an announcement from the Party's Central Committee endorsing the initiative. The trade union newspaper, Trud, joined in the publicity, not only on the day itself (6 August), but also on 8 August, when preliminary results of the nationwide day of voluntary labour were announced. Later that month, on 22 August, Trud printed an appeal for a second Industrialisation Day on 25 December, but, by then, the continuous working week had made rest days a relative concept.[167]

On 8 August 1929, Pravda finally published the results of the All-Union check on production conferences that it had launched in October 1928. Altogether the check had produced 320,000 suggestions from workers, compared with 62,000 received for the whole of 1928. The prize for the best production conference went to the Taganrog metalworks, and other prizes went to the Tula No.1 metalworks, the Petrovskii works in Dnepropetrovsk, Moscow's Dinamo works,the Kalinin plant in Leningrad, The New Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile mill and the Zlatoust Machine Works among others.[168]

Finally, on 10 August, Trud published the challenge to the world's proletariat issued by the workers of Krasnyi Profintern works (Bryansk region) to organise international competition. Although several pacts were signed, the movement never really took off and faded into oblivion.[169]

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166 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.270-271. In fact 6 August was a Tuesday, picked to coincide with the traditional religious holiday of Transfiguration. See Trud, 6 August 1929.

167 Similarly, this date was picked to coincide with Christmas (new-style). In the event only those factories that had not switched to continuous production were asked to participate. See Trud, 17 December 1929.

168 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.558-559

169 See, for example, signing of international competition pact between Berlin and Tula workers, Trud, 6 December 1929. See also Lebedeva and Shkaratan, op. cit., pp.101-102.

The Party-inspired press campaign, launched on the 15 August, was sharply critical of the state of competition then pertaining. In the very first supplement 'Socialist Competition' to Trud, published on that day, a rabkor revealed the following shortcomings at Moscow's Dinamo plant:

Despite the many challenges in the first stage of competition, almost eight months later nothing was being done. Speeches on socialist competition in the lunch break were attracting pitifully few workers and they were not interested in the report. The majority of workers knew nothing of competition. In reality at the plant there were only two shock brigades with four members each. Neither Komsomol, nor Party members were participating and the factory committee, management and technical personnel were indifferent.

And this at a factory in the forefront of Moscow competition!

The situation in the capital was summed up on 21 August (in the third supplement to Trud) under the headline "Danger on the Front" (Na fronte trevozhno), in which a survey by the Moscow regional trade union council (MGSPS) noted that the numbers of workers involved in competition in various plants ranged from seven to 89 per cent.

The changes wrought in the VTsSPS leadership by the Party only gradually filtered down to the shop floor. Thus, on 25 August 1929, a Party declaration ruefully admitted that "in general, competition at the grass roots is still being led by Party organisations, the trade union organisations are still only beginning to get to grips with the actual running of competition."[170] Within days a central directive from VTsSPS called on all union organisations to do precisely that, noting, moreover, that since the Five-Year Plan had not taken into account socialist competition and the continuous production year (the introduction of which had been decreed by the Government on 26 August 1929)[171] certain sections of that plan were to be fulfilled in 3 years.[172]

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170 Voprosy istorii, 1962, no.3, p.131 (V.I. Kuz'min).

171 Sobranie zakonov 1929, no.54, p.499.

172 Trud, 31 August 1929.

The unions were turning their attention to production. On 1 September, in a report from the Nizhnyi Novgorod territorial union congress, Akulov was quoted as declaring that "socialist competition is the basic work of the unions'.[173] This statement found reflection in the historic appeal by the new VTsSPS Presidium, dated 5 September 1929 and addressed to all trade union organisations and members and to all working men and women, urging them to develop socialist competition. Entitled 'Faces to Production' (Litsom k proizvodstvu)[174] it called upon union representatives to spend less time at meetings (men'she zasedat') and more on the shop floor, among the masses. This appeal effectively marks the point of departure by Soviet trade unions away from the defence of their members' interests as a first priority.

Indeed, the real purpose of the appeal was revealed by a member of the VTsSPS Presidium (and editor of Trud), Evreinov, in his report to the III Plenum of VTsSPS in November 1929.[175] "Socialist competition", he claimed, "is the tool with which to reorganise all trade union work. Socialist competition is directed, in fact, against craft attitudes, trade-unionism (tred-yunionizm) and the lack of attention to economic questions."

The political importance of this appeal was underlined when Evreinov's colleague, Veinberg, stressed that the forthcoming VTsSPS check on the progress of socialist competition represented "a political examination of the unions".[176] It was Veinberg who, on 12 September 1929, launched the campaign for the negotiations on collective agreements for 1929/1930, with the observation that this document should henceforth contain two-sided obligations (i.e. the union and worker were now obliged to help raise productivity etc.).[177]

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173 ibid. 1 September 1929.

174 ibid. 6 September 1929. A contributor to an emigré journal disparagingly referred to this policy as 'Backs to the proletariat' (spinoi k proletariaty), see A. Kefali, Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 12 July 1930.

175 N. Evreinov, 'Profsoyuzy v period rekonstruktsii', Bol'shevik, 1929, no.21, p.34. Although, within days (on 5 December), Evreinov was replaced as Editor of Trud by Bogdanov, see Trud, 5 December, 1929.

176 Trud, 7 September 1929.

177 ibid. 12 September 1929.

The appeal, the collective agreement campaign and the check on socialist competition combined to give the movement a much-needed boost in the autumn of 1929. Throughout September results were being published on the state of competition in various parts of the country. Although the overwhelming majority of plants were nominally competing (all 42 Urals metalworks, 92 per cent of Donbas enterprises and 70 per cent of Leningrad factories), the numbers of workers within those plants fluctuated considerably. Thus two enterprises that had won prizes in the Pravda production conference check, the New Ivanovo-Voznesensk textile mill and the Petrovskii works in Dnepropetrovsk had a mere three per cent and eight per cent respectively engaged in competition,[178] while at Krasnyi Vyborzhets in Leningrad 50 per cent were said to be competing. Nowhere is the fluctuation more graphically apparent than at Leningrad's Krasnyi Treugol'nik: in the main factory only 15 per cent were involved, while at the No.2 works (galoshes) all the workers were competing. Generally, the percentage throughout industry was somewhere between 25 and 35.[179]

The results printed in Trud on 21 September confirmed the figure of 3 per cent at the New Ivanovo-Voznesensk mill and elsewhere painted a gloomy picture. Of 35 enterprises checked in Baku "socialist competition at the majority had virtually ceased". In Lugansk and Stalingrad "the pace was slackening". Moreover, there is evidence of inflated figures for competition in "reports of factory committees which glow with dreamed-up details of the workers' activity". The investigators conclude soberly that "one can still find enterprises at which significant strata of workers, albeit the backward ones, do not have the faintest idea what socialist competition is". Of even more concern was "the presence of significant groups of workers opposed to socialist competition."

Thus one might safely conclude that the first stage of competition, which commenced in the first months of 1929, had come to an end by the

178 Izvestiya TsK VKP(b), 1929, nos.26-27, p.15.

179 loc. cit.

summer of that year. The new, second stage, initiated in the late summer and destined to run to the end of the calendar year, differed considerably from the first in both quantative and qualitative terms. If the first stage was characterised by, first and foremost, socialist pacts between plants and, to a lesser extent, individual challenges issued by one worker to another, then the second stage witnessed the spread of intra-factory and intra-workshop competition.

The link between the two stages was the shock worker movement. Indeed, Veinberg, in presenting the VTsSPS report on the progress of socialist competition to the All-Union Congress of Shock Workers in December 1929, calls the shock brigades a separate, intermediary stage in the development of competition, stressing that they represented a spontaneous growth.[180] The main difference in the second stage was that shock brigades no longer remained predominantly the preserve of Komsomol members, but spread to involve cadre workers. A specific feature of the shock movement during this stage was the rapid growth of production communes and collectives (see below pp.240-261). However, although this period, effectively the first kvartal of 1929/1930, saw a further improvement in labour discipline (as measured by the absentee rate),[181] the promfinplan by the end of 1929 was not being fulfilled.[182]

However, it is important to maintain a sense of proportion as far as the shock brigades are concerned during this period. Numerically, the shock brigadiers represented only a small proportion of all workers competing during the first stage. This is illustrated by examining the figures for three regions in the forefront of competition (Donbas, Urals and Moscow) at the beginning of October i.e. as the new campaign was getting under way.

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180 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.63.

181 Although the fall from 1.05 days per worker in the III kvartal (July-Sept.) to 0.91 days in the IVth (Oct.-Dec.) may be largely attributed to seasonal fluctuations. (See Chapter Three).

182 Kuibyshev drew attention to this at the Shock Workers' Congress, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.34; This was confirmed in the XVI Party Congress decree 'On the Fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan in Industry', KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, 7th ed. Part III, M. 1954, p.37.

In the Donbas coal mines, of the 1214 competition pacts signed by 1 October 1929, 40 were inter-pit, 866 were between workers at the same pit and 308 were individual commitments. At the same time there were only 54 shock brigades with 543 workers, which represented a mere 0.5 per cent of all workers and 1.6 per cent of those competing.[183] By the end of the year these figures had risen to 5 and 15.6 per cent respectively, a significant improvement, but hardly overwhelming.[184]

In the Urals the growth was more spectacular:[185]

1. 5.1929	400	shock	brigades	with	12000	members
1. 6.1929	1200	"	"	"	20000	"
1. 8.1929	1500	"	"	"	25000	"
1.11.1929	3582	"	"	"	52200	"

In the Zlatoust area, in the Urals, it was estimated that on 15 November 1929, 29.3 per cent of the workers were in the shock movement.[186] However, judging by the figures for this month from the Zlatoust Machine Works, this percentage would include workers in communes and collectives. Out of the 3713 workers at this plant in November, 506 (13.6 per cent) were in shock brigades, 793 (21.4 per cent) in collectives and communes - giving a sub-total of 35 per cent in brigade competition - and a further 602 (16.2 per cent) in individual competition.[187]

The Moscow trade union survey of competition and shock work, carried out at the beginning of October 1929, reveals that 13.1 per cent of all workers were in shock brigades (16.2 per cent if one counts only the plants that had shock brigades.[188] Of the 276 Moscow factories

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183 Uchenye zapiski (Khar'kovskii gos. un-t im. A.M. Gor'kogo), vol.88, (Trudy Kafedry istorii KPSS), vol.6, p.344.

184 M. Chuvyrin, Profsoyuzy Ukrainy na sotsialisticheskoi stroike, M. 1931, p.17.

185 Ocherki razvitiya, p.319.

186 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.319.

187 Calculated from data given in ibid. p.310 and Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.150-151. An indication of how unreliable data on shock work and competition during this period were is given by the fact that other sources claim that by November, 90 per cent of the workers at the Machine works were udarniks. Kommunisticheskaya partiya-vdokhnovitel', p.206 (V. Cheremnykh).

188 Moskovskie udarniki, p.9; Byulleten'statistiki truda, p.4.

studied, only eight had no competition at all, five were only competing with other factories and 86 only had internal competition. The remaining 177 had both inter-plant and intra-plant competition.[189] Altogether 192 plants (69.6 per cent) had shock brigades, with on average ten to eleven brigades per enterprise and eleven workers per brigade.[190]

Although almost half (9922 out of 21898) of the shock workers were in metal and textile factories, the proportion of brigaders to all workers in these two industries was lower (at 11.9 and 12.7 per cent respectively) than in either leather works (26.4 per cent) or the food industry (21.2 per cent).[191]

Moreover, the survey revealed that although over one quarter (25.4 per cent) of the brigaders were aged under 22, less than one fifth of workers in this age-group (18.1 per cent) were involved in shock work. Nonetheless, this proportion was higher than that of Komsomol members (17.6 per cent), let alone non-Party workers (12.5 per cent) and Party members (11.7 per cent).

Two other indicative facts to emerge from the survey were that men (at 12.3 per cent) and women (12.5 per cent) were equally likely (or unlikely!) to join the shock brigades at this stage and that workers on piece-rates were nearly three times more likely (at 15.7 to 5.6 per cent) to join than those on time payments.[192]

The data on individual Moscow plants are also revealing. At the AMO motorworks 33 per cent of the workers were in shock brigades and, in some shops, 80 or even 90 per cent[193] (strictly speaking, the entire 3000 plus workforce were shock workers as a general meeting of employees on 15 September had declared the factory 'shock', challenging Leningrad's Krasnyi Putilovets to competition from 1 October).[194] The situation at

189 Byulleten' statistiki truda, p.3,
190 ibid. p.4.
191 ibid. p.6.
192 ibid. p.7.
193 Moskovskie udarniki, p.15.
194 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.295.

the Trekhgornaya Manufaktura textile works was similar except that three quarters of the brigades were composed of adults (117 out of 155), who constituted 81.5 per cent of all brigaders (1086 out of 1333).[195] Somewhat surprisingly for a textile mill, two out of three (737 out of 1086) of the adult udarniks were men, whereas over half (135 out of 247) of the youngsters were women.[196] Of the adult workers only 51 (a mere 4.7 per cent) were Party members, whereas at Serp i Molot metalworks Party participation in shock work reached 15.9 per cent (58 out of 364).[197]

The situation reported in another Moscow textile mill, Krasnye Tekstil'shchiki, illustrates graphically the relative weight of shock work at this time. Of the 90 per cent nominally competing, the eight adult shock brigades accounted for only 68 workers and the lone youth brigade for a further 30.[198] A similar situation apparently obtained at Leningrad's Krasnyi Vyborzhets plant, where according to a report by the local Komsomol committee on 25 October four whole shops with 2186 workers were competing while just five shock brigades uniting 45 members were operating.[199] At Leningrad's Krasnyi Putilovets in October only 3.7 per cent of the workers were in shock brigades.[200] Yet another Leningrad enterprise in the forefront of competition, the Svetlana works, had just ten brigades with 140 members by 1 October 1929.[201] Leningrad, it would seem, experienced a particularly rapid growth in shock brigades in the period under review, rising from 649 (with 7609 members) on 1 October to 2668 (with 29054 workers) on 15 January 1930, the eve of the Leninist Appeal.[202]

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195 Moskovskie udarniki, pp.16-17.

196 ibid. p.17.

197 ibid. p.16-17.

198 ibid. p.15.

199 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.304.

200 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.5, p.36.

201 M. Eskin, 'Zakonomernosti udarnogo dvizheniya' in Problemy marksisma, 1931. Nos.8-9, p.28.

202 Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za sotsializm, 1926-1937gg, Len, 1965, p.201.

A particular feature of competition in this second stage was the spread of 'shock' shifts, workshops and whole plants; AMO in September, a number of Leningrad shops and sections in October, railway depots and the main shops of one of the Urals biggest metalworks at Lys'va (also in October), Krasnyi Vyborzhets, Krasnyi Profintern and the Petrovskii metalworks in Dnepropetrovsk in November etc.[203]

In many ways this move represented a synthesis of competition from above (i.e. inter-factory) and from below (i.e. the shock brigades). Although this form of competition remained popular during the third stage of competition in early 1930, it was found to be largely to blame for the widespread phenomenon of 'sham shock work' (lzheudarnichestvo) and was dropped in favour of less collective forms of socialist work.

This helps to highlight some of the contradictions that were maturing in Soviet industry at this time. On the one hand a massive inflow of mainly peasant recruits into the work force diluted the cohesiveness of the working class and called into question the appropriateness of certain forms of socialist labour, while on the other the talents and energies of the most committed and public-spirited of the workers were required in areas other than the shop-floor. Secondly, the unquestionable gains in terms of labour productivity and labour discipline that shock work potentially held had to be weighed against the overwhelming priority of giving management maximum rights in order to fulfil planned targets. Thirdly, the collective, at times even syndicalist responses of the working class to the appeals of Party and Government, while serving as a useful tool in eliminating restrictive customs and practices on the shop floor, came to pose a political challenge to a system that was based on the individualisation of production responsibilities in a descending hierarchy from the director and, thus, an atomisation of the working class.

These contradictions were inherent in the series of decrees passed in the latter half of 1929 that sought, on the one hand to

203 Kommunisticheskaya partiya-vdokhnovitel' pp.206-207; Ot udarnykh brigad k udarnym tsekham i zavodam: Udarnye brigady metallistov, M. 1929, p.55.

strengthen one-man management,[204] and, on the other, encourage the development of shock work.[205] From the beginning, however, it was clear that the interests of the former were sometimes being served at the expenses of those of the latter. Thus, as early as 25 July 1929, Akulov had complained that "under the guise of competition, the work day is being lengthened, work is being done on Sunday etc."[206] This is corroborated by contemporary accounts.[207]

In his report to the Shock Workers' Congress on 6 December, Veinberg felt moved to criticise the management of certain plants for taking advantage of the shock movement, quoting as typical the remark of a manager at Krasnyi Profintern who said "you are shock workers and therefore must carry out any job and work under any conditions".[208] However, Veinberg's objection seemed to be less to the principle involved than to the fact that such an attitude undermined the shock brigades.

The importance of the shock brigades during this period was not so much their quantative growth (from an estimated 10 per cent on 1 October[209] to 29 per cent on 1 January 1930)[210] as the increasingly prominent role this form of socialist competition came to play in the Party's struggle for labour discipline and, more specifically, the breaking down of resistance to the increased pace of industrialisation on the shop-floor.

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204 See Chapters Two and Four.

205 See Chapters Four and Seven.

206 Trud, 25 July 1929.

207 See for example, Bor'ba klassov,1931, nos.3-4, p.81 (I. Povalyaev) which states that at AMO, in order to catch up on the plan "12 hours instead of 8 as well as Sundays were worked".

208 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.66.

209 Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932gg, p.516.

210 Calculated from Trud v SSSR. Spravochnik 1926-1930gg. M. 1930, p.25. Note that my own calculations give the percentage as 28.4, though this largely excludes the Leningrad workers who, in general, had a slightly higher proportion of shock workers. (see Table 10). The figure of 29 per cent is confirmed by N. Shvernik in Materialy k otchetu VTsSPS, p.24.

This is recognised by modern historians of the movement as well as by contemporary observers. Thus, a recent history of socialist competition asserts: "the shock workers formed the leading detachment of the working class, and were the initiators in breaking down out-moded work practices, methods and standards."[211]

Of contemporary appraisals of the shock workers, the most complimentary was that of Kuibyshev, speaking at the Shock Workers' Congress in December. They represented, he said, "the highest expression of socialist competition" in which "as in a mirror is reflected that historic breakthrough in the psychology of a worker in the sense that he becomes the master of his country."[212] "Where there are shock brigades", he continued, "one notes a reduction in absenteeism, less idle time and a rise in productivity. Socialist competition and the shock brigades constitute the best blow at the petty-bourgeoise psychology which is still strong in certain cross-strata....it is a crushing blow to the old traditions of work, to old habits, to the old psychology that had been inculcated for decades under capitalism."[213]

Kuibyshev was by no means alone in his assessment. "With the development of shock work, old workers began to work in new ways", wrote one author.[214] Another noted that whereas the brigade represented an old form of organisation at work, the 'shock' provided the new, socialist element.[215] The same writer further identified shock work as the "organised reflection of competition",[216] noting that in general "competition plays the role of a catalyst, accelerating the stratification

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211 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti...(1973), p.66.

212 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, pp.46-47. Kuibyshev's keynote speech to this Congress, "Brigades of socialism", was later described as "not an ordinary report, but in its way a kind of poem in prose about the best people of the working class, who were creating a new, quite different attitude to production, to the enterprise, and were forging a communist discipline.", in Valerian Vladimirovich Kuibyshev: Biografiya, M. 1966, p.299.

213 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.49.

214 D. Reznikov, op. cit., p.21.

215 Yu. Kalistratov, 'Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie i organizatsiya truda' in Na novom etape sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva: Sbornik statei, vol.1, M. 1930, p.175.

216 Na novom etape, loc. cit.

of the working class into those workers who work in a socialist manner and those who are not satisfied with this condition, but at the same time this process squeezes out the latter share insofar as the first grows."[217]

Throught the autumn pressure was brought to bear on workers to join the shock brigades. As early as 18 October 1929 Trud published instructions on the preparations for and elections to the All-Union Congress of Shock Workers to be convened on 5 December in Moscow by VTsSPS, the Komsomol, VSNKh SSSR and Pravda. The emphasis in this campaign was that shock workers were setting an example that ought to be followed by all workers in order to defeat the class enemy and carry through to a successful conclusion the socialist offensive.

This is best exemplified by the appeal from the Moscow trade unions and Komsomol on 30 October in preparation for the local shock workers' congress: "Through their revolutionary enthusiasm the shock brigades ignite the rest, display genuine examples of public-minded labour discipline and oppose the self-seekers, money-grubbers and wreckers with the discipline of a conscious worker and a socialist attitude to production."[218] "The duty and obligation of every worker", concluded another contemporary investigation, "is to follow the shock workers' example, to measure themselves by their standards and to join their ranks."[219]

Throughout November regional meetings of shock workers were held in preparation for the All-Union Congress and similar appeals for mass participation in shock work were made.[220] The local meetings were given a tremendous boost by the publication in Pravda on 7 November of Stalin's article 'The Year of the Great Breakthrough' (God velikogo pereloma) in which two major Stalinist innovations of 1929 - socialist competition and the continuous working week - are identified as the main levers with which to win the class struggle within industry; the former being aimed

217 ibid. p.171.

218 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.17.

219 Moskovskie udarniki, p.46.

220 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, pp.17-21.

at absenteeism and violations of labour discipline and the latter against routine attitudes and inertia in production.[221]

Stalin came out strongly for the shock brigades and was elected an honorary shock worker by the Moscow preparatory congress[222] and later called the 'leader' (vozhd'), ideologue and inspiration of shock work.[223] It seems that Stalin saw in the shock brigades a manifestation of that attack on bureaucracy from below, that had been called for in the Party's campaign for 'self-criticism' (samokritika) in 1928.[224] This link is evident in the Appeal of the 16th Party Conference of April 1929, which stated: "Socialist competition is a powerful means of awakening and organising the initiative of the masses in fulfilling the Five-Year Plan and, at the same time, is a powerful means of developing self-criticism from below."[225]

This control from below was designed to complement control from above exercised by Party and state organisations. In the sphere of forging a labour discipline more commensurate with the increased pace of industrialisation, shock work complemented the series of measures adopted from early 1929 (see Chapter Four, pp.127-8), aimed at increasing the power of one-man management. Bettelheim rightly perceives socialist competition as "an attempt by the advanced elements of the working class to take in hand certain factors in the production process, so as to speed up the growth of industrial production."[226]

However, it is clear that the movement gradually developed an "autonomous" approach to dealing with problems of production, an approach which increasingly became incompatible with the "managerial" approach

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221 I.V. Stalin, Sochineniya, vol.12, M. 1949, p.119.

222 XVI S"ezd vsesoyuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (bol'shevikov) - stenograficheskii otchet, 2-e izd. M-L, 1931, p.528.

223 A. Kapustin, A. Milorud, Tri goda sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya mass, M-L, 1932, pp.17-18.

224 Pravda, 3 June 1928.

225 Resheniya...vol.2, p.45 (emphasis in original).

226 Charles Bettelheim, Class Struggles in the USSR, 1923-1930, London, 1978, p.251 (emphasis in original).

advocated from above. These conflicts became apparent at the Shock Workers' Congress (see below pp. 208-212), and lay at the roots of disagreement over the production communes (see below pp. 240-296) At this early stage of the movement, however, both approaches had sufficient common enemies to aim at (bureaucracy, old customs and practices, conservatism etc.) as to ensure that such conflicts remained below the surface.

Moreover, the trade unions, effectively directed by Stalin's hand-picked lieutenants, Kaganovich and Shvernik, had now thrown their weight behind the movement. A check on socialist competition pacts, conducted by VTsSPS in the autumn of 1929, had revealed the potential of the shock worker movement, especially in the Urals, where Shvernik had previously been obkom secretary. The results of the check, published on 5 November, revealed more than 6000 shock workers at the Lys'va metalworks, nearly 4000 at the Alapaevskii metalworks and more than 1000 at the Nadezhdinsk plant.[227]

At the III plenum of VTsSPS later that month, Dogadov noted in his chairman's report that "the basic link of trade union work in their reorganisation to face production and get closer to the masses is socialist competition, which represents the development of new forms of communist labour..."[228] However, his assertion that collective rewards for competition were better than individual[229] would appear to run counter to the official Party line and favour, instead, the spontaneous movement in the factories to switch from shock brigades to production communes and collectives. This trend was to become a major source of contention between Party representatives and the shock workers themselves at the December Congress (see below pp. 208-212).

However, the preparations for the Congress were not being conducted everywhere with great zeal. A survey of 26 plants for whom places had

227 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.310.

228 Rezolyutsii II i III, pp.68-69.

229 ibid. p.72.

been reserved at the Congress revealed that 14 had made no preparations at all and that four had no shock workers anyway.[230]

This, perhaps, exemplifies the ambiguous situation with regard to shock work in the country at the end of 1929. On the one hand fulsome praise and support from the Party leadership (if not always from Party members in the localities) and the recognition that shock work and competition had enabled the plan for 1928/29 to be fulfilled[231] and on the other, widespread reports of attacks, some fatal, on shock workers.[232] If rate-cutting had sparked off the greatest opposition amongst shop-floor workers since its introduction in the summer of 1929, then as the year progressed it must have become more of an irritant. Thus in Leningrad, by the end of the year, 49 out of 96 enterprises studied had witnessed rate-cutting.[233]

Although divisions within the working class over attitudes to competition were evident at the Shock Workers' Congress, the opponents of the movement, by definition, were not represented at the event. In effect the clash was one between representatives of control of competition from below and control from above. Indeed, the composition of the 820 delegates who gathered in Moscow's Dom Soyuzov on 5 December indicated where, from the Party's point of view, the strengths and weaknesses of the shock worker movement lay.[234] Thus, 73.5 per cent of all delegates were members of either the Party or Komsomol, the remaining 26.5 per cent being non-Party.[235] However, more than twice

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230 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti...(1930), p.34.

231 See, for example, the Leningrad obkom decree of 26 December 1929 quoted in N. B. Lebedeva, 'Partiinoe...', op. cit. p.72.

232 See, for example, Kosarev's speech at the Congress, in Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.40; Ocherki razvitiya, p.51; Pravda 10 December 1929. I.P. Ostapenko op. cit., pp.144-145.

233 N.B. Lebedeva, 'Partiinoe...', op. cit., pp.71-72.

234 Of the 820 delegates no fewer than 690 were shock workers, I.P. Ostapenko, op. cit., p.146.

235 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.180.

as high a proportion of the non-Party shock workers (69.2 per cent) had started work before the Revolution compared to the Party and Komsomol representatives (34.3 per cent).[236] Moreover, 64.4 per cent of the non-Party delegates were 30 or more years old, compared to just 27.5 per cent of the Party and Komsomol contingents.[237]

Yet it was precisely amongst the younger delegates that Party saturation was at its highest. Thus, whereas almost one-third (30.2 per cent) of all delegates were under 22 years of age, only 6.7 per cent of these belonged to neither the Party, nor the Komsomol.[238] This is also reflected in the fact that only 14.6 per cent of Party and Komsomol members had worked at their current place of employment for more than ten years while fully 56.1 per cent had for less than five years; the corresponding figures for the non-Party delegates were 39.8 per cent and 37.6 per cent.[239]

However, there were attributes that united the delegates. Thus, a similar percentage of both groups originated from workers' families (59.5 of Party/Komsomol, 57.7 of non-Party).[240] Moreover, virtually all the delegates were activist, an impressive 92.7 per cent holding elected posts, including nearly half (46.5 per cent) who worked in Party organisations, and over two-thirds (69.7 per cent) who were elected to union bodies.[241] Further proof of the avant-garde role of these delegates in the shock worker movement is provided by the fact that no fewer than 60 per cent (and among metalworkers 69 per cent) of the delegates were brigade leaders.[242]

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236 ibid. p.181.

237 ibid. p.180. Significantly, a contemporary observer noted that the gathering "was overwhelmingly a Congress of young workers", I. Reznikov, 'Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie i Narkomtrud' in Voprosy truda, 1930, no.2, p.10.

238 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.180.

239 ibid. p.182.

240 loc. cit.

241 ibid. p.186.

242 loc. cit.

It is against this background that the discussion on the class struggle around socialist competition and shock work must be perceived. For these delegates were, in the words of Komsomol secretary, Kosarev, the "Bolsheviks of tempo",[243] and it is no coincidence that the Appeal issued by the delegates at the end of the Congress called upon the best shock workers - the "Bolsheviks of socialist tempos" - to join the Party.[244]

Management and union representatives united to launch a two-pronged assault aimed at: a) encouraging the initiative of the shock workers by getting the rest of the workforce, management, union organisations etc. behind them; and b) advocating that repressive measures be taken against those opposed to the movement.

Veinberg, the VTsSPS Secretary, set the tone in the opening speech of the Congress:[245]

> "But comrades, shock workers are those people who remake more than just things. In remaking things they simultaneously effect a remaking of consciousness, a remaking of people, a remaking of themselves. In fact, by means of socialist competition, by means of shock methods of work, we must remake the whole working class, the entire peasantry, we must raise up the creators of socialism not in words, not on paper, but in deed."

Kuibyshev, on behalf of VSNKh, was no less enthusiastic in his opening speech:[246]

> "You are the representatives of the most conscious detachments of the working class who have set out on the road of creating communist labour, communist discipline, a communist attitude to the factory and the plant - by this you become the avant-garde of the working class whom the Central Committee of our Party greets with special fervour, seeing in you the earnest of success, seeing in you the guarantee that the million-fold mass of workers have already entered the final battle for socialism."

Later in this speech, Kuibyshev turned to the opponents of competition:[247]

> "You know that there is a certain cross-strata of the working class that is not always willing to join in socialist competition. You know that, unfortunately, there have been

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243 ibid. p.39.

244 ibid. p.176.

245 ibid. p.38.

246 ibid. p.42

> incidents, albeit isolated and rare, but incidents nonetheless of direct opposition; you know that in practice, this went as far as forwarding the slogan of breaking machines at some plants".

Kuibyshev summed up the Party's attitude to 'watchers' and 'deserters' thus:[248]

> "He who refuses to assist and help socialist competition is not serving the cause of socialist construction. He who is against competition is an enemy of the working class."

Finally, in his concluding speech, Kuibyshev combines the twin lines of attack:[249]

> "It seems that our glorious shock workers - the embodiment in production of the highest principles of communist work on the one hand are surrounded in some cases by elements that are hostile to them in their own midst and, on the other hand, often the labour of the shock workers is met by an inattentive, bureaucratic attitude from above, from the heads of management, trade union and other organisations. This makes the work of the shock brigaders especially complex and difficult and it makes the deeds and the achievements of the shock brigades all the more glorious and honourable. The shock worker must not be put off by these difficulties, the shock worker must be sure that the Communist Party, the trade union movement and all organisations directing economic life will come to the aid of the shock brigades that are performing miracles in production."

In his concluding speech, Veinberg was more specific about the role of both Party members and opponents of shock work:[250]

> "We must attain a situation whereby every member of the Party and every member of the Komsomol participates in shock work, otherwise we will not be able to say that this is really a communist or a Komsomolite."

and:[251]

> "What happens if someone refuses to knuckle under to the brigade? Can they get rid of him? If the whole brigade sees that he is a wrecker, a shirker, that this worker doesn't want to work, then the whole brigade can get rid of him and supplement the brigade with someone who will work voluntarily and observe discipline."

I have dwelt on the Shock Workers' Congress because it did mark the decisive breakthrough in the struggle for new forms and tempos of work and, thus, in the establishment of a new kind of labour discipline. From

248 Quoted in D. Reznikov, op. cit. pp.46-47.

249 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, pp.158-159.

250 ibid. p.167.

251 ibid. p.166.

this date the concept of the advanced and backward workers came to rest more on their attitude to socialist competition than their social background, experience in industry etc. This was emphasised in the Appeal to all workers, issued at the end of the Congress (and printed in Trud on 11 December):[252]

> "The shock worker undertakes to show no mercy towards the the money-grubber and the shirker - towards the disorganisers of production."

Significantly, the Appeal ended with the slogan: "Raise high the banner of struggle for a new, socialist labour discipline!"[253]

For the battle was only just beginning. As a Komsomol representative to the Congress, Segal, remarked: "He who thinks that we have solved the problem of raising discipline is mistaken".[254] One of this speaker's prescriptions for the problem was the insistence that "every shock worker must enrol ten more into competition",[255] a directive that, at first sight, might appear to compromise the provision that shock work be fully voluntary, contained in the resolution on shock brigades passed by the Organisational Section of the Congress.[256]

Examples of the kind of worker attitudes that were deemed backward are provided by the following two workers at the AMO motorworks in Moscow:[257]

> "Every worker wants to earn more, and that doesn't affect competition, but affects his own pocket. He earns more - he'll live a little better, eat better. The newspapers have nothing else to do, they've a page to write, so they write about competition. But what does the worker need? Money for food, that's what he needs".

According to the author the second worker was the most productive and conscientious in the factory, but was against competition because he liked to take time and care over his work: "I can do a better job than

252 ibid. p.177.

253 ibid. p.178.

254 ibid. p.81.

255 ibid. p.83.

256 ibid. p.149.

257 Delo chesti: Ustnye rasskazy rabochikh o sotsialisticheskom sorevnovanii, M. 1931, p.95.

your shock workers as it is, without your piece of paper"[258] he asserted, refusing to accept the shock worker's ticket.

The first worker might well be termed a 'money-grubber' (rvach), while the second could be categorised as a 'self-seeker' (shkurnik). Both would be classed as 'backward', as the following definition from one of their colleagues at the AMO motorworks illustrates:[259]

> "We call a backward worker the man who is only interested in earning more, who doesn't take part in public activities and doesn't pass on those achievements that he has made in his work."

As the Five-Year Plan progressed (and the class struggle ostensibly 'sharpened') the label of 'money-grubber' was attached to even those who complained of poor food and accommodation[260] or demanded protective clothing (to which they were entitled under the existing labour legislation) in bad weather.[261] Yet as the industrialisation drive took concrete shape on the vast construction sites at Magnitogorsk, Kuznetsk and Stalingrad, such conditions were to become the lot of progressively more workers.

The avenues of redress for the worker were narrowing. The trade union could no longer be relied on to support him, even on such legitimate complaints. Following the Party Central Committee's decrees of 23 December "On the Participation of the Komsomol in Economic Construction"[262] and 26 December "On the Improvement of Trade Union Work at New Construction sites",[263] increasing numbers of Komsomol and Party members were being despatched to the major construction sites and were bound by

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258 ibid. pp.114-115.

259 ibid. pp.93-94.

260 Delo chesti, slavy, doblesti, geroistva: kniga udarnikov-stroitelei kuznetskstroya, Novosibirsk, 1931, p.35.

261 ibid. p.79; An example of social pressure overriding contractual rules of work is given at the Kuznetsk construction site, where work continued at temperatures of 60 degrees below zero (Centigrade), despite a clause in the work contract setting minus 45 degrees as the limit. In the event "all worked", after having been told that "only the enemies of construction fear the cold", see ibid. pp.55-56.

262 Direktivy KPSS i sovetskogo pravitel'stva po khozyaistvennym voprosam, vol.2, M. 1957, pp.133-136.

263 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.7, chast' 2, M. 1930, pp.276-277.

Party discipline to endure whatever working and living conditions that might await them. In the atmosphere of the class struggle, it was foolhardy indeed for the worker to oppose them.

Even his workmates could not be relied on for collective action, as the following assessment by a cadre worker illustrates:[264]

> "One can have no confidence in the worker. Today he is your brother, tomorrow he will betray you. He works with you in the same corporation, at the next bench; he thinks and speaks as you do; he sees that workers have been let down, that their life is wretched, that they are being tyrannised. But tomorrow, as soon as he is given a little advancement, a little bone to gnaw, as it were, or a little rise, his speech will change and he will begin to bray at meetings as if he had always been a bureaucrat. If he is spoken to as man to man, he answers with insolence 'I do as everyone else does'."

To be fair, the rank-and-file Soviet worker was faced at this time with a dilemma. On the one hand, there is evidence that there was widespread, general support for the Party and the Soviet Government. Even Gozhev and Pup express this, and the following attitudes towards communists articulated by an old Leningrad worker, were probably shared by many of his colleagues:[265]

> "I cuss them, but brother, I respect them too, because, whatever you say, it was they that led us through hell and high water out onto the broad highway. I cuss them because I know that, without the Party we would have been done for long since, without the communists we'd have been stuffed good and proper ages ago."

On the other hand, there is equally clear evidence of particularistic opposition from the workers to policies that were perceived as detrimental to their working conditions (e.g. rate-cutting, waiving of limits on working day etc.). As the workers were called upon to demonstrate their general support by joining shock brigades and entering competition, the various campaigns to this end generally met with an initially favourable response. But as the shock movement gradually became one of the reasons for negative changes in their working conditions (and it was precisely at this point of time that general meetings of workers were 'adopting' initiatives of shock workers and waiving days off, labour

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264 Ante Ciliga, The Russian Enigma, London, 1979, p.110.

265 I. Zhiga, Novye rabochie, M-L, 1929, p.140.

safety provisions, rest days and limits on work day),[266] the whole idea of competition was compromised. Not wishing to come out openly against the movement, and thus the Party line, the worker would either 'sham' shock work or take recourse to such individualised action as leaving in order to find better working conditions.

This surge and fall of shock work and competition during successive campaigns is well illustrated by the situation at the Lys'va metalworks, where in November, according to the VTsSPS check, there were 6000 shock workers.[267] However, the trade union daily, Trud, was complaining at the beginning of December that there remained just 38 out of the 215 shock brigades that had been formed there.[268] The rueful admission made in the Party journal in mid-1931 that "all investigators come to the same conclusion: we are able to raise the masses, but are unable to consolidate competition"[269] holds equally true for the end of 1929.

The point is that the propagandists of each new campaign (and this does not necessarily include its initiators) shared the general misperception of the shock worker as a muscular giant (one has only to compare the cartoons and posters of the time with the many photographs of actual udarniks to appreciate this).

In what Syrtsov identified as the 'yo-heave-ho' (ei, dubinushka, ukhnem)[270] mentality of the socialist offensive, heroic, intensive work was applauded and quiet, efficient work was ignored. Those committed shock workers who worked in the former manner were soon promoted to other work, a trend which both the cadre workers and raw rural recruits caught on to quite soon.[271] In the relatively rare cases of shock brigades (usually

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266 See, for example, Govoryat stroiteli sotsializma - vospominaniya uchastnikov sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva v SSSR, M. 1959, pp.151-153; Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti...(1930), p.218; Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.81 (I Povalyaev).

267 See p.207 above.

268 Trud, 4 December 1929.

269 M. Rafail, 'Profsoyuzy posle XVI s'ezda partii', Bol'shevik, 1931, no.5, p.53.

270 S. Syrtsov O nashikh uspekhakh, nedostatkakh i zadachakh, M-L, 1930, p.5.

271 See, for example, Delo chesti: Ustnye, pp.139-140. This trend had been advocated since the very beginning of this campaign, see Trud, 19 July 1929 calling for initiators of competition to be promoted.

composed of youth) remaining on the shop floor over long periods of time, performance tended to peak and fall, just like competition as a whole. Thus the example of the youth brigade at the Stalin metalworks (Donbas) was not atypical, fulfilling its monthly output plan thus: July 1929 137 per cent, August 146 per cent, October 128.5 per cent, November 92.8 per cent, December 66.6 per cent, January 1930 44.5 per cent. In February, to the delight, it seems, of management and unions alike, the brigade folded up.[272] Note the similarity to the experience of Dudarev's brigade at Zlatoust (see above p.163), whose members also burned out just as a new campaign was being launched.

Thus, as this second stage of competition drew to a close, a new initiative was required to consolidate the gains of the autumn of 1929. This took the form of a campaign to involve the majority of workers in shock brigades along with 100 per cent involvement of Party, Komsomol and union activists.

The opening shot in this campaign was the Appeal of the Shock Workers' Conference, followed by the Central Committee decree on the Komsomol of 23 December, which called for 100 per cent participation of Komsomol members and working youth in competition and shock brigades as a decisive, priority task for Komsomol organs.[273] On 26 December the Leningrad obkom of the Party passed a decree demanding that 50 per cent of all Leningrad workers and all Party, Komsomol and union activists should join the shock brigades.[274]

The call for full participation by Party and Komsomol members was particularly pertinent, for by the beginning of 1930 they were still only marginally involved in shock work. Kaganovich, in his report to the 16th Party Congress, claimed that only 15-20 per cent of communists were engaged in all forms of competition by January 1930,[275] although

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272 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti...(1930), p.104.

273 See note 268 above, loc. cit.

274 Kommunisticheskaya partiya-vdokhnovitel', p.114 (A. Dubin).

275 XVI S"ezd, p.65.

the VTsSPS survey, dated 1 January 1930, maintained that 31 per cent of communists and 33.8 per cent of Komsomol members were in shock brigades.[276]

Even allowing for the fact that the VTSSPS results were somewhat inflated, they do nevertheless reveal interesting variations within the shock movement on the eve of the Leninist Enrolment (leninskii prizyv), as the following tables demonstrate:

TABLE 10

Composition of workers participating in shock brigades on 1.1.1930

Union	No. of ents. studied	No. of workers	No. of shock workers	No. of shock brigades	Av. no. workers per brigade	% workers in shock brigades amo							
						All	Adult		Youth (up to 22)		Party	Komsomol	Non-Party
							M	W	M	W			
lworkers	133	245,798	63907	7010	9.1	26	26	21	20	25	29	27	2
rs	314	160,063	41616	4694	8.9	26	26	24	30	17	30	31	2
ile workers	124	185,088	48123	2585	18.6	26	21	29	26	36	23	33	2
ical workers	42	17,422	6969	645	10.8	40	42	35	41	52	40	39	4
workers	94	36,292	19525	589	17.9	29	22	42	31	44	30	39	4
rworkers	25	14,496	3769	473	8	26	27	23	20	8	29	21	2
ders	102	50,074	17526	837	20.9	35	37	19	36	20	47	45	3
nerworkers	130	68,467	22594	1936	11.7	33	34	28	40	35	38	38	3
ters	59	12,078	4348	483	9	36	35	37	46	42	41	53	3
ning workers	35	31,196	10295	796	12.9	33	33	33	34	33	40	41	3
r industry	32	26,085	7826	339	23.1	30	29	33	36	24	40	40	2
industry	161	41,814	14217	1290	11	34	33	36	45	56	39	48	3
workers	40	19,695	6302	369	17.1	32	33	25	29	29	45	35	2
nications	42	14,086	4085	360	11.3	29	22	42	31	44	30	39	2
c catering	25	3,007	812	79	10.3	23	25	21	34	23	30	53	2
Total	1358	925,661	262914	22485	11.7	284*	297*	299	*333	*326	*354	*388	*30

i) only those enterprises with shock brigades have been counted.

ii) apart from categcries 8,12,13,14 data for Leningrad are not included.

iii) * : average of percentages

e: Trud v SSSR, 1926-1930, p.25.

As this table includes only one-quarter of workers employed in industry on 1 January 1930, it would not be unreasonable to assume that almost one million shock workers were nominally active at this time.

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276 'Perestroika partiinoi raboty', in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, nos.11-12, p.39.

This figure is borne out by certain subsequent studies.[277] Despite wide variations from industry to industry, it is significant that between one-quarter and one-third of all categories (Party, Komsomol, non-Party, adult men and women, young men and women) were engaged in shock work. Nonetheless, it is clear that, in general, the non-Party workers were beginning to lag behind.

A slightly different sample from the same survey provides an indication of the relative participation in competition and shock work:

TABLE 11

No. of workers participating in socialist competition and shock work on 1.1.1930

	Union	No. of ents.	Workers	No. competing	% competing	No. shock workers	% in shock brigades
1	Metalworkers	140	255743	150888	59	84395	33
2	Miners	344	166134	91373	55	39872	24
3	Textile workers	140	209834	146884	70	39868	19
4	Chemical workers	48	21220	14005	66	6154	29
5	Woodworkers	127	36471	27718	76	7294	20
6	Paperworkers	36	17091	12818	75	4444	26
7	Builders	136	57546	29348	51	15537	27
8	Leatherworkers	157	71239	33482	47	17097	24
9	Printers	78	16239	11692	72	4709	29
10	Clothing workers	36	31196	18094	58	12790	41
11	Sugar industry	82	46293	37960	82	7870	17
12	Food industry	225	49557	36672	74	14867	30
13	Waterworkers	59	29089	18617	64	6109	21
14	Communications	51	16952	11866	70	4238	25
15	Public catering	46	3925	2983	76	903	23
	Total	1705	1028529	628110	61.1	273441	26.6

Notes
i) this survey would appear to include even those plants which had no competition
ii) apart from categories 8,12,13,14 Leningrad workers are not included.

Calculated from material in Trud v SSSR, 1926-1930, p.24.

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277 A. Devyakovich, 'Sotssorevnovanie i udarnichestvo' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1934, no.5, p183, gives a figure of 903,100 in competition. This same figure, referring to shock workers in competition is given in the International Labour Office's Industrial and Labour Information, vol.50, April-June 1934, no.11, p.370. If one accepts that 29 per cent of the industrial workers were in shock brigades (see above p.203), and that a total of 3,116,200 workers were engaged in Soviet industry on that date, see Trud v SSSR (1936) p.94, then a figure of 903,698 shock workers emerges, an insignificant statistical difference.

The high proportion of metalworkers in shock brigades is undoubtedly due to the number of workshops and whole factories in that industry that declared themselves 'shock'. Although various observers differ over the exact percentage of workers competing at this time, there is a general consensus that nearly two thirds of the industrial workforce was involved.[278] This would provide a total of some two million participants in socialist competition (an intriguing figure, being the same given by Dogadov for May 1929 and, subsequently, by Veinberg in May 1930!).

It is also apparent that, at this time, less than half of all those competing were in shock brigades.[279] Yet as this form of work organisation continued to produce generally favourable results at a time when shortcomings were becoming more and more commonplace in the overall performance of industry, it is not surprising that emphasis was placed on shock brigades during the next mass campaign for socialist competition that was launched early in 1930.

However, in discussing the Leninist Enrolment, it is worth bearing in mind the parallel trends that were emerging in competition towards the end of 1929. On the one hand the 'managerial' approach to competition had encouraged workshop rather than factory-wide competition and, as a result, the promfinplan, had now reached shop level.[280] On the other hand, the 'autonomous' approach was manifesting itself in the rapid growth of such collective forms of work organisation as production communes which, in the perception of many Party, union and industrial executives, posed a potential threat to managerial authority. As both

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278 Some sources claim that the VTsSPS survey revealed 63 per cent of industrial workers competing, see Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei...,p.89. Kuibyshev quoted this figure at the 16th Party Congress, XVI S"ezd..., p.514. Shvernik, however, maintained at the 9th trade union congress that the survey showed that 65 per cent were competing, see Materialy k otchetu..., p.24.

279 I have calculated that Kuibyshev's figures reveal that 41.3 per cent of those competing were in shock brigades, whereas the figures in Table 11 would suggest 43.5 per cent and those given by Shvernik, 44.6 per cent.

280 The 3rd plenum of VTsSPS in November 1929 specifically called for this, see A. Aluf, "Profsoyuzy - organizatory mass na zavershenue postroeni fundamenta sotsialisticheskoi ekonomii SSSR', in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.1, p.57.

trends were to intensify during the Leninist Enrolment, this inherent conflict became increasingly overt, particularly in the context of the wider conflicts that were beginning to characterise Soviet society during this period.

THE LENINIST ENROLMENT - THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE 'AUTONOMOUS' APPROACH

The year of 1930 has entered the Soviet history books as the 'year of the expanded socialist offensive along the entire front' (god razvernutogo nastupleniya sotsializma po vsemu frontu).[281] In practical terms this signified the rapid expansion of the socialist sector, in the countryside through the collectivisation of agriculture and, in the towns, through the intensification of the industrialisation drive. At the time both policies were explained within the context of the sharpening of the class struggle between socialist and capitalist elements. As socialist competition had been identified by the Party leadership as an important front of the class struggle within industry,[282] it was inevitable that the movement would reflect the fundamental contradictions that were afflicting the country as a whole.

As we have seen, the second stage of socialist competition (August-December 1929) marked the end of neutrality towards the movement. In the Leninist Enrolment, the third stage, even passive support was to be regarded as insufficient. A positive attitude towards and active participation in shock work and competition became a kind of acid test that every worker would be obliged to take in order to avoid being labelled a class enemy. Under such circumstances it is small wonder that cadre worker and new recruit alike would follow the example of the genuine pace-setters and join competition. As a consequence, however, the label of 'shock worker' would necessarily be devalued.

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281 See, for example, Ekonomicheskaya zhizn' SSSR: khronika sobytii i faktov, 1917-1959, M. 1961. P.227.

282 At the Shock Workers' Congress Kuibyshev made this point, Pravda, 12 December, 1929.

But the pace-setters or 'trail-blazers' (zastrel'shchiki),[283] as they were then called, would themselves be responding to appeals from above for class action. This tended to take the form of attempts to create proto-communist ways of organising life, work and communal services, which, it was widely believed, would spread eventually to the entire working population. In this the 'trail-blazers' were to be proved profoundly mistaken.

Such ideas from those in the forefront of shock work and competition foundered on a basic contradiction that had been created by the socialist offensive. For it was to this group of committed supporters that the Party and Government turned not only to implement its policy of cllectivisation, but also to staff its expanding industrial apparatus. Thus, more than 25,000 cadre workers were sent to the villages on a permanent basis to organise the first collective farms,[284] and thousands more were promoted from the bench to all levels of management, or sent to study to become engineers and technicians.[285] Not surprisingly, these upwardly mobile cadres would come to share a 'managerial' attitude to questions of production, including that of socialist competition.

But if the core of 'trail-blazers' was undermined by the loss of its members sent to other work, it was even more threatened by the massive influx of new recruits to the workforce, mostly from the countryside, that flooded into industry as a result of Party and Government policies. In general the latter's attitudes, cultural standards and motivations were quite different from those of the 'trail-blazers', whose initiatives thus became inappropriate for the vast majority of the workers.

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283 The term became particularly popular early in 1930 after the publication of Mayakovsky's poem Zastrel'shchiki in Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.1.

284 On 17 November 1929 the Plenum of the TsK VKP(b) had passed a resolution 'On the Results and Future Tasks of Collective Farm Construction" which called for not less than 25,000 'of the most advanced workers' to be sent to the countryside, KPSS v resolyutsiyakh, p.684. Of the 23,409 actually sent, 87 per cent were cadre workers (i.e. with at least 5 years industrial experience), Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, pp.544-545.

285 According to an order (prikaz) issued by VSNKh SSSR on 27 January 1930, 5100 workers were to be promoted into the state apparatus in line with the decision of the Shock Workers' Congress, Za industrializatsiyu, 28 January, 1930. At the same time the Party's Central Committee decreed that of the 2000 to be sent to study in higher education, 75-80% should be workers with at least 5 years work experience, Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.1, p.77.

The idea for the Leninist Enrolment came from workers at the Lys'va metalworks and the Kolomenskoe locomotive works, two plants well in the forefront of the shock movement.[286] The idea was taken up by the trade unions and the Komsomol. On 21 January 1930 the VTsSPS and the Komsomol's Central Committee issued an appeal "To all Proletarians of the Soviet Union",[287] to mark the anniversary of Lenin's death with a second 'Leninist Enrolment' (the first had followed his death in 1924 when nearly quarter of a million cadre workers had joined the Party). This time workers were urged to enrol in shock brigades so that there might be at least half a million new shock workers.

Four days later, on 25 January, the Party Central Committee issued an appeal "On the Fulfilment of the Economic Plan",[288] addressed to all Party, trade union and economic organisations, approving of the Leninist Enrolment and calling for the election of shock workers to union committees.

In purely quantitative terms the response to the Appeal was quite staggering. In total it was estimated that 1.3 million workers had joined shock brigades by 1 March 1930, although it was admitted that the figure was greatly inflated by the inclusion of all workshops and plants that had declared themselves 'shock'.[289]

VTsSPS carried out a selective survey of the state of shock work and competition on 1 March 1930, the results of which confirmed the rapid growth of shock workers during the Leninist Enrolment. Although the survey included railway and construction workers, these may be excluded to provide figures for industry:

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286 See Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.76. A leading article in the Party journal noted that both plants had declared themselves 'shock' during the Leninist Enrolment, Bol'shevik, 1930, nos.3-4, pp.4-5.

287 Trud, 21 January 1930.

288 Direktivy VKP(b) po khozyaistvennym voprosam, 1931, p.664.

289 See decree of TsK VKP(b) "On the results of the Leninist Enrolment of Shock Workers" in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.9, pp.59-60; the VTsSPS report on 28 March 1930 put the total for 20 unions at 1,320,000 new shock workers, see Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, p.510. Other sources put the figure as high as 1.5 million, Istoriya sovetskogo rabochego klassa v shesti tomakh, vol.2, p.266.

TABLE 12

	No. of workers studied	No. shock on 20.1.30	%	No. shock during Lenin Enrolemnt	%	No. shock on 1.3.30	%
Metalworkers	597250	161258	27	197091	33	358350	60
Paperworkers	26842	7140	26.6	8482	31.6	15622	58.2
Textile workers	181281	32812	18.1	55653	30.7	88465	48.8
Chemical workers	29641	6402	21.6	7558	25.5	13961	47.1
Woodworkers	88516	12215	13.8	24976	27.2	36292	41.0
Total	923530	219827	23.8	292861	31.7	512690	55.5

Source: Materialy k otchetu VTsSPS - IX s"ezdu profsoyuzov, p.25.

Thus, in a little over a month the number of shock workers had grown by about 225 per cent to nominally over two million by 1 March.[290]

A smaller sample from the same survey (in which data for Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine are excluded) provides comparable results:

TABLE 13

	No.of ents.	No. of workers	No. shock 20.1.30	%	No. shock Lenin Enrolment	%	No. shock 1.3.30	%
Paperworkers	44	26842	7140	26.6	8482	31.6	15622	58.2
Woodworkers	86	50851	8238	16.2	23951	47.1	32189	63.3
Metalworkers	61	111592	27786	24.9	29683	26.6	57470	51.5
Chemical workers	51	29641	6402	21.6	7558	25.5	13961	47.1
Textile workers	93	181281	32812	18.1	55653	30.7	88465	48.8
Totals	335	400207	82378	20.6	125327	31.3	207707	51.9

Source: Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei (1930) p.91.

Although the increase of shock workers during the Leninist Enrolment is even greater (more than 250 per cent), the provinces can be seen to be lagging behind Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine. According to VTsSPS data, the Enrolment provided 237,000 new shock workers in the Ukraine, 202,000 in Leningrad and, by 9 February, 160,000 in Moscow. Of the

290 A figure almcst certainly inflated and one achieved by simply multiplying the number of shock workers before the Enrolment (903,100) by 225 per cent (the increase during the Enrolment). Obviously, an even higher figure is reached if one adds the 1,320,000 new shock workers to the 903,100. Alternatively, a lower figure of about 1.8 million shock workers is obtained by calculating 55.5 per cent of the industrial workforce at that time (3,230,200 in the first quarter of 1930), see Trud v SSSR (1932), p.61.

other established industrial regions the Urals provided 87,000 new shock workers and the Ivanovo region 101,000.[291]

Other significant increases were recorded in the Nizhnii Novgorod region, with 101,546 new shock workers,[292] and Western Siberia, with 54,230.[293]

The succession of decrees and appeals emphasising the need for Party and Komsomol involvement in shock brigades resulted in these groups leading the way in the Leninist Enrolment, as the following table (which excludes Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine) illustrates:

TABLE 14

% participation in shock brigades among:

	No. of ents.	No. of workers	Members and cands. of Party			Members and cands. of Komsomol			Non-Party		
			21.1	LE	1.3	21.1	LE	1.3	21.1	LE	1.3
Paperworkers	44	26842	21.3	38.5	59.8	27.3	42.1	69.4	27.7	28.5	56.2
Woodworkers	86	50851	21.7	51.2	72.9	25.5	38.7	64.2	14.8	47.4	62.2
Metalworkers	61	111592	39.4	36.6	76.0	31.5	32.1	63.6	21.3	23.9	45.2
Chemical workers	51	29641	34.4	37.9	72.3	31.5	31.4	62.9	18.0	22.6	40.6
Textile workers	93	181281	23.8	35.4	59.2	24.7	31.9	56.6	16.7	30.1	46.8
Totals	335	400207	31.5	39.9	71.4	28.5	35.7	64.2	14.6	26.6	41.2

Source: Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei (1930) p.92

Several other factors promoted this growing disparity in involvement in shock brigades between, on the one hand, non-Party workers and, on the other, members of the Komsomol and Party. Notably, the massive influx of cadre workers into the Party which outstripped even the unprecedented rate of expansion of the industrial workforce.[294] The 'non-Party' contingent was thus diluted by a dual process by which it lost its most senior and active members and gained inexperienced recruits.

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291 Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, p.511.

292 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.372

293 A. Moskovskii, 'Formirovanie kadrov promyshlennykh rabochikh Zapadnoi Sibiri i razvitie ikh trudovoi aktivnosti v gody pervoi pyatiletki', in Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.150.

294 At the 16th Party Congress it was reported that 220,000 workers had been accepted into the Party in the first three months of 1930, see XVI S"ezd, p.233; In that same period 178,600 workers had joined the industrial labour force, see Trud v SSSR (1932), p.61.

The situation is graphically illustrated by figures for this period in Leningrad where the intake of workers went up from 4122 (Oct-Dec 1929) to 14390 (Jan-Mar 1930),[295] yet the percentage cf Party members at the city's enterprises remained virtually stable, falling from 20.1 per cent on 1 January to 20 per cent on 1 April 1930.[296] Moreover, the Party was not slow to realise that the wholesale and collective entry of shock workers into their ranks was a mixed blessing. Indeed, as early as 11 February 1930 the Party's Central Committee felt obliged to pass a decree expressly forbidding collective entry into its ranks,[297] and, on 12 March, issued a further directive aimed at developing "political and educational work amongst newly-accepted candidate members".[298]

This served further to highlight the contradiction of the Party's policies regarding worker initiatives, for the responses to appeals to join the shock worker movement and the Party tended to undermine and devalue membership of both. In an effort to boost the quantative success of the campaign, qualitative considerations were neglected and the screening process became minimal. Thus, of the 27,000 Urals workers applying for Party membership in the first few days of the Enrolment, no less than 20,447 (75.7 per cent) were accepted.[299] Entry into the Party appears to have been easiest of all for skilled, cadre workers, for 53.3 per cent of those accepted had worked in industry for more than ten years and 60.3 per cent were in the upper half of the grade scale.[300]

To appreciate the reason for this sudden rush of applications to join the Party, it is useful to reflect upon the changes that were

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295 Leningradskaya gorodskaya organizatsiya VKP(b) v tsifrakh, vyp.4, Leningrad. 1934, p.16.

296 Leningradskaya oblastnaya organizatsiya VKP(b) v tsifrakh, vyp.2. Leningrad. 1930, p.24.

297 Pravda, 11 February 1930. The decree emphasised that "the most important criterion for admission into the Party is the active participation of workers in shock brigades, in socialist competition and their genuinely leading role in production".

298 Quoted in N.F. Plotnikov, "Ulushchenie sotsial'nogo sostava ural'skoi partiinoi organizatsii v gody pervoi pyatiletki" in Voprosy partiinogo rukovodstva rabochim klassom Urala, Sverdlovsk, 1976, p.52.

299 ibid. p.48.

300 ibid. pp.48-49.

occurring at this time in Soviet society. Apart from the ubiquitous "sharpening of the class struggle", the collectivisation drive was in full swing, the continuous working week was striking at the roots of religion, the commune movement was growing apace and significant changes were occurring in the composition of the workforce.

An example of the way in which these simultaneous developments were reflected in the workers' response to the Leninist Enrolment is provided by the situation at one of the plants that suggested the idea in the first place, the Kolomenskoe locoworks. Here virtually all workers joined shock brigades and entire workshops became communes, applying en masse to join the Party.[301] Moreover, 70 per cent of the workers were connected with the land and, of these, fully 90 per cent had joined the collective farms. The attitude to Party membership amongst this group is best summed up by the reaction "well, now that we are in the kolkhoz, we ought to be in the Party too".[302] As a result, by 1 April 1930, 47.3 per cent of all workers at the plant were members or candidates of the Party.[303] Another source puts the total number of communists at the plant at 4677, of which 3354 had recently joined (71.7 per cent).[304] It would appear that more than 2600 of the latter joined during the Leninist Enrolment, of which a mere 127 (just under 5 per cent) were rejected.[305]

To further demonstrate the commitment of the plant to the socialist offensive the entire factory, and the region in which it was based (the home of an important Orthodox monastery) was declared "godless" (bezbozhnym).[306]

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301 Bol'shevik, 1930, nos.3-4, p.5.

302 ibid. p.8; Another source claims that, of the 1150 workers at this plant joining the Party and linked with the countryside, 979 (85.1 per cent) had joined collective farms, A. Karlik "Proletariat na pod"eme i nashi zadachi" in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, nos.3-4, p.28.

303 F. Rizem', "Rost partii za dva goda" in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.10, p.12; At the 16th Congress the figure for 1 April was given as 48 per cent, XVI S"ezd, p.84.

304 N.N. "Novoe v sisteme partrabotoi", in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.10, p43.

305 V. Ryabokon', "Partiya i ee rezervy", Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, nos.3-4, p.38.

306 Bol'shevik, nos.3-4, 1930, p.9.

What then was the effect, in terms of productivity, working and living conditions of such radical changes? On the credit side was the fact that productivity rose in industry as a whole in the first quarter of 1930 by 7.2 per cent (compared with the previous quarter), in Group 'A' industry by 9.7 per cent. However, the same report declares that the March production figures did not match the immense rise in shock work.[307] At the same time arbitrary absenteeism reached its lowest recorded level during the entire Five-Year plan in the months January - March 1930, constituting just 0.80 days per industrial worker (compared with 1.17 days for the same period in the preceding year and 1.31 days for January - March 1931).[308]

On the debit side, however, was the appearance on a mass scale of 'sham shock work' (lzheudarnichestvo), which reached enormous proportions. The above report noted that "often shock work is in name only, whereas in content it consists of routine, slipshodness and truly Russian lethargy (oblomovshchina)".[309] At the Lys'va metalworks, the other initiators of the Enrolment, it was claimed that 8000 (!) workers did not know that they were shock workers.[310] The Leningrad Party obkom revealed in its decree of 15 April 1930 that "we have no few facts of premature shock work when the number of workers involved in active forms of competition at the moment that the enterprise or workshop was declared shock, did not exceed one-fifth of those working at the plant, falling sometimes to absolutely insignificant percentages." Among the examples given were workshops of the Zinoviev factory, which had been declared 'shock' yet had no shock workers at all.[311]

In his report to the 9th Congress of Soviet Trade Unions, Shvernik (who took over as First Secretary in May 1930), cited the example of the

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307 Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei (1930), p.92.

308 Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR (1932), p.446; S. Kheinman "Trud v SSSR" in Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie, 1929, no.10, p.136.

309 Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei (1930), p.93.

310 Metallist, 1930, nos.14-15, p.22.

311 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.48.

Muromsk textile mill, which had declared itself 'shock' when only 25 of its 1200 workers (2 per cent) were udarniks.[312] He also claimed that, during the Enrolment, the countrywide rise in shock work had been accompanied by increases in absenteeism, defective output and idle time at a number of enterprises, notably Krasnyi Treugol'nik.[313] Another Leningrad plant in the forefront of competition, Krasnyi Vyborzhets, also reported rising brak and absenteeism, falling productivity and underfulfilment of plans.[314] Similar reports were coming in from factories all over the USSR in the spring of 1930.

How can these apparently contradictory trends be explained? Firstly, the radical changes in the work regime had had a dramatic effect on working conditions. As planning targets were raised, managements made the fulfilment of the promfinplan a priority that overrode such considerations as labour legislation. As a result norms were upped and rates were cut, working days lengthened and rest days waived, sometimes, although not always with the "approval" of the workforce.[315] More significantly entire workshops and even plants were mobilised until the plan was fulfilled, a trend that was to develop throughout the Five-Year Plan.[316] At the same time funds designated for labour protection were diverted elsewhere and, as a consequence, the accident

312 Materialy k otchetu VTsSPS, p.26.

313 ibid. p.25. A contemporary report noted that this plant had declared itself 'shock' when only 2500 of its 22,000 workers (11.4 per cent) were udarniks. After this declaration lateness increased five-fold, absenteeism nine-fold, work would cease 30-40 minutes before the whistle and, prior to days off, 1-1½ hours early, Voprosy profsoyuznogo stroitel'stva, pp.21-22.

314 Metallist, 20 June 1930, p.30.

315 The above trade union report called for the stamping out of workers voting for longer working days, waiving days off etc, see Voprosy profsoyuznogo stroitel'stva, pp.22-23. Attention was drawn to this phenomenon by Trud on 18 February 1930 and, on the following day, it criticised managements and unions for 'imposing' this arbitrarily. For examples of this practice see Trud 25 February 1930; G. Unpelev, Rozhdenie Uralmasha, p.32; Govaryat stroiteli sotsializma, pp76, 151. On 27 February 1930 Narkomtrud outlawed this practice whether initiated by workers or management, see Izvestiya, 28 February 1930.

316 For examples in Zlatoust and Ivanovo-Voznesensk see Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.155, 200.

rate rose sharply in many factories.[317] Finally, the overall improvement in absentee rates was offset by the introduction of a far less tolerant attitude to violations of labour discipline.[318] Small wonder, therefore, that the rank-and-file worker went along with decisions to declare workshops 'shock' and contributed to the spread of 'sham shock work'.

Discontent with working conditions was exacerbated by the wide differentations in rates of pay within factories and between industries. This, combined with rapidly deteriorating living conditions, particularly accommodation and provisions, gave rise to unprecedented rates of labour turnover in 1930 (see Chapter Three). This fluidity of labour threatened to undermine the entire shock work movement.

Even before the Leninist Enrolment began, labour turnover was having a major effect on socialist competition, as the following survey, carried out by VTsSPS on 1 January 1930 in 2057 enterprises belonging to 17 unions, illustrates:

Reasons for the collapse of shock brigades (in %)

1	Labour turnover, switching jobs, end of contract	29.1
2	Lack of guidance by Party and union organisations	15.5
3	Reorganisation due to continuous working week	13.3
4	Mobilisation to collective farm, study or promotion	10.6
5	Poor planning, poor materials etc.	9.1
6	No assistance from management or technical personnel	8.0
7	Non-fulfilment by workers of socialist obligations	8.0
8	Lack of plan or account of brigade's work	6.4

Source: Na novom etape sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva (Kalistratov), p.190.

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317 At the Stalin metalworks (Donbas) the rise in the accident rate during the first half-year 1929/1930 was blamed on "bad lighting, and a tired and rapidly changing workforce". In this period there were 8 fatal and 25 serious injuries, ibid p.114; At the Kolomenskoe works, in the first six months of 1930 there were, "due to the poor level of expenditure of labour protection funds", 1195 accidents, Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.29, p.2. At the Sel'mashstroi works in Rostov-on-Don, "a massive rise in serious injuries occurred during the third quarter of 1929/30 rising to 1066, compared with 283 for the previous quarter, F. Kilyuzhnyi, 'Bor'ba s travmatismom na predpriyatiyakh Severno-Kavkazskogo draya', in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.2, p.91.

318 At Sosnevskaya Manufaktura, a textile mill in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, it was claimed that, although labour discipline was low, it had improved somewhat due to the sterner measures being adopted by management, Thus, if in the figures for the first half year of 1928/29 there had been 553 reprimands and 26 dismissals, the figures for the first half year of 1929/30 had risen to 1085 and 56 respectively, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.203-204.

Thus, even leaving aside turnover, nearly one-quarter of all the collapses were brought about by Government policies (categories 3 & 4) and a further third stemmed from failures of organisational back-up (2, 5 & 6).

The growing influence of turnover as the root cause for shock brigades folding up is illustrated by figures from Leningrad for May 1930, which show that this phenomenon was to blame for 63.1 per cent of all collapses, with lack of guidance from Party and union organs constant at 15.5 per cent and "due to the fault of management" likewise stable at 8 per cent.[319]

Contemporary accounts confirm that, no sooner had the initial enthusiasm for the Leninist Enrolment subsided than a rapid falling-off occurred in shock work, labour discipline, working conditions and provisions.[320] Apart from a brief resurgence for the 16th Party Congress in June-July the situation continued to deteriorate through to the autumn of 1930, when the Party and Government launched a fresh series of appeals and measures aimed at regulating the crises.

The Party was equivocal in its assessment of the Leninist Enrolment in a special decree of 28 April 1930. While praising the positive achievements of the campaign, including the beneficial influence on labour discipline, several shortcomings were indentified.

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319 Trud v SSSR: sbornik statei (1930), p.93.

320 A retrospective survey carried out by VTsSPS on 15 July 1930 concluded that "there was a clear ebb in socialist competition and shock work immediately the Leninist Enrolment of shock workers had finished", Industrializatsiya SSSR (1929-1932), p.518; in the Moscow region, arbitrary absenteeism, which had shown a drop in the second quarter of 1929/30 of 26.3 per cent compared with the corresponding period of 1928/29, rose by 45.5 per cent in the third quarter of 1929/30 compared with the period April-June 1928/29, A. Putyatin, 'Ispol'zovanie rabochei sily Moskovskoi oblasti v 1929/30 godu', in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.2, p.83; at the Sosnevskaya Manufaktura textile mill, by March 1930 the management had spent just 4.5 per cent of the allotted labour protection funds. As a result, accidents in the first half-year had risen to 333, compared with 326 for the entire year of 1929, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.208; in April, "serious difficulties with provisions" were reported at the construction site of the Stalingrad tractor works, ibid, p.220.

Criticism was directed in general at "sham shock work" and, in particular at the razamatazz" (paradnaya shumikha) accompanying the declaration of entire plants and workshops "shock", a trend which henceforward was to involve far greater selectivity. Instead, the Party sought to emphasise the need for bringing the promfinplan down to the brigade level, so that each group of shock workers would have concrete responsibilities, tasks and targets.[321]

Although the decree did call for key enterprises in basic industries and industrial centres to be promoted as "genuinely shock and advanced", it nevertheless marked an important step away from collective to individual forms of competition at a time when the latter was in danger of being squeezed out by the former.[322]

Systematic bonuses were to be paid not only to the best enterprises and shock brigades in competition, but also to the best individual workers and technical personnel. A renewed call was made for 100% participation of Party and Komsomol members in the shock brigades.[323]

Perhaps the most significant part of this decree, however, was its definition of the goals of the shock workers: "the primary goal of the shock worker movement, in addition to intensifying labour, is to improve the entire production process by every means: better organisation of labour, streamlining of production and management, maximum development of invention and improvement of individual work skills by raising the workers' technical qualifications and teaching the workers to care for machinery and tools."[324] Compare this essentially "managerial" view of shock work with the wider concept of the udarnik contained in a resolution

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321. Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.9, p.59.

322 A major Gosplan survey concluded that by 1 May 1930 "individual competition was dying out", accounting for just 28.3 per cent of all those competing, compared to 58.9 per cent in the shock brigades. In such key areas as the Ukrainian metals industry, only 8.8 per cent of all those competing did so on an individual basis, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.23-24.

323 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.9, p.60.

324 Great Soviet Encyclopedia: A Translation of Third Edition, vol.26, New York, p.135. (Original Russian text, Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.9, p.59.)

adopted just a few months earlier at the Shock Workers' Congress: "the shock worker is a revolutionary striving to improve production, public life and everyday life. He sets an example of a conscientious attitude toward productive work and fights for socialist labour discipline."[325]

This Party decree was supplemented by further directives: on 1 June 1930 "On the Progress in Checking the Fulfilment of the Promfinplan, Socialist Competition and Shock Work", which called for a decisive struggle against "sham shock work"[326] and, on 16 June 1930 "On the Results of the Growth of the Party in the First Quarter of 1930 and the Improvement of Party Work in Enterprises", which not only repeated the call for 100% participation in shock brigades by Party and Komsomol members, but also advocated the individualisation of their tasks and responsibilities in competition.[327]

In effecting this switch of emphasis in socialist competition, the Party's main support was the trade union movement. At the IV VTsSPS plenum in mid-May, Shvernik was duly elected First Secretary, thus completing the Party "shake-up" of the union leadership.[328] The VTsSPS dutifully turned its attention to bringing the promfinplan down to brigade level and countering manifestations of "sham shock work". The latter was tackled in a decree issued by the VTsSPS Presidium on 28 April, the very same day as the Party decree on the Leninist Enrolment. Union organisations were called upon to utilise production conferences and temporary control commissions in an attempt to encourage the workers to draw up their own planned targets for the coming financial year 1930/31.[329]

It was this decree that spawned a new form of socialist competition known as "counter planning" (vstrechnoe planirovanie), which was just one of the many new forms being advanced by workers in the run-up to the Party Congress in June-July. A prototype version of this movement

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325 loc. cit. (Original Russian text, Kulyshev & Rogachevskaya, op. cit. pp.104-105)

326 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, M. 1934, p.404.

327 ibid. p.302.

328 S. Shvarts, "Profsoyuzy pered XVI s"ezdom", Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 14 June 1930.

329 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.75-77.

had begun back in the summer of 1929 at Moscow's Elektrozavod, when 'five-year plans' were drawn up not only for the factory and each work shop, but also for every machine tool. The idea for reviving the concept was aired at Leningrad's Komintern leatherworks early in April, but it was not introduced on an organised basis until the Karl Marx works in Leningrad responded to the VTsSPS decree prior to the Party Congress and then, on 30 July 1930, called on other plants to follow its example.[330]

Two other forms of shock work that also drew praise from the Party Congress were the liaison brigades (skvoznye brigady) and the 'social tugboats' (obshchestvennye buksiry). The former (sometimes translated as 'chain', 'through' or 'mixed' brigades) originated at the Sel'mashstroi agricultural machine works in Rostov-on-Don in May 1930.[331] Members of the 2,000 strong brigade had published in Trud on 5 June 1930 a letter explaining how control was exercised over the entire production process to overcome "bottle-necks" and poor liaison works between shops at the plant.

On 14 June 1930, Trud published a report on the formation, in mid-May, of the first social tugboat at the Artem mine in the Northern Caucasus. A general meeting of Artem miners had despatched a team consisting of two of their best shock workers, an engineer, and representatives of management, union and Party organisations to the neighbouring October Revolution pit, which had fallen behind in its production schedule. By mid-July, a VTsSPS report on this innovation noted its successful implementation elsewhere,[332] although other reports point to the hostility such 'visits' engendered amongst the 'host' workers.[333]

330 Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za sotsializm, p.207.

331 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.88-90.

332 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.93.

333 Metallist, 10 July 1930 reports on an "unfriendly welcome" given by Moscow's Parastroi workers to the "tugboat" team from Taganrog's Krasnyi Kotel'shchik. Similar opposition was manifested when the AMO motorworks 'took in tow' the Moscow Brake Works, see Pravda, 4 September, 1930; the Artem miners were also met at first "with ill-will" (nedobrozhelatel'no) by the miners of the October Revolution pit, Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.17, p.6, who called their visitors 'foreigners' (chuzhaki), 'Varangians' (varyagi) and 'upstarts' (vyskochki), A. Kapustin & A. Milorud, op. cit. p.53.

Amongst the proliferation of other types of brigades at this time were 'tempo brigades' (brigady tempov),[334] 'storm brigades' (shturmovye brigady), brigades of exemplary output and rationalisation brigades, planning-operational brigades, etc.[335] Although these were formed in a substantial proportion of factories over the next two years, none of them ever accounted for a significant percentage of workers, as the following tables illustrate:

TABLE 15

Type of brigade	Total no. of brigades	% ents. with these brigades	Average no. of brigades per ent.	No. of workers in these brigades	% of all workers
Liaison	2790	29.9	5	71548	3.8
Social Tugboats	346	8.0	2	9160	0.49
Quality study	4062	27.9	8	43458	2.34
Planning-operational	1415	10.6	7	10557	0.57
Rationalisation	1901	23.5	5	13889	0.75

Source: A survey of 1.4.1931, covering 1884 enterprises with 1,864,235 workers), Trud v SSSR: statisticheskii spravochnik, (1932), pp.126-127.

The last three types of brigade listed were all roughly the same size as the average shock brigade (7-11 workers per brigade), whereas the liaison brigades and social tugboats were considerably larger, averaging 25 members per brigade. However, there were wide differentations from industry to industry. If one compares the auto and tractor with the cotton industry, the former had, on average, 6 members per liaison brigade and 3 per tugboat, while the latter had about 70 for each.[336]

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334 Metallist, 10 July 1930 (Stalinsk metalworks).

335 Bol'shevik, 1931, no.4, pp.31-32, notes 'storm brigades' and 'brigades of exemplary output' (elsewhere called quality brigades) at Moscow's Serp i Molot works, and rationalisation brigades at Elektrozavod; 'Planning-operational brigades' are identified at Krasnyi Putilovets, in Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, pp.126-127.

336 Trud v SSSR (1932), pp.126-127.

The situation with these groups did not change significantly thoughout the rest of the First Five-Year Plan as the following table illustrates:

TABLE 16

	1 April 1931	1 July 1931	1 January 1932	1 January 1933
All ents. studied	1884	2052	2692	2304
Total no. of workers (thousands)	1864.2	1863.6	*2068.5	2581.8
Liaison brigades				
% ents. with liaison br.	29.9	24.4	20.0	17.5
No. of brigades	2790	2871	3980	4434
No. of workers in them	71548	59334	72991	63981
% of all workers	3.8	3.2	3.5	2.5
Social Tugboats				
% ents. with tugboats	8.0	6.0	4.4	11.4
No. of brigades	346	413	614	1019
No. of workers in them	9160	10468	10320	25975
% of all workers	0.49	0.6	0.5	1.0
Rationalisation brigades				
% ents. with rat. brigades	23.5	22.4	24.9	37.4
No. of brigades	1901	1981	2957	3464
No. of workers in them	13889	13426	23524	37999
% of all workers	0.75	0.7	1.1	1.5
Quality brigades				
% ents. with quality br.	27.9	26.9	29.0	28.9
No. of brigades	4062	4222	5725	4285
No. of workers in them	43458	48572	52760	34658
% of all workers	2.34	2.6	2.55	1.34
Plan-operational brigades				
% ents. with p-o brigades	10.6	12.7	24.6	34.0
No. of brigades	1415	1638	7345	8369
No. of workers in them	10557	10545	41194	46726
% of all workers	0.57	0.57	1.99	1.81

Source: Trud v SSSR: statisticheskii spravochnik (1932), pp.126-127; Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.107-108.

* The figure given in the original is 1068.5 which, it must be assumed, is a misprint.

Significantly, in mid-July 1930, the trade unions and central press had convened a meeting of representatives of the above types of brigade in Moscow with a view to discussing how to spread the initiatives to the

working class at large.[337] As the table above demonstrates, they were not successful in this and, in due course, for one reason or another all these types of competition folded. The liaison brigades became gradually redundant as inter-workshop control points were established,[338] and the social tugboats were superseded by such "helping hand" movements as the Izotov and Stakhanov workers.[339] Counter-planning did initially expand into first "shift-counter planning" (smenno-vstrechnoe planirovanie), which originated at the Il'ich works in Mariupol' in April 1931,[340] then "technically-based counter plans" (techniko-obosnovannye vstrechnye plany) from late 1931 at Leningrad's Sevkabel' works.[341] However, one account suggests that workers' participation in planning was sharply curtailed during the years of "the cult of the personality" and was not restored until after Stalin's death.[342]

In general, most of the above groups were overshadowed in 1931-1933 by the growth of the "cost accounting" (khozraschetnye) brigades (see below pp.314-334), which in turn faded as one-man managerial control tended to stifle workers' group initiatives. Nevertheless, at least one rationalisation brigade at Leningrad's Krasnyi Putilovets tractor plant continued functioning right up until 1940.[343]

What then, was the state of socialist competition and shock work on the eve of the crucial 16th Party Congress? In his report to Congress, Kaganovich claimed that a Gosplan survey of 20 large plants in May 1930 had revealed that 87 per cent of workers were competing and 48 per cent were in shock brigades.[344] A much larger sample from the same investigation (covering nearly 900,000 workers) confirms that

337 Trud, 13, 14, 17 July 1930.
338 Istoriya SSSR, vtoraya seriya, vol.8, M. 1967, p.479.
339 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.476.
340 ibid. pp.79-81.
341 ibid. pp.86-87; Istoriya SSSR, vtoraya seriya, vol.8, p.491.
342 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.476.
343 V. Ya. Karasev, 'Shturmovye budni', in Neizvedannymi putyami, p.219.
344 XVI S"ezd, p.60.

47.8 per cent were in shock brigades.[345] However, the full survey, of 491 plants and 1,051,000 workers, concludes that 72.3 per cent of workers were competing and just 42.6 per cent were in shock brigades.[346] Moreover, the survey only covered plants with more than 1000 workers. The highest estimation that I have come across for May 1930 is that 52 per cent of workers were shock.[347] The lowest was given by Veinberg at the IV plenum of VTsSPS in mid-May where he claimed that 2 million workers were competing (just under 60 per cent) and 1.4 million were in shock brigades (just over 40 per cent).[348]

Thus, if one accepts that by May 1930 there were between 2 and 2.5 million workers competing and between 1.4 and 1.8 million shock workers, it becomes clear that, at best, the movement had only stabilised since the end of the Leninist Enrolment on 1 March. However, several key factors had, since then, greatly influenced the situation in a negative way. Labour turnover in the second quarter (April-June) 1930 reached unprecedented levels,[349] as did the influx into the working class of new recruits.[350] Indices of labour discipline had taken a sharp turn for the worst[351] and living and working conditions were deteriorating rapidly. Most importantly, however, key industrial targets were not being met.

At the IV plenum of VTsSPS, it was reported that labour productivity in the period October 1929-March 1930 had risen by only 18.9 per cent against the 25 per cent planned, while costs had been reduced by only 5-6 per cent against 11 per cent planned.[352] Moreover, the rise of 12 per cent in real wages had not been fulfilled, due, it was stated,

345 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.22-23.

346 ibid. p.11.

347 This figure was twice reported by A. Aluf, in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.6, p.4 and Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.31, p.6.

348 Quoted in ILO, Industrial and Labour Information, vol.34, April-June 1930, no.13, p.489.

349 See Chapter Three, p. .

350 Between 1 April and 1 July 1930 the workforce increased by 348,600, Trud v SSSR: statisticheskii spravochnik (1932), p.61.

351 Absentee rates rose by 17.5 per cent in the period April-June compared to January-March 1930, Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR (1932), p.446.

352 Rezolyutsii IV i V plenumov VTsSPS, M. 1932, p.5.

to a rise in the cost of living and bad provisions.[353] The situation was due to deteriorate even further during the summer of 1930. It is against the background of this situation that we shall examine, in the next chapter, the rise and fall of a type of shock work that was not represented at the July meeting on new forms of competition and did not share in the praise lavished on these initiatives at the Party Congress.

Conclusion

The importance of socialist competition, and its major component - shock work, is best viewed from the perspective of the vital role it played in stimulating a general acceptance for the new industrial order, geared towards the interests of production, and simultaneously, the smashing of the old order, directed more towards the improvement of workers' living and working conditions and the defence of their interests. This political task took precedence over the largely economic task of ensuring the improvement in labour discipline that, objectively, continued through 1929 and the first quarter of 1930. However, as an essential feature of shock work was a high level of labour discipline, the latter came to be regarded more as a political, rather than an economic, question.

The decisive breakthrough in this respect occurred in 1930. Although this year was most notable for mass collectivisation and the deepening industrial crisis, it was also very much the year of the shock worker. During 1930 the absolute number of shock workers nearly tripled, and their proportion in the industrial workforce doubled from 29 per cent to 58 per cent.[354] No fewer than 1½ million more shock workers were working in Soviet industry at the end of 1930 than at the beginning of the year. In comparison, both the preceding year of 1929 and the following year, 1931, produced less than 1 million new shock workers.

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353 ibid., p.6.

354 Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, M, 1934, p.454. I have calculated that from zero on 1 January 1929, the absolute number of shock workers rose to 0.9 million by 1 January 1930 and to 2.4 million by 1 January 1931. By 1 January 1932 this figure had risen to 3.2 million. See Appendix E.

However, these figures only gain their true perspective if it is emphasised that by far and away the most intensive growth in numbers of shock workers was experienced during the first five weeks of the Leninist Enrolment in January-February 1930, when at least 1 million workers declared themselves to be new udarniks (i.e. more than in the whole of either 1929 or 1931). It is important to stress that these recruits joined for largely moral, rather than material considerations (unlike the influx in the last two months of 1930, in which a further ½ million workers joined the movement largely to get the extra provisions that an udarnik's ticket ensured). The fact that much of the efforts of the shock workers were wasted as their industrial and living environment deteriorated rapidly in 1930, was less important than the fact that the will to work in the new way had been firmly established. After tackling the most serious problems facing them in 1930, the Party could set about channeling the energy generated by the shock movement in the desired direction, a task they began to get to grips with only in 1931.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PRODUCTION COMMUNES, 1929-1931

Introduction

The rise and fall of the production communes encapsulates the fate of the "autonomous" approach towards competition, and the changing attitudes to them by the central authorities marked the real watershed in the development of the movement at this time. The fate of the communes highlights, in particular, an important aspect of the struggle for labour discipline for, on the one hand, most contemporary accounts of the communes agree that they had an overall beneficial effect on discipline but, on the other, they were clearly incapable of coping with such effects of rapid industrialisation as labour turnover and a mass, raw new workforce. This, despite the fact that it was the communes that set the pace in combatting these problems, through self-contracting (samokreplenie)[1] and skill-raising within the brigade.[2] Their reliance on social, rather than material, incentives, on collective, rather than individual solutions and on "autonomous", rather than "managerial" approaches in an environment that was increasingly unfavourable to such factors, eventually proved to be their undoing.

Their brief existence of the production communes, from first making an impact in the latter months of 1929 until their effective proscribement by the Vesenkha and VTSSPS decree of 11 September 1931,[3] was the subject of intense debate in the USSR at the time,

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1 Markus notes, in his article 'Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na pod"eme', Bol'shevik, 1931, no.4, p.31, that communes showed the way in self-contracting at Elektrozavod.

2 Many contemporary observers noted this fact. For example, S. Zarkhii, op.cit., p.34; Bol'shevik, 1930, nos.3-4, p.5; Na novom etape, p.183 (Kalistratov); ibid. p.262 (Rakhman), who notes that "as it happens it is the most advanced section of the workers who point out that the production collectives represent the best school for promotion and the training of new, skilled workers."

3 Pravda, 12 September 1931.

engendering a host of newspaper articles, journal contributions and monographs. Studies into the phenomenon were instituted by the Party, unions and state organisations,[4] and conferences to discuss the communes were convened by the press and union bodies.[5]

Yet this debate has found little reflection in subsequent histories of the Soviet working class and socialist competition. If they are mentioned at all, the production communes tend to be dismissed as ephemeral, insignificant and experimental by-products of this turbulent period and, as such, not worthy of serious attention and analysis.

True, certain relatively recent works on socialist competition have been less than unequivocal in their criticism of the communes. Lebedeva and Shkaratan emphasise that "only the most conscientious (soznatel'nye) workers were accorded the honour of being accepted into the communes" and, after criticising them for wage-levelling (uravnilovka), state "However, the very fact of their creation is clear proof that the workers themselves were looking for ways to construct communism, were trying to educate members of society in a communist spirit and were trying to ignite in the working class the flame of competition. Certain features of the production communes of the 1930's make them kindred (ikh rodnyat) to the brigades of communist labour."[6]

This view is echoed by Rogachevskaya, who concludes:[7]

> "Production communes had many good points: collectivism, organisation, tight labour discipline, responsibility, etc

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4 Most notably, the Gosplan study of April-May 1930, see Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), especially the article "Proizvodstvennye kollektivy i kommuny" by G. Polyak, S. Batsofen and A. Semenina, pp.51-93.

5 VTsSPS organised a meeting to discuss communes in March 1930, although the favourable report on the meeting was not published at the time, see Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, pp.506-508: The management journal Predpriyatie also convened a meeting of communards in early March, see ZA industrializatsiyu, 7 March 1930.

6 Lebedeva & Shkaratan, op. cit., p.104.

7 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit., p.119.

> But due to equalisation in the division of wages communes eventually fell apart. They did not have the concrete conditions for spreading on a mass scale."

Even more striking is the attitude of actual participants in Soviet industry during this period when reminiscing about the communes:[8]

> "One may come up with different appraisals of the viability of creating such brigades. And they gave rise to much dispute at the time too. Their shortcoming was wage-levelling. But I'm bound to say that the brigade-communes at that time played an important role at the factory. They served as very good propaganda for collectivism, for friendship in work and mutual help. It was with great regret that we abolished the brigade-communes in September 1931 after the Vesenkha and VTsSPS decree on cost-accounting brigades."

It will be noted that all of the above quotes draw a distinction between the positive aspects of the communes, the communist attitude to work, and the negative, the equalisation of wages. The former, of course, relied on moral incentives and sanctions to sustain it, while the latter effectively precluded the application of material incentives. After the first heady months of the socialist offensive, the initial optimism that moral stimuli could be spread from the shock workers to the rest of the working class evaporated and increasing reliance was placed on the efficacy of material incentives and repressive legislative sanctions to achieve the desired levels of productivity and labour discipline. The shock production communes stood in the way of this switch of emphasis and thus had to be denounced on political as well as economic grounds.

Thus it is that we find contemporary references to the communes as "Utopia, the sum total of petit-bourgeois, left-deviation Trotskyist levelling mania"[9] and "leftist opportunism",[10] which had "nothing in common with Marxist communist equality".[11] What is surprising is that modern historians of the Soviet working class should repeat these assertions unquestioningly. Thus, a recent history of socialist competition calls production communes "distortions of the Leninist

8 P.P. Semyachkin, "V bor'be za vstrechnyu" in Neizvedannymi putyami, p.192.

9 Klaus Mehnert, Youth in Soviet Russia, London, 1933, p.253.

10 M. Eskin, "Zakonomernosti udarnogo dvizheniya", Problemy marksizma, 1931, nos.10-12, p.36.

11 St. Samueli, "Rabotu proizvodstvennykh kommun i kollektivov - na novye rel'sy", Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16, p.18.

ideals of competition",[12] and a writer on the movement in the Donbas concludes that "collectives and communes arose as a result of the hostile activity of Trotskyites, right-wing and bourgeois nationalists, who were attempting to discredit the concept of socialist competition".[13]

In fact, as I shall seek to demonstrate, the communards represented those workers who were in the forefront not only of competition, but also of the struggle for labour discipline. As such they constituted a response from below to policies formulated above and were a parallel development in industry to both the collectivisation of agriculture (which also produced communes until their proscription by the Party decree of 14 March 1930)[14] and the communalisation of life (byt'), which was abandoned following the Party edict of 16 May 1930.[15]

Furthermore there is clear evidence that the communes were a logical extension of the shock worker movement, being a response by the most committed, active and experienced workers to the intensification of work procedures (the introduction of line production, the continuous working week, the three-shift system etc.). The semi-autonomous growth of the production communes in the latter half of 1929 and the first half of 1930, with their emphasis on collective solutions to the problems of industry, inevitably came into conflict with the Party's policy of maintaining centralised control over industry through one-man management and thus curtailing the possibilities of devolving control to worker organisations.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to accuse the communards of naivety in attempting to create communist work relations in a society so manifestly lacking either the necessary material or human basis. However, such idealism was shared by significant sections of the creative and technical intelligentsia and reflected the mood of

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12 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973),p.105.

13 A.F. Rudenko, Uchenye zapiski (Khar'kovskii gos. un-t im. .M. Gor'kogo), vol.103, "Trudy kafedry istorii KPSS, vol.7, Khar'kov, 1959, p.131.

14 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh i resheniyakh, chast' 2, M. 1954, pp.668-671.

15 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, M. 1934, pp.733-734.

optimism and self-confidence that gripped the country at least until the spring of 1930.[16]

Nevertheless, some of Stalin's closest aides were displaying remarkably hard-boiled realism on the efficacy of communes from the very outset, as Kuibyshev displayed in his speech to the Shock Workers' Congress illustrates:[17]

> "If a highly-skilled worker joins a commune he can only survive on pure communist ideology. But, comrades, this cannot be a firm and good principle for all production, for all industry, given the heterogeneous composition of the working class, given that among the working class are enormous numbers of new workers, in many cases from the countryside."

Indeed, caution and suspicion exemplified the Party leadership's attitude towards the communes right up until Stalin's key policy statement in June 1931 came out unequivocally against them. This explains why, in distinction to the shock brigades before them and the cost-accounting brigades after them, a central Party directive was never issued advocating the mass spread of production communes, without which no form of socialist competition could hope to succeed.

Thus, one must beware of overexaggerating the impact of the commune movement. At the height of their popularity, in the year from May 1930, communes do not appear to have comprised more than 13 per cent of workers in larger industrial plants, and probably at no time ever accounted for more than 310,000 workers.[18] However, by the time of the 16th Party Congress, they were far more widespread and numerous than the liaison brigades and social tugboats which won official approval and, had they received the blessing of the Congress, would

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16 This mood is graphically expressed in Mayakovsky's poetry of the period, particularly in the opening lines of "Verses about (Doubting) Thomas" (Stikhi o Fome): "We are building the commune, and life itself heralds the dawn of a new era", Vladimir Mayakovskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, vol.10, pp.114-115. Mayakovsky made frequent reference to the "commune" in his poetry of this period using it in the Leninist sense, i.e. referring to communist society, a plant, or a settlement. Thus, in his aforementioned poem "Trail-blazers!" (Zastrel'shchiki!) he opines that "the commune is a matter of years, not centuries", ibid. pp.87-88. Portentously, his disenchantment with the course the Revolution was taking and his subsequent suicide in April 1930, coincided exactly with the end of the "optimistic" phase of the socialist offensive.

17 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.160.

18 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.43. See note 155, p.277.

undoubtedly have become as ubiquitous as both the shock and cost-accounting brigades.

As with the shock brigades, the generic term "production commune" covered a wide variety of organisational forms functioning under various names: communes, collectives, living and production communes (proizvodstvenno-bytovye), conveyors, communist brigades, communettes (kommunki) etc. There is no clear distinction to be drawn between the communes and collectives, although it is generally accepted that the former split wages and earnings equally, while the latter did so according to grade and hours worked.[19] However, the Gosplan survey of May 1930 suggested that only those brigades which exercised equal distribution amongst different grades and skills were true communes, all the rest being collectives.[20]

The point to emphasise is that it was not the form of wage distribution that linked these brigades (indeed, only in some of the living communes was the distribution truly communist i.e. according to need), but their communist attitude to work, expressed in cooperation under the slogan "all for one, one for all"[21] (a slogan revived without quite the same conviction in the post-1958 movement for communist labour). To ban these prototype forms of communist work relations for incorrect wage distribution would appear to be a clear case of the means substituting for the ends.

The Rise of the Communes

The task of establishing the origins of the first production commune is as difficult and engaging as the search for the first shock brigade. An authoritative article on communes in Pravda claimed that the first commune was formed at the Oktyabr' textile mill in Leningrad in July 1929, but this would appear to have folded up

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19 See T. Tirzbanrut, "Za novye formy organizatsii truda" in Puti industrializatsii, 1930, nos.11-12, pp.33-34.

20 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.55. This classification is also used by I. Zaromskii in his article "Proizvodstvennye kollektivy - novaya forma organizatsii truda', in Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, pp.20-21.

21 D. Reznikov, U darnye brigady sotsializma, p.31.

within two months.[22] However, there are references to communes being formed as early as 1928 in large metal and engineering works in Kiev,[23] Leningrad,[24] and Moscow,[25] and by early 1929, several Moscow textile mills had so-called "conveyors".[26]

The most widely-accepted birthplace of the commune movement, however, was the cradle of the shock brigade movement - the Zlatoust Machine Works in the Urals, where, by 15 June 1929, 178 workers (6.1 per cent of all) were in 39 production collectives.[27] The pioneer role of this plant in the development of the movement is confirmed by the first VTsSPS check on communes in March 1930,[28] and, later that year, by an article in the Party journal Bol'shevik.[29] The former notes the link with the introduction of the three-shift system and the latter with line production, thus emphasising the claim that communes arose, first and foremost, in response to the introduction of new technologies and management systems.

Other factors that facilitated the upsurge in the growth of communes in the latter half of 1929 were the check on socialist competition and economic pacts, the introduction of the continuous working week, the need to overcome breaks in production and the fresh wave of labour enthusiasm generated by the Party's call to fulfil the Five-Year Plan in four years.[30]

As it was this second stage of competition that attracted older workers to join what had hitherto been a predominantly youth movement, the communes may be perceived as the mature workers' response to the call for mass socialist competition.

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22 Pravda, 25 February 1930; Trud, 13 September 1929.

23 S. Zarkhii, Kommuna v tsekhe, M-L, 1930, p.14.

24 Leningradskie rabochie v bor'be za sotsializm, 1926-1937, p.206.

25 Yulii Ber, Kommuna segodnya, p.76.

26 Udarnye brigady (MK VLKSM), p.9.

27 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.149.

28 Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, p.506.

29 A. Pavlov, "Bor'ba za pyatiletku i sotsialisticheskuyu organizatsiyu truda" in Bol'shevik, 1930, n o.17, p.59.

30 Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, pp.18-19 (I. Zaromskii); Ot udarnykh brigad, pp53-54.

This is not to suggest that only the longest-serving and most high-skilled workers were interested in the communes. Indeed, the Gosplan survey of April-May 1930 concludes that "experienced workers don't like the communes"[31] and there seems to have been the same mixture of hostility, opposition and indifference that the shock brigades encountered. The typical organiser of a commune might well be a Party member acting on his or her own initiative, or that of the local Party or Komsomol cell, who had probably been in the forefront of the shock brigade movement.[32]

Naturally, not all communards shared the idealism of the committed few, there is evidence that many were browbeaten or cajoled into joining, if they were consulted at all.[33] On the other hand, there are grounds for arguing that the communes represented a rational and practical means of coping with new technologies that provided both moral and material incentives, in the form of cooperative work and increased earnings, to attract many workers.

More ominously, the communes were perceived by certain groups of workers, in particular those with links with the countryside, as a means of resurrecting the work cooperative (artel'), in which the workers accepted the authority only of their elected charge-hand (starosta). More than one contemporary observer noted the link between weak management and lack of Party support for the communes and the growth of syndicalist tendencies amongst the workers. Thus "in certain Donetsk and Urals metalworks, the extremely favourable overall phenomenon - the growth of shock brigades into shock collectives and communes (where all earning of a given collective goes into a common kitty and is shared out equally), in the absence of Party guidance, and with the wrong arrangements, can lead to consumer attitudes and, as a

31 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.54.

32 See, for example, Povalyaev's brigade at the AMO motorworks, in Delo chesti, pp.48-51; N. S. Yarov, Udarnye brigady v Gus'-Khrustal'noi, M-L, 1930; Rabotnitsa na sotsialisticheskoi stroike, M. 1932, pp.67-75.

33 Zaromskii gives examples of this in his article in Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, p.25.

result, to a fall in production."[34] There were even isolated cases of communists being specifically banned from communes.[35]

By the time of the Shock Workers' Congress in December 1929, the communes had already made an impact. Indeed, one-sixth of the delegates to the Congress were on some form of collective pay.[36] Not surprisingly, therefore, the communes figured prominently in the debate on future forms of work organisation. Significantly, Kuibyshev's caution was echoed at the Congress by union representatives, Shvernik and Veinberg, and by the Komsomol delegate, Segal, who all specifically attacked wage-levelling.[37] Delegates from production, however, were far more enthusiastic, none more so than one Aleksandrov, who urged:[38]

> "Make way for the communes! It is shameful that some of us fear the commune. I consider that it would be a crime to stifle the initiative in setting up the communes. Only there is no need to foist communes on the workers. We must wait until they come to them voluntarily - and they will come, undoubtedly they will come. There will be communes - with work in common for each and everyone, with wages in common and with a common way of life."

As the first checks on communes and collectives were not carried out until early in 1930, it is difficult to establish with any accuracy, the absolute number of such brigades existing at the time of the Shock Workers' Congress. At the plant in the forefront of the movement, the Zlatoust Machine Works, by November 1929, 21.35 per cent of all the workers were in communes and collectives.[39] At this time there were well over one hundred such brigades functioning,[40] a number that grew to more than two hundred by December, and to more than three hundred by January 1930.[41]

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34 D. Krymskii and K. N. "Profsoyuzy na novom etape", Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1929, no.2, p.19.

35 Metallist, 10 May 1930.

36 Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.360.

37 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, pp.71, 84, 141.

38 S. Zarkhii, op. cit. p.44.

39 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.150.

40 At the Shock Workers' Congress, the figure given was 120 communes and collectives, Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.141; Pravda, 25 February 1930, retrospectively claimed that there were 169.

41 Pravda, 25 February 1930.

At the Red Banner (Krasnoznamennyi) works in Kiev, by November 1929 there were 40 communes with 245 members, of whom 76 (31 per cent) were Party members, 61 (25 per cent) were Komsomol and the remaining 108 (44 per cent) non-Party.[42] By January 1930 the number of such brigades at the plant had gone up to 60,[43] although it was claimed that the management had forcefully formed some of these. Nonetheless the average earnings of the communards rose on average by 29.7 per cent.[44] The author comments that, at this time, "there was hardly a major plant in Khar'kov or Kiev that does not have communes, nor where there aren't dozens of them."[45]

Retrospective evidence was provided by the Gosplan survey of April-May 1930, which found that, of the 512 communes and collectives studied, 106 (20.7 per cent) had been formed in the period October-December 1929 and only 33 (6.4 per cent) prior to that. Of the 139 communes and collectives organised by the end of 1929, fully two-thirds (93 or 66.9 per cent) were single-grade communes, while a further seven (5 per cent) were multi-grade collectives in which earnings were divided according to grade. Thus the attack at the Shock Workers' Congress on wage-levelling would appear to relate to little more than one-quarter (28.1 per cent) of all the communes and collectives then functioning. A probable explanation for the excessive caution articulated by management representatives at the Congress was the fact that, in the vital metal and electrotechnical industries, of the 70 communes identified as being organised prior to the end of 1929, only 36 (51.4 per cent) were single-grade, whilst 27 (38.6 per cent) were multi-grade communes in which wages were divided equally.[46]

The polarisation of attitudes to the communes between on the one hand, the shock workers themselves and, on the other, non-working delegates is evident from reading the speeches delivered at the Congress. The point is that the shock workers provided the overwhelming

42 S. Zarkhi, op. cit. pp.15-17.

43 ibid. p.36.

44 ibid .22.

45 ibid. p.16.

46 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.90.

majority of delegates, 690 out of 820 (84.1 per cent).[47] Not surprisingly, therefore, positive appraisals of the communes outnumbered negative. Ryabov, for example, a delegated shock worker from the Nadezhdinsk metalworks, proudly catologued the production successes of another Urals plant, the Zlatoust Machine Works, which was in the forefront of the communes movement and had fulfilled its annual production plan by 107 per cent, raised labour productivity by 26.8 per cent, cut costs by 6.7 per cent, and reduced absenteeism five-fold.[48] Moreover, a resolution was passed at the Congress approving the spread of collective forms of pay.[49]

It was the commencement, however, of the Leninist Enrolment that gave the communes movement its greatest impetus. Significantly, the two plants that had first suggested this new initiative, the Lys'va metalworks and the Kolomenskoe locoworks, both had whole workshops operating on a communalised basis.[50] During the course of the Enrolment (from 21 January to 1 March 1930) workshops in many other plants were to follow suit,[51] resulting, in some cases, in entire factories declaring themselves communes.[52]

This trend had a particular poignancy, given the fact that the Enrolment was launched to mark the anniversary of Lenin's death, for he had used the term "commune", in writing about competition, to denote whole factories, rather than individual work collectives. The move

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47 Pravda, 6 December 1929; Of the shock worker delegates, no fewer than 120 addressed the Congress, Kulyshev & Rogachevskaya, op. cit., p.101.

48 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.87; Ryabov's speech is printed in full in Istoriya industrializatsii Urala (1926-1932gg), Sverdlovsk, 1967, pp.450-453.

49 According to Kalistratov, in Na novom etape, pp.177-178, the resolution stated that it considered "possible the organisation of communes on conveyor-type work with similar skills, whilst decisively struggling against the artificial spreading of communes. The correct form of wage distribution within the communes is held to be according to the skills of the workers."

50 Bol'shevik, 1930, nos.3-4, pp.4-5.

51 Bol'shevik, 1930, nos.3-4, pp.4-5, notes communalised workshops at Krasnaya Etna (Nizhnii Novgorod), Zlatoust Machine Works and Kolomenskoe locoworks.

52 A VTsSPS report in July 1930 noted that Monetnyi dvor, the Verkhne-Turinskii metalworks and the Kolomenskoe works had all been turned into communes, Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, p.517.

towards communalised workshops and plants would appear to have been a reflection of the shock workers' awareness of this link, as would the penchant for naming the communes "Lenin", "Iskra" and other such revolutionary terms.[53] In what probably came nearest to a Leninist endorsement of the communes, his words were paraphrased by his widow, Krupskaya, who called these "little communes" (Kommunki), "the beginnings of something bigger" (nachalo bol'shego dela), alluding, it would seem, to Lenin's concept of "The Great Beginning" (see p.153). Krupskaya added that:[54]

> "To the extent that a conscious attitude to work grows, the necessity for material incentives will wither away. Socialist competition has raised the conscious attitude to work, and has raised a conscious discipline, and it is by no means accidental that it is amongst the shock workers that the kommunki have become a trend. This does not represent a striving for petty-bourgeoise wage-levelling, but rather the shoots of the socialist system (rostki sotsialisticheskogo uklada)."

Such sentiments were echoed, in the run-up to the Sixteenth Party Congress, in a whole range of publications, the consensus being that communes represented "the highest form of socialist competition"[55] and that they had a great future".[56] Very soon, such claims were to sound somewhat hollow, if not downright counter-revolutionary!

It is remarkable that, despite the fact that all investigations into communes appeared to draw favourable conclusions on the movement, little of the data was published in time for the Sixteenth Party Congress,

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53 "Lenin", "Iskra" and even "Leninist Spark" (Leninskaya iskra) were all names of communes at the Zlatoust Machine works, see P. Dubner & M. Kozyrev, Kollektivy i kommuny v bor'be za kommunisticheskie formy truda, M-L, 1930, pp.23, 38; Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16 (Samueli), p.16; Stalingrad Tractor works had both "Iskra" and "Lenin" communes, Yu. Kokorev, op. cit. p.15; Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, M. 1934, p.144.

54 Quoted in L. Tandit, 'Proizvodstvennye kommuny i zadachi partorganizatsii', in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.6, p.47.

55 Among the many sources in which this claim is made are Na novom etape, p.176, (Kalistratov); D. Reznikov, op. cit., p.32; Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.6, pp.44-45 (Tandit); Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.7 (Gimmel'farb); ibid. 1930, no.12, p.3 (Zaromskii); Trud, 11 July 1930; Bol'shevik, 1931, no.4, p.31 (Markus); Puti industrializatsii, 1930, nos.11-12, p.33 (Tirzbanrut); In a report dated 1 February 1930, the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party reached this conclusion, in Razvitie sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v Belorusskoi SSSR (1919-1941gg); dokumenty i materialy, Minsk, 1980, p.93.

56 Trud, 9 April 1930, which stated "the greatest future (velichaishee budushchee) ...awaits this new movement."

which might otherwise have served as a launching platform for the spread of communes in much the same way as the Sixteenth Party Conference had for shock brigades.

Gosplan, VTsSPS and VSNKh were all instructed to carry out investigations into communes in time for the Congress. The Gosplan survey provided the broadest analysis of the movement, commenting favourably on its growth (for which it was subsequently roundly condemned,[57] and, eventually "rehabilitated").[58] Even the new leadership of the unions, basing its policy on the results of VTsSPS investigations, passed a resolution at its May plenum "encouraging and developing by all means shock production collectives that operate with one wage-book and divide earnings according to skills, while at the same time conducting a decisive campaign against trends towards wage-levelling that are being exhibited by certain low-paid and backward groups of workers."[59]

One might conjecture that the failure of VSNKh's investigation to publish results might be connected with the continuing scepticism of its Chairman, Kuibyshev, on the feasibility of communes as a mass phenomenon as well as a growing awareness of the threat the movement might potentially post to one-man management and the spread of piece-work. Nowhere was this threat more evident than at the Zlatoust Machine Works, the cradle of both the shock worker and production commune movements.

It is worth noting that this plant had an unusually high proportion of cadre workers, no fewer than 49 per cent of its work force, as of May 1930, had been at the plant for more than five years.[60] As a result of continued production successes the plant had been allowed to bear the proud title of the Lenin Works.[61] On 22 January 1930, the

57 V. Pavlov, "Bor'ba za pyatiletku i sotsialisticheskuyu organizatsiyu truda", Bol'shevik, 1930, no.17, p.55, points to "the crude theoretical and political mistakes" in the work.

58 I. E. Vorozheikin, op. cit. p.233.

59 Rezolyutsii IV i V plenumov, p.22.

60 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.48.

61 Na putyakh k pobedam, p.15.

day following the launch of the Leninist Enrolment, the plant had been declared "shock".[62] So quickly did the commune movement spread within the factory that, by the end of the Enrolment, an estimated 36.1 per cent of all its workers were in communes, a figure that had risen to 42.5 per cent by early June.[63]

By the end of the Enrolment the best communards from the Machine works were visiting other metal works in the Urals, advising on the establishment of communes. The leading role in the movement occupied by this plant is illustrated in the report by the Urals obkom of the Party to the Tenth Regional Party Conference in June 1930:

TABLE 17

	Name of metalworks	No. of shock workers	No. of shock brigades	incl. collectives	No. of shock workers in collectives
1	Nadezhdinskii	4587	303	18	100
2	Kushvinskii	1061	77	23	146
3	Nizhne-Saldinskii	1473	51	16	308
4	Nizhne-Tagil'skii	2682	73	43	1504
5	Nizhne-Turinskii	743	80	46	420
6	Kaslinskii	2901	47	47	2901
7	Verkhne-Isetskii	3027	29	12	583
8	Asha-Balashevskii	891	47	3	57
9	Zlatoust metalworks	2053	43	18	1497
10	Myasskii	1013	187	29	405
11	Kusinskii	219	14	11	176
12	Zlatoust Machine works	4300	515	359	1985
13	Satkinskii	643	14	3	52
14	Ust'-Katavskii	1673	28	22	1498
15	Katav-Ivanovskii	1238	59	16	161
	Totals	*28504	1567	*666	*11343

Source: Istoriya industrializatsii Urala (1926-1932gg), Sverdlovsk, 1967, p.454.

Note: *these represent the totals of figures given and not those in the original which, evidently, contains errors.

62 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.159.

63 Calculated from ibid. pp.150-151; Istoriya industrializatsii Urala, p.454; Trud, 9 July 1930.

Thus, fully 53.9 per cent of all the communes studied were at Zlatoust Machine Works, as were 17.5 per cent of the communards. In total, the communes accounted for no less than 22.2 per cent (11,343 out of 51,128) of all workers at these plants, and 40 per cent of all shock workers. Interestingly, six of the fifteen factories listed had higher percentages of communards than the Machine Works, including the Kaslinskii metalworks, which was totally communalised. Significantly, at all these plants the average size of the commune was far greater than at the Machine works (5.5 members per commune), reaching 83.2 per commune at the Zlatoust metalworks,[64] where one collective of 350 members had been formed to mark the 12th anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1929.[65]

Both the communes at the Machine works and the entire plant itself continued to produce good results. Thus the daily output of the axe-grinding shop doubled from 268 to 537 axes after the formation of communes, whose members' productivity of labour was from 122 to 182 per cent higher than that of non-communards.[66] The plant overfulfilled its production plan for the first half of 1929/30 by 106 per cent,[67] was commended in a VTsSPS survey for its "brilliant" results during the first quarter of 1930,[68] was nominated by the Metallists' union for the VTsSPS Red Banner[69] and won praise from Trud for "taking in tow" the neighbouring Zlatoust metalworks.[70] On all criteria, it would seem, this was an exemplary plant.

What, then, were the objections that Kuibyshev and his supporters has against the communes. To begin with, it appears that the movement at the Zlatoust plant had been an essentially workers', rather than Party, initiative. A contemporary account concluded:[71]

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64 Istoriya industrializatsii Urala, p.454; the Gosplan survey noted that the average size of collectives at this plant was 325, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.45.

65 Ot udarnykh brigad, p.46.

66 Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4 (Zaromskii) p.22.

67 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.154.

68 Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932, pp.517-518.

69 Metallist, 30 June 1930.

70 Trud, 13 July 1930.

71 Dubner & Kozyrev, op. cit. pp.20-21.

> "The collectives, for the most part, were organised on the initiative of non-Party workers from amongst the most active, conscientious and highly-skilled cadres, working in the majority of cases in the same section, being of the same grade and uniting in order to fulfil production tasks, raise labour productivity, streamline production and setting themselves the task of being examples of a communist attitude to work."

The strength of the communes at the Machine works inevitably led to a questioning of the concept of one-man management,[72] culminating in an attempt to set up a council of communes to run production.[73] This was perceived by the Party leadership as precisely the kind of "leftist" leap into communism that was being explicitly condemned on the eve of the Party Congress.[74]

Moreover, the communes threatened to undermine the spread of piece-work in Soviet industry, relying as they did on moral rather than material incentives. This was early recognised by such economic planners as Strumilin, who wrote at this time that, whereas the spread of individualism favoured the system of unlimited piece-work, the spread of collectivism favoured wage-levelling.[75] Similarly, the collectivisation of the way of life reduced the need for income differentials.[76] As wage-differentation and unlimited piece-work were to form the corner-stones of Stalin's new policy of incentives in 1931, it is easy to understand the lack of enthusiasm for the communes amongst Stalin's followers in the leadership. Stalin himself appears to have reserved judgement on the movement for the time being, but there is no evidence that he ever abandoned his preference for greater emphasis on managerial control, individual responsibility and rewards in production. However, it should be emphasised that, in the period around the

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72 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.160.

73 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.108.

74 See, for example, the Central Committee decree "On Work on the Reconstruction of the Way of Life", issued 16 May 1930, which condemned attempts to "leap with one bound" (odnim pryzhkom pereskochit') into socialist forms, which had "discredited the idea of the socialist reconstruction of the way of life as a whole", Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika,vyp.8, pp.733-734.

75 Na novom etape (Strumilin), p.45; on 7 April 1930, Leningradskaya Pravda had warned that "this form of work threatens the existence of individual piece-work.

76 Na novom etape (Strumilin) p.48.

Sixteenth Party Congress such other complex matters as the collectivisation of agriculture, the intra-Party struggles and the growing need to consolidate and even quicken the adopted pace of industrialisation, took precedence over the debate on communes, a fact which is certainly reflected in the proceedings at the Congress.[77]

Yet herein lies a paradox. For one of the great successes, from Stalin's point of view, of the rapid rate of industrialisation, had been the spread of socialist competition and shock work, which had effectively smashed the old, restrictive customs and practices on the shop floor. Naturally, this featured prominently in Stalin's speech to the Congress, in which he reminded his audience that "not so long ago we could still hear talk about the 'far-fetched' (nadumannost') and 'untenable' (nesostoyatel'nost') nature of competition and shock work", continuing that "the most remarkable thing about competition is that it effects a radical change in people's attitude to work, for it transforms work from a despicable (zazornyi) and heavy burden, as it used to be regarded, into a matter of honour, a matter of glory, a matter of valour and heroism."[78] Yet the very embodiment of this radical change in attitudes, and the trail-blazers in what was to become the 'heroic age' of shock work (until the policy shift in mid-1931), were the shock workers in the much neglected production collectives.

This was indirectly acknowledged at the Congress by Kaganovich, who praised the productivity record of a brigade of young workers in the gearbox assembly shop at the AMO motorworks.[79] Other contemporary sources reveal that this brigade was a production commune.[80] Indeed, in the rare references to production communes at the Congress both Kaganovich and Shvernik praised certain positive features of the movement, but the former warned of the threat posed to one-man

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77 For Stalin's attitude to agricultural communes see R.W. Davies, The Soviet Collective Farm, 1929-1930, London, 1980. S. Zarkhii, op. cit., p.9 notes that Stalin called the communes "SR demagogy".

78 XVI S"ezd, p.39.

79 ibid., p.61.

80 Aleksandr Gambarov, 'Korobka skorostei', in Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.17, pp.29-33. In fact, as the brigade divided wages according to grades, it should strictly be called a production collective.

management,[81] and the latter repeated VTsSPS's call for a decisive struggle against wage-levelling.[82]

On the basis of available evidence, both these threats were over-exaggerated. Attempts to take over management, or to include administrative personnel in the communes were isolated,[83] and, in those communes which had been voluntarily constituted, wage-levelling was not considered a problem.[84] With some justification, the communards and their supporters felt that the very real achievements of the movement were being neglected,[85] while detractors of the communes were mistakenly regarding the distribution of wages as a more reliable test of the 'communist-ness' (kommunistichnost') of the brigades than attitudes to work, levels of labour discipline etc.[86]

For, at this stage, one would be hard put to criticise the communes on their record in labour discipline; indeed, there is near consensus that the movement made a marked improvement on absenteeism, punctuality, rational use of work time etc.[87] However, this only

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81 XVI S"ezd, p.62.

82 ibid. p.653.

83 Kaganovich referred to directors joining communes in the Urals in his speech to the Sixteenth Party Congress, see XVI S"ezd, p.62; Rabochaya Moskva reported on 18 February 1930, that the director of the January Works in Odessa had joined a commune at 100 roubles a month like everybody else, Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.6, p.48 (Tandit).

84 This view was expressed by communards at Moscow's Elektrozavod, see A. Klyushin, 'Proizvodstvennye kommuny kak opyt kollektivnogo truda', in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.11, p.26.

85 As communards from the Baltiiskii works in Leningrad complained: "in all this time not one factory organisation, neither the Party committee, nor the union committee has taken the trouble to come and see our commune for themselves. Nobody has paid any real attention. We could have been a band of counter-revolutionaries, out to disorganise and undermine production", in Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.85.

86 This point is made in Na novom etape, p.182, notes the "extraordinarily great contribution of the collectives and communes in the strengthening of labour discipline" adding that absenteeism had been virtually eliminated in such brigades. Virtually all the charters (ustavy) and rules drawn up by communards place high emphasis on observance of labour discipline, see Pravda, 25 February 1930; Tandit, in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.6, p.45 notes that "the basic principles of pacts and charters of production collectives and communes were precisely a high and firm labour discipline, class consciousness, strict and accurate organisation and the streamlining of production."

87 See, for example, Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos. 15-16, (Samueli).

applied to communes that were formed on a voluntary basis. For the second major paradox of the commune movement was that the negative influence of wage-levelling was exacerbated not so much by the workers themselves, as by the arbitrary and enforced creation of communes by the management. The literature of the time abounds in references to such cases, which were not only doomed to failure, but also discredited the commune movement as a whole and made easier its proscribement in 1931.[88]

Again, such attempts at 'communism by edict' can be understood only in relation to the other events at the time: for example, the practical embodiment of the 'new life' was to be the Stalingrad Tractor Works - a socialist plant in a socialist town in which production and living communes would become the norm - now being built at a 'shock' pace (it would be fully another year before the ideals of this project would be obliged to come to terms with hard reality). Similarly, the arbitrary communalisation of factories was a parallel and understandable extension of the collectivisation of agriculture, particularly as the influx of new workers were predominantly from the new collective farms. This link did not escape the attention of at least one contemporary author, who wrote:[89]

> "The creation of communes coincides exactly with the dizziness from success in the countryside. Thus, for example, the entire wisdom of the 'fully-collectivised' workshops at the Lenin Works in Zlatoust consisted of the indiscriminate transfer of all the workers to brigade piece-work within three days..."

Indeed, the dizziness from success seemed to work in two directions: on the one hand, this condition is blamed for the management decision at the Moscow Brake Works to transfer an entire shop to communal work, "with terrible results",[90] and on the other the director of the

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88 S. Zarkhii, op. cit. p.36 mentions this phenomenon at Kiev's Red Banner Works at the beginning of the movement; Zaromskii, Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, pp.20-21 notes 'semi-administrative' (poluadministrativnye) means in setting up communes and, as late as 21 July 1931, Pravda came out against implementing communes from above.

89 Na novom etape, p.179 (Kalistratov).

90 A. Yuzhnyi, 'Proizvodstvennye kommuny kak opyt sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya', in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.8, p.11.

Dzerzhinskii works folded up all the factory communes after an article had appeared in Trud on 4 April 1930 entitled "For Production Collectives - Against Wage-Levelling".[91]

However, this link with collectivisation was manifested not only by the management, but also in the form of social pressure. Thus, at the Tsentrosoyuz confectionary factory in Moscow, workers joining the collectives began calling themselves kolkhozniki, while those "not organised" were termed kulaki.[92] At the Krasnoe Sormovo metalworks in Nizhnyi Novgorod, workers connected with the countryside were obliged to join the collective farms or be sacked. After Stalin's "Dizziness from Success" speech in March "they all quit".[93] Another report from the same plant observes that those who refused to join the communes were called 'right fractionalists'.[94] Finally, as if to demonstrate that the communards themselves were aware of the pitfalls of haste and arbitrariness in forming communes, a member of a commune from Krasnoe Sormovo remarked "it must be admitted that the best form of competition are the shock brigades. When they have become consolidated, the move can be made to production and then living communes. So as somehow to avoid with communes those mistakes that were made during collectivisation".[95]

Indisputably, during this period of upsurge, the production communes represented a contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the leading shock workers were in the forefront of the movement and were motivated by the most laudable motives. As a contemporary observer noted: "we consider it necessary to emphasise, however, that the movement for collectives and communes arose from the very best class impulses, from the desire to achieve at any

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91 Na novom etape, p.220 (Kalistratov).

92 ibid. p.179 (Kalistratov).

93 Metallist, 10 May 1930.

94 Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.10, p.10.

95 Na novom etape, p.220, (Kalistratov).

sacrifice the quickest possible realisation of communist ideals."[96] However, as the Gosplan survey concluded: "no matter how great is the stratum of enthusiasts, the fate (of the communes) will, in the final analysis, be decided by the attitude of the rank-and-file members of the collective."[97] As the ranks of enthusiasts were diluted by promotion and the influx of new workers, their influence on the movement waned and other factors took over. Where the management was weak and the factory organisations stood to one side of the commune movement, large-scale collectives were formed and syndicalist trends developed.[98] In areas with a large number of peasant recruits, the communes were seen as a vehicle for resurrecting the former artels, which were motivated by considerations quite alien to the genuine communards.[99] And, finally, when communes were foisted on the workers from above, discontent with the system of wage distribution compromised the efficacy of the entire movement.[100] If one adds the dislocating effects of rampant labour turnover, then one can at least appreciate the vacillation on the part of the Party leadership in placing its stamp of approval on the movement. The point is, however, that the commune movement was if anything stronger and more widespread at the time of the Sixteenth Party Congress than the Shock Brigades had been when they won official Party approval at the Sixteenth Party Conference. Even without that approval, the communes continued to grow for a further year. One might only surmise how widespread the movement would have become had it won the backing of the Party in the summer of 1930.

It is quite difficult to establish just how many communards there were at the time of the Party Congress. The only clue contained in the Gosplan survey is that 4.5 per cent of all industrial workers were in

96 ibid. p.180 (Kalistratov).

97 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.73.

98 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.45-46.

99 ibid. p.219 (Stalingrad Tractor works construction site).

100 Voprosy truda, 1930, no.4, pp.20-21 (Zaromskii); Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.70-71.

communes and collectives (the percentage for the metal industry is considerably higher at 5.5 per cent).[101] This would indicate that by May 1930 there were in excess of 150,000 communards in Soviet industry.[102] Two points deserve special emphasis in this respect: the first is that these communards were largely concentrated in key industries in the major industrial regions. Thus, for example, other sources inform us that more than 11,000 communards were in the Urals metalworks alone (22 per cent of all workers),[103] and another 4,000 in the Leningrad metal industry (4 per cent of all workers).[104] Secondly, despite the lack of a central Party directive encouraging the formation of communes, the number of communards would appear to have roughly doubled over the following year to 300,000 by May 1931.[105]

The Organisation and Composition of the Communes

The Gosplan survey of April-May 1930 concentrated on the two industries in which the communes were most widespread - metal and textiles. Six basic types of production communes and collectives were studied:

TABLE 18

Type	No.	% to total workers	% to total collectives	% to total workers in collectives
1 Workers of same grade	316	3213	61.7	60.7
2 Workers different grades but equal distribution of basic wages	114	942	22.3	17.8
3 Workers different grades but equal distribution of extra earnings	23	252	4.5	4.8
4 Workers different grades all earnings proportional	44	679	8.6	12.8
5 Distribution according to size of family	2	45	0.4	0.8
6 Mixed forms of distribution	13	163	2.5	3.1
Totals	512	5294	100	100

Source: Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.58.

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101 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.67.

102 Calculated at 156,562 (i.e. 4.5% of 3,479,146). Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932 gg. p.435.

103 See note 64, p. 254.

104 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v Leningrade, p.149. A report to the III Regional Party Conference on 1 June 1930 revealed that, in the region as a whole, there were 15,595 communards (6.25% of all workers), concentrated in metals, textiles, (6,608 or 12.1% of all workers) and leather (2,481 or 11.7%).

105 This may be seen to be true on a national(see p. 277) and on a local scale (for example see Leningrad figures on p. 285).

Significantly different patterns were found to exist, not only between the two industries, but also between types of collective. To begin with the average collective in the textile industry was nearly twice as big as that in the metal industry (14.1 and 7.3 members respectively).[106] Moreover, of the 160 collectives studied in the textile industry, only 10 (6.25 per cent) were true communes (i.e. composed of workers with different grades sharing wages equally), whereas 130 (81.25 per cent) were single-grade collectives. The corresponding figures for the metal industry's 256 collectives were 92 (35.9 per cent) and 112 (43.75 per cent). If one examines the absolute number of workers in the collectives, the difference becomes even more pronounced. Thus, 80.4 per cent of the textile communards were in single-grade collectives, against a mere 32.9 per cent of metallists. Whereas only one in every sixteen communard in the textile industry belonged to a true commune, the corresponding figure for the metal industry was one in three.[107]

Substantially different forms of work organisation were also discovered. Thus fully 88 per cent of the textile communards and 91.9 per cent of textile collectives operated on multi-shift work, compared to just 56.5 and 56.25 per cent respectively in the metal industry. Whereas over half of the metal communards (51.7 per cent) worked in one-shift only collectives, this was true of less than one-third (32.2 per cent) of the textile communards. A further important difference was that 70 per cent of the textile collectives kept accounts of each individual member's output, the same was true for only 19.9 per cent of the metal collectives.[108]

On the other hand, the metal collectives were nearly twice as likely (20.7 per cent against 11.25 per cent) to engage in rationalisation measures and almost eight times as likely (39 per cent against 5 per cent) to conduct work in raising the skills of their members. Only two

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106 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.90.

107 loc. cit.

108 ibid., p.91

textile collectives switched their members around in jobs requiring different skills and only four engaged in voluntary rate-cutting; the corresponding figures for the metal collectives were 41 and 63. Finally, the metal collectives were much more likely to impose their own penalties on members for breaches of discipline.[109]

One of the reasons underlying this last differentation is the existence of a far greater proportion of true communes in the metal industry. This may be confirmed by comparing the patterns of work organisation between, on the one hand, single-grade collectives and, on the other, communes uniting workers of different grades sharing wages equally. Thus, although a similar proportion (25 and 22.8 per cent respectively) engaged in rationalisation work, the true communes were nearly twice as likely (at 25.8 and 44.6 per cent respectively) to raise the skills of their members and more than six times as likely to switch members around on jobs (4.5 and 29.3 per cent). The true communes were also more likely to voluntarily cut rates and to impose fines on their own members.[110]

The survey also provides data on the sex, age, experience and party commitment of the communards. Apart from the obvious differences in female/male ratios between the industries (82.1 per cent of the metal communards were male, whereas 80.8 per cent of the textile workers in collectives were female), the most striking feature is the high proportion in all types of collectives of mature, cadre Party workers. Thus, 70 per cent of all communards were 25 years old or more and nearly half (48.2 per cent) were thirty or more, and fully 18.9 per cent were 40 years old or more. In both industries the proportion of over-40s was significantly higher in those collectives which split only extra earnings equally (24.8 per cent in metals and 33.4 per cent in textiles) and lower in true communes (13.7 and 17 per cent respectively).[111]

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109 ibid., p.92.

110 ibid., p.91.

111 ibid., p.92.

Nearly three-fifths of all communards (58.2 per cent) were cadre workers (i.e. with at least five years work experience) and less than one in seven (14.9 per cent) was a new worker (with less than two years experience). This was even more pronounced in the textile industry where over two-thirds (68.6 per cent) were cadre and a mere 7.3 per cent new (the corresponding figures for metal were 56 and 14 per cent). Moreover, more than one-quarter of the textile communards had more than twenty years work experience! (15 per cent for metal workers). In the metal industry most experienced workers appeared to favour the collectives splitting only extra earnings equally, although this group constituted 15.9 per cent of all true communards in that industry. In textiles, the favoured type of collective was either one which split only extra earnings equally, or one-grade collectives. This latter apparent anomaly is explained by the high percentage of women workers (85.3 per cent) in this category.[112]

The exceptionally high Party saturation in the collectives (30.4 per cent in metals compared with 15.9 per cent for that industry as a whole, and 16 per cent in textiles as against 9.8 per cent for the industry)[113] is sometimes attributed to the mass application of communards to join the Party during the Leninist Enrolment. However, the survey refutes this, for three-quarters of all communards with Party affiliation (74.8 per cent) appear to have joined the Party prior to the formation of their collective. The same applies to membership of the Komsomol, who constituted a small minority of communards in both industries (13.3 per cent in metals and 13.1 per cent in textiles), 89.7 per cent of whom had joined prior to communes in the textile industry, which at 30.4 per cent, had the highest Party saturation in that industry of any form of collective. Of these 94.1 per cent (and all Komsomols) had joined prior to the formation of the commune. In the

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112 ibid., pp.92-93.

113 ibid., p.93; figures for Party membership in these industries as a whole are for 1 January 1930, in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.17, p.40.

metal industry Party saturation was roughly the same in the collectives sharing only extra earnings (36.3 per cent), the true communes (33.9 per cent) and one-grade collectives 33.5 per cent).[114] However only one in every 15 communists in the metal industry (6.6 per cent) was a member of a commune or collective, and only one in every twenty (4.8 per cent) in textiles.[115]

The different orientations in commune work in the two industries are reflected in the grade distributions of the communards. In textiles only 1.2 per cent were unskilled, whereas 71 per cent were skilled and highly-skilled. In metals the picture was somewhat different, only 19 per cent being skilled or highly-skilled, 49.9 per cent semi-skilled and 31.1 per cent unskilled.[116]

An investigation into the true communes of the metal industry revealed that 81.9 per cent of the communards were in adjacent, medium-skill grades (2-4).[117] This preponderance of semi-skilled workers underlines the communes suitability for conveyor work. Although at this time (April 1930), only about 150 enterprises had switched to continuous flow production,[118] it was widely assumed that the wider application of such technologies would lead to the disappearance of individualistic work.[119]

Given the emphasis on the harmful effects of wage levelling in the communes, it is worth analysing what the survey reveals in this area. In the true communes of the metal industry it would appear that the unskilled prospered most, as their earnings rose on average by 26.2 per

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114 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.93.

115 ibid., p.67.

116 loc. cit.

117 ibid., p.58.

118 Rabochie o nepreryvnom potoke: vtoraya moskovskaya konferentsiya rabochikh s predpriyatii, vvedshikh nepreryvnyi potok, M-L, 1931, p.29.

119 This was the opinion of Aleksei Gastev, head of the Central Institute of Labour (TsIT) see Za industrializatsiyu, 17 January 1930.

per cent, at the expense of the skilled, whose income dropped by 1.4 per cent; younger workers up to 24 years of age also gained 13.6 per cent, while the most senior group, over forty years of age, saw their earnings unchanged. Those with one child or no children also did better in the communes than those with large families.[120]

As the skilled workers tended to be those older workers with larger families, such wage distribution put three-fold pressure on the idealism of this group, pressure which intensified as the growing shortage of skilled cadres raised the selling price of their labour. At the other end of the scale, the young, unskilled workers with few family commitments could expect significantly-increased earnings in the communes. Such a situation was bound to attract many who had not a jot of idealism and was eventually to prove the Achilles heel of the movement.

This potentially negative feature was commented on by the compilers of the survey, but ironically for a major investigation launched at the request of such stalwart supporters of the 'managerial' approach to competition as Kuibyshev, Krzhizhanovskii and Veinberg,[121] just about every other aspect of this collective form of work won praise. Indeed, even the 'general kitty' (obshchii kotel) was regarded as a good thing insofar as it cemented the material dependence of workers and thus stimulated a rise in labour productivity and tighter labour discipline.[122]

Yet it was the 'managerial' view of the communes that won out at the Sixteenth Party Congress, a forum which failed signally to reflect the furious debate being carried on in the country on this new form of work organisation. Thus, Shvernik, ostensibly the trade union's chief spokesman at the congress, was taken to task in the union daily, Trud, for ignoring the communes in his speech.[123] Inevitably, however, by failing to receive Party endorsement in the form of a mass campaign, interest in the commune movement eventually cooled and the growth of this form

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120 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.70-71.

121 ibid., p.5. It was also commissioned by the department of mass campaigns of the Party's Central Committee.

122 ibid., p.87.

123 Trud, 11 July 1930.

of shock work checked. Attention was switched instead to the burgeoning problems of labour turnover and absenteeism, as well as to the 'heroic' side of shock work. As the industrial crisis deepened in the summer of 1930 and breaks in production became more frequent, it was such heroic deeds of labour as working for days upon end without rest in the most discomforting conditions that caught the imagination rather than the solid, rational production successes of the communes. Yet successful they were. A survey of communes, conducted mainly in Moscow in late 1930 and published in the Party journal in February 1931, concluded that "at nearly all the enterprises studied the production communes and collectives formed last year or at the beginning of 1930 have proved viable and, according to the investigators, have won the deserved respect of the other workers".[124]

Not least among the factors that won the communes respect was the force of example, particularly in the sphere of production self-discipline. This is graphically illustrated in the charters and rules adopted by the communes, and a particularly instructive insight is provided by the communes' charter at the Zlatoust Machine Works:[125]

1. A member of the collective not fully utilising the working day (aimlessly wandering about the workshop, conversation that is not directly related to production, arbitrarily leaving the lathe untended etc.) is to be placed on the board of disgrace (chernaya doska) as a loafer (lodyr'), with details written on the wall newspaper.

2. A member of the collective who neglects to look after his lathe (poor wipe-down, failure to lubricate moving and revolving parts, that lead to a rapid breakdown of the machine and a fall in productivity) shall be regarded as a wrecker of production and placed on the board of disgrace and the wall newspaper.

3. For systematically producing a high proportion of brak (actual figure shown) for which he is to be blamed, the member shall be warned on the first occasion, and expelled from the collective on the second.

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124 Bol'shevik, 1931, no.4, p.31 (B Markus).

125 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.6, p.45 (L Tandit).

4. For absenteeism (without good reason) on one occasion in a month the member will receive a severe reprimand and a warning. For two absences in a month, or one in each consecutive month, the member shall be expelled from the collective.

Order within the collective was coordinated by a 'triangle' (treugol'nik) consisting of Party organiser, trade union representative and elected starosta.

The "Iskra" commune at the construction site of the Stalingrad Tractor Works had a 'Central Executive Committee' (TsIK) of five, including a 'people's commissar of labour' etc.[126] The following excerpts from the commune's rules illustrate the role accorded to self-discipline and example:[127]

1a) In production the commune struggles for the raising of labour productivity, for the full utilisation of the working day, for the strengthening of labour discipline, for the streamlining of production, for a communist attitude to work, for the precise fulfilment of the promfinplan...

5 The commune as a whole and the communards individually must set an example of conscious labour discipline.

The oldest production commune at Moscow's Elektrozavod, bearing the name of Max Gelts, differed from the above two examples by explicitly subordinating itself to management, to the extent that the latter had the right to appoint the commune's brigadier. This helped resolve one of the trickiest problems thrown up by the communes: how to establish lines of authority between elected commune leaders and the lowest rung of management, the foreman. The commune adopted the following charter:[128]

"The shock production commune, being the best form of participation in socialist construction, sets itself the fundamental task of actively assisting the fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan in four years, setting an example of a communist attitude to work, based on high class consciousness, by means of the maximum and most rational

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126 Yu. Kokorev, op. cit., p.28.

127 ibid., pp.51.52.

128 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.11, p.24 (A Klyushin).

> use of individual abilities and the systematic raising of social and political and cultural levels as well as the managing and technical know-how of each member of the shock production commune..."

The socio-political and educative roles of communes were stressed also in the communes' charter at Leningrad's Krasnaya Zarya, which calls upon communards to up work norms, cut costs, eliminate absenteeism, refrain from drinking, smoking and swearing at work and to ensure that "the commune will be in the first ranks in carrying out all measures of Government and Party aimed at industrialisation and the earliest victory of socialism."[129]

The Fall of the Communes

Although the communes themselves,rather than their alleged wage-levelling, were not the subject of widespread criticism at this time, the first attacks on their supporters began to be published in the summer of 1930.[130] It is difficult to establish the extent to which membership of the communes had fluctuated during that summer, as there are few figures for socialist competition as a whole, let alone this specialised form of shock work. Two things are clear, however. First, the gains in productivity, cost-cutting, labour discipline and rationalisation which the communes had played a great part in achieving, were in danger of being cancelled out by the industrial crisis of 1930. Secondly, the next nationwide campaign for an upsurge in competition, initiated by the Party appeal of 3 September 1930,[131] made no special mention of the communes.

Nevertheless, the workers responded to the Party's appeal, in many cases, by forming new communes.[132] This was quite logical, for not

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129 Dubner & Kozyrev, op. cit., p.16.

130 Bol'shevik, 1930, no.17, p.55 (A Pavlov); Voprosy truda, 1930, nos.7-8, pp.25-29, (A Aluf).

131 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp. 8, p.389; Pravda, 3 September 1930.

132 For example, at the Moscow Brake Factory, Partiinoe stroitel&stvo, 1931, n o.8 p.9 (Yuzhnyi); at the Svet shaktera plant in Kharkhov, Promyshlennost' i rabochii klass Ukrainskoi SSSR v period postroeniya fundamenta sotsialisticheskoekonomiki, (1926-1932 gg. Kiev, 1966, p.325; the Kommunar works in Minsk, Razvitie sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya, p.113.

only had the Party called for the development of socialist competition and shock work "in all its forms", but also had emphasised the need for workers to pledge to stay at their place of work, develop counter-planning and conduct a real campaign against slack discipline (raskhlyabannost') and absenteeism, elements which all featured prominently in the commune movement. Moreover, the other main points of the appeal, the campaign against 'flitters' (letuny), the purging of the unemployment registers and the call for rewards to the workers with long experience at given plants, might well be construed by the communard to be an implicit Party endorsement of the movement.

An example of the workers' perceived interrelationship between communes and the Party appeal is provided by the Kommunar engineering works in Minsk, which won third place in the competition for the best enterprise in Belorussia during the "special quarter (Oct-Dec 1930) immediately following the appeal. During the "special quarter" 94.5 per cent of the workers indentured to stay at the plant until the end of the Five-Year Plan and 4 shock brigades, 3 liaison, 1 storm brigade, 6 production collectives and 9 production communes were formed.[133]

The period that elapsed between the Party appeal of September 1930 and the proscribement of communes in September 1931 witnessed more than satisfactory production results from the leading communes yet, paradoxically, increasingly bitter attacks on the movement from Party, government and union spokesmen. This can only be understood by bearing in mind the following factors that influenced the debate over socialist forms of work organisation: i) the final major battle within the Party over rates of industrialisation, which might be characterised for simplification as the 'heroic' approach of the Stalinists versus the 'rational' approach of the so-called right-'leftist' bloc; ii) the spiralling turnover rates which Stalin was to counter eventually with wage differentation;

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133 Razvitie sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya, p.113.

iii) the unprecedented influx of new recruits into the workforce during this period and iv) the perceived priorities of both tightening managerial control over production and mastering the technology that was being introduced into industry and thus defining the individual responsibility of the worker.

Studied in isolation, the leading communes were clearly a viable means of coping with the above factors. As a movement to be spread to the whole working class within industry, however, the communes were just as clearly unsuitable. The raw peasant recruit shared neither the ideals nor the motivations of the leading communards although, ironically, it was the peasant intake of precisely this period that was to provide Soviet industry with its quintessential 'heroes' - the Stakhanovites.[134] Their forerunners were already performing heroic deeds in the winter of 1930/31,[135] but it was the leading communards that were being selected for the highest Government awards.[136]

There is little doubt that the deteriorating working and living conditions sapped the enthusiasm and ardour for socialist competition. Nonetheless, when Syrtsov and Lominadze, leaders of the right-'leftist' bloc, were taken to task for suggesting this they were accused of inordinate 'worker worship' (rabocheliubie).[137] However, it is significant that the Party appeal was directed not at the working masses directly but at Party, management, union and Komsomol organisations. As such it represented a watershed in the Party's approach to socialist competition. Henceforth less faith would be placed on the efficacy of moral exhortations to the working class and recourse would be taken more frequently to material incentives and management-imposed sanctions. Evidence of this was provided by the

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134 A G Stakhanov, Rasskaz o moei zhizni, M, 1936,

135 see p. 275 below.

136 Lyudi bol'shevistskikh tempov: sbornik M, 1931, pp.34-37; Istoriya Moskovskogo avtozavod im. IA Ligacheva, M. 1966, p.167; Istoriya rabochikh Moskvy, p.214.

137 B Markus, 'K voprosu o traktovke problem ekonomiki truda', in Voprosy truda, 1930, nos. 10-11, p.30.

relatively luke-warm response to both the All-Union Day of the Shock Worker, proclaimed for 1 October 1930, and the competition for the best production results in the special quarter amongst enterprises and workers in shock brigades and collectives, announced in Pravda on that day, both at the suggestion of the Stalin Metal Works (Leningrad).[138]

However, exhortations were only one form of moral pressure that the Party could apply to the workers. As we have seen, such direct appeals to the worker's class consciousness resulted most generally in the formation of shock brigades and, especially since the Leninist Enrolment, specifically in the establishment of production communes and collectives. Despite proving viable in overcoming short-term breaks in production and representing a rational response to the introduction of new technologies they were particularly vulnerable to exploitation from below, by less conscientious elements in the work force and from above by the arbitrary formation of communes by management. Moreover, the communes provided a mechanism for the workers to collectively resist the encroachment of management control over production and led them to being perceived as an obstacle not only to strict one-man management, but also to the spread of individual material incentives.

The communes proved particularly susceptible to the moral pressure exerted through Stalin's theory of the 'sharpening of the class struggle', by which one's class affiliations were determined by adherence to the Party line, rather than on objective criteria. Throughout the special quarter within industry the main battleground in this struggle remained the rates of industrialisation, a struggle which polarised between 'rational' and 'heroic, storming' factions. The former was represented by such "class enemies" as the defendants in the Promparty Trial (November-December 1930) who had compiled the original five-year plan and the leaders of the right-'leftist' bloc, the leaders of which were

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138 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh Leningrada v gody pervoi pyatiletki, 1928-32gg, Leningrad, 1961, p.320 claims that the competition was first suggested by this plant in a letter to Pravda on 26 August 1930. Confirmation that this plant suggested both initiatives is given in A M Lazareva, 'Kommunisty Vyborgskoi storony Leningrada za razvitie sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v gody pervoi pyatiletki' p.89, Leningradskii inzherno-ekonomicheskii institut, Trudy, vyp. 38, Voprosy istorii KPSS i filosofii, Leningrad, 1961.

expelled from the Party in December 1930.[139] In both cases workers were urged to compete and tighten labour discipline as a means of rebuffing the class enemy.[140]

In this political struggle the 'rational' and 'autonomous' aspects of the commune's organisation lay them open to charges of deviation from the Party line, irrespective of their members' proletarian backgrounds or production successes. More specifically, Syrtsov and Lominadze had sought to defend the workers' interests against the excesses of management. The defensive functions of the communes could thus be portrayed as a manifestation of right-'leftist' worker adoration.

Indeed, Lominadze had characterised the attitude towards the needs of the workers displayed by Party organs and management as 'medieval' (feodal'no-barskie).[141] Syrtsov had launched a savage attack on the distortions of socialist competition. Taking as his example counter-planning, which he conceded had certain positive features, he complained that it was being implemented "with a degree of unhealthy moral and political pressure that distorts discussion and drives valuable groups of workers and managers towards passivity...in an auction-room atmosphere of agiotage figures plucked from this air are imposed...attempts to defend the business-like elaboration of plans evoke stomps of disapproval (tyukan'e) and flippant accusations and suspicions of factionalism, wrecking, 'underestimation', 'overestimation', 'failure to grasp' and so on...by some sort of automatic process just about every creative political idea of the working class after a while is unfailingly distorted..."[142] As far as the communes are concerned, these distortions were manifested in the arbitrary establishment of communes "from above" by management, a trend that continued as late as April 1931.[143]

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139 Pravda, 2 December 1930.

140 See Appeal of VTsSPS and MOSPS of 25 November 1930 for more competition and tighter labour discipline as a rebuff to all rightists in I Voitinskii, 'Organizatsiya truda i trudovoe pravo na novom etape' Sovetskoe trudovoe pravo na novom etape:sbornik M-L, 1931 p.64; Bol'shevik 1930, nos23-24, p.3.

141 See leading article 'Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo i pravo-'levyi' blok' in Puti industrializatsii, 1930, no20, p.11.

142 ibid., p.9.

143 See note 88, p.258 above.

Another form of moral pressure exerted under the "sharpening of the class struggle" theory was the erosion of the legal norms, enshrined in the 1922 Labour Code, by so-called "public and political" norms (obshchestvenno-politicheskie) such as waiving days off, working shifts on end, foregoing safety measures etc. which became features of the "heroic" period of socialist competition. Ostensibly voluntary, participation in socialist competition had become such a political litmus test that opposition was dangerous. An attempt was made in November 1930 to reconcile competition with legal norms by incorporating the former into a new "Labour Code of Socialist Reconstruction". The Draft Code, which was subsequently published but never became law, made no mention of communes.[144]

Again, this omission failed to reflect the intensity of debate over the fate of the communes during the first four months of 1931. Certainly, new communes were still being formed and such figures as are available suggest that they were achieving excellent production results in the special quarter and in early 1931. The situation was encouraging, for example, at Moscow's Elektrozavod, an enterprise that not only had won a first prize in the VSNKh and VTsSPS competition for plan fulfilment in 1930,[145] but also had completed its five-year plan in just two-and-a-half years by the end of March 1931.[146]

Figures for the last six months of 1930 reveal that in the stamping shop of the plant's transformer section, productivity was 9.3 per cent higher in production communes compared to ordinary shock brigrades and 5.7 per cent higher than in collectives. Moreover, the communes were utilising the workday more fully, carrying out more rationalising work, were higher-skilled, produced less waste, had lower absentee rates and wasted less time on smoking.[147]

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144 For text of Draft Code, see Zin. Grishin, 'O novom trudovom kodekse' in Sovetskoe trudovoe pravo na novom etape, pp.80-103.

145 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.4-5, p.25.

146 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.12, p.5.

147 N Vol'khov 'Uchet sotssorevnovaniya na Elektrozavode' in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.12, p.166.

A detailed analysis of socialist competition in the same workshop during the first four months of 1931 shows that the communes retained this superiority. The average productivity of communes studied was 9.9 per cent higher than that of ordinary shock brigades and the hourly rate of pay 27.9 per cent higher. Absentee rates, on the other hand, were one-sixth of those in the shock brigades and 25 per cent less defective output was produced.[148] The shop's outstanding commune, led by Zhukov, had a productivity 25 per cent higher than in the shock brigades and hourly earnings of nearly 60 per cent more. Throughout the four months of the survey, none of Zhukov's communards was absent, nor was any defective output produced.[149]

Of the 713 shock brigades in the plant (with a total of 14,000 workers), 115 (16.1 per cent) were production communes or collectives.[150] Thus, at one of the country's foremost plants it is not imporbable that over 2000 workers belonged to either collectives or communes (one of which, appropriately, bore the name "The Five-Year Plan in Two-and-a-Half-Years"). One of their number, Anton Ol'shevskii, who was credited with forming three communes, was one of fifteen Soviet workers to be given a top Government award in March 1931.[151]

Notwithstanding this successful development of communes at Elektrozavod, in early April the plant's Party committee resolved to switch all brigades to khozraschet by 1 July 1931.[152] Even earlier, on 2 February, the management newspaper Za industrializatsiyu had published a letter from the Party cell, union committee and production conference of the works' lamp section advocating the individual costing of each worker's product. However, the immediate incentive to be seen to be toeing the Party line would appear to be the criticism levelled at the plant's welding shop, in the Party decree on mass work in the

148 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16, p.14 (Samueli)

149 ibid., p.15.

150 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.12, p.5.

151 Lyudi bol'shevistskikh tempov, pp.34-37.

152 G L'vov, 'Partorganizatsiya Elektrozavoda v bor'be za khozraschet', in Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.14, p.37.

workshop and brigade on 21 March, calling for brigadiers to be appointed and not elected.[153]

This was the decree, of course, which called for a study to be made of the communes in order to determine their viability given the "varying appraisals" of their work. A recent historiographer of socialist competition claims that this decree was never carried out,[154] although evidence exists that the Party's Orginstr (Instructors' Section) did initiate surveys, as did government and union bodies. A major survey of industry carried out at this time, the beginning of April 1931, revealed the tenacious hold that communes and collectives maintained within Soviet industry at this time:

TABLE 19

ıdustry	Total workers	Total sh. wkrs	Workers in comm.	Workers in coll.	Total in com/coll	% workers in com/col to all wkrs	Workers in sh. bgd.	Workers ind. com
ıstries	1864009	1196694	46671	87359	134030	7.19	916668	14599
tations	20412	13186	145	488	633	3.10	10311	224
	86967	42962	1590	2921	4511	5.19	33510	494
	57118	29701	1337	2346	3683	6.45	22781	323
	12248	8108	275	227	502	4.10	6916	68
	19637	9072	626	562	1188	6.05	6151	173
	630227	419713	16789	30640	47429	7.53	321514	5078
llurgy	116812	79082	316	870	1186	1.02	75049	284
rrous	114202	77543	233	698	1031	0.90	73821	27
n-ferrous	2610	1623	54	149	203	7.78	1391	2
neering	391087	255380	11237	20430	31667	8.10	191280	3243
to	15012	7206	122	382	504	3.36	5556	114
ansport	109928	72662	3342	11263	14605	13.29	55223	283
riculture	82348	50315	3874	5484	9358	11.36	33007	795
neral	182025	120319	5535	9265	14800	8.13	93007	1251
trotech	44665	31400	2229	4239	6468	14.48	17270	756
Processing	86425	50991	1377	4997	6374	7.38	35694	892
ocessing	68163	35786	1253	2720	3973	5.83	27054	476
	26778	17432	680	1307	1987	7.42	13980	146
-fur	31705	21496	1892	1827	3719	11.73	15950	182
l	78745	51814	1295	3316	4611	5.86	42643	456
s	488723	318159	8590	26089	34679	7.10	252618	3118
n	353005	232277	6039	15795	21834	6.19	190932	1951
	71050	47461	2373	1898	4271	6.01	34552	863
co	7974	7041	753	556	1309	16.42	4668	106
g & Toilet	173753	118512	8296	6044	14340	8.25	88884	1528
g	38051	24500	686	3038	3724	9.79	16562	421

Source: Calculated from Trud v SSSR, Moscow, 1932, p.123.

As the survey appeared to cover 44 percent of all industrial workers, it would not be unreasonable to assume that, a full year after the Lenin

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153 Pravda, 21 March 1931

154 A L Oprishchenko, 'Voprosy sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya rabochego klassa SSSR v sovetskoi istoriografii' in Nekotorye problemy istorii sovetskogo obshchestva, M. 1964, p.160.

Enrolment, more than 300,000 workers were still in communes or collectives, concentrated as previously in the metal and textile industries.[155] This represents a remarkably high figure in view of the fact that there had been no Party decree advocating the spread of this form of competition.

The overall number of workers in communes and collectives would appear to have dipped slightly by the end of April 1931, occasioned largely by a fall in the proportion of shock workers united in communes from 3.9 per cent to 3.1 per cent (the proportion in collectives actually rose from 7.3 per cent to 7.4 per cent.[156] Nonetheless, it may be seen that there were still almost twice as many workers in these forms of work organisation on the second anniversary of the start of mass socialist competition (29 April 1931) as there had been on the first (29 April 1930). Moreover, by virtually doubling their membership in a year, the communes were expanding at a faster rate than the shock movement as a whole, which had grown by only 58.8 per cent (from 1.8 to 2.8 million) in the same period.[157]

A survey of 121 major plants in 1931 confirmed that the movement had peaked in the first half of 1931 and had then gradually given ground to both individual competition and the cost-accounting brigades:

TABLE 20

% shock workers	% in prod comm and coll	% workers in com/col to all wkrs	% in shock brigades	% ind comp	% in cost-a/c brigades
60.2	8.1	(4.9)	80.2	11.7	0.1
66.3	8.5	(5.6)	80.4	11.1	0.6
68.0	7.8	(5.3)	79.9	12.3	3.0
67.0	5.9	(4.0)	79.5	14.6	17.0

Source: Byulleten' po uchetu truda. Itogi 1931 goda, Moscow, 1932, p.99.

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155 I calculate that there were 304,590 workers in communes and collectives on 1 April 1931 (based on 7.19 per cent of the total no. of workers, 4,236,300) see Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1921-1932gg., p.435. Lewis Siegelbaum arrives at a slightly higher figure of 306,035 in his article 'Production Collectives and Communes and the "Imperatives" of Soviet Industrialization, 1929-1931', in Slavic Review, vol.45, no.1, Spring, 1986, p.70.

156 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.60.

157 See Appendix E.

Other sources put the proportion of communards even higher. Orginstr, the Party department charged with studying the movement added its findings at Elektrozavod, Leningrad's Elektroapparat, the Dnepropetrovsk metalworks, the Zlatoust Machine Works and other enterprises, to those of VTsSPS and Gosplan to conclude that 12-14 per cent of all industrial workers engaged in competition were united in production communes and collectives and that the movement was "slowly but systematically growing".[158]

The Gosplan survey in May 1931 covered 461 communes and collectives with 5878 workers. It revealed that only 105 (22.8 per cent) of these were multi-grade communes which split all earnings equally (although most of these united workers of adjacent grades in the semi-skilled range from 3 to 5), compared to 258 (56 per cent) single-grade collectives which split earnings according to hours worked, 64 (13.8 per cent) multi-grade collectives which split earnings according to grade and 29 (6.3 per cent) multi-grade collectives that split equally only the extra earnings.[159] Thus the charge of wage-levelling, for so long the main complaint from Party, union and management representatives against the communes, would appear to apply to less than one-quarter of collectives studied, the same proportion revealed in the Gosplan survey of May 1930.[160]

These figures are corroborated by findings at metalworks in Dnepropetrovsk, where only six of 33 communes and collectives studied were multi-grade groups splitting earnings equally.[161]

It is tempting to conclude that it was not wage-levelling that the Party leadership disliked most in the production communes, although there were well-founded fears on the efficacy of spreading the movement to an increasingly raw and young workforce. Rather, the major objection would appear to have been the "autonomous" approach to workplace organisation that was fostered in the communes. This was to become intolerably at odds with a new Party drive in 1931 for the stricter enforcement of one-man management.

The key pronouncement that ushered in this new phase was made on 4 February by Stalin in an address to the 1st All- Union Conference of

158 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16, p.12 (Samueli).
159 ibid., p.17.
160 See Table 18 p.261.
161 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16, p.44 (Antonov)

Industrial Managers in Moscow, in which he forwarded the new slogans "Bolsheviks must master technology" and "technology in the period of reconstruction is decisive".[162] The latter effectively replaced "tempos are decisive" as the watchword, implying that the battle for the rates of industrialisation had been won with the demise of the right-"leftist" bloc. That Stalin chose this particular forum (at which shock workers constituted a mere 10 per cent of those attending) to launch his new industrial strategy gave clear indication of where he thought the decisive cadres were occupied.[163]

Paradoxically, it was at enterprises in the forefront of the communes movement that Stalin's new slogans found organisational form. Within a fortnight of the leader's speech the first "mastering of technology" brigades had been formed at Moscow's Serp i Molot works,[164] and in March 1931, the AMO automobile works had concluded a pact "on the mastering of technology" with Krasnyi Putilovets.[165] Similarly, the parallel drive for better quality of output had been initiated, in January 1931, by Leningrad's Elektroapparat works (a plant at which communes had attracted much favourable attention) by calling for an All-Union crusade for quality, a movement which greatly facilitated the spread, later in that year, of the cost-accounting brigades.[166]

However, it was at another giant factory that the contradictory nature of the communes was most graphically illustrated. The Stalingrad Tractor Works, the showpiece of Soviet industrialisation, had been commissioned ahead of schedule in June 1930, at the very height of the movement. Indeed, on the very day of the triumphant launch Daesh' traktor, the factory's newspaper, identified wage differentation as

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162 I V Stalin, Sochineniya, vol.13, M. 1952, p.29.

163 Ya A Livshits, 'Rabochie-metallisty Moskvy v bor'be za zavershenie pervoi pyatiletki, 1931-1932gg.', in Moskovskii gosudarstvennyi istoriko-arkhivnyi institut. Trudy, vol.14, M. 1960, p.246.

164 ibid., p.250.

165 Pravda 14 February 1931.

166 V Afanas'ev and A Grishkevich, op. cit., p.21; N B Lebedeva, O I Shkaratan, op. cit., p.109.

the main obstacle to the communalisation of life,[167] this in spite of the Party decree just one month earlier branding such schemes as 'utopian'. However, the composition of the workforce, the appalling living conditions and the intensity of work demanded all combined to facilitate the spread of the commune movement. For example, the many migrant workers saw in the communes a means of resurrecting the traditional peasant artels which had been scrapped by the local union in March 1930. Similarly, the thousands of Komsomol youngsters who had been mobilised to the plant favoured the formation of living and production communes, a practical reaction to a situation where most lived in tents or huge barracks,[168] and might be obliged to work 23 hours a day or even round-the-clock.[169]

The teething problems of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant have been discussed elsewhere. Suffice it to stress that the situation reached breaking point in the first quarter of 1931. In February alone more than 900 of the mainly imported machine tools were put out of action, representing a breakdown every 20 to 30 minutes.[170] The accident rate was ominously high,[171] and the turnover of workers was amongst the highest in Soviet industry.[172] Moreover, instead of producing the projected 144 tractors per day, it was unusual for more that 20 (14 per cent) to be completed.[173]

On 18 April 1931, Pravda sounded the alarm and shortly thereafter three high-ranking delegations were despatched to the tractor works to appraise the situation. The first was led by Stalin's commissar for heavy industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, who arrived in Stalingrad on 24 April. He ordered that the plant be re-organised from top to bottom by means of the introduction of a six-day 'interrupted' working week,

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167 N I Pershin, Kommunisticheskaya partiya - organizator osvoeniya tekhniki proizvodstva v traktornoi promyshlennosti v period stroitel'stva sotsializma, Volgograd, 1974, p.20.

168 Sh F 'Detskie bolezni Stalingradskogo Traktornogo', Udarnik, 1931, nos.2-3, p.65.

169 Klaus Mehnert, Youth in Soviet Russia, p.181.

170 Joseph Freeman, "The Soviet Worker" London, 1932, p.181.

171 Udarnik, 1931, nos.2-3, p.66 (Sh F)

172 N Pershin, op. cit., P.17.

173 Joseph Freeman, op. cit., p.180; Istoriya SSSR, vol.8, p.554.

the strictest enforcement of one-man management, the application of progressive piece rates and the institution of military-style discipline based on the individual responsibility of each employee for the job in hand.[174]

While there he had to overcome the opposition of not only the communalisers, but also the so-called 'Super-Fordites' (sverkhfordisty), who sought to eliminate piece rates and socialist competition and let the machinery determine work norms.[175] However, in demanding the spread of socialist competition, Ordzhonikidze was implicitly rejecting both the 'storming' approach and the 'democratism' from below of the communes.

Two days after Ordzhonikidze's arrival in Stalingrad, a special brigade from Pravda commenced its investigation at the Tractor Works. A spokesman for the delegation, B Tal', concentrated his criticism on the communes, labelling them as "harmful remnants of the past. There is nothing proletarian about them at all. They are petty-bourgeoise wage-levelling".[176]

Given the overwhelming proportion of inexperienced youngsters new to production and migrants from the countryside amongst the plant's workforce, it is hardly surprising that the Stalingrad communes were not 'proletarian'.[177] Nonetheless, even here the communes won commendations and prizes.[178]

Moreover, even as the Pravda brigade was savaging the Stalingrad communes, the Party newspaper was praising the performance of communes elsewhere. Molochnikov's brigade of Party communards at the Krasnoe Sormovo Works, for example, were commended on 30 April 1931 for over-fulfilling its plan by 240 per cent.[179]

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174 Za industrializatsiyu, 8 May 1931.

175 Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, p.338.

176 ibid., p.211.

177 Udarnik, 1931, nos.2-3, p.65 (Sh F) where it is claimed that of 13,500 workers, more than 85 per cent (11,500) had worked for less than two years in a factory.

178 Yu Kokorev, op. cit., p.24; Klaus Mehnert, op. cit., p.181.

179 M Eskin, Sotsialisticheskie formy truda, M-L, 1932, p.16.

Indeed, the Stalingrad communes appear to have been defended by the plant's Komsomol committee, which was duly removed for 'left-opportunism'.[180] This was confirmed in early June when the Komsomol secretary, Kosarev, led a delegation to the plant. He, too, condemned the "kitty" used to pool earnings amongst the communards and urged a switch to cost-accounting brigades, which were first formed at the plant in that month and spread rapidly in the autumn of 1931.[181] However, Kosarev directed his main attack at the insanitary living conditions of workers at the plant, which was described by a contemporary as 'the kingdom of bedbugs'.[182]

The shake-up instituted by these delegations had a positive effect and by June 1931 the situation at the Tractor Works was beginning to improve. This can only have confirmed the opinion of the Party leadership that communes were an obstacle to the implementation on a wide scale of its new industrial policies. It was in June 1931, of course, that Stalin delivered his keynote address "New Situation, New Tasks" to a meeting of industrial managers convened by the Party's Central Committee.[183] Although not specifically mentioning communes, Stalin criticised 'wage-levelling' in general and called for the implementation and spread of cost-accounting.[184] The full implication of Stalin's message was not immediately understood by writers on the communes. It appears that the speech was not printed until 5 July and at major plants such as Krasnyi Putilovets was not discussed until 19 August.[185] Equivocal appraisals of the communes appeared in the press even after Stalin's speech.

Thus, on 16 July 1931, Trud maintained that "it is necessary to abolish the kitty in communes and collectives while preserving the latter as a form of labour organisation". On 21 July Pravda criticised

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180 Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, pp.210-211.

181 N I Pershin, op. cit., p. 119.

182 Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, p.412.

183 I V Stalin, Sochineniya, vol.13, M. 1952, pp.53-61.

184 ibid., p.61.

185 Pravda, 5 July 1931; Lili Korber, Life in a Soviet Factory, London, 1933, p.220.

only those communes that had been imposed from above by management while claiming that "the majority of those communes formed on a voluntary basis have outstanding production indices. Absenteeism and turnover have been virtually eliminated and quality has been raised. Labour productivity and wages significantly exceed those of shock brigades working in similar conditions".[186]

Nowhere is the impact of Stalin's speech more graphically illustrated than in an article entitled "The Work of Production Communes and Collectives on New Rails" in the Party periodical Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, published in August 1931. Having elaborated for most of the article a defence of communes against charges of "wage-levelling", there is a sudden switch of emphasis at the foot of the penultimate page in which the author admits that "a given degree of equalisation exists in all production communes" and takes the initiators to task for seeking communist forms of distribution now. The source of this change of tack is made evident by quoting from Stalin's speech about the differences between skilled and unskilled labour. The same quote is to be found at the end of another article on communes, entitled "For Production Collectives without Wage-levelling and Irresponsibility", printed in the same issue. This author, having also defended communes as a form of work organisation, nonetheless concludes that "the call for equality at this moment in time is S-R demagogy".[187]

On the other hand, the Party's other major journal, Bol'shevik, had published an article on communes that incorporated Stalin's 'six conditions' within a week of the speech.[188] Generally critical in tone, even this article, however, warns that "it would be absolutely incorrect if we unreservedly condemned all communes and collectives as a movement emanating from the masses" pointing out their worth and progressive significance in such features as their enhanced pace of work, higher

186 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, nos.15-16, p.14 (St Samueli).

187 ibid., p.45 (G Antonov). Note this is the same phrase attributed to Stalin.

188 Ya Leibman and A Raisov, 'Aktual'nye problemy truda na sovremennom etape', Bol'shevik, 1931, no.12, pp.11-29.

productivity, better quality of output and internal work cooperation. Nonetheless, the remedy suggested was strictly in line with the Party's call for the individualised appraisal of each worker's performance. This was articulated in the article by an experienced 7th grade turner, named Vlasov, who maintained that "if you want to eliminate breaks in turning, then eliminate the collectives and fix to every machine tool three turners (one from each shift)".[189]

To be absolutely in step with Party thinking, he should have said four turners, for it was the four brigade rota system that was being introduced at this time in factories on three-shift working. Following trials at Moscow's X-Ray factory, from 1 April 1931 this system had been spread to roughly one-quarter of the relevant workers in certain major industrial centres.[190]

This was just one of the reforms in work organisation and conditions, in the course of 1931, that combined to promote the cost-accounting brigades at the expense of the communes. Indeed, from the Spring of 1931, there are reports of leading communes switching to khozraschet.[191]

Following Stalin's speech the pace of this movement quickened. On 7 July, a Party and Government decree ordered the spread of piece-rates amongst the Donbas coal miners and the abolition of wage-levelling within two months.[192] This time-scale had only just expired when the Vesenkha and VTsSPS decree "On Cost-Accounting Brigades" effectively sounded the death-knell for the communes.

In November 1931, a VTsSPS meeting convened to discuss the new wage-scales, which had reflected the differentation between skilled and unskilled work, and between priority and non-priority industries, had dwelt on the problems of communes. After noting their 'poor production results' it was decreed that here, too, individual cost-accounting must be introduced.[193]

189 ibid., p.15.

190 Trud v SSSR: materialy (1932), p.42.

191 Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.83 (Povalyaev); Rabotnitsa na sotsialisticheskoi stroiki, M, 1932, pp.67-75; A L Oprishchenko, 'Istoriografiya...', op. cit, p.60.

192 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp. 8, M. 1934, p.464.

193 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.31-32, p.18.

There appears to have been some opposition to the scrapping of collectivist forms of pay, not least by the Komsomol and leading groups of workers. Thus, as late as the beginning of 1932 there were still 14,400 industrial workers in the Leningrad region united in communes and collectives, most notably 8,600 in the metal industry (representing 4 per cent of all workers and 5.3 per cent of all shock workers in that industry).[194] Indeed, in the Commissar of Labour's report to the IX Trade Union Congress in April 1932 it was admitted that a campaign had been launched aimed at "eliminating wage-levelling and collective forms of pay" to be completed by 1 July 1932.[195] Even the workers on piece-rates were resisting, for the Commissar criticised collective piece-work in construction (in which 80 per cent of the work done was on piece-rates) and "opportunistic forms of collective pay" which accounted for 60-70 per cent of workers on piece-rates at certain factories, such as the Kolemenskoe works.[196]

This tenacity notwithstanding, the remaining communards were fighting a losing battle. Early in 1932 the XVII Party Conference had passed a resolution "On the Development of Industry in 1931 and the Tasks for 1932" which demanded that "a worker be put in charge of each lathe, each machine, each set of machinery, and each place of work, who shall work there on a regular basis and be responsible for the job in hand". The resolution goes on to explicitly ban wage-levelling "which obliterates the dividing line between good and bad work" and instructed that "foremen and brigadiers advance to the forefront as the immediate organisers of labour processes".[197]

The same Party forum provided what amounted to an epitaph for the commune movement in the long speech by a delegate named Stetskii who complained that:[198]

> "certain comrades have formed the opinion that once we have a classless society, the problem of the avant-garde

194 Trud i profdvizhenie v leningradskoi oblasti 1932g, Leningrad, 1932, p.63.

195 Trud v SSSR: materialy (1932), p.54.

196 ibid., p.50

197 S Orjonikidze, Industrial Development in 1931 and the Tasks for 1932, M, 1932,p.78.

198 XVII konferentsiya VKP (b): stenograficheskii otchet , M, 1932, p.192.

> will disappear - all will be communards, all will be equally conscious. This is a schematic, abstract conception. In reality each will remain a person who had behind him his own personal history and differences in experience, and participation in the class struggle and in socialist construction will have no little significance in completing the Second Five-Year Plan also.
>
> A worker, a skilled worker who has passed through the long school of revolution, civil war and large-scale pròduction is one thing, and the collective farmer who has retained petty-bourgeois prejudices is another"

Yet, later in his speech, Stetskii hinted at the paradox that stemmed from the shift to material incentives: they were more suited to the former peasant than the hereditary worker. As he put it "today in the furnaces of Magnitogorsk and the new workshops of Uralmash yesterday's agricultural labourers, from the national minorities, are already breaking world records and setting an example of heroic labour and qualitative achievements which Europe has never seen the like of".[199]

How ironic that as Lenin's beloved avant-garde of the Soviet working class - the Leningrad metalworkers - were striving to cling on to the last form of "autonomous" work organisation in the communes, the young peasant lads who were to become the real heroes of Stalin's 'classless' society - Stakhanov, Busygin, Gudov and Mazai - were just entering the Soviet workforce.[200]

How ironic, too, it was the trade unions that put the final nail in the coffin of the communes. On the 11 and 12 March 1932, the VTsSPS convened a special meeting to discuss the work of production communes and collectives. Addressing the meeting Shvernik said:[201]

> "If the people who are now coming to the factory from the countryside, right now don't just want to raise their skills (and they do want to do this too) but first of

199 ibid., p.202.

200 See, for example, A I Vdovin, 'Sotsialisticheskaya rekonstruktsiya narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR i sotsial'naya psikhologiya novykh popolnenii rabochego klassa' in Rabochii klass i industrial'noe razvitiye SSSR, M, 1975, p.107.

201 A I Vdovin, V Z Drobizhev, Rost rabochego klassa SSSR, 1917-1940gg., M. 1976, p.170.

> all to get equal wages with those workers who have been working over a whole number of years and get higher rates of pay, then this very equalisation becomes disastrous and we must proceed against it decisively, because it doesn't raise labour productivity. Insofar as you create equal division of wages, you reduce the incentive to raise skills."

And thus, as one author put it, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater.[202]

Conclusion

Thus, it could be said, that the doubts expressed by Kuibyshev at the Shock Workers' Congress in 1929 on the viability of the communes given the heterogeneity of the Soviet working class, by mid-1931 had proved to be well-founded. On the other hand, the evidence available suggests that this form of work organisation amongst the most advanced sections of the working class had proved its viability. Kuibyshev and his colleagues might have done well to have heeded the advice proffered by Lenin some ten years earlier and, as a result, adopted a much more solicit ous and selective approach to the communes. Admittedly Lenin was using the term "commune" to describe whole enterprises, but his warning in "The Great Beginning" might be held to apply equally to the production communes of the socialist offensive:[203]

> "It would be a good thing to eliminate the word "commune" from common use, to prevent every Tom, Dick or Harry from grabbing it, or to allow the title to be borne only by genuine communes, which have really demonstrated in practice (and have proved by the unanimous recognition of the whole of the surrounding population) that they are capable of working in a communist manner...
>
> ...We must see to it and make sure that in future anyone who calls his enterprise, institution or undertaking a commune without having proved this by hard work and practical success in prolonged effort by exemplary and truly communist organisation, is mercilessly ridiculed and pilloried as a charlatan or a windbag."

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202 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.187.

203 V I Lenin Polnoe sobranie vol.39, pp.26-27, Moscow 1963.

How significant that, as Lenin's widow was calling the communes "the beginning of something greater",[204] Stalin was dismissing them as "SR demagogy".[205]

However, it would be wrong to assume that all of Stalin's opponents thought any better of the communes. A writer in the Menshevik emigré journal dismissed them as "a Bolshevik experiment"[206] and an even less charitable foreign observer labelled them "ephemeral phenomena" whose "appearance says quite enough about the hopes and illusions bureaucracy offered workers in order to turn the revolutionary and creative instincts of the masses to account".[207] But such critics were against socialist competition per se, as were those workers who ridiculed and scorned the appearance of the communes.[208]

Nonetheless, no other form of competition appears to have so won the hearts of those that participated in them, nor won such praise from observers outside. As we have seen, the communes represented an innovatory and practical response from below both to the moral calls upon the worker's class consciousness made by the Party and to the objective problems posed by the introduction of new technologies, the influx of new workers without the most elementary skills and the need to establish new forms of work organisation. As such they straddled a watershed in Soviet industrial relations, for they were the last form of labour organisation to retain vestiges of traditional worker defensism and posed the last real collectivist or syndicalist threat to Stalin's preferred one-man management. At the same time the communes were in the forefront of the battle to break up old craft attitudes and restrictive practices and took the shock brigade movement to its logical if premature conclusion.

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204 See note 54, p.251.

205 See note 77, p.256.

206 Letter from Anton, Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 12 December 1931.

207 Ante Ciliga, op. cit., p.116.

208 Those who derided the communes made much of the pun on the Russian word for commune - kommuna and the expression komu na komu ne (some for you, none for you). See, for example, Yulii Ber, op. cit., p.70; Yu Kokorev, op. cit., p.10.

The replacement of the communes by cost-accounting brigades represented a triumph for the "managerial" approach to industrial relations over the last genuine worker response from below. The former, especially when they were held responsible for their own shortfalls in production, resembled the system operating in the Bata shoe factories in Czechoslovakia, whereas the cooperation and division of wages in the communes resembled more closely the Commendate system within the French printing industry (noted for its high degree of workers' class consciousness).[209]

In another major work, Lenin claimed that, in capitalist countries communes were "empty dreams".[210] How strange, therefore, that so many detractors wrote them off as Utopian. Certainly, one cannot read the statements of the communards themselves without feeling some sympathy towards their aspirations. This cri de coeur from a communard at the Kharkov Power Station is a typical example:[211]

> "Why are our communes and plans Utopian, if we have raised production, tightened discipline, voluntarily cut rates, and yet the earnings of all communards, especially those with large families, have risen?...
>
> Why are we Utopians if the communards stand at the bench cheerfully and energetically, confident in the morrow, and in the workshop's morrow?...

One can understand the nostalgia noted earlier. One wonders whether Soviet society will ever see their like again.

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209 ILO Reports - Series B, No18 The Social Aspects of Rationalisation, Geneva, 1931 pp.42, 334-335.

210 V I Lenin Polnoe sobranie, vol.36, p.148.

211 S Zarkhii, op. cit.,p.62.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE VICTORY OF THE "MANAGEMENT" APPROACH: THE ROLE OF MATERIAL INCENTIVES IN ESTABLISHING LABOUR DISCIPLINE

INTRODUCTION

It is not possible in every case to draw clear dividing lines in the drive to establish labour discipline between campaigns emphasising moral incentives (and disincentives), and those stressing material benefits and sanctions. The fact is that, in the period under review, they tended to overlap, both chronologically and conceptually.

For example, bonus payments had been introduced for enterprises with good production results as early as June 1928,[1] long before the term "socialist competition" had been coined. Similarly, as may be seen in the case of both the production communes and the cost-accounting brigades which replaced them, moral and material incentives could co-exist within a given form of work organisation.

Moreover, there were at this time at least two other important manifestations of socialist competition in which it is nigh impossible to determine the relative weight of moral or material incentive: i) the "heroic" approach to shock work based on Lenin's "force of example" (sila primera),[2] that initially tended to take the form of plugging production gaps, tackling crises and storming towards targets and ii) competition aimed at raising skills. In the later years of the First Five-Year Plan these trends merged to form such prototypes of Stakhanovism as the record-breakers, the "excellers" (otlichniki) and the 'dipovtsi'.[3]

On the other hand, if one takes a broad view of the First Five-Year Plan period, certain general trends may be discerned. It may be seen, for example, that the first 1½ years of the Plan (from the beginning of 1929 to mid-1930) saw an emphasis on moral exhortations, culminating in the Leninist Appeal. By contrast, the remaining 2½ years of the Plan (mid-1930 to the end of 1932) witnessed a decisive switch in favour of material incentives, characterised

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1 Izvestiya Narkomtruda SSSR, 1928, no.33, pp.504-508.

2 Lenin, Polnoe sobranie, vol.36, p.150.

3 Dipovtsi was the name given to members of the DiP (dognat' i peregnat' - catch up and surpass) brigades. See below p.329).

by a proliferation of enactments commencing with the Party appeal of 3 October 1930 and continuing to the Party and Government decree of 4 December 1932 extending the rights of factory management over workers' provisions.[4]

Paradoxically, this dividing line between drives based respectively on moral and material incentives roughly separates a period of generally improving labour discipline from one of burgeoning rates of turnover, absenteeism and under-utilisation of work time. On the other hand, it was precisely in the latter period that key legislation aimed at turnover, on 15 December 1930,[5] and absenteeism, on 15 November 1932,[6] was introduced. As Soviet industry retreated from the dizzy excesses of the socialist offensive these laws, combined with wage reforms and increased material incentives, were to effect a considerable improvement in levels of labour discipline in the Second Five-Year Plan.

It is tempting to pinpoint the XVI Party Congress in June-July 1930 as the watershed between these two periods. However, it is worth emphasising that a full year passed until Stalin's speech of 23 June 1931 determined the 'new tasks in the new conditions'. The intervening year was one of crisis, indecision and debate over the best way forward with, perhaps, the decisive breakthrough coming with Stalin's assertion to the Industrial managers' conference in February 1931 that "technology is decisive".

Against this background both the production communes and the 'heroes' of the 'shock quarter' (October-December 1930) and 1931 (the 'year of construction') may be seen as survivors left over from the socialist offensive. They differed in that the former came to be regarded as a harmful example and were thus eliminated, whereas the latter were perceived as embodying the heroic and selfless attitude to work that the Party now sought to channel in the desired direction. The important link between these shock 'heroes' and the new breed that followed them - shock workers who had studied, understood and could rationalise their work process - was

4 Resheniya TsK VKP(b) i SNK SSSR po vazhneishim voprosam sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva, Leningrad, 1933, pp.127-129.

5 Izvestiya, 17 December 1930.

6 Izvestiya, 16 December 1932.

that the standards set by both were utilised to smash, once and for all, the concept that norms should be set on the 'average' worker. Not surprisingly, this could and did engender the hostility of the ordinary worker.

Insofar as labour discipline is concerned the shift of emphasis from moral to material incentive represented a victory for the management approach to industrial relations. It would be said that it was the worker with the psychology of the manager that reaped most benefit from socialist competition in this period. As many of them were to subsequently become managers this was to have a profound influence on the way the state viewed worker behaviour and labour discipline.

THE HEROIC PHASE OF SHOCK WORK, 1930-1931

By its very nature, shock work contained a 'heroic' element from its earliest days during the Civil War. In the do-or-die atmosphere of those years there were many examples of selfless and intensive labour, usually to counter some emergency, meet a deadline or make good some deficiency.[7] In such situations individuals and groups of workers would work "according to their ability" and might thus be perceived to be displaying a socialist attitude to work. Lenin, in particular, saw in these feats of labour the shoots of a new, socialist attitude to work based on a high degree of conscious discipline and class consciousness. In this, he reasoned, they represented the avant-garde, the forerunners that would one day be typical products of Soviet industrial relations. Thus he saw in their work, the force of example (sila primera) which was to be held up for the mass of workers to emulate.

Lenin, and subsequent Soviet commentators, never questioned the basic premise that socialist industrial relations were qualitatively different from those under capitalism and that a psychological breakthrough in the way that a worker regarded his work could and would be made. While difficult to prove or disprove this assertion to any degree of certainty, it is worth making some initial observations.

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7 See, for example, N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., pp.35-39.

To begin with, there are examples of selfless and intensive work in capitalist societies, particularly in times of war or emergency. These tend to be manifestations of commitment (to a profession, cause or social group) and are clearly not the exclusive preserve of socialism. Moreover, they invariably are task-orientated, i.e. with specific time-limits, aims and results and are more difficult to sustain over long periods, let alone become the normal working practice. Finally, such crises and emergencies in the short term constitute a unity of interest between the demands of production and the demands of the workers. As and when the crisis is oversome, fundamental conflicts of interest will tend to reappear.

A corollary of this last point is that workers' interests tend to be expressed collectively, whereas the interests of production will be formulated first and foremost by management for the individual attention of each worker. This leads to a natural tendency to emphasise the individual, rather than collective force of example. Even when heroic labouring feats were achieved by groups of workers, emphasis will be placed, consequently, on the role of the team leader, brigadir or foreman. This was evident during the period under review when a definite shift was effected from the collective to the individual evaluation of work and reached its logical conclusion with the emergence of the 'super-heroes' - the leading individuals in the Stakhanovite movement.

As we have seen, once the Civil War ended, the fundamental necessity for shock work disappeared and 'cadre' workers reverted to a more consistent and tolerable working relationship. It is important to emphasise that the new phase of shock work was initiated by the Komsomol members of the work force, who had been too young to participate in either the Revolution or Civil War and were impatient with the lack of revolutionary ardour in Soviet industry during the years of NEP. Insofar as the socialist offensive was perceived by many youngsters as a resumption of the Revolution, the 'sharpening of the class struggle' and the spate of crises (many of them artificially created) recreated the emergency atmosphere of civil war, particularly in view of the war hysteria evoked by 'capitalist encirclement'.

This, in turn, recreated the 'necessity' for shock work, and heroic examples of selfless labour.

However, the difference between the two periods was that, during the latter, it was by no means obvious to a significant section of the work force that a wartime situation existed and that workers' interests must needs be subordinated to those of production. On the contrary, the initiatives of the young shock workers were perceived by many 'cadre' workers as being inimical to their own interests, particularly when shock work was presented as a permanent method of work. As we have seen, however, the prevailing ideology not only supported and legitimised the breaking down of workers' collective resistance, but also introduced severe sanctions against those who actively, or even passively, opposed such moves.

Thus, hand-in-hand with the moral imperative of heroic shock work went the moral condemnation of its opponents; beside the red board of honour, stood a black board of disgrace; for every hero, there was a 'wrecker', money-grubber and deserter. It was not difficult for the average worker to see which side his bread was buttered (not, perhaps, a suitable metaphor for exigent conditions of the First Five-Year Plan). Not surprisingly, the heroes always remained the few, even if their professed 'emulators' became the many. The result was that shock work over time became formalised and only proved to be at all viable in Soviet industry for the mass of workers when target-orientated in order to overcome crises or meet deadlines. It is for that reason that the force of example, the labouring feats by those who are committed for whatever reason to the prevailing industrial ideology, is still a necessary component of Soviet industrial relations. It was precisely in the period under review that heroic work became institutionalised.

Obviously, if these heroes were to serve as examples then it was necessary to widely publicise their deeds. To this end, in 1921, the honorific title 'Hero of Labour' (Geroi Truda) was introduced.[8] Among the hundreds of workers first awarded this prize on 1 May 1921 was a worker at Petrograd Power Station No.2, Penkin, who had crawled into a hot boiler in

8 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., pp.38-39.

order to repair it. Nominations could be made on behalf of those that had performed 'exceptional labour deeds' by workers' meetings and the award was conferred by the local trade union organisation.[9] On 27 July 1927 a Government decree changed the statutes to cover only those who had worked for hire for at least 35 years.[10] Nominations were by the unions and the title was conferred by the Government. This arrangement was in force throughout the period under review and was only scrapped with the instituting of a new supreme award 'Hero of Socialist Labour' on 27 December 1938 (designed specifically for the Stakhanovites), which restored the 'heroic' element to the prize.[11]

Thus very few of the young heroes of the First-Five Year Plan qualified for this title. The award that they could aspire to was the Order of the Toiling Red Banner, which, from 7 September 1928,[12] provided pensions and specific benefits to enterprises, collectives and workshops as well as to individuals. These benefits were expanded by a Government decree of 30 April 1930, which also instituted a new award - the Order of Lenin. This was also to be awarded to individuals, collectives and enterprises for, among other things, "activity in achieving outstanding quantitative and qualitative results in industry" and imposed on the bearer the obligation to a) assist socialist construction and take part actively in socialist competition and shock work; b) engage in active social work; c) be involved in special campaigns.[13]

It is important to stress, however, that all such prizes were designed to be rewards and acknowledgements rather than incentives to engage in shock work. It was the publicity surrounding the award ceremonies that provided the desired force of example. This would not only maintain the morale of those in the forefront of the shock movement, but also inspire would-be emulators to join it.

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9 ibid., p.39.

10 Sobranie zakonov i rasporyazhenii SSSR, 1929, no.45, art.456.

11 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.39.

12 Izvestiya Narkomtruda SSSR, 1928, nos.44-45, pp.682-683.

13 Sobranie Zakonov, 1930, no.26, art.288. The first recipient of the new Order was the newspaper, Komsomol'skaya Pravda, for its role in initiating socialist competition, Slavnyi put' leninskogo komsomola: istoriya VLKSM, M. 1978, p.214.

The problem facing the supporters of shock work was that the few would join because, for one reason or another, they believed in it, whereas the majority would join for less laudable reasons, be it the opportunity to earn more or to avoid being branded as a 'class enemy'. This was evident in the very beginning of mass competition. In his report to the 2nd Leningrad Regional Trade Union Congress in April 1929, Kirov posed the problem thus:[14]

> "There are plants where shock work is outwardly in good shape - 90 per cent shock workers - what could be better. But one has to say from the outset that we do not yet have a plant where there are 90 per cent real shock workers...So what is this 90 per cent? It means that the most backward workers, not wishing to be left behind by the leaders, sign up as shock workers and carry on working as before."

Underlying this contradiction was the fact that the initiators of shock work were almost exclusively young, supported occasionally by stalwarts from the 'cadre' workers. The enthusiasm, impatience and dynamism of the new generation of Soviet-educated youngsters is understandable. Their zealous approach to shock work approximated the desired image being propagated by the Party and Government apparatus. This mental picture of the ideal worker was well expressed by an experienced metalworker from Leningrad in 1929:[15]

> "There are many Party members who picture workers as muscular, strapping chaps in blue overalls with rolled-up sleeves and in their hands huge sledgehammers (the like of which, in reality, the world has never seen), or robust lads, stripped bare to the waist, shifting great hunks of rock."

This crudely distorted image of the worker seriously hampered an effective evaluation of shock work during the period under review, overemphasising the 'gung-ho', heroic style of work at the expense of consistent and proficient performances obtained through less sensational means. It was this approach that Syrtsov, leader of the right-'leftist' bloc within the Party, complained of so vehemently in 1930.

At the same time, the 'heroes' were portrayed as being motivated only by enthusiasm, thus diminishing the role of material incentives. In fact,

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14 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.127.

15 I. Zhiga, Novye rabochie, M-L, 1929, pp.59-60.

the latter were always of great consequence, as Grigorii Dubinin, a veteran worker at Krasnyi Vyborzhets, reminisces:[16]

> "Nowadays I often come across people who claim that everything in the first five-year plans was built only on enthusiasm, slogans and appeals. This was not so. I remember that there were many different material incentives for all those who participated actively in competition and achieved success in those difficult years. And each, upon receiving a bonus or piece of cloth for a suit would regard it as deserved. And this, in turn, raised the enthusiasm of people".

Thus if the popular image of the shock worker was of a giant young man, a member of the Party or Komsomol and fired by pure enthusiasm, then an analysis of the actual composition of the shock brigades at the end of the socialist offensive presents a different picture. Of the estimated 2.7 million shock workers on 1 April 1931, for example, over 1 million (i.e. approximately two in every five) were women. Nearly two million (73.2 per cent) were mature workers aged 23 or over. On the other hand, less than one in every eight shock workers was a member of the Komsomol (11.9 per cent) and less than half a million 17.1 per cent) were Party members. The remainder (i.e. nearly two million or 71 per cent) were non-Party workers.[17]

To give the Soviet authorities their due, at this stage production successes rather than image were the first criteria in determining who was to receive a Government award for shock work and be held up to the rest of the workforce for emulation. Nonetheless, the logical outcome of the triumph of the bureaucratic image of the hero-worker was the appearance, in the Second Five-Year Plan, of the Stakhanovites, men whose physiques tended to match their prodigious labouring feats (not to mention earnings!) It was this man that found permanent representation in Mukhina's celebrated monument to the Worker and Collective Farm Girl. In truth, some of the heroes of the First Five-Year Plan would have made quite unsuitable models for this statue.

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16 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.115.

17 Figures calculated from Trud v SSSR (1932), p.124.

Ivan Povalyaev - An Unlikely Hero

On 6 March 1931 Pravda published an article entitled 'The Country Must Know its Heroes' which gave details of the first Government awards to 15 leading shock workers. Among this 'cream of the cream' was Ivan Povalyaev, an engineering worker with experience before and after the Revolution at Moscow's Dinamo (formerly Westinghouse) plant and, from 1924, at the AMO motorworks.

A self-confessed heavy drinker who had absented himself from work as a result for two weeks on end on one occasion, he had given up the bottle only in 1928, just as he had turned fifty.[18] An unlikely candidate indeed for a hero of labour!

However, when in the Spring of 1929 Komsomol members in his workshop had set up the first shock brigades, Povalyaev had supported them, in spite of the fact that even experienced Party workers regarded this new initiative "with apprehension". Explaining that "it's the Five-Year Plan, after all, and I don't want to be left out", he responded to the Party appeal for mass competition by encouraging members of his brigade of cylinder block makers to eliminate absenteeism, cut down on idle time and defective output and to look after their tools better.[19]

Through the pages of Vagranka, the factory newspaper, he challenged other brigades to competition. Predictably, not only did the other brigades fail to respond with more than "you are supposed to be grown-up, and here you are playing Komsomol games", but even members of his own brigade only "signed the pact unwillingly and with misgivings at first". This appears to have been the rule in the formation of adult shock brigades.[20]

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18 I. Povalyaev, 'Avtobiografiya udarnika' in Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, pp.77-79

19 ibid., p.79.

20 In the case of the first such pact, that at Krasnyi Vyborzhets, Pavel Mokin objected initially to rate-cuts and only signed because everyone else in the brigade had, see M. Putin, 'Pervyi dogovor', in Govoryat stroiteli, M. 1959, p.227. Referring to the same pact, another source attributes the following reaction, evidently to Mokin: "what's this then? It turns out that the material position of the working class ends up worse. I am not in favour of such a thing". A member of one of the brigades challenged by Putin retorted thus: "It's a politically harmful folly, detrimental to the interests of the labouring masses. A.I. Vdovin and V.Z. Drobizhev, op. cit., pp.230-231.

In order to fulfil its planned undertakings, Povalyaev's brigade was obliged to work a twelve-hour day during the summer of 1929 and, in July, waived their days off.[21] Not surprisingly, not all could stand the pace for long and "three of the best workers quit".[22] On the other hand, the brigade was on piece-work, so that earnings rose considerably. In Povalyaev's words this sometimes led to "chasing the ruble" (pogon'ya za rublem), which in turn fostered a devil-may-care (naplevatel'skoe) attitude to tools and an increase in defective output.[23]

As we have seen, other workers objected not so much to shock workers trying to earn a little more as to the rate cuts proposed by the shock brigades and spread, subsequently, to the remainder. The situation at Povalyaev's factory - AMO - was particularly tense with, on the one hand, the plant's union committee keeping the names of rate-cutters secret in order to save them from attack by other workers,[24] and, on the other, leading shock workers such as Aleksandr Salov openly challenging his workshop's worst six 'truants' to cut their rates by 30 per cent![25]

So the workers that were being proclaimed by the authorities as heroes were often the object of scorn and abuse from their workmates. In such an atmosphere the moral and legislative support given to the early shock brigades by the Party and Soviet Government was of crucial importance, as was the favourable publicity for shock work generated by such initiatives as the Shock Workers' Congress and the Leninist Enrolment.

Another important factor was the flood of youngsters now entering the workforce which provided a new and dynamic source of support for the shock movement. Thus it was that, during the course of 1930 as the older workers quit, Povalyaev's brigade was transformed into one offering on-the-job training for youngsters. Typical of the youths who passed through such instruction at this time was the eighteen-year old Ivan Starshinov. Within

21 Bor'ba klassov 1931, nos.3-4, p.80 (I. Povalyaev)

22 ibid., p.81

23 ibid., p.82.

24 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.181.

25 Lyudi bol'shevistskikh tempov, sbornik 1, Moscow, 1931, p.48.

a year this lad had been chosen to lead a 200-strong Komsomol brigade that earned the nickname 'Trouble and Rescue' (Beda i vyruchka) for such heroic feats as working round-the-clock for two weeks on end in an attempt to ensure that the reconstruction of the plant was completed on schedule by 1 October 1931.[26]

Carried away, perhaps, by the optimistic euphoria of the Leninist Enrolment, Povalyaev's brigade became one of fifty collectives and communes in the machine shop at AMO. Indeed, he foresaw the time when the entire factory would consist of such collective brigades and living communes; this, in his opinion, would be socialism. Referring modestly to his own role in this grandiose undertaking, Povalyaev explained: "working at the bench, I take pride in being a small cog in this big wheel".[27]

Clearly, it was the transformation wrought in workers such as Povalyaev that Stalin had in mind when he told the XVI Party Congress in June 1930:[28]

> "The most remarkable thing abour competition is that it effects a radical change in people's attitude to work, for it transforms work from a despised and heavy burden, as it used to be regarded, into a matter of honour, a matter of fame, a matter of glory and heroism".

Significantly, the same Congress passed a resolution instructing trade unions to "give outstanding workers every form of encouragement and reward".[29] Such benefits were soon to come Povalyaev's way. Along with his fellow celebrity from AMO, Aleksandr Salov, he was among the 257 shock workers chosen to cruise around Europe in November 1930 in the first all-Soviet built liner - the 'Abkhazia'[30] (built at Gozhev's workplace - the Baltic shipyards in Leningrad. It is intriguing to contemplate that this first, vocal opponent of socialist competition might have riveted some of the bolts on this ship).

Upon his return, Povalyaev found that his brigade was working badly.[31] He identified high turnover rates as the factor behind a fall in enthusiasm

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26 I. Starshinov, 'Tak rabotali i uchilis' komsomol'tsy' in Govoryat stroiteli, pp.191-196.
27 Delo chesti, pp.48-51.
28 XVI S"ezd, p.39.
29 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, vol.III, p.65.
30 Istoriya moskovskogo avtozavoda, p.163.
31 Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, pp.82-83 (I. Povalyaev).

for shock work, although other contemporary accounts would appear to be closer to the mark in attributing this to poor provisions, atrocious housing conditions and inadequate transport facilities.[32] Indeed, the turnover rate at AMO was significantly lower than the national average in Soviet industry.[33] This may have been partly due to the fact that the plant was in the forefront of the self-contracting movement, which encouraged workers to pledge to stay at the factory until the end of the Five-Year Plan. By 1 November 1930, 68 per cent of AMO workers had signed such an undertaking.[34]

This fact serves as a reminder that AMO remained in the avant-garde of socialist competition throughout this period. The plant had been awarded the very first VTsSPS Challenge Red Banner late in 1930 for its excellent production results in 1929/1930.[35] Early in 1931 the factory was among the first prize winners of the competition for best fulfilment of the promfinplan in the special quarter.[36] This despite the fact that a contemporary source claims that AMO fulfilled this plan by only 99.8 per cent and only achieved this by taking on an extra 878 (17 per cent) workers.[37]

Povalyaev himself reached the zenith of his personal fame when he was awarded the Order of the Toiling Red Banner (again alongside his fellow AMO shock worker, Salov). Thanks to the publication of a series of articles and pamphlets, all fifteen of these first recipients of Government awards for shock work became virtual household names in the Soviet Union.

However, as the pace of industrial innovation and expansion quickened in the course of 1931, with the reconstruction of AMO and the contruction of such industrial giants as the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk metallurgical

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32 Delo chesti, pp.143-145; I. Troitskii, 'Tekuchest' rabochei sily i bor'ba s nei' in Voprosy truda, 1931, no.2, p.77, states that "1000 AMO workers had nowhere to sleep"; M. Rodin, 'V bor'be za novyi Donbass' in Puti industrializatsii, 1931, no.8, p.26.

33 I have estimated that the turnover rate at AMO in the three months from September to November 1930 was 16.6 per cent (giving an annual rate of 66.4 per cent), see G. Datsuk, 'Za luchshee ispol'zovanie rabochei sily na proizvodstve' in Voprosy truda, 1931, nos.3-4, p.90. The comparable rate for all Soviet industry over these three months was 38.7 per cent (annual rate 154.8 per cent), Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR (1934), p.342.

34 Istoriya moskovskogo avtozavoda, p.166.

35 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.71-73.

36 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.4-5, p.25.

37 Voprosy truda, 1931, nos.3-4, p.83 (G. Datsuk).

complexes, the Nizhnii Novgorod autoworks, the Khar'kov and Cheliabinsk tractor plants, younger, more energetic and resourceful examples of heroic labour were required. For a shock worker in industry it was no longer enough to apply more intensive labour to existing techniques, increasingly a mastering of technique and a rationalisation of the production process was required.

Povalyaev, and old-time workers of his ilk, could go some way along this road, either by being promoted to foreman,[38] or, as in Povalyaev's case, leading his brigade in the transfer to cost-accounting and shift counter-planning.[39] But the real value of such old-timers was in their ability to pass on production experience and teach new skills to youngsters. In this AMO was yet again in the forefront as it established a comprehansive factory school system.[40] Povalyaev's dream of socialism at AMO was not to be, but there was still much for him to do at the re-named Stalin Motor Works (ZIS).

The Epos of Demented Labour

If rationalisation and technical knowledge became the hallmark of the industrial shock worker in 1931 there was still plenty of scope for the application of intensified work to existing techniques on the giant construction sites of the Soviet Union. Here endurance, sheer muscle power and quantitative achievements were still the stuff that heroes were made of. In the factories it was increasingly the foreman and engineer that were credited for production successes,[41] while only those workers who had rationalised production mastered new skills or tutored young workers were singled out for honour and publicity.[42]

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38 For example, the Baku oil worker Lordkipanidze, see Strana dolzhna znat' svoikh geroev, M-L, 1931, p.8; and Zuev from Moscow's SVARZ (carriage repair works), I.P. Ostapenko, op. cit., p.196.

39 Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.83 (I. Povalyaev).

40 A. Kuznetsov, 'Pervenets sovetskogo avtomobilestroeniya' in Govoryat stroiteli, pp.181-182.

41 For examples of foremen who were among the production leaders to win an Order of Lenin in 1931, see N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., pp.118-121.

42 Significantly, of those awarded the Order of Lenin for the reconstruction of ZIS (AMO), most held managerial or technical positions. The production shock worker singled out for this honour, foundry smith A.A. Osipov, was commended especially for his rationalising work, Istoriya moskovskogo avtozavoda, p.167; Govoryat stroiteli, p.186 (A. Kuznetsov). In addition, three Komsomol shock workers, including Ivan Starshinov, engeged in reconstruction work at the plant were also awarded the Order of Lenin, Govoryat stroiteli, pp.194-195 (I. Starshinov).

There was a simple reason for this In the absence of building machinery enthusiasm and muscle power were eminently suitable for meeting the extremely tight deadlines set for completing construction, deadlines that had to be met for technical or climatic reasons. Thus, if work dropped behind schedule, heroic shock work became necessary in order to save the situation. Under such conditions hesitation or refusal to participate might well be portrayed as political opposition.

Given the appalling living and working conditions on the major construction sites, and the resulting high rates of turnover and absenteeism, the heroic example of the shock workers was necessary not only to make up for the low productivity of their less conscientious fellow-workers, but also to justify the application of moral, material and legislative sanctions against the latter. Thus, paradoxically, it was the construction sites and mines where labour discipline and conditions were worst that provided the greatest feats of labour heroism.

In the factories the situation was quite different, for heavy manual labour was being replaced by sophisticated machinery. Individual feats of heroism could not compensate for the shortcomings of the average workers. What was required was a general level of technical competence that would improve quality of output as well as quantity. As many Western observers at the time noted, the Soviet workforce was much better able to build enterprises than to operate them.[43]

After all, the experience of the Stalingrad Tractor Works, which was built ahead of schedule (and was awarded in consequence the Order of the Toiling Red Banner)[44] but then took two years to reach its projected capacity of 144 tractors per day,[45] served as a warning which did not go unheeded. As an observer at that plant ruefully concluded:[46]

> "Technology will not be taken by storm. No amount of jerking will make the conveyor work properly. You cannot launch a

43 See, for example, Bruce Hopper, 'Soviet Economy in a New Phase', Foreign Affairs, vol.10, no.3. (April 1932), p.455; Maurice Hindus, The Great Offensive, London, 1933, p.28; Edgar G. Furniss, 'Results of the Five-Year-Plan', Current History, vol.37, February 1933, p.631.

44 Metallist 10 July 1930.

45 This was achieved on 20 April 1932, see Ekonomicheskaya zhizn' SSSR, p.272.

46 Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, pp.476-477.

> factory by a reckless charge. This is clear to everyone now. These are simple truths, but ones that had to be learned by suffering. And thousands of workers had to go through this. Lack of culture (beskul'tur'e) reduced their heroism to naught."

Thus the heróism of the builders of Stalingrad was to be emulated, while the teething problems of the plant's launch period were to be avoided. The trouble was that the heroic image of the shock worker still persisted, as the Editor of the tractor plant's newspaper complained:[47]

> " Sometimes elements of folkloric rapture creep into an author's attitude to shock workers. They write about a shock worker as if he was a 'super-Hercules' (chudo-bogatyr) who can stop a troika of horses with one hand. Sometimes a romantic passion for 'production prowess' such as working overtime for one-and-a-half to two months creeps in. But how the shock workers achieved their successes, what they did for them - a calm, business-like story which would teach others how to organise their work properly, without overtime, but productively and economically, is hard to find."

Of course, the real heroes of Stalingrad had been the Komsomol, seven thousand of whom had been mobilised to the tractor plant from all over the country early in 1930.[48] True, little over a year later, just one-quarter (1909 or 27 per cent) remained at the plant.[49] However, this does not diminish the importance of the fact that it was at Stalingrad that the seasonal nature of construction was terminated and that the precedent for heroic work was set.[50]

The mobilisation that had been ordered at Stalingrad to produce the plant's first tractor in time for the opening of the XVI Party Congress in June 1930 was to become a regular feature on construction sites for the rest of the Five-Year Plan. Fittingly, it was this Congress that intensified the war psychosis in the country by calling for the priority construction of the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk plants in order to enhance the USSR's defence capability.

Other manifestations of the militarisation of industry at this time was the formation of the 'Red Guards of the Five-Year Plan' in response to the

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47 ibid., p.435.

48 On 20 December 1929 the Komsomol Central Committee had called for 7000 members to be mobilised to the tractor plant by 1 April 1930, Komsomol'skaya pravda 28 December 1929. Ivanov, director of the Tractor Works, had written with an appeal for assistance to the Central Committee of the Komsomol on 19 December 1929, Slavnyi put', p.216.

49 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.15, p.6.

50 For first-hand accounts, see M. Suchkov 'Odinnadtsat' boevikh mesyatsev' in Govoryat stroiteli, pp.147-161; Yu. Kokorev, op. cit.

Party appeal of 3 September 1930. The most celebrated of these was at Leningrad's Krasnyi Vyborzhets, where 1970 workers undertook not to leave the plant before the end of the third year of the Five-Year Plan.[51] Similar detachments were formed in Khar'kov at the Cycle Works and the Svet Shaktera engineering plants.[52]

The response to this appeal at the Magnitogorsk site was to form 'Battalions of Enthusiasts' out of the best 1550 workers, a number that had swelled to 2000 by February 1931.[53] At Kuznetsk dozens of brigades of the 3rd decisive year of the Five-Year Plan were formed, the members of which also undertook not to leave the site before October 1932.[54]

But the militarisation of labour was taken to the extreme by the Territorial Committee of the Komsomol in Nizhnii Novgorod. In order to finish the pipe-laying at the local autoworks site by 1 December 1930, they mobilised on 10 September 3000 youngsters into four regiments of a 'Komsomol Battalion'.[55] However, this was explicitly criticised by the Komsomol's Central Committee on 26 September, and the experiment was not spread to other sites.[56]

Nonetheless it was the Komsomol that continued to force the pace of work on all the shock construction sites. This is not surprising for they were all essentially the creation of Soviet youth. Thus, for example, even the head of construction work at Magnitogorsk, Yakov Gugel', was only 35 years old, and 60 per cent of his workforce was under 24[57] (the figure for

51 Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.29, p.2.

52 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.112; Promyshlennost' i rabochii klass Ukrainskoi SSR, p.326.

53 V.G. Serzhantov, 'KPSS - Vdokhnovitel' i organizator sozdaniya Magnitogorskogo kombinata', Chelyabinskii gosudarstvennyi ped. in-ta, Uchenye zapiski, vol.1, vypl Chelyabinsk, 1956, p.196; Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR (1973), p.112; another source indicates that "about three thousand" (15% of all construction workers were in these battalions by the beginning of 1931, Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', pp. 192-193 (M. Shkol'nik).

54 ibid., p.191 (M. Shkol'nik).

55 F. Evgrafov, 30 let bor'by i pobed - stranitsy iz istorii Gor'kovskogo avtozavoda, Gor'kii, 1962, p.43; another source claims that the battalion numbered 10,000, of which 1800 were awarded prizes for shock work, including 900 who were twice thus honoured, Slavnyi put', p.219.

56 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1973), p.112.

57 Miles M. Sherover, 'Magnitostroi: Epic of Soviet Labour', in Current History, vol.36, July 1932, pp.407-408.

Kuznetsk was 61 per cent).[58] As an American engineer at Magnitogorsk later wrote, the project was built by "sheer brute force - the strength of thousands of peasant backs" adding that a similar project in America would require one-quarter or one-fifth the number of workers.[59]

The enormous demand for manpower on these sites had to be met, first and foremost, by young recruits mainly from the newly-collectivised farms. Few of these had any previous experience of construction work, let alone more sophisticated skills. This was not a great handicap initially, for muscle power compensated for the absence of special machinery. For those that stayed on site (and most did not) and showed willing, there was soon to be ample opportunity to learn skills that could be transferred to the factories that they had helped build. This path was traversed not only by many heroes of the shock construction sites, but also by the leading industrial workers of the Second Five-Year Plan.

Not all of the youngsters arriving from the countryside were mobilised by the Komsomol, however. In many cases older seasonal workers would do their own recruiting in their native villages and would bring entire artels to the sites.[60] These groups would be attracted in the first place by the money and, as goods became acutely scarce, by the preferential provisions afforded to shock workers. Moreover, the <u>starosta</u>, or brigade leader as he was to become, imposed discipline within his brigade and thus served as a prototype for the <u>brigadir</u> of the cost-accounting brigades. This is important, as these groups owed loyalty to the brigade and its leader rather than to any wider traditions of working class solidarity.

On becoming shock brigades, these newcomers would often smash existing work norms and arouse the enmity of other construction workers. Consequently,

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58 A.S. Moskovskii, <u>Formirovanie i razvitie rabochego klassa Sibiri v period stroitel'stva sotsializma</u>, Novosibirsk, 1968, p.95.

59 <u>Current History</u>, vol.36, July 1932, p.408. (M. Sherover).

60 For examples, see M. Arduanov, 'Nash trud ne propal darom', in <u>Govoryat stroiteli</u>, pp.124-125; P. Pochinshchikov and S. Syskov, 'O rabote nizovogo partiinogo zvena (na opyt partorganizatsii Magnitostroya)', <u>Bol'shevik</u>, 1931, nos.19-20, pp.59-60. A Party decree of 16 April 1931 ordered that all artels on the Nizhnii Novgorod site be transferred to brigades by 15 May, with the brigade leaders to be appointed predominately from among the experienced and trustworthy workers, <u>Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika</u>, vyp.8, p.423; a similar decree was issued in April 1931 by the Urals obkom, <u>Istoriya Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza</u>, vol.4, book two, M. 1971, p.135.

most of the shock heroes were subjected to abuse, beatings and, in some cases, fatal attacks. The best Komsomol shock worker, Velichko, at Magnitogorsk was murdered,[61] as was Larionov, organiser of a shock brigade at Uralmashstroi.[62]

Some of these attacks had racial overtones: the brigade of Tatar and Bashkir concrete-layers led by Mirsaid Arduanov at Berezniki construction site suffered one of their number killed and two wounded in a knife attack. In a separate incident Arduanov barely escaped an attempt on his life;[63] the world record-breaking Tatar brigades at Magnitogorsk led by Sagadeev and Galiullin were also victims of savage attacks.[64] Not that such nationalistic resentment was all one-sided: there was considerable opposition to recruitment in Tataria. Thus it was reported:[65]

> "The former outstanding worker Tarpishchev, has turned once and for all into an agent of the kulaks, agitating against the exodus of manpower from the Tatar Republic, claiming that Soviet power was tearing the Tatars asunder, evicting them from their republic to work underground and in industry, sending them to their death."

Of course, the shock construction workers were getting the same treatment as had been meted out to their 'rate-busting' brethren in the factories. For as the young brigades made nonsense of existing technical norms, the standards for all workers were revised upwards accordingly. For example, the norm for concrete-layers on the new sites had been 135-140 mixer-loads per shift until May 1931.[66] Then, on 14 May 1931, Trud announced that the leading shock brigade at the Khar'kov tractor site had achieved 258 loads in one shift. This initiated the All-Union competition in concrete-laying, the first of the competitions by trade which were to mark the next stage in the development of shock work.[67]

By the end of May the target had been raised to 400 loads per shift by the shock workers at Uralmashstroi, by early June Stasyuk's brigade at

61 Zin. Grishin, Sotsialisticheskaya organizatsiya i distsiplina truda, p.148.

62 A.I. Vdovin and V.Z. Drobizhev, op. cit., p.230.

63 Govoryat stroiteli, p.129. (M. Arduanov).

64 A.I. Vdovin and V.Z. Drobizhev, op. cit., p.230.

65 Na trudovom fronte, 1932, no.1, p.15.

66 E. Smertin, 'Trudnosti nas ne ostanovili' in Govoryat stroiteli, p.78.

67 Some sources claim that this competition was initiated by the women's brigade of concrete-layers, led by Koshikova, at Dneprostroi, which had increased its norm by 50 per cent and, on 6 May 1931, had challenged other brigades on site to competition in quality and pace of work, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.110.

Kuznetsk was regularly achieving 410 and more. The national press also gave great prominence to the record-breaking feats of Arduanov's brigade at Berezniki, and those led by Monakhov and Semerov at Cheliabinsk.[68]

It was the competition at Magnitogorsk, however, that really gripped the nation's imagination. The duel between the Komsomol brigades led by Sagadeev and Galiullin became so celebrated that it served as the real-life model for the competition described by Valentin Kataev in his novel "Forward, Time!" (Vremya vpered!). At the beginning of July Sagadeev's brigade had laid 525 loads and subsequently alternated with Galiullin's men in raising the total until, by the end of July, the latter brigade broke the world record for concrete-laying with 1196 loads (or more than two per minute). In one eight-hour shift his twenty-one men had the done the work of 127![69]

Even after Sagadeev was called into the Red Army, the competition continued. In the next round of the challenge, his successor - Egor Smertin - led his men to victory.[70] Eventually both brigades were bettered by that led by Movlev at the Kramatorsk construction site, which laid 1400 loads in a shift (or ten times the original norm).[71]

To put this work in context it must be remembered that it was done against a background of soaring turnover and absentee rates and appalling living conditions. Indeed, on all construction sites the priority given to production was such that the most fundamental needs of the workers (such as housing, communal facilities, provisions, etc.) tended to be overlooked. Site authorities were berated for attempting

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68 Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', pp.194-195 (M. Shkol'nik); Govoryat stroiteli, p.127 (M. Arduanov).

69 Govoryat stroiteli, p.78 (E. Smertin); Kommunisticheskaya partiya-vdokhnovitel', p.195 (M. Shkol'nik).

70 Govoryat stroiteli, p.79 (E. Smertin).

71 S. Milochkin, 'Zavod zavodov', in Govoryat stroiteli, p.206.

"to take a long leap into socialism off a short run".[72]

The personal pressure on Smertin is best exemplified by two anecdotal incidents drawn from his memoirs: once, when dreaming of his work, Smertin shouted at his wife in his sleep to pour out the concrete more quickly; on another occasion, instead of cement, his brigade was sent a waggon-load of oats, a hint perhaps that his men were working like horses[73] (precursors to Boxer in Orwell's "Animal Farm")!

Of course, work was by no means restricted to eight-hour shifts. The normal working day on most construction sites was ten hours and it was not unusual to work two, three or even four hours on top of this. In emergencies workers might be required to work two or more shifts on end and there are cases of brigades continuing their work for days on end.[74]

Moreover, the youngsters in the battalions of enthusiasts would 'voluntarily' declare themselves prepared "to work at any time for any amount

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72 A.I. Vdovin & V.Z. Drobizhev, op. cit., p.221. An article in April 1931 blamed the massive labour turnover at Magnitostroi on the appalling living conditions, claiming that only 65 per cent of workers had mattresses and blankets and that they had to stand in line for up to two hours to get a meal of poor quality, Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.10, p.9; On 14 April 1931, the Party's Central Committee decreed that the work of management on the site was unsatisfactory and held it to blame for the high rates of absenteeism and turnover, V.N. Eliseeva, 'Bor'ba za kadry na stroitel'stve Magnitogorskogo metallurgicheskogo kombinata v gody pervoi pyatiletki' in Chelyabinskii gosudarstvennyi ped. institut Uchenye zapiski, vol.1, vyp.1, 1956, pp.208-209; in 1930 there were just 175 hospital beds in Magnitogorsk for a population of 72,000, ibid., p.204, I. Baevskii, Fondy kollektivnogo potrebleniya, M-L, 1932, p.81; Of course, Magnitogorsk was one of the so-called 'socialist towns' (sotsialisticheskie goroda) built from 1929 to facilitate production and, ostensibly, to ensure the welfare of the workers. For a critique of these settlements, see G. Mequet, 'Socialist Towns: a New Development of Housing Policy in the USSR' in International Labour Review, vol.25, no.5, May 1932 pp.621-645; Finally, a Government and Party decree on 17 March 1932 "On Housing and Communal Facilities for Workers at Magnitostroi" handed Gugel' and his adminstration a strong reprimand for the "intolerably insanitary conditions" which were causing epidemics amongst workers and their families, Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, p.474.

73 Govoryat stroiteli, p.79 (E. Smertin).

74 See for example, A. Fillipov, 'Ya nashel svoyu "Zolotinu"', in Govoryat stroiteli, p.114; Shvarts, 'Poeziya "sumashedshego truda"', in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 28 November 1931; E. Dzhaparadze, 'Etikh let nel'zya zabyt'', in Govoryat stroiteli, p.87; Trud, 7 November 1931; In addition many thousands of youngsters studied after work and on days off, see Govoryat stroiteli, pp.195-196 (Starshinov).

of hours if production so demands",[75] conditions that were sometimes spread to the entire workforce as a letter from a trade-union worker to an Opposition publication confirms:[76]

> "To eliminate breaks in production anything at all is allowed: the eight-hour working day is made into ten or more hours; days off are waived ('voluntarily' of course), leave is not granted (those who managed to get away in the summer have been recalled); often workers are woken in the night to eliminate the most serious breaks and so on"

Writing at this time, the correspondent of The Times wrote that "to mention the work 'voluntarily' is to raise the anger of the average Russian".[77] A worker writing to another Opposition paper complained:

> "If a worker compains that he hasn't the strength to fulfil the very high work norm because he is starving, non-workers will fall on him and shout that he is a 'self-seeker' (shkurnik), a counter-revolutionary and such like".

This, claimed the worker, led to heavy drinking, high absenteeism, hooliganism, family tragedies, murders and suicides. He also noted that:

> "Socialist competition and shock work have fallen sharply and management, starting from the brigadier right up to the Director, virtually walk around with whips and hustle the workers".[78]

As if this was not enough, even the local population would be drafted in on occasions for subbotniks,[79] children and wives would be organised to bring pressure to bear on indisciplined workers,[80] and huge 'black boards'

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75 F. Evgrafov, op. cit., pp.36-37.

76 'Pis'mo professionalista' in Byulleten' oppozitsii, 1931, no.19, p.20.

77 The Times, 13 November 1931.

78 Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 28 November 1931; The inability to compete due to hunger is also remarked upon in Bol'shevik, 1931, no.5, p.61 (M. Rafail).

79 For examples, see F.G. Evgrafov, 'Nizhegorodskaya partorganizatsiya i stroitel'stvo avtozavoda (1929-32gg)', in Voprosy istorii KPSS, 1960, no.4; G. Unpelev, op. cit., p.108.

80 This was a feature throughout the Five-Year Plan. On 9 April 1929, for example, the wives of workers at Krasnyi Profintern in Bryansk challenged the wives at the Yartsevo textile works to competition under the slogan "absenteeism and drunkeness hit not only the state but also the worker's family", Politicheskii i trudovoi pod"em, p.235; in 1930 a meeting of the wives of the most persistent 'truants' was convened at the Krasnyi Treugol'nik mine in the Donbas, Vit. Ermilov, Podnimem massy na sorevnovanie, M. 1930, pp.32-33; in April 1931 the wives of workers at Leningrad's Krasnyi Vyborzhets called for a women's campaign against absenteeism, drunkeness and money-grubbing, Leningradskii inzherno-ekonomicheskii institut, Trudy, vyp. 38, p.35 (A.M. Lazareva). Similarly, there are many examples of children being involved in the struggle for discipline, often demonstrating outside the dwellings of 'truants', see A. Kapustin and A. Milorud, op. cit., p.88.

of disgrace were erected on site.[81]

The national and local press also pilloried the 'disorganisers' of production, not merely on their pages, but also by sending special brigades to the biggest enterprises and construction sites.[82] Pravda and its resident poet, Aleksandr Bezymenskii, were particularly effective in this respect, establishing, for example, the Order of the Camel for lagging workshops at the Stalingrad Tractor Works.[83]

If one takes into consideration the 'punishment battalions',[84] the widespread practice of organising the most indisciplined workers into shock brigades under the aegis of a genuine Party enthusiast[85] and the persistent rumours of forced labour in the USSR,[86] one might be bound to conclude that worker cooperation was secured first and foremost by compulsion.

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81 The first red and black boards were erected on 15 October 1928 at the Lys've metalworks in the Urals, see A. Kapustin and A. Milorud, op. cit., p.23 and became widespread during the First Five-Year Plan, particularly in the battle against absenteeism. On 18 October 1931, a Government decree "On Boards of Honour at New Construction Sites" spread this practice to the shock building projects, Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.63, art.413; for a worker's view on the impact of 'black boards and 'doormat' (rogozhnoe) banners, see Govoryat stroiteli, p.114 (A. Filippov) Lenin had been an early advocate of these boards. In his rough notes for his "Current Tasks of Soviet Power" under the heading 'Raising Labour Productivity' he wrote "Self-discipline. Piece work per output. Taylor's system and the black board", V.I. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie, vol.36, p.547.

82 Pravda, 5 September 1930.

83 B. Semenov, 'V bor'be za metall' in Bol'shevik, 1931, no.2, p.20 notes that "Pravda and its poet Bezymenskii play a great role in creating an atmosphere of moral guilt." The Order of the Camel was just one of a variety of slow moving animals utilised to shame lagging workers, see A. Kapustin and A. Milorud, op. cit. p.89. Other examples are the Order of the Elephant (at Elektrozavod), Strana dolzhna znat' svoikh geroev, p.34; the Order of the Tortoise (Sevkabel') V. Afanas'ev and A. Grishkevich, op. cit. p.20; and the Order of the Crocodile (Stalino metalworks), Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.118. This last-named plant also had a novel form of 'red'-and 'black' boards at the factory gates, depicting a snail, a tortoise, a resting mule, a pedestrian, a horse rider, a cyclist, a car and an aeroplane with portraits of workers hung in their respective places, see ibid., p.110. Other 'honours' included the Order of the Honourable Layabout (Serp i molot, Khar'kov), the Order of the Truant (Generator, Khar'kov) and Order of the Deserter from the Five-Year Plan (Moscow Cable Works), Vit. Ermilov, op. cit., pp.29-30.

84 In November 1931, the Magnitogorsk gorkom criticised the formation of punishment platoons (shtrafnye roty) out of truants and other violators of labour discipline, Iz istorii partiinykh organizatsii Urala: sbornik 2, p.94 (V.M. Kulikov and S.S. Koz'min).

85 See, for example, N.B. Dolgovyazova and E.I. Shashenkova, 'Gornyaki v pervoi pyatiletki' in Ugol', 1979, no.4, p.61.

86 These reports became persistent from early 1930, see The Times, 22 February 1930 passim.

On the other hand, as many contemporary observers pointed out,[87] the unprecedented turnover rates and frequent complaints from Western engineers working in Soviet industry about 'democratic meetingitis'[88] would tend to indicate that labour in the USSR was "too darn free".[89] Certainly, even the harshest critics of the labour scene could not deny the existence of examples of genuine enthusiasm, no matter how misguided they might perceive them to be.[90]

As we have seen, material incentives held a particularly strong attraction for the peasants who had originally joined the workforce 'just for the money' (za dlinnym rublem).[91] With the spread of piece rates and the introduction of progressive bonuses and preferential provisions for the top shock workers (particularly during times of great shortages) the incentive to work harder was undoubtedly enhanced.

Nonetheless, it was the combination of these incentives with the capacity and will of the newcomers to work more productively that produced the record-breakers during the First Five-Year Plan. But there are far too many tales of genuine heroism to doubt that enthusiasm born of commitment was an important factor in establishing such examples of shock work. Young and old alike, on occasions, seemed prepared risk their lives for the sake of production, from the seventeen-year old brigade leader, Stroganov at Kuznetsk[92] to the retired foreman, Rumyantsev, who was recalled to work at Leningrad's Lzhorskii metalworks.[93] Others were to risk life and limb even to get to work, as in the case of the detachment of youngsters that marched 400 kilometres over fourteen days in temperatures of minus 40C in order to reach Komsomolsk-on-Amur.[94]

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87 Sidney Webb, 'Freedom under Soviet Rule', in Current History, vol.37, January 1933, pp.399-401; Walter Duranty, Russia Reported, London, 1934, pp.200-201.

88 See, for example, Lyudi stalingradskogo traktornogo, p.315; Edgar Furniss, 'New Curbs on Soviet Labour', in Current History, vol.36, June 1932, p.365.

89 Walter Duranty, op. cit., p.201.

90 A. Jugow, 'The Results of the Five-Year Plan', in The American Socialist Quarterly vol.2, no.1, New York, 1933, p.46. See also his article 'Dneproges' in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 29 October 1932.

91 A.I. Vdovin and V.Z. Drobizhev, op. cit., pp.216-218.

92 Izvestiya, 7 November 1931.

93 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.115.

94 S. Trapeznikov, 'Gorod molodosti', in Govoryat stroiteli, p.220.

The examples of heroism were as diverse as they were many. Thus, for example, Tanya Sokolova's brigade of women at the Lepse works in Moscow was awarded the Order of Lenin in 1931 for completing its five-year plan in two-and-a-half years;[95] Arduanov's team of strong young lads from the national minorities worked round-the-clock for two days, for much of the time up to their necks in water, in order to repair a gap in a flood-prevention wall at Berezniki;[96] eighteen-year old Zhenya Zosulya's brigade of Komsomol girls displayed outstanding courage and endurance working in sub-zero temperatures at great height fitting window panes at the Stalingrad tractor site;[97] Ivan Zhelobayev's brigade of fitters, mobilised to Magnitogorsk from Leningrad, assembled in just 39 days a twenty-five thousand kilowatt turbogenerator that the foreign specialists had indicated would take six months to install.[98]

Even the most ardent of those that survived to write their memoirs admitted that their work was extremely hard and that the working conditions left a lot to be desired.[99] Clearly, their level of commitment and enthusiasm, coupled with the recognition and reward that shock work brought, must have eased the privations and sacrifices considerably. Indeed, by mid-1931, Pravda quoted a speaker at a conference on the psychophysiology of work as saying that fatigue was a subjective sensation quite capable of being overcome by dint of the shock worker's will power.[100] While possibly applying to the heroic few, such a conclusion would hardly have been appropriate to the mass of workers.

The essential importance of these record-breaking heroes was that they made the existing technical standards in industry look ridiculously low and thus provided the authorities with a weighty argument for setting

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95 N. Levina, 'Udarnaya komsol'skaya', in ibid., pp.234-242.

96 ibid., p.128 (M. Arduanov).

97 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), pp.227-228.

98 Govoryat stroiteli, p.88 (E. Dzhaparidze).

99 Byli gory vysokoi, M. 1935, pp.297-314; Govoryat stroiteli, p.79, (E. Smertin), p.114 (A. Filippov), p.131 (M. Arduanov), p.175 (R. Robinson), p.211 (S. Milochkin) etc.

100 Pravda 21 May 1931.

work norms on the average _shock worker rather than the average worker.[101] The rewards for heroic work were great. Even the older, barely-literate ex-peasants such as Arduanov and Berezniki and Filippov at Kuznetsk were promoted to foremen, given top Government awards and were eventually retired on special pensions.[102] Many more transferred from construction to the factories that they helped build, some to become the shock workers of the Second Five-Year Plan.[103] At a time of unprece dented social mobility yet others were promoted to management positions or joined the technical intelligentsia.[104] In this way the influence of these early heroes reverberated for many decades not only in industry, but throughout Soviet society.

THE COST-ACCOUNTING BRIGADES, 1931-1934

The importance of the cost-accounting brigades is that they represented a synthesis of what the Party leadership considered most valuable in Socialist competition and the optimum form of worker organisation within the desired heirarchy of industrial management.

Thus, on the horizontal level, the brigades united workers engaged on similar work processes and, as such, were the heirs to the shock brigades and communes in providing examples of the desired attitude to work. Moreover, they were logical extensions of the campaigns for counter planning, rationalisation and improved quality. In this respect they were particularly appropriate for the greater technical literacy and higher skills of the workforce that characterised the period during which they flourished.

On the vertical level, the cost-accounting brigades slotted neatly into the schema of strict one-man management at the very lowest level, the the brigadir being at one and the same time the leader of the brigade and

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101 See leader 'Boevye zadachi promyshlennosti' in Bol'shevik, 1931, no.9, p.9. Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.8-9, p.3; at the IX Trade Union Congress it was stated that output norms should be set on shock workers, but not on supermen and record-breakers, Materialy k otchetu, p.52.

102 Govoryat stroiteli, p.109 (A. Filippov), p124 (M. Arduanov).

103 At Uralmashstroi, for example, 30 per cent of construction workers switched to skilled work in the completed factory, V.D. Fedorov, 'Podgotovka rabochikh dlya novikh zavodov v pervoi pyatiletke' in Iz istorii rabochego klassa SSSR, Ivanovno, 1964, p.179.

104 Pod"em kul'turno-tekhnicheskogo urovnya sovetskogo rabochego klassa, M. 1961,

the representative of management. Moreover, unlike the shock brigades and the communes, the cost-accounting brigades collective action was restricted decisively to the brigade (effectively to improving on the targets set them by management). This not only prevented any threat to the principle of one-man management in the shape of syndicalism, but also allowed the introduction of strict accounting of each individual brigade member's work performance as well as the exact definition of his or her responsibilities. This was particularly important in the context of the switch from moral to material incentives, based on the spread of piece rates and individual bonuses and benefits for shock workers.

In this way, it was hoped that the enthusiasm, initiative and collective accummulation of experience that had featured so strongly in the shock brigades and communes, would be combined within a strictly managerial approach to production. Despite a concerted campaign and the fact that, on paper, about one-third of the Soviet industrial workers joined these brigades, they never really achieved this synthesis. As the worker input into target setting was channelled more and more into the heroic, record-breaking direction, the need for collective counter-planning at the brigade level faded and actually became a hindrance to radical norm revision.

With the virtual disappearance of the cost-accounting brigades by the end of 1934, a chapter in the development of shock work and socialist competition was brought to a close. Like their predecessors, the communes, they were deemed ahead of their time. Unlike the communes, however, the cost-accounting brigades were destined to make a come-back.

The Origins of the Cost-Accounting Brigades

Khozraschet (sometimes translated as economic or business accounting) has a distinctive Leninist pedigree. Indeed, there are some remarkable parallels between Lenin's initial drive to introduce it into Soviet industry in 1921 and the spread of the cost-accounting brigades exactly ten years later. One of the key elements of the New Economic Policy, khozraschet was aimed first and foremost at raising productivity and reducing costs, thus embodying Lenin's demand for uchet (accounting) and kontrol' (control

and checking).[105] From the beginning it represented a management approach to industry and was linked to both piece-rates and bonuses for increased productivity and aimed at wage-levelling and communal forms of pay.[106]

In a revealing article entitled "Towards the Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution", written in 1921, Lenin discussed the desired relationship between moral and material incentives:[107]

> "We counted, raised upon a wave of enthusiasm and having awakened a popular enthusiasm that was at first generally political and, subsequently, military, we counted upon realising, directly upon that enthusiasm, economic tasks that were just as important (as generally political and military)... Life has shown us our mistake... Not directly upon enthusiasm, but with the help of enthusiasm..., on personal interest, on personal incentive, on cost-accounting try to construct at first firm bridges that, in a small-scale peasant country, lead through state capitalism to socialism."

However, in the conditions of the New Economic Policy, cost-accounting proved hard to implement on a wide scale, and it was not until the Party decree of 5 December 1929 "On the Reorganisation of the Management of Industry"[108] that it began to be introduced in all enterprises down to the workshop level. As we have seen, the wave of enthusiasm generated by the spread of mass socialist competition was accompanied by a growth of collective forms of work and pay, a trend which had been explicit VTsSPS policy since the VIII Congress in December 1928.[109] It was precisely when the enthusiasm began to wane, in the spring of 1930, that personal incentive re-emerged as the main lever for raising productivity.

However, the period between the end of the Leninist Appeal and the emergence of the first cost-accounting brigades in January 1931 was characterised by a deepening industrial crisis. Only by studying the successive switches in policy that were adopted to try and remedy this crisis can the qualitative changes in industry that turned an environment that in May 1930 was favourable to production communes into one that,

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105 V.I.Lenin, Polnoe sobranie, vol.35, pp.199-200.

106 See E.H. Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923, vol.II, London, 1952, especially pp.110-114.

107 V. Lenin, Polnoe sobranie, vol.44, p.151.

108 Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta, 14 December 1929.

109 Trud, 13 January 1929.

a year later, was much more conducive to cost-accounting brigades, be understood.

Certainly, it was tacitly admitted that enthusiasm had its limits as the basis for an industrial strategy as soon as the impact of the Leninist Enrolment was subjected to scrutiny. Thus, in the Party decree "On the Results of the Leninist Enrolment of Shock Workers", dated 28 April 1930, the phenomenon of sham shock work was heavily criticised and the introduction of rewards for outstanding shock workers was called for.[110]

On the very same day, the Presidium of VTsSPS issued a decree "On the Involvement of Trade Unions in Compiling the Control Figures for 1930/31",[111] which sought to involve the workers in more tangible means of cutting costs and raising productivity than loudly-proclaimed competition pacts by setting in motion the movement for counter-planning, which was to play a crucial role in the evolution of cost-accounting brigades.

Further evidence of some disenchantment with enthusiasm as the basis for improved performance of industry is provided by the first spate of legislation aimed at rewarding shock workers, a policy that had been mooted at the very beginning of the mass spread of competition, but had yet to be effectively introduced. This initially took the form, on 20 May 1930, of preferential medical treatment and access to cultural and communal facilities,[112] by September 1930 had expanded to cover trips abroad for the best shock workers,[113] and by the end of the year to better housing and improved access to education and courses to raise skills.[114]

Moreover, the Party appeal of 3 September 1930, although not strictly a legislative act, proposed the preferential provision of shock workers with

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110 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, n o.9, p.59 (see p.230 above).

111 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.75-77.

112 Circular of Narkomtrud RSFSR and Narkomzdrav RSFSR, Izvestiya Narkomtruda,1930, no.19.

113 Decree of Presidium of VSNKh SSSR and VTsSPS "On Rewards for Shock Work" Izvestiya 27 September 1930. The most celebrated trips abroad were on the first all-Soviet built passenger liners, "Abkhazia" (in November 1930 with 257 shock workers, including Povalayev from AMO) and "Ukraina" (in August 1931 with 340 shock workers, including the initiators of the first three cost-accounting brigades, Kapkov, Nikolaev and Davaines), N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.116.

114 Decree of TsIK and Sovnarkom SSSR of 15 December 1930, Izvestiya 17 December 1930.

food and consumer goods in short supply.[115] As a direct result of this appeal most of the major factories introduced shock worker 'cards'(kartochki) through which these benefits might be obtained.[116]

From the beginning these measures were linked with the struggle against labour turnover and thus sought to spread these benefits to workers with a long length of service (stazh) at a given plant. For example, the IV VTsSPS plenum resolved in May 1930 that "in order to struggle against turnover it is necessary, by legislative and contractual means, to consolidate a number of advantages for those who have been working at one plant for a long period (promotion, incentive payments etc.)...".[117] However, as we have seen, by no means all the 'cadre' workers had been burning with enthusiasm for the increased rates of industrialisation. Thus it was not simply a matter of introducing new pay scales based on length of service. Indeed, when Narkomtrud suggested, in July 1930, that wages be restructured on this basis, the idea was turned down by the VTsSPS leadership.[118] For it was precisely the flood of raw recruits into Soviet industry at this juncture that was assisting in breaking down those workshop and craft attitudes that were preceived as holding back the socialist offensive. Moreover, participation in socialist competition and shock work was held to be a more reliable guide to a worker's class attitude than length of service. Not surprisingly, therefore, productivity became the prime criterion for reward.

In the event, the distinction between the 'cadre' and the 'shock' worker was rendered somewhat irrelevant after the Party appeal of 3 September made self-contracting the first priority of shock work.[119]

It should be emphasised, nonetheless, that the introduction of material rewards, in keeping with Lenin's original blueprint, did not exclude moral incentives. For example, the VTsSPS resolution quoted above also called upon shock and cadre workers to form comrades' courts "in order to bring

115 Pravda, 3 September 1930.

116 See N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.116

117 Rezolyutsii IV i V plenumov, p.16.

118 ILO, Industrial & Labour Information, vol.44, Oct-Dec 1932, p.236.

proletarian influence to bear on the various backward elements that violate labour discipline and undermine socialist competition".[120]

The main source of moral incentive, however, emanated from the "sharpening of the class struggle" theory which was one of the major themes of the XVI Party Congress. From July 1930, participation in shock work, particularly in such forms as counter-planning, the drive for improved quality and measures aimed at cutting costs, were presented as the most accessible channel through which the shop-floor workers might best oppose and rebuff the 'class enemy', be they kulaks, bourgeois specialists or rightists within the Party itself. This approach is made explicit in the Party appeal of 3 September (which mentioned by name the economic planners who were shortly to become main defendants in the Promparty trial).[121] Action against 'wreckers' remained a feature of shock work in general, and counter-planning in particular, throughout the rest of the First Five-Year Plan.[122]

Among those identified as 'class enemies' was the leadership of the Labour Commissariat. The replacement of the Commissar, Uglanov, by Tsikhon in August 1930 and the appointment of Kraval' as his Deputy enabled the state authority responsible for labour legislation and regulating the labour market to turn its 'face to production'.[123] This was to have the effect of redefining the role of law in regulating industrial relations. During the heady months of the socialist offensive this had been eroded by the increasing importance of the so-called socio-political norms of socialist competition. As genuine enthusiasm manifestly waned, the Party leadership continued to proclaim its existence but resorted more frequently to legal sanctions against those who implicitly exposed this fallacy. The first hint of a new crack-down accompanied the launching of the campaign against labour turnover in May 1930. A union newspaper that month called

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120 Resolyutsii IV i V plenumov, p.14.

121 Pravda, 3 September 1930.

122 This is most graphically illustrated in the Soviet film "Vstrechnyi", made in 1932, in which the Party secretary, young Soviet engineers and an old-time foreman combine to defeat the 'wrecking' activities of a bourgeios specialist. The film also depicts a Komsomol's attempt to whip up enthusiasm at a workers' general meeting as a risible failure.

123 , no.22.

upon the authorities to "combine the enthusiasm of the masses with an iron labour discipline".[124]

The abolition of unemployment in October 1930, not only took away one of the major areas of Narkomtrud's work, but also provided the justification for both the state regulation of the labour market and the demand for new levels of discipline. However, as we have seen, Narkomtrud's attempt to incorporate socialist competition into a new legislative framework by means of a new Labour Code and the introduction of work books foundered early in 1931 at precisely the period that changes in industrial policy were being made that would render the need for a 'declaration of rights" for workers redundant. Instead, material incentives backed up by legislative sanctions would be the main instruments for encouraging competition. Rights were to become unambiguously the concern of management.

One has only to compare the Party endorsement of the Leninist Enrolment with its appeal of 3 September to see the shift of emphasis from mass enthusiasm to more defensive moral ground. Thus the latter document concentrated on plugging gaps in production, self-indentures to counter turnover and counter-planning to reduce imports and rebuff wreckers. At the same time it advocated benefits for the most productive workers and sanctions against the least disciplined.

Perhaps the most telling indicator of the fall off in enthusiasm was the relative formality that accompanied Industrialisation Day on 6 August 1930 when compared to the one a year earlier.[125] Such enthusiasm as was generated during the latter half of 1930 was largely confined to those engaged in heroic shock work. Some interest was generated by the battle to win the VTsSPS Challenge Red Banner, proposed in June by Leningrad workers and run by Trud from 1 August to 7 November 1930.[126] Particularly well supported by enterprises in Moscow and Leningrad, the competition resulted in a victory for the AMO motorworks, ahead of Elektrozavod, the Karpov pharmaceutical works and Serp i Molot (Moscow), and the Karl

124 Metallist, 30 May 1930.

125 The Times, 7 August 1930.

126 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.71-73.

Marx works (Leningrad).[127]

The competition was for the best record in raising labour productivity, cutting costs and improving quality of output, the very targets that counter-planning was aimed at. This facilitated the growth of the movement, as did the subsequent All-Union competition for the best plant during the 'shock' quarter (October-December 1930) in fulfilling counter-plans.[128]

The impetus for counter-planning was carried over into the New Year (the beginning of the economic year). On the anniversary of Lenin's death, on 21 January 1931, Leningradskaya Pravda printed a letter from the workers of the local Elektroapparat plant which called upon Soviet workers to "immediately struggle for qualitative indices".[129] It was this 'quality crusade' that led directly to the formation of the first cost-accounting brigade in the iron foundry of the Lenin Engineering Works (Leningrad).

Petr Kapkov, leader of a brigade of iron casters in the foundry, introduced this new form of competition through the pages of Leningradskaya Pravda on 31 January 1931.[130] He gave a more detailed account of his brigade's work to a meeting of Leningrad foundry workers, convened by Trud and the Leningrad regional metallists' union, on 9 March 1931, a report of which was printed in Trud on 21 March.

Kapkov stressed the natural but gradual transition to cost-accounting once they had engaged in the battle to raise qualitative indices. Apart from improving the quality of output this involved increasing labour productivity and reducing costs. In other words, precisely those criteria used in the competitions of late 1930:[131]

> "When we foundry workers at the Lenin works took up the challenge of Elektroapparat, we undertook to commence the struggle for the fulfilment of qualitative indices, we started to carefully check our own brigade to see how work was carried on, how much material was required and what we used it for, and here we came across some scandalous facts...And then the

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127 ibid., p.73.

128 Pravda, 1 October 1930.

129 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.109.

130 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh Leningrada v gody peervoi pyatiletki (1928-1932gg), Leningrad, 1961, pp.177-180.

131 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.94-95.

> idea occured to us: 'Couldn't we estimate how much material is needed for each component and establish strict limits on the expenditure of material?'
>
> We implemented this idea. We drew up estimates on the expenditure of material and undertook the socialist obligation to fulfil these estimates and, if at all possible, to economise more on these estimates.
>
> Thus the brigade switched to cost-accounting, i.e. it receives all materials and tools per estimate and promises in return a given quantity of completed moulds. As a result we can struggle for qualitative indices not just in words, but in deed, and can check ourselves every day."

Kapov's example in switching his brigade onto cost-accounting was quickly followed by A.N. Nikolaev at the Baltic Shipyards and S.I. Davaines at the Sevkabel' works.[132] Initially, however, the movement was restricted to Leningrad. By the time of the aforementioned meeting of foundrymen there were just 10 such brigades with 120 members in the city,[133] totals that had risen only to 52 brigades with 380 workers by 1 April.[134] Nonetheless, certain parallel developments at this time would facilitate the subsequent spread of cost-accounting brigades.

For example, the drive to implement new technical standards in Soviet industry, which had commenced in late 1930, gathered pace in 1931. As the head of the Central Institute of Labour (TsIT), Gastev, told the 1st All-Union Conference of Industrial Managers:"for ten years there has been argument over whom to set norms by. The TsIT has always said 'set them on the very best'. That person now is the shock worker".[135] On 4 February 1931, Stalin had delivered his keynote address "On the Tasks of Managers" to that same Conference, calling upon Bolsheviks and leading workers to master technology. During this Conference, the management newspaper Za industrializatsiyu had published a letter from the workers of Elektrozavod lamp section suggesting that the cost of goods manufactured be calculated for each workshop, unit and worker.[136] Shortly afterwards, workers at the Proletarskaya Pobeda works in Moscow called for the

132 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, pp.181-182, 184-185.

133 Na trudovom fronte, 1932, no.11, p.4.

134 Leningradskie rabochie, p.220.

135 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.8-9, p.3.

136 Za industrializatsiyu, 2 February 1931.

introduction of promfinplan books, in which would be recorded the output of each worker.[137]

Of no less significance in getting the worker to concentrate on a particular rather than general sphere of competence was the resolution adopted by the V plenum of VTsSPS, published in Trud on 6 February 1931, on breaking up the 22 existing unions into 45 new bodies thus averting any threat of syndicalism in the trade union movement. Finally, on 21 February 1931, a decree was issued by the Presidium of the Party's Central Control Commission and the Collegium of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate (Rabkrin) which called upon factories to set up funds to reward workers making valuable suggestions on the rationalisation of work.[138] This was part of a campaign to help reduce the dependency of Soviet industry on foreign imports.

It was only with the publication on 11 April 1931 of a VTsSPS decree "On Reducing Output Costs" that the movement for cost-accounting brigades took off outside Leningrad. The decree specifically praised "the positive results of the transfer to cost-accounting (the brigades of comrades Kapkov and Nikolaev in Leningrad) which have revealed a reduction in defective output, in expenditure on auxiliary material and in costs".[139] Soon there were reports of the first cost-accounting brigades being set up in Moscow,[140] the Donbas,[141] Khar'kov,[142] Stalingrad,[143] and the Urals.[144] Meanwhile, a boost had been given to the movement in Leningrad with the convening of a city-wide 'gathering' (slet) of shock workers on 22 April to discuss the brigades. While promoting the spread of cost-accounting, the meeting took the opportunity to criticise certain negative aspects of the development of the movement, in particular the idea that the new

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137 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.7, p.12.

138 Izvestiya Narkomtruda, 1931, no.13.

139 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.95.

140 Bor'ba klassov, 1931, nos.3-4, p.83 (I. Povalyaev).

141 Khyar'kovskii gos. un-t, Uchenye zapiski, vol.103, p.123 (A.F. Rudenko).

142 A.L. Oprishchenko, op. cit., p.60.

143 N.I. Pershin, op. cit., p.33.

144 Ocherki razvitiya, p.63.

brigades meant the end of socialist competition.[145] By 1 May 1931, the city had 252 cost-accounting brigades.[146]

The first major breakthrough followed the Leningrad obkom decree of 17 May 1931 which approved of the formation of these new brigades.[147] The impact of the decree may be measured by the fact that a survey of 164 Leningrad enterprises revealed that on 1 July there were 1892 brigades in the city,[148] although another source claims that there were 5276 by this date.[149] A survey of 121 major plants throughout the country, conducted by VTsSPS, concluded that by 1 July, just three per cent of shock workers were in these brigades (at a time when 7.8 per cent were still in production communes).[150]

Understandably, the movement received a tremendous boost from Stalin's call for the introduction and strengthening of khozraschet in his speech of 23 June 1931 on "The New Situation - The New Tasks", in which he also roundly condemned wage-levelling.[151]

This shift of emphasis was reflected in a decree issued by the VTsSPS Presidium on 21 July, which hailed "this new form of socialist competition and shock work" as "the best means of introducing cost-accounting from below".[152] The decree criticised crude distortions in the setting-up of these brigades, singling out the treatment of Davaines's brigade at Sevkabel', which had deductions from its members' pay for not fulfilling its plan. The decree also hit out at "the bureaucratic implanting of brigades in an administrative fashion from above". Cost-accounting brigades, concluded the document, should be linked to the movement for counter-planning and the introduction of material incentives.[153] As a result of this decree the number of brigades in Leningrad had doubled by August 1931.[154]

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145 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, pp.182-184.
146 M. Eskin, op. cit., p.59.
147 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, p.185.
148 ibid., p.192.
149 M. Eskin, op. cit., p.59.
150 Byulleten' po uchetu truda, p.99.
151 I.V. Stalin, Sochineniya, vol.13, p.61.
152 Profsoyuzy SSSR, vol.2, pp.626-630.
153 ibid., p.630.
154 M. Eskin, op. cit., p.59.

Not that the cost-accounting brigades avoided the teething problems that had plagued all other forms of shock work. Inevitably the movement became linked with the raising of output norms and rate-cutting, which had been encouraged by the appeal from Tula metalworkers published in Pravda on 3 April and from the VTsSPS to mark the second anniversary of socialist competition, published in Trud on 28 April 1931. Thus, apart from the distortions noted above, there were predictably attacks on the initiators, most notably on Petr Kapkov himself who was badly beaten on 26 May by two local workers - Markelov and Gerasimov.[155] On 1 June the local trade union council strongly condemned this attack and, on 6 August 1931, a clarification by the RSFSR Supreme Court "On Responsibility for Threats Aimed at Shock Workers in Connection with their production Activity from Backward and Class Alien Elements that have Infiltrated Enterprises" made the persecution of shock workers a criminal offence.[156]

Other factors generating hostility from ordinary workers towards the new brigades were the introduction of the progressive piece-rate system,[157] bonuses and other benefits for outstanding production performances,[158] new rules on fines for defective output,[159] the attack on the production communes[160] and the further emasculation of the factory union committee.[161] However, overt opposition was of little use and drew heavy sanctions; the cost-accounting brigades were soon to get the official seal of approval, by implication, of Stalin himself.

Cost-Accounting Brigades - the 'Highest Form' of Socialist Competition

The real turning-point in the development of these brigades was the Vesenkha and VTsSPS decree "On Cost-Accounting Brigades" of 11 September 1931 which instructed management to eliminate lack of responsibility (obezlichka) and wage-levelling by means fixing workers or brigades to

155 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, p.187.

156 Sbornik vazhneishikh postanovlenii po trudu, 4-e izd., M. 1932, p.121.

157 See decree of VTsSPS and VSNKh SSSR of 20 September 1931, Trud 23 September 1931.

158 See pp. 342-348.

159 See decree of TsIK &SNK SSSR of 3 June 1931, Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.35, art.257

160 See Chapter Five

161 See Model Statute on Structure of Union Organs in the Enterprise, Trud 28 June 1931

machines or sets of machines and introducing piece-rates. The decree laid down the procedure for concluding cost-accounting agreements by which the management would set standards for wastage, output and costs, the brigade would enter its counter-plan and an agreement would thus be reached. Management was obliged to supply the brigade with materials and reward its members monthly with from 20 to 60 per cent of the economy achieved. By the decision of the brigade, individual members could be deprived of their bonus for defective output and absenteeism.

Stress was laid on the voluntary principle of forming cost-accounting brigades and the practice of foisting khozraschet on the workers was again condemned, as was the practice of holding brigades materially responsible for any underfulfilment of the plan. At the same time, management approval for the formation of such brigades became a necessary prerequisite and the shop head was given the right to appoint the brigade leaders who would now become the lowest link of management (and receive an extra 25 per cent on the wages in addition to any bonuses).[162]

This decree, signed personally by Ordzhonikidze (Vesenkha) and Shvernik (VTsSPS) with the implicit approval of Stalin, marked the decisive victory of the management approach to industrial relations. Its effect was both dramatic and immediate; there was a wholesale conversion of production communes and other forms of shock work into cost-accounting brigades so that by the beginning of October (in the 121 biggest enterprises in the USSR), the latter accounted for 17 per cent of all shock workers whereas the communes had shrunk to six per cent.[163] By that date the number of cost-accounting brigades in Leningrad had shot up to 14421, a figure that was to rise to 20118 by 20 November 1931[164] and to 26000 with over 300,000 members (70 per cent of Leningrad workers) by the end of the year.[165]

On 14 September 1931, just two days after the publication of the decree, Pravda gave the following endorsement of the movement: "With the

162 Pravda, 12 September 1931.

163 Byulleten' po uchetu truda, p.99.

164 M. Eskin, Sotsialisticheskie formy truda, p.59.

165 Leningradskie rabochie, p.220; another source puts the number of workers at 301,500, Istoriya rabochikh Leningrada v dvukh tomakh, vol.2, L, 1972, p.239.

cost-accounting brigades there ends a given period of searching for the organisational form of shock work that most closely conforms to the current tasks of socialist society". This principle having been established, the Authorities moved swiftly to implement wide-ranging reforms of wage-scales, the system of provisions and other benefits and labour relations.

What was perceived by many, including significant sections of the Komsomol and trade union movement, as a shift to the right in labour policy aroused much resentment. To some extent overt opposition was deflected by the exchange of Komsomol membership cards and the re-election of factory union committees in the autumn of 1931.[166] At the same time the Komsomol leadership was encouraging at this time the 'Stalin Relay' (Stalinskaya estafeta) to ensure implementation of the six conditions laid down in the leader's speech of 23 June,[167] while the trade unions were actively advocating the spread of cost-accounting brigades. Thus, in October 1931 a competition to find the best cost-accounting brigades in the Leningrad region was initiated by the local unions and facilitated the formation of 4000 new brigades.[168] Despite these measures both the XVII Party Conference in February and the IX Trade Union Congress in April 1932 were obliged to call for further drives against wage-levelling and lack of responsibility.

As we have noted cost-accounting brigades grew as part of the counter-planning movement, which was also expanding in 1931. In June of that year VTsSPS and Trud had convened a nationwide meeting to discuss shift counter-planning. On the basis of this meeting the VTsSPS issued a letter to all union organisations on 2 September 1931 advocating the spread of this form of competition. The growing influence of the cost-accounting brigades led, by the end of 1931, to a significant shift in the emphasis of planning.

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166 The exchange of Komsomol membership cards commenced on 10 October 1931 and ran until April 1932, Marsh udarnykh brigad, p.266; for a critical review of the union elections, see A. Kefali, 'Shvernik vybiraet' in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 14 November 1931.

167 A. Aluf, The Development of Socialist Methods and Forms of Labour, M. 1932, p.54. Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, p.322. On 9 February 1932 it was declared that the winners were the brigades of Kapkov, Nikolaev and Davaines, loc. cit.

168 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.81-82.

On 20 October 1931, workers at Leningrad's Sevkabel' factory first announced, through the pages of Leningradskaya Pravda, the idea of a counter-technical planning (vstrechnyi tekhpromfinplan).[169] The cost-accounting brigade at the plant led by Pyatyshev conferred with Shapiro, an engineer who had just returned from a study visit to an American cable works, and established the technical requirements that would allow the brigade to catch up with and overtake the productivity of American workers. By the end of the year brigades from Sevkabel' and two other Leningrad factories - Svetlana and Russkii Dizel' had proposed that the promfinplan for 1932 be made a tekhpromfinplan,[170] a proposal that was supported by the XVII Party Conference and the meeting of cost-accounting brigades and the IX Trade Union Congress.

A parallel development that was particularly supported by the Komsomol at this time were the brigades for technical independence, better known as 'DIP' (dognat' i peregnat'- catch up and overtake) brigades that set themselves the goal of studying foreign production techniques and improving on them. The first dipovtsy were Komsomol members at Leningrad's Kozitskii plant in December 1931.[171] By January 1932 the young initiators had given a detailed account of their work and the movement started to expand.[172] By 1 June 1932, a report by Leningrad's regional Komsomol committee revealed that the city had 246 brigades, made up almost exclusively of youngsters.[173] However, the movement never really caught on for, as one Soviet account exaplains: "in 1931-1933 there were not yet the prerequisites for a mass movement on the level of the 'DIP' brigades".[174] Nonetheless, it was the innovatory element of these brigades which, when grafted onto the Izotov movement's knowledge of technology and 'helping hand' for other workers, produced the Stakhanovite initiative in 1935.[175]

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169 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, p.247.

170 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.86-67. N.B. Lebedeva an O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.111.

171 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR (1973), p.93.

172 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie na predpriyatiyakh, pp.269-270.

173 ibid., pp.281-282.

174 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.113.

175 ibid., p.132.

For the time being, however, the cost-accounting brigades continued to prosper and grow. In February 1932, a Party journal confirmed that they constituted "the highest form of socialist competition".[176] By the beginning of that month there were estimated to be 150,000 such brigades in the country, uniting more than one million (about 20 per cent) of all workers, with particularly large concentrations (more than 25,000 brigades each) in Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine.[174] A further boost to the movement was provided by the 1st all-Union Meeting of Cost-Accounting Brigades in Moscow in March 1932 (although, it must be admitted that this gathering has attracted nothing like the attention accorded by historians of socialist competition to the Shock Workers' Congress in 1929).

Following the meeting, VTsSPS elaborated a decree on the formation of cost-accounting brigades, describing them in the preamble thus:[178]

> "Being the highest form of socialist competition and a new form of labour organisation that combines socialist competition and shock work with material incentives at work, and realising in practice the six historical conditions of comrade Stalin, cost-accounting brigades are called upon by the will of the Party and the working class to resolve the historic task of teaching millions of people to run the economy".

Among the tasks set by the decree was that the brigades should "eliminate wage-levelling and set up a system of material incentives for each member of the brigade (piece-rates, bonuses for economy)." The document also took a swipe at detractors of cost-accounting, singling out as "politically harmful" the article by Orlov in Za industrializatsiyu on 23 March 1932.[179]

The decree was published in Trud on 21 April 1932, to coincide with the opening of the IX Trade Union Congress. In his keynote address Shvernik repeated the formula of "the highest form of competition" while adding that the cost-accounting brigades "help the worker to become a genuine master of production who is concerned with how to work better, more quickly and economically".[180] Other commentators at this time hailed them as "the

176 Ya. Leibman and B. Markus, 'Bor'ba za povyshenie proizvoditel'nosti truda', in Bol'shevik, 1932, no.3, p.63.

177 I.P. Ostapenko, op cit., pp.160-161.

178 Sbornik vazhneishikh postanovlenii po trudu, p.35.

179 ibid., p.37.

180 N. Shvernik, Profsoyuzy SSSR nakanune vtoroi pyatiletki, M. 1932, p.27.

leading detachment of the shock workers' army",[181] "the shoots of communism"[182] and a form that "successfully combines genuine socialist competition of the working masses with the personal interests of every worker".[183]

However, there remained clouds on the horizon. There were still cases of arbitrary formation of brigades by management and the fining of brigade members for not fulfilling plans. An article published at the time of the Congress gives examples of both: an order at the Dnepropetrovskii railway depots declared that "brigades from the following locomotives must appear without fail in the main office to effect their transfer to cost-accounting within three days. Engine drivers who do not appear will be transferred to cost-accounting in their absence and will have administrative fines applied to them"; while at the Verkhne-Isetskii works it was made known that "should the brigade not fulfil the cost reductions plan, the members of the brigade will carry material responsibility".[184]

Moreover a resolution of the Congress on the Report of VTsSPS pointed out that "it is necessary to conduct a decisive struggle against blown-up figures, eye-wash and sham shock work in socialist competition".[185] It might be wise, therefore, to treat with some scepticism the figures for cost-accounting brigades which had risen, allegedly, from 155,000 with one-and-a-half million members (about thirty per cent of the workforce) on 1 April 1932[186] to 20,000 with about two million members (forty per cent of workers) by the end of the year.[187]

However, it was another point in the same resolution that was to have a decisive effect on the further development of socialist competition: it was stressed that "the slogan 'faces to production' remains the fundamental slogan of the trade union movement. The most important link in the

181 A. Frolov, 'K tretei godovshchine sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya' in Voprosy truda, 1931, nos.5-6, p.8.

182 'O khozraschetnykh brigadakh', in ibid., p.19.

183 Na trudovom fronte, 1932, no.11, p.4.

184 loc cit.,

185 Materialy IX Vsesoyuznogo s"ezda profsoyuzov - Rezolyutsii, M. 1932, p.8.

186 Materialy k otchetu VTsSPS, p.32.

187 I.P. Ostapenko, op cit., p.161.

implementation of this slogan at the present stage is the completion of the radical restructuring of wages and the organisation of technical standard setting (tekhnicheskoe normirovanie)".[188] In approving of this resolution, a leading article in the Party journal - Bol'shevik warned "opportunists of all shades are agents of the class enemy. Anyone who is against 'faces to production' is an opportunist".[189]

Throughout the summer of 1932 the campaign for technical standard setting continued apace with, for example, sixty major Moscow enterprises conducting a mass review of standards from 1 May.[190] Understandably, there was much more enthusiasm for this process among foremen and engineering personnel than there was amongst the workers at large, who tended to manifest their discontent through various forms of indiscipline. In such a situation the role of the brigade leader became of crucial importance.

This was reflected in the Model Statute on Cost-Accounting Brigades,[191] and confirmed by VTsSPS on 27 July 1932, which clarified the role of the brigadir both as the lowest link of management (under the general direction of the foreman and responsible for the entire activity of the brigade to the shop management) and as leader of the brigade (with a 10 to 25 per cent addition to basic pay, responsibility for labour discipline and promotion within the brigade). The statute specifically required the brigade to give concrete undertakings aimed at strengthening labour discipline and eliminating labour turnover, allowing the brigade itself the opportunity of establishing comrades' courts which might deprive offenders of their bonus. Socialist competition was to be conducted not only between brigades, but also between individual members of the brigade.

It could be said that the package of measures introduced in 1932, including the review of technical standards, a new system for the payment of defective output and the spread of the cost-accounting brigades were all aimed at intensifying the working day, at a time when absenteeism was rising alarmingly and labour turnover was still over 100 per cent per

188 Materialy IX Vsesoyuznogo s"ezda profsoyuzov - Resolyutsii, p.10.

189 'Za povyshenie roli profsoyuzov v sotsialisticheskom stroitel'stve' in Bol'shevik, 1932, no.8, p.9.

190 Moskovskii gos. istoriko-arkhivnyi in-t, Trudy vol.14, p.259, (Ya. Z. Livshits).

191 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.100-104.

year.[192] As a result labour productivity remained unsatisfactory at a time when wage bills were rising steadily. The resulting inflation was reflected not in higher prices but in a scarcity of goods, queuing, rationing and speculation. Thus the rationing system and strengthened managerial authority came to be perceived as more effective levers for raising productivity than initiative from below.

Throughout 1932 the number of cost-accounting brigades in construction fell off sharply, from 40.4 per cent of workers at the beginning of the year to 23.3 per cent at the end.[193] Although, as we have seen, in industry the movement continued to grow throughout 1932, the rot set in during the following year and the number of workers engaged in cost-accounting brigades had fallen to between 28 and 34 per cent by the beginning of 1934.[194]

During the course of that year this form of competition gradually disappeared.[195] The main problem was the enormous difficulty in calculating each brigade's performance. One last attempt to remedy this was made at the Makeevka metalworks in the Ukraine in April 1934 with the introduction of brigade-unit cost-accounting (brigadno-agregatnyi khozraschet).[196] However, this initiative never received wide application.

Moreover, the failure to introduce cost-accounting on a shop-wide basis inevitably devalued the work of the brigades. Nonetheless the brigades had established a precedent in economising on materials and in producing quality output. Both were resurrected after World War II.[197] Nonetheless, it was not until a further drive to ensure that Soviet enterprises ran on cost-accounting principles in 1965 that the environment again became favourable for cost-accounting brigades. They figure with particular prominence in Gorbachev's industrial plans. Thus, at the meeting with veterans of the Stakhanovite movement in September 1985, Gorbachev stressed the importance

192 See Chapter Three,

193 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.106

194 N. Vasil'ev, 'Nekotorye itogi po trudu za 1933g.' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1934, no.2, p.16 gives a figure of 28.1 per cent; A. Devyakovich, 'Sotssorevnovanie i udarnichestvo', in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1934, no.5, p.85, gives 34 per cent.

195 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.111.

196 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.108-109.

197 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.111.

of skvoznoi khozraschet (here best rendered as cost-accounting from top-to-bottom, or from the level of the enterprise to the level of brigade and individual worker).[198]

198 Pravda, 21 September 1985.

THE MATERIAL BENEFITS OF SHOCK WORK

The period under review may be characterised as a struggle between two contending views of the worker: as first and foremost a 'producer', or as a 'producer-consumer'. The eventual victory of the principle that the interests of production were paramount necessarily helped ensure that the former view should prevail. Indeed, Stalin's forced pace of industrialisation implied rigid restraints on consumption, not least by the working class.

However, the struggle should not be portrayed as a clear-cut conflict between the interests of production and the interests of the worker as a consumer. Rather, the trend during the New Economic Policy had been towards more consideration for the workers in what was, nonetheless, very much a 'producer'-orientated industrial system. The organisational platform for this trend, naturally enough, was the trade union movement. Thus the VII VTsSPS Congress in 1926 had called for the introduction of new wage and grade scales aimed at reducing differentials[199] and the VIII Congress, in December 1928, resolved to replace individual piece-rates with collective bonuses.[200] This trend was also reflected in such Government decrees as that of 27 June 1928 which established Funds for the Improvement of the Conditions of Workers made up from 10 per cent of a state enterprises profit which was to be diverted directly to workers' needs, specifically housing.[201]

On the other hand, the primacy of production interests was forcefully defended by Stalin and his supporters in the Party leadership, the management organs and the Komsomol. In organisational terms the conflict came to a head at the VIII VTsSPS Congress and continued until Stalin's victory over the last of the 'deviations' within the Party by the end of 1930. The chosen vehicle of Stalin's faction to achieve this breakthrough in industrial relations - socialist competition and shock work - failed signally to shift sufficiently by moral exhortations alone the worker's attention to the primacy of production. Nevertheless, in the process it

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199 A good account is contained in Rabochii class v upravlenii gosudarstvom (1926-1937gg), M. 1968, pp.225-228.

200 Trud, 13 January 1929.

201 Izvestiya Narkomtruda, 1928, no.33, pp.504-508.

did destroy the trade unions as the organisation which could articulate and defend the workers' interests.

In this respect, the year which elapsed between the XVI Party Congress in 1930 to Stalin's change of tack in his "New Situation - New tasks" speech of June 1931 may be perceived as a period of searching for the most effective blend of moral and material incentives, backed up by legislative sanctions.

The subsequent period provides graphic evidence that, at a time of acute shortages, material incentives were to become the dominating ingredient in this blend. Not surprisingly, socialist competition and shock work reflected these shifts of emphasis.

From the very outset of the movement, early in 1929, there had been calls for material rewards in socialist competition. The trail-blazing article in Komsomol'skaya Pravda on 26 January 1929 had advocated that the best enterprise be awarded the Red Labour Banner, but also that the best shock brigades should be rewarded with trips abroad to improve skills, better housing etc. On 31 March 1929, Pravda added its voice to the call for material benefits in competition.

The document generally accepted as launching the mass movement for socialist competition - the Appeal of the XVI Party Conference on 29 April 1929, quoted with approval Lenin's proposal that outstanding results in competition should be rewarded with "wage rises and cultural or aesthetic benefits",[202] while the subsequent Party decree of 9 May 1929 called for material incentives and the establishment of bonus funds.[203]

These suggestions first found legislative form in the order issued by VSNKh RSFSR on 14 May 1929,[204] which called upon management organs to pay money prizes to victors in competition. Further support was forthcoming by the end of the month when the II VTsSPS plenum declared in favour of collective rewards,[205] a proposal echoed by the union newspaper, Trud, on 2 July 1929. A cartoon in the same newspaper, on 10 August 1929, suggests

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202 KPSS v resolyutsiyakh, chast' II, p.618.

203 Pravda, 10 May 1929.

204 Torgovo-promyshlennaya gazeta, 15 May 1929.

205 Rezolyutsii II i III plenumov, pp.46-47.

that management was dragging its feet on introducing such rewards. A manager tells a group of workers, which has cut costs and wastage and raised productivity "why talk about bonuses, comrades?! More enthus-s-s-iasm!!"

A further step in this direction was taken by the Government decree of 11 September 1929 "On Rewards for Improvements Achieved in the Course of Socialist Competition amongst Workers and Employees".[206] This called for the establishment of Funds for Assisting Socialist Competition to be created from forty per cent of the economy made through competition in the previous financial year. Rewards were to be paid to whole enterprises, workshops, shifts, brigades, groups or individuals. Given the poor state of accounting and organisation of competition at this initial stage, the efficacy of this decree was strictly limited. A contemporary account suggests that it was not known about in the workshop.[207] However, it remained the basis for material rewards in competition until 1931.

As the shock brigades forged to the front of competition in the latter half of 1929, the trade unions continued to stress their preference for collective, rather than individual bonuses. This was reflected in Dogadov's report to the III VTsSPS plenum in November 1929.[208] Nonetheless, by the end of the year, complaints were being aired about the danger of shock workers becoming an 'aristocracy',[209] and one author was moved to declare that "under no circumstances must the shock worker stand in a privileged position vis-a-vis other workers".[210]

Of course, from the beginning a form of material incentive for shock work existed in the form of substantially increased earnings on piece rates (in 1927/28 61.6 per cent of all work done in industry was on piece rates[211] and, despite the policy endorsed by the VIII VTsSPS Congress, this proportion dropped only marginally to 56.7 per cent in 1930 before the

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206 Sobranie zakonov, 1929, no.58, art.541.

207 Na novom etape, p.253 (D. Rakhman).

208 Rezolyutsii II i IIIplenumov VTsSPS, p.72.

209 Trud, 16 November 1929.

210 A. Kapustin, Udarniki!, M. 1930, p.60.

211 ILO Studies & Reports. Series D, no.19, Semyon Zagorsky 'Wages and Regulation of Conditions of Labour in the USSR', Geneva, 1930, p.107.

trend was reversed in the following year).[212] Many contemporary observers noted that the opportunity for raising earnings often gave rise to 'money grubbing' (rvachestvo) amongst workers who joined competition solely for the financial rewards.

Such additional prizes as were given for shock work were sometimes of dubious value. Early in 1930, for example, an udarnitsa (woman shock worker) at the Suslinskii Works near Rostov-on-Don was awarded a pair of stockings worth one rouble five kopeks and a set of books containing such titles as "How to Avoid Pregnancy", "Venereal Diseases" and "How to Feed a Baby" - she was seventeen years old![213] There are cases, too, of workers 'voluntarily' foregoing their prizes: at the Stalino Metalworks in late 1929 the first prize of 150 rubles was donated to the industrialisation fund, the second of 100 rubles was given to the workshop library and only the third (a holiday trip) and the fourth (a delegate to the Shock Workers' Congress) were taken up.[214]

A miner-delegate to that Congress no doubt spoke for many when he declared that "shock work is not for prizes, but for the fulfilment of the plan, not in five, not in four, but in three years."[215] There was to be an ironic sequel to this statement for, during the Leninist Enrolment, significant moral pressure was applied to donate monetary rewards for shock work to the newly-issued State Loan "The Five-Year Plan in Four Years".[216]

However, there is little doubt that it was the Party's sceptical assessment of the value of moral incentives following the Leninist Enrolment

212 Lewis L. Lorwin and A. Abramson, 'The Present Phase of Economic and Social Development in the USSR', in International Labour Review, vol.33, no.1, January 1936, p.18. This figure is confirmed in Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, Moscow, 1936, p.526. This source gives the percentage of piecework for 1928 as 57.5 of all man hours worked in industry (the figures for 1929 are 58.8 per cent, for 1931 58.7 per cent, 1932 63.7 per cent and 1935 69.8 per cent).

213 Na trudovom fronte, 1930, no.22, p.11.

214 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti (1930), p.105.

215 Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi s"ezd, p.127.

216 Trud, 26 March 1930. This was not a new phenomenon for it had already become customary in some plants, for example, the Rykov metalworks, to donate prizes to the Third Industrial Loan in the latter half of 1929, see Ot udarnykh brigad, p.30.

that prompted the next clutch of calls for material benefits. The decree of 28 April 1930 "On the Results of the Leninist Enrolment of Shock Workers"[217] specifically called for the establishment of "systematic bonuses for the best enterprises, shock brigades, individual workers and engineering and technical personnel", a policy that was endorsed at the XVI Party Congress in June-July 1930.[218]

By now the new leadership of the trade unions had turned its 'face to production' and was able to anticipate certain of the key features of the Party's new approach to labour relations that was launched with the Appeal of 3 September 1930. Thus, the IV VTsSPS plenum in May 1930 called for comrades' courts to be established at enterprises from among the best shock workers and 'cadre proletarians' in order to bring pressure to bear on violators of labour discipline and opponents of socialist competition,[219] a formula enshrined in the September Appeal, as was the need to encourage workers who stayed at one plant and to discourage the 'flitters'.[220]

Indeed, by September 1930 the struggle for socialist competition, in purely quantitative terms, had been won. The task was now to direct the movement at the mounting problems of labour turnover, falling labour productivity and shortages of provisions and to stamp out manifestations of sham shock work. The linkage was made explicit in the Party Appeal of 3 September which stressed the importance of self indenturing (samokreplenie) as the key criterion of shock work, confirmed counter planning as the best means of raising productivity and gave the green light to the introduction of 'shock workers cards' (kartochki udarnika), which were to become a major incentive to shock work in 1931.[221] These cards had already been introduced early in 1930 at some plants, such as the Baltic Shipyards, but became wide-spread only after the Appeal.[222]

The period from the Appeal to the end of the year witnessed a spate of Party, Government and union decrees aimed, on the one hand, at spreading

217 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1930, no.9, p.60.
218 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, chast' III, p.65.
219 Rezolyutsii IV i V Plenumov VTsSPS, pp.14-16.
220 Pravda, 3 September 1930.
221 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.116.
222 Voprosy profsoyuznogo stroitel'stva, Leningrad, 1930, p.26.

benefits to those assisting the primacy of production interests and, on the other, imposing sanctions against those who stood in its way. The most important of these were the decree by the Presidium of VSNKh and VTsSPS, dated 25 September 1930, "On Rewards for Shock Work" establishing such prizes for shock work as housing, clubs, canteens, nurseries, baths, laundries and sporting facilities for the best enterprises and medals and trips abroad for the best brigades and individuals;[223] the Party decree of 20 October 1930 "On Measures to Ensure a Planned Supply of Manpower to the National Economy and the Struggle against Turnover" (issued in the wake of the elimination of unemployment in the USSR);[224] and the subsequent Government decree of 15 December 1930 "On the Procedure for the Engagement and Distribution of Labour and the Campaign against Labour Turnover", which advocated for shock workers (as well as for engineering and technical staff) such special benefits as better housing, priority in study and skill-improvement courses.[225]

It is worth examining the essence of this dual policy, this 'carrot and stick' approach to labour relations. The object of the exercise was to reduce costs and increase production. Insofar as this could not be achieved amongst the working class at large through moral exhortations, it had to be done by raising output standards and cutting rates. Thus, on the one hand, the shock workers who led this movement were rewarded accordingly, while on the other the mass of workers were obliged to work more intensively in order, so to speak, to stand still. As the shortages in provisions and communal facilities became more acute, the differentation between the shock and ordinary worker became more pronounced. By the end of 1930, a correspondent to an Opposition journal reported that "the shock brigades consist mainly of well-fed people with only an insignificant number of idealistic youngsters who believe that socialism can be built in

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223 Izvestiya, 27 September 1930.

224 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, M. 1934, pp.396-398.

225 Izvestiya, 17 December 1930. This decree was published on the same day an another issued by the Presidium of VTsSPS and VSNKh "On the Resigning of Collective Agreements" which called for the "regulating of wages by encouraging workers to increase the quality of their labour output through the maximum possible application of piece-work wages and by obliging skilled workers (or unskilled workers where there is a shortage of such) to remain in their respective factories", Trud, 17 December 1930.

this way". For the ordinary worker, he suggested, the attitude was one of "if you want the five-year plan to be complete, provide our table with some meat" (chtoby dovesti pyatiletku do kontsa, dovedite myaso do nashego stola).[226]

Indeed, the joint plenum in December 1930 of the Party's Central Committee and Central Control Committee paid particular attention to the question of meat supplies. However, it was this forum that decided that the 'successes' of 1929 and 1930 made an all-out assault possible in 1931, calling for a massive increase in industrial output in the 'third, decisive year of the five-year plan'.[227] Significantly, the plenum floated the idea of the preferential supply of shock workers with provisions and goods in short supply, a system that VTsSPS tried out, for example, at the Moscow engineering works Krasnyi Proletarii.[228]

The shift towards a new labour policy was evident from the very start of the new year. On 8 January, the Labour Commissar Tsikhon was reported to have called for the spread of material incentives and a campaign against wage-levelling at the third session of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK).[229] The same session resolved that a radical improvement must be made in the training of skilled manpower for the economy.[230] This was followed by a spate of legislation on various aspects of labour relations.[231]

Nowhere was the new approach to industrial problems more evident than at the 1st All-Union Conference of Industrial Managers, convened in Moscow at the end of January. For here were gathered the key cadres supporting the management approach to labour relations. Naturally, the overwhelming majority of the 728 delegates were managers (sixty per cent), followed by Party or union officials and technical-engineering personnel (fifteen per cent each) with the remaining ten per cent made up of shock workers.[232] Although the Conference was most notable for Stalin's speech

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226 Letter from Ya Ts., Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 9 January 1931.

227 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, chast' III, pp.74-93.

228 Materiali k otchetu, p.64.

229 Izvestiya, 8 January 1931.

230 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, chast' III, p.

231 See Chapter Four,

232 Moskovskii gos. istoriko-arkhivnyi institut, Trudy, vol.14, p.246 (Ya. Livshits).

in which he advanced the slogan 'technology is decisive', the forum also marked the final victory for the principle that strict one-man management and shock work were the main levers with which to improve production.[233]

The organisation that had initially resisted the encroachment of this principle, VTsSPS, by ironic coincidence was holding its V plenum in Moscow at the same time as the Conference. The plenum marked the end of the road for the unions as a platform for opposition and carried through reforms (such as breaking up the existing 22 unions into 45 new ones) that would render them better able to assist the implementation of the Party's industrial policies.

Following the instructions of the TsK and TsKK joint plenum of December 1930, the VTsSPS resolved that unions must "expand the idea that has justified itself at a number of enterprises of the advantageous and priority supply of deficit produce and industrial goods to shock worker union members" Closed distribution shops (ZRK) were established in all plants employing two thousand or more workers.[234]

Steps were taken to ensure the introduction of this policy in an instruction published on 7 April 1931 by VTsSPS, the People's Commissariat of Supplies and the central cooperative organisation, Tsentrosoyuz. The instruction "On the Preferential Provision of Shock Workers" explicitly set out to link provisions with the fulfilment of the promfinplan, the raising of labour productivity, the campaign against labour turnover and the encouragement of socialist forms of work. The management (in the person of the assistant to the director, who was also the chairman of the production conference) was obliged to keep records of shock work and issue monthly 'shock worker cards' which would entitle the employee to receive provisions and goods from a variety of closed distribution points (from shops and kiosks to buffets and canteens). Management could withdraw these cards for failure to fulfil planned targets or for breaches of labour discipline. Moreover, the goods in shortest supply, notably coats, suits and shoes, were to be distributed amongst the shock workers in descending order of merit.[235]

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233 Trud, 3 February 1931.

234 Rezolyutsii IV i V plenumov VTsSPS, p.97.

Obviously, the more scarce provisions and industrial goods became, the greater the incentive of such material benefits and the more valuable a weapon they became in the hands of management. To put into perspective the relative importance of provisions vis-a-vis money wages by 1931, it is necessary to emphasise that throughout the late 1920's wages had risen steadily while food prices remained relatively stable. This led to a qualitative improvement in the worker's diet, as is reflected in the following figures. Between 1926 and 1928, if the monthly consumption per head of the population rose in meat and lard products by 17.3 per cent, in butter by 27.8 per cent and in eggs by 233.3 per cent, then it fell in such staple items as potatoes (a good gauge of poverty levels) by 12.5 per cent and flour and bread products by 2.3 per cent.[236]

Originally, the Five-Year Plan foresaw a continued improvement of the urban population's diet through increased consumption of high-calorie foodstuffs. In the event, the worker's diet deteriorated markedly, as the following figures for Leningrad in 1928-1933 reveal. During this period the monthly consumption per head of meat and lard fell by 3.6 times, milk by 2.8 times and fruit by 3.7 times, compensated for only by a rise in consumption of potatoes by 10.8 per cent and rye bread by 38.7 per cent. In other words, by 1933 the average Leningrad worker was consuming each month just 1.21 kilos of meat and 0.32 kilos of fruit! However, due to the rises in market prices, the proportion of expenditure on food increased during this period, reducing the amount left over to spend on household goods, clothing and accommodation.[237]

Small wonder, therefore, that Western observers were reporting that even the most privileged workers were complaining in 1931 and 1932 that their general consumption was inferior to what it had been in 1928 and 1929.[238] Improved access to provisions and deficit goods became a prime motivation for engaging in shock work and the ration category to which a worker belonged

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236 Trud v SSSR. Spravochnik, 1926-1930gg, p.56.

237 O.I. Shkaratan, 'Material'noe blagosostoyanie rabochego klassa SSSR v perekhodnyi period ot kapitalizma k sotsializma (po materialam Leningrada), in Istoriya SSSR, 1964, no.3, p.40.

238 'The End of Rationing and the Standard of Living in the Soviet Union', in University of London, School of Slavonic Studies: Monographs, no.9, November 1935, p.6.

became at least as important a factor as the amount of wages in the pay packet.

However, given the limitations of the rationing system and the existence of a 'free' market (albeit with goods at prohibitive prices), money wages never lost their significance. For this reason a fundamental reform of the wage system in Soviet industry was carried through almost simultaneously with the changes in the system of provisions. A campaign to introduce individual progressive piece work was launched in March 1931 and culminated with an All-Union Rates Conference approving this system which would (in theory) allow unlimited earnings for the best shock workers.[239]

In practice, the frequent upping of output standards and rate cuts had the effect of pushing up productivity while keeping average wages relatively stable.

Thus, on the eve of Stalin's June speech that confirmed the primacy of material incentives, all of the essential elements of the new policy were already in play: payment for results, individualisation of worker responsibility, the raising of skills and the attack on 'outdated' output standards. By this time, VTsSPS was actually taking the lead in advocating the new policy, as the Appeal for more shock work on the second anniversary of socialist competition on 28 April 1931 and the Model Rules for Union Organisations in Enterprises, published on 28 June 1931, illustrate.[240] Testimony to the shift in union emphasis to production questions is provided by the fact that Trud was moved to criticise union apathy to workers' needs by the summer of 1931.[241]

So what was the mood in the factories and on construction sites at this time of incipient change in labour organisation? We have already seen the response of those to the fore in the shock movement as well as the attacks on them by other workers. Clearly there was deep division within the working class, a divide that cannot be simply explained away by the

239 Shvarts, 'Na trudovom fronte', in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 23 May 1931.

240 Trud, 28 April 1931; Trud, 28 June 1931.

241 Trud, 15 & 16 August, 1931.

'sharpening of the class struggle'. For example, the factory committee at the Ravenstvo works in Leningrad - the very first factory to declare itself 'shock' in 1929 - was attacked for giving an 'apolitical' report to the workers.[242] Elsewhere there are reports of bread riots,[243] strikes over lack of provisions or rate-cuts[244] and epidemics of typhus and scurvy.[245]

Even the Party journal, Bol'shevik, carried reports at this time of opposition to self-indenturing, the reorganisation of the unions, and, of course, to poor food and the raising of output standards. The journal also complained of the appalling state of communal facilities, the misuse of and speculation in ration books, widespread theft from cooperative stores, the lack of prizes for all shock workers and the far from satisfactory quality of public catering.[246]

In other words, there were shortages of just about everything except jobs. As a Western correspondent wrote at the time, there were "great numbers of workers and peasants wandering about the country in search, not of jobs, which are plentiful, but of adequate food and housing, which are not".[247] For all the talk of 'class enemies' the tasks facing the Stalin leadership were clear: there was an acute shortage of skilled labour; productivity had to be raised in the key metal, mining and transport industries; the organisation of the production process and of labour discipline needed to be tightened up under strict management control; and, in view of the shortages of provisions, goods and housing, those available had to be directed first and foremost towards those most ably tackling the above tasks.

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242 Bol'shevik, 1931, no.5, p.61 (M. Rafail).

243 The Times, 14 February 1931.

244 The Times, 16 February 1931; Trud, 13 April 1931.

245 Yu. L., 'Pyatiletka i rabochii klass', in Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 2 June 1931; in the winter of 1932 the entire workforce at Komsomol'sk-on-Amur was struck down by scurvy, Govoryat stroiteli, p.219 (S. Trapeznikov).

246 See A.I. Mikoyan, 'K reshayushchim uspekham v razreshenii myasnoi problemy' pp.10-23, and R.S. Zemlyachka, 'Boevyi voprosy potrebitel'skoi kooperatsii' pp.33-46, in Bol'shevik, 1931, no.1; B. Markus, 'Sotsialisticheskoe sorevonovanie na pod"eme' in ibid., no.2, pp.27-40; ibid., no.5, pp.50-61 (M. Rafail); L. Perchik, 'Gorod i gorodskoe khozyaistvo na novom etape', in ibid., no.14, pp.36-47.

247 W.H. Chamberlin, 'The Balance Sheet of the Five-Year Plan', in Foreign Affairs, vol.11, April 1933, p.459.

It was against a background, therefore, of the teething problems of new showpiece plants such as the Stalingrad Tractor Works, the near collapse of the railway system, the falling output of the Donbas coalmines and the soaring turnover rates that Stalin made his historic speech "New Situation - New Tasks" to management representatives in Moscow on 23 June 1931. The key elements of Stalin's new industrial policy were differentation (between skilled and unskilled, productive and unproductive, key industry and secondary industry), individualisation (of production tasks, responsibilities and rewards), and the establishment of a hierarchy of authority from the director down to the foreman and brigade leader.

As such the new policy was inherently divisive within the working class, leading to an almost physical separation between shock and ordinary workers (separate canteens, housing, shops, etc.). On the other hand, entry into the 'elite' was open to all, and every encouragement was given to raise skills or engage in shock work. Given the primacy of production interests, the fact that workers would enter shock work for material considerations rather than out of socialist convictions was a matter of little concern. However, the new policy only intensified trends that were already becoming evident in Soviet industry, as an article in an Opposition journal printed just prior to Stalin's speech reveals:[248]

> " There are no ideological reasons for becoming a shock worker any more. Some are talked into it, some by threats, others just don't want to be left out, but the majority join for material well-being or for a good job. They are mainly the most backward workers and semi-mature youngsters... ...There are shock workers and there are ordinary workers and the differences between these two groups are growing all the time."

Of course, the former were portrayed by the Stalin leadership as the 'real' workers, and those who opposed them, however justifiable the grounds (poor food, bad working conditions, worker solidarity, etc.) were defined as 'class enemies' and dealt with accordingly. As the acute shortages lasted at least until the end of the First Five-Year Plan, one must assume that this differentation and the divisions and hostility that it engendered persisted. Certainly, it was in such evidence at the beginning of the

248 Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 2 June 1931 (Yu. L.).

Stakhanovite movement that it took a purge to finally silence worker opposition.[249]

Appropriately enough, a decree was issued on the very same day as Stalin's speech which bore all the hallmarks of the new policy; the Government decree "On Social Insurance" obliged agencies to "look after basic industrial cadres first and foremost" and "to assist by all possible means the raising of labour productivity", "encourage socialist competition and shock work" and so on. The coal, metal, chemical, engineering and transport industries were singled out for preferential treatment, as were cadre workers with two years service at a given plant or three years anywhere in industry and shock workers irrespective of their stazh as long as they had worked somewhere for at least a year. 'Flitters' and 'truants' could be deprived of social insurance benefits.[250]

On 7 July 1931, a Government and Party appeal "On the Tasks of the Donbas Coal Industry" called for at least 85 to 90 per cent of underground workers to be switched to piece work in an attempt to eliminate wage-levelling within two months. Working conditions were to be improved through mechanisation and living conditions through better provisions and housing. The best examples of shock work at Donbas mines were to be copied by all other mines in the region.[251]

On 13 August 1931, the Government approved the statute of Bonus Funds for Fulfilling and Overfulfilling the Promfinplan aimed at rewarding quantitative and qualitative shock work as well as encouraging rationalisation suggestions and inventions.[252] This replaced the largely inoperative decree of 11 September 1929.

However, the major implementation of Stalin's new policy was carried through in September 1931 with the decrees "On Cost Accounting Brigades" (11 September)[253] and "The Restructuring of the Wage System in the Metallurgical and Coal Industries" (20 September).[254] Taken together these decrees aimed

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249 See Robert Conquest, Industrial Workers in the USSR, London, 1967, pp.78-80.
250 Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.41, art.283.
251 ibid., 1931, no.43, art.291.
252 Izvestiya, 20 August 1931.
253 Pravda, 12 September 1931.
254 Trud, 23 September 1931.

to raise the incentives to improve skills and rationalise production, increase personal responsibility and reward high productivity while hitting at indiscipline.

Thus, in ferrous metallurgy, wage differentials were raised between the lowest and highest grades to 1:3.7 from 1:2.8. Nonetheless, rates for all grades were raised, from 25 per cent at the lower end of the scale to 80 per cent for the top grade.[255] Moreover, the application of direct, progressive piece rates provided significant bonuses for the overfulfilment of the production output norm.[256]

Piece rates, based on groups and shifts, were also introduced on construction sites by order of VSNKh on 28 September.[257] Another order by the same body, on 16 September 1931, was aimed at the preferential supply of the most important enterprises with deficit goods and provisions, ensuring that a number of large stores in the biggest industrial cities would service only the major plants and that other shops, while remaining open to the public, would reserve deficit goods for the leading enterprises.[258]

Taken together, this package of measures may be seen as an attempt to provide material incentives in order to raise productivity and improve labour discipline. At this stage emphasis was on benefits for shock workers with good discipline records rather than draconian sanctions against violators. Thus, for example, the new wage system encouraged those staying at one plant in an attempt to cut labour turnover. The problem of idle time (prostoi) was tackled by not paying the worker if this came about through his or her fault, and only paying 50 per cent of the rate if the stoppage was due to the management.[259] In the coal mines, underground workers were to get an extra 10 per cent cash bonus for regular attendance, an attempt to reduce the traditionally high rates of absenteeism in this

255 ibid.

256 As Veinberg reported to the IX VTsSPS Congress, a Urals steelworker at the Molotov works in the Urals was earning 8000 rubles a month in bonuses on top of a basic wage of 160 rubles. G Veinberg, Profsoyuzy na novo m etape, M. 1932, p.49.

257 Za industrializatsiyu, 30 September 1931. The progressive piece rate was applied to construction from 1 July 1932, see Byulleten' finansovogo i khozyaistvennogo zakonodatel'stva, 1932, nos.49-50.

258 Izvestiya Narkomtruda, 1931, no.34.

259 Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.43, art.291.

industry.[260]

However, putting the mechanisms of the new policy on the statute book may be seen as analogous to building new enterprises - the problem was getting them to work properly. For example, the decline in agricultural produce was arrested only in 1934, so that providing even the shock workers and key personnel remained a problem for some time to come; as we have seen, there was resistance to the scrapping of communal forms of pay long into 1932; moreover, the new policy had to be implemented by an unwieldy and inefficient bureaucracy.

The initial results of the reforms were by no means all encouraging. Labour productivity throughout 1931 remained well below planned targets. For example, the annual productivity of one industrial worker rose over the 1930 figure by only 5.6 per cent (as against 28 per cent foreseen by the plan). In the coal and metallurgical industries, and on railway transport, productivity actually fell in 1931. Industrial output suffered as a result, the 1931 plan for pig iron being fulfilled by just 60 per cent.[261]

On the other hand, production costs, which were planned to fall in 1931, actually rose by six per cent. Most importantly, however, the reforms appeared to have the effect of pushing wages up faster than productivity. For example, in the fourth quarter of 1931 (i.e. the initial period of the reform), industrial output rose by 4 per cent, while wages went up by 17 per cent.[262] Elsewhere the difference was even more marked. In November 1931, Moscow's Serp i Molot metalworks achieved only 64 per cent of the production plan, but managed to expend the wage fund in its entirety.[263] The previous month the Krasnoe Sormovo shipyards had overspent the wage fund by nearly 20 per cent, while fulfilling the output plan by just 68.7 per cent.[264]

The main culprit here was the tendency of management to resort to overtime work to help achieve planned production targets and deadlines.

260 See Chapter Three

261 KPSS v rezolyutsiyakh, chast' III p.138.

262 S. Kruglikov, 'Kachestvennye pokazateli v rabote promyshlennosti', in Bol'shevik, 1932, n o.9, p.56.

263 Ya. Leibman and B. Markus, 'Bor'ba za povyshenie proizvoditel'nosti truda', in Bol'shevik, 1932, no.3, p.63.

264 Na trudovom fronte, 1932, no.2, p.5.

In Leningrad industry in 1931, for example, the number of overtime hours worked nearly doubled from 636,000 hours in March to 1,228,000 hours in December.[265] On 17 November the Government was obliged to pass a decree specifically condemning this trend[267] and, on 29 November, an order by VSNKh categorically forbade wages to be raised except insofar as output was increased. The same order prohibited the hiring of more workers except with the approval of the trade union, an attempt to trim the thousands of 'superfluous' workers allegedly employed at the major plants.[267]

Rostsel'mash, the agricultural plant that had experienced teething problems worse even than those at Stalingrad (it fulfilled its production plan by only 46 per cent in 1931),[268] was estimated to have 4000 (20 per cent of the workforce)[269] superfluous workers and Krasnoe Sormovo 3530.[270] As a result of this campaign enterprises began to shed surplus labour, 8000 workers being discharged in Moscow during the first fortnight of 1932 alone.[271]

In summary, it may be seen that the wage reforms made no immediate impact on turnover figures, indeed the percentage of workers leaving their plants in the last quarter of 1931 was above the annual average, whereas it had been below during the corresponding period in 1930.[272] Rates did not commence to fall appreciably until May 1933, suggesting that other observers, who laid the blame for labour turnover on poor provisions and housing, were correct.[273]

Of course, turnover was not restricted to the workers. Early in 1931 it was reported that in three months the Lyuboretskii Works had four directors, three technical directors, two party secretaries and three chairmen of the union committee, and that the situation at Rostsel'mash

265 Na trudovom fronte, 1932, nos.8-9, p.18.

266 Sob ranie zakonov, 1931, no.67, art.447.

267 Trud, 30 November 1931.

268 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1932, no.5, p.41.

269 Za industrializatsiyu, 6 December 1931.

270 XVII Konferentsiya VKP (b): stenograficheskii otchet, M, 1932, p.58.

271 Za industrializatsiyu, 22 January 1932.

272 The average monthly rate in the last quarter of 1931 was 11.7 per cent compared to 11.4 per cent for the whole year. The corresponding figures for 1930 were 12.4 per cent and 12.7 per cent. Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo, p.342.

273 The rate for May 1933 was 16.8 per cent lower than in May 1932 and, subsequently, the turnover rate in 1933 was consistently lower than in the previous year, ibid., p.342.

was similar.[274] From 1931 to the end of 1933, the works superintendent at the Vysokogorskii iron ore mine was changed ten times! One of them, a railway expert, was quoted as saying that he understood the job "like a pig understands oranges, or a ram understands the Bible".[275] This state of affairs was reflected not only in production but also in gross mismanagement of prize funds, wage calculations, provisions, housing expenditure and labour safety measures.[276] In turn, such phenomena gave rise to labour turnover, absenteeism and poor, low quality productivity.

Nonetheless, the acute shortages continued to swell the ranks of the shock workers. As a correspondent to an Opposition journal noted early in 1932:[277]

> "When the food rations for the shock workers are raised, those of the ordinary workers are lowered. Hunger is forcing the workers into shock work. And they are going."

Another letter to the journal, written a month earlier, comments:[278]

> "And notice, even among our Communists and Komsomol members, one comes across all the more rarely sincere enthusiasm, a genuine burning desire. And as for the rank-and-file millions of 'enthusiasts' when all is said and done they are just like our entire Soviet output: full of defects and all too often, good for nothing!...both the youngsters and the Communists, even the most active, are more and more infected by the same individualistic, the same egoistic moods and aspirations."

The Central Committee decision, just a few months later in April 1932, to scrap the Party maximum wage of 300 rubles per month might be perceived as an admission that, even among the faithful, enthusiasm alone was not enough.[279]

Just as the "Paradise in Five Years" vision was quietly dropped in December 1931 with the announcement that a new five-year plan would commence upon completion of the first, so any illusion that Soviet industrial relations could be restructured with the active participation of the mass

274 Trud, 2 February 1931.
275 Byli gory vysokoi, pp.266-268.
276 Such manifestations drew sharp criticism from both Shvernik and Veinberg at the IX VTsSPS Congress, see N. Shvernik, Profsoyuzy SSSR nakanune vtoroi pyatiletki, M, 1932, pp.65-70; G. Veinberg, Profsoyuzy na novom etape, M, 1932, pp.46-67.
277 Letter from P, Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 27 February 1932.
278 Letter from L (Moscow), Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 23 January 1932.
279 See Edgar Furniss, 'Soviet Peasants Face New Crisis' in Current History, vol.36 (Apr-Sep 1932), p.247.

of workers was gradually dispelled in the course of 1932. The Party had set the parameters for a massive increase in production in the Second Five-Year Plan (1933 -1937) at the XVII Party Conference in January 1932. The same forum had thrown its weight fully behind the foreman and brigade leader (i.e. the lowest rungs of management) as the immediate organisers of the production process.[280] In mid-1932, after a number of key new industrial enterprises had ground to a halt, the Party installed the strictest one-man management. Throughout the year the attention of the trade unions and the shock work movement was directed towards the establishment of output standards and the spread of progressive piece rates with their 'defensive' functions limited largely to the improvement of provisions (through such diverse means as market gardening and rabbit breeding) and living conditions.[281]

However, throughout the year labour discipline was deteriorating, with absentee rates in particular assuming threatening proportions. The logical outcome at the end of 1932 was that management should take over provisions and accommodation and that both be linked to the strict observance of labour discipline. Thus, the infamous Government decree "On Dismissal for Absence from Work Without Valid Reason" of 15 November 1932, specifically demanded that even one day's unsanctioned absenteeism should lead to dismissal and deprivation of food and goods cards as well as eviction from accommodation belonging to the factory.[282] An instruction issued by Narkomtrud on 26 November made the surrender of ration cards in such situations obligatory and allowed the eviction from factory accommodation of a worker and his or her dependants at any time of year. The instruction also spread the application of the decree to 'persistent disorganisers of production'.[283] The Labour Commissar, Tsikhon, was moved to justify the new legislation by declaring that it was not aimed "to introduce a system

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280 KPSS v resolyutsiyakh, chast' III, p.65.

281 See decree of TsK VKP (b) dated 8 May 1932 "On the Development of Rabbit Breeding in Industrial Areas", Sel'skokhozyaistvennyi slovar'-spravochnik, 3rd ed., M-L, 1937, p.602; both Shvernik and Veinberg encouraged such trends in their speeches to the IX VTsSPS Congress.

282 Izvestiya, 15 November 1932.

283 Byulleten' finansovogo i khozyaistvennogo zakonodatel'stva, 1933, no.13, pp.40-41.

of forced labour, as the capitalist press claims, but that its sole object was to strengthen labour discipline."[284]

This is borne out in the preamble to the Party and Government decree of 4 December 1932 "On Extending the Rights of the Factory Management in Workers' Provisions and Improving the Rationing System", which had the aim of "further improving workers' provisions, struggling against the handing out of groceries and industrial goods to truants and flitters who do not, in fact, work at the enterprise, and also to strengthen the power of the director of the enterprise."[285]

Certainly, the reaction on the shop floor was mixed. On the one hand there are reports of such worker reactions as "they demand discipline, but feed us badly" and "they might as well chain us up and stop us from leaving the factory" and management responses such as "if we chase out all the truants there won't be anyone left to work".[286] On the other hand, a circular from the RSFSR Health and Labour Commissariats on 13 December 1932 claimed that "the decree has called forth widespread enthusiasm from workers and has mobilised the working public for a campaign against recidivist truants who disorganise production."[287]

However, it was clear that factory managements in the localities were slow to take over provisions, and a Government and Party decree signed by Stalin and Molotov on 19 December insisted that the January coupons be ready within nine days.[288] Once this package of measures started to be implemented and workers were dismissed in large numbers for truancy, the effect on the officially registered absentee rates was dramatic in all industries. The tough line on discipline was undoubtedly reinforced by the introduction of internal passports in late December 1932 and the

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284 Za industrializatsiyu, 20 November 1932.

285 Sobranie zakonov, 1932, no.80, art.489.

286 N. Aleksandrov, 'Bor'ba s progulami na proizvodstve' in Sovetskoe gosudarstvo, 1933, no.5, p.55.

287 Byulleten' finansovogo i khozyaistvennogo zakonodatel'stva, 1933, no.14, pp.43-44. Immediately following the publication of the decree, the central newspapers carried favourable responses from a variety of factories, see Pravda and Izvestiya 6 December 1932.

288 Sobranie zakonov, 1932, no.82, art.501.

commencement, in January 1933, of a new purge of the Party.[289]

It must be remembered that this period coincided exactly with the completion of the First Five-Year Plan, a massive undertaking launched amid such enthusiasm and optimism at the birth of the shock worker movement. Certainly, there appears to have been no dancing on the streets to mark the Plan's fulfilment. Perhaps the best measure in the fall in morale of the rank-and-file worker is that a nationwide campaign to publicise the achievements of shock workers in the second half of 1932 and the first quarter of 1933 run by the newspaper Trud drew a total of 21 comments.[290]

The mood at this time is expressed by a leading Oppositionist commentator as "in place of the enthusiasm of shock workers - there is an extra kilogram of butter".[291] Ironically, the very first day of the Second Five-Year Plan - 1 January 1933 - was declared by VTsSPS to be the All-Union Day of the Shock Worker, a day which "should be marked as a date of worldwide, historical significance of the victory of the general line of the Party in the struggle for the creation of a socialist society...".[292]

In fact, as we have seen, 1933 was remarkable in respect of socialist competition in that it witnessed the decline of the cost-accounting brigades - the last bearers of the collective tradition started by the shock brigades of the First Five-Year Plan. Otherwise the emphasis in competition during the year was directed at raising skills, mastering the new technology and utilising the working day more fully, while improving at the same time the preferential treatment of shock workers.

The prescriptive mood of the times is best expressed in the following quotes from the trade union's official journal in 1933:[293]

> "in the collective agreement campaign the review of output standards will be the most important field in the class

289 See Chapter Two,

290 V. Markovich, 'Uchet i izuchenie osobo otlichivshikhsya - na vysshuyu stupen'' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.6, p.39.

291 A. Yugov, 'Podchinit' pitanie interesam proizvodstva', Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 24 December 1932.

292 See decree of VTsSPS Presidium dated 2 December 1932, Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.115; In both 1932 and 1934 1 January was declared all-Union Shock Worker's Day, see ibid., p.97 and Istoriya rabochikh Leningrada v dvukh tomakh, vol.2, 1917-1965, Leningrad, 1972, p.241.

293 'K itogam koldogovornoi kampanii' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.6, p.6.

> struggle, the review of standards will meet with the most active support of all conscientious workers and, at the same time, with overt and covert opposition from opportunistic, kulak and counter-revolutionary elements who have stolen into our enterprises due to the insufficient vigilance of local organisations."

The role of the trade unions in this was expressed thus:[294]

> "Unions must achieve in practice from every employer the conscientious fulfilment of his/her duties, the punctual arrival at work, the strengthening of labour discipline at the workplace by management, as well as through cultural and public influence: clubs, red corners, Rates and Conflict Commissions (RKK), comrades' courts, etc. A pitiless struggle m ust be waged against all wasters of work time, against idlers, layabouts and class alien elements, up to and including their expulsion from the union...
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> ...Only that worker that fulfils and overfulfils the norms, struggles to fully master technology, struggles for the elimination of waste and the improvement of quality of output, and who serves as an example of better work to other workers may be considered a shock worker."

Yet even those who met all these criteria were not always getting the preferential treatment that the new policy implied, as the following example illustrates:[295]

> "A survey of especially outstanding workers at factories in Moscow and Leningrad revealed that the majority of them badly wanted to study, but that at present they do not study precisely because they are exceptionally weighed down with production and social work, because of bad housing conditions, distance of factory from home or the educational centre etc."

The trade unions were given additional opportunities to pursue their policy of preferential treatment for shock workers midway through 1933 when, as a result of the merger between VTsSPS and Narkomtrud, they took over the social insurance system with its 4.4 billion ruble budget.[296] Reporting to the III VTsSPS plenum on 29 June 1933, Shvernik advanced the slogan:

> "All privileges to the Shock Workers and Cadre Workers"

adding:

> "we must turn social insurance into a really powerful lever for the improvement of the material conditions of the workers and the increase of the productivity of labour. We must eliminate every kind of bureaucracy and equalisation in social insurance. We must revise the entire practice of social insurance from the point of view of granting priority

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294 'K itogam III plenuma VTsSPS', in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.8, p.9.

295 Khitrov, 'Rabota profsoyuzov s peredovymi udarnikami i geroyami sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva', in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, nos.1-2, p.47.

296 N. Schvernik, New Functions of the Soviet Trade Unions, M-L, 1933, p.16.

> in supply to shock workers and old cadre workers. The keynote here must be the fight against labour fluctuation. We must handle the social insurance lever in such a way as to further the fight to induce workers to stay at their respective enterprises and must strike a hard blow at flitters, malingerers and work disrupters. In the defence of the interests of the working class and of socialist industry, we can no longer endure that a flitter or loafer be supplied on an equal basis with the foremost shock worker. The trade unions will not allow it!"[297]

Nonetheless, throughout 1933, there were complaints about the poor performance of the closed factory shops and the arbitrary handing out of shock worker cards, irrespective of plan fulfilment.[298] A feature of the union drive for preferential supplies in 1933 was the advocacy of greater differentation between shock workers of the so called 'leading trades' (vedyshchie professii) and ordinary shock workers. The union journal noted with approval that some plants had opened special shops for these 'leading trades' and recommended that the following practice be extended to other plants: In addition to quarterly rations, extra monthly rations would be issued to the tune of 75 per cent extra for engineering and technical shock workers and shock workers from the leading trades, 50 per cent for medium-skilled shock workers and 30 per cent to shock office workers and junior service personnel. To qualify for these supplementary rations all three categories must produce shock worker cards with proof of fulfilment of production indices, with no defective output in that month, no absenteeism or disciplinary fines.[299]

A survey conducted in nearly two thousand plants at the end of the year established that 57.4 percent of shock workers were fulfilling or over-fulfilling their production tasks, which means that only about 40 per cent of all Soviet industrial workers were working satisfactorily,[300] (assuming that non-shock workers, by definition, were underfulfilling their plans).

Of those surveyed only 12.2 per cent of all shock workers (6.6 per cent of all workers) had received bonuses in December 1933, at an average

297 ibid, pp.24-25.

298 See, for example, the decree of TsK VKP(b) dated 7 May 1933 "On the Work of the Party Organisation at the Petrovskii Metallurgy Plant (Dnepropetrovsk)", Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, p.431; 'Profsoyuzy vypolnyayut zavety Lenina', in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.13, p.10; see also note 302 below.

299 I. Kolyaskin, 'Opyt raboty s vedyshchimi professiyami v avto-traktornoi promyshlennosti', in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.13, pp.31-39.

300 Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1934, no.5, p.84 (A. Devyakovich).

of 52 rubles 80 kopecks. The situation varied widely from factory to factory. Thus at Krasnyi Bogatyr' the average award was 15 rubles, whereas at the Chelyabinsk Tractor Works it amounts to 108 rubles each. At the Lys've metalworks, only 2.2 per cent of workers were fulfilling or over-fulfilling their plan and at the Bereznikovo chemical plant just 1.5 per cent.[301]

The survey also revealed that at some plants the number of shock worker cards or books exceeded the number of shock workers (in transport engineering by 14.1 per cent), whereas at other plants many shock workers were not in possession of any such document. At the Lys've metalworks, for example, registered 8120 shock workers but had issued only 7204 books, while at the Stalingrad Tractor Works only 5705 of 9915 shock workers possessed books (i.e. less than 60 per cent).[302]

The authorities obviously still had not got it right by the end of 1934, for on 20 November the VTsSPS secretariat was obliged to pass a decree "On the Expenditure of Bonus Funds for Socialist Competition" which revealed numerous incidents of the misuse of such funds. Among the examples given were rewarding workers who had not fulfilled their plan, irregularity of payment and using the funds for such collective purposes as producing posters, subscriptions to newspapers, evenings for all shock workers rather than for specially chosen individuals, etc.[303]

Within a week, a Party decree announced a measure that was to overshadow all this tinkering with material incentives. For, on 26 November, the decree "On Ending Rationing of Bread and Certain Other Products" (the certain other products were flour and grits) set in motion a process that was to restore the value of money wages and thus give real meaning to material incentives.[304] The ending of rationing on these staple products on 1 January 1935 (in October 1935 meat, fish, sugar, butter, potatoes and

301 ibid., p.84.

302 ibid., p.85.

303 Byulleten' VTsSPS, 1934,nos. 21-22.

304 KPSS v resolyutsiyakh, chast' III, p.258.

vegetable oils were also derationed)[305] allowed the high-earning shock workers to utilise their income and thus acted as a powerful incentive both to shock work and to skill improvement. The synthesis of the two emerged in August 1935 with the Stakhanovite movement.

Thus it may be seen that initially material incentives were effective mainly due to the acute shortages (i.e. there was a strong disincentive to opting out of shock work). As the shortages became more acute, and legal sanctions were made to bite, the new system came to be accepted, albeit grudgingly by many. As the situation improved enough for rationing to be abolished, money wages at last became the most effective incentive in raising productivity.

THE 'MASTERS OF TECHNOLOGY' - THE RISE OF INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION

Although the turning point in the mastering of technology clearly came with Stalin's speech to the industrial managers on 4 February 1931, the raising of skills had been an integral component of socialist competition from the outset, albeit on a very ad-hoc, unplanned footing. The benefit to the individual worker of raising skills had been expressed in promotion and public acclaim rather than in significantly increased earnings. The switch to material incentives, to be effected in 1931, was to increase substantially the personal rewards for improving qualifications.

As we have identified Stalin's speech, in which he replaced the slogan "tempos are decisive" with "technology in the reconstruction period is decisive", as the point that marked the victory of the 'management' approach to industrial relations, the new policy aimed at raising skills was conducted with strict adherence to the principle of one-man management and with emphasis on the individual worker rather than the group.

Not surprisingly, such a policy favoured the implementation of theories of scientific management, particularly those advanced by the Central Institute of Labour (TsIT) under its quintessential 'management man' Aleksei Gastev, the leading Soviet exponent of Frederick Taylor's methods. Indeed, it is hugely ironic that this "indefatigable enthusiast"

305 Sobranie zakonov, 1935, no.51, art.421.

was nominated by the Soviet trade union leadership(!) at this time to receive the Order of Lenin for his services to Soviet industry.[306] It is not without irony either that, in the Spring of 1931, the Taylor Society was meeting in Philadelphia to approve an Industrial Employment Code which warned amongst other things against rate cutting as demoralising alike to producers and to community's standard of living, at a time when it was being advocated in Soviet industry as the most important feature of socialist competition.[307]

The other main features of the drive to master technology were i) an attempt to understand a given production process with a view to achieving breakthroughs in labour productivity as a result, ii) the development of competition by trades and industries by which these technical innovations could be applied on a wider scale and iii) the development of individual competition. As the movement was inextricably linked to the shift to material incentives, performance rather than class background, age or industrial experience became the main criterion.

Although individual shock work was a prominent feature of the early stage of mass competition, it tended to be squeezed out by such collective forms as the shock brigades and production communes. The major Gosplan survey estimated that only 28.3 per cent of those in shock work were competing on an individual basis, compared to 58.9 per cent in the brigades and 12.8 per cent in communes. Moreover, as the proportion was much lower in such key industries as metallurgy in the Ukraine and the Urals (8.8 and 13.9 per cent respectively), the compilers of the survey findings were moved to comment that "individual competition is dying out".[308]

This was the conventional wisdom of the day, with even Gastev remarking upon it. A contemporary account suggested that "individual competition in its form was still too reminiscent of the old habits and customs of individualistic society" advising that "one should not pour new wine into old skins or they will break".[309] Within the year, Gastev had

306 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, no.14, p.13; no.15, p.12.

307 Industrial and Labour Information, vol.38 (April-June 1931), no.11, pp.406-407.

308 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v promyshlennosti SSSR (1930), pp.23-24.

309 P. Dubner and M. Kozyrev, op. cit., p.6.

radically revised his opinion and the authors of the above account were to be taken to task for underestimating the importance of individual competition.[310]

For in the intervening year (until 1 May 1931) this form of competition had not died out, although the proportion of shock workers engaged in it had fallen sharply to 11.8 per cent, compared to 77.7 per cent in the shock brigades and 10.4 per cent in communes and collectives. Thus, at the start of the new movement there existed a base of over 325,000 individual shock workers.[311] Their number grew steadily during the summer of 1931, reaching 12.3 per cent of shock workers by 1 July and 14.6 per cent by 1 October. Thus, on the very day that the new wage scales were introduced it was estimated that almost half a million workers (about 10 per cent of the workforce) were engaged in individual competition.[312]

As Kraval', the Deputy Commissar of Labour, was to explain in his speech to the World Social Economic Congress in Amsterdam in August 1931 "the most important problem of socialist competition has been to get the industrial financial plan individualised for every department, every worker, every machine in the factory".[313] Once this was achieved, individual competition became the norm, and such collective forms of labour as the shock brigades fell from favour.

Similarly, technical instruction had been an ever present component of socialist competition. Factory union committees would establish in their workers' clubs production-technical circles, often run in conjunction with classes to eliminate illiteracy. Other methods of spreading technical knowledge at this time were production conferences, which would organise collections of suggestions to counter losses and overexpenditure of materials etc; newspapers such as Pravda, which on 25 October 1930, explained the method of work by which a bricklayer at the Chelyabinsk tractor site had laid 1300 bricks in one shift instead of the norm of 800; and Za

310 Na trudovom fronte, 1931, nos.8-9, p.26.

311 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, p.60.

312 Byulleten' po uchetu truda, p.99.

313 World Social Economic Planning. Material Contributed to the World Social Economic Congress, Amsterdam, August 1931, Hague, 1932, p.401.

industrializatsiyu, which on 21 March 1931 published the results of studies made by the Central Institute of Labour (TsIT), which enabled a Soviet bricklayer to beat an American expert in a competition by laying 907 bricks in an hour against his opponent's 452.

However, it was the massive influx of barely-literate, untrained rural youth into the workforce at a time when the latest Western technology was being installed in the show projects and shock construction sites that made the mastering of technology such a prime imperative. With the ending of unemployment in October 1930, the Commissariat of Labout had turned its attention to the training of cadres, and it was this body that presented a report to the Central Executive Committee in January 1931 that led the latter to decide that it was "necessary to intensify and increase production instruction at work itself, combining it with the highest forms of organising work processes". This decree "On Measures Regarding the Training of Skilled Manpower for the National Economy of the USSR" called for Narkomtrud to provide two million skilled workers for industry by means of rapidly extending the number studying of FZU courses and by promoting existing workers to higher-skilled work. At the same time measures were to be introduced to mechanise the heaviest work in the key industries and construction projects.[314]

The V plenum of VTsSPS at the beginning of February 1931, gave both the development of competition by trades and the movement to master technology a significant boost, the former by creating production sections for the main trades within the new unions and the latter by encouraging production conferences to promote "more boldly" to highly-skilled work those workers who had mastered technology.[315]

On 8 March 1931 a decree by the Presidium of VTsSPS "On the Technical Instruction of Shock Workers" called upon factory union committees to organise courses to raise skills outside working hours as had been successfully tried at Krasnyi Proletarii.[316] On 24 March the VTsSPS

314 Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.5, art.63.

315 Trud, 6 February 1931; Rezolyutsii IV i V plenumov VTsSPS, p .61.

316 Profsoyuzy SSSR, vol.2, pp.622-623.

Presidium followed this up by making production conferences responsible for the movement to master technology and for ensuring that every trade, unit of machinery and brigade was covered by this.[317]

Meanwhile the Party was directing its attention to specific enterprises and in April 1931 issued a series of decrees on ways of improving their functioning. Typical was the decree on the Nizhnii Novgorod motorworks site, where more than 4000 skilled workers had to be trained prior to the launch of the factory scheduled at the end of the year.[318] It was at precisely this time, of course, that Ordzhonikidze led the Party delegation to sort out the teething problems at the Stalingrad Tractor Works. It was left to VTsSPS to issue the appeal for, amongst other things, the development of the "universal technical instruction of shock workers" on the second anniversary of the launch of socialist competition. With this same appeal, it was the unions, rather than the Party or management organs, that were setting the pace in the campaign to raise output standards and cut rates.[319]

Commenting on this appeal at the IX VTsSPS Congress in the following year, Shvernik noted "the major deficiency in the organisation of socialist competition is that competition between individual workers within a brigade for the overfulfilment of its task and for better quality work is not being developed and is sometimes replaced by general agreements which depersonalise the concrete participation and results in socialist competition achieved by each individual worker."[320]

The introduction of the seven-hour day gave the unions a further opportunity to advance the campaign for raising skills. On 28 May 1931, Trud published the details of initiative introduced at Moscow's Kalinin Works (the same plant that had been in the forefront of the campaign to introduce work books at the beginning of the year) whereby the workers would devote their eighth hour to compulsory (and, of course, unpaid)

317 Trud, 24 March 1931.

318 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1931, no.8, pp.57-61.

319 Trud, 28 April 1931.

320 Materialy k otchetu, p.30.

technical instruction. This idea was soon taken up by plants all over the country, although it never became, as some Western correspondents were to suggest, a back door means of reintroducing the eight-hour day.[321]

At the time of the publication of this article the first meeting of the new Coal Miners' Union was taking place. This gathering dealt almost exclusively with production problems for, apart from railway transport, coal was probably the least efficient of all branches of industry. Thus, in the Donbas and Moscow fields production in the first quarter of 1931 was actually down on the corresponding period in 1930 and socialist competition covered only 43 per cent of workers in the Donbas and 18 per cent of Moscow coal miners. The daily output of the Soviet miner at this time was about 20 per cent that of an American miner.[322] Turnover had reached 300 per cent in 1930[323] and absenteeism at an average of 14 days per worker was higher than in any other industry.[324] The reasons for this were not hard to find: housing, in particular, was quite inadequate with the average Donbas miner 'enjoying' less than 3 square metres living space and the miners in Kuzbas having on average 0.2-0.3 square metres!!![325]

To try and sort out the problems in the Donbas, a delegation of Baku oil workers, who had already completed their five-year production plan by the end of March, arrived in the coalfield just prior to the Congress to lend a 'socialist helping hand' (sotsialisticheskaya poruchka), a variation of the 'tugboat' movement. One of the worst pits in the Donbas was the No.1 Kochegarka pit in Gorlovka where a 29-year old miner named Nikita Izotov worked. He recalls in his memoirs the deep feeling of shame he experienced when the Baku oilworkers visited his pit, and when the miners from the neighbouring No.5 Lenin pit sent them a 'dõormat' banner (rogozhnoe znamya).[326] Within a year Izotov was to become a household name for his highly-productive new methods of coal-getting and instructing other miners.

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321 See, for example, The Times, 2 June 1931.

322 Industrial and Labour Information, vol.39 (July-Sept 1931), no.1, pp.14-15.

323 Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, p.531.

324 Trud v SSSR (1931), p.530.

325 Za industrializatsiyu, 21 May 1931.

326 N. Izotov, 'Rabochaya initsiativa' in Govoryat stroiteli, pp.243-244.

It was also in May 1931 that the first All-Union competition by trade (among concrete layers) commenced, stimulating the development of a new movement for the 'front rankers' (peredoviki) in mastering new technology and achieving high productivity. In the summer of 1931 this form of competition spread to engine crews on railways and throughout the remainder of the five-year plan gradually spread to a variety of other professions, being especially widespread on the shock construction sites at Dneprostroi, Magnitostroi etc.[327]

A direct outcome of the competition by trades was the movement by skilled workers to take 'patronage' (sheftsvo) over younger workers in an attempt to teach them new skills. Of course, brigade and individual tuition of trainees and apprentices had long been established in Soviet industry, but was significantly expanded from 1930 and, especially, in 1931. However, with the introduction of new technology exacerbated by the increasing turnover rates amongst skilled workers, the rapid passing on of technical know-how became an urgent priority. Thus, in late 1930, but particularly in 1931 the movement for 'patronage' spread. One of the first factories to introduce this on an organised basis was the Voikov metalworks in Kerch, where each 'cadre' worker would take it upon himself to instruct from two to five newly-arrived young workers. On 13 July 1931 the Kerch metalworkers appealed, through the pages of Rabochaya Gazeta, to all cadre workers to "forge conscientious proletarians from the new workers".[328]

As a result of the appeal, other aspects of 'patronage' were introduced, such as encouraging the youngsters to become active trade unionists, to self indenture and to continue studying. In this way the movement became qualitatively different from the purely production

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327 Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovanie v SSSR, 1918-1964, pp.110-113.

328 Rabochii klass v upravlenii gosudarstvom, p.198. There had been an attempt to launch a similar scheme fully a year earlier when Ural'skii rabochii organised "a skills fund named in honour of the XVI VKP (b) Congress" under the slogan "Every skilled worker teach one unskilled!", Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.189 (M. Shkol'nik). Another initiative was the establishment of production circles to teach skills to new workers, in the case of the Marti works (Leningrad) from February 1931, M. Rafail, 'Uspekhi pyatiletki i voprosy ovladeniya tekhnikoi' in Bol'shevik, 1931, no.10, p.40.

instruction of youngsters that preceded it. Not that all the cadre workers were by any means old; Aleksandr Bolotov, for example, a worker with a seven-year length of service at Leningrad's OGPU optical works, was only 21 years old when he received an Order of Lenin in May 1931 for his efforts in production and in instructing other workers.[329] The movement was given a major boost on 18 December 1931 with the publication of the decree of the VTsSPS Presidium "On the Patronage by Cadre Workers over Youngsters", but was gradually incorporated into the Izotov movement from mid-1932.[330]

Meanwhile the process of individualising planning, production and socialist competition within the strict confines of one-man management was continuing apace. A Government decree of 29 November 1931 had called for the 'passportisation' of all industrial machinery as part of the struggle against lack of responsibility, the break up of Vesenkha into individual commissariats had been effected, the trade unions were calling for an upsurge in counter-planning, and the Party decreed on 17 January 1932 that all management, Party and union officials in the enterprises should undergo technical training on a strictly individualised basis.[331]

These elements were brought together in the resolution of the XVII Party Conference in February 1932 that called for workers to take individual responsibility for their machines and their job in hand, for wage differentation within and between industries and for ensuring that the foremen and brigade leaders became the immediate organisers of the production process.[332]

By this time some of the major construction projects of the First Five-Year Plan were being completed. Just before the end of 1931 the first units were commissioned at Magnitogorsk, on 1 January 1932 the Nizhnii Novgorod motorworks opened, followed on 29 March by the 1st State

329 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.120.

330 L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit., p.123.

331 Decree of STO "On Conducting a Census of Industrial Equipment", Sobranie zakonov, 1931, no.68, art.457; decree of TsIK and SNK SSSR "On the Formation of the People's Commissariats of Heavy, Light and Timber Industries, Sobranie zakonov, 1932, no.1, no.4.; joint decree of VTsSPS and Gosplan SSSR "On the Technical Training of Management, Union and Party Cadres", Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.8, p.315

332 S. Orjonikidze, Industrial Development in 1931 and the Tasks for 1932, p.78.

Ballbearing plant in Moscow and on 3 April by the first units at Kuznetsk.[333] Ironically, just the day before Kuznetsk was commissioned, the Party was obliged to pass a decree on the Nizhnii Novgorod motorworks closing the brand new works for a complete reorganisation.[334] Unlike the situation at the Stalingrad Tractor Works, the problem was not so much one of teething problems as of poor management and organisation. Ordzhonikidze and Kaganovich were despatched to the motorworks to sort out the situation. Hitting out at interference from Party and union organisations, they called for the implementation of the strictest one-man management not just at this plant, but at all major industrial enterprises.[335] In many ways this decree may be seen as the final, decisive victory of the manager over the worker in Soviet industry.

The IX VTsSPS Congress held later in April did nothing to dispel this impression. Kaganovich referred to the reformed labour organisations as 'production unions' and called for a two-pronged attack against inter-union joint action and caste-like shop activity.[336] The Congress, the first to be held since the birth of the mass movement for socialist competition, reflected the advance that this aspect of the Five-Year Plan had made since the VIII Congress, for, of the delegates from production fully 98.7 per cent were shock workers and 80.9 per cent were in cost-accounting brigades. As 76 per cent of the 1057 delegates were members or candidate members of the Party, it is hardly surprising that the Congress concentrated more on questions such as the spreading of output standards rather than the erosion of workers' rights vis-a-vis management.[337]

A report by a Party brigade visiting the Stalin motorworks in Moscow, published at the time of the Congress gives an indication of the worker's position:[338]

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333 Ekonomicheskaya zhizn' SSSR, pp.263-272.

334 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1932, nos.7-8, p.60.

335 Edgar Furniss, 'New Curbs on Soviet Labor', Current History, vol.36 (Apr-June 1932) pp.364-365.

336 L.M. Kaganovich, O zadachakh profsoyuzov SSSR na dannom etape razvitya, M, 1932, p.3.

337 Industrial and Labour Information, vol.43 (July-Sept 1932), no.2, p.65.

338 Partiinoe stroitel'stvo, 1932, nos.7-8, p.29.

> "When the question was raised about overtime work and work on days off in connection with the non-fulfilment of the production programme, the trade union organiser called a meeting of workers and suggested that a vote be taken thus: 'those that want to work raise their hands'. 'And many voted' the union organiser told the brigade."

Such passivity and silence at workers' meetings is confirmed by a letter to an Opposition journal written during the Congress.[339]

Even the cost-accounting brigades, still being heralded at the Congress as the highest form of competition, had lost much of their rationale given the drives for individualisation of work and the strictest managerial authority. The example that was now required was an individual worker who had mastered his job and was able to achieve record-breaking production results. Such a worker was the Gorlovka coalminer Nikita Izotov, who had joined the Party in January 1932.

On 11 May 1932 Pravda printed an article written by Izotov in which he explained how he daily exceeded the output norm by four or five hundred per cent, not through sheer muscle power but through studying his pneumatic drill and mastering it thoroughly. Izotov was a godsend indeed to the propagandists of socialist competition: a fine, strong cadre worker who had mastered technology and was utilising it to achieve outstanding production results at one of the most seriously lagging pits in the Donbas.

Immediately after the printing of his article, Izotov took on his first pupil, Zolotarev, and instructed him in how to achieve equally high productivity. His initiative was taken up by other leading miners at the pit and, through the local newspaper Kochegarka, a roll call for the best system of passing on the experience of the 'front rankers' to lagging miners was instituted.[340] Despite Izotov's personal efforts his pit fulfilled the 1932 output plan by only 82.3 per cent.[341] In many ways this was an essential feature of the Izotov movement which sprung from this initiative: while the front rankers scored unprecedented successes,

339 Letter from P.R., Sotsialisticheskii vestnik, 25 June 1932.

340 Govoryat stroiteli, p.246 (N. Izotov).

341 ibid., p.247.

the problems of turnover, absenteeism and poor utilisation of work time remained as severe as ever, not least because of the continuing shortages in provisions and housing. This led to the somewhat bizarre situation whereby Soviet miners could establish world records in coal getting per shift by the summer of 1932 at a time when the industry as a whole was still underfulfilling production quotas significantly.[342]

On 30 June 1932 a Government decree introduced a technical minimum examination which had to be passed by all workers servicing complex machinery, to be introduced not later than 1 January 1934.[343] Courses could be organised through the FZU network or by the enterprises themselves. In the following month Izotov proposed the establishment in Gorlovka of a 'school for newcomers' (shkola novichok) which would enable front rankers to pass on their experience in an organised fashion.[344] The Izotov school, which was eventually opened in 1933, was a variation of the helping hand movement that linked the social tugboats of the First Five-Year Plan with the Stakhanovites of the Second. However, it is significant that it was not until the Party leadership and management at Izotov's pit was changed for its failure to fulfil the 1932 plan, that production began to pick up. In the first quarter of 1933 the output plan was fulfilled by 111.2 per cent and the productivity per face worker by 112.4 per cent.[345] Inevitably such successes were followed by a sharp rise in output standards accompanied by the just as predictable protests of other miners.

Izotov's own group had even better production results, fulfilling the quarterly output plan by 125.5 per cent and the plan for productivity per face worker by 150.6 per cent. Moreover, in just two months Izotov produced 20 skilled face workers from amongst the trainees and a further ten from cadre miners.[346] To put his feat into perspective, however,

342 N.B. Dolgovyazova and E.I. Shashenkova, 'Gornyaki v pervoi pyatiletke', Ugol', 1979, no.4, p.62.

343 Decree of STO "On the Compulsory Training of Workers Tending Complex Machines, Installations and Units", Sobranie zakonov, 1932, no.51, art.311.

344 Govoryat stroiteli, pp.251-252 (N. Izotov).

345 Govoryat stroiteli, p.248 (N. Izotov): Sotsialisticheskoe sorevnovane v SSSR 1918-1964, p.118.

346 ibid., p.119.

even Izotov himself was cutting only about 20 tons of coal per shift, compared to the 102 tons achieved in August 1932 by Stakhanov (who, unlike Izotov, was not obliged to engage in any auxiliary work).[347] Izotov soon reaped the benefits of his shock work, being presented with a private car and sent to study at the Industrial Academy, from which he entered mine management.[348] Here was a prime example of a worker with the psychology of a manager. However, like owners of private automobiles in the USSR at this time, he was very much the exception rather than the rule. By January 1934, for example, in 25 Leningrad engineering works there were just 718 Izotovites.[349]

To some extent his movement came to exert a mass influence through the initiative of the Komsomol at the Uralmash works, which introduced in March 1933 a 'public technical exam' (obshchestvennyi-tekhnicheskii ekzamen) for all those workers who were not taking the state technical exam.[350] This factory had been one of many in the Soviet Union to have formed ZOT (za obladenie tekhnikoi) circles for the mastering of technology in late 1931 by new recruits to production.[351] By 1933 nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) of this plant's workers were newcomers (i.e. with under two years service), most of them lacking the most elementary production skills.[352] The purpose of the 'public-technical exams' was to provide short courses for workers to be run under the aegis of the union. The examining committee consisted of representatives drawn from management, unions, Komsomol, engineers, foremen and skilled workers subject to the approval of the director or shop head.[353] By June 1933, more than 3000 workers at Uralmash had passed the exam, which was then promoted on a nationwide scale.[354] By the end of 1934 no less than 180,000 Leningrad

347 Izotov overfulfilled his plan by 2000 per cent, implying that the average output per face worker was one ton per shift, ibid., p.247, 252. For Stakhanov's record, see Trud 8 September 1935.

348 Govoryat stroiteli, p.243, (N. Izotov); L.S. Rogachevskaya, op. cit., p.125.

349 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., pp.121-122.

350 ibid., pp.122-123.

351 Ocherki razvitiya, pp.61-62.

352 ibid., p.88.

353 A. Popov and P. Kartsovnik, 'Novoe v sotsialisticheskom sorevnovanii' in Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.12, p.39.

354 N. Bakharev, 'Za ovladenie tekhnikoi', Voprosy profdvizheniya, 1933, no.11, p.61.

workers had passed similar tests.[355]

On 1 February 1935 the state technical minimum was extended to cover all workers in heavy industry.[356] The front rankers in the Izotov movement set themselves the goal of passing only with top marks whereas, as one account notes, "the majority of Stakhanovites were grade IV workers who passed the state technical exam with marks of 'good' or 'excellent'.[357]

In September 1933, a Government decree completely reorganised the factory school (FZU) system, reducing the length of the most popular trades from 2 years to six months, and obliging all graduates to work in their speciality for at least three years.[358] Given the ending of the massive influx of new workers into production, these courses became the main source for providing industry with skilled and semi-skilled workers in the Second Five-Year Plan.

By 1934, management control over the production process was complete and the training system established. More than two in every three industrial workers were involved in shock work and labour discipline was at last beginning to improve. However, the mass enthusiasm of the heady days of the Shock Workers' Congress and the Leninist Appeal was a thing of the past. The Party had to rely on those relatively few front rankers to show the way to the less-than-enthusiastic majority. Such collective forms of labour as the cost-accounting and DIP brigades were in terminal decline and such movements as the 'otlichniki' (excellers) who undertook to provide output only of excellent quality never became widespread, nor could they in the prevailing situation.

The Izotov movement lingered on through 1934 when it merged into the campaign to catch up with and surpass the output of leading capitalist countries. A good example of this was at Leningrad's Skorokhod shoe

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355 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit., p.123.

357 Sotsialisticheskoe narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR v 1933-40gg, M, 1963, p.104.

356 Kommunisticheskaya partiya - vdokhnovitel', p.228. (R. Kirpichenkov).

358 Decree of TsIK and SNK SSSR "On Schools of FZU", Sobranie zakonov, 1933, no. art.357.

factory, where Izotovites, Pilikis, Dzevenkovskii, Smetanin and others surpassed the output per shift at Bata's shoe factory in Czechoslovakia without sacrificing quality. In a little over a year Smetanin was to become the first Stakhanovite at the factory.[359]

On the other hand, the year of 1934 saw a token: Shock Worker Day (1 January) and the end of the collective agreement.[360] By the time of the XVII Party Congress - the Congress of Victors - in January-February 1934, the authorities clearly felt that they had overcome the opposition to the reforms in the system of production. Although there was a ritual appeal by VTsSPS for an upsurge in socialist competition on the fifth anniversary of the movement (29 April 1934),[361] it was by this time evident that management was using competition as a means of cutting corners in labour legislation and that many of the workers were using it as a means to get better food and housing. The further break-up of the trade unions in September 1934 was designed to allow them to concentrate even more on the interests of production.[362] And finally, the abolition of the rationing system and the restructuring once more of the wage scales so as to favour the most productive, skilled workers in the key industries made the prescribed 'interests' of the workers and those of the state virtually identical.

Just as the battle for 'tempos' had been won by the end of 1930, so the battle to 'master' technology had been brought to a successful conclusion by the end of 1934, enabling the Party newspaper Pravda to declare on 29 December 1934 that "Cadres who have mastered technology decide the success of the matter", a slogan which Stalin was to paraphrase in May 1935 as "Cadres are decisive". Just two months later, in August 1935, the Donbas miner Aleksei Stakhanov provided an example of exactly which type of cadres were to be regarded as decisive within the working class.

359 N.B. Lebedeva and O.I. Shkaratan, op. cit. p.123, 132.

360 Istoriya rabochikh Leningrada v dvukh tommakh, vol.II, 1917-1965, L, 1975, p.241; Collective agreements were not renewed at the end of 1933. However, the International Labour Office's journal, which regularly monitored the Soviet press, noted the campaign for renewal of collective agreements in November 1934, Industrial and Labour Information, vol.52 (Oct-Dec 1934), pp.362-363.

361 Trud, 29 April 1934.

362 Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika, vyp.9, M, 1935, pp.362-363.

As for discipline, each succeeding appeal and decree repeated the call for tighter labour discipline and a campaign against slackers and disorganisers. Labour discipline was by no means perfect, but by and large, the system of incentives and sanctions operating within a strictly heirarchical network of industrial relations, was clearly much more effective than the perceived near anarchy that had preceded it. For as Pravda commented on 3 February 1935 "workers no longer endeavour to interfere in management."

Conclusion

It is paradoxical that the introduction of material incentives as the basis for increasing productivity should have occurred in 1931 and 1932, years of unprecedented shortages and hardship. Yet it was precisely this situation that enabled the authorities to direct those resources they did have at their disposal to the key areas of industrialisation and, by a combination of moral precept, legislative sanction and material deprivation ensured not only that there would be no open, organised opposition to this policy, but also that the majority of workers would finally accommodate themselves to the new order in Soviet industry.

Many Western observers have written off socialist competition as a factor in changing Soviet industrial relations after the victory of the management approach early in 1931. However, as we have seen in this Chapter, that victory had to be carried through and consolidated. It is my conclusion that, without the example of the shock workers, front rankers, dipovtsi etc., who could be presented by the authorities as the 'genuine' representatives of the working class, it would have been much harder to carry through the policies of strict management control. The "millions of workers with the psychology of a manager" were clearly the product of wishful thinking, but the fact is that there were always enough willing to combine material reward with moral considerations to show that this was attainable.

Moreover, clear differences of emphasis may be seen between factions

advocating the management approach; the technocrats aiming for the largely economic ends of accomplished, efficient, quality work, while the central Party authorities were perpetuating the largely political need for intensive work to achieve quantitative results. In other words, the economic efficacy of socialist competition after the complete victory of the management approach was doubtful, whereas its political importance was undiminished. As competition had effectively been reduced to rate-cutting and norms revisions by the end of the period under review, it was often necessary for managements to compromise with workers in order to maintain their will to work, not only by cushioning them from the effects of rate-cuts and norm revisions, but also by tolerating violations of labour discipline and formalising the conduct of socialist competition.

Thus, the superficial indices of industrial discipline, expressed in low absentee rates, high levels of participation in competition and frequent revisions of norms and rates were satisfactory, whereas the actual state of affairs on the shop floor was characterised by storming to fulfil plans, poor quality output and inefficient use of work time, problems which have continued to plague Soviet industry until this very day.

There is an analogy to be drawn, perhaps, with the fate of architecture under Stalin. The Constructivist and other modernist schools sought to transform buildings into tools rather than monuments, a movement which found expression in the 'socialist towns' around the shock construction projects of the First Five-Year Plan. However, the economic need for functional buildings was accompanied by a perceived political need for monuments and prestigious show-pieces. By the end of the Second Five-Year Plan this found concrete expression in the Moscow Metro and, eventually, in Stalin's distinctive 'wedding cake' style of architecture, both embellished with statues of heroic, strapping workers. So it was with the working class. The emphasis on intensity pushed to the forefront the heroic, storming type at the expense of the methodical, consistent and efficient worker. For despite the great strides made by Soviet society in this respect, the genuine men and women of technology were still

perceived to be a less efficient force of example than the men of marble.

CONCLUSIONS

The task was finally accomplished, however imperfectly and high cost notwithstanding, and a society of peasants, workers, craftsmen and versatile labourers were moulded into a modern industrial work force possessing a degree of technical literacy that in itself represented an awe-some achievement.

Patterns of worker behaviour that were perceived to be tolerably consistent with the demands of production (allow-ing for the periodic tightening-up campaigns by the regime) were established within Soviet industry by the end of 1934. This is not to say, however, that the problems of labour discipline were solved within that time scale. Indeed, it is argued that, in devoting its energies to the task of tackling labour turnover and absenteeism, both natural products flowing from the rapid expansion of Soviet industry and the social policies that accompanied them, the regime was able to commence addressing the central problem of work discipline - the full utilisation of the working day - only as the period under review drew to a close.

An experienced observer of Soviet industry over the years since 1934 might well conclude that the regime has proved far more adept at getting workers to stay at the factory and to attend on a regular basis, than it has been in getting them to work consistently and productively. Here, indeed, is a dilemma of its beginning.

Now this is precisely where socialist competition is cast to play the leading role. For, so the theory would have it, socialist competition is the vehicle upon which workers can exercise their management of production. Insofar as they are imbued with a sense of being 'masters of the country', they

would perceive it to be in their interests to work productively.

For an all too brief period, during the 'optimistic' phase of the socialist offensive (early in 1930) there was just a hope that this might be attainable. With the elimination of the production communes, however, all spontaneity and autonomy in the movement for socialist competition was lost and it became, like the trade unions before, just another arm of management, albeit part of the fabric and tradition of Soviet industrial relations.

Why, one may ask, if the notion of workers exercising genuine control over production through socialist competition is so patently a chimera, does Soviet society continue to this day to pay it lip service? The answer, it seems to me, lies in the conflicting perceptions of managers and workers.

Perhaps the decisive factor in this respect stems from the fact that such a large proportion of the managerial and executive cohort that tightened its grip over Soviet society during the period under review had risen up through the ranks at such an unprecedentedly rapid rate. As Kaganovich reported to the XVII Party Congress in 1934, half of the management at the Stalin Motor Works in Moscow had been promoted from the shop floor during the First Five-Year Plan. [1] It is quite probable that these cadres overestimated their own ability to organise production and underestimated the problems that the rest of the work force had in coping with the new technology.

It is important to stress that the 'management' perspective increasingly held sway over Soviet industry during this period. Thus such ardent advocates of scientific management

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1 XVII S"ezd Vsesoyuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b): stenograficheskii otchet, Moscow, 1934, p.529.

and technological innovation as Aleksei Gastev, head of the Central Institute of Labour (TsIT), were enthusuastically supported by all sides of the debate on the pace of industrialisation. What appeared to escape Gastev and his like-minded colleagues was that by no means all the ordinary workers shared this enthusiasm and zeal for production. It is hard to disagree with the following assessment:[2]

> "The demand of the Soviet state for rapid industrialisation and the weakness of the old trade unions, which had lost their mass following during the years of the Civil War, destroyed what natural balance that may have existed between a labour movement jealous of its members' immediate material welfare and industrial managers whose first consideration was productivity. These new industrial managers were drawn in many cases from the ranks of skilled labourers and old trade union leaders, but they acquired interests and modes of thought that were quite different from those of the rank and file, while still pointing to their working-class background as proof of their solidarity with the working masses. That any conflict of interests could exist was denied as these new managers acquired full sway over the world of Soviet industry and, under Stalin's direction, forced the pace of industrialisation by all available means after 1929."

Thus the managers, who claimed to have empathy with the workers, sought to create workers who had the psychology of a manager. It is in this respect that socialist competition represents a 'management' approach to production. It was not fortuitous that the men that I have credited with giving the movement its name - Kuibyshev and Lenin - were management men par excellence. Nonetheless it was the working-class origins of the movement (albeit among the young management-minded members of the early shock brigades) that

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2 Kendall E. Bailes, 'Aleksei Gastev and the Soviet Controversy over Taylorism, 1918-1924' in Soviet Studies, vol. XXIX, no.3, July 1977, p.393.

enabled the regime to utilise socialist competition as a weapon with which to crush those old trade unions and any other organisation or individual that stood in the way of the interests of production. By pointing to its working class roots the regime could identify the movement with the working class and accuse anyone who opposed it, be they the most proletarian of cadre workers, as being 'an agent of the class enemy'. Once the opposition had been seen off, those elements within the movement itself whose spontaneity and autonomy were perceived as a potential threat by the regime, could be effectively eliminated, until workers were left with little more than the right to produce more.

However, as participation in socialist competition was regarded as an act of faith in support of the system, and refusal to participate tantamount to outright opposition to the regime, the nominal numbers of workers 'actively engaged' in competition remained high long after it had abandoned the goal of exercising a genuine control over industry.

What emerged was a sort of Soviet Taylorism. Moral incentives were gradually displaced by material incentives tailored to appeal to the individualistic petty-bourgeois instincts of the most upwardly-mobile section of the Soviet working class during the Second Five-Year Plan.

Few of these would have even heard of the dissident communist, Bogdanov, who in 1913 warned:[3]

> "Since Taylorism was geared to the superior, not the average worker, it would create a rift in the working class, with the best workers extolled for heroic efforts and the average ones dismissed as idlers and loafers."

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3 Soviet Studies, vol.XXXIII, no.2, April 1981, p.248 (Suchoy)

Clearly, this was not the law of the jungle: the fittest - Izotov, Busygin, Smetanin, Stakhanov etc. - prospered, the rest had to work to survive.

However, those dilemmas of the beginnings are now coming home to roost as Gorbachev strives to breathe initiative, quality and a socialist attitude to work into Soviet industry. As the campaign for perestroika and glasnost' unfolds, it is intriguing to guess the reaction of one old Soviet pensioner - Kaganovich - who in his time had overseen the perestroika of the trade unions which had effectively put an end to any glasnost' in those worker organisations.

It is ironic, too, as Gorbachev looks back to the New Economic Policy and the ideas propounded by the 'Right Opposition', while lambasting the ossification of the Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, to compare the fates of the two men who, in this thesis, represented the two camps: Tomskii, former Chairman of the VTsSPS who took his own life to pre-empt being put on trial and shot as 'an enemy of the people' and Shvernik, First Secretary of VTsSPS from 1930 to 1944, subsequently Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (i.e. head of State), buried with honour on Red Square with his bust proudly adorning the entrance to the Soviet trade union headquarters in Moscow.

One cannot help concluding that if this perestroika of Soviet industry is to be effective, many of the battles fought between these two styles of trade-union leadership will have to be re-fought, with possibly a different outcome.

As for socialist competition, Gorbachev has already spoken with approval of the cost accounting brigades. To make the movement into a genuine form of workers' management of production, one feels that he may have to go back even further - to the early shock brigades and communes - and that would be a mighty step.

APPENDIX A

WORKERS IN SOVIET INDUSTRY, 1928 - 1934: TOTAL NUMBERS

TABLE I - Average yearly totals (without trainees)

Year	Absolute Nos. of Workers (in large-scale industry)
1928	2,598,700
1929	2,860,920
1930	3,404,900
1931	4,167,300
1932	4,668,500
1933	4,576,400
1934	4,949,000

Sources: Narodnoe khozyaistvo SSSR, 1932, p.11.
Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, 1934, pp.324-5
Trud v SSSR (1934) Ezhegodnik, p.3.

TABLE II - Average yearly totals (including trainees)

Year	Absolute nos. of workers (in large-scale industry)
1928	2,691,000
1929	2,923,300
1930	3,674,900
1931	4,619,100
1932	5,152,800
1933	4,915,500
1934	5,193,500

Source: Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, 1936, pp.XXVI-XXVII.

TABLE III - LABOUR TURNOVER IN SOVIET INDUSTRY, 1928-1934 (in % to av. no. of workers)

	1928		1929		1930		1931		1932		1933		1934	
	Arr.	Dep.	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep	Arr	Dep
1. All industry	100.8	92.4	122.4	115.2	176.4	152.4	151.2	136.8	127.1	135.3	124.9	122.4	100.5	96.7
2. Group 'A'	118.8	110.4	154.8	140.4	207.6	177.6	160.8	145.2	136.4	144.1	132.4	130.1	103,3	99.9
3. Group 'B'	79.2	72.0	84.0	86.4	129.6	115.2	133.2	124.8	111.0	119.8	111.9	109.2	95.9	91.2
4. Coal Mining	140.4	132.0	201.6	192.0	307.2	295.2	232.8	205.2	185.4	187.9	129.2	120.7	90.7	95.4
5. Oil Extractn	36.0	42.0	39.6	44.4	98.4	90.0	92.4	87.6	100.4	112.4	118.9	102.3	101.9	92.1
6. Iron & Steel	78.0	69.6	98.4	90.0	163.2	145.2	139.2	127.2	113.3	117.1	104.7	97.9	75.8	71.0
7. Engineering & metalworking	76,8	62.4	100.8	78.0	177.6	120.0	117.6	100.8	93.6	103.2	96.0	96.0	79.2	64.9
8. Iron Ore	160.8	141.6	249.6	219,6	301.2	288.0	277.2	249.6	176.1	198.7	170.5	154.2	123.1	111.5
9. Chemicals	112.0	107.3	122.9	110.7	190.1	159.0	148.1	126.2	129.7	131.8	127.9	114.4	91.3	78.5
10. Cotton	37.2	31.2	25.2	37.2	48.0	62.4	80.4	68.4	63.4	72.2	59.3	61.2	46.9	43.1

Source: Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, 1936, p.531.

TABLE IV - MONTHLY PERCENTAGES OF WORKERS LEAVING JOBS IN SOVIET INDUSTRY, 1928-1934 (to av. no. of workers)

		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Av. for yr.
1. ALL	1928	7.4	5.6	6.2	7.3	8.0	7.6	9.0	9.6	8.8	9.9	6.5	6.8	7.7
	1929	6.9	6.0	7.1	9.1	8.8	9.3	11.2	11.9	11.9	12.1	10.2	11.2	9.6
	1930	10.7	10.1	12.0	13.5	14.1	13.8	14.6	13.9	12.8	14.0	11.9	11.2	12.7
	1931	11.7	9.7	10.8	11.5	11.5	11.2	11.5	12.2	12.1	13.0	10.7	11.4	11.4
	1932	11.3	9.4	9.6	10.7	11.9	11.0	12.8	13.2	11.6	12.0	10.9	11.6	11.3
	1933	12.2	10.2	10.0	10.7	9.9	9.4	11.0	10.7	10.4	10.1	9.4	8.8	10.2
	1934	9.4	7.6	8.0	8.0	8.3	7.5	8.2	9.1	8.1	8.1	7.3	7.6	8.1
2. 'A'	1928	7.0	6.4	7.7	9.4	9.7	8.9	11,5	12.2	11.0	12.3	7.7	6.6	9.2
	1929	6.6	6.5	8.3	11.4	11.2	11.5	14.3	15.5	15.5	14.9	11.8	12.5	11.7
	1930	12.1	12.4	14.4	16.4	16.5	16.8	18.9	16.4	14.5	14.9	11.9	11.9	14.8
	1931	11.6	9.7	10.8	11.5	12.4	12.3	12.9	13.2	13.3	14.2	11.8	12.0	12.1
	1932	12.0	10.1	10.1	11.8	12.4	11.9	14.1	14.0	12.3	13.2	11.1	11.6	12.0
	1933	12.4	10.5	10.5	11.2	10.6	10.0	12.2	11.7	11.2	11.2	9.7	8.4	10.8
	1934	8.6	7.5	8.1	8.3	8.6	7.9	9.0	10.3	8.7	8.9	7.2	7.0	8.3
3. 'B'	1928	7.9	4.6	4.6	5.0	6.1	6.1	5.8	6.2	6.2	6.9	5.2	7.0	6.0
	1929	7.1	5.4	5.7	6.5	6.3	6.6	7.3	7.4	7.6	8.5	8.4	9.7	7.2
	1930	8.0	6.9	8.4	9.2	10.2	8.8	8.0	10.2	10.3	12.6	11.9	10.2	9.6
	1931	11.9	9.8	10.7	11.5	10.2	9.4	9.2	10.5	10.4	11.2	9.0	10.5	10.4
	1932	10.1	8.2	7.9	8.8	11.0	9.2	10.5	11.7	10.6	9.9	10.5	11.6	10.0
	1933	11.9	9.6	9.1	9.8	8.5	8.1	8.6	8.6	8.8	8.0	8.7	9.5	9.1
	1934	10.1	7.7	8.0	7.4	7.7	6.9	6.9	6.8	7.0	6.7	7.3	8.8	7.6

Sources: Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, 1934, p.342; Trud v SSSR, 1934, p.137.

APPENDIX D

UNSANCTIONED ABSENTEEISM IN SOVIET INDUSTRY, 1928 - 1934.

(in days per worker)

	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934
All industry	5.72	4.09	4.49	5.96	5.96	0.93	0.67
Iron & steel	5.81	3.67	4.27	5.63	4.21	0.54	0.45
Engineering & metalwork	4.33	2.60	4.37	5.83	5.24	0.55	0.46
Coal mining	24.06	19.19	13.78	13.32	10.52	1.93	1.33
Chemicals	2.36	1.45	3.08	4.48	4.18	0.62	0.42
Food	2.48	1.59	2.43	3.91	3.85	0.76	0.55
Cotton	1.70	0.86	1.60	4.30	7.12	0.68	0.36
Wool	1.34	0.88	2.01	3.72	4.39	0.55	0.35
Wood	3.53	3.05	4.88	7.49	7.22	1.80	0.93
Paper	1.45	0.87	1.66	3.20	3.92	0.78	0.61
Clothing	3.58	1.81	2.54	3.53	4.50	0.67	0.49
Printing	2.30	1.43	2.36	3.32	3.86	0.33	0.29

Source: Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR, M, 1936,p.530.

APPENDIX E

SOME ESTIMATES OF TOTAL Nos. OF SHOCK WORKERS IN SOVIET INDUSTRY 1929 - 1935

Date	Total no. of shock workers (in millions)	% to workers	% in soc. competition
1.10.1929	0.29	10	-
1.1.1930	0.86	29	65
1.3.1930	1.80	55.5	72
1.5.1930	1.66	47.8	72.3
1.11.1930	1.94-2.01	48.9	58.1
1.1.1931	2.19-2.45	57.8	65.5
1.4.1931	2.72	64.2	71.3
1.5.1931	2.75	65.0	71.1
1.6.1931	2.87	65.4	71.3
1.10.1931	2.87	62.1	74.3
1.1.1932	3.04 -3.2	64.2	65.6
1.1.1933	3.10	66.0	71.3
1.1.1934	3.31	66.6	73.4
1.1.1935	3.37	65.0	72.1

Sources: Industrializatsiya SSSR, 1929-1932gg. p.516.
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