

**Speaking Out:**  
The Public Discussion of the 1936 Constitution and the  
Practice of Soviet Democracy

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh  
2014

University of Pittsburgh  
Dietrich School of Arts  
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# **Speaking Out: The Public Discussion of the 1936 Constitution and the Practice of Soviet Democracy**

Samantha Lomb, PhD

University of Pittsburgh 2014

The Stalinist Constitution was a social contract between the state and its citizens. The Central leadership expressly formulated the 1936 draft to redefine citizenship and the rights it entailed, focusing on the inclusion of former class enemies and the expansion of “soviet democracy”. The discussion of the draft was conducted in such a manner as to be all-inclusive and promote the leadership’s definition of soviet democracy. However the issues that the leadership considered paramount and the issues that the populace considered paramount were very different. They focused on issues of local and daily importance and upon fairness and traditional peasant values as opposed to the state’s focus with the work and sacrifice of building socialism. However, the greatest difference was between how the state conceptualized the role of the former people and how the former people used their new rights. This tension between how the people and the state interpreted the role of the government and the duties of the state and citizens, in conjunction with former class enemies using their new rights to agitate for their own interest contributed to the onset of repression in 1937. This work focuses on this disconnect between the central leadership’s narrative of a social contract geared towards state building and the people’s interpretations of a social contract guaranteeing their rights and privileges, to illustrate some of the fundamental conflicts within Soviet society and the problems such tensions caused.

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## Archival abbreviations

**GARF**- The State Archive of the Russian Federation

**GAKO**- The State Archive of the Kirov Region

**GASPI KO**- The State Archives of Social and Political History of the Kirov Region

## List of Russian terms

**Aktiv**- those who actively engaged in political or agitational work, but may not be party members

**Artel'**- workmen's cooperative association; a type of collective farm with collectivized means of production, but private household property

**Ispolkom**-Executive Committee of a soviet

**Krai** - Administrative region/ province

**Kraispolkom**-Regional Executive Committee

**Kraikom** – Regional Party Committee

**Lishentsy** - people who were deprived of voting rights due to social class

**Oblast'**- Administrative region/ province

**Raion**- District (of a city or a rural district)

**Raispolkom** – District Executive Committee

**Sovnarkom USSR** - Council of Peoples Commissars (equivalent of a Cabinet)

**TsIK** -Central Executive Committee of the Soviet government

**Zemstvo** - a form of local government that was instituted during Alexander II 's reforms in Imperial Russia

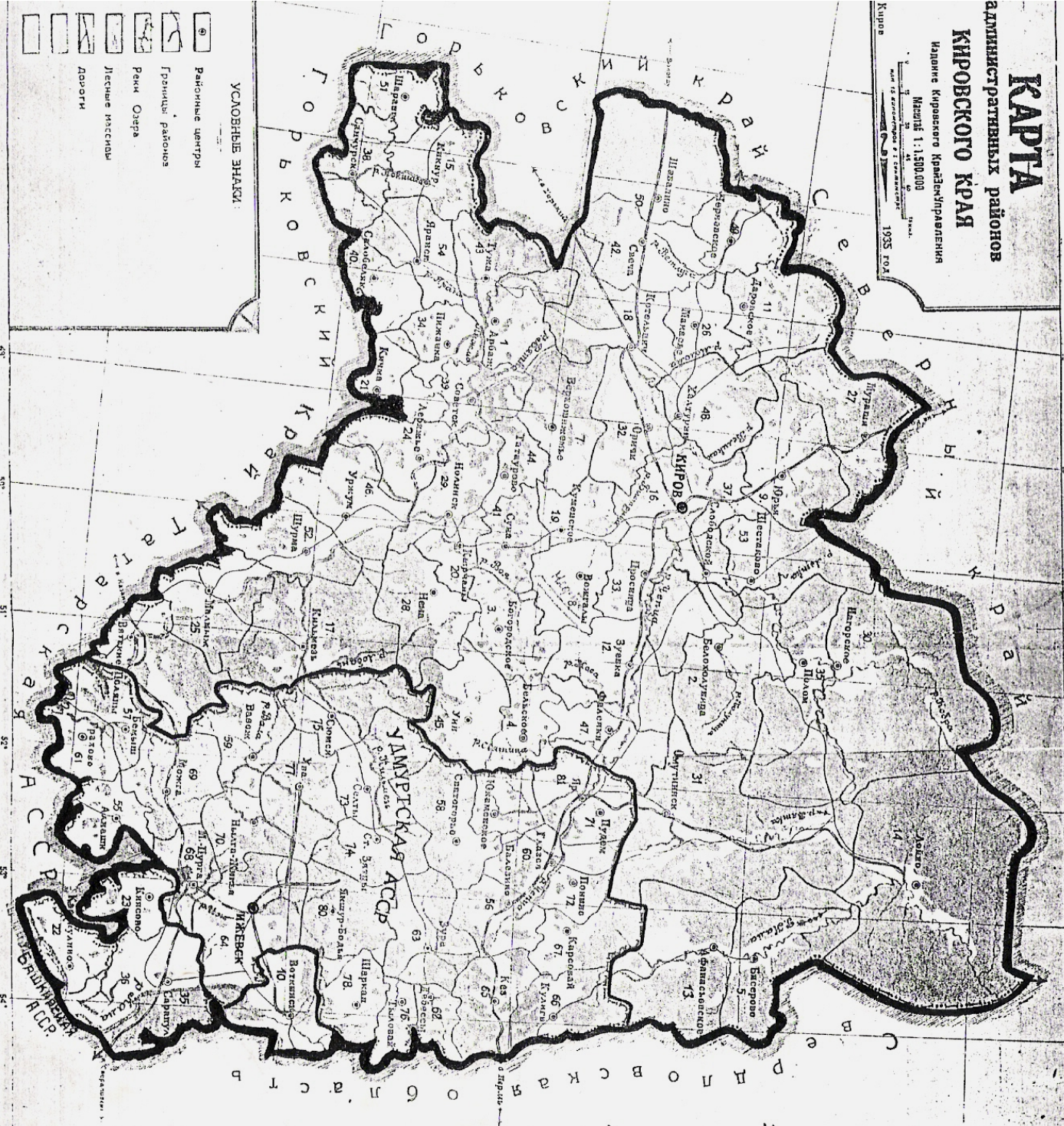
# КАРТА

## Административных районов Кировского края

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  - ▭ Границы районов
  - ▭ Реки, Озера
  - ▭ Лесные массивы
  - ▭ Дороги

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ЦЕНА 1 РУБЛЬ

Составлено Управлением Землеустройства

## Introduction

The USSR in the 1930s is justifiably associated with massive social and political upheaval. The central state and party leadership sought to redefine economic, cultural and political relationships throughout the country by launching programs of rapid industrialization and collectivization, among other policies. In the mid 1930's, there had been enough significant social and economic change that the leadership decided to redefine state-citizen relationships on the basis of a social contract, guaranteeing certain citizens' rights and material security in exchange for continued effort to construct a new socialist society. One of the vehicles for this change was a new draft constitution, which enfranchised the whole Soviet population with the goal of creating a more participatory society. The drafting process began in 1935 when the Constitutional Drafting Commission was formed; its members came from the highest echelons of the state and party. The committee worked on drafting and revising a new constitution through June 12, 1936, when a finished draft was submitted to the public for discussion. The discussion of the draft constitution took place over a period of six months, from June to December 1936. In this six-month period, an estimated 42,372,990 people participated in meetings and discussions of the draft constitution.<sup>1</sup> A final version of the constitution was ratified and presented at the 8th Congress of Soviets in December 1936.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the number provided by Andrei Sokolov in "Konstitutsiia 1936 goda i kul'turnoe nasledie stalinskogo sotsializma" *Sotsial'naia istoriia: ezhegodnik* (Sankt Petersburg: 2008), 140. A higher number (51.5 million people or 55% of the country's adult population) is provided by G. I Tret'iakov, "Soobshcheniia. VSENARODNOE OBSUZHDENIE PROEKTA KONSTITUTSII SSSR," *Voprosy istorii* No.

Very few changes were made to the draft constitution as a result of the discussion and none to the issues that most concerned the participants in Kirov. This is one reason why this work examines the drafting of the constitution and the public discussion, rather than focusing on any difference that the discussion made in the constitution itself. The discussion of the draft constitution provides a unique opportunity to examine state-citizen relations, what roles the state conceptualized for its citizens in state-building campaigns, and what sort of expectations the citizenry had for the state.<sup>2</sup> This study also uses the discussion to highlight the agency of the Soviet population. Based on materials from the Kirov region, it argues that the local population, especially the collective farmers co-opted the language of the state to agitate for their own local and personal interests, and that the sometimes-divergent interests of the central leadership and Soviet citizens caused tensions at the local and national level.

Given the scope of the discussion campaign and its embodiment of certain fundamental Stalinist state-building techniques, it is surprising that the topic has not received more scholarly attention. This is not the first scholarly work to examine the discussion of the draft constitution. Both Russian and American scholars have

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9, (September 1953), 98. Both authors cite Central Executive Committee files from GARF as their sources.

<sup>2</sup> Although this study focuses on the interaction between the citizens and state, the importance of the 1936 Constitution goes beyond the USSR. As discussed in Chapter One, that constitution was the first to draw upon the Lasallean and Marxist idea that a constitution was a social contract that reflected the society at the time of its creation. Later constitutions in some socialist and post-colonial states also drew on this tradition. However, the issue of intellectual and political nature of state constitutions, and the influence that the 1936 Soviet Constitution may have had, is a very different research study than this one. In this study, the constitution as a legal document is not of primary importance. What is important is the interaction between the citizenry and the state as seen during the public discussion preceding its adoption.

explored various aspects of the discussion of the draft constitution. Ellen Wimberg<sup>3</sup> investigates the formulation of the draft constitution and the discussion of that draft in the Soviet press as a way to examine tensions between various party leaders at the time, particularly focusing on Bukharin. J. Arch Getty<sup>4</sup>, G. I. Tret'iakov<sup>5</sup> and Andrei Sokolov<sup>6</sup> provide good overviews of the development of the drafting commission, the discussion on a national scale, including the most popular additions corrections and suggestions, and how these suggestions influenced the final draft of the constitution. Both Getty and Sokolov note that many Soviet citizens took advantage of this open forum to agitate for personal and local issues: this study makes the same point. However, because these published studies' examination of suggestions comes from the Central Executive Committee archive, their evidence is akin to snapshots from throughout the USSR and is difficult to interpret except in broad terms. Getty himself admits that, "without detailed studies of the Soviet countryside in the 1930's, it is difficult to interpret such data."<sup>7</sup> This is where my study differs from the other works that examine the draft constitution.

This project is not simply about the Constitution of 1936 and its implementation; instead I use the discussion of the 1936 draft Constitution as a way to investigate state-citizen relations and state building efforts in the Stalinist 1930's. By using a regional case study, the Kirov region, I am able to provide an in-depth

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen Wimberg, "Socialism, Democratism and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution," *Soviet Studies* Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992), 313-332.

<sup>4</sup> J. Arch Getty. "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), 18-35.

<sup>5</sup> G. F. Tretiakov, "Soobshcheniia. VSENARODNOE OBSUZHDENIE PROEKTA KONSTITUTSII SSSR," *Voprosy istorii* No. 9, (September 1953), 97-102.

<sup>6</sup> Andrei Sokolov "Konstitutsiia 1936 goda i kul'turnoe nasledie stalinskogo sotsializma", *Sotsial'naiia istoriia: ezhegodnik* (Sankt Petersburg: 2008) 137- 163.

<sup>7</sup> Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," 27.

look at the local conditions that helped to shape the implementation of the discussion, the suggestions and additions made to the draft, and how both the central authorities<sup>8</sup> and Soviet citizens sought to use the language of the draft constitution during its discussion to promote their own, sometimes conflicting interests. This is the first case study of the public discussion at the regional level.

Despite the excellent treatment that these historians give aspects of the discussion, the draft constitution is often dismissed by many scholars as propaganda and consequently has not been investigated in depth.<sup>9</sup> And in some ways these historians are correct, the discussion of the draft constitution was propaganda in the sense that it was designed to propagate certain values, and to teach and reinforce certain lessons that the central state and party leadership deemed important. The discussion was a propaganda campaign, but that does not devalue it as a vehicle for exploring state-citizen relations and the attempts by the Soviet leadership to forge a social contract with its citizens in return for their efforts to strengthen socialism. All modern states engage in propaganda as a way to shape the opinions and behaviors of their citizens. Like the Moscow Show Trials, the discussion of the draft constitution was meant to show the citizens of the USSR that they lived in a modern state that had a codified, functional legal system, a state that was creating a social

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<sup>8</sup> Throughout this study, I will refer to central authorities. When I do so, I am referring specifically to those personnel in Moscow who worked for the Drafting Commission or, more often, those in the offices of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet state charged with overseeing the implementation of the public discussion of the draft constitution or implementing state policy. When I am able to identify such people, I do so.

<sup>9</sup> Elena Aleksandrovna Shershneva defended a dissertation titled “Sozdanie Konstitutsiia SSSR 1936 goda” on the process behind the formulation of the draft constitution in 2011. While it does appear she addresses the discussion of the constitution, she does it from the perspective of the central leadership, focusing on the decrees that they issued. She uses only central archival material. An overview of her dissertation can be found at <http://www.dissercat.com/content/sozdanie-konstitutsii-sssr-1936-goda> accessed 8/20/2013.

contract with its people, and a state that valued the participation of its citizens in the political and economic processes that drove its rapid change.

There is another reason to examine the 1936 Constitution --- it had enduring power. In 1977, a revised constitution was adopted but it retained much of the wording and many of the features of the 1936 version. In the post-Soviet period, the 1993 Constitution of the Russian Federation also bore many similarities to the 1936 Constitution. The latter document was in many ways a foundational document that defined state society, political, economic and legal relations for the USSR until its collapse: it also influenced those relations in the post-Soviet period.<sup>10</sup> Although this study does not examine the 1936 Constitution as a legal document, it addresses many aspects of the constitution and pays particular attention the populace's opinions of its rights and promises. Such opinions illustrate the values and expectations of the citizenry.

Although in popular parlance the 1936 Constitution is often referred to as the Stalin Constitution, Stalin's role in this study is episodic. He played a crucial role in articulating the official rationale for the need for a new constitution, in convening the Drafting Commission, of which he was Chairman, and in editing the draft constitution. Stalin played a very active role and his suggestions were usually, but not always decisive. Some of the Bolshevik Party's and Soviet state's leaders served on the Drafting Commission. Several of them, by virtue of their service on key committees, were more active participants than others. The Drafting Commission,

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the historical development of the 1993 Russian constitution see Andrei Medushevskii. *Russian Constitutionalism: Historical and Contemporary Development*. London: Routledge, 2006

its members and work, and the roles of key players, particularly Stalin, in the Drafting Commission are discussed in Chapter One. But as this study focuses on the popular discussion of the constitution, Stalin's appearances in this study are confined to these roles and few others. One of his more important roles was as an advocate for expanding those groups who qualified for enfranchisement a role discussed in Chapter One and elsewhere. He was not an active participant in the popular discussion of the draft, hence his absence from the bulk of this work. But he played an important role bookending the discussion, first by contributing to the formulation of the draft and then by examining the outcome of the popular discussion and giving his support for the ratification of the little-changed draft constitution in December 1936.

One point deserves brief mention here, namely why Stalin and other party leaders decided in 1935-36 that a new constitution was necessary. As discussed in Chapter One, there were several publically enunciated reasons for this decision. One was theoretical, that is the class enemies had been vanquished and it was time to expand the franchise. Another was political, specifically that the Soviet state needed citizens' active participation to enhance the construction of Soviet socialism. Some were linked to modernizing the Soviet state as a state, for example creating a uniform central code of laws.<sup>11</sup> Each of these three provide legitimate reasons for the decision to craft a new constitution. Rather than try to prioritize the relative importance of these three, which is not the focus of this work, I argue that all three

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<sup>11</sup> Some western scholars, such as Peter Solomon, have suggested other factors, in particular to enhance the reputation of the Soviet Union in Europe and the outside world generally. There is no direct evidence to support this suggestion.



played key roles and that it was the coincidence and overlapping of the three that seems to have driven party leaders to advocate for a new constitution.

The strength of this study is that it uses the discussion of the draft constitution to explore some broader issues of the mid-1930s, and thereby provides insight into state-citizen relations. The older generation of western historians often tended to portray Stalinism<sup>12</sup> as a totalitarian and command-style society in which any opening up of society was merely a ploy to mask the Soviet leadership's (or Stalin's) true intentions. Robert Tucker argues that Stalin's main expedient for camouflaging the terror operation in the late 1930's was his re-writing of the constitution.<sup>13</sup> Tucker reduces the discussion of the constitution to a propaganda exercise aggrandizing Stalin, who "was a master of deceit who was making use of the public discussion of the 'most democratic' constitution as a smokescreen for moves to transform the Soviet regime into something approximating a fascist one."<sup>14</sup> Other scholars have a different approach to Stalinism, though many still conceptualize it as a centralized and strictly hierarchical state in which central directives carried enormous weight. Of course, formally the USSR was this. But as many works over the past two decades have noted, the structure of the state and party did not guarantee the fulfillment of directives as formulated. In fact, seemingly more often than not, Moscow was frustrated by the less than satisfactory fulfillment of central policies. Some western scholars of Soviet society in this era

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<sup>12</sup> The term Stalinism is widely used by historians but there is no universal definition. In this work the term Stalinism will be used to describe the period 1932-1953, which was defined by a one-party political system, dedicated to economic modernization, industrialization, and collectivization.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Tucker, *Stalin in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992) 352-353

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, 360.

explain the problems that often bedeviled the implementation of the directives as a result of Soviet citizens' 'pushing back' against the state. For example, Shelia Fitzpatrick<sup>15</sup> examines the intricacies of Soviet life; particularly how urban citizens interacted with the "ubiquitous" state in their everyday lives. Fitzpatrick concludes that the state offered both rewards and punishment to its citizens in a completely arbitrary fashion and, as a result, much of the population felt fatalistic and passive.<sup>16</sup> She notes that Soviet citizens were not without strategies to defend themselves against the state, but that these defenses too were passive and hence offer evidence of their powerlessness relative to the state.

This sense of the population embattled by the state pervades many of the historical studies of the USSR in the 1930's. Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov in *Stalinism as a way of life*,<sup>17</sup> present documents illustrating myriad reactions and interactions between state and citizen in the 1930's. They use this diverse collection to demonstrate how the challenges of building socialism confronted people in often life-threatening ways in their daily life. Like Fitzpatrick, Siegelbaum and Sokolov focus on how citizens negotiated the disruptions that collectivization and rapid industrialization created in their daily lives, but unlike Fitzpatrick, who evokes a citizenry without agency, Siegelbaum and Sokolov demonstrate how citizens learned to "speak Bolshevik" and advocate for their own interests within the

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<sup>15</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

<sup>16</sup> Fitzpatrick notes that the peasants did not simply accept victim status but rather worked less hard or not at all as a form of passive resistance. Fitzpatrick's peasants were not proactive. The peasants of the Kirov region in fact were quite proactive and in ways that were often unexpected.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum and Andrei Sokolov, *Stalinism as a Way of Life: A Narrative in Documents* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

framework of rhetoric created by the state.<sup>18</sup> This negotiation with the state, using the state's own language to advocate, often successfully, for personal or local needs and concerns is one of the central themes of this work. The discussion of the draft constitution and a general overview of life in the Kirov region shows a populace, especially its rural members, with agency, a population that was able to negotiate and interact with the state, to use the tools at its disposal to actively agitate for their own interests, even if they ran contrary to the interests of the state, and to couch these appeals and negotiations in the language of state building to legitimize these demands.

One aspect of the historiography that remains beyond dispute is that the USSR in the 1930s was a one-party dictatorship and that the Soviet state aspired for strong central control. There seems to be a contradiction between this fact and the popular participation of the citizenry. This work argues that there was no contradiction. While the Bolsheviks and the Soviet state had no desire to yield power, both also viewed popular participation in state sanctioned campaigns as essential. And in fact, the party sought to mobilize citizens for such campaigns, whether they be in service of collectivization (e.g. the 25,000ers)<sup>19</sup> or greater worker productivity (e.g. Stakhanovism).<sup>20</sup> What distinguished the popular discussion of the draft constitution from earlier campaigns was its national scope

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of "speaking Bolshevik," see Stephan Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

<sup>19</sup> Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935- 1941* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

and short time frame.<sup>21</sup> The party and state did not disdain popular participation. On the contrary, they embraced it albeit within prescribed limits. Popular participation was a way for the party and state to communicate certain goals and values to the population as well as a way for the population to help the central state to identify problems with the implementation of these campaigns and local governance. While central authorities deliberately structured such participation, was structured, participants often used the opportunity to convey its own concerns and demands.

The idea of an active citizenry that embraces the language and many of the changes wrought by Soviet power is a relatively new idea in Soviet historiography, but it should not be a surprise. In recent years, many good regional studies have allowed historians to investigate the implementation of state campaigns at a local level and the negotiations that took place between local and regional state and party officials and the masses. Charles Hier<sup>22</sup> produced an excellent study of collectivization campaigns in Sechevka *raion*, Western *Oblast'* and what he found challenges more mainstream conceptualizations of collectivization. He argues that local party and state officials were often lax in implementing collectivization because they were the ones with the most personal property to lose. He documents how local poor peasants worked with regional officials to collectivize the land because of the benefits the state offered to collective farms, such as tractors and

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<sup>21</sup> While campaigns such as Stakhanovism and collectivization were national in scope, they were long term campaigns. The short timeframe of the national discussion made it exceptional and especially challenging to organize.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Hier. "Party, Peasants and Power in a Russian District: the Winning of Peasant Support for Collectivization in Sychevka Raion 1928-1931," (unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2004).

high quality seed. Hier found that many peasants not only embraced collectivization in this region, but also had to actively struggle against local party and state officials to implement central directives. In the Kirov region, Aaron Retish<sup>23</sup> argues that peasants embraced and utilized state programs to strengthen their positions and to improve their daily lives. He notes that Viatka/Kirov had a strong tradition of local self-government and advocacy as peasants were well represented in the pre-revolutionary *zemstvos*. He notes that, during the Civil War, when committees of the poor and other collective organizations were formed, the peasants of the Kirov region embraced them as a way to improve landholdings and access to agricultural supplies. While these committees failed quickly in other regions, Retish notes that they endured in the Kirov region and formed the basis for some of the first collective farms there.

But it was not just the rhetoric of triumphant state building that citizens embraced and utilized to deal with everyday problems in the provinces. In his study of regional bureaucracy in the Kirov region in the 1930's, Larry Holmes<sup>24</sup> notes that the regional and local educational bureaucracy adopted the rhetoric of failure and escalating negativity to account for the material and professional failures that plagued the region's schools. Doing so, he argues, helps to explain their use of the language of victimhood to petition for rights and privileges. These administrators were not just passively trying to weather the wrath of the state, but rather used the

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<sup>23</sup> Aaron Retish. *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity and the Creation of the Soviet state 1914-1922*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Larry Holmes, *Grand theater: Regional Governance in Stalin's Russia, 1931-1941*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

state's own rhetoric and institutions to settle personal scores and to agitate for personal rights and privileges.

This study of the popular discussion of the draft constitution finds similar patterns. The people of the Kirov region embraced some state programs because they were beneficial to their everyday lives and they rejected others, but they always used the language of the discussion itself and that of the larger state-building enterprise to frame and legitimate their requests. Regional studies such as this one demonstrate that the Soviet citizens were not without agency and, in fact, often shrewdly sought to manipulate state goals, rhetoric and campaigns to their own ends. But as this study argues, the population of the Kirov region did not always speak with one voice. Urban residents and rural residents, and at times different generations often had divergent views on various issues, as did local elites and the local population. There were also differences between those disenfranchised in 1929-1933 (either for being kulaks or priests or for other reasons) and those who lived and worked on the region's collective farms. Such differences should not be surprising given that the individual experiences of the region's population differed. They serve to remind us that Soviet citizens in the 1930s were not simply passive or victims. This study sheds insight into the different perspectives enunciated by the residents of the Kirov region and argues that where one worked, one's lived experience and one's personal values influenced their views on the draft constitution. Sometimes these opinions appear in the historical record as individual opinions, sometimes they appear as collective opinions (e.g. of a collective farm, an urban workplace, or a social group). But what this study makes clear is that the

population of the Kirov region had opinions, often very strong opinions, about this foundational state document.

One of the overarching themes in the recent historiography of the Stalin period is an examination of how both the state and the citizenry sought to manage the disorder that the rapid economic, social and political changes in the 1930's produced. Legal reform was one of the ways by which the Soviet state sought to increase social stability.<sup>25</sup> Historians have written about the Soviet state's use of jurisprudence to strengthen its position in the 1930's. John Hazard, in *Law and Social Change in the USSR*,<sup>26</sup> explained that Soviet leaders in the Stalinist period used judicial decisions and legislation to solidify their position in power and to lay the new foundation for a new pattern of social organization. While the majority of Hazard's work focuses on the maintenance of labor discipline in the late 1930's and early 1940's, he notes that the Soviet system of law was designed to shape a new society, and at the same time to codify and solidify the changes that had already been made. Hazard explores the two-fold use of criminal law: to effect social change by attempting to make officials behave rationally, i.e. to serve the factory rather than their own interests, and by repressing enemies. Other historians, such as Peter Solomon, develop this idea further. He argues that the 1930's saw a return to traditional legal order as Nikolai Krylenko's ideas of "revolutionary legality," which relied on proletarian intuition, were replaced by the professional cadres and

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<sup>25</sup> David Shearer. *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Peter Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> John Hazard, *Law and Social Change in the USSR* (Toronto: Carswell Co., 1953).

codified legal codices that Andrei Vyshinsky<sup>27</sup> championed. Solomon believes that the promulgation of the new constitution in 1936 was symbolic of this shift, as the discussion of the draft constitution provided a forum for the promotion of the status and authority of law.<sup>28</sup> My study of the discussion of the draft constitution supports Solomon's assertions. The central and regional party leadership tried to use the discussion of the draft constitution to highlight the return to a predictable, codified legal system and the supremacy of codified law by highlighting new protections such as *habeas corpus*. However, Solomon views the 1936 constitution as a farce, arguing that it never sought to promote democracy in the western sense of that term but rather was designed to give the Soviet Union a veneer of respectability abroad, and to enhance the authority and legitimacy of the Soviet government inside the country's borders.<sup>29</sup> This is where my study and Solomon's interpretation differ.

The Drafting Commission consulted and discussed various western constitutional models, although which ideas its members found useful and which they discarded as bourgeois is not clear from the archival record. What is clear is that the members of the Drafting Commission gave considerable thought to writing the draft constitution. Based on newspaper and archival material, I argue that the Soviet leadership was indeed serious, at the time of the release of the draft constitution, about expanding the participatory base of the USSR. I also suggest that the opening up of the franchise may have contributed to the onset of repression in

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<sup>27</sup> Procurator General of the USSR at the time of the drafting of the 1936 Constitution and Chair of the Drafting Committee's Subcommittee on Judicial Organs, Vyshinsky promoted a codification of legal thought in the USSR, advocating the use of precisely defined penal codes.

<sup>28</sup> Solomon, 155,171.

<sup>29</sup> Solomon, 191.



1937, when officials “found” that some “anti-Soviet elements” took Soviet leaders at their word and began using the rights that the formerly disenfranchised were granted under the 1936 constitution to agitate for their interests. Getty makes a strong case for the constitution and the subsequent 1937 elections influencing the start of repression in 1937.<sup>30</sup> But on the basis of the evidence in Kirov, I can only draw tentative conclusions as to the role of the draft constitution as a contributing factor in repression. Such connections, however, are fascinating and deserving of further careful investigation, especially at the regional and local levels.

Involving its citizens in the state-building process through popular participation was another way the Bolsheviks and the Soviet state sought to strengthen and legitimize their rule. However, Bolsheviks and Soviet officials had a very specific understanding of public participation. The state wished to elicit more voluntary effort from citizens, (i.e. more participation in societal and state building), but was less interested in hearing the array of different voices so that it could govern by “the will of the people.” Yet the Soviet state and party had always been very conscious of public opinion and experimented with various ways of eliciting public opinion and support. As Jeremy Hicks notes,<sup>31</sup> by 1922, letter writing as a source of information and a means of encouraging participation had become institutionalized, and the offshoot workers’ correspondent movement was supported by the state. Hicks argues that party leaders debated the role that the

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<sup>30</sup> Getty deals with this issue in two separate articles: “Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations” in James Harris, ed., *Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Lenin and Stalin*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) and “Excesses Are Not Permitted”: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s”, *Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Jan., 2002), 113-138.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Hicks “From Conduits to Commanders: Shifting Views of Workers Correspondents, 1924-26.” *Revolutionary Russia*, Vol. 19 No.2 (December, 2006), 131-149.

state and party should play in regards to the workers' correspondent movement, which resulted in a shift from viewing such correspondents as the independent voice of the masses to "the commanders of proletarian public opinion, striving to channel the indestructible force of this great factor to the aid of the party and Soviet power in the difficult matter of socialist construction."<sup>32</sup> The state sought to harness this enthusiasm and sought to turn public opinion into a force for state building, particularly in the periphery, where the local party and state apparatus seemed at times beyond the center's control. In the late 1920's and early 1930's, the workers' and peasants' correspondents movement took on the roles of the eyes and ears of the party in the periphery, reporting on local officials who were not fulfilling their duties, on the success and failure of various campaigns, and other issues. As Hicks notes, such a position was often dangerous for the rural correspondents, who were often victims of violence. While my study does not focus on the roles of such channels of information, it makes clear that the local press played an active role in organizing the public discussion and reporting on various aspects of it precisely because the public discussion of the draft constitution was one of the many methods by which the state tried to connect with its people.

Other authors who explore letter writing in the 1920s and 1930s note the development of a prescribed structure for petitioning the state and argue that within the Soviet structure a certain level of freedom existed for citizens to petition

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<sup>32</sup> Hicks, 136.

the state for personal reasons. Matthew Lenoe<sup>33</sup> frames his study of letter writing by examining the needs that this behavior served for both average citizens and the party. He notes that for the authors, the letters were a channel of petitions to those with all types of powers: asking for a job, expressing opinions for or against the party line, settling private disputes, or seeking redress for injustice. He also argues that ordinary Soviet citizens wrote to the newspapers within a framework that had been constructed by party officials and journalists. Letter writing also allowed a person to prove themselves to be civic minded and worthy of admission to the party. Lenoe argues that, for the party, the solicitation of letters was an administrative tool that helped them gauge the popular mood, monitor the state apparatus, educate the populace, and facilitate the distribution of goods, power and privileges. He also notes that letters demonstrating enthusiasm for an ongoing propaganda campaign were often solicited and published.

The public discussion of the draft constitution harnessed these earlier practices and trends to engender support for state-building projects, and to rein in the local and regional officials whom central authorities had trouble controlling. The central, regional and local press solicited letters, many of which documented how the authors' lives had improved under the Soviet system and how the rights guaranteed in the new constitution promised to further enhance their quality of life. Lesson plans designed to guide the discussion of the draft also focused on the increased quality of life for workers as well. Additionally, during the discussion of

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew Lenoe "Letter Writing and the State: Reader Correspondence with newspapers as a source for early Soviet history" *Cashiers du Monde Russe: Russie, Empire Russe, Union Sovietique, Etats Independants*, Vol 40 No. 1-2, 1999, 139-170.

the draft constitution, participants were encouraged to criticize local officials who had been lax in fulfilling their duty, and to replace them with more competent and politically active representatives. This trend was not an afterthought, but one of the main reasons that the party sought to expand the franchise in the first place. Stalin and other leaders felt that by making the Soviet system more participatory, it would enable the masses to police and remove unsuitable local representatives. Sheila Fitzpatrick addresses this trend in her article “How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces.”<sup>34</sup> She notes that, as the local party and state apparatus grew increasingly beyond the control of the central party and state leadership, central officials turned to increasingly extreme means to control them, including encouraging local workers and officials to denounce their bosses publicly. In the *Road to Terror*,<sup>35</sup> Getty and Naumov note the same trend. Central officials called for denunciations of local and regional party and state officials in the wake of unfulfilled campaign goals and increased unresponsiveness to central demands. This study provides evidence to support both views.

Repression was another way that the Soviet state sought to create stability. In their groundbreaking study of mass repression in the USSR, Getty and Naumov focus on concerns that fueled feelings of insecurity at the highest echelons of state and party leadership in the USSR, such as the unresponsiveness of local and regional administrations to properly implement campaigns, and the botched exchange of party documents and verification of party members, and how this lack of control

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<sup>34</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, “How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (July 1993), 299-320.

<sup>35</sup> J. Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

over the periphery ultimately led the central leadership to take drastic action to bring state and party organs back under stricter central control. This study touches on many of the issues that Getty and Naumov raise, such as the unresponsiveness of local and regional officials and their inability to implement the popular discussion to the central leadership's specifications. It is clear from the documentation of the popular discussion in Kirov that the central authorities were not satisfied with the way that the discussion was handled in many districts. The Central Executive Committee and its representatives issued directives to regional and local officials nationwide in response to perceived inadequacies during the implementation of the discussion. These directives were designed to give the Central Executive Committee greater control over the discussion. They clearly indicate great frustration at the unresponsiveness of the regional and local officials, and their "bureaucratic" handling of the discussion. While it is not clear that this frustration directly contributed to repression of local and regional officials, it is clear that "incompetent" officials were targeted during the discussion, as central propaganda urged the masses to use this open forum to denounce them and even remove them from office.

A more causal albeit indirect link between the 1936 constitution and repression in 1937 can be made in the case of the "former class enemies." Though the popular discussion of the draft constitution ended before repression intensified in the USSR in 1937, this study argues that the re-enfranchisement of former "class enemies" and increased reports of "anti-Soviet" activities perpetrated by these groups helped to intensify accusations against them. David Shearer<sup>36</sup> notes in his

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<sup>36</sup> Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*

study of policing and repression that even though the state had relaxed restrictions on the former class enemies, such as kulaks and priests, in the mid 1930s, it still maintained a watchful eye and dossiers on them. Shearer argues that many former class enemies were arrested and repressed during periods of mass repression because of this continued suspicion, as the police already had information on these suspect groups and endeavored to fulfill their quotas by rounding up the “usual suspects.” He notes that, in some cases, kulaks and others returning from exile pressured local officials for the return of confiscated property and agitated for other rights, which in turn made them more likely to be targets of mass arrest by local officials. J. Arch Getty<sup>37</sup> likewise argues for a connection between the expansion of electoral participation and increased repression in the USSR. He argues that one of the main precipitants of repression in 1937 was a center-periphery dispute about unrest in the Soviet countryside in 1937, about who controlled the use of violence, and about the domestic need for violence in 1937. He postulates that kulaks returning home from their terms of exile attempted to use the new rights enumerated in the new Constitution as a way to challenge the state, to attempt to recover lost property and to destroy any stability that collective farms had achieved. Getty contends that the regional leaders had vigorously opposed the expanded franchise from the beginning and, failing to change the leadership’s mind during the discussion of the draft constitution, set about sabotaging the electoral campaign and elections for the Supreme Soviet as a way to force the central leadership to restrict the franchise and allow them to use repression to maintain order in the countryside.

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<sup>37</sup> See Getty, “Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations” and “Excesses Are Not Permitted”.

Getty argues that this plan was successful because by July 1937, Stalin had become convinced of the danger in the countryside and personally initiated mass operations.

While Getty studies central materials, my work examines regional material to appreciate how regional and local leaders felt about the enfranchisement of former class enemies and how that affected the repression. I have not found any outright resistance to the implementation of the Constitution from regional officials during the discussion of the draft constitution. However, many citizens offered serious objections to parts of the draft and some spoke out against re-enfranchising priests and former kulaks. The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) party cell meetings discussed and expressed concern about anti-Soviet activity during the election campaign in 1937. As the campaign progressed, NKVD and other state officials became increasingly convinced that former class enemies were indeed using the elections to agitate for their own interest and undermine Soviet power.

This study uses the discussion of the draft constitution as a springboard to explore state-citizen relations in the mid 1930's. It shows how the state sought to advance its state building goals by redefining social relations through the use of a social contract, the new Constitution. The state crafted this social contract to help create a stable legal base for society and to promote participation at local and regional levels, as well as a way to make party and state officials accountable. Many participants utilized the open forum by co-opting the language of the state to agitate for personal and local interests, and to critically engage the state. The conflicts that arose during the discussion of the draft seem to have been genuinely startling to the central leadership and they may well have contributed in some measure to

increased repression in 1937, as central officials sought to make sense and contain such conflicts. But this study provides no evidence to support Tucker's or Solomon's contention that the constitution and the public discussion leading up to its adoption was anything but sincere. What use was made of the experience after the fact is a separate issue.

The focus of this work is a case study, specifically of the Kirov region. A case study is appropriate and valuable for several reasons. The scope of the all-Union discussion, with over 40 million participants, makes it impossible to study it as a national campaign in any meaningful way. However, a focused case study enables me to examine the often-conflicting agendas of the national government, local and regional officials and of the populace. It offers something more focused than a sweeping overview of materials from the center or a sampling from across the Union. This tighter focus allows me to set the regional context so as to understand the suggestions and reactions of the citizenry to the draft constitution and the varied responses by distinct governing organs at the local and regional level. Such a focus also allows for careful treatment of the mechanisms put in place for a discussion of the draft constitution and the problems of implementation of central decrees at local and regional levels relevant to that discussion.

The Kirov region offers a rich archival material base for such a study. As the Kirov region was beyond the line of German occupation, the archives were never damaged or evacuated. Therefore documents not found elsewhere, such as letters, exist in abundance in the Kirov regional archives. The state and party archives house a substantial amount of documentation, including: letters and official



responses to them; materials on the activities of state and party organs at the local and regional (and national) level; records of the deliberations of local, regional, and central agencies as they attempted to guide the popular discussion. Such materials are in abundance and accessible in Kirov's two main archives: the State Archive for the Kirov Region (GAKO), the main state archive for the region, and State Archive for the Social and Political History of the Kirov Region (GASPI KO), the archive of the region's Communist Party. This study draws extensively on both archives as well as on the region's newspapers, and the materials relating to the Central Drafting Commission that are housed in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF).

The first chapter of this work offers an overview of constitutional theory in the USSR, and how the central state leadership used this theory to formulate the draft constitution. It is not a through analysis of constitutional thought or theory in the USSR, nor of each article of the constitution. Rather its purpose is to set the context for the public discussion. I focus on the re-definition of citizens and citizenship, which included the re-enfranchisement of former priests and kulaks, as well as its focus on state building to highlight how the state sought to create a new social contract with its citizens and what it expected from them in return. This chapter demonstrates how the central leadership conceived of the draft constitution and the role of constitutionality in the USSR. It also illustrates the aspects of the constitution that the central leadership sought to highlight and how it hoped that the discussion of the draft constitution would be instrumental in generating enthusiasm for mass state building projects.

The second chapter provides an overview of the demographic, social and economic situation in the Kirov region in the 1930's. This chapter helps to set the context for the citizens' numerous suggestions and proposed additions to the constitution. The daily realities of life in the Kirov region helped to shape the perceptions of its citizens and the complaints and suggestions that they brought to the discussion. It also makes clear that the citizens of the Kirov region demonstrated in their daily lives and interactions with the state that they were often politically savvy and capable of using an open forum like the discussion of the draft constitution as a platform to agitate for their own interests.

Chapter Three focuses on the implementation of the popular discussion in Kirov and addresses many of the tensions within the Soviet system revealed by the discussion. The central party and state leadership had a very specific vision of the discussion, which was communicated in the form of lesson plans that dictated the topics to be covered during the discussion of the draft. These topics reflected the emphasis on state building and changed citizenship rights that the central state leadership had vested in the constitution. However, the implementation of the discussion was left primarily to local district officials, who tried to balance the discussion with the demands of their day-to-day tasks, and often treated the discussion like just another campaign. This formal treatment drew the ire of the central leadership and then in turn of regional officials, who denounced many of the personal suggestions brought forth during the discussion as the result of improper agitational and propaganda work by local officials.

The fourth chapter addresses the popular responses to and discussion of the draft constitution. Most of these suggestions were personal and local, focusing on citizens' rights, local power, safety, and security. To give a greater air of legitimacy to their suggestions, many of the residents of the Kirov region framed their suggestions within the greater narrative of state building. But underlying the common language that unified the central state's narrative and popular suggestions, the focus on the local and personal demonstrates what were often rather different interpretations of the role of the state and citizens. The central leadership envisioned a people devoted to selflessly building socialism. The people of the Kirov region believed that they should exercise greater local control and that the state should provide them with increased benefits because of the sacrifices they had made to date. These tensions became further apparent when the recently enfranchised former people<sup>38</sup> seized upon their new constitutional rights and began to run their own candidates, who advocated for their own interests in the subsequent elections.

The final chapter deals with the role that the constitution and the subsequent elections played in repression. The documentation from the Kirov region demonstrates that reports of anti-Soviet activities in the region and instances of former people nominating their own candidates for local offices were often sent to Moscow. These reports most likely served to exacerbate the anxieties that the central leadership had about perceived increased enemy activity throughout the country. The local NKVD party cell minutes likewise demonstrated increased

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<sup>38</sup> These are people who had been deprived of voting rights for socio-political reasons, such as former kulaks and priests.

anxiety. As 1937 progressed, participants at those meetings stopped referring to the infiltration of Soviet organs of power by class enemies as a possibility but rather as an eventuality that needed to be aggressively confronted. This chapter addresses the value and limits of materials from Kirov in validating the argument that pressure from the regions helped to trigger the onset of mass repression in 1937.

This work concludes that the opening up of the electoral franchise combined with the open forum of the discussion encouraged many Soviet citizens to engage the state in a dialogue about their needs and responsibilities. The locally and personally oriented needs and suggestions of the citizenry were contrary to the suggestions that the state had expected. When citizens, particularly those from already suspect groups, began using their rights to agitate for these personal interests, it heightened central anxieties to the point that it contributed to mass repression in 1937.

More importantly, this study's most significant contributions to the literature on the USSR in the mid 1930s are three-fold. It is the first study to examine the public discussion of the draft constitution at the regional and local level. As such, it fills a glaring gap in existing historiography, and highlights the importance of local and regional studies to our understanding of Soviet politics and society in the mid 1930s. Second, it provides ample evidence that Soviet citizens engaged with the state and exercised their rights to press for the resolution of their local and large concerns. This is especially the case among the collective farmers, whom many western scholars have viewed as being passive. As this work shows, they were hardly passive. Finally, the evidence presented here allows us to appreciate that the

various social groups often had distinct opinions on various aspects of the Soviet experience. This seems obvious, but until there are more local and regional studies of the period, appreciating just how and why such groups held the views that they did remains a work in progress for the field at large.

## Chapter 1: Constitutional Theory in the USSR

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The main focus of this study is not the Constitution of 1936, nor its development or the ways in which it differed from the 1918 and 1924 Constitutions, nor how it provided the basis for the 1977 Constitution<sup>39</sup>. Rather this study examines the *public discussion* of this draft document and how that discussion reflected the power dynamic between the state and its citizens, and some of the perceptions that each had of the other. This work focuses on how both the state and its representatives and the citizens of the USSR interpreted their respective roles and the ramifications of each group's understanding of the rights granted to citizens by the 1936 Constitution. But to understand the relationship between the state and the citizens of the USSR, in this case as represented by the people of the Kirov region, it is necessary to understand how central state officials conceived of democracy and the purpose of a constitution in the USSR in general and what role they envisioned for citizens.

The party's central leadership held to a very particular understanding of democracy, which was rooted in Marxist theory and which allowed for and even encouraged citizen participation. While western scholars may see a contradiction between the tightly controlled democratic centralist one party state based on the principles of democratic centralism and popular participation, no such contradiction

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<sup>39</sup> For more information on the historical development of the Russian constitution, both pre-revolutionary and post-Soviet see Andrei N. Medushevskii. *Russian Constitutionalism: Historical and Contemporary Development*. (London: Routledge), 2006. Although an examination of how the 1936 Soviet Constitution influenced the constitutions of other states, be they socialist (e.g. the People's Republic of China or the people's democracies of eastern Europe) or post-colonial, would be of great interest, such a study would be too much of a tangent for a focused work such as this

existed in the mind of Soviet leaders. They viewed popular participation in state building as essential for the development of the social and economic systems in the USSR. This understanding of democracy was what produced the populist rhetoric preceding the discussion of the draft constitution and provided the foundation for the central state leadership's attempts to guide and manage the discussion. Scholars need to approach Soviet conceptualizations of democracy from the perspective of those who formulated them. Doing so reveals that, within their own understanding of politics and constitutionality, their intentions were both legitimate and earnest. It also reveals how such interpretations helped to frame, but not determine the public discussion.

## **The Principles of Constitutional Theory in the USSR**

The Soviet Union viewed itself as the culmination of the European revolutionary tradition and the correct branch of the democratic tree. The 1936 Constitution was intended to be the cornerstone of Soviet state-building efforts and therefore it was not just another set of laws promulgated by the state. While some of the promises made in the draft constitution were later honored only in the breach, the state's intention was to define the rights and responsibilities of a participatory society that was to become a powerful grassroots weapon against bureaucratism and to deepen the connection between the state and its citizens. Soviet leaders<sup>40</sup> had long been skeptical of and hostile to bureaucracy, viewing it as a necessary evil to be

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<sup>40</sup> As the draft constitution was the result of a committee's work, and its revision and approval required collective consent, I will use the term Soviet leadership, which includes party and state leaders.

tolerated and tightly controlled. Citizen participation in government was seen as the most effective way to combat corrupt or incompetent local and regional officials.<sup>41</sup> As the centerpiece of Stalinist state building efforts in the 1930's, Soviet leaders viewed the drafting, public discussion, and implementation of the 1936 Constitution as fundamental to the construction of a participatory society and a socialist state. Outside the USSR, however, Soviet democracy has long been thought to be a prop to legitimize a totalitarian regime, a concept devoid of theoretical depth and separate from European concepts of constitutionalism. The renowned scholar of the Soviet judicial system, Peter Solomon, puts it succinctly:

the concept of constitutionalism in a western sense had no place in the authoritarian order represented by a one party dictatorship. Rather in designing a new constitution, Stalin seemed to have had two main purposes: to present the USSR to the outside world as a democratic state, and to enhance the authority, legitimacy and respectability of the Soviet state at home.<sup>42</sup>

My work contends that though they viewed democracy as a tool for socialist construction rather than an end in itself, Soviet leaders did not ignore western European Enlightenment ideas on the formation of the state, the basis of sovereignty and the importance of democracy. Rather they embraced and interpreted these ideas, and portrayed the 1936 Soviet Constitution as the “correct” manifestation of certain Enlightenment ideas.

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<sup>41</sup> For more information on this please see E. A. Rees *Rabkrin and the Soviet System of State Control: 1920-1930*, (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice Under Stalin* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 191.



In order to understand how the Soviet leadership incorporated aspects of European constitutional theory into its crafting of the 1936 Stalinist Constitution, it is imperative to understand what role Bolsheviks believed that a constitution should play in Soviet society. Party and state leaders viewed the constitution as the codification of the achievements of socialism, rather than a document that identified aspirational goals or guiding principles. In his November 1936 speech to the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, Stalin made it clear that the constitution should not be confused with a program: “a program talks about what does not yet exist and that which must be obtained and won in the future, the constitution on the other hand, must speak about what already exists, what has already been obtained and won now, in the present.”<sup>43</sup> In his address to the same body, Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, Viacheslav Molotov, also made it clear that the constitution is meant to be the concrete foundation of the Soviet government, not an aspirational document: “The new Constitution elucidated all that which has already been won and exists in the country without raising questions of the future, it forms and legally strengthens the great victory of the socialist state of workers and peasants.”<sup>44</sup> For Stalin and Molotov, Soviet constitutionality was more focused on concrete rights and achievements than were western constitutions. The constitution represented a social contract that the state made with its citizens, providing them with specific benefits, such as vacation and social security, in return for their help in building socialism.

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<sup>43</sup> Iosef Stalin, “Doklad o Proekte Konstitutsii,” *Pravda*, November 28, 1936, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Viacheslav Molotov, “Ob Izmeneniakh Sovetskoi Konstitutsii.” *Izvestiia*, February 7, 1935, 1.

The theory that a constitution was both the representation of the current balance of power in a state and the fundamental guide to shaping its institutions had a profound effect on how Soviet leaders viewed other constitutions and how they chose to formulate the new draft Constitution. In his speech before the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets on 6 February 1935, in which he called for a revision of the 1924 Constitution, Molotov utilized this definition of a constitution to justify the need to make radical changes to the existing constitution.<sup>45</sup> He argued that when the constitution correctly conveys the correlation of class strength in the country, then it is a mighty instrument for strengthening social construction. He contended that the social and economic developments that followed the implementation of Five-Year Plans and collectivization had wrought fundamental changes in the socio-economic, cultural and political situation in the USSR. Molotov explained that, “there has been much technological improvement and the agricultural system of the country was restructured. The Kulaks have been destroyed. The collective farms have been victorious on all fronts.” Socialist property was victorious in the city and the country. “Nothing remain[ed] of the capitalist elements.”<sup>46</sup> The victory over capitalist elements meant that the dictatorship of the proletariat and poor peasants had outlived its usefulness and provided an opportunity for the greater democratization of the USSR. The constitution needed to be rewritten to accommodate these changes. Among the envisioned changes was extending the definition of who had legal rights, the extension of the franchise to all citizens of the USSR, including those formerly deprived of voting rights due to class origin, and the

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<sup>45</sup> Molotov, “Ob Izmeneniiakh Sovietskoi Konstitutsii.” *Izvestiia*, February 7, 1935, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Molotov, “Ob Izmeneniiakh Sovietskoi Konstitutsii,” *Izvestiia*, February 7, 1935, 1.

promotion of multi-candidate elections. While such reforms were not realized as envisioned, in part because of unexpected developments, which are discussed below, they signify the Soviet leadership's understanding of the form of Soviet democracy and how important such concepts were to both strengthen and legitimize the Soviet regime.

Here, a brief tangent is in order. While Soviet leaders intended to have multi-candidate elections, it did not mean that the Communist Party was loosening its monopoly on power. For party leaders, there was no contradiction between a one-party state and contested elections so long as that party was a communist party that represented the interests of the vast majority of citizens—and Soviet leaders believed that the Bolsheviks did just that. To them, multi-candidate elections did not mean multi-party elections. What multi-candidate elections did mean is that elections might provide an opportunity for citizens to reject local or regional political figures who did not represent popular—and Soviet—interests. They sought the aid of the Soviet people to remove “bureaucrats,” in the pejorative sense of the word. Stalin and the Bolshevik Party had no intention of altering or endangering their party or the concept of democratic centralism on which it was based. What they did seek to achieve by revising the constitution and holding multi-candidate elections was to enhance the functionality, legitimacy of and popular support for that party.

In formulating and promoting the Stalinist constitution, party and state leaders paid much homage to the European roots of democracy. The Constitutional Drafting Commission consulted multiple “bourgeois,” i.e. western constitutions and

ensconced many of the ideals of universal suffrage, popular participation, and the responsiveness of the state to its constituency in the draft. That Commission was well aware of the constitutional principles of other states and their election laws. Karl Radek was charged with gathering the texts of foreign constitutions and appropriate laws, and reviewing them along with Nikolai Bukharin (the editor of *Izvestiia* from 1934) and Lev Mekhlis (the editor of *Pravda* in 1936).<sup>47</sup> The collected materials of the Constitutional Commission contain election laws from England, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Czechoslovakia, and Switzerland, copies of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) and various western (bourgeois) constitutions.<sup>48</sup> Although the archive does not contain notes on the discussion of these materials, Molotov stated that “all the best [parts] of the democratic systems of other states we brought into and added to our constitution to apply to the conditions of the Soviet state.”<sup>49</sup> When describing the proposed

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<sup>47</sup> J. Arch Getty. “The State and Society under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s,” *Slavic Review* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), 19-20.

<sup>48</sup> For examples see: GARF, F. R- 3316, op. 40, d. 74.- The Feb. 6, 1918 English law about voting rights and the new allotment of seats in Parliament and acts about people’s representatives from 1928; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 75- Information about Belgian voting law; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 76- The German Imperial Voting law of March 6, 1924 with a proposed law about elections for the Imperial president from March 6, 1924 and an imperial voting order from March 14, 1924. (Also includes a second law about the elections for the imperial president from March 1925); GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 77-Norwegian laws about elections to the Stortinget and changes to the law on December 17, 1920 and March 11, 1930; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 78- French election laws and the Declaration of the Rights of Man from August 27 1789; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 79 the Czechoslovak voting law from August, 11 1935 about changes, additions and suggestions about the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, Senate, Regional and County representative bodies; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 80- Laws, decrees, and resolutions about popular voting and the procedure of popular voting in Bern Switzerland from 1918-1921; GARF, F. R-3316, op. 40, d. 84- the constitutions of various bourgeois countries

<sup>49</sup> Molotov, “Rech’ Tov. Molotov o Novoi Konstitutsii,” *Pravda*, November 30, 1936, 2.

electoral system in 1937, Kalinin noted that the new Soviet system would resemble the French electoral system.<sup>50</sup>

When the state began publicly promoting the new draft constitution, the two premier legal scholars of the day, Nikolai Krylenko and Andrei Vyshinsky, were tasked with writing articles on constitutionality and constitutional rights. Both authors were intimately involved in the formation of the Soviet legal system and the Soviet theories of justice. Vyshinsky was Procurator General of the USSR at the time and headed the Drafting Committee's Subcommittee on Judicial Organs. Krylenko had served as the Procurator General for the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic. Vyshinsky promoted the codification of legal thought in the USSR, advocating the use of precisely defined penal codes, while Krylenko advocated revolutionary justice that gave judges elected from the people wide latitude in deciding cases. Vyshinsky argued that such imprecision produced various inconsistencies and undermined the credibility of Soviet law, while Krylenko argued that codified legal systems were inherently bourgeois in nature.<sup>51</sup> Both authors agreed, however, that Soviet democracy and constitutionalism had evolved out of European traditions. They postulated that the Soviet Constitution was a newer, better, form of democracy and they condemned European governments for not being democratic enough or for only paying lip-service to democratic and representative ideals. Their perspectives exemplified the belief of many Soviet

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<sup>50</sup> Getty. "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," *Russian Review* Vol. 61, No. 1 (January, 2002), 113-138.

<sup>51</sup> For more information on the disagreements between Krylenko and Vyshinsky see David Shearer. *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and social order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009; Peter Solomon. *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

thinkers who viewed the Soviet constitution as heir to European intellectual traditions, while noting that this tradition had only been correctly interpreted in the USSR.

Krylenko, the main proponent of revolutionary legality, was reaching the end of both his judicial career and life when the draft constitution was proposed for discussion and ratified.<sup>52</sup> Despite his declining role, he produced four brochures: two very similar brochures on the rights and duties of citizens, another on the electoral law of the USSR, and one on the newly renamed Soviets of Laborers Deputies.<sup>53</sup> In these works, he attacked western declarations of rights and electoral systems for their incomplete realization of democratic ideals, which he interpreted as a function of their bourgeois nature. In his works on the rights and duties of citizens, for example, Krylenko conducted a systematic review of preceding declarations of rights, including the US Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, and the French Constitution of 1793. He concluded that these declarations provided no guarantee of the stated rights and, in agreement with Marxist conceptualizations of the state, that they were written by a bourgeois state that reflected the will of that state and of the exploiting class of that state, thereby precluding their realization by the exploited.<sup>54</sup> However, Krylenko argued, the new Soviet constitution made these rights concrete and provided for their realization through the “provision of typographic offices,

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<sup>52</sup> He was executed as a wrecker in 1938.

<sup>53</sup> Nikolai Krylenko. *Pravda i obiazanosti sovetskigo grazhdanina*, Partizdat TsK VKPb, 1936; *Osnovnye Pravda i obiazanosti sovetskigo grazhdanina*. Partizdat TsK VKPb, 1937; *Izberatel'nyi zakon Soiuzna SSR*, Sotszhkgiz 1937; *Soviety deputatov trudiashchikhsia- politicheskaia osnova SSSR*, Isdatelstvo TsK VLKSI Molodaya Gvardia, 1937

<sup>54</sup> Krylenko, “*Pravda i obiazanosti sovetskigo grazhdanina*,” 8-14.

buildings, streets, means of communication and other material conditions, necessary for their realization to the laborers. This is what distinguishes our Constitution from the bourgeois constitutions. At its core, this ability rests only in states where power is in the hands of the working, laboring mass.”<sup>55</sup> At no point did Krylenko question the desirability of democracy or citizens’ rights to have protections from the state. By setting up bourgeois constitutions as pretenders to the throne of constitutional democracy, he set the stage for explaining how these ideals would be more perfectly realized under a socialist system.

Krylenko also discussed the transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat to a classless society. According to him, this transition, which he believed was well underway, signified that the masses were now the ones in control of the system. For this reason he argued that the USSR had become a democracy of the majority and that the dictatorship of the proletariat was no longer needed. He highlighted this evolution by exploring the name change of soviets in his 1937 brochure. From 1917 to 1936 soviets had been known as the Soviets of Workers, Peasants, Soldiers and Sailors Deputies. In the draft 1936 Constitution, they were renamed the Soviets of Laborers Deputies, implying both a liquidation of the class enemies and an erasure of the barriers between workers, peasants and other social groups.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, Krylenko argued, even the new title of the soviets signified the transition, for the first time in history, to a rule by the majority of the population and

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<sup>55</sup> Krylenko, “*Pravda i obiazanosti sovetskigo grazhdanina*,” 43. S. L Ronin further elaborates on this idea in *Konstitutsiia 1936*. Gosydarstvennoe izdatel’snvo Uridicheskoi Literatury, 1957.

<sup>56</sup> Krylenko, *Sovety deputatov trudiashchikhsia- politicheskaia osnova SSSR*, 12-13.

further democratization of the USSR. This was only possible now that its class structure allowed for the complete realization of democratic rights.

Andrei Vyshinsky, the main advocate of legal codification in the USSR and Stalin's Procurator General during the Moscow show trials, wrote in a similar manner about constitutionality in general and the 1936 constitution in particular.<sup>57</sup> While Vyshinsky's main work on constitutionalism was written after the ratification of the 1936 Constitution, it is valuable because it highlights the continuation of the specific narrative on constitutionalism in the USSR, despite Krylenko and many of the constitution's drafters becoming victims during the mass repression. As Procurator General of the USSR from 1935-1939, Vyshinsky became the main voice of legal formulation and interpretation in the Soviet Union. In a speech titled "The Constitutional Principles of the Soviet State," delivered to the Economics and Justice Sections of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR on November 3, 1939, Vyshinsky, like Krylenko, criticized bourgeois constitutions for being insufficiently specific in guaranteeing citizen's rights. For example, he criticized the Belgian constitution of 1831, the Norwegian constitution of 1814, as well as the English<sup>58</sup> and French constitutions for not dedicating even a single statute to the local organs of power. He pointed out that in the 1936 Constitution, there were eight articles dealing with local power and even more references in the constitutions of the Soviet republics. He noted in particular 22 articles in the constitution of the Azerbaijani republic and 26 such articles in the constitution of the RSFSR. For Vyshinsky, local organs of

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<sup>57</sup> Vyshinsky also served as the head of the Judicial subcommittee of the Constitutional Commission

<sup>58</sup> Although various Soviet officials and sources refer to an English constitution, there is no single document that warrants such a title.



power were important levers of democracy and should not be excluded from constitutional protection.<sup>59</sup>

Vyshinsky further expounded on this idea in his 1948 work, *The Law of the Soviet State*. For Vyshinsky, “the realization of popular sovereignty requires the annihilation of the bourgeois state and bourgeois parliamentarism - - an instrument to oppress and crush the masses. The proletariat -- being in authority - - creates its own system of representative organs to replace bourgeois parliamentarism.”<sup>60</sup> He argued that how Soviet organs of power were truly representative and integral to the formation of a participatory society. Vyshinsky explained how the Soviets are “at once representative organs (for only they represent the people) and working organs as well, organs with whose help the people immediately execute leading state work. In the form of Soviets, the working class makes true popular sovereignty, having called the people to govern the state and made them alone the bearers of state authority.”<sup>61</sup> Like Krylenko, Vyshinsky only rejected *bourgeois* implementations of democracy and *bourgeois* notions of popular sovereignty. He embraced the concepts of democracy and popular sovereignty in full, and explained how socialist democracy was the “correct” manifestation of these ideas. Krylenko and Vyshinsky’s respect for the concepts of democracy, popular sovereignty, and constitutionalism, and their rejection of bourgeois manifestations of these concepts as corrupt, were firmly grounded Marx and Engels’ writings.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Andrei Vyshinsky, *Konsitutsionnye printsipy Sovetskogo Gysudarstva*, OGIZ Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1940, 30.

<sup>60</sup> Vyshinsky, *The Law of the Soviet State*. (The Macmillan Company: New York, 1948), 166 -167.

<sup>61</sup> Vyshinsky, *The Law of the Soviet State*, 166 -167.

<sup>62</sup> Unlike Krylenko, whose works have few citations, Vyshinsky frequently cites the Marx- Engels canon. This work will examine the specific texts cited by Vyshinsky in his 1939 speech: Marx’s

Understanding how Marx and Engels viewed constitutions and the rights that constitutions granted is key to appreciating how Soviet leaders, like Stalin, Molotov, Krylenko and Vyshinsky, understood the purpose of a constitution and to understanding the evolution of communist democratic theory. Whereas earlier democratic thinkers had viewed democratic rights as natural or “God given,” Marx utilized Hegel’s ideas about base and superstructure to formulate a concept of social democracy. He viewed democratic rights and principles, enshrined in constitutions, as a product of the socioeconomic and historical development, a snapshot of its development at that point in time, rather than an enduring ideal. Reviewing the work of his mentor, Marx took his base-superstructure ideas of constitutionalism and applied them to social democracy. Marx extrapolated from Hegel’s theories that the constitution of the state was a reflection of its political and economic makeup rather than an enduring ideal.<sup>63</sup> Because Marx also had a very specific view of history as both linear and progressive, he considered the development of democratic constitutionalism was a step forward on the path of progress. He noted that “in monarchy we have the people of the constitution, in democracy the constitution of the people. . . Here the constitution not only in itself, according to essence, but according to existence and actuality is returned to its real ground, actual man, the actual people, and established as its own work. The constitution

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*Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843) and Engels *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), and *Anti Duhring* (1877). These texts were selected because they were specifically mentioned by Vyshinsky as sources of constitutional principles in the USSR. A discussion of the full pantheon of Marx and Engels work is beyond the scope of this project.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch02.htm> accessed 6/21/12

appears as what it is, the free product of men.<sup>64</sup> Soviet leaders used Marx's idea of the constitution as a representation of the society that created it and his notion of the progressive development of historical constitutionalism to justify drafting a new constitution and promoting it as the paradigm of progress, the correct manifestation of Enlightenment ideas.

While Marx established a broad theoretical basis for socialist constitutionality, Engels applied this theory. In *Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels criticized the English government for not being representative enough and for still having trappings of feudalism. He claimed that the House of Commons retained the ability to violate *habeas corpus*, and he decried the lack of the enumeration of the rights of citizens in the English constitution.<sup>65</sup> At the end of his lengthy exposé on English constitutionality, Engels concluded that English democracy was a farce, but soon would make the transition to real democracy; "not like that of the French revolution, whose antithesis was autocracy, but a democracy whose antithesis will be middle class and property, social democracy."<sup>66</sup> By repeatedly pointing out England's failure to live up to the democratic principles espoused in English law, Engels demonstrated his support for representative government and a limitation of state's rights to impose its will on the people. For him the most important aspects of his analysis of the English constitution were the inevitable evolution of democracy towards socialism and the failure of bourgeois

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch02.htm> accessed 6/21/12

<sup>65</sup> The choice of the phrase "English Constitution" is Engels'. No actual single English constitution exists, instead the English constitution Engels refers to is a collection of precedents dating back to Magna Carta that establish rights of citizens, rather than one document.

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/condition-england.htm> accessed 6/21/2012

constitutions to truly realize democratic constitutionalism, because of the class structure that placed power in the hands of the privileged. In *Anti Duhring*, Engels traced the development of calls for equal rights to the development of capitalist trade and the bourgeoisie. He noted that from its inception, the bourgeoisie was hypocritical in its call for equal rights because in reality they sought to secure rights only for the privileged few. He cites the first constitution, the American Constitution, as an example of this hypocrisy as it proclaimed equality to be a human right while providing for the ownership of slaves.<sup>67</sup> Engels noted, however, that there was a positive side to the development of the bourgeoisie and their imperfect constitutions. The proletariat emerged in response to capitalist developments, imbibed the rhetoric of equality and laid in wait to push these calls for equality to their ultimate conclusion.

“The proletarians took the bourgeoisie at its word: equality must not be merely apparent, must not apply merely to the sphere of the state, but must also be real, must also be extended to the social, economic sphere. . . since the French bourgeoisie, from the great revolution on, brought civil equality to the forefront, the French proletariat has answered blow for blow with the demand for social, economic equality, and equality has become the battle-cry particularly of the French proletariat.”<sup>68</sup>

Engels believed that only the proletariat was capable of realizing true equality, something that Soviet leaders would also espouse from 1917 on.

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<sup>67</sup> Technically it is the Declaration of Independence, which is a non-binding document, not the constitution that proclaims all men are created equal, but the hypocrisy exists all the same.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring.htm> accessed 6/21/2012

While Marx and Engels are the most famous and most often cited cornerstones of Soviet democracy, the idea of a constitution as a snapshot of society did not originate with them. That idea was the fundamental premise of Ferdinand Lassalle's "On the Essence of Constitutions" (1862).<sup>69</sup> Like Marx, Lassalle conducted a historical materialist exploration of the development and definition of constitutions and concluded that the constitution of a country is the codification of the relation of forces actually existing in the country.<sup>70</sup> He believed that once "these actual relations of force are put down on paper, are given written form, and after they have been thus put down, they are no longer simply actual relations of force but have now become laws, judicial institutions and as a constitution is the basic law of the land, it must be an active force which necessarily makes all other laws and juridical institutions in the land what they are."<sup>71</sup> For Lassalle, the constitution was the fundamental basis of all other documents of jurisprudence in the country, not simply representing but actively shaping all other laws. Because of this active nature of constitutions, Lassalle concluded that as "the actual constitution of a nation lies in the real, actual relation of forces existing there, written constitutions are valid and stable only when they correctly express the actual relation of forces in a society."<sup>72</sup>

Marx, Engels, and Lassalle firmly rooted their analyses of constitutionality and constitutions in the European Enlightenment traditions of democracy and civil

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<sup>69</sup> Despite the influence of Lassalle on successive socialist thinkers, he was not directly cited by Vyshinsky, possibly for political reasons.

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol03/no01/lassalle.htm> accessed 7/4/2012

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol03/no01/lassalle.htm> accessed 7/4/2012

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol03/no01/lassalle.htm> accessed 7/4/2012

rights. Marx and Engels simultaneously rejected the bourgeois manifestations of democracy as inherently false or, at best, incomplete realizations of these ideals, and anticipated the proletariat pushing democracy to its logical conclusion, where power was in the hands of the many, not the few. This same simultaneous embracing of democratic ideals, rejection of “false” bourgeois constitutions, and insistence that only socialist constitutions are truly democratic, coupled with Lassalle’s ideas that the constitution must reflect the current status of society, dominated Soviet constitutional thought in general and the draft of the 1936 Constitution in particular.

In press releases and speeches published during the All-Union discussion of the draft constitution (June 1936-December 1936), leaders such as Stalin and Molotov emphasized that the constitution was the culmination of Enlightenment ideas, taking the imperfect bourgeois models to their superior Soviet conclusion. The fundamental Marxist principle of the nature of the state, where the economic system shapes the political and social structure of the state, coupled with a remarkable awareness of the constitutions and electoral laws of “bourgeois” countries combined to shape Bolshevik perceptions of constitutionality and democracy. The leadership portrayed Soviet constitutionality as the antithesis of bourgeois constitutionalism because of its class focus, but it shared the same European roots as other democratic movements. These shared ideas about the value of democracy, the rights of citizens, and the concept of a social contract are evident in the leadership’s description of the new draft constitution. What set Soviet constitutionalism apart, they argued, was the USSR’s class nature and a constitution

that elucidated the specific terms of the social contract and the mechanisms by which the rights of Soviet citizens could be realized.

Addressing the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, Stalin noted the superiority of the new Soviet constitution over the constitutions of bourgeois countries:

bourgeois constitutions typically limit the functionality of the formal rights of citizens, not caring about conditions for the realization of these rights, about the opportunity for their realization, or means of their realization. They talk about equal rights between citizens, but forget that there cannot be actual equality between owner and worker, between landlord and peasant if the first has wealth and political authority in society and the second is deprived of both, if the first are exploiters and the second exploited . . . They talk about democracy (addressing bourgeois critics of the draft) but what is democracy? Democracy in capitalist countries, where there are antagonistic classes, has at the last reckoning, democracy for the propertied minority. Democracy in the USSR, on the other hand, is democracy for the laborers, i.e. democracy for all. And from this it follows, that the fundamentals of democracy are not destroyed in the draft constitution, but in bourgeois constitutions. Therefore I think that the USSR has the only outright democratic constitution in the world.<sup>73</sup>

The rhetorical tactic of Soviet leaders distancing themselves from bourgeois democracy and highlighting the uniqueness of the Soviet Constitution has allowed western scholars to remove Soviet constitutional issues and thought from

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<sup>73</sup> Stalin, "Doklad o Proekte Konstitutsii," *Pravda*, November 28, 1936, 3.

discussions of pan-European constitutional developments. And the very real differences between “bourgeois” constitutions and the Soviet constitution have led some scholars to mistakenly ignore the shared ideas. Soviet leaders embraced longstanding Enlightenment ideas about the basis of sovereignty and democratic ideals but adopted them to fit the Marxist conception of state formation and the evolution of history. In this manner the Soviet Union portrayed itself as the only true heir to the Enlightenment and European democratic traditions.

Constitutionalism in the USSR involved more than the theoretical embracing of European and socialist principles. Such principles were used to drive democratization and increase participation within the Soviet state, particularly at the regional and local levels. The Soviet leadership viewed popular participation as a powerful weapon against bureaucratism and corruption. To that end the central leadership, including Stalin, promoted an agenda of increased participation and democratization of Soviet society at the regional and local level. Few people would ever associate the name Stalin with the advancement of democracy. But, in 1936, upon the drafting and subsequent implementation of the draft constitution that would bear his name, Stalin was indeed a driving force behind the expansion of democratic principles in the USSR. In particular, Stalin advocated the expanded electoral franchise and multicandidate elections, which were introduced in the draft 1936 Constitution and were to be applied to the elections to the Supreme Soviet in 1937. In his interview with Roy Howard on March 1, 1936, Stalin addressed the



issue of open elections.<sup>74</sup> While he dismissed the idea of multi-party elections, he strongly supported the idea of *multi-candidate* elections. Stalin noted that under the new draft constitution, social organizations of all varieties, not just the Communist Party, would have the right to nominate candidates for election.<sup>75</sup> These contests, not between different parties but between different individuals, would allow the proletariat to effect change in the government and policy through mass participation, one of the foundational principles of Soviet democracy.<sup>76</sup> Stalin saw these multi-candidate elections as effective weapons against bureaucratic incompetence in the USSR:

I foresee very lively election campaigns. There are not a few institutions in our country, which work badly. Cases occur when this or that local government body fails to satisfy certain of the multifarious and growing requirements of the toilers of town and country. Have you built a good school or not? Have you improved housing conditions? Are you a bureaucrat? Have you helped to make our labor more effective and our lives more cultured? Such will be the criteria by which millions of electors will measure the fitness of candidates, reject the unsuitable, expunge their names from candidates' lists, and promote and nominate the best. Yes, election campaigns will be

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<sup>74</sup> "Beseda tovarishcha Stalina s predsdatelem amerikanskogo gazetnogo ob'edineniia 'Skripps-Govard N'iuspeipers' g-nom Roi Govardom" *Pravda*, March 5, 1936, 2. The translation I use is courtesy of Marxist.org. While the draft constitution was not formally issued until June 1936, the drafting commission had been engaged in writing the constitution since July 1935, with a complete first draft being prepared by February 1936.

<sup>75</sup> "Candidates will be put forward not only by the Communist Party, but by all sorts of public, non-Party organizations. And we have hundreds of these."

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/03/01.htm> accessed 6/27/2012

<sup>76</sup> Stalin's campaign to listen to the "little people" has a similar focus on mass participation as a way of increasing officials' accountability. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, "How the Mice Buried the Cat: Scenes from the Great Purges of 1937 in the Russian Provinces" *Russian Review* Vol. 52, No. 3 (July, 1993), 299-320.

very lively; they will be conducted around numerous, very acute problems, principally of a practical nature, of first class importance for the people. Our new electoral system will tighten up all institutions and organizations and compel them to improve their work. Universal, direct and secret suffrage in the U.S.S.R. will be a whip in the hands of the population against the organs of government, which work badly.<sup>77</sup>

In the fall of 1936, in the face of numerous suggestions from the populace to re-impose limits on the voting franchise, Stalin defended his decision to grant universal suffrage. In his speech on the draft Constitution to the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, Stalin stated that the Soviet state had deprived “dangerous elements” of voting rights during a time when they were waging open war against the people and undermining Soviet laws. Now that the exploiting class had been destroyed and Soviet power had been strengthened, the time to introduce universal suffrage had come. He countered the argument that universal suffrage will allow enemy elements to worm their way into organs of power<sup>78</sup> by replying that not all former kulaks and white-guardists were harmful to Soviet power and if the people somewhere elect

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<sup>77</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/03/01.htm> accessed 6/27/2012 For more on Stalin’s deep dislike of and struggles against bureaucracy see Erik van Ree. *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin: A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism*, (Richmond: Curzon, 2002).

<sup>78</sup> This argument about enemy elements worming their way into power most likely came from regional party leaders and not the populace. Arch Getty (“Excesses Are Not Permitted’: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s”) however notes these complaints were frequent from regional party leaders, who resisted the implementation of a multicandidate system from its inception. Getty argues that: “For regional chiefs, free voting for the soviets was a nightmare. If they lost the elections, it could mean “losing one of their two positions, the soviet one that enabled their leadership.” But even if the resulting legislature was powerless, the regional leaders felt that anti-Soviet feeling was strong enough in the country as to threaten party control, and open elections would give it voice. They resisted the new voting system from the beginning.” “Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations” in James Harris, ed., *Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Lenin and Stalin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. This comment, therefore, could be seen as a subtle way of checking their resistance.

dangerous people, it will mean that the agitational and propagandistic work was not carried out well.<sup>79</sup>

J. Arch Getty notes that Stalin remained a staunch supporter of multi-candidate elections through much of 1937, despite increasing resistance from regional and local party leaders. Getty also notes that Stalin wrote to regional leaders, such as Ukraine's Kosior, to remind them that voting was to be carried out by secret ballot.<sup>80</sup> He argues that the central leadership propagated a long campaign for multi-candidate elections and pushed regional leaders to make the appropriate preparations until October 1937, when facing increased resistance and outright disobedience from regional party apparatus, the Central Committee and Stalin abandoned the plans for multicandidate elections.<sup>81</sup> Though Stalin primarily supported democratization as a tool for combating bureaucratism in the party and state apparatus, he may also have genuinely embraced the fundamental notions of Soviet democracy and, if Getty is correct, remained committed to the idea of multi-candidate elections until it became politically untenable.

Molotov too focused on the idea of democracy by means of participatory elections, and their benefits for the party and state. He noted that the new electoral system would secure the complete development of democracy and would help to improve the state apparatus through the expansion and renewal of leading soviet

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<sup>79</sup>Stalin. "Doklad o Proekte Konstitutsii." *Pravda*, November 28, 1936, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Getty also concludes that the beginning of Kulak mass operations on the same day that the electoral laws continuing to support multi-candidate elections were published was Stalin's way of compromising with his regional leaders. He was forcing them to have multi-candidate elections but was going to help them win it by allowing them to kill or deport hundreds of thousands of "dangerous elements. Getty, "'Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," 126.

<sup>81</sup> J. Arch Getty. "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s" and "'Excesses Are Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s".

cadres and the elevation of working people to the party organization.<sup>82</sup> In addition to supplying new cadres with strong ties to the working people, “the new elections will shake up the weak and strike out at bureaucratism.”<sup>83</sup> Democracy was a tool to turn against incompetent and unresponsive regional and local bureaucratic organizations that had consistently frustrated central authorities.<sup>84</sup>

However, the same class nature that Soviet leaders used to demonstrate the unique nature of Soviet constitutionalism also precluded multiparty elections or even the possibility of other parties existing. When confronted by Roy Howard with charge that a one-party state seemed to stifle democracy, Stalin replied:

“Since there are no classes, since the dividing lines between classes have been obliterated, since only a slight, but not a fundamental, difference between various strata in socialist society has remained, there can be no soil for the creation of contending parties. Where there are not several classes, there cannot be several parties, for a party is part of a class.”<sup>85</sup>

Molotov was even blunter about the impossibility of another party. In his speech to the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, he stated: “in our country where quarrels between our classes are absent, where workers and peasants unite around the communist party, and where other political parties, as the entirety of our

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<sup>82</sup> Molotov, “Rech’ Tov. Molotov o Novoi Konstitutsii.” *Pravda*, November 30, 1936, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Molotov, “Rech’ Tov. Molotov o Novoi Konstitutsii.” *Pravda*, November 30, 1936, 2.

<sup>84</sup> For more on the center’s contentious relationship with local officials see: Gabor Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933-1953*. (New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1991), and for a specific case study on the problems caused by regional obstinacy see Charles Hier “Party, Peasants and Power in a Russian District: the Winning of Peasant Support for Collectivization in Sychevka Raion 1928-1931,” (unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2004).

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1936/03/01.htm> accessed 6/27/2012. He offers up the same justification for a one party state in his “Doklad o Proekte Konstitutsii” *Pravda*, November 28,1936. 3.

experiment showed, are only agents of the restoration of capitalism, there cannot be a place for their legalization.”<sup>86</sup>

The framers of the 1936 constitution were guided by the idea, articulated by Lenin, that the Party was always correct, that it could not err, and that it represented History, which for Marxists was a progressive force. While often left unspoken, this faith in the correctness of party line and doctrine was an essential feature of Soviet constitutionalism of the 1930s. This does not mean that the framers, and Stalin himself, believed that Party rule, democratic voting, and multi-candidate elections were incompatible. It is to say that they believed that one party rule would continue and that in that sense, History as implemented by an unerring Party would continue. Later in 1937, the problem occurred when it became apparent that the multi-candidate elections and unchallenged party rule were, in fact, incompatible.

Despite obvious differences with other European democratic communities, the Soviet Union relied heavily on European revolutionary traditions, and concepts of democracy and constitutionalism in formulating both its concept of a constitutional state and the 1936 Constitution. Soviet democracy was in part a means to help further the advance of socialism, in part by subjugating local and regional officials to the will of the people. But the idea that popular will formed the correct and unerring foundation of a state had roots in the French Revolution as well as the idea of a social contract. Soviet legal scholars borrowed from these ideas, as articulated by socialist philosophers, like Marx, Engels and Lassalle, to define the

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<sup>86</sup> Molotov, "Rech' Tov. Molotov o Novoi Konstitutsii." *Pravda*, November 30, 1936, 2.

state’s relationship with its people and vice versa—a social contract — as formulated in the constitution of the USSR.

## Drafting the Constitution

Molotov announced the need to revise the 1924 Constitution at the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets in February 1935, after which the Central Executive Committee proceeded to elect a thirty-one member Constitutional Commission. Despite being appointed in February, the commission’s first meeting did not occur until July 7, 1935. Stalin chaired the initial session, which appointed twelve sub-commissions to address the various facets of the constitution.<sup>87</sup> Stalin was Chairman of the Commission, while Molotov and Kalinin served as vice chairmen. Each of the sub-commissions was chaired by a prominent political figure, all of whom were high ranking party members and many of whom had held state posts <sup>88</sup>.

### Composition of Committee Sub-commissions<sup>89</sup>

Name of Subcommission	Chair of Subcommission	Number of commission members
General questions	Stalin	10
Economics	Molotov	17
Finances	Chubar†	11
Rights	Bukharin†	9
Electoral system	Radek†	12
Judicial organs	Vyshinsky	9

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<sup>87</sup> Getty. “State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s” *Slavic Review* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring 1991), 19.

<sup>88</sup> Many of these people also held state positions as well. For example Molotov was the head of the government as the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, Chubar’ was Deputy Chairman of the USSR’s Council of Labor and Defense, Vyshinsky was the Procurator General of the USSR, Akulov had served as the Procurator General before Vyshinsky, Voroshilov was Peoples’ Commissar of Defense, and Litvinov was People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>89</sup> This chart was taken from Ellen Wimberg’s “Socialism, Democratism and Criticism: The Soviet Press and the National Discussion of the 1936 Draft Constitution,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992), 314.

Central/local organs of power	Akulov†	10
People's education	Zhdanov	9
Labor	Kaganovich	13
Defense	Voroshilov	11
International affairs	Litvinov	6
Editing	Stalin and all subcommittee chairmen <sup>90</sup>	11

†Four of the chairmen did not survive the mass repression: Chubar' (d.1939), Bukharin (d. 1938), Radek (d. 1939), Akulov (d. 1937).

During this initial session, the chairmen of the subcommittees were instructed to nominate their subcommittee members and to prepare drafts of their section of the constitution in two months. The two-month deadline was not met and the drafting work of the sub-commissions continued into 1936. What had begun as changes to an existing constitution became a lengthy process, involving at least five drafts. Each sub-commission produced its own partial draft, which the editorial subcommittee of Iakov Arkaidiovich Iakovlev,<sup>91</sup> Aleksei Ivanovich Stetskii,<sup>92</sup> and Boris Markovich Tal'<sup>93</sup> wove the partial drafts together into a complete draft by February 1936; a second version of this draft was formulated in April 1936.<sup>94</sup> Stalin himself met with

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<sup>90</sup> The original editing of the recommended draft was done by Iakovlev, Stetskii and Tal' while Stalin weighed in heavily on the review process, then the whole of the committee made changes to the draft Stalin, Iakovlev Stetskii and Tal' had created.

<sup>91</sup> A party member since 1913, Iakovlev was the organizer and editor-in-chief for *Krestianskaia Gazeta* from 1923-1929, member of the Central Control Commission from 1924-1930, Commissar of Agriculture USSR from 1929, and head of the Agricultural Section of the Central Committee from 1934. He was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938.

<sup>92</sup> Stetskii was a member of the Party from 1916, serving in the Civil War on the Red Army Staff. In 1923 he began working for various sections of the Central Control Commission and the Worker and Peasants' Inspectorate. From 1926 to 1930, he was head of the Agitprop section of the Northwestern Bureau of the Central Committee and the Leningrad Regional Committee of the VKP(b). From 1930-1938, he was head of the Agitprop Section for the Central Committee. He was arrested and executed in 1938.

<sup>93</sup> A Party member since 1918, Tal' served at the front in the Civil War. He served on the editorial board of *Pravda* from 1930-1932, and from 1934-1937, he edited various publications, such as *Bolshevikia Pechat'*, *Bolshevik* and *Izvestiia*. He was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938.

<sup>94</sup> Getty. "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), 19. Many earlier sources, such as Stephen Cohen's *Bukharin and the*

the editorial sub-commission in his office on April 17, 18, 19, and 22, 1936, and personally revised the draft constitution multiple times. On April 17, 1936, Stetskii, Iakovlev and Tal' submitted a draft constitution to Stalin for his consideration and he made recommendations. On April 18, 19 and 22, the three drew up subsequent drafts were made, with most of Stalin's suggestions adopted wholesale. From there, the draft was presented to the whole Constitutional Commission, where even more changes were made, before being published for national discussion on June 12, 1936.

As this discussion of the Constitutional Commission's work suggests, the writing of the draft constitution was a collective affair involving sub-commissions, the editorial sub-committee, Stalin, and finally the whole Commission. As the following discussion will make clear, the original draft itself underwent various revisions, some at the suggestion of commission members, some by the Editing Sub-commission, and some by Stalin. The available archival materials do not allow one to identify who, other than Stalin, proposed what aspects of the draft and why. But that should not deflect readers from crucial aspect of the draft constitution—it was the result of a collective effort by leading party members and state officials who shared a common vision of the role and purpose of a constitution.

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*Bolshevik Revolution: a Political Biography 1888-1938*, 424-425 (in the 1992 Russian language edition) credit Bukharin with writing the 1936 constitutional draft. The source for this claim comes from Boris Nikolaevsky's "Power and the Soviet Elite: The Letter of an Old Bolshevik and other Essays" *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (July 1966), 105-107. However, upon examining the documents in the *opis* of the Constitutional Commission in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (f. 3316, op. 40), I found that the original complete draft appears to have been written by Iakovlev, Stetskii and Tal', and heavily revised by Stalin himself. Bukharin's contributions were therefore probably limited a draft of the section on rights, as he chaired that committee. Getty also concludes that Bukharin likely played a much less important role than previously ascribed to him and that Stalin "clearly played a major role in the process and devoted considerable time to it." "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," 22.



The draft constitution was to provide not only the legal basis of the Soviet state, but it also to defined citizenship, and the rights and duties of the state and citizens, which later became key issues in the public discussion. Examining the drafting process allows us to see a variety of opinions about the role of the state and offers a glimpse into the negotiations behind the formation of a central narrative about the role of the people in governance and the shaping of an ascribed citizen identity. Overall, the original draft produced by Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii focused much attention on the creation of an encompassing program of socio-cultural development, designed to create a modern Soviet citizen. As longstanding Bolsheviks, Iakovlev, Stetskii and Tal' were committed to remaking society by changing social relations and gender roles, and obliterating bourgeois' patterns of life. However, despite his radical economic policies of the 1930's, Stalin was a social conservative. He removed many aspects of Iakovlev, Stetskii and Tal's more radical social changes from the draft constitution, ensuring the continuation of more traditional social roles and state-building efforts. Therefore, rather than examine the entire draft constitution, this section will focus on the evolution of articles in the sections on social construction of the USSR, the Courts and Procuracy, elections and voting rights, and the rights and duties of citizens—each of which received considerable attention in the public discussion—in order to understand the master narrative that the leadership of state sought to project about its relationship to the people and the role of participation of the people in governance.<sup>95</sup> Interested readers will find a copy of the Draft Constitution in Appendix 1.

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<sup>95</sup> For a good overview of the changes made to the structure of the executive, legislative and judicial

## Defining Citizenship

Citizenship rights define who has the right to participate in governance and who does not. In the first two Soviet constitutions, citizenship was purposefully limited to workers, peasants and certain working people. Many members of the former exploiting classes were disenfranchised and excluded from governance and, in some cases, from state programs like education. With the announcement of the victory of socialism and the destruction of exploiting classes, citizenship in the USSR had to be redefined. The changed definition of citizens who were entitled to legal rights meant that the 1936 Constitution underwent a lengthy drafting process. By examining the changes in the various drafts, we can appreciate the process of constructing citizenship identities in the USSR. We can also analyze the internal party dialogue as various leaders proposed differing definitions of citizenship and citizenship rights in the drafts of the constitution, where class, race and nationality, gender, and participation in electoral franchise helped to define citizenship.

Because of the Marxist nature of the Soviet state, a class-based characterization of citizenship was the defining factor in classifying citizenship. The first section of the original draft constitution demarcated the class make-up of the USSR and made clear in which classes and groups sovereignty was vested. The first article of Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's original draft defined the USSR as a socialist government of free laborers (трудящихся) of the city and country, and stated that all power in the USSR rests with the laborers in the persons of the Soviets of

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sections of government, see Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," 20-22.

Laborers' Deputies.<sup>96</sup> Stalin heavily revised this article, changing it to “the USSR is a socialist state of workers (рабочих) and peasants (крестьян)”<sup>97</sup> and took the second half of original Article 1 and made it its own separate article. Stalin's description of the organs of power in the USSR became Article 2: “The political basis of the USSR is composed of the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies /Soviets of Laborers' Deputies,<sup>98</sup> which developed and became stronger as a result of the overthrow of power of the landlords and capitalists.”<sup>99</sup> Stalin emphasized once again the existence of two official classes, workers and peasants, by trying to officially change the name of the Soviets in the original draft. He also added a completely new Article 3 to Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's April 17<sup>th</sup> draft, by recommending: “All power in the USSR resides in the laborers of the city and countryside in the persons of the Soviet of Laborers' Deputies.”

These first three articles acknowledged the concept of popular sovereignty in that all power was vested in and arose from the people, while also noting the role that the victory over the exploiting classes had in shaping the way the state conceived of its constituency. However, Stalin's decision to define the USSR as a state of “Workers and Peasants” rather than “laborers” would have real far-reaching consequences for the populace of the USSR. While the Russian word “laborers” (трудящихся) refers to all laboring people without differentiation, the use of the words workers and peasants implies a strong separation of the two. This was to be

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<sup>96</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 1

<sup>97</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 1

<sup>98</sup> In the final draft constitution, the soviets kept the name Soviets of Laborer's Deputies, despite Stalin's addition of the label Worker and Peasants' deputies, which was removed in the final version. It would appear that Stalin did not always get his own way,

<sup>99</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 1

of profound importance, given that other articles specified that workers received more benefits from the state than the peasants. This unequal distribution of rights, despite guarantees of equality, would be strongly contested during the public discussion of the draft.

In contrast with Stalin's definition of a "classless" society composed of two classes with different rights, Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev had proposed a different, more egalitarian, interpretation of class in the USSR. Article 10 of their April 17<sup>th</sup> draft stated: "In the USSR the division between classes has been annihilated. In the USSR there is no exploitation of people by other people, no parasitical classes living off the work of the workers and peasants. Soviet society is comprised of free toilers of the city and countryside -- the workers, peasants and intelligentsia. All of them are builders of socialism with equal rights. (Все они являются равноправными строителями социализма.)"<sup>100</sup> This conceptualization of classlessness in the USSR would have made the collective farmers equal to workers because it denied that any important differences between them still existed. Together with the intelligentsia, whom Stalin had not mentioned, all were equal contributors to the construction of a socialist state, and therefore were entitled to equal rights. However, Stalin struck this article from the draft constitution on April 17<sup>th</sup> in favor of his concept of a strictly divided working class and peasantry. In his speech on the constitution at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets in November 1936, Stalin defended his word choice, stating

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<sup>100</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 5

that it is well known that the Soviet Union has two classes, workers and peasants, and that only this phraseology represents the “true” social makeup of the USSR.<sup>101</sup>

The rhetorical separation of workers and peasants linguistically in the draft constitution also both created and implied real inequality between the two groups. In the context of explaining the ramifications of the further democratization of the Soviet electoral system in his speech at the 7th Congress of Soviets in 1935, in the context of explaining the ramifications of the further democratization of the Soviet electoral system, Molotov stated: “Soviet Democracy provides for the participation of the peasantry, with guidance, in the task of administering the new government.”<sup>102</sup> Molotov essentially implied that the peasantry was still not developed enough to be trusted and still needed “guidance” from the more conscious working class. While such obvious statements of the superiority of the working class seemed to disappear from official statements during the campaign for the public discussion of the constitution and its ratification,<sup>103</sup> subsequent amendments made to the section on citizens’ rights and duties demonstrated that Stalin did not regard peasants as full citizens with the rights and privileges of the working class.<sup>104</sup>

While class remained the most important factor for determining Soviet citizenship, the Commission’s members recognized that race, nationality, and gender limited franchise in most democracies. They responded by promising equal

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<sup>101</sup> Stalin, “Doklad o Proekte Konsitutsii,” *Pravda*. November 28, 1936, 4.

<sup>102</sup> Molotov, “Ob izmeneniakh Sovetskogo Konstitutsii,” *Izvestiia*. February 7, 1935, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Instead the rhetoric shifts to talking about them working together, see discussion below.

<sup>104</sup> This did not go unnoticed by the peasantry and is one of the more contentious issues during the popular discussion.

rights for all races and nationalities, and both sexes. Gender and racial equality were incorporated in the first two Soviet constitutions as part of Lenin's strategy to minimize their importance relative to class. The Soviet leadership's stance on racial equality had not changed much by 1936. Iakovlev, Tal' and Steskii's draft article on race stated that all citizens of the USSR have equal rights, regardless of nationality or race. It guaranteed aid to help disadvantaged national minorities and guaranteed their rights as national minorities.<sup>105</sup> Other than some minor changes in wording, this article was not changed. Women's' rights had long been a key issue for socialists. The first Soviet constitution, written in 1918, granted women equality and the right to vote. However, the Bolsheviks were not satisfied with merely declaring women equal. They also sought to give them the tools to realize that equality and to liberate them from domestic burdens so that they could enter the work force. Therefore, Stetskii, Iakovlev and Tal's proposed article on women's rights featured a list of state programs designed to help women realize their equality. The article granted

every woman equal rights with men to work, equal pay for work equivalent to its quality and quantity, equal opportunities for elementary, middle and higher education, in the law about marriage stipulating the safeguarding of the interests of mother and child, granting pregnant women leave with pay, organizing public catering, kindergartens and nurseries, concern about

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<sup>105</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 42

construction of the family on the basis of equality between men and women.<sup>106</sup>

Stalin made only minor changes to this article on April 19<sup>th</sup>, but on the 22<sup>nd</sup> he presented a version that removed some of the specific privileges and protections that Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's version provided to women. Stalin's new version did not include equal pay for equal work, or the promotion of equal gender roles within the family.<sup>107</sup> The full session of the Constitutional Commission further altered this article, adding that women were equal in state life, as well as economic, cultural and socio-political life. It re-instated the stipulation about equal pay and replaced the state guarantee of social dining with a promise of an expanded network of birthing houses, which was more in line with the state's new emphasis on the role of women as mothers.<sup>108</sup>

The final aspect of citizenship in the USSR was connected with who was able to vote and be elected to the soviets. In contrast with the earlier 1918 and 1924 constitutions, there were no class restrictions on voting in the new draft Constitution. Tal' Stetskii and Iakovlev's draft section on election law consisted of two articles. One stated that "Elections to all Soviets of laborers are Universal: every citizen, who in the election year who has reached 18 years of age has the right to participate in elections and be elected, with the exception of under aged persons and those stripped by the courts of voting rights;" the other guaranteed equal voting

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<sup>106</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 43

<sup>107</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.7, l. 40

<sup>108</sup>"Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 3. For more on the evolution of women's roles in the Soviet Union and the state's construction of female identity see Wendy Goldman's *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

rights to women and racial minorities.<sup>109</sup> The wording of this article changed very little, though Stalin broke down the second article about protection for women and minorities further, creating two separate articles, one dealing with minority rights and one dealing with women's rights.

The draft constitution provided an encompassing definition of citizenship to the people of the USSR, with equal rights for women and minorities, and the ending of voting franchise restrictions and antagonistic classes. Central authorities and media outlets emphasized the expansiveness of citizenship in the USSR. However, the rhetorical changes that Stalin made to the articles effectively limited the rights of collective farmers and removed some of the earlier guarantees of material aid to women. Citizens addressed both of these shortcomings during the public discussion. And while the expansion of the franchise was heralded as a step towards democracy by the center, as we shall see, many people challenged it.

## The Rights of Citizens

In affixing the rights and duties of citizens, there appears to have been a great deal of discussion amongst the four men who produced the text of the draft constitution. When focusing on citizens' rights, Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev typically presented detailed plans for a symbiotic relationship between the state and citizens that guaranteed a wide array of rights and services that would further enhance socialist state-building efforts. Stalin's edits often simplified or even removed whole articles that Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev had proposed, though on some occasions the

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<sup>109</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, ll. 38-39



deleted sections were later reinserted into the text by the whole Commission. Some of Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's article were probably more suited for legislative initiative, and indeed some of the content that Stalin removed from the draft reappeared in later legislation. But, since no explanation for the changes were given, one can only speculate as to why changes were made. However, viewed together the changes made to the articles of the draft constitution tell the story of the creation of a central narrative about citizens' rights, the participation of the populace in government, the privileges granted by the state, and the duties that citizens must fulfill in return for these privileges.

Participation in governance is one of the fundamental factors in citizenship and a basic right of citizens. In his interview with Roy Howard, Stalin focused on the participatory nature of the elections as the method for making governmental organizations accountable to the populace. In this vein, the proposed second article from Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's draft section on citizens' rights sought to create a participatory society to help the masses bring the state apparatus back under control. It reads:

Citizens of the USSR have equal rights to participate in the administration of the state. The USSR guarantees this right, engaging laborers, though the soviets, in the administration of the state, organizing on the basis of collective farm charters, the participation of all collective farmers in the administration of large scale social production, engaging laborers from state factories, collective farms and other enterprises to actively participate in the administration of the economy, promoting their unification and organization,

supporting professional unions, the Komsomol<sup>110</sup> and other social organizations in their work to unify the laborers and struggle with the bureaucratic perversion of soviet and economic organs.<sup>111</sup>

This proposed article provided for the direct, albeit rather structured participation of citizens in administering aspects of the state. It also supported the initiative to rid the Soviet state apparatus of “bureaucratic perversion.” In this respect, it served as an open invitation for popular engagement through state or party sponsored organizations and for the opening up of a dialogue between the state apparatus and civilians. This draft article makes clear the nature and limits of the commission’s view of a participatory society. The article extended the opportunities for participation beyond the Communist Party and the Komsomol to trade unions and a host of other social organizations, which while limited to fighting bureaucratism, may have provided latitude for effecting real change on the state apparatus.<sup>112</sup>

Stalin removed this article from the draft constitution on April 19<sup>th</sup>. However, on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, he added another article allowing for the participation of approved organizations in the process of governance. Stalin’s proposed article was, in turn, revised by the full Constitutional Commission. Stalin’s version read:

In accordance with the interests of the laborers in the development of spontaneous organizations and the political activities of the masses, the right to unite in voluntary organizations and societies is provided to the citizens of

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<sup>110</sup> the Young Communist League

<sup>111</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, ll. 41-42

<sup>112</sup> Stalin’s “Little People” campaign shares some of these same features, where the populace was invited to criticize and even denounce members of the state apparatus in a fight against bureaucratism.

the USSR: professional unions, cooperative associations, unions of youth, sporting and defense organizations, cultural, technical and scientific societies. The most active and conscious people from amongst the workers and general laborers will unite in the Communist Party, becoming the first detachment of laborers in the fight for the victory of communism and the leading force of all laborers organizations in the USSR.<sup>113</sup>

The Constitutional Commission edited the last section of Stalin's proposed article so that the party would struggle for the "strengthening and development of socialist construction and is presented as the leading nucleus (ядро) of all organizations of laborers, society and the state."<sup>114</sup> Additionally another article allowed for civic organizations to nominate candidates in elections, providing some chances for the contested elections that Stalin had envisioned.<sup>115</sup>

Stalin's version of participatory rights was much more limited in scope than was that of Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's. Rather than trying to create a civil society in which citizens can participate and create more or less independent civic organizations, Stalin sought to bring all such organizations under the purview of the party. Robert Tucker likewise argues that these changes effectively brought all state and civil organizations under party oversight as it gave them the right to control institutions' administration and limited the choice of candidates whom they could nominate in the upcoming elections.<sup>116</sup> As a result, the focus of the subsequent

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<sup>113</sup>GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, ll. 42-43

<sup>114</sup> "Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovietskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 3.

<sup>115</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 234

<sup>116</sup> Robert C. Tucker, *Stalin In Power: the Revolution from above 1928-1941*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), 355.

propaganda campaign during the discussion of the draft constitution was on increasing citizen participation and creating a participatory society, often with the expressed purpose of combatting bureaucratism, rather than on creating of a truly civil society.

Despite these and other restrictions, the Drafting Commission argued that the new constitution was the most democratic in the world as it provided the material conditions for the realizations of citizens' rights. Like the right to participate in governance, however, these rights were often tailored to protect those who conformed to the state's goals of building socialism. For example, the USSR had a curious relationship with the freedom of speech, press, and assembly. On one hand, the state encouraged citizens to engage in criticism of the state and party apparatus as a control mechanism to bring the often-contentious regional and local organs to heel.<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the formation of contending parties or even factions within the Communist Party was forbidden and had dire consequences. Stetskii, Iakovlev and Tal's draft recognized this apparent contradiction, couching these freedoms of expression in the context of promoting the final victory of socialism, stating "Citizens of the USSR are provided (with the aim of the struggle for the final victory of socialism) the freedom of expressing their opinion, the freedom

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<sup>117</sup> For more on the subject see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 68, No. 4, Practices of Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989 (Dec., 1996). Matthew Leno, "Letter writing and the State," *Cashiers du monde russe: Russie, Empire russe, Union soviétique, Etats indépendants*, Vol 40 No. 1-2 (1999), 139-169; Coe, Stephen. "Struggles for Authority in the NEP Village: the early Rural Correspondents Movement 23-27" *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 48 No. 7, (1996), 1151-1171.

of the press, free meetings, demonstrations and organization.”<sup>118</sup> They also incorporated the means to realize these rights

by granting [to the people] all that is applicable for the construction of accommodating people’s meetings, all typographic establishments at the disposal of the laborers and their social organizations, paper for the printing of newspapers, books and other and other industrial press, establishing their free distribution to the whole country, [as well as] organizing the construction of new societal buildings. <sup>119</sup>

As previously noted this promised accessibility was viewed as an important distinction between socialist and bourgeois constitutions.

Because of the nature of the Soviet state’s relationship with these rights, this article underwent multiple and complex editing sessions. On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Stalin separated Tal,’ Iakovlev, and Stetskii’s article on the right to free speech, press and association into several articles, while simultaneously merging the freedom of expression with Stetskii, Tal’ and Iakovlev’s article on citizens’ rights to criticism and self-criticism. The initial article on criticism viewed this right as an important in the “fight with the bureaucratic perversions in the state apparatus and in the elimination of hindrances (препятствий) in socialist construction.”<sup>120</sup> The three valued the freedom to criticize officials to such an extent that they included measures to prevent local officials from stifling criticism, “guaranteeing this right by sternly punishing and looking into the faces of all the guilty, in defense of anybody

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<sup>118</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 46

<sup>119</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 46

<sup>120</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 47

persecuted for criticism and self-criticism.”<sup>121</sup> Stetskii, Iakovlev and Tal’ also included a separate clause allowing citizens to hold such officials accountable by giving citizens “the right to demand any official figure be prosecuted for breaking this law”.<sup>122</sup> Stalin’s version shared characteristics of the parent articles, combining provisions for the realization of the right of free speech (meeting places, etc.) with the right to freely criticize the state and officials: “Citizens of the USSR have the right to free expression of their opinion. This right is guaranteed by granting laborers all technical and material means for the publication of newspapers, brochures, books and others industrial printing materials and their free distribution in the whole of the USSR, the punishment of those guilty of persecuting [others] for criticism and self-criticism of the action of government organs and officials.”<sup>123</sup> He also drafted articles providing for the freedom of assembly and the freedom of organization.<sup>124</sup> In particular, the right to criticize local officials fit neatly with Stalin’s and the Soviet leadership’s goal of turning participatory policies into a weapon against elements within the bureaucracy. However, Stalin may have considered such specific goals inappropriate for a constitution. On April 22, he again condensed these articles down into one article, with the caveat that these rights (free speech, free press, freedom to have meetings, and freedom to demonstrate) were guaranteed “in accordance with the interests of the laborers and the goal of strengthening socialist construction.”<sup>125</sup> This final draft did not contain any specific mention of the right to

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<sup>121</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 47

<sup>122</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 47

<sup>123</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 162

<sup>124</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 162

<sup>125</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d 7, l. 42

criticize state officials, but it may have been implied as part of strengthening socialist construction. It also limited the use of the rights of free speech, press and assembly to only those activities deemed to be in the interests of the masses or the state, effectively curtailing other forms of opposition. While such a caveat had existed from the first draft of this article, where these rights were enumerated in the context of struggling for the final victory of socialism, Stalin's language made it clearer that opposition to state goals was not acceptable, even if opposition to local leaders and bureaucrats was encouraged.

Supplementing citizens' rights to free speech was an article on citizen's rights to engage in propagandistic activities. Iakovlev, Tal' and Stetskii's original article stated: "A citizen of the USSR is granted the freedom of propaganda of a materialistic worldview. To citizens, not having freed themselves from religious prejudice, the USSR gives the freedom of departure from their religious cults, but the teaching of any religious studies in schools is not permitted."<sup>126</sup> Stalin reworked this article to focus more on a separation of church and state, and the suppression of religion: "With the goal of ensuring real freedom of conscience for the laborers, the church is separated from the state and the schools from the church. Freedom of materialistic worldview propaganda and departure from religious cults is recognized for all laborers."<sup>127</sup> On April 22, Stalin removed the words "materialistic world view propaganda" and later the full Constitutional Commission added the

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<sup>126</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 48

<sup>127</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.6, l. 162

freedom to engage in anti-religious propaganda.<sup>128</sup> Like the right to free speech, the right to engage in propaganda could only be used in the interests of the state, i.e. for anti-religious purposes, even though during the discussion many people interpreted this as a right to also engage in religious agitation, much to the state's chagrin.

In addition to providing more traditional rights for their citizens, members of the Soviet leadership set about providing guarantees of government sponsored social services together with the means for their realization. The promise of education, social services and property rights were also included in the draft constitution. Tal' Iakovlev and Stetskii's draft provided an extensive program of education for every citizen of the USSR. They introduced universal mandatory elementary education and made education up to higher education free, created seven-year instruction in the native languages of the peoples of the USSR as well as "organizing in factories, state farms, machine tractor stations and on collective farms productive-technical and agricultural instruction and political enlightenment for adults and youth" designed to promote the "systematic raising of the level of workers in engineering-technical and agricultural work".<sup>129</sup> To ensure that education was accessible for all citizens, Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's draft provided for the financial maintenance of high school students (обучающихся) at the state's expense. But their draft went above and beyond the confines of traditional education. They included a full program for citizens' enlightenment. They mandated "bringing books, newspapers, film, theater, sports, schools for adults serving in the

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<sup>128</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.6, l. 42; "Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936.

<sup>129</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5 ll. 43-44



Red army, political and general cultural instruction facilitating in the self-cultivation of laborers in all spheres in their own creative work within the reach of the masses of laborers.”<sup>130</sup> This focus on creating both an educated populace and cultured modern Soviet citizens had long roots in Bolshevik policy and thought.<sup>131</sup> For example, the Proletkul’t movement, which pushed for the creation of a genuine proletarian culture, dated back to 1917. During the Civil War period, Proletkul’t had flourishing theater workshops, studios, literary circles and adult education classes under its administration.<sup>132</sup> Although the Proletkul’t movement faded during NEP, the Bolsheviks never abandoned the idea of cultivating proletarian consciousness. Continuing such efforts, Stetskii, Tal’ and Iakovlev’s draft provided a comprehensive program of not just education but of “enlightenment”.

In his redaction on April 19<sup>th</sup>, Stalin removed the focus on enlightenment from this article. His new version read:

Citizens of the USSR have the equal right to education. This right is guaranteed by the existence of universal compulsory elementary education, free education up to higher educational institutions, and state aid for instruction in schools in native languages. This right is also secured by the organization in factories, state farms, machine tractor stations and on

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<sup>130</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5 ll. 43-44

<sup>131</sup> Works exploring this further: Fitzpatrick. *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organization of Education and Arts under Lunacharsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Richard Stites. *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Visions and Experimental life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: 1989). David L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca, 2003).

<sup>132</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick. “The Bolsheviks’ Dilemma: Class, Culture, and Politics in the Early Soviet Years,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 47 No. 4 (Winter 1988) 602-609. Initially an independent organization, by NEP Proletkul’t came under the jurisdiction of the Commissar of Enlightenment and shortly thereafter became defunct. See also Lynn Malley *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990),

collective farms of industrial-technical and agricultural instruction for adults and youth, and the systematic raising of workers and collective farmers to the level of workers of engineering- technical and agricultural work.<sup>133</sup>

Then on April 22, Stalin decided to make the technical instruction in factories and farms explicitly free.<sup>134</sup> At the June meeting of the entire Constitutional Commission, a clause providing “systematic state stipends to an overwhelming majority of students in higher schools” was added.<sup>135</sup> While this amendment provided additional state support for education, it failed to live up to the all-encompassing program of “enlightenment” that Stetskii, Tal’ and Iakovlev had initially envisioned.

The focus on enlightenment dominated another of the draft articles in Tal’, Iakovlev and Stetskii’s version of the constitution. Article 6 focused on developing Soviet youth, stating:

Youth in the USSR have the right to material security and cultural development. The USSR guarantees the realization of this right for all young men and women of the USSR, limiting the work day to four hours for teenagers under 16, with pay as if for a full work day, combining the work of teenagers with their instruction in schools for factory apprenticeship, protecting the health of teenagers and organizing treatment for the ill in rest houses and sanatoria, abolishing the exploitation of children and teenagers as landless laborers, establishing for peasant youth the ample opportunity

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<sup>133</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 159

<sup>134</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, ll. 39-40

<sup>135</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 221

for independent work, raising their qualifications with exposure to city culture.<sup>136</sup>

In his comments on April 19, Stalin left most of this article intact, changing only the section that applied to rural youth. Rather than being preoccupied with their cultural level, Stalin changed the article to read that peasant youth now “have the ability to become qualified, cultured workers of large-scale agricultural machinery”.<sup>137</sup> This entire article was removed from the April 22<sup>nd</sup> draft, but portions of it reemerged later as part of the Labor Code. Despite not being part of the final draft of the constitution, this article demonstrated that some Soviet leaders were not just creating a legal code but trying to create a new, modern, and educated citizenry.

Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's Article 7 in the citizens' rights section also emphasized, albeit implicitly, raising the cultural level of citizens.

Citizens of the USSR have the right to rest, to comprehensive physical and cultural development. The USSR guarantees to every citizen the use of this right, shortening the working day, establishing yearly vacations for laborers (трудящимся), providing free medical aid for laborers, rendering state aid for the construction of sanatoria, rest houses, and sports stadiums.<sup>138</sup>

Stalin revised this article to the point of changing its meaning. His version from April 19<sup>th</sup> read: “Citizens of the USSR have the right to rest. This right is guaranteed by the shortening of the working day, the establishment of yearly vacations for

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<sup>136</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, ll. 44-45

<sup>137</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, ll. 159-160

<sup>138</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 45-46

*workers and service workers* [emphasis added] with retention of pay, and the construction of sanatoria, rest houses and clubs.”<sup>139</sup> While Stalin again diminished the focus on an encompassing program of cultural and physical development, the most important change Stalin made was to change the word “laborers” (трудящимся) to workers and service workers, which thereby effectively excluded collective farmers from yearly vacations. On April 22<sup>nd</sup> after further deliberation with Stetskii, Tal’, and Iakovlev, Stalin made still more changes to this article by adding the qualification: “the right to rest is secured by the shorting of the working day for the *majority of workers* [emphasis added] to 7 hours.”<sup>140</sup> These changes further disenfranchised the collective farmers, by only limiting the working day for the majority of workers, though peasants still theoretically had access to rest houses. However, the funding and construction of these sanatoria, rest houses and clubs was no longer guaranteed. This version only promised that these institutions be open for use, not that the state should fund or build more. This discrimination against the collective farmers did not go unnoticed during the discussion of the draft constitution and raised serious questions about the equality of Soviet citizens.

While Stalin seemed to have the final say on most of the changes to the first draft of the constitution, the editorial process surrounding the article on state social security benefits seems to have relied more on compromise between the Iakovlev, Tal’, and Stetskii on one hand, and Stalin on the other. Like the right to rest, the original version was very egalitarian, stating: “Citizens of the USSR have the right to security in old age, and also to material aid from the state in cases of the loss of

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<sup>139</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.6, l. 157

<sup>140</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 38

health or working ability. This right is guaranteed by the USSR though the organization of state benefits and social security at the state's expense and on the basis of the model of the charter of agricultural *artely*.”<sup>141</sup> On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Stalin removed the phrase “at the state's expense” (на счет государства) from the clause about social security and added that laborers can have access to resorts and sanatoria.<sup>142</sup> However, on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, he reinserted the phrase “at the state's expense” and specified that citizens have the right to *material* aid.<sup>143</sup> Collective farmers were not specifically excluded. Although there were limitations on government services as they had originally been proposed, state leaders would still contend that the guarantees given to citizens was the most expansive in the world. However, as discussed below, citizens noted that the draft constitution only provided for parts of the population to realize these rights and the expansion of access to governmental services would make up the bulk of citizens comments.

Property rights were another gray area for the Soviet state. On one hand, the leadership hailed the collectivization of agriculture and state ownership of industry as markers of the achievement of the victory of socialism, and they denounced bourgeois constitutions that were too focused on the property rights for the elite. On the other hand, they sought to provide for the continuation of individual smallholdings and craftsmen, and for protecting personal property from state seizures. Originally Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's article on property rights was rather general, stating: “Citizens of the USSR have the right to personal property. The USSR

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<sup>141</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 46

<sup>142</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 158

<sup>143</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7 l. 39

secures this right, safeguarding by law personal property of laborers of the city and countryside. No one has the right in the USSR to encroach upon the personal property of citizens, unless stated otherwise, like the decision of the courts and in cases especially provided for by the law”<sup>144</sup> Stalin’s change to this article on April 19<sup>th</sup> consisted of only minor changes in wording. But on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, he removed this article from the section on citizens’ rights and duties entirely, and he added an article on personal property to the first part of the constitution on the construction of the state. That article states: “The personal property of citizens, in their earned income or savings, in the objects of household economy and utensils, together with the objects of personal consumption and comforts, are safeguarded by law.”<sup>145</sup> The full Constitutional Commission added the protection of the home to the list of protected personal property.<sup>146</sup> The revisions made to this article indicated that property was not thought of so much as a citizen’s right, but rather its safeguarding was a legal function of the state.

In addition to property laws protecting the personal effects of all citizens, the first draft of the constitution had a specific article designed to deal with the personal property of collective farmers, which could be used for their own economic endeavors. This draft article sought to codify the place of collective farms and collective farmers within the new socio-economic order. The article began by defining collective farms as “enterprises founded by collective farmers, voluntarily collectivizing their means of production and conducting their economic activity on

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<sup>144</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d.5, l. 46

<sup>145</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 4

<sup>146</sup> “Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik,” *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 1.

the land belonging to the state [which are run by collective farmers who] conduct economic activity in accordance with their charter, under the leadership of the organs of the Soviet state on the basis of a plan.”<sup>147</sup> Stetskii, Iakovlev and Tal’ succinctly defined collective farms, but also implied that they have a symbiotic relationship with the state, noting that “collective farms bear state obligations, established by law.”<sup>148</sup> But Stetstkii, Tal’ and Iakovlev did not conceive of this as a unilateral relationship. According to their draft article, the state also bore certain responsibilities to the collective farmers. The Soviet state, “through our machine tractor stations [was responsible for providing] tractors, combines, and other modern agricultural machines to collective farmers for the working of the land and harvesting”.<sup>149</sup> In their view, the state was responsible for providing the equipment and machine tractor stations, and the collective farmers were responsible for working the land and providing the harvest. In addition to promising collective farmers access to modern agricultural equipment, this article also sought to codify the difference between collective farm property and the personal property of the collective farmers, noting that “together with the social property of the collective farm, every collective farm household has for personal use a garden plot, a milk producing cow and petty agricultural stock, whose dimensions are specified in the charter of the agricultural *artel*.”<sup>150</sup> This article guaranteed, despite the socialist nature of the economy as whole and collective farms in particular, the right to a household economy for collective farmers, though the subordination of personal

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<sup>147</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 3-4

<sup>148</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 3-4

<sup>149</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 3-4

<sup>150</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 3-4

property to collective property was in line with laws protecting state property. As Iakovlev, Stetskii and Tal' drafted this article, it implied the mutual responsibility of state and collective farmer for the success of Soviet agriculture as well as the creation of a private economic sphere within what was an otherwise very collectivized economy.

In his revision of this article on April 18<sup>th</sup>, Stalin removed the description of collective farms and their cooperative relationship with the state. Instead he chose to specify what constitutes collective farm property: "Social enterprises in collective farm and cooperative organizations with their living and inanimate stock, used in collective farm and cooperative organization production, equally with their communal buildings are property of the collective farms and cooperative organizations."<sup>151</sup> Four days later, he revised the section on collective farmers' personal property, changing the article so that every household could have "a *small* [emphasis added] garden plot and personal property for subsidiary economic activity on the garden plot, a milk cow, fowl and petty agricultural stock as specified in agreement with the charter of the artel."<sup>152</sup> The Constitutional Commission added a guarantee of a house to the list of collective farmers property.<sup>153</sup> Stalin's changes removed the mutual responsibility of the state and collective farmers for agricultural production and made it clear, through the specificity of protected property that any activity-taking place on the collective farmers' garden plots was to

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<sup>151</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 3

<sup>152</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 3. Emphasis added.

<sup>153</sup> "Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 1.



be secondary to the work on the collective farm. His revisions thereby served to strengthen the principle of the supremacy of collective property in the USSR.

However, not all protections of the citizenry had such pervasive limitations. In the mid-thirties, Vyshinsky and Stalin both promoted a return to codified legal statutes and legal order in the face of the chaos caused by collectivization, rapid industrialization and other official campaigns. This shift in Soviet legal thought was codified in *habeas corpus*-style protections in the draft constitution. The original version of *habeas corpus* that was included in Iakovlev, Tal' and Stetskii's draft established basic protections: "Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law. No one may be freed from prosecution, who is liable by law. No one may be subject to arrest, except by decision of the court or with the sanctions of the procurator."<sup>154</sup> On April 19<sup>th</sup>, Stalin rewrote the article to include citizens' rights to hold public figures accountable. His article stated: "Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law. Citizens of the USSR have the right to demand any public official be prosecuted for breaking the law. No one may be placed under arrest without a court order or sanction of the procurator. No one may be freed from prosecution, who is liable by law."<sup>155</sup> This once again illustrates Stalin's distrust of bureaucrats and desire to use popular participation act as a weapon against corruption. However, Stalin further revised the article on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, removing the section about public officials. The new article was streamlined: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed the inviolability

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<sup>154</sup> GARF, f. R- 3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 49

<sup>155</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 163

of their person. No one may be placed under arrest without a court order or with the sanction of the procurator.”<sup>156</sup>

The inviolability of the person was complemented by the inviolability of the home. Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's original draft contained an article guaranteeing the inviolability of the home<sup>157</sup> and Stalin later added a guarantee of privacy in written communication to this article.<sup>158</sup> While these new *habeas corpus* laws sought to protect citizens from the extra-legal arrests of the early thirties, they were widely almost unanimously rejected by citizens, and on the collective farms almost unanimously rejected, because people viewed them as a hindrance to restoring order in the countryside. The reasons for this seemingly puzzling stance are examined in the chapter on the popular discussion.

## The Duties of Citizens

The leadership of the USSR sought to guarantee social services to Soviet citizens that were designed to enrich their lives and create better citizens, and to protect citizens from state encroachment into certain spheres of their life. However, this was a reciprocal relationship. If the state had obligations to its citizens, then citizens had obligations to the state as well. Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's draft contained several articles enumerating the duties of citizens. These proposed duties included defending socialist property and the constitution, raising children properly, and defending the USSR. Most of these articles only underwent only

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<sup>156</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 43

<sup>157</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 49

<sup>158</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 164

minimal edits as they reflect the state's need to defend itself from various enemies and to strengthen socialism.

Strengthening socialist construction in the USSR required popular participation. As the fundamental law of the USSR and the defining document of victorious socialism, the constitution played an important role in state building. Therefore, citizens were responsible for safeguarding its main tenets. Tal', Iakovlev, and Stetskii drafted an article requiring "Every citizen of the USSR [to] observe the constitution of the USSR, executing her fundamental law and also decisions and instructions, guard daily the iron discipline of labor, be honestly be concerned with labor and social duty, [and] respect the maxims of socialist society."<sup>159</sup> Stalin made only minor changes to this article, removing the words "executing her fundamental law" and the word "iron".<sup>160</sup> These minor changes indicate consensus in the Soviet leadership that citizens must obey the laws of the USSR, in particular labor discipline and social laws, which helped to promote the construction of a socialist society.

As part of their efforts to strengthen socialist values of the USSR, Iakovlev, Tal', and Stetskii, suggested that citizens had the responsibility for rearing their children in a socialist manner as well. Their draft an article read: "Every citizen of the USSR must raise their children to be physically healthy and culturally committed to their motherland, and to hate enemies of laborers."<sup>161</sup> While this suggestion may appear comical out of context, it demonstrated the commitment to an overall

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<sup>159</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 50

<sup>160</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 165

<sup>161</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, ll. 50-51

program of socio-cultural development that Iakovlev, Tal' and Stetskii promoted in their original draft constitution. Stalin removed this article from the constitution on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, demonstrating his commitment to either a less radical socialist redevelopment of life or his realization that such issues were more effectively dealt with through legislation.

Tal', Iakovlev, and Stetskii also proposed more conventional ways to make citizens commit to the state and safeguard socialist gains. Their draft contained an article on the defense of socialist property, which stated: "Every citizen of the USSR must defend, take care of and increase social property, the sacred constitution and the inviolable base of Soviet construction as the source of wealth and power of the motherland, as the source of a prosperous and cultural life for all laborers. People encroaching on socialist property are considered enemies of the people."<sup>162</sup> Stalin removed the word "defend" from this article, but made no other changes to it.<sup>163</sup> The Constitutional Commission removed the part about taking care of the constitution, focusing this article solely on social property.<sup>164</sup> The emphasis on the sacredness of socialist property reinforced a commitment to the socialist economic structure and to punishing those who would violate it.

Military service was the ultimate defense of the Soviet state from enemies and the language of the draft articles on military service reflected that fact. Tal', Iakovlev, and Stetskii's draft stated:

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<sup>162</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 50

<sup>163</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 45

<sup>164</sup> "Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 3. Incidentally socialist property was already strongly protected by penal codes, which handed down very harsh sentences for theft or damage of collective property. Peter Solomon addresses these strong penalties in *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[T]he defense of the motherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the USSR. Military service is the honorable right and duty of every citizen of the USSR. The betrayal of the motherland, that is for citizens to commit acts to the detriment of the military might of the USSR, its state independence or the inviolability of its territory, is to be punished with all harshness of the law, as the most terrible, abominable crime.”<sup>165</sup>

Stalin made some superficial changes to this article, changing the word motherland to fatherland, adding that breaking the military oath or going over to the side of the enemy and spying were considered treasonous acts, and removing the parts about territorial sovereignty.<sup>166</sup> But he left the essence of the article, the “sacred duty” to defend the fatherland intact. In addition, he created a whole new article to address the role of a citizen army. Initially it read, “military service is the honorable right and duty of every citizen in the USSR. The Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army is built on the principle of universal military duty.”<sup>167</sup> Later the language was revised so the article read, “Universal military service is a duty (повинность) required by law, and military service in the Worker and Peasants’ Red Army is presented as an honorable duty of the citizens of the USSR”<sup>168</sup> This focus on military service reflected both the revolutionary concept of citizen soldiers that goes back to the French revolution and the increased military preparedness in the USSR in the face of the rise of fascism in Europe and uncertainty in the Far East. Service in the military as part of a citizen’s duties to the state was a topic of great debate during the discussion of the draft

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<sup>165</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 51

<sup>166</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 45

<sup>167</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, ll.165-166

<sup>168</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d 7, l. 45

constitution. Part of the debate focused on whether women, as equal citizens, should have to serve in the army. Others focused on the idea of military service as a duty (ПОВИННОСТЬ)

## The Cult of Labor

The abovementioned duties of citizens focused on the defense of the USSR or of the socialist principles on which it was founded, but one of these same principles was elevated to almost cult-like status. The Soviet leadership enshrined labor within the draft constitution. The first right guaranteed to citizens in Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's original draft was the right to work. This right was "safeguarded by the socialist organization of the peoples' economy, the steady growth of the productive strength of the Soviet fatherland, the absence of crises in a socialist economy and the liquidation of unemployment."<sup>169</sup> In addition, every citizen was guaranteed the right to pay for his work in accordance with its quantity and quality. As the focus of this article was the consolidation of the gains made from the transition to socialism, the core of this article remained intact through the publication of the draft.<sup>170</sup>

The importance of labor featured in other parts of the constitution as well. Article 11 in the section on the social construction of the USSR of Tal', Iakovlev and Stetskii's draft stated that, "In the USSR there exists the governing principle of

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<sup>169</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5 ll. 40-41

<sup>170</sup> The version published in the draft constitution read: "Citizens of the USSR have the right to work—the right to receive guaranteed work with pay for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality. The right to work is guaranteed by the socialist organization of the economy the steady growth of the productive strength of the Soviet fatherland, the absence of crises in a socialist economy and the liquidation of unemployment", "Konstitutsiia (osnovnoi zakon) Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik," *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 3.

socialism, from each to his ability to each according to their work.”<sup>171</sup> Stalin expanded this article on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, prefacing it with “Labor in the USSR is the duty of citizen able to work on the principle, ‘he who does not work does not eat.’”<sup>172</sup> Hence Stalin’s editorial change transformed work from a right to the duty of each citizen. And the drafters of the constitution further elevated labor to the level of heroism. Stetskii, Tal’ and Iakovlev waxed poetic about labor, stating: “In the USSR, work has been transformed from a shameful and heavy burden, as it was considered under capitalism, into a honorable, glorious, valorous and heroic activity.”<sup>173</sup> Stalin presented his own version of the heroism of labor in his April 19<sup>th</sup> draft. He wrote that “Labor in the USSR is an honest activity, a glorious activity, a valorous and heroic activity of socialist competition based on the spontaneous will of laborers and supported by the state. The state surrounds the pacesetters of social work with honor and awards, as heroes and famous people (знатных людей).”<sup>174</sup> Neither version of the article extoling the heroism of labor made it into the final draft constitution, but the media coverage of the discussion of draft constitution focused strongly on Stakhanovism and heroic efforts of labor being put forward in response to the publication of the draft.

The draft constitution was formulated with much attention to European revolutionary principles, though the Soviet leadership always intended it to be a socialist document, a pronouncement of the accomplishments of Soviet socialism, rather than just another western constitution. During the drafting and the editing

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<sup>171</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 5

<sup>172</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 7, l. 5

<sup>173</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 5, l. 5

<sup>174</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 40, d. 6, l. 161

process, the leadership debated what the role and reach of the constitution should be. Stetskii, Tal', and Iakovlev crafted a constitution that reflected the earlier Bolshevik ideas of creating a new Soviet citizen by radically and fundamentally changing the socio-economic relationships in society. Stalin's edits suggest that while he was supportive of radical change to the economic structures in the USSR, he was less supportive of and in some instances even opposed to radical social change. He returned women to a more domestic and motherly role, and separated the peasantry anew from the working class. When the final draft constitution was given over for public discussion in 1936, these changes, combined with the language of state building and European revolutionary tradition, formed the basis of the state's grand narrative of citizenship and the rights and duties of those citizens. The Kirov Region provides an excellent case study for viewing how this discussion was conducted at the regional and local level, and how Soviet citizens responded to the state's invitation to express their opinions.



## Chapter 2: An Overview of Life in Kirov in the 1930's

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Context is imperative for understanding and interpreting the popular suggestions to the draft constitution. The social and economic realities of the Kirov region in the 1930's shaped how the people of Kirov thought about the issues raised by the draft constitution and the types of suggestions that they formulated. The Kirov region was in a great period of transition in the 1930's from a region of independent peasants to an increasingly urbanized and industrialized region with collectivized agriculture. The traditions of independence and local self-governance that made the Viatka region unique endured even as the social and economic upheavals of the 1930's drastically changed people's way of life. Such changes and the pressures they created greatly affected the worldview of the people participating in the discussion. This overview of life in Kirov in the 1930's makes no pretense to be complete. Rather its purpose is to provide some context for understanding the daily lives and experiences of those who participated in the constitutional discussion.

Formerly called Viatka, the Kirov region is located about 550 miles north-east of Moscow. An independent administrative region under the tsars, the Viatka province was amalgamated into Nizhny Novgorodskii *Krai* (region) in 1930. In 1934, following the murder of Leningrad party leader Sergei Kirov, a series of administrative reforms split the Viatka region away from the Gorky (Nizhny Novgorod) Region and the newly formed region was named for the fallen Bolshevik.

The region was predominantly ethnically Russian, with Tartar, Udmurt and Mari ethnic minorities. In 1934, Kirov *Krai* occupied a territory of 144,000 square km. with a population of more than 3.3 million people.<sup>175</sup>

The climate of the Viatka\Kirov region had an important influence on its industrial and political development. Because of its northern climate the Viatka/Kirov region was agriculturally marginal. The soil in the north of the region is clay and sand while further to the south it draws closer to the more fertile black earth regions. The climate is harsh with frosts sometimes occurring as late as July in the region's northern most reaches. The primary agricultural production in the southern part of the Viatka region was grain; animal husbandry and flax production predominated in the north because the growing season is too short for reliable crop production. This made life on collective farms unstable and left peasants consistently vulnerable to hunger and privation. Dairy farming became a far more stable alternative to crop farming. Even today the Kirov region remains famous for the quality of its dairy products. However, the poor agricultural land in the Viatka region proved to be positive for the political and civic lives of Viatka's peasants. The marginality of Viatka's agricultural land meant that the region's peasants experienced an unusual amount of independence during the Tsarist period. Viatka had very little serfdom, enjoying the highest rates of privately owned land in pre-emancipation European Russia.<sup>176</sup> Following emancipation, the *zemstvo* movement was very strong in the Viatka region. Peasants held a majority of seats in Viatka's

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<sup>175</sup> G.G. Zagvozdkin, "Triumf i Tragediia v 30-kh godov" *Istoriia Ensiklopediia zemli Viatskoi* tom. 4, (administratsiia kirovskoi oblasti ,viatskaia torgovo-promyshlennaia palata, 1995), 379.

<sup>176</sup> Aaron Retish, *Russia's Peasants in Revolution and Civil War: Citizenship, Identity, and the Creation of the Soviet State, 1914-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 14.

*Zemstvos* and devoted much effort to public services such as education, which the peasants deemed necessary to conduct business in a wider world.<sup>177</sup>

Increased urbanization and the longstanding tradition of migratory labor in the Viatka/ Kirov region helped strengthen ties between city and countryside, as many people still had family in villages but lived and worked in cities. Therefore both agricultural concerns and urban problems were of importance to this segment of the population. The poor agricultural output of the land led to the growth of seasonal migrant labor and the early development of handicraft industries. In the 1890s, over 90 percent of Viatka's peasant households relied on handicraft production or migrant labor to supplement their agricultural income.<sup>178</sup> Peasants in the pre-revolutionary period provided the workforce in armament and metal working factories in Izhevsk, Glazov and Votkinsk.<sup>179</sup> In the city of Viatka, smaller factories producing leather goods, wooden barrels and furniture sprang up. As it did in many sections of Russia, this migrant labor proved especially important in forging ties between city and countryside and for circulating ideas.<sup>180</sup> More radical ideas from the urban areas were brought back to villages; likewise, conservative village values were asserted in urban areas. After the revolution the Viatka/Kirov region began to urbanize in earnest, with more people remaining permanently in the cities. Nonetheless, in 1928, the population of the region was still 91.2% rural. The industrial push of the First Five- Year Plan, coupled with the recovery of industry

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<sup>177</sup> Retish, 19.

<sup>178</sup> Retish, 18.

<sup>179</sup> Votkinsk, Glazov, Izhevsk and Sarapul were soon removed from the Kirov region, when Udmurtiia became an independent republic at the end of 1936.

<sup>180</sup> Retish 18-19.

following the Civil War, spurred some migration to urban areas. In 1933, the urban population had grown to 13% of the total: by 1939, the proportion of urban inhabitants had climbed to 15.1%.<sup>181</sup>(See Appendix 2, Chart 1-2) Urbanization and the increase of rural urban ties, combined with the traditions of *zemstvo* self government, helped to create a well-informed and assertive local population.

Urbanization also represented a very real manifestation of the goals of the new Soviet state and those goals had a direct impact on the daily life of the citizens of the Viatka/Kirov region. Most of the urbanization in the Kirov region took place during the period of the Five-Year Plans and as a result of Stalinist economic policies. Urban growth was concentrated in the region's eleven cities, five workers settlements, and nine urban style settlements. The cities that saw the largest increases in urban population were also the most industrialized and were undoubtedly attracting people as workers to their expanding industries.<sup>182</sup> (See Appendix 2, Chart 3-4) The city of Kirov saw the largest population growth, adding 23,500 people to its population between 1926 and 1933. Most of this population gain occurred during the years of the first Five Year Plan (1928-1933), when industry in the city recovered from the downturns of the Civil War and the investments of the Five Year Plan began to spur development. In 1928-1933 alone that time frame, 20,600 people moved to the city of Kirov. Other cities which were connected with targeted industries, such as Votkinsk, which housed a large machine-building factory experienced even larger growth – a 43% growth in

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<sup>181</sup> Larry Holmes, *Grand theater: Regional Governance in Stalin's Russia, 1931-1941* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 3.

<sup>182</sup> *Kirovskii Krai v Tsifrah*, (Moskva:TsUNKhU GOSPLANA SSSR, 1936), 171.

population during the years of the First Five Year Plan. However, urbanization was not equally distributed among the cities and urban settlements. Cities not closely associated with industrialization, such as Iaransk and Nolinsk, only experienced moderate growth, while the city of Malmyzh experienced negative growth during the years of the First Five Year Plan. Industrialization and urbanization during the Five-Year Plans shaped the physical and mental landscape of many urban citizens of the Kirov region.

Despite the implementation of the Five-Year plans, the Kirov region did not transform into a heavily industrial region overnight. Given the long tradition of craftsmanship in the region, the industrial strength of the Kirov region lay in light industry.<sup>183</sup> Many of these industries, especially those focusing on animal and forest products, had developed during the late Tsarist period and played to the strengths of the Kirov region. Food processing, leather and fur industries, forest products processing made up the bulk of the Kirov region's economic output. (See Appendix 2, Chart 5-7) Despite increased industrial growth during the 1930's, many of the enterprises in the Kirov region were small. The city of Kirov was host to small handicraft related enterprises, including 23 craft *artely*. The two largest enterprises outside of the city of Kirov were the Votkinskii Machine Building Factory, located in the city of Votkinsk, which employed 5,458 workers in 1935, and the "Squirrel" Fur Factory in Slobodskoi *raion*, which employed 4,491 workers in 1935. The rest of the region's enterprises were moderate to small in size, employing 2,000 workers or less. (See Appendix 2, Chart 8) Smaller enterprises tended to have less of a

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<sup>183</sup> It was not until World War II and the evacuation of enterprises to the east that Kirov became a large heavy industrial city and region.

proletarian character than larger enterprises, which dominated in regions like Leningrad and Moscow. This fact, combined with the more traditional handicraft nature of the region's economy meant that many of the enterprises retained their prerevolutionary nature.

However, the transition from a Tsarist state to a Soviet one was not an easy process. The ravages of war and instability took its toll in the Viatka/ Kirov region. The Civil War, in particular, had a deleterious effect on industry in Viatka. In 1918 and 1919, when the Red Army fought against Admiral Kolchak's forces, Viatka was a frontline location. The resulting violence led to the death of thousands from famine and disease, and disrupted both agriculture and industry. The Civil War saw a sharp decline in many industries, which had barely recovered by the late 1920's.<sup>184</sup> It was only the industrialization push of the Five Year Plan that led to growth in industry in the Kirov region. As part of the industrialization drive, socialist competitions and Stakhanovism took hold in Kirov's enterprises and drove production increases in the mid 1930's. The pioneers of the Stakhanovite movement in Viatka were a steelmaker in the open hearth workshop in Omutninskii factory (V. K. Vilovatykh), M. E. Kharin and A. N. Kolodkin who were furriers at the factory "Squirrel" factory, A. Ia. Zykov who was a train engineer at the depot station Kirov 1, and the flax harvester, A. P. Smertina from the "New Path" collective farm in Shabalinskii *raion*. Although these were the most notable Stakhanovites for whatever reasons, Stakhanovism spread quickly. In 1936, 40% of the workers in Viatka enterprises

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<sup>184</sup> Holmes, 5.

reportedly participated in the Stakhanovite movement.<sup>185</sup> Though participation figures were often inflated by factory management to serve their own ends,<sup>186</sup> it may also suggest that such campaigns for popular involvement resonated with the population of the Kirov region, although precisely why is unclear.

Besides creating an environment where urban movements such as Stakhanovism could flourish, the growth of industry in the Kirov region caused a rapid influx of new workers from the surrounding countryside. In 1931, new industrial workers who had migrated from the countryside made up 33% of the workers of Viatka's enterprises.<sup>187</sup> During the second Five-year Plan, the number of workers and service workers in the region grew by 48.9%, (from 133,000 in 1932 to 198,000 in 1937) Most of the growth came as rural inhabitants moved to the city to fill vacancies in the growing enterprises. Some of these new workers stayed permanently; others engaged in seasonal migrant work (*otkhodnichestvo*). By 1936, about 10 % of the able-bodied collective farmers were engaged in migrant labor. The Slobodskoi district, which was home to several large fur and forest products factories, saw the highest rate of collective farmers leaving for seasonal work in factories (16 %), while Biserevskii<sup>188</sup> raion on the far eastern borders of the Kirov region had the lowest incidence of migrant labor (5.6%).<sup>189</sup>

However, these new workers coming from the villages had difficulty acclimating to factory discipline, the rhythms of which were very different than

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<sup>185</sup> Zagvozdkin, 383.

<sup>186</sup> Lewis Siegalbaum. *Stakhanovism and the politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

<sup>187</sup> Zagvozdkin, 380.

<sup>188</sup> This raion was split from Ziuzdinskii raion in 1935 and merged again with Ziuzdinskii raion in 1955.

<sup>189</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op. 2, d. 364. l. 36

those rhythms of rural life. This difficult adjustment resulted in a relatively high rate of turnover of enterprise personnel. For example, in the Kirov district (*raion*), the annual turnover was 17%. Additionally, one in ten of the newly arrived workers were illiterate. In order to address this, factory schools (*fabrichno-zavodskoe uchilishche*) and courses were created particularly for the newly arrived workers.<sup>190</sup> These new and migrant workers who came to staff the developing fur, food and forest industries in the cities and settlements in the Viatka region provided an important link between village and country bringing a rural frame of mind from the countryside to the city and returning with new ideas and expectations of city life to the village.<sup>191</sup> Cities also proved to be an important place for increasing the educational levels of migrant workers and their counterparts who stayed in the cities.

The prerevolutionary traditions of strong local governance, the active involvement of peasants in local governmental bodies, and the firm connections forged between city and countryside continued to shape the consciousness of the inhabitants of the Kirov region through the 1930's. Given that Kirov was an overwhelmingly rural region throughout the 1930's, the political awareness and activity of the peasantry was particularly important in shaping the public discussion of the draft constitution. But the transition towards greater industrialization and

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<sup>190</sup> Zagvozdkin, 380.

<sup>191</sup> Such patterns of behavior are also noted in Moscow by William Chase. *Workers, Society and the Soviet State*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), and Robert Johnson, *Peasant and Proletarian: the Working Class of Moscow at the end of the Nineteenth century*, (New Brunswick, N J: Rutgers University Press, 1979), in Petrograd by Steven Smith *Red Petrograd : Revolution in the Factories, 1917-1918*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1983), and in the Donbas by Hiroaki Kuromiya *Freedom and terror in the Donbas : a Ukrainian-Russian borderland, 1870s-1990s*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1998) and in several works by Theodor H Friedgut.



urbanization also affected the inhabitants of the Kirov region as the goals of the Soviet state became manifest in Five-Year plans. The people of the Kirov region were being pulled into Stalin's industrial machine, which changed their entire way of life, from the length of the workday to where they lived and to the type of education they received. The complex nature of this transition is reflected in the discussion of the constitution in both a strong delineation of urban and rural needs, and the nature of urban and rural concerns. Yet the ties between town and country continued. The fact that workers suggested that they be given land to farm, demonstrates that the separation between rural and urban was by no means complete and that many people moved frequently between these two spheres.

One area where, tradition and modernization and urban and rural interests all coincided was the sphere of education. The Viatka/Kirov region had a tradition of recognizing the importance of education. During the tsarist period, the peasant dominated *Zemstvos* often devoted most of their attention and budget to elementary education, which the peasants viewed as key to doing business in the wider world. During the Civil War and NEP era, the Bolsheviks also tried to build educational institutions as part of their goal of destroying the old tsarist culture and creating a new socialist society. However, according to Aaron Retish, the Bolshevik government lacked the resources in the Civil war period to maintain the existing school network and most schools closed. He argues that during the early NEP period, the Soviet government had better luck promoting its educational goals through small cultural centers like reading huts.<sup>192</sup> Because these reading huts were

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<sup>192</sup> Retish , 223.

successful and particularly widespread in Viatka, the organization of discussions and readings became the main avenue of communication between the peasants and the state.<sup>193</sup> While traditional schools did experience a revival during the late NEP and First Five Year Plan periods, these meetings remained an important point of contact between the representatives of the state and its citizens.

As late as 1936, seven-year compulsory education was available only in seventeen cities and workers settlements in the region. Despite the limited geographic spread of seven-year education, the quantity of students attending such institutions grew steadily in the 1930s, from 354,000 in 1935 to 375,000 in 1937.<sup>194</sup> New cultural experiences, designed to reinforce socialist construction and identity, also became available to the inhabitants of the Kirov region, particularly those who lived in the regional capital. During the Second Five Year Plan, Kirov witnessed the building of the House of Soviets, the Drama Theater, Central hotel, and the “October” movie theater. At the same time, the local government demolished many historical monuments, such as the church of Aleksander Nevskii, as a way to destroy the old consciousness and replace it with a Soviet one. The network of cultural and informal educational facilities also spread to the countryside, albeit more slowly. In the fourth year of the Second Five Year Plan, 667 collective farm and workers clubs, and 50 houses of culture were opened in the region.<sup>195</sup> Such institutions often played a vital role in the countryside as they provided the primary points of contact

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<sup>193</sup> Retish , 225.

<sup>194</sup> Zagvozdkin, 387. For a more detailed overview of education policy and its effects on the Kirov region in the Stalinist period, see Larry Holmes *The Kremlin and the Schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) and *Grand Theater: Regional Governance in Stalin's Russia, 1931-1941*.

<sup>195</sup> Zagvozdkin, 388.

between the rural population and the state and party, which sent officials and representatives out to conduct lectures, readings, meetings and other events, including the public discussion of the draft constitution.

While life in the cities after 1928 offered many people increased economic, educational and cultural opportunities, it also increased competition for resources, especially housing. The growth of industrial production and urban populations sharpened what was already a housing problem in the 1920's. Housing construction in the 1930's was only undertaken in the city of Kirov, Slobodskoi and several other cities, where new factories were constructed. In 1936, in the city of Kirov, the regional center, 42,000 square meters of housing was built as opposed to the planned 96,000 square meters.<sup>196</sup> The influx of new workers combined with shortfalls in housing construction plans created a shortage of living space in the region that has never been fully resolved. Compounding the housing shortage was the fact that housing in the cities of the Kirov Region was administered by five separate agencies, which led to inconsistencies in the allotment of space per person and the services offered. For example, in 1935, 37.3% of Housing Trust dwellings had indoor running water, while just 4.6% of housing under the supervision of the Municipal Department of Communal Services (*Gorkomkhoz*) had running water. The rates of connection to sewage lines varied from 0.1% to 5 % of total housing stock, and at most only 21.6% of Housing Trust residences had central heating. Other agencies provided far more limited access to this service. While 89% of dwellings administered by the Cooperative Housing Rental Society had electric lighting, in

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<sup>196</sup> Zagvozdkin, 388.

industrial housing units that number fell to 33%. Overall housing in the developing urban centers and the quantity and quality of these dwellings remained a constant problem. (See Appendix 2, Chart 9). However, such close quarters also fostered the exchange of ideas and the maintenance of ties to the countryside as the peasants who moved from the villages to the city often lived with relatives or members of the same village and often still had relatives in that village with whom they maintained close ties. In Kirov, the alliance (*smychka*) of the 1920s was found in the urban dwellings of the 1930s.

Life in the Kirov countryside maintained many similarities with its prerevolutionary past. Peasants had been very active in *zemstvo* organizations, using them to promote their interests. When Soviet power presented the peasantry of Kirov/Viatka with new similar institutions, many coopted them for their own purposes. The primary example is the collective farm. Collectivization in Viatka had early roots. In 1918, the Soviet authorities launched Committees of the Poor (*kombedy*) designed to encourage the poor to pool their resources and engage in struggle with kulaks in the villages. While these Committees of the Poor did not flourish in other regions, the movement blossomed in Viatka, which had established 15,573 committees by December 1918, almost double the number of any other Russian province.<sup>197</sup> Aaron Retish argues that, unlike the committees of the poor in other regions, the Viatka committees were staffed by respectable members of the village community rather than outsiders.<sup>198</sup> However, the committees failed to

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<sup>197</sup> Retish, 193-194.

<sup>198</sup> Retish, 196.

control the village communes or to meet the grain requirements of the state and were soon disbanded.

Nonetheless, these Committees of the Poor spawned the first collective farms in the Viatka region in 1918. While these collective farms ran into administrative problems, they still remained appealing to many peasants because of increased access to land, supplies, and modern farming techniques.<sup>199</sup> Retish argues that, while many of these early collective farms struggled, the NEP era saw not only modernization plans from above but also from below. He notes that before 1917 local village assemblies (*skhods*) and former *zemstvo* organizations often pushed forward with agricultural modernization efforts and that when the Soviet state agencies engaged in such projects, they often retained the *zemstvo* officials as advisers.<sup>200</sup> As this suggest, the peasants often coopted Soviet-sponsored initiatives and reworked them to their own advantage. Thus collectivization in Viatka, while not without its struggles and hardships, often developed out of state and peasant cooperation and co-utilization, and with far less brutality than seen in the southern and western parts of the USSR.

The early 1930s saw full-scale collectivization and the beginnings of the mechanization of agriculture. For example, the second half 1930 saw a new stage in the collectivization of the countryside, when the first Machine Tractor Station (MTS) was built on Viatka territory in Zuevka. It contained fifty tractors and serviced 1,187 collective farms.<sup>201</sup> At the end of 1932, there were 9,936 collective farms in Gorky

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<sup>199</sup> Retish, 219-220.

<sup>200</sup> Retish, 222.

<sup>201</sup> Zagvozdkin, 379.

Region, which at that time included the Viatka region. They unified 240,000 peasant households or 44.7% of the total households. The overwhelming portion of individual small holders remained in the northern half of the region where the land was poorer and more forested. In these regions, farmsteads were located in the woods, sometimes as much as 4-5 km. apart, which made movement between them difficult and collectivization almost impossible. In the northern regions, only in *Zuizdinskii raion* was there any significant collective farm development in the early 1930's.<sup>202</sup>

The collective farms formed from 1918 through 1932 were weak, often cobbled together out of a few families of former small holders or landless peasants. Many collective farms did not have storehouses, stables or livestock farms. The inventory, livestock and seed was stored in individual houses. Therefore the district and regional party focused its efforts on bringing the process of collectivization to completion by consolidating gains and strengthening collective farms, particularly those involved in social animal husbandry.<sup>203</sup> Such efforts by the party and state paid off as collective farms overall were strengthened and consolidated. In 1928, individual households had 1.1 million head of cattle, but the collective farms only had 410 head. But in 1934, the ratio had changed, with individual households having 756,400 and the collective farms having 194,700 head of cattle.<sup>204</sup> At the beginning of 1935, the same year that the Kirov region was formed from Gorky

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<sup>202</sup> Zagvozdkin, 380.

<sup>203</sup> Zagvozdkin, 382.

<sup>204</sup> Zagvozdkin, 380. While the ratio moved to the collective farms' advantage, precisely what accounted for the loss of some 150,000 head of cattle is unclear. This study focuses on Kirov, which during the collectivization drive a part of the Nizhnii Novgorod region. An analysis of the collectivization campaign in the latter region is a future research project.

region, 77% of the peasant households in Gorky Region had joined a collective farm.<sup>205</sup>

Far from being the monolith often depicted in historical literature, the collective farms of the Kirov region were diverse and fluid. In 1936, the collective farms varied widely in size, ranging from an average of 77 households per collective farm in Kayskii *raion* to eighteen collective farm households in Murashinskii *raion*.<sup>206</sup> Although 35 households per collective farm was the overall average for the region, the number of households in the primarily grain producing regions was slightly higher, with 37 households, while the flax producing collective farms had fewer members as a whole, averaging only 33 households.<sup>207</sup> The rates of collectivization varied across the various districts within the Kirov region. Verkhoshizhenskii *raion* was the most collectivized in 1936, with a 98.3% rate of collectivization; Karakul'skii *raion* was the least collectivized, with only 68.3 % of its cultivated land collectivized in January.<sup>208</sup> Overall, 1936 saw a decrease in the rate of collectivization with a total decrease of 0.93% in collectivized territory. The steepest rate of decline was in Kirovskii *raion*, which saw a 10.4% decrease in its collectivized land holdings.<sup>209</sup> (see Appendix 2, Chart 10) However, the overall upward trend of collectivization prevailed and, at the end of 1937, there were 10,976 collective farms, unifying 94.3% of the peasant households. The collective farms and state farms sowed 99% of the region's tilled land.<sup>210</sup> By 1937, individual

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<sup>205</sup> Zagvozdkin, 382.

<sup>206</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 36

<sup>207</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 36

<sup>208</sup> This number increases slightly to 69.6% in October 1936. GASPI KO, F. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 36

<sup>209</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 36

<sup>210</sup> Zagvozdkin, 385.

peasant small holders made up only 5.7% of the population.<sup>211</sup> While most of the land in the Kirov Region became collectivized, the economic and organizational strengths and weaknesses of the individual collective farms created a varied patchwork of variety that shaped the lives of the collective farmers. In fact, the conditions in rural Kirov *Krai* make clear that central state structures and influence were quite weak. There was no single collective farm experience in the Kirov region, which resulted in a variety of opinions on some issues. However, overarching concerns such as fairness and the maintenance of law and order united the collective farmers despite the varied nature of their economic lives.

One of the best ways of illustrating the fluidity of the collective farms is by measuring expulsions and households and members who withdrew from the collective farms. Rather than this number decreasing by the mid to late 1930's as the collective farm system became a fixed part of Soviet life, the number of collective farmers expelled or withdrawing from collective farms actually grew. In the beginning of 1935, 11,100 households were expelled or voluntarily withdrew from collective farms. In 1936, 13,400 households were expelled from collective farms,<sup>212</sup> 21,700 households had been expelled by the beginning of 1937.<sup>213</sup> The question of the exact number of people being expelled from collective farms and the ramifications of this expulsion are not clear because many of those who were expelled for violations of collective farm rules were later readmitted.

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<sup>211</sup> Zagvozdkin, 386.

<sup>212</sup> The number of collective farmers expelled from collective farms is lower in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, being listed as 1979, but this can be accounted for by the fact that many of those expelled were later readmitted to the collective farm, often in the span of 2 or 3 months: this number does not include voluntary withdrawals from the collective farm.

<sup>213</sup> Zagvozdkin, 385.



Expulsion from the collective farm seems to have served as a way for collective farms to regulate the behavior of their members. For example, on March 13, 1934, at the general meeting of the V. Sludka collective farm, Trifon Grigorovich Buldakov, Arkadii Semenovich Buldakov and Aleksei Vasil'evich Yel'tsov were expelled for the loss of collective farm horses.<sup>214</sup> The horses were lost in the city of Glazov, when the three collective farmers were taking a sick family member to the hospital.<sup>215</sup> The meeting participants decided to expel the household of Aleksei Vasil'evich Yel'tsov for the loss of the collective farm's horses. Arkadii Semenovich Buldakov and Trofim Grigorovich Buldakov were also expelled from the collective farm for the same offense and sent to court.<sup>216</sup> However, these expulsions were not long term. The latter two households that were expelled were soon reintegrated into the community. In the course of three months, one household was again accepted in to the collective farm, and from the second household, the whole family, except for the head of the family who had lost the horse, was readmitted back into the collective farm.<sup>217</sup> The conditions for the return of these former members to the collective farm were enumerated at an administrative meeting of the V. Sludka collective farm. Vasilii Yel'tsev and his whole family were taken back into the collective farm on this condition: they had a cow for personal use that they had to give to the collective farm in exchange for the lost horse. A. S. Buldakov was also readmitted to the collective farm, but was sentenced to pay 885 rubles for the loss of the horse; he too had his cow confiscated. The cow covered the price of the lost

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<sup>214</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.77

<sup>215</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.77

<sup>216</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, ll.77,78

<sup>217</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 73

horse and court costs. A. S. Buldakov was also given a strict rebuke. However, for his negligent attitude to collective farm work and property, T. G. Buldakov, was not readmitted into the collective farm, though it appears that his family was.<sup>218</sup> Once restitution had been made to the collective farm for the losses inflicted upon it (i.e. the price of the horses, which they paid back with credit from workdays and cows given to the collective farm <sup>219</sup>) the expelled collective farmers, with the exception of T. Buldakov were welcomed back into the collective farm. As this case clearly illustrates, at the local level, the collective farmers were quite active in shaping their communities and imposing order.

It would seem that expulsion from the collective farm served as a way for the collective farmers to regulate their members, and attempt to impose fairness and order onto a countryside that lacked a strong state presence. Collective farmers had the final say over who was expelled from or admitted to the collective farm, which endowed this organization with considerable power over the daily lives of its members. For example, Anastasiia Stepanovna Ushakova, also from the V. Sludka collective farm was expelled for a second time from the collective farm. She petitioned the collective farm for re-admittance and even had received a statement of the *Raion* Land Organization about being readmitted, but the collective farms rejected her application, stating “such thieves and spongers are not needed.” <sup>220</sup>

The pattern of cyclical expulsion and re-admittance to the collective farm led Dokuchaev, the inspector from the agricultural section of the *Kraikom*, to conclude,

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<sup>218</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 78

<sup>219</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 74

<sup>220</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 78

that the question of expulsion from the collective farm and the acceptance of members into the collective farm was not approached seriously.<sup>221</sup> However, he seems to have failed to note the effect that such expulsions had on regulating community behavior as those expelled from the collective farms were subject to increased taxation as individual smallholders and denied access to collective farm resources.

Although the state's daily presence on collective farms was weak, various state offices sought to direct collective farms by regulatory means. Collective farm resources became increasingly important to survival in the countryside as more and more restrictions were placed on individual small holders and individual property. In April 1935, the Kirov *Kraispolkom* and *Kraikom* established the size of garden plots as between .25 and .5 hectares.<sup>222</sup> They also sought to limit the personal livestock holdings of collective farmers, to promote the growth of collective farm holdings, and to promote equality in livestock holding when collective farmers maintained a large personal holding of livestock. For example, A. Khodyrev, an instructor for the agricultural section of the *Kraikom* noted the unequal distribution of livestock among collective farmers in a 1935 report on the collective farm "Flame of Revolution" in Falenskii *raion*. On this collective farm, which consisted of 50 households, the instructor noted that many collective farmers, particularly administrators, maintained substantial private livestock holdings. For example, the collective farmer Mikhail Ivanovich Mil'chakov, the bookkeeper for the collective farm, had a nine-member household, which had three milk cows, a one-year-old

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<sup>221</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 73

<sup>222</sup> Zagvozdkin, 386.

heifer, a pig, two piglets, and four sheep. The chairman of the collective farm, Mikhail Ksenofonich Ushakov, had one cow, one Yaroslavl Pedigreed bull, one heifer, a bull calf, a pig, three sheep, and four lambs. The collective farmer, Nikolai Gerasimovich Mil'chakov, possibly a relative of the above mentioned book keeper, had two cows, two heifers, two bull calves, two sheep, three lambs and a piglet. Of the 50 households in this settlement, thirteen households had two cows with calves; at the same time on the collective farm there were three cowless households. But the three families noted above had a disproportionately large amount of livestock and their heads held key posts in the collective farm. The large personal holdings of collective farmers also had a deleterious effect on the livestock herds of the collective farm, as well as propagating inequity among members. The plan for calves on the collectivized part of the "Flame of Revolution" farm in 1934 was not fulfilled. However that was not due to a dearth of livestock. The development of livestock husbandry proceeded mainly in the form of increasing the heads of livestock for the collective farmers' personal use; on the collectivized portion of farm, the only increase was a natural increase. There was not one case of the collective farmers giving a heifer or a cow to the collective farm perhaps because the collective farmers believed that they had an unlimited amount of livestock for personal use.<sup>223</sup> As a result the *Kraikom* and *Kraispolkom* passed regulations in 1935 limiting the personal holdings of the collective farmers to one cow, one pig with a litter, ten sheep or goats, up to twenty beehives and unlimited birds and chickens.<sup>224</sup> Here the state, in the form of local precedents, was trying to regulate the collective farms,

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<sup>223</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.64

<sup>224</sup> Zagvozdkin, 386.

which many peasants had coopted to their benefit by maintaining large herds of livestock while simultaneously accessing the collective farm resources the state helped provide.

The economic and climactic disparities that marked the Kirov region manifested themselves in collective farm life. Despite the best efforts of the party and state officials to address issues such as “cowlessness,” the actual livestock holdings of collective farmers varied dramatically from collective farm to farm. For example in 1935, the collective farm V. Sludka in Poninskii *raion* reported that all its collective farmers had a cow.<sup>225</sup> However, that same year the “Second Five Year Plan” collective farm in Falenskii *raion* reported that, of their 59 households, nineteen had no personal cows.<sup>226</sup> Such discrepancies in household economies continued throughout the 1930’s. In the fall of 1937, 22.6% of collective farmers in the *Krai* did not own their own cows and 14% had no livestock at all.<sup>227</sup>

The wages of collective farmers also varied greatly, depending on the success or failure of each collective farm. There existed in the Kirov Region a Regional Honor Roll (краевые доски почета) that recognized and tried to promote collective farm excellence. Those successful collective farms that were featured on the Honor Roll received significantly higher wages, though these too increased or decreased from year to year based on the fortunes of the collective farm. For example, the collective farmers of Krasinskii collective farm<sup>228</sup> received payment in kind of 3.1 kg of food and 10 kopeks per workday in 1934; this increased to 4.5 kg of food and 30 kopeks

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<sup>225</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 71

<sup>226</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.64

<sup>227</sup> Zagvozdkin, 386.

<sup>228</sup> Lugovskii rural soviet, Sovietskii *raion*

in 1935.<sup>229</sup> On the “First of May” collective farm in Shabalinskii *raion* collective farmers saw an even greater increase in their wages. In 1934 the collective farmers received 2.08 kg of grain and 26 kopeks, while in 1935 they received 3.343 kg of grain and 1 ruble per workday.<sup>230</sup> However, not all collective farmers, even on successful collective farms, received monetary payment for their work. In 1937 in Iaranskii *raion*, collective farmers earned an average of 1.2 kopecks per workday, but on 1,414 collective farms in the region, collective farmers received no monetary pay.<sup>231</sup> In short, although no collective farmer grew rich from his or her work, there was considerable economic disparity among the region’s collective farms and within the farms themselves.

Not surprisingly then, based on the success of their individual collective farms, the lifestyles of collective farmers varied significantly too. For example, those in the above-mentioned “First of May” collective farm (Shabalinskii *raion*), which had been founded in 1928 and contained 54 families, lived a materially secure life in 1935. The collective farm was so successful that it made the Regional Honor Roll. They had 837 total hectares of land, of which 450 hectares were arable, 75 hectares were devoted to haymaking, 249 to pasture and 63 hectares were forested. They had forty five horses, five young horses, and a dairy farm with 118 head of cattle, of which forty two were milk producing, thirty eight were heifers and twenty eight were two-year-old cows. Every household had one cow, one or two heifers, small animals and chickens. The collective farm had a cow barn for 220 head of cattle, a

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<sup>229</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 668, l.2

<sup>230</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.104

<sup>231</sup> Zagvozdkin, 387.

horse stable for thirty six head, and they were building a second stable for an additional twenty horses. In 1935, they built a calf barn for forty calves and a silo. The collective farm also has a club with 200 places, nurseries with places for 50 children, two grain storage facilities, and a garage for agricultural machines.<sup>232</sup> This was a prosperous collective farm and not the only one. Other honor roll collective farms, such as the Gredenevskii production collective farm<sup>233</sup> offered cultural amenities as well. The Gredenevskii production collective farm had five Red Corners, seven nurseries, three cafeterias, one music circle, a portable film projector, a radio set and various newspapers and magazines.<sup>234</sup> The production collective farm “Reconstruction”<sup>235</sup> was a particularly successful collective farm. They bought a truck and a car for the collective farm from bread sales revenue. Additionally, they had electrical lighting for 195 households, radios in twenty six households and subscribed to 453 journals and newspapers. The collective farm provided its members with access to three nurseries and four seasonal cafeterias as well as one permanent cafeteria.<sup>236</sup> Such successful collective farms stood in stark contrast to many others. Rural Kirov Krai was a very diverse place.

Despite the relatively high standard of living on Honor Roll collective farms, rural life was still strenuous and difficult. For example, the collective farm “Socialism,”<sup>237</sup> which primarily grew grain and flax, was organized in 1931 and experienced tremendous growth, developing from fifteen households in 1931 to 138

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<sup>232</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l.104

<sup>233</sup> Gredenevskii rural soviet, Verkhshizhenskii *raion*

<sup>234</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 668, l. 138

<sup>235</sup> Smolentsevskii rural soviet, Sovietskii *raion*

<sup>236</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 668, l. 159

<sup>237</sup> Volozhitinskii rural soviet Kayskii *raion*

households in 1935. Some of this growth was facilitated by fierce socialist competitions. To improve the conduction of agricultural work, the “Socialism” collective competed with the neighboring collective farm “Union”. The qualitative and quantitative indices indicated that in the competition “Socialism” was the victor. Besides such inter-collective farm competitions, there were also brigade and individual competitions. The totals from competition between brigades and individual collective farmers were discussed every week at brigade meetings as well as in the wall newspaper and exchange of work reports between brigades. The results of such competition between collective farms contributed to the raising of labor discipline and productive work output. For shock work during the spring sowing and in harvest campaigns and grain deliveries, thirty collective farmers-shock workers were awarded prizes and above all the collective farm was placed on the *Raion* Honor Roll.<sup>238</sup> While these socialist competitions did succeed in raising production in agriculture, as they did in raising productivity in industry,<sup>239</sup> such rates of production were in fact unsustainable and shock work only masked the lack of mechanization in the Soviet Union that would have made such growth rates more permanent. While such competition may have facilitated a somewhat artificial increase in productive work, the lack of sufficiently mechanized agriculture caused the collective farmers to work to extremes to maintain this output. On the “Socialism” collective farm, the collective farmers began work at 4 or 5 in the

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<sup>238</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 668, l. 38

<sup>239</sup> See Steven Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) and Lewis Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935-1941*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). for a discussion of shock competitions in industry.



morning and finished work at 8 or 9 at night.<sup>240</sup> Such demands could not be sustained.

Even Honor Roll collective farms often could not or did not maintain such momentum. For example, until 1933 the collective farm “Red Column” was considered one of the best and most advanced collective farms in the Udmurt *oblast’*. During the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Udmurt Autonomous *Oblast’*, the collective farm received the Regional Executive Committee (*Obispolkom*) banner and several times the collective farm was awarded prizes. But beginning in 1933, work discipline began to become weaker and a mass expulsion of collective farmers began. In 1933-34, twenty-five households were expelled and in 1935, thirty-five households from the village of Azim’ia filed a written request to secede from “Red Column”.<sup>241</sup> This exodus and the subsequent decline in livestock was blamed on the collective farm’s leadership, specifically the former collective farm chairman Nikolai Iosifovich Lozhkin, who was depicted as having wild drunken parties, inflating the number of workdays worked, and basically running the establishment into the ground.<sup>242</sup> Lozhkin<sup>243</sup> stood as a reminder that the fate of a kolkhoz and the well-being of its members often depended on the actions of an individual or a few individuals. During the popular discussion of the draft constitution and the 1937 elections, such leaders came under intense scrutiny.

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<sup>240</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 668, l. 38

<sup>241</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 20, l. 279

<sup>242</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 20, ll.280, 282; an entire *delo* is devoted to Lozhkin’s misconduct GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 672

<sup>243</sup> Some may interpret Lozhkin being held up as an example but a review of his case file indicates that he did indeed engage in action such as theft from the collective farm and the *zaiavleniia* that both he and the other collective farmers wrote about his removal from power suggests a very complex situation involving nepotism and family squabbles.

Weak collective farms often faced dire situations. In 1935, the collective farm “Wave 2”<sup>244</sup> was considered one of the most backward, low-capacity collective farms in the region. It was undersupplied with grain for the spring sowing because it had failed to produce a surplus the previous year. It also had production shortfalls in the production of livestock fodder and inadequate grain with which to pay the collective farmers. The *raion* leadership considered conditions on the collective farm to be catastrophic, particularly the supply of provisions, and was forced to give it loans in December.<sup>245</sup>

Hence there was no one “collective farm” experience in the Kirov region. Instability was always a threat, be it from natural forces, economic forces or corrupt or ineffective collective farm leadership. The variations in lifestyle and the success or failure of a collective farm produced an array of opinions, particularly about the effectiveness of the Soviet state. Those who lived on the successful collective farms and who had experienced often-dramatic increases in the standard of living tended to praise the Soviet state. They greeted the draft constitution, and especially Stalin, with applause, often supplementing their glorification of Soviet achievements with tales of hardships under the Tsar. I argue that much of this praise was sincere, as their lives had truly improved under the Soviet regime. Conversely, those who lived on struggling collective farms tended to be critical of Soviet power and used the discussion of the draft constitution as a way to vent their frustrations, arguing that the constitution was nice, but that it did not feed them. They too were sincere.

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<sup>244</sup> Lopatinskii rural soviet, Kotel’nicheskii *raion*

<sup>245</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 1, d. 643, l. 26

However, the success or failure of agriculture was often out of control of even the most organized and dedicated cadres. Life in the countryside was always uncertain as agriculture's reliance on environmental factors caused grain harvests to fluctuate yearly. The first years of the 1930's saw modest increases in productivity as land was collectivized. During the first Five Year Plan, arable collective farm land grew from 2.6 to 3.4 million hectares, and the grain harvest increased from 7.7 to 8 tsenters per hectare. In 1933-34, in the districts of the Viatka region the grain harvest increased to 9 tsenters (100 kl) per hectare.<sup>246</sup> The year 1935 brought some happiness with a bountiful harvest yield of grain and flax. The grain harvest in the region reached 10.6 tsenters per hectare, and total duties on grain for the first time reached two million tons. Conversely, in 1936, the hot, dry summer, and the early, rainy and cold autumn brought a considerable shortage in grain and animal feed, reducing the total number of livestock on the collective farms and the personal plots of the collective farmers.<sup>247</sup> This shortfall was noted during the constitutional discussion. In *Zuizdinskii raion*, a discussant of the draft constitution stated: "the Constitution is good but just the same we don't have bread."<sup>248</sup> As a result of the poor harvest, resources in the region were strained and in some areas food became very scarce. In the spring of 1937, hunger spread to *Nolinskii, Lebiazhskii and Urzhumskii raiony*. In several villages people fed on the corpses of collapsed livestock. The Central Committee and Sovnarkom USSR made a

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<sup>246</sup> Zagvozdkin, 382.

<sup>247</sup> Zagvozdkin, 384.

<sup>248</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, l. 11

decision to forbid local authorities to offer these distressed regions help.<sup>249</sup> Such shortfalls and inherent instability exacerbated familial and inter-collective farm tensions and led to occasional eruptions of rural violence.<sup>250</sup> Despite the differences in lifestyle on the collective farms, inter-village tensions and economic pressures, coupled with a weak state presence, meant that the threat of crime always loomed large over the collective farmers. Such tensions and pressures formed the backdrop to the public discussion in 1936 and the elections in 1937.

Crime in the Kirov region was an ongoing problem for both the citizenry and the state, and in both the cities and the countryside. But the way in which the local officials, primarily the procuracy, addressed crime and the way that the general population viewed it differed greatly. The procuracy was primarily concerned with crimes against the state or state and communal property. The procuracy recorded statistics for eleven types of crime in 1935 and 1936, but only two of those categories referred to crime against citizens: property crimes and hooliganism.<sup>251</sup> Therefore it would seem that crimes against average citizens and personal property often went under-reported. But, in fact crimes against persons and property were a reality of life in Kirov. In 1935, the investigative units from the procuracy, the *militia* and NKVD investigated 131 homicides, 55 instances of robbery, and 53 sex

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<sup>249</sup> Zagvozdkin, 384.

<sup>250</sup> 1936 was a terrible agricultural year for much of the Soviet Union and ushered in a nationwide economic crisis. The effects of this crisis on the whole of the Soviet Union was explored by Roberta Manning in "The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936-1940 and the Great Purges" in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* eds. J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 117-141

<sup>251</sup> GAKO, f. P- 2684, op. 1, d. 248, l.6 David Shearer investigates state priorities in regards to crime in his *Policing Stalin's Socialism*.

crimes.<sup>252</sup> The procuracy recorded a total of 1,845 instances of property crime against individual citizens for the whole of 1935, and 737 recorded instances in the first half of 1936. They also recorded 3,031 cases of “hooliganism” in 1935 and 1,200 cases in the first quarter of 1936. However, the procuracy often did not handle crimes against average citizens. Instead such crimes tended to be investigated by the *militsia* or the NKVD, so the numbers here probably under-represent the real crime rate in the Kirov region.

Violence appears to have been of greatest concern in the countryside, where the state’s presence was weakest, and social and economic factors may have exacerbated tensions. Local party reports and even *raion* newspapers often carried anecdotal evidence of violence on collective farms, particularly against members of the collective farm leadership. These may not have been the most common incidents, but because they were attacks on people who could be perceived as part of the state apparatus and who were often members of the Communist Party, these were the incidents that were reported. Given the focus on violence against the collective farm leadership, which was often framed in terms of “enemies of the people” attacking good “representatives of the state,” these were the incidents that were most widely reported in newspapers and party reports. They therefore became the representation of crime in the countryside.

Local newspapers reported instances of hooliganism in particular. The article entitled “To eradicate Hooliganism” from *Kirovets*, (the district newspaper from the Kirov rural district) which demanded the procuracy take action against such

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<sup>252</sup> GAKO, f. P-2684, op. 1, d. 248, l. 10-11

incidents, was a compilation of various letters that the editorial board had received from three different collective farms that reported incidents of hooliganism, encompassing everything from drunken disorders to attempted murder. On the “Red Putilovets” collective farm, one of the collective farmers wrote that, over the course of two years, Pavel D. Karavaev and Vasilii A. V. behaved outrageously (хулиганят). On October 4, 1935, they beat the collective farmer I. Ia. Ogorodnikov, hitting him several times in head with a rock. On Easter 1936, they beat two collective farmers from the “12<sup>th</sup> of October” collective farm and a Komsomol member from the “Red Putilovets” collective farm, R. M. Karavakov. On “Trinity Day”, with the help of Dmitrii Karavaev, Pavel’s father, beat several other people. Later, on St. Peter’s day (July 19), the hooligans led young people away from hay making to participate in binge drinking. They subsequently beat the collective farmer Ia. I Mel’nikov, tore off his shirt, hit the brigadier and member of the rural soviet as well as his wife, M.V. Ogorozhnikova several times. They wanted to do the same to the head of the collective farm, but he was not present. The collective farmers were rightfully distressed by the conduct of the Karavaevs and demanded that the procurator quickly bring them to justice.

In Nikulitskii rural soviet, on the collective farm named for Voroshilov, the *raion* Executive Committee Instructor, Comrade Kotel’nikov, also reported incidents of violence. He wrote that on the evening of July 21, Aleksander Cherepanov organized binge drinking. Then he and his brother and cousin, (Nikolai I. and Ivan M.), assaulted the chairman of the collective farm, P.A. Cherepanov, and a member of the rural soviet and editor of the wall newspaper, A.N. Cherepanov, dealing them

heavy blows with bottles and pickets from a fence. The village executive officer, A. I. Braturkhin, and the collective farmer, M. I. Braturkhin, tried to come to their aid while the collective farm chairman and the wall newspaper editor were beaten unconsciousness. But the would-be rescuers were also beaten. All four of the victims were unable to work and the chairman of the collective farm was beaten so badly that he could not walk. The organizer of the bacchanalia and beating, A. I. Cherepanov, had been expelled from the collective farm and decided to take revenge on the chairman of the collective farm.<sup>253</sup> Such violence against collective farm leaders bespeaks sharp social tensions in rural areas, but it also limited their ability to effectively manage the organization and to use expulsion as an effective means of social control.

By collecting and printing such accounts, the newspaper editors brought the specter of violent crime to the forefront of the readers' attention while trying to force local authorities to act. Such cases of violence on collective farms were hardly unique.<sup>254</sup> As we shall see, violence appears to have occurred with some frequency and it took a fair amount of effort to get the procuracy to address the issue. On collective farms where the culprits were often well known, many of the inhabitants of the Kirov region rejected the implementation of *habeas corpus* as it delayed the apprehension of the suspects and allowed them to further perpetrate violence.

Aleksander Vasil'evich Agalakov, a worker in the finishing section of the Lenin

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<sup>253</sup>"Iskorenit' Khuliganstvo," *Kirovets*, June 27, 1936, No. 126, pg 2. Other incidents of drunken misconduct, often on the part of collective farm workers is reported in *Kirovets*, October 9, 1936 No. 184, 2 and October 17, 1936 No. 190, 1 as well.

<sup>254</sup>Other such cases are listed in various reports in procuracy materials such as GAKO, f. R-2684, op.1, d. 72, l. 3,8, which describes a drunken assault on someone on a train platform with a knife and the beating of collective farm chairman to unconsciousness

leather factory, gave voice to the popular apprehension behind the widespread rejection of Article 127 of the constitution. In his letter to *Leninskii Put'* titled "Is it not Early?", he addressed the vulnerability that average citizens felt and how article 127 further undermined their sense of security. He wrote that:

In article 127 it says that no citizen of the USSR can be deprived of personal freedom or placed under arrest without the agreement of the court or the sanctions of the procurator.

In my opinion it is incorrect and here is why. We have not once and for all eliminated hooliganism. Hooligans sometimes insult and attack passersby and really in light of this the policeman doesn't have the right to arrest such a person? In my opinion this must even be done by any honest citizen.

Then, when we have finally eliminated hooliganism, then this article can be adopted. But now in my opinion it is too early. This is my observation.<sup>255</sup>

Such complaints and newspaper articles about violence demonstrate that the inhabitants of the Kirov region were not shy about agitating for their interests, even if they conflicted with those of state officials. Even rural inhabitants were comfortable enough and politically astute enough to use or challenge Soviet laws to argue for their interests. A case from Zuevka *raion* in 1935-36, where collective farmers came into conflict with the district state administrative authorities over land use, demonstrated the tenacity and political astuteness of the collective farmers of the Kirov region.

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<sup>255</sup> "Ni rano li," *Leninskii Put'*, June 24, 1936, No. 140, .3.



From March through October 1936, members of several collective farms<sup>256</sup> challenged the actions of two local organizations, a logging enterprise and the *raion* roads department, both of which operated under the auspices of the Zuevka District Executive Committee. The collective farms argued against these local organizations on the basis of damage to their land's productive capacity as well as infringement on the rights that the central government had recently endowed upon collective farms.

The problem began when the Zuevka District Executive Committee and its District Roads Department decided to construct a road from Zuevka to Bogorodsk. However, the land required for the roadbed, as well as for the gravel to line the roadbed belonging to functioning collective farms. The fact that the land was occupied by collective farms presented a twofold problem for the Zuevka District Executive Committee. They had to contend both with collective farmers and Soviet law, specifically with the Decree on the Eternal Usage of Land, by which the central government bequeathed all land to the collective farms for eternal usage. Under this law, the land could only be alienated with the agreement of the collective farmers.

However, the Zuevka District Executive Committee did not seek the agreement from the collective farms and, in October 1935, ordered the District Roads Department to begin construction on the road. The road cut across the fields of the collective farm "Saturday," which had been planted with winter wheat. The trenching of a planted field, combined with the road technicians compelling collective farmers from another collective farm to build the road, sparked complaints. The initial report in response to the complaint, filed by the road

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<sup>256</sup> Luzinskii, "Dawn of Freedom" and "Pushkin," "Chenousy," Bubnov and "Saturday" agricultural *artely*.

foreman, alleged that the road technician, Maria Semenova Pliner, constructed the section of road from Zuevka to “Saturday” was guilty of violating the collective farm’s rights. She had begun construction without an agreement from the collective farmers, even though they had the state document about eternal land usage. She also allegedly acted against the orders of her superiors. The report alleged that Pliner had been told to halt the construction of the road by the outgoing head of the roads department and that the construction had continued without the approval of the Chairman of the District Executive Committee Comrade Sapozhnikov.<sup>257</sup>

Soon more complaints from other collective farms, which were losing land to the road project, surfaced. The senior inspector of the Kirov Land Management Department, Zhdanov, was tasked with investigating the legality of the road construction following the publication in the local newspaper of an article titled “The chairman of Zuevskii District Executive Committee (RIK) violated Soviet laws”. During the investigation, Plinner refused to be blamed for the violation of Soviet law and the rights of the collective farmers. On June 12, 1936, she gave Zhdanov information confirming the newspaper story. She stated that the new road ran through the territories of the “Dawn of Freedom” and “Pushkin” collective farms and that because “Pushkin” collective farm had been officially given the State Act on the Eternal Usage of Land and the collective farmers had not given their consent, the Zuevskii District Land Organization asked officially that the work stop. The collective farmers had referred this question to the Chairman of the District Executive Committee, Comrade Sapozhnikov, who stated “that the work would

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<sup>257</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 82

continue and that the road would be constructed.”<sup>258</sup> The Presidium ordered the Roads Department to deliver gravel for the construction of the proposed road and the Roads Department fulfilled the request. Despite the protests of the collective farmers, the road was completed.<sup>259</sup>

However, the completion of the road was not the end of the saga. Sapozhnikov had made a habit of seizing land from collective farms for the construction of this road in a way that violated both Soviet law and the rights of the collective farms. The land seizure from two collective farms, “Saturday” and “Chernousy” appeared to have occurred before these collective farms received the Act on the Eternal Usage of Land.<sup>260</sup>

While the seizure of land on “Saturday” and “Chernousy” collective farms was questionably legal, the precedent that it established had wide reaching effects and the District Executive Committee used this precedent to openly violate both the rights of the collective farms and Soviet law. For example, the Presidium of the District Executive Committee, following the approval of the draft securing the land in perpetuity for the Bubnov agricultural artel’, decided to withdraw four hectares of land under the gravel quarry from that collective farm. The Roads Department had failed to reach an agreement on the land in question with the collective farms, but went ahead and began to dig anyway. Doing so reduced the food base for the collective farm. <sup>261</sup> The protocol of the March 18, 1936 meeting of the Presidium of Zuevka District Executive Committee indicated that the Presidium reviewed the

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<sup>258</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 76

<sup>259</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 79

<sup>260</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 79

<sup>261</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 79

question of land usage for Bubnov collective farm and decided against the rights of the collective farm. Therefore the Presidium decided to remove from the collective farm four hectares of land, which encompassed the gravel pit and access road needed for road construction. The District Land Organization was ordered by the Chairman of the District Executive Committee, Comrade Sapozhnikov, to seize the land from the collective farm.<sup>262</sup>

The removal of land from the collective farms sparked protests from collective farmers for several reasons. The loss of both valuable arable land and the seemingly unilateral actions of the District Executive Committee threatened both the livelihood and sovereignty of the collective farms. Collective farmers were afraid that more tilled land might be confiscated and hence arable land would decrease further.<sup>263</sup> Decreases in acreage not only made it difficult for the collective farmers to grow sufficient crops, but in some cases shrank the fields to a size where agricultural machines could not be used.

The collective farm "Pushkin," which had also had land seized, refused to accept the actions of the District Executive Committee. At a general collective farm meeting held on June 12, 1936, with thirty-five of the forty-five members in attendance, the collective farmers discussed the actions of the District Executive Committee. Comrade Kuznetsov, chairman of the collective farm, recommended appealing to the regional officials for the return of the land that had been seized as the collective farm possessed the Act on the Eternal Usage of Land at the time that the land was taken and the size of the remaining fields was inadequate for the use of

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<sup>262</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 81

<sup>263</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 79

agricultural machines. The collective farmers unanimously decided to file a written request at the regional level for the return of the land.<sup>264</sup>

Addressed to the Presidium of the Kirov *Kraiispolkom*, the written request from “Pushkin” collective farm highlighted the above-stated arguments, driving home the fact that the District Executive committee knowingly violated Soviet law and the rights of the collective farm. The collective farmers claimed that the District Executive Committee ordered the Roads Department to seize eight hectares and dig across twenty-two hectares of winter wheat, despite the fact that the collective farm had the document authorizing its usage of land. Both the District Executive Committee and the Roads Department ignored the petitioned of the collective farmers, so they asked the regional officials to step in. The collective farmers of “Pushkin” collective farm petitioned the regional executive committee to not only return the land to the collective farm but to also provide compensation for damages in the form of lost crops.<sup>265</sup>

At the same time that the “Pushkin” collective farm was petitioning for regional intervention in its struggle with the District Executive Committee, another collective farm was also accusing that committee of violating its rights. The Luzinskii collective farm filed a complaint against Chairman Sapozhnikov as well over damage done to collective farm meadows by a local logging enterprise. The regional officials launched an official investigation into the claim, but only following the publication of a note of complaint in *Kirovskaia Pravda* on June 7, 1936. On June 10, Senior Inspector of the Land Management Section of the Kirov Regional Land

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<sup>264</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 87

<sup>265</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 86

Administration Zhdanov conducted an investigation of the incident. He ascertained that the conflict began in the autumn of 1935 when the logging enterprise began to prepare land around the meadows for harvesting. The logging enterprise harvested some 7,000 cubic meters of wood, but ruined the meadows in the process. The collective farm chairman, Aleksei Shennikov, asked the foreman of the logging enterprise Mikhail Ivanovich Dybovskikh, to remove the bark from the meadow so as to enable the meadow's grasses to grow. But Dubovskikh ignored this request and the bark remained. The bark had to be gathered into a pile by the collective farmers, who received no money for doing the work of the logging enterprise. The collective farm chairman alleged that this violated the rights of the collective farm. He also accused the logging enterprise of damage to the meadows, resulting in the loss of hay from approximately forty hectares, which could have been used to feed twenty five cows, eighteen horses, four juvenile horses, twenty eight sheep, and thirty heifers, was ruined. Senior Inspector Zhdanov's investigation concluded that the collective farms' complaints were valid and that the chairman of the District Executive Committee broke Soviet laws because he did not require the logging enterprise to clean up their mess.<sup>266</sup>

At the same time that Inspector Zhdanov was investigating the incidents, the Zuevka District Party Committee was stirred to action by the publication of a June 8, 1936 article in *Kirovskaiia Pravda* titled "The Chairman of the *Raion* Executive Committee violates Soviet Laws." Based on the information provided by the newspaper article, the Party Committee confirmed that there were regulatory

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<sup>266</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 72

violations that damaged the agricultural *artely* “Pushkin” and “Dawn of Freedom”. The Party committee concluded that Comrade Sapozhnikov was the guilty party because he had not observed the state act on the usage of land. The decision to remove land for the road and gravel quarry had been approved by the Regional Executive Committee, but the Zuevka Party Committee concluded that Sapozhnikov did not get the appropriate permission from the Regional Executive Committee or the Council of People’s Commissars to take the land from “Pushkin” and “Dawn of Freedom” collective farms. The party committee concluded that for the violation of the *artel’* regulations, Sapozhnikov needed to be reprimanded and that the collective farms be compensated for the lost land.<sup>267</sup>

In the case of Bubnov collective farm, the District Party Committee also concluded that the head of the *Raion* Land Organization, Comrade Nikulin, and the head of the Roads Department, Comrade Makhnev, should be reprimanded because they did not take any action on the complaints of the collective farm about damage to the clover planted near the quarry. The district Party Committee demanded that Nikukin and Makhnev take relevant actions to put a fence to protect this clover field from possible damage by the gravel delivery people. Additionally they decided to require the Director of the logging enterprise to completely clean the collective farm meadows of garbage left during the winter and to give the collective farms monetary compensation for the cleanup. In order to legalize the land seizure and stay compliant with Soviet law, the district Party Committee decided to ask the party group of the district Executive Committee to make an application to the Regional

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<sup>267</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 99

Executive Committee about the annexation of the land beneath the new road and gravel quarry and about the grazing lands of the logging enterprise, which the collective farmers used.<sup>268</sup> While the members of the Bubnov collective farm did not receive the land under the road back, they were compensated for their losses. They also won recognition of their rights and an acknowledgement from the District Executive Committee that their actions had violated the collective farmers' rights as Soviet citizens and harmed their personal interests.

The collective farmers, in these cases, demonstrated their political acuity by framing their struggle with the District Executive Committee in terms of harming their interests as collective farmers and the violation of central state law. This demonstrated that they were quite familiar with Soviet laws as they applied to their daily lives. Additionally they appealed to multiple organizations, such as the regional newspaper *Kirovskaia Pravda* and the Zuevka Party Committee, to investigate the incident and to get justice. And the state rewarded their tenacity and faith. The District Party Committee demanded restitution for the lost land and crops, censured the errant District Executive Committee chairman, and referred the issue to the Regional Executive Committee for further action. Thus the inhabitants of the Kirov region, in this case collective farmers, were politically active and aware, and were willing to engage in a dialogue with the state to agitate for their interests. The cases above indicate that collective farmers were not afraid to challenge what they perceived as injustice and illegal state behavior nor were their challenges uninformed. When the Soviet state asked for their input into shaping the foundation

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<sup>268</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 364, l. 99



of the Soviet state through their comments on the draft constitution, the citizens of the Kirov region happily complied. For many reasons not the least of which was that they understood the power of the law, they engaged the state in a public conversation about their needs and expectations, which were often dramatically different than the needs and expectations that the state had been promoting through its managed discussion of the draft constitution.

This incident also highlights a more general reality that influenced how the citizens of Kirov interacted with the Soviet state—the importance of economic realities. In both town and country, citizens who participated in the discussion brought to that discussion their economic experiences and anxieties, realities that formed their perspectives.

## Chapter 3: The Implementation of the Discussion of the Draft Constitution

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Much of the information in this work on both the implementation of the discussion and the popular response to the draft constitution comes from regional and local party and state documents. Many of these documents were designed to address certain questions and concerns raised by officials in Moscow. The set of questions that Moscow posed to regional officials undoubtedly shaped the information supplied in the reports and how the discussion of the draft constitution was portrayed in the documents on which this work is based. One of the most important of those documents was sent in August 1936, by Akulov, the secretary of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK). It is a letter with specific questions to be answered by the regional officials in their reports on the implementation of the popular discussion of the draft constitution. This prescribed form for reports was issued in response to what the central leadership perceived as insufficiencies in the discussion campaign at a regional level. Kalinin, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, addressed these concerns specifically in a telegram issued in August 1936, in which he accused regional officials of slacking off on the implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution. He was particularly upset with the lack of information coming from the regions.<sup>269</sup> Without such reports, it was impossible for central authorities to monitor either the progress of the discussion or popular responses to the draft constitution. Therefore, when Akulov issued his letter prescribing the form and questions that regional reports needed to

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<sup>269</sup> GARF, f.3316, op. 8, d. 222, l. 36

address, he specified that reports in this form were to be received from the regions on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of the month.<sup>270</sup> The specific questions that the Central Executive Committee demanded be answered were as follows:

1. How is the discussion progressing and has it progressed at the plenums of district executive committees, city soviets, rural soviets, settlement soviets (*possovietov*) and also in sections of deputy groups? Were there any cases of the disruption in the discussion of the draft constitution at these plenums? How many people attended, the number of participants and the number of suggestions brought to the draft constitution (include the character of the resolutions of the plenum and the additions and suggestions to the constitution brought by the deputies)?
2. How is the discussion progressing with the laborers of factories, collective farms, state farms etc? State the forms of the discussion (assembly, meeting, reading, other), the activity of the laborers during the discussion of the draft, how many attended, the number of participants and the number of suggestions brought etc. (include the most characteristic actions). Corrections, comments, and suggestions to the draft constitution should be completely counted and submitted in separate reports with individual examples, characterizing growth in the productive and political activity of the laborers in connection with the

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<sup>270</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 8, d. 222, l. 37

all people's discussion of the draft constitution (the growth in the number of shockworkers, Stakhanovites, the organization of Stakhanovite brigades, and shifts (*smen*), the early fulfillment of plans and the struggle for quality etc.).

3. During the time of the discussion did criticism of the shortcomings of the work of the soviets and executive committees unfold (provide characteristic examples)? Have there been occasions, in connection with the discussion of the draft constitution, of the removal of individual deputies for poor work and other detractive reasons (provide examples)?
4. Was the discussion among national minorities conducted in their native tongue?
5. Were there cases of politically irregular interpretation of the draft constitution during its discussion? ( indicate what they were)
6. Were there cases of the worming in of class enemies during the discussion of the draft constitution and how were they expressed?
7. How was the organizational role and help of the soviets and executive committees to lower soviets and executive committees expressed during the all peoples' discussion?"<sup>271</sup>

These questions resulted in a great deal of information in the regional party committee reports on topics such as criticism of local soviet leaders and their

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<sup>271</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 8, d. 222, ll.38-39

actions and a strong focus on searching for enemies infiltrating both the discussion and various institutions. Because the *Krai* and *raion* officials were specifically asked to find this material, it is difficult to ascertain whether these issues were really those of great local importance, or if the many examples were simply ways of fulfilling a central directive. In the case of both criticism of local soviets and the “worming in” of enemies, I suspect they were less important to the people of the *Krai* than their presence in the documentation would imply as examples of criticism and enemy behavior are often simply repetitions of the same six or seven incidents and incidents of “enemy behavior” were things like chain letters and simple acts of individuals. I also doubt that criticism of Soviet officials attained the groundswell response that Moscow hoped for in their campaign to rid local organizations of corrupt or incompetent officials. While this information may not be overly important to understanding the discussion of the constitution at the regional level, it indicates the focus and concern of central officials. They wanted the discussion to be instrumental in purging incompetent people from the urban and rural soviets and feared a return of enemy elements, even as they enfranchised them in the draft constitution.

The implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution in the Kirov region was typical of many Soviet campaigns in that the central leadership expected its directives to be implemented without significant changes or delays by the local officials. However, it was plagued by many of the same problems of resources and staff that other Soviet agricultural and production campaigns of the era were. But, unlike other campaigns, the discussion of the draft constitution was not targeted at

a specific segment of the Soviet population to complete a short-term task. Rather it was designed to engage the entire population of the USSR in a lengthy discussion of the draft constitution and the real benefits that it provided to citizens. The scope and focus of the discussion of the draft constitution sets it apart from other Soviet campaigns.

But like other Soviet campaigns, the implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution represented an intersection of central ideals and designs with local realities. Central party authorities envisioned a months long discussion of the draft, where the constitution would be presented as the embodiment of socialist achievements up until that point. They believed that such a campaign would stimulate citizens to redouble their efforts to build socialism as citizens would see the benefits received from their labors so far. However, local realities ended up shaping the discussion of the draft into a very different thing than the central authorities had envisioned, in part because understaffed and poorly prepared *raion* officials tended to treat this as another campaign, in part because many citizens spoke their mind. As time progressed and central authorities did not receive the results they wanted, they pressured *Krai* and *raion* officials to implement the central authorities' vision of the discussion. When leaders in Moscow began receiving and cataloguing the popular suggestions, they noted many unsatisfactory suggestions and blamed the district officials for failing to properly conduct the proper agitation and propaganda work. Reviewing the implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution in the Kirov region allows us to study the tension between what the central party leadership envisioned and what it was capable of implementing in the regions.

Where party presence was stronger, in urban areas, particularly in enterprises, the discussion was conducted with much more success. However, in the countryside where the party's and state's presence was weak, so too was the implementation of the discussion. In trying to implement a discussion on this scale, the party and state revealed not only its weakness in the countryside, but also the problems that *raion* cadres faced in implementing central directives and the tensions that this created on the administrative apparatus of the party and state.

## **How the instructors were supposed to guide and shape the discussion**

With the release of the draft constitution on June 12, 1936, central and local authorities tried to guide and shape the discussion by creating syllabi for discussions based on published articles about the draft constitution that appeared in the central press. I have two such examples of prepared plans: one is a lesson plan provided for study circles for correspondence students;<sup>272</sup> the other consists of subject matter for lectures and meetings discussing the draft constitution.<sup>273</sup> Both syllabi illustrate which aspects of the draft constitution party authorities wished to highlight and what they wanted students to learn about both the constitution and the state that issued it.

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<sup>272</sup> Unfortunately the document does not provide any clues as to the identity of these correspondence students, simply referring to them as *заочники*. These materials are housed in the archives of the City Committee of the VKP(b) in Kirov. GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 10-13

<sup>273</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 20, l. 250

The lesson plans aimed at circles of correspondence students were the more detailed of the two syllabi. They relied heavily on speeches by party and state leaders, such as Molotov's speech to the 7th All Union Congress of Soviets, articles by party officials, such as Stetskii's "About the Liquidation of Classes in the USSR,"<sup>274</sup> and additional articles published in *Bolshevik*, *Pravda*, *Izvestiia* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* to provide the written texts for the lessons.<sup>275</sup> Detailed instructions on how to use these texts and which aspects of the draft constitution to highlight accompanied these materials. The lesson plans focused both on the civic education of the correspondence students, for example understanding the basic functions of the government, and the reinforcement of the central master narrative of state building, the expansion of citizenship rights, and the social contract between the state and its citizens, all of which were firmly rooted in the prevailing theoretical interpretation of the victory of socialism.

As noted in the chapter on constitutionality in the USSR, a substantial theoretical base underpinned the new draft constitution. Study circle facilitators were instructed that it was essential to discuss and explain socialist notions of constitutionality. They were to show how only Marxism-Leninism expressed the true essence of constitutionalism. For example, Comrade Aymov's article in *Bolshevik*, titled "The Development of the Soviet Constitution,"<sup>276</sup> reiterated the leadership's argument that bourgeois constitutions could not be democratic because they represent only the interests of the exploiting class. This discussion on

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<sup>274</sup> *Bolshevik*, 11, (1936), 8-29.

<sup>275</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 10

<sup>276</sup> *Bolshevik*, 12, (1936), 114-126.



constitutionalism was backed up with details on how the constitutions of 1918 and 1924 had expressed the existing correlation of class strength in the country, and used the changes between the fundamental class structure then and in 1936 to explain why it was necessary to change the constitution. The lesson plan recommended drawing upon the industrial and social developments described by Molotov in 1935 and Stetskii's "About the Liquidation of Classes in the USSR".<sup>277</sup> Like Molotov, Stetskii argued that the abolition of capitalist class relations in the countryside, and the economic and cultural development there had closed the gap between the more advanced working class and the peasantry and had destroyed the exploiting classes, effectively creating a classless society in the USSR. The lesson plans urged organizers of the study circles to present the draft constitution as the culmination of these achievements, as the "codex of the victorious laborers of our country" and "a world-wide historically important document, reflecting the great victory of the laborers of the USSR under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party."<sup>278</sup> Leaders of the discussion circles were urged to convey precisely why the draft constitution was the most democratic by explaining the "the original sense and meaning of universal, direct and equal elections with secret [ballot] voting."<sup>279</sup>

The creation of universal, direct and equal elections highlighted the changing definition of citizenship in the USSR, and brought the issue of citizen rights and responsibilities to the forefront of the discussion. For the writers of the lesson plans, citizens' rights and responsibilities were bound up with the idea of the

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<sup>277</sup> *Bolshevik*, 11, (1936), 8-29.

<sup>278</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 11-12

<sup>279</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 11-12

constitution as the “greatest document of Stalinist concern (*zabota*) for the people,”<sup>280</sup> an idea elucidated in the recommended supplementary materials, in particular, an article from *Pravda* titled “The Tireless Concern of the Party and Government.”<sup>281</sup> This article outlined state and party monetary and material investment in the population’s well-being through the increased expenditures for social service funds for workers and service workers, increased government spending on education, the construction of public buildings such as schools and clubs, and the provision of “bright new apartments” for urban dwellers.<sup>282</sup> According to this article, the massive investment in social projects not only demonstrated the state’s concern for its citizens, confirmed by comparisons to the lesser investments of capitalist governments in social services, and the increase in the standard of living since the Civil War period. But the socialist state also provided the monetary base for the implementation of some of the fundamental rights that citizens were guaranteed in the draft constitution, such as the right to education and the right to material security.

The right to education and the equal rights of men and women were the focus of two articles in *Izvestiia*. The compilers of the lesson plans chose these specific articles to “present concrete facts” about the fundamental rights and duties of citizens to students in the study circles. The article titled “The Right to Education” opened with a description of the prerevolutionary era, when education was difficult for workers and peasants to obtain, and how the current situation in the USSR

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<sup>280</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 12

<sup>281</sup> *Pravda*, June 16, 1936, 1.

<sup>282</sup> *Pravda*, June 16, 1936, 1.

offered a vast array of educational opportunities. These new educational opportunities were not just a gift to the citizenry. Rather the citizens were expected, indeed, obligated to take advantage of these new opportunities to master science and raise their cultural levels.<sup>283</sup> The article titled “On equal rights with men” followed the same formula, explaining the poor situation of women before the revolution and the new opportunities available to them after the revolution. And like the right to education, women were expected to use their new rights to assume leadership roles in the construction of socialism. The article focused in particular on the role of women in agriculture as brigadiers and tractor and combine drivers, whose labor served to strengthen the collective farms.<sup>284</sup>

The lesson plans and articles from the central press that the plans utilized focused on the correct theoretical premises of the party, the achievements of socialist construction under the party’s leadership, and the need for increased effort to push the development of socialism further and faster. According to these articles, Marxist-Leninist theory provided the only method for the correct development of democracy. Party policy provided for the development of social and economic infrastructure in developing union republics. The correctness of this policy was illustrated by the addition of several republics to the USSR. According to the lesson plans, the circle leaders were “to make special mention of the transition of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan to Union Republics and demonstrate that this transition was the result of the implementation of Leninist Stalinist

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<sup>283</sup> *Izvestiia*, June 17, 1936, 1.

<sup>284</sup> *Izvestiia*, June 23, 1936, 1.

national policies.”<sup>285</sup> The party and state had correctly devised policies to raise the living standards of its people and in return the people were supposed to work to strengthen the socialist state. Even the rights guaranteed to individual citizens were presented as an investment by the state in human capital that should in turn be utilized in the struggle for socialism.<sup>286</sup>

The list of themes for lectures and meetings provided by the *Kraikom* was far less developed than the lesson plan for correspondence students, but the selected themes still provided guidance for the discussion. The suggested lecture topics were divided into three main subheadings: “About the draft of the Stalinist Constitution,” “19 years of socialist construction” and “the international situation of the struggle for peace.” The section on the draft constitution focused on themes that the center found important, such as how the state was composed of two classes, workers and peasants, the forms of socialist property and how Soviet democracy differed from bourgeois democracy. They also focused on the right to work and the right to an education, rights guaranteed to citizens and duties that they were expected to fulfill, again emphasizing the reciprocal nature of rights in the USSR.

The section entitled “19 years of socialist construction” focused on the strength of the nation and the correct party policies that created that strength. These policies included collectivization, illustrated by the theme of the “victory of

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<sup>285</sup> GASPI KO, f.1293, op 2, d.43, l. 13

<sup>286</sup> The only break from this dialogue was the section on the “characteristic trait of the draft as an instrument of peace and freedom,” which seemed to almost be an afterthought. The leaders of study circles were informed that “it [was] necessary to particularly underline the essence of Article 49 (on the duties of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet), which provides that only in cases when there is an assault on the USSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet can declare a state of war. It is necessary to say that this formulation flows entirely from Stalin’s statement: We don’t want one row of foreign soil, but we will not give one verst of our land to anyone.” GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2 d. 43, l. 13

collective farm construction in the USSR,” and the Stakhanovite movement. The role of party policy in bringing about the victory of socialism was emphasized by the twin themes,” Lenin and Stalin the organizers of the October revolution and the victory of socialism” and “the victory of socialism and the Trotskyite band, who would restore capitalism.” These themes emphasized the positive achievements of the leaders and Marxist Leninist doctrine by demonstrating how the “incorrect” path of Trotskyism would have led to the restoration of capitalism, which again proved the correctness of the party line.

The section on the international struggle for peace also highlighted party policy and presented the USSR as the defender of freedom. Specifically, lecturers were instructed to focus on the “struggle of the Spanish people for a democratic republic and fascist intervention,” the Popular Front movement and the “struggle of the Chinese soviets for the independence of the Chinese people.” These were all movements supported by party policy and Soviet financial and material aid. The final theme portrayed the USSR as the “bulwark in the struggle with fascist instigators of war.”<sup>287</sup> Each and all of these themes sought to underscore the supposed strength of the Soviet state (though the need for continued strengthening may in fact have demonstrated the leadership’s insecurity with the existing levels of Soviet development), the correctness of state policy and the party line, and the need for citizens to continue to strengthen socialism.

Both of these documents demonstrated that officials had a prescribed script for the implementation of the discussion, one that emphasized the correctness of the

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<sup>287</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 20, l. 250

party line and the center's preoccupation with theory. Both also focused on the Soviet social contract: the obligations that citizens had towards the state in return for their rights and improved quality of life. However, a question remains as to how these lesson plans were utilized by the local officials and those who conducted lectures and meetings, that is those who were actually responsible for conducting the discussion among the masses. A report from Slobodskoi *raion* demonstrated that competent organizers of the discussion were indeed supposed to limit the discussion to the themes that dominate these syllabi. The report noted:

The party organizations systematically explained suggestions brought to the draft constitution and also questions that remained vague for meeting participants. They conducted additional explanations of questions the listeners had not yet mastered, and also reined in suggestions that violated the fundamental principles of the draft constitution, for example reining in the suggestion that the USSR be called a state of laborers (*trudiashchikhsia*) and not workers and peasants etc.<sup>288</sup>

From the leadership's perspective, this was clearly never meant to be a free-form discussion, and the obligation to properly mold the discussion rested with the agitation and propaganda workers.

## **The Organizers of the Discussion**

The organization of the discussion of the draft constitution ultimately fell to the district party committees (*raikom*) and the district executive committees

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<sup>288</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d. 224, l. 59

(*raispolkom*). They were responsible for providing accounts of their actions to the Regional Party Committee and Regional Executive Committee respectively, who in turn compiled their own reports, which were sent to Central Executive Committee. While the Central Executive Committee and the Regional Party Committee and Regional Executive Committee often issued directives, monitored progress and demanded increased performance and responsiveness from the district party committees and the district executive committees, the implementation of the discussion was carried out at the local levels of administration.

The implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution appeared to take place on at least two levels and involved both ordinary worker-activists as well as members of the local power structure. District and city officials participated in the organization of the discussion in two different ways: training people to be sent out to conduct mass meetings and actively conducting mass meetings themselves. This is exemplified in a report from Shabalinskii *raion*, which provided detailed information on eleven high-ranking local officials involved with the implementation of the discussion, including what types of meetings they conducted and for how many people. The local leadership of Shabalinskii *raion* organized small conferences, probably for training lecturers and those charged with conducting meetings, as well as general meetings with the public. Six local officials conducted both these small training conferences and mass meetings on collective farms. For example, P. A. Iablokov, the chairman of the District Executive Committee, conducted three *raion* conferences with a total of 130 attendees, four rural soviet Plenums with a total of 180 attendees and 27 meetings on collective farms that were attended by 1,240

people.<sup>289</sup> Five other officials worked with more advantaged groups, such as local officials and students, who were presumably singled out for smaller conferences because of their place in the Soviet social hierarchy and for the purposes of training some of them to be lectures and meeting conductors.<sup>290</sup> As these examples indicate, local state officials played an active role in preparing activists to lead the discussion and in conducting the discussion itself. How they did so illuminated how the discussion unfolded.

When reaching out to recruit lecturers and meeting organizers, the district party committee and district executive committees relied heavily on existing networks of party and non-party *aktiv* to serve as the basis for organizing the discussion. In Slobodskoi *raion*, the *raikom* bureau dispatched 308 members of the Komsomol and party *aktiv* to conduct the popular discussion, with the party school taking a particularly active role, sending 144 students to provide services to 100 collective farms, where they conducted 482 meetings with 19,921 participants

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<sup>289</sup> Other local officials also were involved in the discussion. I. N Golubev, the procurator, conducted three conferences in the *raion* with 65 people in attendance and thirteen meetings on the collective farms for 75 people, and M. Ia. Gredenev, the head of the Financial Department of the district soviet, conducted two conferences with 54 attendees and twelve meetings on collective farms with 376 attendees. A. D Vokhmianin, the head of the Organizational Department conducted one Komsomol meeting for twelve attendees, a conference attended by the rural soviet, with 35 members present and six meetings on collective farms with 160 attendees. N. M. Lebedev, the deputy chief of the Land department for the district soviet conducted one rural soviet conference for twenty people and five meetings on collective farms with 85 attendees. S. I. Komlev, the Secretary of the *Raikom* Komsomol section conducted five meetings on collective farms with a total of 190 attendees. GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l. 23

<sup>290</sup> The chairman of the *raion* consumer union, A. G Dvoeglazov, conducted two conferences among the workers of the apparatus with 75 attendees. M. G. Kalinin, the administrator of the state bank in Shabalinskii *raion* conducted one conference among the local state workers with twenty-two attendees, and N. M. Sokolov, the director of the Machine Tractor Station, conducted one conference among students with fifty people present and one among the local state workers with twenty people present. P. Ia. Mart'ianov, the chief of grain collections (Зв.\б\з\ зерн.) conducted a conference among the apparatus with 45 people in attendance and a plenum of the local rural soviet with 25 attendees. I. P Barinov, the head of the Education Department of the district soviet conducted two rural soviet plenums for 30 people. GAKO, f. 2168, op.1, d. 472, l. 23



(63% of the rural population).<sup>291</sup> Other district party committees relied heavily on party members as well. While party members were especially active organizing the discussion, they were not alone. The Komsomol and non party-*aktiv* also played an important role, providing as many if not more volunteer lecturers and meeting organizers than the party organizations. In Kirovskii *raion*, a seminar was conducted on June 17 with propagandists and three lessons on the draft constitution were conducted in the network of party and Komsomol political study circles. All of these *raion* party *aktiv* were then mobilized for the discussion of the draft constitution among the laborers, workers and collective farmers of the *raion*. In total, there were 320 party-Komsomol and non-party *aktiv* dispatched for lectures at plenums in 35 rural soviets, as well as lectures and meetings on the collective farms.<sup>292</sup> Such networks of politically reliable people formed the core group that local officials utilized to implement the discussion, particularly in the countryside where little party and state infrastructure existed.

Other civic organizations, such as trade unions, teachers' organizations, and street committees, also played important roles in the implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution in some districts. In Pizhanskii *raion*, the general discussions conducted on the collective farms and smaller brigade meetings were carried out by 28 members of the district party committee and the district executive committee, thirty individuals from the Komsomol and trade union *aktiv*, and 121 teachers or rural *aktiv*.<sup>293</sup> In Shabalinskii *raion*, work on the discussion utilized 126

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<sup>291</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>292</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 38

<sup>293</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 472, l. 42

teachers and 300 readers from the *aktiv*.<sup>294</sup> While these civic networks helped supplement the core party and *aktiv* networks in the countryside, they were often the main organizational networks in the cities. For example in the city of Kirov, street committees and groups affiliated with the city administration conducted meetings among the unorganized urban population. The Kirov city soviet organized a seminar, attended by a total of 50 people, for the heads of the street committees as well as the leaders of the deputy groups and sections and also organized courses for up to 28 members of the soviet *aktiv*. All of these people were then dispatched to organize meetings to discuss the constitution.<sup>295</sup> The city party committee also dispatched 50 members of the party *aktiv* for the discussion and study of the draft constitution among housewives.<sup>296</sup> In the city, civic organizations played a particularly important role in engaging the otherwise unorganized housewife population in the discussion of the draft, while providing key numbers for the discussion in the countryside. While the use of these existing networks appears to have been instrumental for organizing the discussion, by providing existing social hubs that *raion* officials could readily use, they ran the risk of excluding some groups of the population. For example, in Slobodsk, the city soviet was accused of not reaching out to a broader audience. The inspectors from the regional organizational section complained that the discussion of the constitution at the

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<sup>294</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 472, l. 42

<sup>295</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

<sup>296</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

liquor factory was limited to the study circles on party studies and not discussed among the workers as a whole.<sup>297</sup>

Party, Komsomol and *aktiv* members provided most of the lecturers and meeting organizers for the discussion of the draft constitution, but their political affiliation only represents part of their social identity. The vast majority of these lecturers worked either in local administrative positions or in industrial enterprises. A report from Slobodskoi *raion* detailed the occupations of 127 people dispatched to examine the draft constitution on the collective farms in the *raion*. The vast majority of these people came from urban areas and most were employed in industrial, administrative or educational positions. Sixty of those recruited to lead discussions on the collective farms worked in light industry, producing leather goods, matches and alcoholic beverages. Forty-six of the recruits worked in some kind of administrative position. Among their ranks were members of the trade organization (TORG), the machine tractor station, the social benefits office, the match distribution department (ORS Spichk), and the *raion* educational, financial, health, and land administrations. Their numbers also included a people's investigator, two members of the Slobodskoi city soviet, four NKVD officials, a postal worker and fourteen rural soviet chairmen. Six people came directly from educational institutions; only six individuals were recruited directly from the collective farms.<sup>298</sup>

An August 1 report from Shabalinskii *raion* demonstrated that the urban and administrative character of the lecturers and meeting organizers was a region-wide trend. Fifty-five leading workers went from the district center to the collective farms

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<sup>297</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op.1, d. 472, ll. 1-2

<sup>298</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d.202, ll. 37- 39

for the discussion of the draft constitution. They also took with them 65 lecturers and facilitators (*besedniki*). In the rural soviets, there were 656 people selected to conduct lectures and meetings on collective farms and in brigades. Of them twenty six were chairmen of rural soviets, 85 were members of rural soviets, fourteen worked at the general store (*sel'po*), twelve worked for the schools, 85 were collective farmers and 320 were identified simply as newspaper readers.<sup>299</sup>

As this data indicates, the people charged with conducting the discussion of the draft constitution were overwhelmingly residents of the urban centers and the administrative elite in town or country. They brought an administrative understanding to the implementation of the discussion. Those of urban origins may have found it harder to relate to their collective farm audience, who were less well educated and less familiar with the theories that the central authorities deemed vital to the discussion of the draft constitution. They were drawn from existing party and state networks, and had to shoulder the duty of conducting the discussion of the draft constitution in addition to their own obligations as administrators, workers or teachers. As a result of their many responsibilities, the discussion of the constitution was often cursory, or in some cases non-existent, as the overburdened *raion* officials and *aktiv* struggled to implement the discussion with little logistical or material support. Many of the problems that arose in the implementation of the discussion, as discussed below were related to personnel issues. Nevertheless, many made honest efforts to lead the discussion of the draft constitution, and beginning in June

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<sup>299</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, ll. 9-10

they went forth from the *raion* centers armed with newspapers and copies of the draft constitution.

## **The Implementation of the Discussion of the Draft Constitution**

The discussion of the draft constitution began with the publication of the draft in the main party and state newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*, on June 12. Because of the broad scope of the discussion, *raion* level officials were directly charged with implementing the discussion in their respective *raiony*. Many local officials responded with enthusiasm and exhibited the pomp and circumstance appropriate for such an undertaking. In Votkinskii *raion*, the 120 lecturers who traveled to all collective farms were dispatched in cars decorated with slogans and greenery.<sup>300</sup> While other districts did not choose such a flashy way to inaugurate the discussion, they all hurried to respond to the demands of regional and central authorities to review the draft with the population of their district. Because the discussion was organized on a *raion* basis, the methods of implementing it varied from district to district, though the discussion in the many districts of Kirovskii *Krai* shared a great number of overarching similarities born of the resources and networks available to district officials for the implementation of such a large-scale campaign.

Most district officials chose to utilize a simple, lecture-style discussion of the draft. For example, in Pizhanskii *raion*, the draft constitution was discussed multiple

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<sup>300</sup> GAKO, f. R- 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 24

times, first at a general collective farm meeting and then in brigades, where the draft was read out by section and article. Every article was read out, often several times, then explained, after which the meetings' leaders expressed their opinions and desires to the assembled.<sup>301</sup> Group meetings were conducted through pre-prepared points of the constitution or on particular issues at the insistence of the collective farmers. This method proved ineffective overall because these point-by-point discussions often turned into a discussion of other matters, such as economic-political campaigns, loans for haymaking, and the preparation for harvesting rye. Such realities and the details of the discussion often distracted or befuddled participants.<sup>302</sup> Many of these lecture-style discussions did not successfully engage the inhabitants of the Kirov region. For example, the discussion of the new draft constitution in Nolinskii *raion* took place at meetings by means of reading the text out loud and reading the coverage of the discussion in the wall newspapers and in the *raion* newspaper *Kolkhoznaia gazeta*. In the city of Nolinsk, the *raion* center, a general meeting and two seminars were conducted with the district party *aktiv*. In the rural soviet, sixteen seminars were organized and there were rural soviet plenums that were conducted with the participation of the collective farm *aktiv*.<sup>303</sup> These meetings never progressed beyond the existing party and *aktiv* networks. In some cases, local officials were so poorly organized that no commentary or discussion points were utilized and the draft was merely read aloud.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 32, a similar method of discussion was described in Vozhgal'skii *raion* as well GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 1

<sup>302</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 32

<sup>303</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 3

<sup>304</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 57

The district officials of Sovetskii *raion*, however, broke with the simple point by point reading of the draft that dominated the discussion in the abovementioned *raiony*. They conducted party meetings, plenums of the rural soviets, and meetings on 223 collective farms, and in all industrial enterprises. While they too relied on reading and discussing the various points of the draft constitution, their meetings focused on explaining the demonstrable benefits of the draft constitution and they used diagrams to prove their points. The use of diagrams and a focus on the benefits to citizens showed a deeper engagement with the draft constitution than simply reading its text aloud. In addition, four lessons explaining the draft constitution were organized in all political schools; 391 meetings with 20,305 participants were conducted as of the beginning of September.<sup>305</sup>

Sovetskii *raion* also submitted a rather expansive plan for extending explanatory work in the district. Their proposal included: plans to conduct meetings among the pupils at all the schools, among construction workers of all specialties, among the service workers of various enterprises, in the Sovetsk city districts, and on the collective farms where the discussion had not yet been conducted. To verify that the work in meetings was carried out effectively, they proposed listening to the report of the secretary of the regional party committee titled “about the progress of the explanation and discussion of the new draft constitution;” conducting a statistical accounting of additions, corrections and suggestions to the new draft constitution and systematically verifying the work of propagandists during the discussion. The local leadership also proposed having the party

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<sup>305</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 6

educational center (*partkabinet*) and the district library organize an exhibition devoted to the new draft constitution and the discussion of that document in the press. They had assigned individuals responsibility for the completion of each one of these tasks.<sup>306</sup> Such an expansive and detailed plan appears to have been exceptional.

While the implementation of the discussion may have varied from district to district, the networks upon which district officials relied for the dissemination of information and which served as organizational hubs for the discussion remained largely consistent. Radio lectures played an important role in disseminating the text of the draft constitution and relevant commentary by party leaders to a wide audience. Local officials often organized large-scale radio listening sessions. A report from the *Kraikom* noted that over June 11 and 12, 12,000 laborers of the *krai* listened to the text of the draft constitution on the radio.<sup>307</sup> In Omutninskii *raion*, group meetings to listen to the radio lectures of comrades Stetskii, Vyshinsky, Krylenko, and Shvernik were organized and attracted a large audience. Stetskii's lecture reportedly attracted 396 communists, 98 sympathizers, 200 Komsomol members and 150 members of the non-party *aktiv*.<sup>308</sup>

The press was an important medium for the dissemination of both the text of the draft constitution and central and regional leaders' commentary on the draft constitution. Newspaper articles by central authorities provided discussion

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<sup>306</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 8

<sup>307</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

<sup>308</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 30. Similar large scale radio lectures were organized in Svechinskii raion (GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 4) and Shabalinskii *raion* (GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l. 42).



materials for study circles and meetings. Agitators in Slobodskoi *raion* took advantage of the widespread press coverage to familiarize the participants of meetings with additions and corrections. They often used material from the local press, *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia* to address questions regarding the draft constitution. Reportedly lively meetings resulted from the use of newspaper materials.<sup>309</sup>

In addition to reprinting the commentaries by central officials and thereby conveying the central narrative of state building as discussed in the chapter one, the press proved to be an important means of distributing basic information. Gromov, an instructor of the *Kraiispolkom*, noted that in Shabalinskii *raion* one would be hard pressed to find someone in the district who was not familiar with the draft constitution due to the work of the *raion* newspaper. On June 15, the *raion* newspaper printed out 2,200 copies of the text of the constitution and twenty separate issues of the newspaper reported on the progress of the public discussion of the constitution.<sup>310</sup> The Pizhanskii *raion* newspaper was also very useful. It published fourteen articles on the constitution, twelve articles about the progress of the discussion among laborers, twenty-nine individual statements from collective farmers at meetings on the constitution, and twenty-one notes from laborers about the constitution. In all, it devoted a total of 76 newspaper articles to the draft constitution.<sup>311</sup> Newspapers also provided its readers with updates on the progress of the discussion and reports on what sorts of additions and corrections to the draft other people were suggesting. As of September 17, the *Krai* newspaper *Kirovskaia*

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<sup>309</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>310</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 472, l. 9

<sup>311</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 362

*Pravda* had printed over 100 testimonials and suggested additions to the draft constitution.<sup>312</sup>

The press did more than seek to focus the popular discussion. It also called to task officials and other organizers of the discussion who were not properly conducting the discussion. By presenting investigative reports on reported failures of local officials, they not only criticized those who had failed but demonstrated the kind of behavior that was deemed inappropriate for a broader audience of discussion organizers. *Kirovskaia Pravda* ran a series of articles detailing the failings of local officials to correctly conduct the discussion. In an article titled “The Mistakes of Mozhginskii City Soviet,” the author Nazarov, described how the city soviet poorly examined the draft constitution and how this attitude affected the general debate in the city. Nazarov noted that the discussion of the draft constitution began at a plenum of the city soviet. However this plenum was poorly attended, with only half the deputies attending and only two or three participating in the debate after the report. The discussion in the city was also poorly organized and attended. Of the 1,500 people listed in the unorganized population of the city, only half discussed the draft constitution. There had been about twenty meetings, but no protocols existed for them because the deputy director gave an order to not write them; only six additions to the draft constitution were recorded, but it was unclear who made them. This dismissive attitude taken by the city soviet was reflected in the attitudes of other local leaders. For example, a committee chairman in Forest Products

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<sup>312</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

Factory № 2, comrade Strizhov, acknowledged that he had not read the draft constitution and it was doubtful that any of the workers in his factory had either.<sup>313</sup>

Inattention and indifference to the discussion was the subject of the article “Enhance the role of deputies in the organization of the all people’s discussion of the Stalinist constitution.” The article asserted that: “A deputy of the soviet must be one of the central figures in the organization of the all people’s discussion of the Stalinist constitution. It is his sacred duty. As a representative of the people, he is obligated to listen to the voice of his constituents with Bolshevik keenness.” However not all members of the Kirov city soviet displayed the appropriate levels of energy and initiative when discussing the draft constitution. In particular, the organizational sections of the Kirov city soviet and rural soviets did not always utilize its best workers by having them speak at the discussion and thereby promote soviet state-building efforts. The poor work of the Kirov city soviet affected the implementation of the discussion in the city. At the “Red Star” factory, the study of the draft constitution had been subsumed into technical study, with no special circles devoted to the study of the draft. Although this was known, the presidium of the city soviet did not inform the deputy group at “Red Star” of this grave mistake. The author noted that as the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress of Soviets approached, it was necessary to raise the level of the popular discussion through study circles for semi-literate people, conducting meetings with national minorities in their native language, and carefully record all additions and corrections that have been

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<sup>313</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, August 17, 1936, 3.

received.<sup>314</sup> Indeed, the approaching 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, and the accompanying district and regional congresses provided impetus for a rejuvenation of the discussion and an opportunity for the Kirov city soviet to demonstrate enthusiasm and initiative by implementing the suggested measures.

The wrong kind of discussion could be just as harmful as no discussion. *Kirovskaia Pravda* highlighted this in its article “The Mistakes of a *Raiispolkom*,” which focused on the Bogorodskii district executive committee’s mistaken permutation of the TsIK directive on the discussion (*obsuzhdeniia*) into a cursory “working up” (*prorabotka*) of the draft constitution and the negative effects that that interpretation had on the discussion in the *raion*. The author, M. Vakhnin, from the village of Bogorodskoe stated that: “It is difficult to say if the Bogorodskii *raiispolkom* read the directive of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee on ‘the publication of the draft constitution for all people’s discussion’.” He noted that instead of implementing this directive, they sent out “this mistaken illiterate directive” to every rural soviet chairman:

In the absolute majority of the rural soviets the working up (*prorabotke*)!<sup>315</sup> of the draft constitution has not begun. The presidium of the *raiispolkom* thinks its importance is underestimated. We ask that the working up be conducted personally by the chairman over the course of 3 or four days on every collective farm. For work create a calendar plan . . . establish repeated visits up until the final session.”

Chairman of the *raiispolkom* Repin

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<sup>314</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, October 29, 1936, 1.

<sup>315</sup> Punctuation in the original

Secretary Zorin

Vakhnin accused the district executive committee of “debas[ing] the constitution with their bureaucratic game” by the use of the term “working up.” He noted that this call for working up had a devastating effect on the quality of the discussion in Bogorodskii *raion*. He reported that, when summoned to the *raispolkom* to present material about the course of the discussion, the rural soviet chairmen could not provide such materials as the “working up” had stifled real discussion. Vakhnin reported that at the plenum of Basharskii rural soviet, “the greatest document of the era was discussed as such: “listened to the ‘working up’ of the draft constitution by Mikriukov, Resolved: the draft was adopted and ‘worked up’ on every collective farm.” Similarly in Veprevskii rural soviet, they listened to “the first question of Comrade Anisimov about the working up of the constitution” and decided to adopt it. Vakhnin reported that the draft was not discussed at all on the collective farms of Veprevskii rural soviet. Though he blamed the *raispolkom* directive that requested a “working up” rather than a proper discussion, for the poor quality of the discussion in the *raion*, Vakhnin also held the local newspaper culpable for not correcting this mistake. He claimed that the editorial board of the *raion* newspaper *Collective Farm Dawn* “knew about the mistake committed by the district executive committee and the rural soviets but remained silent.”<sup>316</sup> The failure of local officials to conduct the discussion in a proper manner meant that in many areas the constitution was not discussed as Soviet leaders had intended. The press fulfilled its role as watchdog of the state and investigator of complaints by

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<sup>316</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, September 9, 1936, 2.

exposing these shortcomings as a way to redress them and to demonstrate that the poor implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution was not acceptable and would not go unnoticed.

But the press also played a didactic function. It provided a template of how to conduct and not conduct the discussion by allowing discussion organizers to share mistakes that had been made during the discussion as well as sharing which of their efforts had been successful. On October 29, *Kirovskaia Pravda* published a series of articles on organizers' experience in conducting the discussion of the draft. In the article "My Mistake," Semen Teren'evich Utrobin, a gauger at a fur and lambskin coat factory, recounted his experience organizing study circles for the factory's workers living in dorms or communal housing, those who studied at home or on weekends, and also for the remainder of the workers who gathered in sections after work on the last day of a five-day shift. The circles were very successful, as many participants offered additions and suggestions. However, Utrobin reported that he had not originally considered it important to record these suggestions, but he planned to remedy his mistake over the course of the next two or three days.<sup>317</sup> Likewise in her article, "In place of in-depth study, loud reading," Elizaveta Vasil'evna Iakimova, a senior dryer at the leather combine, reported that she had successfully established a circle for the study of the draft constitution that thirty of her 42 colleagues regularly attended. However, the circle was poorly led. The director of the combine, comrade Iabloko, led the study sessions but rather than discussing and analyzing every point of the constitution, he only read the draft

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<sup>317</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, October 29, 1936, 1.

aloud. The group met irregularly and although Iakimova had asked the party committee for a special day devoted to the work of the circle, it had not yet provided an answer.<sup>318</sup> Leadership was also a problem in the study circles of the Comintern leather factory. In his article "To better select the leaders of circles," Veniami Ignat'evich Laptev described how he had helped to organize a study group in his section of the factory and how this group had chosen an old Bolshevik, Comrade Presnetsov, to lead them. He was considered a good choice because he was politically developed. However, Presnetsov knew it and dominated the circle. Many workers left lessons dissatisfied and with many baffling questions. Laptev noted that it was necessary to pick better leaders and to organize special seminars for them.<sup>319</sup>

While these organizers of study circles had successfully attracted participants eager to study the draft constitution, they had failed to record popular responses or there were leadership problems that made the discussion experience frustrating for the participants. The ideal discussion experience was captured in N. Shevnin's letter "Seminars for the Discussion of the Constitution," which described the implementation of the discussion in Pizhanskii *raion*. He noted that in all the rural soviets in Pizhanskii *raion*, there were two-day seminars to the study of the Stalinist constitution. Thirty to thirty five people participated in each seminar, including members of the rural soviets, revision committee members, chairmen of collective farms, and Stakhanovites. The lessons were led by members of the district party committee, the presidium of the district executive committee and the district

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<sup>318</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, October 29, 1936, 1.

<sup>319</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, October 29, 1936, 1.

party *aktiv*. The population was deeply involved in the discussion and brought up many suggestions, such as one from the veterinary technician, Comrade Mikhailov, on Article 118 about trying to stimulate the Stakhanovite movement and invention, and one from the collective farmer Mokhov to Article 9 about limiting access to arable land for individual small holders who did not use modern farming techniques.<sup>320</sup> Not only did this well-organized discussion generate suggestions, but they were all dutifully recorded. Shevnin's letter illustrated all the key components that central and *krai* officials were looking for in the implementation of the discussion: a well prepared and involved rural leadership, which included local administrators, and an active and lively discussion that generated many suggestions that were recorded and sent to the press or central officials. The first three articles illustrated the pitfalls that organizers should try to avoid, while the fourth provided a template for a successful discussion.

The timing of these articles reflected a resurgence of the discussion campaign in preparation for the congresses of Soviets in the fall. Chronologically, the discussion was strongly promoted after the initial publication of the draft constitution in June and then again in the fall in preparation for the district congresses of Soviets and the regional congress of Soviets. The attention from the press and regional officials spurred *raion* officials to concerted action in June. In a report from the *Kraikom* about their work on the discussion of the draft constitution compiled on September 17, regional officials noted a region-wide drive for participation in the discussion in early June 1936. From June 12 to 20, a campaign

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<sup>320</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, October 29, 1936, 1.



to conduct meetings, assemblies with lectures and speeches by the leading party *aktiv* about the draft constitution took place in the *Krai's* central city, Kirov (city), and in a majority of the other cities in the region, in factories, villages, collective farms, enterprises and in the *raion* centers of the region took place.<sup>321</sup> For example, in Votkinskii *raion*, there were general meetings on June 16 and 17 to discuss the draft constitution on the collective farms and individual homesteads.<sup>322</sup> Regional officials came out to support the local officials in their effort to engage the populace in the discussion. On June 16, at a meeting in the city of Kirov, the secretary of the regional party committee, Comrade Stoliar, highlighted the importance of the ongoing discussion by giving a report about the draft constitution to an audience of 17,000 people.<sup>323</sup> However, by the end of June attention to the discussion of the draft had waned. An instructor from the regional executive committee noted in a report about the preparation for the 2nd district congress of Soviets in Kirovskii *raion* that as of October 19, only 65.1% of the work aged population had participated in a discussion of the draft. The ebbing of the discussion during the summer months resulted from various factors, including the demands of the growing season, cadres' fatigue after the initial push, and a sense among many that they had done their job. Nonetheless, the preparations for the congresses of Soviets in the *raiony* sparked renewed efforts to engage the population in discussing the draft, as the draft was to be discussed and ratified at the 8<sup>th</sup> All Union Congress of Soviets in December.

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<sup>321</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

<sup>322</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 24

<sup>323</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 9

An overview of the discussion in *Votkinskii raion* provides the best example of this trend. On June 12, a meeting of 8,000 laborers of the city and countryside to discuss the draft constitution took place. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, a plenum of *Norodskii soviet*, *Votkinskii raion* discussed the draft constitution; 447 people attended. In all of the factories and enterprises of the city, according to the preliminary data from the city soviet, 5,632 people participated; reportedly they presented 372 questions and 204 people actively engaged in the discussion. Among the unorganized population, there were discussions conducted through the street committees on June 22; in nine locations, 1,153 people participated in the discussion. However, no other activities related to the discussion of the draft constitution were reported until August 28, when at a meeting of the presidium of the city soviet it was decided to organize short-term courses (seminars) for the leaders of the deputy group sections and leaders of the street committees on the study of the draft constitution. On September 3, a plenum, with 560 people in attendance, was conducted where questions about the progress of the discussion of the draft constitution were raised.<sup>324</sup> As this example makes clear, the discussion had a certain rhythm. No mention of the draft constitution was made for two months during the summer, but in the fall, at the time when preparations were made for the district congresses, the leadership of *Votkinskii raion* once again made the discussion of the draft constitution an important issue.

The most complete picture of the day-to-day workings of the discussion of the draft comes from *Slobodskoi raion*. The data provided by the district party

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<sup>324</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 340

committee showed significant differences in the way that the discussion was conducted in the rural and urban parts of the *raion*, demonstrating the importance of the media and party, social and professional networks in successfully conducting an in depth debate. The discussion was much more developed among the industrial urban population, where the party and state had the strongest organizational base, than among the urban “unorganized” urban population or rural population. The rural and unorganized population produced a number of suggestions to the draft constitution that were deemed irrelevant and relied heavily on groups rather than individuals to offer up suggestions to the draft constitution. This less-organized population was also denied the opportunity for in depth examination of the draft constitution in study circles. In their report to the Regional Party Committee, district party committee officials themselves acknowledged this shortcoming: “It is necessary to noted that if in the city and among the workers of industry, the discussion of the draft constitution proceeded systematically and had a broad character, then in the countryside the discussion proceeded worse and to a considerable extent had a campaign-like character.”<sup>325</sup>

Based on the information from Slobodskoi *raion* on meetings conducted on collective farms, there were some 261<sup>326</sup> such seminars conducted with a total of 8,291 participants.<sup>327</sup> This breaks down to an average of 32 participants per

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<sup>325</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 59

<sup>326</sup> The numbers here are likely inexact. Most of the collective farms did not list a specific number of meetings but provided participation information, indicating at least one meeting was conducted. I assigned those a value of one. 79 additional collective farms were listed on this chart but no other information was provided, so perhaps meetings did not occur there or no information was provided to the *Raikom*.

<sup>327</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, ll. 1-23

meeting. A total of 237 suggestions were put forward at these assemblies. Of the total, 171 were collective or group suggestions, 59 were made by individuals, and seven were classified as not relevant to the constitution. There were on average 2.9 group suggestions per individual suggestion made in collective farm meetings and over 70% of the suggestions made were made by groups of participants. On the seven collective farms that provided appropriate data, only two thirds (65.9 %) of the total population participated the discussion of the draft constitution.<sup>328</sup>

Meetings conducted in the rural soviets, rather than on the collective farm, had a significantly higher rate of participation. A total of 293 assemblies took place in the rural soviets with 16,873 total participants recorded, (an average of 58 participants per meeting). An average of twelve gatherings occurred per rural soviet, ranging from two seminars in Morozovskii rural soviet to 28 meetings in Volkovskii rural soviet. The participants offered up 459 suggestions: 174 collective suggestions, 84 individual suggestions, and 201 suggestions that were deemed not relevant to the constitution. Over 43% of the suggestions offered up by participants were deemed to be irrelevant. However, of the suggestions applied to the draft constitution, 37.8% were collective suggestions while 18.3% were made by individuals, a ratio of 2.1 collective suggestions to individual ones.<sup>329</sup>

In the urban areas, the percentage of population that participated in the discussion of the draft constitution was highest among the industrial population, and many of the industrial workers made individual suggestion. However, the participation data on the unorganized urban population more closely resembled the

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<sup>328</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d. 202, ll. 1-23

<sup>329</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d. 202 l. 31

rural areas. In the city, 23 meetings were conducted in twelve civic organizations, such as the housing trust, the postal organization, street committees and organizations of housewives; there were 730 participants or an average of 32 participants per meeting. An average of 1.9 meetings were conducted per organization with a range from one assembly in seven organizations to four seminars in Mekhovshik. The participants offered up a total of 43 suggestions: only seven were group suggestions but a whopping 27 or 79.4% of suggestions were considered irrelevant to the draft constitution.<sup>330</sup> In contrast, in the industrial enterprises in the city of Slobodsk, 82 meetings took place in ten enterprises, with a minimum of two assemblies in four of the smaller factories and a maximum of 48 meetings in the largest enterprise, the “Squirrel” fur factory. Each seminar averaged 66 participants and a total 5,380 people or 87.2% of the industrial workers of the city participated in the discussion of the draft constitution. A total of seventeen suggestions were made at these meeting: the participants offered four collective suggestions and thirteen individual suggestions were offered up by the participants, a three to one individual to collective suggestion ratio.<sup>331</sup> A similar trend held for the industrial enterprises in the rest of the *raion*. Ninety five total meetings were held in eight enterprises, with a minimum of two meetings in the Kustarka *artel'* and a maximum of forty meetings in the “Spas” fur factory, with an average of 48 participants per meeting. 5,589 people or 87.8% of the total industrial population participated in the discussion. They offered up 15 suggestions to the draft

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<sup>330</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d. 202, l. 32

<sup>331</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d. 202, l. 40

constitution: five collective suggestions and ten individual suggestions or a 2 to 1 ratio.<sup>332</sup>

It appears that all in-depth discussions of the draft constitution were limited to enterprises and Komsomol and party networks. Special circles were organized in enterprises; 125 circles with 7,429 participants operated in enterprises and *artely*. In the party-Komsomol network, an additional 66 circles worked with 1,281 participants and engaged up to 90 % of members.<sup>333</sup> In five major industrial enterprises in the *raion* (the leather factory, the “Squirrel” fur factory, the match factory, the fur factory “Dem’ianka”, and the production combine) 79 circles were organized with 6,209 participants, ranging from one circle in the production combine with thirty participants to thirty circles in the fur factory “Dem’ianka” with 2,000 participants. The fire prevention squad had six study circles with 111 participants. In ten production *artely*, 43 circles with 1,028 participants were organized. The horse transportation *artel’* (*gruzhartel’*) had only one circle with thirty participants, while the “Pony Fur” *Artel’* had ten circles with 306 participants discussing the draft constitution.<sup>334</sup>

All of these numbers point to one obvious fact -- the discussion among the urban industrial population was much better organized than elsewhere, even if the number of meetings and participants seems comparatively modest in comparison to the much larger rural population. While the press, radio and cadres dispatched to the countryside succeeded in involving collective farmers in the discussion, poorly

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<sup>332</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, l. 40

<sup>333</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>334</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 69

prepared and overworked cadres combined with a weak base of support in the countryside led overall to a more cursory discussion of the draft constitution in the rural areas of Kirovskii Krai. A campaign-style mentality was more widespread in the countryside, leading in many cases to overviews of the text rather than a real discussion. Like all Soviet campaigns of the period, the discussion of the draft constitution was plagued by problems that stopped it from becoming the nationwide discussion that the central party and state officials had envisioned. These failures, discussed below, drew the ire of the central leadership.

## **The Problems with the Discussion of the Draft**

Like every Soviet campaign, the discussion of the draft constitution was plagued by problems, such as an underqualified staff implementing the campaign and an apathetic or overworked local bureaucracy, the leaders of which failed to properly supervise it. While the responsibility for organizing and conducting the draft constitution fell on local officials and a great many rose to the challenge, many officials also failed to fulfill their duties. For example, the instructor of the regional executive committee, Lepekhin, noted that district officials in Salovliakskii *raion* were not actively involved in the organization of the discussion. He noted that members of the presidium of the district executive committee and the deputy directors of the sections rarely got involved in practical organizational work, such as conducting sections or gathering additions and corrections. As a result, there were

no ongoing study circles for the discussion of the draft.<sup>335</sup> On another occasion a poorly prepared district procurator grossly misinformed people when they asked him the question, “Why was the constitution changed?” He answered that, “the old constitution had become obsolete and dangerous”. The inspector for the regional party committee noted that it was good that the chairman of the district executive committee was there because he explained the harmfulness of the procurator’s answer, which clearly ignored everything the central officials had written about the changes in class relations in the USSR.<sup>336</sup> The careless attitudes of *raion* officials in Zhdanovskii district soviet (Kirov city) led in September to the dissolution of study circles for the discussion in the Comintern combine. Even before that, the suggestions that the workers brought to the draft constitution were lost.<sup>337</sup> In Kiknurskii *raion*, similar attitudes led to low media coverage of the discussion. A report to the regional party committee noted that the *raion* newspaper failed to print anything about the constitution from its publication in June until September 30.<sup>338</sup> Clearly, not all of those called upon to implement the discussion did so as expected, or did so at all.

In some cases, the regional party committee and regional executive committee officials blamed *raion* officials’ inattentiveness for the inactivity of local officials or their poor implementation of work. For example, a report from Kirov TASS (the Kirov section of the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) noted that in Iaranskii *raion*, Abramycheskii rural soviet, there were several communists (comrade

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<sup>335</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l. 72

<sup>336</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, l. 11

<sup>337</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>338</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, l. 11



Volzhanin, the chairman of the rural soviet, Comrade Bobbykin, the director of the flax mill, comrade Iarantsev, and the district *militsia* inspector), but they had not conducted a single meeting with collective farmers to explain the draft constitution. It opined that they were not working very hard (*palets ne udarili*) to organize the discussion of the draft on collective farms.<sup>339</sup> While these slackers were identified by name, the compiler of the report squarely placed the blame for their failure and other shortcomings on the *Raikom*:

The district executive committee knew that the discussion of the draft constitution on the collective farms was organized poorly, however upon dispatching the propagandists, no one in the *Raikom* thought it necessary to verify their work. The examination of the draft constitution on the collective farms was to be organized by the instructor Miliaev, but this same Miliaev has never been on a single collective farm. He waits for the return of propagandists from the collective farms with travel vouchers, which, in turn, the chairmen of the rural soviet must certify that the “examination” was conducted with success on all of the collective farms. Many of the propagandists have not yet gone to the collective farms. In Iaransk, this important political report proceeds irresponsibly and bureaucratically.<sup>340</sup>

A similar report came from instructors of the organizational section of the regional executive committee, comrades Nikolaeva and Ershov. They noted that in Slobodskoi *raion* a great deal of effort had been put into conducting the discussion.

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<sup>339</sup> GASPI KO, f. 6777, op. 3, d. 87, ll.1-2

<sup>340</sup> GASPI KO, f. 6777, op. 3, d. 87, ll.1-2

Nonetheless, local officials had failed to fulfill their duties in several rural soviets. In some instances, the work of discussing the constitutional draft had been foisted onto the heads of the collective farms. At the plenum of the Leninskii rural soviet, the decision was adopted “to obligate the chairmen of the collective farms to ‘work up’ the draft constitution on their collective farms.” As a result, on Bolshoi Shoromovskii collective farm and Eprinskii collective farm the draft constitution was not discussed. In Stulovskii rural soviet, the draft constitution was not discussed on two of the three collective farms that they checked. Reportedly, there were workers of the rural soviets who themselves have not read the constitution.<sup>341</sup>

Regional officials considered it unacceptable that both *raion* and other local officials had failed to fulfill their duties. Such a failure demonstrated a lack of commitment to an important political task, but more importantly it lowered the quality of the discussion among the populace. Without strong reinforcement from those leading the discussion, meetings, suggestions and additions to the draft constitution tended to deviate from the prescribed narrative to which central and regional authorities adhered. Instead, suggestions came to focus on local and personal interests rather than the larger goal of mobilizing the populace in continued state-building efforts.

In preparation for the upcoming Congress of Soviets, Comrade Mironov, a delegate of the regional party committee, was assigned the task of detecting indifference on the part of the district executive committees about the discussion of the draft constitution. He noted that the

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<sup>341</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op.1, d. 472, ll. 1-2

*Raikom* officials have a heap of protocols of the rural soviet plenums about their meetings but no one reads them. The organization of the discussion of the draft constitution was not strengthened by anyone. There were twenty members of the *raion aktiv* who were dispatched, [and] who conducted lectures. School workers and collective farmers made reports to the chairman of the collective farm. There were cases where in meetings of collective farmers, some literate collective farmer read the text of the constitution and the discussion was limited to this. As a result of such a discussion, the majority of questions brought forward focused the discussion on equality with the working class, questions about the granting of benefits to elderly collective farmers, about vacations for collective farmers, about securing the eternal usage of garden plots, free vacations, medical aid, pay with money not in kind for natural resources. Here, such a relationship to the organization of the discussion of the constitution speaks of formal preparation. The protocols of the rural soviets are extraordinarily careless. For example in *Kuznetskii artel'*, they wrote not a word about listening to the constitution, but rather wrote that they listened to the newspaper and made a point to add about the establishment of a 7 hour working day and also a number of such occurrences. All of this says that in the *raispolkom*, there are comrades who were sent

for the discussion of the constitution in the rural soviets, who don't display serious attitudes towards this question.<sup>342</sup>

In this instance, regional officials blamed the failure of the *raikom* to properly organize the discussion around the master narrative. That these suggestions, which as we shall see were among the most frequently offered during the discussion, actually reflected the desires and understanding constitutional rights of the populace was never considered. Likewise in Lebiazhskii *raion*, the *raion* officials were blamed for "aberrant" suggestions. A report on mistakes in discussion work noted that, in Lebiazhskii *raion*, the district executive committee shifted the work on the discussion of the draft constitution onto the shoulders of the chairmen of the rural soviets and collective farm chairmen. The result of this was that on Kuranenovskii collective farm in that *raion*, collective farmers brought suggestions to the draft constitution to organize legal peasant unions.<sup>343</sup> A similar situation occurred at a meeting of the workers of the Slobodskoi forest production enterprise. The regional executive committee's organizational section instructors, comrades Nikolaeva and Ershov, believed that the discussion of the draft constitution was conducted irresponsibly at this enterprise. In the resolution produced by the meeting's members, the draft constitution was approved with changes to the following articles: to Article 11, include 100 % of all office workers at the forest production enterprise, to Article 121, include technical education to 100% of all service workers and workers of the Slobodskoi forest production enterprise and the district forest products enterprise. Party organizer comrade Godun wrote the report

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<sup>342</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394 l. 6

<sup>343</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

and the chairman of the workers' committee, comrade Ushakhin, chaired the meeting and wrote the protocol.<sup>344</sup> Here again local organizers had allowed personal or local suggestions to the draft constitution without trying to "correct" them. A regional party committee report verifying the state of mass organizational work during the discussion noted that in Slobodskoi *raion*, in a majority of cases the suggestions brought to the draft constitution had an individual character, such as vacations for collective farmers, the granting of forests to the collective farm. The reports' compilers believed that this situation showed that in some locales the explanatory work during the discussion of the draft constitution was poorly conducted.<sup>345</sup>

More mundane problems also plagued the discussion. Many of those dispatched to conduct the discussion were ill-prepared and ill-suited for the task. In many enterprises study circles met infrequently and were disbanded after a few sessions. As a result what were meant to be in depth discussions often assumed a campaign character.

For example, a report compiled in late November noted numerous problems in Belokholunitskii *raion*. The report's author felt that the state of the study of the draft in party schools and circles in particular demonstrated the sloppy nature of organizational work in the district. For example, in the course of the discussion, the network of schools and circles for party education was "rearranged" three times, and study circles were "reorganized" and "reconstituted" (*pereukomplektovyyali*) three times, as it became clear that serious study in the majority of circles did not

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<sup>344</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 472 l. 1

<sup>345</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 262- 266

exist. In the summer, lessons stopped entirely in the study circles. In the autumn, the circles were again reformed, but did not improve; attendance was unsatisfactory, (around 60 to 70%), the quality of work in the circles and schools was low, and a considerable portion of the audience and leaders of the circles were poorly prepared for lessons, or were simply not prepared at all.<sup>346</sup> As party networks were one of the main recruiting points for leaders of broad popular discussions, the low level and poor quality of discussion work among them was particularly troubling.

Problems continued in Belokholunitskii *raion* in the final phase of the discussion as well. The district party committee sent four *raikom* instructors, ten members of the party, two workers from the *raikom* Komsomol, fourteen propagandists and agitators, twenty eight party *aktiv* and fourteen non party *aktiv* into the villages following the All Union Congress of Soviets for a discussion of Stalin's report on the draft constitution. However, they were poorly trained because the seminar at which they received their training was poorly run and poorly attended (in fact, only 25 out of the 62 invited propagandists showed up).<sup>347</sup> Likewise in Kotel'nicheskii *raion*, as of late November, they had only eight propagandists who were of a high enough political and cultural level to be given the task of preparing lessons for the circles and conducting seminars.<sup>348</sup>

Poorly prepared and trained propagandists proved to be problematic and undermined the purpose of the discussion of the draft constitution. The Kirov city

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<sup>346</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d.224, l. 44

<sup>347</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 55

<sup>348</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 257, l. 6

soviet noted problems with one particular propagandist, comrade Glukhikh, whose lessons on the constitution were poorly prepared. He read the constitution section by section and, after the reading of each section, asked the listeners “what is not clear to you”? Because the listeners very poorly understood the material, they did not ask any questions and Glukhikh proceeded to read on.<sup>349</sup> Poor preparation was also the hallmark of the study circles in the Combine KUShTO.<sup>350</sup> These discussion circles were led by three communists, comrades Buldakov, Sozontov and Zubartov. On the day when party member Naumov reviewed the work of the circles, they all preformed badly. Comrade Buldakov’s circle had only 31 out of its 62 members present. The lesson began with a rapid reading of the constitution because people were anxious to leave. As the leader of the circle, Buldakov was not able to answer listeners’ questions and did not conduct a deeper study of the draft constitution. Comrade Sozontov’s circle had 41 of its 48 members present but none were women. Naumov noted that Sozontov did not read the constitution beforehand and had not thought about a pedagogical method, and consequently stumbled through the text. Comrade Zubartov’s circle had 61 of its 80 members present. At the beginning there had been 71, but ten people left during the course of the lesson. He also read poorly, stumbling over words. At the end of an article, he would ask the listeners if they understood; if they said yes or were silent, he moved on and did not delve deeper into the text. Naumov noted that in every case the circle leaders did not provide

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<sup>349</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 39, l. 63

<sup>350</sup> The Educational technical school equipment combine (комбинат учебно-технического школьного оборудования) for more information see [http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9B%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%81%D0%B5\\_%28%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%29](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9B%D0%B5%D0%BF%D1%81%D0%B5_%28%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%29)

examples that would help listeners understand the constitution better and they were also rather incompetent at answering questions. However, he did not hold them solely to blame for the state of their study circles. Their immediate superior had also failed to properly engage in discussion work. While their combine had held a training seminar for them, the seminar's leader, T. Kalinin, had not actually led the seminar, which resulted in the circle leaders being unprepared.<sup>351</sup> This cursory overview of the draft was clearly the opposite of what the central and regional officials had intended and only served to further alienate the listeners.

In addition to under-qualified and poorly prepared personnel, many of the discussion groups were poorly organized and met infrequently, if at all. A report to the head of the regional organizational section, noted that in the production *artely* "Garminiia," "Edinenie," "Mebel'," "Kozhevennik", and " Irgushka," the discussion of the draft constitution was progressing poorly. In the *artel'* "Mebel'" the discussion was led by a communist-cultural worker rather than the chairperson of the *artel'*. According the report's author, the draft was not read in sections. The situation was a bit better in "Garmoniia." Three meetings to discuss the constitution were conducted and 210 out of 328 people have attended. However, as of the time of the inspection work, the discussion had ceased. In "Igrushka" *artel'*, the party organizer had conducted two meetings. But in "Edinenie" *artel'* absolutely no work had been done to study the draft constitution.<sup>352</sup>

Lecture attendance and overall participation in the discussion of the draft was an ongoing problem. In the city of Kirov, an investigation into the

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<sup>351</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 16-17

<sup>352</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l. 33



implementation of the discussion found that study circles had trouble attracting and keeping members. In the Stalinskii district of Kirov city, out of 255 circles, 50 were not functional and the remaining had conducted only two or three lessons. In Gordorstroi, five circles conducted two lessons in September; in Kirmetallist two lessons were conducted in every circle and 112-116 out of the 124 members attended. In the KUTShO combine all 48 circles carried out three lessons, but never had 100% attendance.<sup>353</sup> Forest Factory No. 2 had 340 people organized into seven study circles that conducted four lessons and had an overall attendance rate of 66%. The lessons in these circles consisted only of readings; no in-depth analysis of the articles of the draft constitution occurred.<sup>354</sup> In Slobodskoi *raion*, attendance in productive enterprises was likewise low. At the beer factory, only 167 of the 266 workers and service personnel had discussed the draft and only 37 of the 116 workers and service personnel at the *artel* "Mashinostroitel" had done so.<sup>355</sup>

While there were many enthusiastic participants in the discussion campaign, there were also many key personnel and organizations that did not implement the campaign as Moscow or even local leaders had anticipated. And then there was the problem of "working up."

## **"Working up" versus Discussion**

A related failing that also attracted the ire of the regional party committee and regional executive committee, which oversaw the implementation of the

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<sup>353</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d.43, l. 24

<sup>354</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, ll. 91-92

<sup>355</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l 2

discussion, was the “working up” (*prorabotka*) of the draft constitution by agitators and propagandists rather than the discussion (*obsuzhdeniia*) of its contents. The term “working up” denoted paying only limited attention and devoting minimal time to the discussion of the draft constitution, creating a short campaign-like discussion rather than the in-depth discussion envisioned by central and regional authorities. For example, in Bogorodskii *raion*, on August 13, the district executive committee sent out a confused directive in which specific directions were given to “work up” the draft constitution. As a result, a set term for the discussion of the draft constitution was established in the rural soviets, with the discussion to end by August 26.<sup>356</sup> Coming as it did during the onset of the harvest, how much was actually accomplished is unclear. Similar events took place in Kotel'nicheskii *raion*, where at the June 24 expanded session of the presidium of Vladimirovskii rural soviet, the discussion of the draft constitution was announced and the draft constitution was approved. The presidium then suggested to the chairmen of the collective farms and members of the rural soviets that they “work up” the draft in general collective farm meetings. They were to present extracts from the meeting protocols to the rural soviet no later than June 26. A two-day discussion was not what central authorities had in mind. In Kotel'nicheskii rural soviet, Kotel'nicheskii *raion*, the presidium of the rural soviet discussed the draft constitution on June 13 and resolved to “work it up” at the next plenum and on every collective farm; they set the deadline for the “working up” as June 25.<sup>357</sup> Even in the city of Kirov, a city party committee report leveled accusations that a number of leaders intend to

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<sup>356</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>357</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

transform the discussion of the draft constitution into a short-term campaign with limited meetings and general assemblies.<sup>358</sup> Such a formalist approach undermined the political importance that central leaders attached to the discussion and rendered any real participation impossible.

In an October 1 report to the Presidium of the regional executive committee, the *kraispolkom* instructor Lepekhin highlighted why the term “working up” was viewed in a negative light. He reported that in Salovliaskii *raion*, from June 11 until the beginning of October, the *raion* newspaper *Shockworker of the Fields*, managed to devote attention to progress of the discussion in only six issues. The editorial board itself permitted the use of the term “work up” together with the all peoples’ discussion, “forgetting that the terminology ‘to work up’ reeks of bureaucratism, and a formulaic approach to such a colossal task as the all union discussion of the draft constitution.”<sup>359</sup> This bureaucratic approach treated the discussion as simply another campaign and a formal “working up” of the draft failed to communicate the state’s essential message.

While the lesson plans distributed for the discussion were carefully crafted to shape how the populace should think about the state and its rights, in regions where this was handled formalistically, popular suggestions to the draft constitution tended to be personal or local and not reflective of the state’s emphasis on the duties of citizens and the importance of state building. When the regional executive committee conducted its verification of the work on the discussion in twelve districts of the region, their investigation showed that “in a number of places the

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<sup>358</sup> GASPI KO, f.1293, op. 2, d. 43 ll. 18-38

<sup>359</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 472, l. 72

great political significance of the all peoples' discussion wasn't understood." According to that committee, the poor organizational work led to little popular participation in the discussion; it noted that "it is not accidental therefore that there were almost no additions to the draft from these areas."<sup>360</sup>

An unpublished report from Kirov TASS noted the adverse effects of "working up" on the discussion in Iaranskii *raion*.<sup>361</sup> The report focused on a particular incident from Abramycheskii rural soviet and the negative effects of the formal approach taken by comrade Baklanov, a member of the plenum of the *Raikom*. In the rural soviet, he gave an order to gather the people from three collective farms in an assembly. However, there were only a total of forty collective farmers from the Barysheevskii collective farm who attended the meeting. What constituted "examining" the draft constitution at the meeting was unknown, but according to Kirov TASS what was known is that, in the protocol of the meeting, it was written that they listened to Comrade Baklanov's speech about the new constitution, which had been approved by the party and government, and the draft was adopted without any changes. The report noted that, "Baklanov obviously thought that his work was done after the meeting, as he did not appear again in a single collective farm of that rural soviet." In addition to shirking his duties, he further undermined the implementation of the discussion by calling on others to follow his example. The reporter from Kirov TASS noted with disgust:

With sleight of hand, comrade Baklanov of Abramycheskii rural soviet suggested to the administrations of collective farms to quickly "examine" the

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<sup>360</sup>GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 33

<sup>361</sup> GASPI KO, f. 6777, op. 3, d. 87, ll.1-2

draft constitution on the collective farms. On many collective farms, chairmen and brigadiers read out the draft constitution without discussion, moving on to the solution of everyday questions. For example, on the Stalin collective farm, in the protocol of the meeting of collective farmers, it is written: " Agenda: the constitution- the fundamental law of the USSR, - the first question the "examination" of constitutional law, Lecturer G. E. Tantarov. Decided: Constitutional law adopted. Pregnant women are freed from work for 2 months before and after the birth and are given working days with median pay".<sup>362</sup>

Another example of the negative effects that "working up" the draft constitution had on the state's proffered narrative comes from a report to the deputy director of the organizational section of the regional executive committee, T. Matveev, about the verification of the popular discussion in Prosnitskii *raion*. The inspector noted that the district executive committee did not organize a verification of the progress of the discussion. As a result, in the rural soviets, the discussion of the draft in the rural soviets had become a formal "working up," that took the form of readings at all-kolkhoz and brigade meetings. The inspector claimed that, "such an organization of work made it so that no one had a knowledgeable opinion about any point of the draft constitution, as a consequence of such banal formalism in the discussion well thought out additions and suggestions to the draft constitution were scarce." The suggestions that he found so objectionable included the guarantee of social security to collective farmers in case of the death of the head of house or

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<sup>362</sup> GASPI KO, f. 6777, op. 3, d. 87, ll.1-2

inability to work, the guarantee of a yearly vacation to collective farmers, and free study and use of textbooks by students.<sup>363</sup> As we shall see, these were very popular suggestions, but they contradicted the master narrative put forth by the center by focusing on local and personal concerns rather than the great tasks of state building. Regional officials came to view the formal “working up” of the constitutional draft as the main cause of this deviation.

## Conclusion

The discussion of the draft constitution was supposed to mobilize the entire population of the USSR to study the text of the draft constitution, its theoretical underpinnings, and the rights and duties conveyed upon citizens, all within the context of continuing to build socialism. The central officials promulgated this narrative in the press and pushed local officials to create detailed lesson plans to meet these goals. In urban areas, where the party and state had a strong presence and strong existing networks from which to draw organizers and agitational workers, the discussion of the draft constitution proceeded more or less as the central officials envisioned it, although as discussed above they were not problem free. Study circles meetings and radio listening sessions on the draft constitution were organized and were relatively well attended, although as noted above there were quite a few exceptions. However, the local cadres tasked with implementing the discussion were often poorly trained and poorly prepared. On the collective farms, cadres’ social standing often alienated them from their primarily rural

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<sup>363</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d.472, ll. 54, 56

audience. The discussion had a more pronounced campaign character in the countryside as well, which often led to a “working up” of the constitution rather than a sustained discussion.

As additions and suggestions to the draft constitution began to trickle in to regional and central offices, officials noted a large number of “individual” and “inappropriate” suggestions coming from the countryside. Such suggestions tended to focus on local and personal matters, like collective farm vacation days, rather than the grand scheme of socialist construction that central officials had sought to emphasize in their lesson plans and articles published in the central press. *Raion* officials were blamed for the prominence of such suggestions. *Krai* inspectors argued that such suggestions were not a reflection of popular opinion in the countryside but rather poor agitational and propagandistic work on the part of local organizers. Central expectations were not and probably could not have been fulfilled in the implementation of the discussion of the draft constitution by the local authorities tasked with carrying out their directives. The state had overreached and, by opening up the draft constitution for discussion, it received responses that deviated wildly from its expectations. Unable or unwilling to concede that these suggestions may have been honest representations of popular opinion, regional and central authorities blamed *raion* officials. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, those authorities used the discussion of the draft constitution to have local officials many removed from office by their constituents.

## Chapter 4: The Popular Discussion

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“The party and government appealed to the people on such an important question, allowing them to express their opinions through corrections to the draft constitution, demonstrating to the capitalist world that the party and government, in conjunction with the people of our country, aspire towards one general goal and they move on the same path towards that goal.”<sup>364</sup>

- from a report on the discussion made by workers of the Regional Forest Administration

The popular discussion of the draft constitution was supposed to unite the country in the pursuit of a common goal: the construction of socialism. What it succeeded in doing, however, was highlighting fractures in Soviet society. These fractures were particularly evident between the urban and administrative elite,<sup>365</sup> a small minority who had experienced real benefits from the advent of Soviet power and who subscribed to the rhetoric of state building, and the rural majority, who co-opted the language of the state to address local and personal issues and to seek redress. The popular discussion highlighted the stark divide between the small, yet active, educated and privileged population, which had been successfully integrated into the Soviet society, and the vast majority of the population, who focused on local and personal matters and who were more isolated from state power.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> GASPI KO, f.1293, op.2, d.43, l. 8

<sup>365</sup> This small group did not necessarily represent the majority of urbanites or intellectuals, but they provided the backbone of support for the constitution. There is no reason to believe their support of the Soviet state was not genuine as many had seen serious improvements in their living conditions.

<sup>366</sup> Sarah Davis makes note of this dichotomy in her work, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent 1931-1941* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 102-112. She notes that the rights and freedoms that were promoted during the discussion of the draft



This dichotomy can be best seen by comparing the discussion of the draft constitution as it was presented in the local newspapers with the reports compiled by district and regional officials from the popular discussion at large. Newspapers relied heavily on letters and materials from privileged groups, such as party members, Stakhanovites, order winners, chairpersons of collective farms and urban workers. Such people, though perhaps not representative of urban dwellers and intellectuals as a whole, tended to have a broader worldview and tended to conform more to the messages presented by central and *krai* officials in official publications and in lesson plans. However, the popular suggestions to the draft constitution from rural areas often deviated from the narrative of state building that state and party representatives had carefully tried to create through a carefully managed discussion of the draft constitution. They differed as well from the tailored reporting of popular responses to the draft constitution in local and regional newspapers. Relying heavily on local party and state reports as well as a compilation of suggestions created by the Regional Party Committee and the Regional Executive committee, this chapter examines the various concerns of citizens, their beliefs, fears, and prejudices, and their expectations of the state and their representatives, which differed notably from the state's concerns and expectations. To promote their interests, the citizens of the Kirov region often adopted the language of the discussion and couched their suggestions in the language of state building, illustrating that peasants understood

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constitution often did not resonate with the masses of Soviet citizens. She further notes that much of the language of freedom and rights had been restricted to circles of intelligentsia up until that point and as a result many people either outright rejected these new rights, or rejected the constitution as untenable in the USSR. She also argues that the introduction of a discussion of rights led to many of the "inappropriate suggestions" that I discuss later in this chapter and chapter five, such as equal vacations for workers and peasants, peasant unions and even alternate parties.

the realities of power and how to 'negotiate' with the state. This chapter also reveals the limits of party and state power in that the state offices, be it at the national, regional or local level, and corresponding party organizations could not always control or direct the discussion as they wished.

The popular responses that the district and regional party and state organs recorded and saved in the archives reflected the socio-economic makeup of the region. Most of the suggestions came from rural inhabitants and tended to focus on issues that concerned them. Their popular suggestions to the draft constitution demonstrated continuity between rural concerns in the pre-revolutionary period and under Soviet rule; in both periods, issues such as land use and property rights were very important topics to peasants. However, the popular responses to the draft constitution also served to highlight the changes in the mentality that twenty years of Soviet power had wrought. Many of the suggestions highlighted concerns about citizens' rights and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the state to provide for its citizens.

The Soviet system of government introduced the concept of citizen to the USSR, as well as the reciprocal relationship between the state and its people to the lands it governed. While the urban and social elite, who were more likely to have their letters published in the local press, used the official rhetoric of the discussion of the draft constitution to praise the state and to express satisfaction with the new social and material status that they enjoyed, the rural participants in popular discussion tended to co-opt official state rhetoric to promote issues of local concern.

As noted in chapter two, many of the inhabitants of the Kirov region had learned how to be active advocates for their interests within the Soviet system.

According to official parlance, “from the day of its publication, the draft constitution, in its entirety, was presented to the whole laboring mass for in-depth study. This historical document, the Stalinist constitution, became the basis for the mobilization of all laborers of the rural soviet.”<sup>367</sup> But as this chapter argues, the outcome of this mobilization campaign often conflicted with the vision that the central state authorities had. State authorities had envisioned a popular discussion of the draft constitution that focused on the specific points that the state and party workers had carefully highlighted during preparatory meetings. The well-regulated discussion of the draft constitution in the press reflected the state’s focus on mobilizing the population to continue the task of state building. However, the actual discussion was far messier than the party had intended. By providing an open forum for the citizens, the state received a plethora of responses, most of which focused on specific needs and rights of citizens, rather than on their overarching role in socialist construction. The re-purposing of the discussion created friction between the central, region and local state and party officials and the citizens of the USSR. Both used the same language to promote conflicting goals. The conflict can best be demonstrated by a report from the Regional Executive Committee to the Central Executive Committee in Moscow. The report notes that the three most popular suggestions in the Kirov Region were:

1. Don’t give priests the right to vote.

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<sup>367</sup> GAKO, f. R- 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 319

2. Make collective farmers equal to workers in the allocation of material aid in old age and sickness and access to resorts and rest houses.
3. Allow the arrest of malicious hooligans, bandits and destroyers of socialist property without the sanction of the procurator.<sup>368</sup>

These suggestions ran counter to the state's new policies as elucidated in the draft constitution. Central authorities had promoted the expansion of the franchise to include even "former people," such as priests, in Soviet democracy. Another key policy for extending Soviet democracy was the introduction of *habeas corpus* and a codified regulated legal system, which leading party members such as Andrei Vyshinsky vigorously promoted. These two changes represented the main pillars of central state policy modification that drove the creation of a new Soviet constitution. Focus on personal benefits also detracted from the state's focus on citizens' roles in state building. For many people in the Kirov region, the state's new policies and focus were viewed as disadvantageous, even harmful to them. What the Regional Executive Committee official quoted above either failed to recognize or could not articulate was that the persistence of such suggestions did not so much represent a failure of explanatory work on the part of the district executive and party committees, as it did a true divergence of interests between the central leadership and its citizens that no amount of explanatory work could reconcile.

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<sup>368</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 155. This whole report is reproduced in GAKO, f. R- 2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 29

## The Discussion in the Local Press

The local press was an important forum for the popular discussion of the draft constitution as it provided both articles on the basic rights and democratic principles behind the draft constitution as well as letters from the inhabitants of the Kirov region about these rights and principles. As depicted in the letters reprinted in newspapers, the press was effective in reflecting one aspect of the discussion, as it conformed to the central narrative developed by central authorities and promulgated by *krai* and *raion* officials. Such coverage reflected the center's focus on state building and the victory of socialism, rather than personal or local concerns. Of the approximately 180 letters and suggestions printed in the main regional newspaper, *Kirovskaia Pravda*, most came from the urban dwellers or privileged rural strata. Those whose profession was identified included a wide array of occupations such as: engineers, workers, housewives, political figures, brigadiers, doctors, collective farmers, collective farm leaders, tractor drivers and others.<sup>369</sup>

In addition, *Kirovskaia Pravda* featured reports and speeches from meetings of housewives, toy producers, store clerks, workers, and delegates to the district congresses. A great many of these people identified themselves as party or Komsomol members. The vast majority of these correspondents represented the

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<sup>369</sup> The full list includes: five heads of sections in manufacturing enterprises, eleven order winners, four engineers, three housewives, fourteen Stakhanovites, sixteen workers, nine students, eight brigadiers, three heads of agricultural *artely*, a head chef, three immigrant workers, a financial planner, an artist of a republic, a member of the *Krai* court, fourteen individual collective farmers, two groups of collective farmers, a master barber, four doctors, six current or former Red Army soldiers, a political worker, a member of the city soviet, three tractor drivers, a chief swine herder, two shockworkers, two accountants, two agronomists, three pipe fitters, six pensioners, a Kirov city judge, three Regional Executive Committee members, three heads of collective farms, a editor of a collective farm newspaper, a factory director, a section leader, two rural soviet members, a *Kraikom* member, a machinist, a club director, and a secretary.

strata of society that benefited the most from Soviet power, and they were better educated and more supportive of the party and state other groups.

Their position as beneficiaries of the Soviet regime and believers in Soviet ideology is reflected in the tone and focus of their letters. Many letters focused on the benefits and opportunities that Soviet citizenship had provided for them and how they would try to repay the regime with even greater labor outputs. One such letter, titled “Women in the workplace,” was written by N. Sumaneeva, an award winning collective farmer from the Rosa Luxemburg collective farm. Sumaneeva’s letter describes how happy she was to hear<sup>370</sup> the text of the new draft constitution and how “Stalinist concern for the people is embedded in the constitution from the beginning to the end.”<sup>371</sup> She then describes the tangible and intangible benefits the Soviet regime brought her: “I say this to myself. I was illiterate, lived poorly and was dressed badly. Now I have become literate, have a house, a radio, a portable gramophone, a bicycle and good clothing. The government greatly values my work. In 1935 I was awarded the order “Mark of Honor” for Stakhanovite work on flax processing.” The Soviet system allowed her to improve her material conditions greatly. She made clear that she felt herself to be a valued and honored member of society who lived comfortably and was rewarded for her hard work. But these benefits were not just for her alone, they extended to all women, thanks to the new draft constitution, which guaranteed women equal rights with men, equal pay for equal work, and the right to vote and hold office. In gratitude to the Soviet state,

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<sup>370</sup> Many people went to public readings of the draft constitution and therefore would have heard, rather than read, it.

<sup>371</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 2, 1936, 2.

Sumaneeva and her fellow collective farm women pledged to give back: “This wonderful Stalinist policy makes me and the collective farm women of my work team happy and makes us wish to incessantly struggle for the attainment of the greatest harvest of flax in the world. Thank you comrade Stalin for a good happy life.”<sup>372</sup>

Sumaneeva’s letter is representative of much of the correspondence reprinted in *Kirovskaia Pravda*. Most of the writers had experienced significant improvements in their lives. They had either risen to positions of prominence in economic or political fields, had seen increases in material standards of living, or had new educational opportunities. All seemed to earnestly believe in the cause of state building. They became “validators” for the regime. For example, in the letter titled “We find happiness in the collective farms,” Matvei Tubylov, a member of the rural soviet, discussed how his parents could not vote during the Tsarist period but that now he was elected at the age of twenty-four to the rural soviet. He noted how his family now also has a fair quantity of livestock and he owned a bicycle.<sup>373</sup> Soviet power brought his family the possibility of political participation and an improved lifestyle. A similar letter came from a section leader, A. P Smertinia, on the “New Construction” collective farm. She notes that, in the past, she had been an illiterate peasant; now she was a citizen with full rights and a Stakhanovite worker on the collective farm. The state offered her unique opportunities to participate in the civil life of the country as a Stakhanovite. She talked about how she will never forget that in 1934, she participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Stakhanovite-Shockworkers and

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<sup>372</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 2, 1936, 2.

<sup>373</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 21, 1936, 3.

“together with our beloved Leaders [she] participated in the making of regulations of collective farm life.” Smertinia also focused on how the Soviet state and the new constitution provided opportunities for her children. She praised the constitution for the right to education as she was the mother of nine children, eight of whom were in school, which she believed would open many doors for them.<sup>374</sup>

Like Smertinia, many of the validators’ letters focused on how the new rights embodied in the draft constitution resonated in their lives. In a letter originally titled “The Voice of an Elderly Man,” I. F Men’shkov, the accountant at the mental hospital in Kotel’nich, explained that he was now 65. Having worked for half a century he was very pleased to see article 120 about material aid in the draft constitution. However he considered it necessary to establish the age for receiving a pension at 60, with the size of the pension determined by the number of years worked. Above all, he considered it important to establish personal pensions for those workers, like himself, who had worked more than forty years.<sup>375</sup> Clearly the issue of pensions resonated with him as he expressed his satisfaction with its inclusion in the constitution and offered up suggestions of his own on how to improve that article. In “A letter from the Sanatoria,” Kopanev, a controller for the mechanical section of KUTShO<sup>376</sup> truly personalized the benefits that the Soviet state provided for its citizens and codified in the new draft constitution. The author suffered from tuberculosis and had been sent for medical treatment to a health

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<sup>374</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 17, 1936, 3.

<sup>375</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 83, l. 28 This letter was printed in *Kirovskaia Pravda* on July 9 under the heading of “about pensions” though an original copy exists in GARF, and is dated November 29, 1936.

<sup>376</sup> The Educational technical school equipment combine (комбинат учебно-технического школьного оборудования)



resort, which was guaranteed to him under Article 120 of the new Constitution. He wrote that he now understood how well the state cares for the laboring people. Every year the factory personnel were sent for rest and recovery in sanatoria or resorts. The state educated his children for free and every year his children relaxed at a Pioneer camp. Kopanev stated that he was waiting with impatience for the approval of the new constitution, which codified the rights of citizens and expressed the state's concern for its people.<sup>377</sup>

Even a formerly disenfranchised member of society used the constitutional discussion to convey how the Soviet state had improved his life, despite the disadvantages that he still faced as a member of the former exploiting class. Seventy-year old Filipp Borodin, a person formerly deprived of rights and as a result liable for individual taxes, still promoted Soviet interests by subscribing to a loan for fifty rubles; he also actively agitated for others to subscribe. He supported Soviet power because it had re-educated him and provided opportunities for his children to live off the fruits of their own labor. This same Borodin was a shock worker on the Stakhanovite work team in his collective farm.<sup>378</sup> This man's experience demonstrated how difficult it was to compartmentalize Soviet citizens based on one aspect of their identity. As a formerly disenfranchised person, it would stand to reason that Borodin would be anti-Soviet; instead he embraced the positive changes in his life and became a Soviet supporter. While this letter undoubtedly served propagandistic functions, it also served to illustrate that individual decisions and situations often served to drive state-citizen relations in the USSR.

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<sup>377</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 5, 1936, 2.

<sup>378</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 26

The majority of the letters published<sup>379</sup> in *Kirovskaia Pravda* served to validate the state's assertions that it had provided spiritually and materialy for its citizens, and that many of these gains were codified in the new draft constitution. A great number of the authors responded by asserting that they would work harder for the state in appreciation for their new rights and privileges. Letters to *Kirovskaia Pravda* frequently dealt with the theme of working harder as an expression of appreciation for the new rights and privileges endowed by the state and codified in the constitution. In an article titled "The Constitution Restored my Youth," fifty-seven year old Stepan Dorofaevich Iuferov, a brigadier and order winner on the collective farm "Science" in Shabalinskii *raion*, described his reaction to the draft constitution. He had read and discussed the constitution multiple times in brigade meetings and was particularly impressed with how the constitution gave laborers the right to free speech and press, which he thought was only possible in the USSR. Iuferov also noted that the draft constitution gave laborers voting rights, the right to be elected and to develop their talents. The constitution called on people to work honorably. He had worked for five years as a brigadier and stated that the constitution has given him new strength to work, despite his advancing age.<sup>380</sup> Taisiia Nikolaevna Shvrina, a tractor driver from the 13th group at the Bel'koi MTS, echoed Iuferov's sentiments. She wanted to respond to the draft constitution with even greater productive labor. She was a tractor driver as was her husband. She saw the constitution as a mirror of Soviet life, reflecting all of the advancements of

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<sup>379</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda* may have censored what it published, but unfortunately, I was able to find very few unpublished letters about the draft constitution in the archives in Kirov. I did find a handful in GARF, one of which had been published in *Kirovskaia Pravda*.

<sup>380</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 4, 1936, 2.

socialism, which gave the ability for laborers to work honestly and have a happy life. In recognition of this fact, she vowed to work harder to more quickly develop the motherland.<sup>381</sup>

Some writers waxed poetic about the new draft constitution. In “The wonderful document of the Stalinist era,” A. Gusak, an order winner and chairman of the Voroshilov stud farm wrote:

Imbued with Stalinist concern for people, the new constitution motivates the laborers to work better; part 10 of the draft constitution enumerates the rights and duties of citizens. This constitution ensures [that] everyone has honorable work and many opportunities for a prosperous and cultured life, cultural growth, and for the complete utilization of their capabilities. But the constitution places on citizens a great and honorable duty. It is a duty we must piously fulfill. We must respond to this appeal with enthusiasm, be vigilant in the struggle for developing the material standards of the country through increased productive labor.<sup>382</sup>

Another letter, this time from the factory director of Izhstal' zavod, the Izhevsk steel factory, proclaimed that:

The new Stalinist constitution is a testimonial to the final victory of socialism. The constitution is the new stimulus for the further development of the country, the ascension of industrial labor, and the growth of laborers' welfare. The Izhstal'zavod collective of workers and service workers will work harder. The constitution inspires us to work better; struggling for

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<sup>381</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 4, 1936, 2.

<sup>382</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 10, 1936, 2.

greater industrial output, for the improvement of product quality and for strengthening the might of our country.<sup>383</sup>

Such testimonials printed in *Kirovskaia Pravda* reiterated the state's message by underscoring the achievements of socialism as codified in the draft constitution, validating that life had gotten better under Soviet power, and asserting that these achievements were only possible because of the communist principles and class-based focus of the regime. This reciprocal relationship served to highlight the notion that, in Soviet understandings of democracy, rights were neither natural nor inalienable but were a result of social class and could be alienated if it benefits the state. While protected by state law, these rights come from the state not from an immutable outside source. Hence they should therefore be used to further the state building goals of the government.

Those who had their letters published represented a privileged stratum of Soviet society that had seen dramatic material and social gains since the regime assumed power. There is no reason to assume that those who wrote the letters did not believe that the Soviet system had made their life better. However, these people were not representative of Soviet society as a whole. These letters better served as a continuation of the central narrative of the discussion, emphasizing the gains of socialism that were codified in the constitution and the obligations citizens had towards the state in return for their rights and improved quality of life, rather than a reflection of the questions and concerns of the majority of citizens.

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<sup>383</sup> *Kirovskaia Pravda*, July 11, 1936, 3.

## The Compilation of Additions and Suggestions

The additions, corrections and suggestions that citizens proposed to the draft constitution provide a unique window for viewing what issues concerned the citizenry, how they conceived of socialism and the social contract, and how they defined political accountability. Despite the insight that this material provides, this source material has its limits. Most of the suggestions, additions and corrections were collected and recorded by state and party agencies. This raises questions about the accuracy of the compilation as regional officials were under much pressure to quickly and accurately collect additions and corrections, and send them to the Central Executive Committee. That committee increased the pressure by sending inspectors to check on the veracity of regional and district reports. For example, on November 13, 1936, the Deputy Secretary of the Central Executive Committee, N. Novikov, sent a letter to the head of the Regional Executive Committee, Comrade Aleksandr Alekseevich Bobkov, accusing the Regional Executive Committee of mishandling suggestions and falsifying their reports to the Central Executive Committee. Novikov questioned the veracity of the reports on the discussion of the draft constitution sent to the Central Executive Committee, "it is obvious that the act of compiling the additions and corrections to the draft constitution in the organizational section of the Regional Executive Committee did not proceed without some problems: the statistical reports are very confusing and they had been made very tentatively, the Regional Executive Committee doesn't

know the exact number of additions.”<sup>384</sup> He strongly implied that the Regional Executive Committee was not well organized and in order to cover up their deficiencies in compiling the additions, corrections and suggestions to the draft constitution, they had resorted to lying. Novikov bluntly and inelegantly accused the Regional Executive Committee of “using fictitious statistics in place of the actual accounted for 219 suggestions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 660 on of October 10, the organizational section reported 1,543 and 2,142 additions, in essence whitewashing the organizational department of the Presidium of the All Union Central Executive Committee.”<sup>385</sup> He warned Bobkov that, “all of that led to white washing and cheating and made your own situation awkward because of the deliberately false data given for your article in *Pravda*.”<sup>386</sup> Novikov followed up this rebuke with a demand that “you [Bobkov] pay attention to the organization of the statistical report of suggestions and additions that laborers bring to the draft constitution, and also report to us what you have done in connection with the stated facts in this letter.”<sup>387</sup>

On November 22, Bobkov responded to Novikov’s accusations with his own letter. Bobkov blamed local officials for the late compilation of some of the additions and suggestions to the draft, noting that, “there are around 900 suggestions that we have not sent because they were received late and because a portion of them cannot be brought to the draft constitution, but relate to the work of local organs of

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<sup>384</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 122

<sup>385</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 122

<sup>386</sup> GAKO, f. R- 2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 122

<sup>387</sup> For the full text of this letter see Appendix 3, Document 1. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 122

power.”<sup>388</sup> He also detailed the process by which the additions and corrections from the Kirov region had been gathered into books and when they had been specifically sent to Moscow. Bobkov used these detailed accounts to “refute the fiction, which [Central Executive Committee] instructor Maslov reported to you, of falsifying the true state of affairs”.<sup>389</sup>

This heated exchange between two bureaucrats highlights several important aspects of the discussion of the draft constitution. The incredibly negative reaction from the Central Executive Committee to what it viewed as incompetence and fraud demonstrated that the highest authorities in the Soviet Union cared about the correct compilation of popular suggestions. The sharp rebuke to Bobkov highlighted the seriousness with which they viewed this campaign in particular and the responsiveness of regional and local officials in general.<sup>390</sup> Bobkov defended his people against the attack from the central authorities while simultaneously passing blame for late or incomplete reports onto local officials. This sort of blame mongering was common in 1930’s Soviet bureaucratic relations and was, at least in part, a function of the extreme pressures of the Stalinist period.<sup>391</sup> The obvious friction between the Central Executive Committee’s representative, Inspector Maslov, and the Regional Executive Committee’s representative, Bobkov, also emphasized the conflicting goals and duties that fractured the Soviet bureaucracy.

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<sup>388</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 123

<sup>389</sup> For the full text of this letter see Appendix 3, Document 2. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 123

<sup>390</sup> J Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov deal with the issue of regional and local compliance and non-compliance with central state and party demands in detail in *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the self-destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>391</sup> Larry Holmes deals with this culture of negativity in depth in *Grand Theater*.

The campaign to discuss the draft constitution, often highlighted these fractures and challenges any assumption of a monolithic state.

Additionally, such controversy raises questions about the completeness and accuracy of the collected popular suggestions, which provide the bulk of the source material for this chapter. The November 22 letter from Comrade Bobkov reported a total of 4,288 suggestions gathered from the *krai* and sent to Moscow as of October 21.<sup>392</sup> However, a report to the Central Executive Committee from the Organizational Section of the Kirov Regional Executive Committee dated November 10, 1936 noted that the Regional Executive Committee had received a total of 3,968 additions, corrections and suggestions to the draft constitution<sup>393</sup> In the material from the district party committees, district executive committees, city party committees, Regional Party Committee and Regional Executive Committee, I read 3,203 suggestions additions and corrections to the draft constitution. It is these 3,203 suggestions from the party and state archival sources in Kirov that form the basis for the following analysis. While this material represents the bulk of the additions and corrections gathered by party and state representatives in the Kirov region, it is incomplete and is further dependent on the accuracy with which those tasked with conducting the discussion of the draft constitution gathered and recorded popular suggestions. Indubitably many were never recorded or were lost.

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<sup>392</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 123

<sup>393</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 113, l. 1 The TsIK itself raised questions about the number of suggestions, and deputy Secretary Novikov accused the *Kraispolkom* of falsely giving higher numbers of suggestions in its reports to the TsIK. Comrade Bobkov, head of the *Kraispolkom* fired back, accusing the inspector from the TsIK of incompetence and replying they had received 3,968 suggestions as of November first, but that more suggestions had come in later, further increasing the total. He asked to be absolved of the accusation of falsifying reports. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, ll. 122-123



How representative is the Kirov region of national trends? Judging from those articles in the draft constitution that elicited the most reactions, the Kirov region largely reflected the national trend. By November 15, 1936, 43,427 suggestions from across the USSR had been compiled and tabulated by the Organizational Section of the Central Executive Committee. Of the 146 articles of the constitution, only 9 articles received over a thousand individual suggestions. Those articles were Article 8 on land usage (1,026), Article 109 on the election of people's courts (1,551), Article 119 about vacations (4,060), Article 120 about material security and pensions (4,960), Article 121 on education (3,400), Article 127 about *habeas corpus* (3,218), Article 132 on military service (2,416), Article 135 about voting rights (4,716) and Article 142 about deputies responsibility to their constituents (1,048).<sup>394</sup> (For the full text of articles see Appendix 1). These were the same articles that occasioned suggestions in Kirov. Put another way, the focus and nature of the individual suggestions in the Kirov region reflected USSR citizens' focus on personal entitlements and the maintenance of law and order.

## Popular Voice

The questions raised during the discussion of the draft and the suggestions made at meetings that were convened specifically to discuss the draft, and that were recorded in the *raikom* and *raispolkom* materials, paint a very different picture of the discussion of the draft constitution than the one presented in the local press.

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<sup>394</sup> GARF, f. R- 3316, op. 8, d. 222, l. 156. Article 109 about the peoples' courts had 106 suggestions, Article 132 on military service received 171 suggestions, Article 142, about the reporting of deputies before the voters.

People used the discussion to address issues that concerned them, what they thought socialism is or should be, and what limits should be placed on political organs and officials based on the citizens' daily experiences and interactions with the party and state.

The reframing of citizenship in the USSR, which was expanded in the draft constitution to include all inhabitants of the USSR, and the expansion of the rights and privileges of citizens raised issues of inclusion and exclusion because state benefits and privileges had a significant impact on the quality of daily life in the USSR. It was not just the state that sought to include or exclude certain groups. In Kirov, the participants in the discussion also focused on including or excluding people from citizenship rights and/or the corresponding benefits. The inhabitants of the Kirov region focused on building a safe, stable and secure material life for themselves. Sometimes coopting official state programs aimed at state building and sometimes using the language of class struggle, the participants used the rhetorical and political tools that the state had given them to agitate for their interests in order to change state policy. Either way, the inhabitants of the Kirov region were politically active and engaged in a dialogue with the state to promote their interests. When the state asked for their input in shaping the foundation of the Soviet state, the citizens of the Kirov region happily obliged, offering up comments and suggestions to the draft constitution. But they also engaged the state in a conversation about their needs and expectations, which were often drastically different than the needs and expectations that the state had been promoting through its managed discussion of the draft constitution.

The recommendations made by the population of Kirov touched on ten major issues: the structure and composition of government, the nature of and right to property, the organization of production, the legal rights of citizens, social welfare and work issues, education, law and order, military service, the rights of those formerly excluded from society (*lishentsy*), and political accountability and limits on power. The articles that received the most suggestions in the Kirov region focused on individual entitlements and community order. The six articles that received the most suggestions were: Article 8 on the granting of land to collective farms (263), Article 119 about the right to rest (381), Article 120 on material benefits in old age and poor health (476), Article 121 on education (259), Article 127 on *habeas corpus* (223) and Article 135 on voting rights (244). (See Appendix 1 for full text of the articles) Suggestions to the draft constitution were made both by groups of people and by individuals. There were a total of 1,111 group suggestions (34.9% of the total) and 2,071 individual suggestions (65.1% of the total). Of the 2,071 individual suggestions, 2,056 of them listed the gender of the person making the suggestion: 1,775 were male and 281 were female. Put another way, individual women only made 8.8% of the suggestions<sup>395</sup> and 55.4% were made by men. Some of these topics were of greater importance to rural inhabitants than to urban dwellers, but because of strong rural urban ties, seemingly rural initiatives often received urban

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<sup>395</sup> Women tended to be more likely to make suggestions about traditionally feminine topics such as child rearing and household concerns. This tendency, coupled with the low number of individual women's suggestions may indicate the existence of a strong patriarchy. Despite early Soviet efforts to change traditional gender roles, Stalin supported those roles as a way to increase stability during the upheaval of the first Five-Year plan and as a way to increase the Soviet Union's population.

support. What connected these disparate subjects was the population's concern for fairness and order in their lives.

Language also played an important role in the popular discussion. One of the reasons for the differences between the state's presentation of the draft constitution and the popular responses that it received was rooted in the language being utilized. Some of the questions asked during the discussion reflected the fact that the language and concepts used by state and party representatives to explain the draft constitution were sometimes confusing and beyond the experience of the discussants. One of the most telling examples came from Omutninskii *raion*, where the collective farmers were interested in what the words "race," "chamber," and "constitution" in the context of the articles of the draft constitution meant.<sup>396</sup> These questions tended to arise in rural areas, where the state and party had the least influence and educational levels were lower. They not only reflected the low political and civic educational levels in the countryside, they also exemplify part of the gap between the city and the country. In the city, the dialogue tended to be more sophisticated and politically aware, more reflective of the discussion of the draft constitution in *Kirovskaia Pravda*. The questions that the collective farmers posed during the discussion provide a snapshot of the levels of political illiteracy in the countryside. However, political illiteracy is not to be confused with political impotence or lack of agency. While the rural population at one level may have been politically illiterate about terms, structures, etc., they were still savvy enough to ask

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<sup>396</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474 l. 120

penetrating questions.<sup>397</sup> As illustrated in the abovementioned case of the collective farmers' challenge to the road committee in Zuevka *raion*, discussed in chapter two, rural people were often able to incorporate the language and laws of the state into their arguments against proposed policies. Much of their knowledge emanated from lived experience, which helps to explain the rural population's being more politically engaged about things of immediate importance.

While basic questions about the governmental structure and function revealed a lack of civic education in the countryside, they also showed an attempt by the public to understand how their government functioned. The questions asked reflected people's curiosity and attempts to understand the framework of the state that they have been asked to help mold. The collective farmers of Alferovskii agricultural *artel*<sup>398</sup> asked the leaders of the constitutional discussion to define the difference between city and countryside.<sup>399</sup> Given the prevalence of both permanent migration to the cities and seasonal labor migrations to the cities in the Kirov region, the boundaries between the two spheres undoubtedly seemed blurred to many participants. However, the central leadership, particularly Stalin, emphasized that the city and country were distinct, each with its own strengths and roles in building the Soviet state. Other questions from Slobodskoi *raion*, which demonstrated how the discussants tried to reconcile party theory and rhetoric with the realities of everyday life, included:

What is the difference between communism and socialism?

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<sup>397</sup>For a treatment of this distinction in the pre-revolutionary period, Daniel Fields. *Rebels in the name of the Tsar*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

<sup>398</sup> Chirkovskii rural soviet, Slobodskoi *raion*

<sup>399</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op.1, d. 202, l. 30

Will there be a state under communism? (pertaining to Article 1)

What are the reasons for the formation of a new republic?

Why were 11 union republics created?<sup>400</sup>

What is the difference between a *krai* and an *oblast*?<sup>401</sup>

These types of questions, which demonstrated a lack of theoretical understanding about how the state functioned, were not limited to Slobodskoi *raion*. The citizenry of Omutninskii *raion* wished to know what signaled the creation of the Supreme Soviet, what was its function,<sup>402</sup> and why was there not a union republic-level people's commissariat of education in the draft constitution?<sup>403</sup> In Sovietskii *raion*, the populace wished to know how the autonomous republics would be administered,<sup>404</sup> if the meetings of the palace of nationalities and the palace of the Union of Soviets (sic) were conducted at the same time or separately,<sup>405</sup> and who could change the constitution.<sup>406</sup> The people of Sovietskii *raion* also wanted to know the last names of the leaders of the All-Union and union republic level peoples' commissars.<sup>407</sup> This last question may suggest a popular desire to relate to and the ability to hold accountable governmental officials and possibly a traditional tendency to equate the office holder with the position. It is worth noting that many of these questions were quite reasonable.

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<sup>400</sup> A similar question was also recorded in Omutninskii *raion*. "Why are considerable subdivisions of republics provided for in the new constitution?/ Why were 11 republics organized, when there used to be 7." GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 224, l. 30; GAKO, f. R- 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120

<sup>401</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>402</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120

<sup>403</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120

<sup>404</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d.224, l. 6

<sup>405</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>406</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>407</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d.224, l. 6

## Concerns about political issues

The participants' concern with fairness, is best reflected by their questions on electoral procedure. The changes in the election procedure codified in the draft constitution raised questions about the nature and reasons for these procedures, and reflected citizens' concerns about their ability to participate. For example, discussants wanted to know why were secret and direct elections introduced, and how would secret elections be organized?<sup>408</sup> Some questions were raised about how secret ballot voting would work and if there would still be electoral mass meetings.<sup>409</sup> For example, in Svechinskii *raion*, the question was raised "Why were earlier elections unequal, i.e. workers were allowed to elect more deputies, and peasants less, and why are elections now equal?"<sup>410</sup> Other questions from around the *Krai* included: "How will illiterate people vote in the secret elections?"<sup>411</sup> and "How will the elections be direct?"<sup>412</sup> Such questions reflect a certain mistrust in the change in election procedures, which as we shall see some people considered as a way for class enemies to worm their way into positions of power. But they also demonstrated a desire to participate in elections in a way that was equal. Paper ballots would have excluded the illiterate and participants in the discussion wished to make sure all honest Soviet citizens could participate.

Similarly many questions during the discussion demonstrated that the citizens of the Kirov region had a practical rather than theoretical understanding of politics.

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<sup>408</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 6 An analogous question came from Nolinskii *raion*. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d.224, l. 30

<sup>409</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>410</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>411</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>412</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

The party often ran into problems getting the peasantry to conceptualize the world and the changes that the state was trying to implement in language that it could understand (and that characterized the central party and state apparatus' discourse). Such language shaped or made opaque peasants' understanding and implementation of policy. For example, in rural Slobodskoi *raion*, the collective farmers on Mokinskii agricultural *artel'* wanted to know who will elect the senior leaders (Stalin, Molotov and Kalinin) and who crafted the resolution about their election.<sup>413</sup> Other questions from Mokinskii *artel'* included:

1. Why were the elder leaders of the Bolsheviks removed from work like Trotsky?
2. Why does agriculture lag behind industry?
3. I support free speech, but when someone makes statements against some sort of proposal, there should be punishment for this<sup>414</sup>

Likewise, on Merzliakovskii collective farm,<sup>415</sup> the collective farmers wanted to know why taxes were collected in money rather than in kind as they had been under NEP.<sup>416</sup> Such questions demonstrated a fundamental lack of basic political knowledge. Information on Trotskyism, the slow development of agriculture during NEP, and collectivization as a policy to hasten agricultural development had long been available through the press and were topics that should have been covered in political study circles. The comment on free speech suggests a particular

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<sup>413</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, l. 30

<sup>414</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, l. 30

<sup>415</sup> Il'inskii rural soviet, Slobodskoi *raion*

<sup>416</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, l. 30



understanding of individual political rights and freedoms, and the fact that in a collectivized society such individualistic opinions could have negative ramifications for group solidarity. Such questions may have reflected political illiteracy in the eyes of the party members who recorded them, but at the same time they also reflected the concerns of an agrarian society that relied heavily on cooperation for survival.

Despite their lack of theoretical political knowledge, the rural population of the Kirov region was politically astute enough to agitate for its own interests and often utilized the state's own language and arguments to do so.<sup>417</sup> The collective farmers used party leaders' two main arguments for the existence of a new draft constitution—the creation of a new classless society and the extension of citizenship rights to the whole population—to advance their cause. The equality between the workers and the peasantry was one of the key arguments for the rewriting of the constitution. The leadership contended that progress had eliminated class differences in the USSR, creating a new classless society and necessitating a change in the constitution. This new classless society would allow the enfranchisement of those whom the state had actively oppressed a few years before. The extension of citizenship rights, such as voting, to formerly disenfranchised groups was the lynch pin in Molotov's speech to the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets. In fact, Cherepanov, a collective farmer from "Development" collective farm, Sarapul'skii *raion*, argued that: "In the furtherance of the erasure of borders between city and countryside

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<sup>417</sup> Stephen Kotkin thoroughly addresses the idea of citizens utilizing state language to agitate for their goals in *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). He referred to this behavior as "speaking Bolshevik."

establish the right to yearly vacations for collective farmers.”<sup>418</sup> Comrade S. A. Rusinov from Karakulinskii *raion* reasoned that it was necessary to “add [language] about yearly vacations for collective farmers with the retention of median pay, because under socialism there will be equal relationship towards the means of production.”<sup>419</sup>

## Land and resource issues

One of the most pressing issues for the collective farmers was the use of land and other natural resources that were vital for their survival. Peasants had long struggled to gain access to natural resources such as meadows, forests and waterways. In his work, *Crime, Culture, Conflict and Justice in Rural Russia 1856-1914*, Stephen Frank notes that crimes, such as stealing wood from private or state forests, were commonplace and often created much friction between the peasantry and the local officials. In *Russia's Peasants*, Aaron Retish addresses the competition for land in the Viatka province from the revolution into the NEP period.<sup>420</sup> Even following collectivization, land remained a key issue for the agrarian population of Kirovskii *Krai*.

Collective farmers were aware of their rights and of the many organizations in which they could petition to advocate for their interests, such as the District Land Department, the District Party Committee, the people's courts and newspapers. Hence it is not surprising that when the central state authorities invited collective

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<sup>418</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 83

<sup>419</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 77

<sup>420</sup> Stephen Frank, *Crime, Culture, Conflict and Justice in Rural Russia 1856-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999)

farmers to express their opinions about the draft constitution, they took the opportunity to campaign vocally for increased land usage rights and other local concerns. Land usage issues caused friction between both the collective farmers and the local authorities, as the struggle over land in Zuevka *raion* illustrated, and between individual collective farms. A letter written to *Kirovskaia Pravda* in 1936 described the struggle between two collective farms for land and other agricultural resources. The author explained that, in 1931 the collective farm “Wheel”<sup>421</sup> was formed by uniting the village of Bol’shoi Bekhtera with three families from the village of Sanynchin. The rest of the villagers in Sanynchin remained individual small holders. The land around the village was divided up and the collective farm “Wheel” was given seven fields of arable land. The individual smallholders of the village had a change of heart and in the fall of 1935, organized into the “Comrade” collective farm. Three of the members of “Wheel” collective farm left and joined “Comrade” collective farm. And then the red tape began. A request was sent to the District Land Committee (PZK) that all of the land located around the village of Sanynchin be taken from the “Wheel” collective farm and given to the “Comrade” collective farm. The PZK prohibited this move. The “Comrade” collective farm also requested forage for horses, horses, horse collars, pigs and other agricultural supplies. The case ended up before the people’s court, but a protest was lodged against the court’s judgment. In the end, the District Land Department had to mediate the land claims of the two collective farms in connection with the State Act

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<sup>421</sup> Pustoshenskii rural soviet, Oricheskii *raion*

on the Eternal Usage of Land by collective farmers.<sup>422</sup> As the amount of the arable land that a collective farm occupied was often a determining factor in its success or failure, it is of little wonder that the collective farmers would agitate for the protection of their current land holdings and the expansion of the territory they could utilize.

The question of the distribution of arable land had been decided in 1935 with the State Act on the Eternal Usage of Land, which became Article 8 of the draft constitution and which affirmed the allocation of land for the eternal usage of the collective farms. While the question of arable land may have been settled, many collective farmers took advantage of the popular discussion to request eternal access to or ownership of the resources that they had traditionally been denied but felt justified using. Article 8 received 263 total suggestions. Of that total, 218 suggestions requested giving the forests to the collective farmers for eternal usage. Others proposed that meadows and hayfields be turned over to the collective farms (18 requests) and that collective farms have water rights to local streams and ponds (7 requests). Three additional suggestions to give the forests to the collective farms were submitted for Article 6 (about the allocation of natural resources). These resources were highly prized and jealously guarded by collective farmers' who suggested not giving land to individual small holders, but rather giving underutilized land to "more deserving collective farms"<sup>423</sup> so as to "guarantee proper land usage."<sup>424</sup> The comments about "appropriate usage" reflected a concern

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<sup>422</sup> GASPI KO, f. 6777, op. 3, d. 61, ll. 180-181

<sup>423</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, ll. 8, 12, 13, 18, 19; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, ll. 38-43

<sup>424</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, ll. 16-17, 19

for fair distribution of land to the farms and farmers who improved the land. The collective farmers argued that land should be given to those who best fulfilled the state's mandate of building socialism through collectivized agriculture. Whether that was the motivation behind their claims is unclear, but it is clear that they used the state's discourse to press their case.

Article 9 provided for the continued existence of individual farming in the USSR it was hotly contested in *Kirovskii Krai*. While article 9 received far fewer suggestions than article 8, it raised important issues of land usage and highlighted social tensions in the countryside. Of the 24 suggestions made to this article, nine were directed against individual small holders, and called for either banning the practice of individual smallholding directly or denying them access to land. The language used to challenge individual smallholders varied. A group of collective farmers from the Kalinin collective farm<sup>425</sup> challenged the individual smallholders' existence on the basis of socialist principles, stating "the socialist system of production in the USSR is governmental in form, and therefore the development of independent peasant production cannot be allowed."<sup>426</sup> Others challenged the smallholders' existence based on the debt that the individual smallholders owed to the state. L.M Zhuikov, a collective farmer,<sup>427</sup> proposed "to remove the right to use the garden plot of independent smallholders who owed two years of back taxes and absolutely to give it to the collective farms, as the independent smallholders every

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<sup>425</sup> Belokholunitskii *raion*

<sup>426</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 26

<sup>427</sup> From the "Red Farmer" collective farm in Chernovskii *raion*

year accumulate arrears.”<sup>428</sup> Zhuikov was very clear that the land of the individual smallholders who defaulted on their tax burden should be turned over to the collective farms.

Individual smallholders competed with the collective farmers for resources and the state, while protecting their right to exist in the constitution, had enacted a series of discriminatory economic measures against them. In some cases, these smallholders were unpopular because they failed or refused to participate in the voluntary civic work on roads, bridges etc.; collective farmers were mandated to expend their time and energy on such work.<sup>429</sup> Additionally, individual smallholdings had the potential to fragment collective farm land. Therefore, some collective farmers tried to use the language of socialist construction to expand their land holdings and challenge individual small holders who existed outside of the collective community. In many ways, the collective farmers challenged the fairness of the existence of individual small holders. As this discussion makes clear, some rural residents used the discussion to press for local and personal interests. That is hardly surprising. What is interesting is what their efforts reveal about their use of the state’s rhetoric.

Land usage was not just a concern of rural inhabitants. Many people who lived in urban areas were recent arrivals from the countryside and maintained strong connections to their rural roots. Some of these urban dwellers wanted to know why was not land put aside for workers under the same conditions as for

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<sup>428</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 26

<sup>429</sup> This issue is addressed by I. E. Zelenin in “Byl li ‘Kolkhoznyi neonep’?” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, No. 2 (April 1994)

collective farmers.<sup>430</sup> Kudrin, a party member and worker at the Votkinskii power plant, suggested that the constitution “include a point about the right of use by workers of hinterland and haymaking grounds.”<sup>431</sup> Likewise, I. K. Markov from the 1st of May collective farm<sup>432</sup> suggested “securing for eternal usage part of the land for workers and service workers.”<sup>433</sup> While such suggestions were not numerous, they demonstrate the continued importance of agricultural ties for workers and service workers, and the overall importance of access to land for food production, even in urban areas of the USSR.

The drafters of the constitution were aware of the citizenry’s reliance on domestic food production. As such they sought to codify the rights of Soviet citizens to personal property, while still promoting the construction of a collectivist and socialist society. They utilized the specificity that defined constitutionalism in the USSR and that set it apart from more western constitutions to explicitly codify property ownership in the USSR. Perhaps no issue reflected the specifically Soviet understanding of constitutionalism better than the issue of private cow ownership. According to Article 7 of the draft constitution, the buildings, livestock, and tools were property of the collective farms, but every collective farm household had the right to “a small garden plot and personal property for subsidiary economic activity on the garden plot, a milk cow (продуктивный скот), fowl and other petty agricultural stock as specified in the charter of the *artel*’.”<sup>434</sup> Such issues were not

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<sup>430</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>431</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 226; GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 340

<sup>432</sup> Kirovskii district

<sup>433</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d.224, ll. 38-43

<sup>434</sup> *Pravda*, June 12, 1936, 1.

included in most western constitutions, which provided a collection of guiding principles, which would in turn shape legislative initiatives. However, in the USSR, the right to own a private cow was present in Stetskii, Tal' and Iakovlev's first complete draft of the draft constitution and remained through the ratification of the draft in December. As noted earlier in the chapter on constitutionality, this level of specificity was part of the overall Soviet conceptualization of a constitution as a list of very specific achievements, rights and duties, rather than as a list of broad guiding principles. The prohibition of owning more than one private cow signaled the victory of collectivization over personal smallholding, and of state ownership over private ownership. Yet, such an article created a constitutionally protected niche for personal property and agriculture alongside collective agriculture.

The issue stretches deeper than the intellectual musings of the drafting commission. As mentioned, earlier in 1935, the Kirov regional authorities had limited the number of personal cows that a collective farmer could own as a way to strengthen collective farms and to promote the growth of collective livestock holding. Up to that point, many collective farmers had been devoting most of their effort into caring and raising their own livestock, thereby neglecting the collective herds that the state deemed vital. However, the state recognized the importance of cows to supplement the collective farm payments in kind and to help households attain a better standard of living. As a result, in 1934-35, when the state and party were trying to strengthen collective farms, the lack of a milk cow (безкоровность) was one of the main disparities that they tried to address. Private cows provided important sources of food for large families in the countryside and the limitations



imposed unfair disadvantages on large families who had many young children. Although young children ate, they were not accounted for in the division of collective farm goods as they were not able to work. Thus multiple household cows would have allowed them to make up the short fall.

Given the importance of private cows in everyday life, it should not be surprising that this issue was raised during the discussion of the draft constitution. In the Kirov Region, there were no less than three recorded suggestions to amend the number of cows constitutionally allowed. At the general meeting of the "Stepan Razin" collective farm,<sup>435</sup> it was suggested that collective farmers with large families be authorized to have two cows for personal use.<sup>436</sup> Shabalin, a worker from Kirovskii *raion*, suggested that collective farmers having eight to ten members in a family be allowed to have two milk cows.<sup>437</sup> Another collective farmer, Shikalov,<sup>438</sup> made an analogous suggestion.<sup>439</sup> Although the numbers were small, the constitutionality of multiple cow ownership resonated with people and illustrates the socio-economic issues addressed in the draft. Cows helped to define quality of life in the countryside and multiple cows would help to raise the standard of living for large families. The suggestions about cows serve to illustrate that many of the very personal, seemingly irrelevant suggestions given to the draft constitutions were responses to state policies and procedures outlined in the draft constitution.

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<sup>435</sup> Kotel'nicheskii *raion*

<sup>436</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d. 257, l. 48

<sup>437</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 119

<sup>438</sup> From Shikalovskaia artel', Slobodskoi *raion*

<sup>439</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, ll. 1-23

What in any other country would have been a legislative initiative became a constitutional principle in the USSR.

## **Social welfare issues**

Enumerating the specific conditions for economic and social welfare in the draft constitution was a hallmark of Soviet democracy and extended not just to cows but also to pensions, vacations and medical benefits. As with questions of land and property, the suggestions and comments made to the draft constitution by the citizens of the Kirov region about social welfare issues reflected an overarching concern for fairness and responsiveness from the government to the needs and welfare of its citizens. One key issue raised during the discussion was the different rights afforded to workers and peasants. Peasants were strongly opposed to the wording of Article 1 of the constitution because the use of the words “workers and peasants” rather than the more encompassing term “laborers” (трудящихся) implied a separation between workers and peasants that limited certain rights for the peasantry. Of the 64 total suggestions made to Article 1, 46 (71.9 %) asked to change the term “workers and peasants” to the term “laborers,” which had been used in the two earlier constitutions, so that the peasantry could be afforded the same benefits as workers. Such suggestions make clear that the citizenry of the Kirov region understood the political implications of such a change, and were willing to agitate to protect their interests as citizens and to promote a sense of fairness.

The collective farmers of the Kirov region raised the issue of fairness and equality with workers on many occasions, particularly as it affected their daily lives. For example, in Alferovskii agricultural *artel*,<sup>440</sup> participants at a meeting to discuss the draft constitution raised several questions about specific governmental policies that affected their day-to-day lives. They wanted to know why workers did not pay taxes on their gardens or deliveries, but the collective farmers did. They also wished to know why the peasants' workday was not limited to 7 hours,<sup>441</sup> why fixed working hours were not established on the collective farm, and why there was a shortage of manufactured goods.<sup>442</sup> On the Red October Collective farm,<sup>443</sup> the collective farmers wished to know why they paid both individual and collective farm taxes an issue that exemplified the of inequality between them and the workers.<sup>444</sup> As the collective farmers saw it, workers had a limited number hours a day when they could be compelled to work, they paid lower tax rates, and they had more access to manufactured goods. In comparison, collective farmers worked long hours, often more than 12 hours at a time without weekends or holidays. They questioned why, if all citizens of the state had equal rights, did they work longer and receive fewer benefits than the workers. The collective farmers of Falenskii *raion* further questioned state policy by asking, "why not abolish grain collection in districts with bad harvests, because collective farmers live poorly."<sup>445</sup> This seemingly unfair and undue burden that the state had placed on collective farmers was also noted in

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<sup>440</sup> Chirkovskii rural soviet, Slobodskoi *raion*

<sup>441</sup> Farmers in Falenskii *raion* also questioned why a seven-hour working day for collective farmers was not stipulated in the draft constitution. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 282

<sup>442</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202 l. 30

<sup>443</sup> Il'inskii rural soviet, Slobodskoi *raion*

<sup>444</sup> GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202, l. 30

<sup>445</sup> GAKO, R-f. 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 282

other *raiony*. Peasants often contrasted their lives and rights with those of urban Kirovites.

Given the many connections between town and country in the Kirov, the rural inhabitants of the region were aware of the differences in lifestyle and the small luxuries afforded to urban dwellers. One of the biggest discrepancies that the collective farmers noticed was the lifestyle that husbands could give to their wives. On the collective farms, women had to work the same long hours as the men, sometimes even during their last trimester of pregnancy. Despite the party and state's rhetorical focus on the paramount importance of labor and the right to work, which was listed as both a right and obligation of every citizen of the USSR, in the urban centers of the Kirov region many women were housewives,<sup>446</sup> who did not have to balance the double burden of working and raising children. The collective farmers were quick to note this inequity and to demand that the wives of workers and service personnel also be obligated to work. Ivan Dokuchaev, a collective farmer,<sup>447</sup> submitted a suggestion to the draft constitution asking that all wives of service workers and workers be obligated to participate in work on the same level as wives of collective farmers.<sup>448</sup> Sitnikov, a party member and chairman of the

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<sup>446</sup> Despite not working long hours like their rural counterparts, housewives in urban areas often felt themselves to be second class citizens who were dependent on their husband's status. Sheila Fitzpatrick argues that the women from this elite group actually discouraged women from working, but instead promoted volunteerism as a path of female independence. Housewives from the cities of Kotel' nich and Kirov had well-organized circles and many were active within the party. They used the discussion of the constitution to petition for familial issues, such as child custody, alimony and specific privileges for housewives such as state benefits and the right to rest. For more information on the activities of housewives in the see Sheila Fitzpatrick's "The Wives Movement," *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 156-164.

<sup>447</sup> From the "Communard" collective farm in Falenskii *raion*

<sup>448</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 28

“Sitniki” collective farm<sup>449</sup> noted that few wives of service workers worked and some kept servants. He wanted it written into the draft constitution that they be obliged to work.<sup>450</sup> Six other suggestions, all either by men or collective groups, were made to the draft constitution to the effect that the wives of workers and technical workers should work. That men rather than women complained about workers wives not having to work may well be related to the man’s role in society. Russian men who were unable to provide for their wives were seen as lesser men than those who could. As such, providing well enough for their families that their wives did not have to work was an important marker of personal worth, one to which collective farm men would have aspired. Such suggestions make clear that the collective farmers used the open forum of the discussion of the draft constitution to promote what they deemed to be fairness and equity in their lives, particularly in comparison to the more privileged urban population. They believed that such equality would improve their situation.

This discrepancy in citizenship rights was most obvious was in Articles 119 and 120, which provided citizens with the right to rest (119), and the right to material security in old age and disability (120). In these areas, inclusion and exclusion into full citizenship rights had a very real impact on quality of life. Such concerns were reflected in both the questions raised during the discussion and in the suggestions made to the draft.<sup>451</sup> Of the 382 suggestions made to Article 119, 293 (76.7%) were about giving collective farmers vacations. Article 120 contained fifteen additional

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<sup>449</sup> In Falenskii *raion*

<sup>450</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 28

<sup>451</sup> J. Arch Getty also notices similar trends in his article “The Stalinist Constitution,” 26-27

suggestions about vacations. Of the 476 suggestions made to Article 120, 199 (41.8%) were requests for collective farmers to be included in all aspects of the social welfare system. There were 23 suggestions to Article 119 and one to 120 to allow collective farmers greater access to rest houses. Questions about rights specifically granted to workers and service workers, but not to collective farmers in Article 119 and 120 appeared frequently during the discussion of the draft constitution.

In Slobodskoi district, questions about the draft constitution were, in a majority of cases, focused on Article 120.<sup>452</sup> Many participants wanted to know why collective farmers were not insured, and why was the right to rest only for workers and service workers?<sup>453</sup> They also wished to know why elderly collective farmers were not paid a pension.<sup>454</sup> For example, on the production collective farm “Khimik,”<sup>455</sup> the collective farmers were interested in why the collective farmers were not given paid vacation like the workers, in spite of both groups having equal electoral rights.<sup>456</sup> They also wished to know where it was possible to get funds for vacations and medical leave certificates for collective farmers.<sup>457</sup> In Nolinskii district, participants in the popular discussion questioned why collective farmers

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<sup>452</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 1

<sup>453</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 59 a similar suggestion was documented specifically from Merzliakovskii collective farm, Il'inskii rural soviet, Slobodskoi *raion*. GASPI KO, f. 988, op. 1, d. 202. L. 30.

<sup>454</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 59

<sup>455</sup> Omutninskii district

<sup>456</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 13. This suggestion without attribution to a specific collective farm also appears in GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120 and GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d.224, l. 30

<sup>457</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120 this suggestion also appears in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 30

did not have weekends and vacations like workers and service workers did.<sup>458</sup> Other participants wanted to know how aging collective farmers would be helped.<sup>459</sup> Participants in Falenskii *raion* also addressed the issue, asking why Article 120 did not extend to collective farmers.<sup>460</sup> Unlike the participants from other districts, they were a bit more direct in expressing their outright displeasure with their exclusion from government benefits, stating: “We think it is wrong when now collective farmers receive medical treatment only after paying, as it will be in the new constitution.”<sup>461</sup> Similar sentiments existed in other parts of the region, where questions such as the following were common: Why isn’t social support provided for collective farmers in equal measure with workers?<sup>462</sup> Why are benefits not granted in case of disability on collective farms?<sup>463</sup> Why is nothing said about vacations for collective farmers in the draft constitution?<sup>464</sup> Given that such questions arose in many different districts, it is clear that the exclusion of collective farmers from Articles 119 and 120 was of great importance to the collective farmers. They wanted to know why a state that had promised equal rights, even to former enemies, was excluding such a large portion of its population from social welfare rights. Their concern makes clear the importance that participants attached to Article 1 and its wording. Given an open forum for discussion, the inhabitants of the Kirov region did not hesitate to make numerous suggestions to address what they perceived as the unfair treatment of the collective farmers.

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<sup>458</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d.224, l. 3

<sup>459</sup> GASPI KO, f.1255, op.2, d.224, l. 6

<sup>460</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 282

<sup>461</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 282

<sup>462</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>463</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>464</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474 l. 277

Particularly telling is the language used in the suggestions. Using the party's own rhetoric the collective farmers argued that such rights were guaranteed to all citizens of the USSR. As equal citizens, who had to bear the same burdens as the working class, collective farmers believed that they were entitled to the same state benefits. At a meeting of the "Eastern Dawn" Artel',<sup>465</sup> the collective farmers advocated granting "collective farmers regular vacations on equal terms with workers."<sup>466</sup> A similar suggestion was made by Comrade Daregorodneva, a worker at the city soviet in Iaransk, suggested implementing social insurance for collective farmers on equal terms with workers and service workers.<sup>467</sup> At the general meetings of the villages of Sitka and Dubrovo,<sup>468</sup> it was proposed granting the right to rest and to work to collective farmers, as citizens of the USSR.<sup>469</sup> Another collective farmer, S. P. Trukhin<sup>470</sup> suggested that "where it is written that all citizens of the USSR have the right to rest, apply this right to collective farmers also. By the decision of the general meeting grant them vacation with 50% of the median pay or further without pay. Grant vacations in the wintertime."<sup>471</sup> The invocation of both the rights of equality and citizenship to justify the extension of these social welfare benefits to collective farmers indicated that the collective farmers had paid close attention to the language being used in the discussion of the draft and used that language to press their interests.

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<sup>465</sup> Slobodskoi district

<sup>466</sup> GASPI KO, f.988, op.1, d. 202, ll. 1-23

<sup>467</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 121

<sup>468</sup> Kotel'nicheskii raion

<sup>469</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 257, l. 47

<sup>470</sup> Of the "Path to Socialism" collective farm, Kotel'nicheskii raion

<sup>471</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d.224, l. 22. Materials also found in GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 473



The idea that all Soviet citizens had the right to social benefits was also reflected in suggestions that people whose behavior that made them unworthy of citizenship should be stripped of their social welfare benefits. Sokolov, from the city of Sovetsk, requested that people who lost their ability to work due to drunkenness, fighting and other disreputable behavior, not be granted the right to social security.<sup>472</sup> Likewise, at the plenum of Kokorovshinskii rural soviet,<sup>473</sup> a suggestion was made that “it was necessary to count only laborers and to exclude the non-working elements of the citizens of the USSR for receiving social security.”<sup>474</sup>

It should be noted, however, that among the collective farmers not all collective farmers were considered equally deserving. Some proposals regarding vacations for collective farmers illustrate nicely the social and political stratification that still existed in the countryside. Quite a few suggestions about giving vacations to collective farmers sought to limit that right to a certain strata of collective farmers. Others proposed granting agricultural Stakhanovites a vacation on equal terms with workers and service workers.<sup>475</sup> Others, such as Usykina, the chairperson of a collective farm in Sarapul'skii *raion*, suggested adding two-week vacations only for the chairpersons of collective farms, brigadiers, stable boy, watchmen and storekeepers, that is those who worked year round in collective farm work.<sup>476</sup> Some advocated granting vacations only to those who worked between 225 and 325 workdays on the collective farm. Such distinctions by collective farmers

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<sup>472</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 112

<sup>473</sup> In Darovskii *raion*

<sup>474</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 115

<sup>475</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 86

<sup>476</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 83

perhaps reflect that collective farms were reliant on the overall cooperation and hard work of all of their members to thrive. The problem of unmotivated collective farmers was demonstrated by comments made during the discussion. For example, at a meeting of the collective farmers of the "Surf" *artel*<sup>477</sup> a suggestion was made to separate those collective farmers who consistently behaved lazily towards collective work by giving them individual tasks and having a brigadier directly supervise them.<sup>478</sup> One collective farmer<sup>479</sup> went so far as to suggest expelling from the collective farm those who do not do any work on the collective farm but made use of collective farm rights.<sup>480</sup> Using vacation as leverage would not only reward those who worked hard with well-deserved rest, which was in accordance with central state philosophy on Stakhanovism, but could be used to spur the less active collective farmers to work.

Who should be entitled to social insurance was not the only divisive issue; so too was who should pay for it. There was disagreement between local elites and collective farms as to what institution should bear this financial burden. Party members and members of the local state apparatus tended to favor the formation of collective farm mutual aid societies to defray the costs, while collective farmers themselves wanted the state to provide their insurance. Comrade V. A Troshkov<sup>481</sup> suggested sending sick collective farmers who need medical treatment to resorts at the expense of the collective farms or of the mutual aid societies. He wanted added

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<sup>477</sup> In Vozhgal'skii *raion*

<sup>478</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 29

<sup>479</sup> From the collective farm "Victory" in Lebiazhskii *raion*

<sup>480</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 29

<sup>481</sup> Of the "Krasnoarmeets" collective farm in Votkinskii *raion*

to the constitution that “every collective farm must purchase 1-2 travel vouchers to resorts for the best Stakhanovites and shockworkers of the field.”<sup>482</sup> Comrade Teplykh<sup>483</sup> likewise supported the idea of social insurance but thought that collective farms should “implement social insurance on the collective farm's tab and broaden the network of collective farm mutual aid societies” to pay for this expense.<sup>484</sup> Comrade Gubin of the Lebiazhskii District Land Organization made a similar suggestion about the organization of mutual aid societies on the collective farms.<sup>485</sup> Comrade I. V. Sozonov<sup>486</sup> too suggested providing “equally for life insurance for collective farmers through cooperative organizations with deductions for insurance from the general earnings of the collective farm,”<sup>487</sup> whereas Comrade E. M. Istomin<sup>488</sup> proposed giving the responsibility for insuring collective farmers on the government's tab, but deducting from the collective farm a percent corresponding to government expenditures on their members.<sup>489</sup>

However, many of the collective farmers believed that the state should pay for their social insurance. At one meeting of collective farmers,<sup>490</sup> a group recommendation was made in favor of the state providing for aging collective

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<sup>482</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 105

<sup>483</sup> A member of the Elizarovskii rural soviet, Lebiazhskii *raion*

<sup>484</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 104

<sup>485</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 103, other such suggestions come from the plenum of Belozerskii rural soviet GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 97, Comrade Solomennikov of the “Red October” collective farm in Votkinskii *raion* GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 226 and Comrade Shumailov of Omutninskii *raion* GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 108

<sup>486</sup> Of the “Bolshevik” collective farm, Shurminskii *raion*

<sup>487</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 98

<sup>488</sup> From the collective farm “Dzerzhinskii”, Kaiskii *raion*,

<sup>489</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 98. The exception to this rule appears to be Comrade Iakimov, head of the building engineering department on the collective farm “Stalin”, Falenskii *raion*. He suggested implementing personal insurance for the purpose of material security in old age on the government's tab and based upon the expenditure of working of the collective farmers GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 96

<sup>490</sup> Of Iiulskii collective farm, Kiknurskii *raion*

farmers and those losing the ability to work.<sup>491</sup> Fedor Stepanovich Kislitsin<sup>492</sup> gave voice to their sentiment. He suggested that the broad development of social insurance for workers, service workers and collective farmers be provided for on the state's tab. He concluded that this plan might take some time to implement, but like the achievements elucidated in the new constitution, he believed that with time it was possible, noting, "We formed the constitution not in one or two years but ten it might even be more years. If there is not the ability to do this now, in the future it is necessary to implement it."<sup>493</sup> The collective farmers of "Combine" *artel*<sup>494</sup> addressed the issue less theoretically, laconically stating, "Provide aid to aging collective farmers from the state, but not on the tab of the mutual aid societies, which are organized on the personal earnings of the collective farmers."<sup>495</sup> Many collective farmers felt strongly that the state had the responsibility to look after their wellbeing and should do so with its own funds, rather than from their personal money.<sup>496</sup> Such disagreements over the funding of collective farm social welfare showed that the collective farmers were actively engaged and politically astute, even if they did not reach a consensus on who should provide money for collective farm social insurance funds. However, there was an overall consensus among the collective farmers that, as citizens of the USSR who had been theoretically given

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<sup>491</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 105

<sup>492</sup> Of the "On Lenin's Path" collective farm, Arbazhskii *raion*

<sup>493</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 114 also GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 107

<sup>494</sup> Zuevskii *raion*

<sup>495</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 106

<sup>496</sup> There are collective farmers such as in Shitmanovskii rural soviet, who favored the idea of sick and disabled collective farmers being supported by the collective farms' earnings. GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 106

equal rights with workers and service workers, they deserved access to social insurance. Again the importance of the term working people became crucial.

Social welfare paid for by the state was not just the concern of the collective farmers though. Urban dwellers and service workers also relied on state benefits; many saw it as a social safety net. The allocation of pensions for a number of groups, such as veterans, orphans, the elderly and the disabled, made up 19.5% of all suggestions made to Article 120. Fairness and the obligation of the state to provide for its citizens were at the center of many suggestions. For example, the teachers' collective of Burkovskoi Elementary School in Svechinskii *raion* submitted a suggestion to Article 120 of the draft constitution about social welfare for children in the event that a parent died. They represented a larger trend of citizens actively and honestly responding to the state's call for participation with enthusiasm.

The number of suggestions related to citizens' rights and the specificity of the suggestions related to those rights suggests that many of the discussants of the draft constitution were more focused on the role of the state as provider than they were in the official rhetoric of state building. The teachers' collective of Burkovskoi Elementary School sent a letter to the Central Executive Committee in Moscow detailing its concern about providing for the survivors when a parent died. It clearly expected that the state to seriously consider its proposal and act on it. They suggested that "if a husband or a wife died and leaves behind 1-6 minor children plus an able-bodied spouse, the remaining spouse must receive a pension for the children in the amount of 100% of the salary of the deceased until the end of the minority of the youngest child, but that the pension should be proportionately

reduced upon the end of the minority of every child.” They provided a specific formula that they proposed be used to calculate a family’s benefits.

For example:

Y4, equals four children

X, the wage of the spouse

7, the received pension

C, the amount of the pensions decrease per child

K, the pension imparted to minor children

1.  $Y4=X=7$
2.  $Y-1=(7-C/3*Y)=K$
3.  $Y-2=(7-2C/2*Y)=K$
4.  $Y-3=(7-3C/1*Y)=K$
5.  $Y-4=(7-4C/Y*Y)=K$ <sup>497</sup>

Fairness, providing equally for every child, was the heart of the formula.

Of the many people who co-opted the language of state building and class struggle to advocate for their personal interests, one of the most compelling examples comes from Timofei Ovechkin, a former accountant from a forest products collective farm in Shurminskii *raion*. He used the party’s language and an appealed to a sense of fairness to endorse his suggested change to the draft constitution about the amount of money that he received as a pension. He addressed his case directly to the state’s leaders on the Central Executive Committee. Ovechkin followed a traditional letter writing model described by Sheila Fitzpatrick in her article

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<sup>497</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 83 l. 101

“Suplicants and Citizens.” Ovechkin’s letter about the constitution, as Fitzpatrick notes, was essentially a form of individual, private communication with authorities about both private and public topics.<sup>498</sup> In his case, he used the language of class struggle and self-sacrifice to frame his request for a higher pension. He began by placing his request in the context of the discussion of the draft constitution and the democratization of the USSR. “In connection with the working up of the Stalinist constitution, I will not describe the enthusiasm at the acceptance of the constitution, it is clear and thanks to comrade Stalin and his coworkers. And I cannot be silent about that true democracy that Soviet power gives us and the most important additions and suggestions to it the most insignificant.”<sup>499</sup> Even as he proceeded to his main argument, raising his pension, Ovetchkin was careful to maintain a broader context for his claim. He framed the case for his very specific request in terms of fairness—those who had served in low-paid positions on collective farms and were left unable to work by that service should have greater pensions because they were fulfilling a patriotic duty to the Soviet state by strengthening the collectivization movement. Although his prose was inelegant, his argument was clear:

pensions should be fixed based on the calculations for the final year of pay and in the absence of such reports, on the basis of qualifications or rating, in particular reflecting on the years of class struggle on the collective farms, on those serving to freely hire qualified workers, in consideration of the still at that time weak collective farms, the organization of poor members, the temporary disruptions of financial ability and progress, which was forced

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<sup>498</sup> Shelia Fitzpatrick. “Suplicants and Citizens,” 80.

<sup>499</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 83, l. 71

and collective farms pay a very small rate to civilians, and to the worker who saw this, but committed himself to the pursuit of class struggle and came to help, not paying attention to selfish question of low wages, who is in retirement at this time.”<sup>500</sup>

Ovechkin noted that he and many other citizens had sacrificed financial and material security to work poorly paid jobs that furthered the development of socialism. He cited his own experience to highlight the level of sacrifice made and the conditions he endured. He lived in the village of R-Mureka in 1927, where :

there was organized a collective farm with an inclination towards forest products production. A saw mill was organized by Kulaks, finding themselves in enslaving agreements, the kulaks left at the end of 1928 leaving the poor peasants in need of an accountant, but no one was satisfied with the pay and the collective farm went out of business. The beginning of class struggle caused me to throw aside service as an accountant in trade society (потребобществе) where the pay rate was around 7 rubles. With overtime and an apartment allowance I went to work for 45 rubles a month. In 1929 I became sick and over the course of the year had to retire. I wanted to move to a forest organization with a salary of 100 to 150 rubles as a consequence. They didn't release me, promising future material support from the insurance office, also from the collective farm and the rest of it. The class struggle on the collective farms increased and I committed myself to this activity, threw aside selfish interests but in March of 1932 I got married and

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<sup>500</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 83, l. 71



retired, and found that my pay from overtime was only 54 rubles and for a third group pension I today receive 18 rubles 59 kopeks.<sup>501</sup>

According to Ovechkin, his long service on the beleaguered collective farm destroyed his health and he was reliant on his pension to survive, as he could no longer work. He asked the state to take note of his sacrifices and increase pensions for people like him. He argued that it is unfair that such people receive a small pension. Such pensions, in fact, punish people like him for their services in badly needed but poorly paid positions.

Another example of a citizen co-opting the official rhetoric from the discussion of the draft constitution to agitate for her own personal interests came from comrade Oliushina, from the city of Kirov, who made a suggestion to Article 120 about giving housewives social insurance and a pension. She argued that the right to receive social insurance, pensions, and the like should be guaranteed not only for workers and service workers in old age, but also those laborers, particularly women who spent their whole life working as a housewife, and who in old age were left without material aid because during their working lives were not insured by the state.<sup>502</sup> The use of such language and the careful framing of personal concerns in the state's language of equality demonstrated the political acumen of the citizens of the Kirov region, who pushed their local and personal concerns by fitting them into a Soviet cosmology.

Even children responded to the state's call to participate, and they too used the language of revolutionary struggle and state building to give their locally oriented

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<sup>501</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 83, l. 71 full text of this letter is available in Appendix 3, Document 3

<sup>502</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 102; GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 117

requests union-wide importance. Yuri Alekseevich Krasnoperov, a ten year old from the city of Sarpul, wrote (probably with help) a letter addressed “To the center of Moscow.”<sup>503</sup> Yuri’s letter demonstrates the mix of intimacy and appeal that mark much Soviet correspondence.<sup>504</sup> The personal qualities of the letter are remarkable. At the end of his letter, Yuri informed the party leaders that it was his birthday, as if they are friends or relatives. But, at the same time, he couched his appeal to improve the quality of nurseries in the small provincial city of Sarpul in the language of patriotism. He wrote:

In connection with the new draft constitution, I ask that you pay attention to children’s nurseries and kindergartens in order to maintain their health so that our young generation doesn’t die from poor care and also make provisions for directors in such cities as Sarapul, Kirovskii *Krai*. There are deadly sicknesses in the nurseries here on account of there being insufficient nannies for children. We need children for the replacement of our ranks of school children and also defenders of our Motherland the USSR. Therefore I ask you earnestly to pay attention to my letter. <sup>505</sup>

He emphasized how important healthy children, the cadres and soldiers of the future, were to the state. But the most striking thing about the letter is its address. Addressed “To the center of Moscow”, the address is reminiscent of Chekov’s poem “Vanka,” where a small boy addresses his pleas for help to “to Grandfather, in the

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<sup>503</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 84, l. 35

<sup>504</sup> See Shelia Fitzpatrick, “Supplicants and Citizens: Public Letter Writing in Soviet Russia in the 1930’s” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring 1996), 78-105; Matthew Lenoe, “Letter Writing and the State” *Cashiers du Monde Russe: Russie, Empire Russe, Union Sovietique, Etats Independants*, Vol 40 No. 1-2 (1999), 139-169.

<sup>505</sup> GARF, f. R-3316, op. 41, d. 84, l. 35 the full text of the letter is in Appendix 3, Document 4

village.” However, unlike Vanka’s cries for help, which were destined to never reach his grandfather and underscored the tragedy and hopelessness of the situation, Yuri’s letter was in fact delivered to the Central Executive Committee, which is where I found it gathered with thousands of other suggestions into carefully categorized folders. The state obviously took great pains to gather and view the correspondence of all its citizens. The citizens of the USSR in turn used this interest, and their increasing level of education, to directly appeal to central state authorities for the protection of their welfare.

## Concerns about educational issues

The inhabitants of the Kirov region recognized that increased access to formal education provided them with improved opportunities. Not surprisingly, increasing access to education was one of the most frequent suggestions to the draft constitution. In Viatka, the tradition of local initiative to promote education had roots in the work of the pre-revolutionary *zemstvos*. The peasants had long valued basic education as a way to improve their lives. After the revolution, the Soviet state had assumed the task of developing and administrating the educational system and the draft constitution had guaranteed education to all its citizens as a fundamental right. The popular discussion provided a unique forum for the citizens of the Kirov region to present their needs and concerns about education to the Soviet government. The *Krai’s* participants made a total of 259 suggestions to Article 121 on education. While the interests of the state and the inhabitants of the Kirov region were at odds on some issues, on the matter of education, their interests coincided.

Better-educated people were better citizens and builders of socialism, and had more opportunities for improving the quality of their lives. Comrade Kapustin, a worker and party member from the city of Sovetsk, highlighted the importance of education for a modern state, noting that every citizen must be literate and therefore it is incumbent upon everyone to study.<sup>506</sup> The issue that most concerned the Kirovites was access to education. One fifth of the suggestions to Article 121 focused on removing or raising the age limit for matriculation into higher educational institutions. While there were undoubtedly many reasons for such suggestions, the limited educational opportunities available to most people, particularly rural inhabitants during the Tsarist period, meant that many older people now wished to have access to educational opportunities that they had been previously denied. This was the argument that the workers and service workers of Murashinskii District Consumer Union used when they put forth their suggestion to allow students to enter into middle and higher academic institutions independent of age.<sup>507</sup>

Access to school supplies, books and other educational materials necessary for students was another concern of discussion participants. Official materials utilized during the popular discussion focused on how only the Soviet constitution provided the material means for the realization of citizenship rights like the freedom of press. Vyshinsky argued that only in the USSR were press facilities and paper provided to give the workers voice. The participants in the discussion argued that the means to effectively utilize their right to education should be guaranteed by

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<sup>506</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 124

<sup>507</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 132

the state as well. One third (86) of the suggestions to Article 121 dealt with providing students, in various circumstances, with schools supplies or textbooks at the state's expense. Some people, however, suggested providing only for needy students. For example, Iosif Andreevich Obatin<sup>508</sup> suggested providing school children aid for elementary and junior high school, particularly for children having poor material conditions, for example dependent single mothers having many children.<sup>509</sup> Other participants, such as Ivan Sergeevich Ustiugov,<sup>510</sup> suggested giving free educational supplies and writing accessories to all school students.<sup>511</sup> Once again, fairness, in this case equal access to education, was of primary concern to the citizens of the Kirov Region.

## Military Service

Fairness also motivated most of the suggestions to Article 132 about military service. The two main foci of popular suggestions to this article were the integration of women into the armed services and the changing of the word "*povinnost*" (obligation), which had Tsarist overtones and implied a forced obligation. The text of the article lists service in the Red Army as the honorable duty of every citizen of the USSR, but the party and state remained ambiguous about the role of women in the armed service. Many inhabitants of the Kirov region wanted to have the role of women in the armed services clarified. Almost half (45.6 %) of the total suggestions to Article 132 were about the inclusion of women in military service. Two main

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<sup>508</sup> From the "Builder" collective farm, Verkhoshizhenskii raion

<sup>509</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 130

<sup>510</sup> From the "New Life" collective farm, Verkhoshizhenskii raion

<sup>511</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 131

reasons were given for the inclusion of women: fairness i.e. equality between citizens, and the need to defend the USSR in case of war. Many citizens of the Kirov region believed that all citizens of the USSR had a responsibility to serve in the Red Army. Stolbova, a collective farmer,<sup>512</sup> suggested that military service in the Red Army be granted as an honorable commitment to both male and female citizens of the USSR.<sup>513</sup> While there was a fair amount of support for women serving in the military, there was less of a consensus as to what roles they should serve. Some people, such as Bogomolov, a party member,<sup>514</sup> felt that since men and women have equal rights, women should do military service on equal terms with men. He felt that women could also be effective partisans as they also may own a rifle and may defend their own motherland.<sup>515</sup> According to Mesheriakov, a party organizer,<sup>516</sup> for women to have completely equal rights with men “it is necessary for women to also be granted the honorable duty of service in the ranks of the Worker and Peasants' Red Army.”<sup>517</sup>

But not all participants in the discussion felt that women should be drafted into the army. A participant from the Mininskii voting district, Darovskii *raion*, suggested allowing women volunteers in the ranks of the Red Army because “women have equal rights here and it may be beneficial to the army in the medical corps”.<sup>518</sup> Other participants in the discussion suggested that women serve only as

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<sup>512</sup> From "Red Star" collective farm, Vozhgal'skii *raion*

<sup>513</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 173

<sup>514</sup> From the village of Zernovgoroe in Sovietskii *raion*

<sup>515</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 174

<sup>516</sup> From Kigbaevskii rural soviet, Sarapul'skii *raion*

<sup>517</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 181

<sup>518</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 178

volunteers <sup>519</sup> in the Red Army, but they should have to undergo compulsory military training to defend their motherland. <sup>520</sup> So while the exact terms of service were not agreed upon, many of the inhabitants of the Kirov region felt that women, as citizens of the USSR, had to serve the armed forces in some capacity and that they were obligated and capable of helping to defend the motherland. The timing was also undoubtedly an important factor as 1936 saw the rapid expansion of the Spanish Civil War, as well as growing threats from Japan and Germany, all of which received much press coverage in the USSR. But these suggestions may reflect an acceptance of the growing equality of women and the appeal to the sense of fairness that seems ingrained in the psyche of many participants as well as a response to the growing threats from the fascism.

Many Soviet citizens took particular pride in service to their country as many of them had in fact seen great improvements in their daily life. Nowhere was this pride more evident than in suggestions to rephrase Article 132. The word used in the draft constitution (*povinnost'*) had roots in Tsarist society and implied a forced obligation. Many Soviet citizens had come to believe service to the new Soviet state of workers and peasants was an honor and that the wording of the draft constitution should reflect this. Aleksei Trushchkov, a collective farmer,<sup>521</sup> explained how important the wording was and the significance that it had to Soviet citizens. He noted that "in the imperialist war, I was at the front bearing military duty '*povinnost'*". 'My son Kostia and I quickly joined the Red Army. Service for him was a point of

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<sup>519</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 174

<sup>520</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 175

<sup>521</sup> From "Dawn of Socialism" collective farm, Kirovskii *raion*

honor not an obligation, not '*povinnost*', correct the article where it says that for us military obligation is '*povinnost*' - change to the word service '*sluzhba*'."<sup>522</sup> This was of great importance to many who had served their country during the Civil War in the Kirov region. Approximately one quarter (24%) of the total suggestions to Article 132 dealt with changing the article's wording. Many inhabitants of the Kirov region expressed their pride in the state that they helped construct and for which many of them had already fought and bled.

## Rights for the Formerly Disenfranchised

On the topics of relating to with religion, elections and *lishentsy*, many inhabitants of the Kirov region strongly opposed the draft constitution's proposed extension of citizenship rights to the formerly disenfranchised. The changes in the state's attitude toward the former *lishentsy*, particularly priests and other members of the Orthodox church,<sup>523</sup> met with both resistance and confusion during the discussion of the draft constitution. Questions such as "Will priests be able to use voting rights?"<sup>524</sup> and "Why are priests allowed the right to be elected and to elect people to the soviets?"<sup>525</sup> imply confusion at the shift in state policy. Some discussants wanted to know why priests and members of religious cults were given "broad democracy in the election."<sup>526</sup> Similar questions (such as will it be possible after the ratification of the constitution for those who had been deprived of voting

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<sup>522</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 173; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, ll. 38-43

<sup>523</sup> I could not find why the local population also seemed hostile to priests. Much work has been done on the relationship between the party, state and religious officials during this period, but virtually none on priest-citizen relations.

<sup>524</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 3

<sup>525</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 3

<sup>526</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 4



rights to vote?<sup>527</sup>) came from around the Kirov region. Some of them appear to be asking to merely clarify the meaning of Article 135, while others stated or implied that the expansion of the electoral franchise would have negative consequences for both the state and its citizens.

Some participants were very concerned about giving priests and former *lishentsy* the right to vote. The citizens of Slobodskoi *raion* wondered if the allowance of “secret” (unmonitored postal) correspondence would be conducive to the activities of hostile elements<sup>528</sup> and asked questions about the participation of priests and other former people in elections.<sup>529</sup> Additional questions implied that many people were uncomfortable with the enfranchisement of the former *lishentsy* and the effect that this could have on policy and their daily lives. In Omutninskii *raion*, the collective farmers were interested in whether members of religious cults would be elected in elections to the soviet?<sup>530</sup> They also asked if members of religious cults<sup>531</sup> would be allowed to participate in elections, and would they elect class-alien people, currently deprived of voting rights at this time? <sup>532</sup> Other discussants expressed discomfort with the idea that, under the new constitution, priests and kulaks would be allowed to participate in elections. They wanted to know if “priests and former kulaks can remove nominated candidates and propose

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<sup>527</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 277

<sup>528</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>529</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 59

<sup>530</sup> GAKO, f.R- 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 30

<sup>531</sup> The term “cult member” is how these people were described in the documents. It makes it difficult to determine exactly to whom they are referring, but I suspect the term “cult member” refers to anyone with religious affiliation.

<sup>532</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 13 Similar questions also appear in GASPI KO, f.1255, op. 2, d. 224, l. 30 and GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 120

their own?<sup>533</sup> Such questions suggested that there were, for whatever reasons, popular fears that the formerly disenfranchised would gain positions of power and in some cases try to reclaim land or property that had been redistributed.<sup>534</sup> Such a possible outcome caused concern.

Although it flew in the face of proposed central policy, such concern appears to have been genuine and accounted for the overwhelming majority of suggestions about voting rights. Of the 244 suggestions made to Article 135 on voting rights, 203 (83.2%) of them were related to limiting the voting rights of former *lishentsy* and “cult members.” “Cult members” attracted more ire than the former *lishentsy*, with 130 suggestions proposed either stripping them of their right to vote, their right to be elected to office, or both. By comparison only 73 suggestions targeted the electoral rights of the former *lishentsy*.

The participants in the discussion opposed the extension of the franchise to former *lishentsy* for several reasons. Some expressed fears that the former *lishentsy* would use their new rights to infiltrate the state apparatus, and perhaps establish their own small governing circles. Such fears were not unfounded. NKVD party cell reports for 1936 noted that on at least one occasion a former kulak was elected to the rural soviet, and he put his friends and supporters in positions of local power.<sup>535</sup>

The participants in the discussion were well aware that many of the formerly

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<sup>533</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 282

<sup>534</sup> While I have found no specific examples of kulaks returning to reclaim land or possessions in the Kirov region, such events did take place in other parts of the USSR. I. E. Smirnova investigates this phenomenon in Ukraine and how it affected the conduction of repression there in “Otrazhenie ‘kulatskoi operatsii’ v dokumentfkh partiinykh organov Donetskoi Oblasti” *Stalinism v Sovetskoi Provintsii :1937-1938 massovaia operatsiia na osnove prikaza № 00447* (Moskva, Rossiskaia Politicheskaia entsiklopedia, 2009) 673-716.

<sup>535</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

disenfranchised were still locally influential and quite capable of using their new rights to promote their interests. One discussant, Maslennikov,<sup>536</sup> argued that granting electoral rights to kulaks and having secret elections might allow foreign elements to be elected to the local administration. Therefore, Maslennikov contended, if they give kulaks the right to vote, it needs to be through open not secret elections.<sup>537</sup> Similarly, D. A. Shabalin, a party member,<sup>538</sup> considered it inappropriate to allow the former *lishentsy* who were deprived of rights because of their social character, to be elected as they might stand up for the interests of the bourgeoisie in the organs of administration.<sup>539</sup> While couched in the language of class struggle, such concerns reflect the instability in the countryside and anxiety about the lingering influence of the formerly disenfranchised.

While concerns about local power shaped the concerns of some participants in the discussion, others felt that the former *lishentsy* had not proven themselves worthy of full citizenship rights, and the honors and responsibilities that citizenship entailed. The concern that many expressed throughout the discussion about fairness is evident. Some discussants felt that those who had not or were not actively participating in socialist construction did not deserve any of the benefits that citizenship brought. For example, collective farmer Kudrevatykh<sup>540</sup> suggested that people who had been deprived of voting rights be given the right to participate in elections to the soviet only after they proved themselves in the building of

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<sup>536</sup> From Urzhumskii *raion*

<sup>537</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 189

<sup>538</sup> From Kotel'nicheskii *raion*

<sup>539</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 203; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 257, ll. 45, 47

<sup>540</sup> Of the "Red East" collective farm, Chernovskii *raion*

socialism.<sup>541</sup> D. Il'in, a Stakhanovite worker,<sup>542</sup> shared Kudrevatykh's sentiment. He proposed not granting voting rights to members of religious cults because "they aren't occupied with useful work for Soviet society, and parasites on society must not be admitted to the elections to the soviets."<sup>543</sup> He also suggested that they must not be allowed to be elected to the soviets, which was the highest responsibility and honor for the laborers of the USSR.<sup>544</sup>

Other discussants who opposed the expansion of the franchise utilized party messages about the struggle between the forward-thinking workers and peasants, and the remnants of the old regime to justify their opposition. Using the party's own arguments, they protested that "former people" were untrustworthy. Such suggestions may have reflected local power struggles, but as always they were couched in the language of class struggle so as to make it relevant to the central state narrative. N. F. Nikulin, a collective farmer,<sup>545</sup> suggested segregating people who interfered with "our October conquests" and formulating a special article about not allowing them in elections.<sup>546</sup> Similarly, Murav'ev, a collective farmer,<sup>547</sup> asked the state to not give the right to vote to former merchants, landlords, owners of factories and mines as "all of them are enemies of the laborers and must not have the right to vote or be elected."<sup>548</sup> Nor were religious people were to be trusted.

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<sup>541</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 190

<sup>542</sup> He worked in the Galva metric section at the Belokholunitskii factory, Belokholunitskii *raion*,

<sup>543</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 191

<sup>544</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 200

<sup>545</sup> From Kirovskii *raion*

<sup>546</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 192

<sup>547</sup> From the Kirov collective farm, Pizhanskii *raion*

<sup>548</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 193

Ovchinnikov, a collective farmer,<sup>549</sup> recommended that members of religious cults should not be granted voting rights, because “at the present time they are still not familiar with work and continue to befog the heads of the laborers.”<sup>550</sup> Comrade Gagarinkov<sup>551</sup> also argued that cult members, “who today pull the wool over the heads of the laborers,” should not be eligible to stand for election.<sup>552</sup> Finally, I. P. Plotnikov, a worker and party member,<sup>553</sup> summed up the root of this distrust, arguing that members of religious cults not be eligible to be elected “as religion is an irreconcilable enemy of socialism.”<sup>554</sup> Whether these people had truly internalized the party’s longstanding argument about the dangers of former exploiters and religious people, or whether they were using the party’s rhetoric to further a personal cause is unknown. But they used the language of the party to make a compelling argument against the new electoral policies proposed by the same leaders who had given them these ideological tools.

## Law and Order

The maintenance of law and order was another point of friction between the central state’s proposals, as outlined in the draft constitution, and the interests of the inhabitants of the Kirov region. As noted in the overview of life in Kirov, crime remained a problem in the Kirov region. Reports of violence against state and collective farm officials were often reported in the news and word of mouth

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<sup>549</sup> From Pizhanskii *raion*

<sup>550</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 193

<sup>551</sup> From Kayskii *raion*

<sup>552</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 195

<sup>553</sup> From the "Stroiiadelali" Factory, Kotel'nicheskii *raion*

<sup>554</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 196

reported those not published. The inability of the state to provide for the security of its citizens, even its officials, led some to think that the safety of person and personal property seemed to be of secondary concern. These issues and perspective to the state created resistance to the implementation of *habeas corpus* among the inhabitants of the Kirov region, particularly in the countryside where state and policing organs had the weakest presence. Many participants expressed concern that the implementation of *habeas corpus* would undermine citizens' security and any semblance of law and order in the villages. This became an important theme during the discussion. Article 127 received 223 suggestions, of these 198 (88.8%) specifically asked for arrests to be carried out without the sanctions of the procurator (*habeas corpus*).

Breakdown of suggestions related to <i>habeas corpus</i>	Number of suggestions
Allow local authorities to arrest criminals without the sanction of the procurator	102
Be allowed to arrest criminals who posed an immediate threat without sanctions	12
Allow criminals caught at the scene of the crime to be arrested without the sanction of the procurator	40
Allow the arrest of hooligans without procuratorial sanction	12

Allow citizens to arrest criminals themselves	10
Total	223

How can one interpret this data, which suggests giving the state and its police more discretion and power? One explanation is that these suggestions reflected a weak policing apparatus and the constant threat of violence that permeated the countryside.<sup>555</sup> Empowering local authorities to handle criminals in the absence of other organizations was vital. The language of the suggestions made during the discussion highlights citizens' concern for order and security, and their fear of violent crime. One of the main reasons people were opposed to *habeas corpus* was because they believed it would delay the apprehension of the criminals and allow criminals to either perpetrate more crime or, as M. N. Vorob'ev, a Party member feared,<sup>556</sup> "hide from proletarian justice."<sup>557</sup> V. Ia. Kolosov<sup>558</sup> proposed that the state strengthen the responsibility for taking drastic measures against drunkenness, hooliganism and rowdiness to safeguard social tranquility in the village.<sup>559</sup> Other collective farmers also expressed concern about security. The collective farmers of the "Truth" collective farm<sup>560</sup> asked the state to grant the right to organs of the *militiia* to seize obvious criminals, who threaten social order.<sup>561</sup> Other collective

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<sup>555</sup> For more information see David Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism*

<sup>556</sup> From the village of Antonovka, Urzhumskii raion

<sup>557</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 150

<sup>558</sup> From Urzhumskii district

<sup>559</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 148

<sup>560</sup> In Sanchurskii raion

<sup>561</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 152

famers<sup>562</sup> demanded that those perpetrating hooliganism and thievery, which “was a blight on the people, be quickly arrested on location without the sanctions of the procurator.”<sup>563</sup> These collective farmers make it clear that crime was a major threat to safety and order in the villages. The rural inhabitants of the Kirov region wanted the ability to deal with crime themselves because the state had failed to do so.

The suggestions made to Article 131, about the safeguarding of socialist property, likewise reflect popular concern with stability in the countryside. The safeguarding of socialist property was one of the main priorities of the Soviet state and the area on which the procuracy focused much of its attention and resources. Some of the citizens of the Kirov region also expressed concerns about the destruction and theft of socialist property. They proposed amendments to the draft constitution to strengthen and extend the responsibility for the protection of socialist property. For example, A. I. Tupitsina, a housewife from the city of Kirov, suggested that not only should people encroaching on socialist property be labeled and charged as enemies of the people, but also people who did not protect socialist property, such as allowing the spoiling of machines, should also be so charged.<sup>564</sup> A similar call for expanding responsibility towards safeguarding socialist property and exposing the perpetrators of such acts was proposed at general meetings of the collective farmers.<sup>565</sup> Some collective farmers recommended including not only

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<sup>562</sup> Of Ashlanskii rural soviet, Urzhumskii district

<sup>563</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 148

<sup>564</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 170

<sup>565</sup> Of Vakimskii and Krestovskii rural soviets, Kiknurskii *raion*



people encroaching on social property, but also their accomplices and concealers under the label of enemies of the people.<sup>566</sup>

However, the majority of suggestions made by the inhabitants of the Kirov region reflected a general concern with maintaining order rather than specific concern for the sacredness of socialist property. Almost half of the suggestions made to Article 131 involved expanding the definition of “enemies of the people” to address various local problems, such as disorder on the collective farms and hooliganism. For instance, at the general meeting of the collective farmers of the October *artel*,<sup>567</sup> some in attendance suggested that people systematically destroying social order or engaged in hooliganism should be considered enemies of the people.<sup>568</sup> Additionally, at a rural soviet plenum,<sup>569</sup> it was suggested that all people, who are “feloniously and habitually negligent or harming the collective farm, such as through the destruction of labor discipline, be considered enemies of the people.”<sup>570</sup> Such suggestions demonstrated that disorder in the countryside, particularly on collective farms, was an immediate threat to the wellbeing of the collective farmers. And indeed as discussed in the overview of life in the Kirov region, poor organization and poor cooperation on a collective farm could spell disaster for all of the members. Therefore, collective farmers were searching for ways, such as expulsion and arresting those disrupting order, to regulate the behavior of its members. Elsukov, a party member and brigadier,<sup>571</sup> took this idea a

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<sup>566</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 164

<sup>567</sup> Ziuzdinskii *raion*

<sup>568</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 165; GAKO, f. R- 2168, op. 1, d. 473, ll. 53- 67

<sup>569</sup> Zausovskii rural soviet, Darovskii *raion*

<sup>570</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 166

<sup>571</sup> From the “Shockworker” collective farm in Makar'evskii district

step further by demanding that, “administrative measures be taken toward people encroaching on socialist property, by forcible resettlement from the limits of a given locale, where there has been an obvious crime”.<sup>572</sup>

The citizens of the Kirov region engaged the state in conversation about their needs and expectations, which were often notably different than the needs and expectations that the state had been promoting through its managed discussion of the draft constitution. The focus on pensions, crime and property reflected a larger trend concerned with the mundane realities of daily life and the impact that government policy had on those realities. In all cases, they demanded “fair” treatment from the government and “fair” distribution of duties to the state. While the concerns of those in the Kirov region and the central state may have differed, they used a common language, the language of state building, class war, and revolutionary struggle, to agitate for their respective interests. The skillful manipulation of this language by both the rural and urban inhabitants of the Kirov region suggests that they were politically astute and used to engaging the local and national authorities in dialogue that addressed their local needs and perspectives.

## **Holding Officials Accountable**

While the central state’s interest in establishing a modern codified legal system based on western principles such as *habeas corpus* conflicted with the interests of the citizens who gave priority to law and order, the central state and those citizens of the Kirov region both had a vested interest in having competent and accountable

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<sup>572</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 400, l. 164

local officials. Many participants in the popular discussion offered suggestions to make both the judiciary and local soviets more effective and responsive to their constituents. One of the proposed methods for rendering the judiciary more effective was reinstating comrade courts or social courts, which would fall under the preview of an individual enterprise or collective farm. In total, forty such suggestions were made to several different articles of the draft constitution. There were several different reasons given for the request to reinstate comrade's courts and social courts. The workers and service workers at the Murashinskii *raion* supply union (Райпотребсоюз) suggested the organization of comrade courts on the state farms and collective farms because they got good results and freed up the people's courts from petty cases.<sup>573</sup> While expediting the judicial process may have been a concern for some, Zaleshin, a party member and worker at the *Krai* Court in Kirov, requested the reinstatement of social courts because such courts were "one of the forms of re-education and development of laborers . . . it is necessary to organize them under the rural soviets, enterprises, and factories."<sup>574</sup>

Legal education for judges and citizens was also proposed as a way to raise the level of competency of the judiciary and to help citizens connect with and trust the legal system. For example, Bazhutin, a party member and trade union organizer,<sup>575</sup> suggested that elected judges be compelled to attend judicial tutorial sessions and to study the judicial science of Soviet laws. Because the judges might be

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<sup>573</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 44

<sup>574</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 48; GASPI KO, f.1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 123 Zaleshin's reference to the pedagogical function of the judiciary reflects the party's use of show trials as a way to demonstrate normative behavior to its citizens and educate them about legal procedures. For an interesting treatment, see Elizabeth Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 2005).

<sup>575</sup> From technical section of the Votkinskii machine building factory, Votkinskii *raion*

elected directly from workers in production, it was necessary to organize a broad system of special courses.<sup>576</sup> In his suggestion Bazhutin addressed two of the major challenges facing the Soviet judicial system—how to maintain close ties to laborers while simultaneously maintaining a high level of legal competence. Early Soviet courts had elected laborers and instructed them to administer “revolutionary justice” without clear formal legal guidelines. This practice, which resulted in a very uneven application of judicial principles and punishments, brought a lack of predictability to the judicial system. Vyshynsky would later address this shortcoming by advocating professionalizing the judiciary and instituting strict legal codes. However, the professionalization of the judiciary destroyed the image and position of the citizen judge that the revolutionary Soviet state had been trying to create so as to make the judiciary closer to and more responsive to the will of the people, rather than just a branch of the state apparatus.<sup>577</sup>

Some of the participants in the discussion addressed the important role of the judiciary in educating people about their rights. I. E Mashkovtsev, a collective farmer,<sup>578</sup> stated that the people's judges need to be elected from the local citizenry and that these judges should be obliged to conduct explanatory work in the locales, that is to explain the fundamental provisions of revolutionary legality.<sup>579</sup> D. Usnirev, a party member and accountant at Sibiriakovskii logging enterprise, made a similar

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<sup>576</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 50; GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 340

<sup>577</sup> For more information on the development of Soviet judiciary see : Eugene Huskey. *Russian Lawyers and the Soviet State: The Origins and Development of the Soviet Bar*. (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1986); David Shearer. *Policing Stalin's Socialism*, Peter Solomon. *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*. and Peter Solomon's *Reforming Justice in Russia, 1864-1996: Power Culture, and the Limits of Legal Order*. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

<sup>578</sup> From the “Political Section” collective farm, Nolinskii raion

<sup>579</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 47

suggestion. He recommended that organs of the procuracy and the court conduct explanatory work among the laborers about the Soviet legal system.<sup>580</sup> Both of these suggestions reflected a desire for popular education so that the citizens of the USSR could better understand the newly revised Soviet legal system.

There were also calls for more direct methods of holding the judiciary responsible for their actions. Many people believed that local officials, including judges and procurators, should report to their constituents about their actions. For example, V. A. Erofeev suggested that to improve the work of the people's judges, they should be obligated to account for themselves in front of the voters twice a year. Specifically, he wanted them to address the progress of their work and its characteristics, changes in the law, and the responsibility of the citizens for violations of laws.<sup>581</sup> Thirty-three other suggestions about judges and procurators reporting to voters were put forth during the discussion. Requiring judicial officials to report to the voters allowed the voters to see what sort of work was carried out locally and allowed them to identify who was ineffective at their job. Central authorities strongly encouraged the voters to remove local officials who were ineffective or incompetent at their jobs. Several participants in the discussion of the draft constitution pushed suggestions to allow the people to hold incompetent judicial officials accountable for their actions. For example, the inhabitants of the villages of Shakhnery and Malyshenki<sup>582</sup> suggested "making people's judges

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<sup>580</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 47

<sup>581</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 47; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d 224, ll. 38-43

<sup>582</sup> Kotel'nicheskii *raion*

accountable for illegal convictions."<sup>583</sup> Arziaev, a party member,<sup>584</sup> developed this idea even further, suggesting recalling and re-electing people's judges at the request of the voters in the case of inappropriate work by judges.<sup>585</sup> Such suggestions illustrate that the inhabitants of the Kirov region were willing to use grassroots, direct democracy as a tool to keep elected judicial and indeed all officials in line.

Concerns with competence and accountability extended to other state officeholders and discussants offered similar suggestions for increasing the political accountability of the local soviets, strengthening the connections with representatives' constituents, and raising the competency of the representatives in the organs of power. One suggestion to promote closer connections between representatives and their constituents was to decrease the number of citizens whom they represented. For example, I.A. Mashkovtsev, a collective farmer,<sup>586</sup> suggested that representatives to the Supreme Soviet represent 100,000 people as opposed to 300,000, as a smaller constituency will allow elected officials to better be connected with the voters and at the same time enable them react to problems in the locales.<sup>587</sup> A smaller constituency was also proposed to increase the responsiveness of rural soviet officials. Nina Tarasova suggested that rural soviets must encompass no more than 1,000 people and the radius of the rural soviet must be no more than 5 km to make the local power closer to the population.<sup>588</sup> By making both All-Union and local officials more accessible to their constituents,

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<sup>583</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400 l. 45; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 257, ll. 45, 47

<sup>584</sup> From Kichminskii *raion*

<sup>585</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 49

<sup>586</sup> From the "Political Section" collective farm, Nolinskii *raion*

<sup>587</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 32

<sup>588</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 39

whether through decreasing the number of people they represented or limiting the distance constituents had to travel to meet with their representatives, such suggestions represent a desire to make officials responsible to their constituents and to enable citizens to evaluate the behavior of elected officials.

Raising the level of competence for local officials was of particular concern. Of the fifty total suggestions made to Article 95, three quarters focused on the election terms for representatives in the rural soviets. While there were many suggestions to extend the term of election for deputies, few reasons for this were recorded, but of those documented, the most prominent was to allow deputies more time to better master their work. For example, S.P Odegov, a collective farmer and order winner,<sup>589</sup> asked that elected deputies to the soviets serve not for two years, but for four years, so that people can better adapt to the work and be more effective.<sup>590</sup> Likewise, at the plenum of Koriakinskii rural soviet,<sup>591</sup> a suggestion was made to elect deputies to the rural soviets for three years, rather than two, so they can better master the work.<sup>592</sup> To promote competent work at the local level, the inhabitants of the Kirov region suggested that, “the soviet of the deputies of laborers report about their work before their laboring voters.”<sup>593</sup> In total, fifty-two such suggestions were recorded during the discussion of the draft constitution. Citizens’ call for greater accountability and responsibility make clear their concern that fairness be an aspect of governance.

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<sup>589</sup> From the Zhdanov collective farm, Shabalinskii *raion*

<sup>590</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 40

<sup>591</sup> Kotel'nicheskii *raion*

<sup>592</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 41; GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 257, l. 45 An analogous suggestion was made by D.F. Dvoeglazov, of Sibirskii collective farm in Nagorskii *raion* GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 42

<sup>593</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 123

In addition to suggesting ways to make representatives more accountable and responsive in general, some people took the opening of the public discussion as an opportunity to criticize local officials who they did not think were doing satisfactory work. Moscow encouraged the people to use the discussion of the draft constitution and the subsequent local soviet elections to criticize and remove ineffective local officials. Stalin himself called on the citizens of the USSR to use democracy as a whip to prompt local officials to be more effective and responsive to their needs. However, since most of this information from the Kirov region comes from reports requested from Moscow, it is difficult to know whether this is a category that the *raion* and *krai* officials would have otherwise prioritized. Additionally because the regional and local officials were specifically asked to provide examples of this behavior, it is difficult to determine whether the use of the discussion for criticizing local officials represented a groundswell of popular democracy aimed at holding local officials responsible to their constituency, as Stalin had envisioned in his interview with Roy Howard, or if these are isolated incidents that were couched in the language of popular democracy to satisfy demands from Moscow. Either way it does appear that, in some *raiony*, local officials were removed from their positions of power for poorly performing their official duties.

Some of the comments made during the discussion of the draft constitution suggest that many people in the Kirov region were dissatisfied with the work of the local soviets and state officials. N. I. Piatin<sup>594</sup> suggested that in future elections to

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<sup>594</sup> Of Shabalinskii *raion*



the soviet, it is necessary to elect to the soviet the best people, as those elected in the last election were unable to work.<sup>595</sup> Another participant in the discussion asked that in the future election campaigns more seriousness be given to the nomination of candidates for deputy.<sup>596</sup> The reports of District Executive Committees and the Regional Executive Committee also reflect discontent with the work of local officials. Although the focus in these and other cases was on future elections, the intent was immediate.

The use of the discussion as a forum to criticize, and even attack, deputies whom some citizens of the Kirov region believed were not sufficiently representing their interests once again demonstrated how the participants seized the open forum that the state provided and used it to agitate for their own interests. And while the language used against local officials may have echoed official discourse, many of the reasons that deputies were dismissed from work were local and economic.

The citizens of the Kirov region were attuned to framing their accusations against local officials in the language of socialist construction. For example, collective farmer V. I. Sozinov<sup>597</sup> was recorded as saying, "Our constitution is the most democratic in the world. Everyone has the right to vote and to be elected. Only those who are worthy of great honor are elected to the soviets through secret ballot, but we won't elect idlers to the soviet. Ivan Sozinov works poorly for us on the collective farm and we won't elect him to the soviet."<sup>598</sup> By framing his criticism within the context of service as the greatest honor that a Soviet citizen could have, V.

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<sup>595</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 41

<sup>596</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 400, l. 41

<sup>597</sup> From the collective farm Dinamovets, Leninskii rural soviet, in Shabalinskii *raion*

<sup>598</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 29. It is not clear if the two men were related

I. Sozinov made Ivan Sozinov's poor work a matter of national not just local importance. Likewise, during the discussion at a meeting of the "Thirteenth Anniversary of October" collective farm,<sup>599</sup> the collective farmers stated that

a deputy of the soviet must himself be a model, through his own personal example he must lead the masses of laborers. But our deputy A. F. Gontsov acts completely otherwise. He treats commissioned work on the collective farm negligently, didn't go to collective farm work on the order of the brigadier. Instead of strengthening work discipline on the collective farm [he] breaks it down, persuading the collective farmers to not go to work. There must not be a place for such a deputy in the rural soviet. During the re-elections to the soviets, we will not elect such good-for-nothings, but we will elect the best collective farmers who work in a Stakhanovite method, examples of proper behavior, and accurately fulfilling soviet laws.<sup>600</sup>

By putting Gontsov's behavior within the context of the larger discussion of constructing socialism, his shortcomings as a deputy took on much greater significance.

One of the more interesting examples of the use of official Soviet language and the concepts of Soviet democracy to demand better work at a local level came from the letter titled "The Laborers were the Masters of the Country." The letter seized upon the central themes of the discussion of the draft constitution that the state had been trying to promote, such as the improved quality of life in the USSR and deputies and citizens working to build socialism, to address local problems such

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<sup>599</sup> In *Kaiskii raion*

<sup>600</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 29

as filth in the rural soviet and the tardiness of local officials. The letter began by framing the problems with local authorities in the context of the struggle to build socialism:

We read the new draft constitution. We, workers and collective farmers, attained such general conquests under the leadership of the communist party. Earlier under Tsarist power they governed us, the landlords together with the capitalists didn't ask us and no one dared talk to them. You would say something and look at knocked out teeth or cuts from a birch rod.

[Скажешь чего, того и смотри зубы выбьют или розгами напорют]. Now it is a different affair. Those who we wish are elected deputies in the soviets and we elect those who struggle for the masses, strengthening collective farms, safeguarding our socialist property and caring about us workers.

Having been repressed under the Tsars, the peasants emphasized the new opportunities that the Soviet socialist system afforded them. They also used this as a way to emphasize the great disservice that poor local officials were doing, and not just to the local inhabitants but also to the USSR. When considering the re-election of these officials, the author stated:

Will we re-elect Polonin as the chairman of our Mineevskii rural soviet and Morozov as his deputy? If they will work better we will elect them and if they work as now we will not. They are very slovenly. In the rural soviet it is always dirty, go to the rural soviet and there is nowhere to sit, lessons are conducted whenever they think about it, citizens coming on business wait, wait and [then] leave and on another day come again. Earlier it was

impossible to fix an accurate time for lessons on collective farm and in brigades, for example from 9 o'clock to 12 and after 12, and citizens would know and would come at the established time. The sections of the rural soviet work poorly. The chairman doesn't think up plans or call assemblies and another time they didn't meet for three months, it is impossible to work now. The new draft constitution compels [them] to work in a new way (заставляет работать по новому), with great care for the citizens of our country, about the strengthening of our collective farms.<sup>601</sup>

As this letter suggests, despite the rhetorical focus on state building that seemed to dominate the discussion of local authorities' responsibilities, many of the reasons that local soviet officials were criticized or removed from work were of purely local concern. Such was the case in Pizhanskii district, where the discussion of the draft coincided with the reporting of the rural soviets and of the deputies to their constituents. Utilizing this forum, the collective farmers criticized the work of the rural soviet for its insufficient development of red corners, reading huts and the mass work of the rural soviets in Pizhanskii, Semenuvskii and Komarovskii rural soviet.<sup>602</sup> And in many districts popular frustration with the work of deputies had real consequences. In this district, during the discussion, two deputies were removed, one from Pizhanskii rural soviet and one from L. Komarovskii rural soviet.<sup>603</sup> Four other deputies were recalled by the voters for not justifying their

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<sup>601</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 474, l. 52. Similar complaints about the work of Polonin and Morozov were noted in report from the Regional Executive Committee to the All Union Central Executive Committee orgotdel in Moscow as well GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 29

<sup>602</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 103

<sup>603</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 103

trust.<sup>604</sup> Many other districts in the Kirov region also used the opportunity created by the discussion and the subsequent elections to the rural soviets in the fall of 1936 to deal with local problems. In Murashinskii district, during the discussion, there was widespread criticism of the unsatisfactory work of the soviets and the *raiiispolkomy*. The participants in the discussion were particularly unhappy with the ill-timed investigation of complaints by rural tax commissions and *raion* tax commissions. For the inability to do proper work and other “discrediting reasons,” two members of the *raiiispolkom*, Tashlykov and Lotapov, were removed from office and three deputies were removed from rural soviet membership.<sup>605</sup>

The reasons for removing deputies varied but they were always local. For example, during the report of the rural soviet the voters of the agricultural *artel'* “Red Falcon”, Slobodkinskii rural soviet, stated that the deputies unsatisfactorily engaged in cultural construction, the liquidation of illiteracy and semi-literacy, the organization and strengthening of collective farms, and the improvement of the rural economy. The voters of Nazarovskii rural soviet were even more specific in their complaints against the district executive committee. They complained that the district executive committee unsatisfactorily studied the expansion of construction of local handicraft production, the expansion of an uninterrupted supply of goods at the co-op, necessary seasonal goods, and the timely sending of necessary agricultural machinery on the collective farms.<sup>606</sup> The failure of local officials in Slobodkinskii rural soviet to address local educational and economic concern

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<sup>604</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 362

<sup>605</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 193

<sup>606</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 474, l. 214

resulted in three soviet deputies, (M. T. Selivanov, A.A. Leushin and F. B. Leushin,) being removed and replaced by “the best shockworker-collective farmers.”<sup>607</sup> Similarly, voters who were dissatisfied with their service removed deputies from their positions in Votkinskii district<sup>608</sup> and Arbazhskii district.<sup>609</sup> Overall the Regional Executive Committee reported that 779 deputies were removed from 284 soviets for incompetence during the 1936 local elections.<sup>610</sup>

The state had invited its citizens to participate in political discussion and political action through the popular discussion and urged the use of this discussion to criticize and remove ineffective local officials from power. The citizens of the Kirov region took up the challenge and, in doing so, pushed for their own personal and local interests. This was how they interpreted the push towards state building that the central leadership had envisioned. The fact that the discussion proceeded with both parties working a towards different goals had negative consequences in 1937, when in preparation for the elections to the Supreme Soviet, some of the newly enfranchised citizens, the former “former people” in particular, began taking

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<sup>607</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 474, l. 214

<sup>608</sup> Similar criticism of the work of local deputies occurred in Votkinskii district as well. During the discussion of the draft constitution, from the very beginning, criticism of the work of the soviets' inadequacies unfolded. But during the reporting campaign criticism of insufficiencies, mistakes of the rural soviets strongly unfolded. For example during the report of Iiul'skii rural soviet in the village N. Kvarsinskii, voters criticized the rural soviet for weak mass work, poor explanation of laws, weak work on cultural- everyday life, construction, the slow preparation of animal food etc. This same happening was ascertained in Galevskii, Pazderinskii and other rural soviets and as a result of incomplete information four people were removed as deputies: P'chnikov, Kel'chino, Lomaev and Molchany. GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 338, An informational report of results of the discussion in Votkinskii *raion*, notes the criticism in the village of N. Kvarsinskii, but additionally noted that in Mishkinskii, Bakaevskii and Pazderinskii rural soviets, upon the giving of the reports from the deputies and rural soviets, fifteen deputies were removed from rural soviet membership: eleven for not warranting trust, one left, one was held for court, one for overspending and one for systematic drunkenness. GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 474, l. 326

<sup>609</sup> In connection with the discussion of the draft constitution in Sovizhkii rural soviet there was expanding criticism of the unsatisfactory work of members of the rural soviet where the was poor work, for in activity three members of the rural soviet were removed from work.

<sup>610</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 120

up this mantle of political activism and promoting their interests over the interests of the state.

As the evidence presented here makes clear, the citizens of Kirov *Krai*, especially its rural citizens, used the forum presented by the public discussion to express their ideas about the state through the discussion of the draft constitution. They actively participated in the discussion and used the official discourse, the language of state building and the construction of socialism, to frame their criticisms, demands, and comments. Although not necessarily well educated, they were more politically astute than is often assumed. But the evidence also makes clear that they did not always agree with rights granted by the draft constitution. They agitated for social welfare to include all citizens, not just workers. Many harbored suspicions about granting equal rights to “former people” and about the appropriateness of *habeus corpus*. The participants were not people without agency. However the differences between the desires and interests of the people and the desires and interests of the state caused conflicts and raised central authorities’ suspicion about the true state of the countryside.

## Chapter 5: The Constitution, the 1937 Elections and Repression

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The open discussion of the draft constitution, which allowed citizens to freely criticize the proposed foundations of the state and the central leadership's emphasis on free and open elections, created stress on the Stalinist system. While central state authorities initially encouraged the population's open participation, as the six-month long discussion progressed and results from party and local elections held in late 1936 became clear, the central and local authorities became increasingly concerned about "anti-Soviet" activity among some of the discussants. This anxiety carried over to preparations for the 1937 elections to the Supreme Soviet. While popular criticism of state policies remained just that during the discussion, in 1937, reports from the Kirov region indicated that some former kulaks and priests used this opening up of society to agitate for their own interests and to win representation in some local organs of power.<sup>611</sup> This perceived challenge to the dominant role of the Communist Party, which coincided with myriad other factors, such as massive demographic upheaval, the challenges of rapid industrialization, the 1936 economic crisis,<sup>612</sup> failed verification of party documents,<sup>613</sup> the economic crisis and a mounting foreign threat, were among the factors that helped to trigger

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<sup>611</sup> Similar cases are examined in the Ukraine by I. E Smirnova, She discusses cases of the formerly dekulakized demanding their land be returned to them from the collective farms that seized it. "Otrazhenie 'kulatskoi operatsii' v dokumentakh partiinykh organov Donetskoi Oblasti," *Stalinism v Sovetskoi Provintsii: 1937-1938 massovaia operatsiia na osnove prikaza № 00447*, 673-716.

<sup>612</sup> For more on the effects of the economic crisis and its causes see Roberta Manning, "The Soviet Economic Crisis of 1936-1940 and the Great Purges" in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* eds. J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 117-141

<sup>613</sup> J Arch Getty and Getty, J Arch and Oleg Naumov provide a detailed account of how failure to correctly verify party documents in the wake of the Kirov assassination helped trigger the repression of party members in 1936 in *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the self-destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).



repression in 1937. Former kulaks and priests, whom the constitution recently re-enfranchised over the objections of many citizens, increasingly became objects of suspicion in late 1936 and early 1937. By mid- 1937, they among others became the victims of repression. This chapter explores some of the factors that may have contributed to their repression.

### **“Anti-Soviet” Behavior during the Discussion**

Central state and party rhetoric during the first months of the discussion emphasized that the destruction of all class enemies had been successful and that this destruction provided an opportunity for the greater democratization of the USSR through open, multi-candidate elections with complete popular participation. This argument dominated the media coverage of the discussion and official statements of state and party officials. But signs of concern about “anti-Soviet” rhetoric and behavior began to surface in August 1936. That month marked the first of the major Moscow show trials.

The first specific mention of a need to monitor the public discussion for specifically anti-Soviet activities came on the heels of Kalinin’s August rebuke of regional authorities for their poor implementation of the discussion. Kalinin’s reaction to the work of the regional officials stemmed from a lack of reports about the discussion’s progress in the regions and the Central Executive Committee’s receiving of a plethora of “incorrect” suggestions, (such as vacation and material benefits for collective farmers) rather than the constructive suggestions to aid in building of socialism. In response to Kalinin’s complaint (and as discussed in

Chapter 3), Akulov issued a call for reports from regional officials. He provided a very specific list of questions and demanded that answers to be included in each report. Among the specific information that Akulov requested on behalf of the Central Executive Committee were reports of anti-Soviet behavior, specifically the “worming in of class enemies during the discussion of the draft constitution” and what form these activities took.<sup>614</sup> On its own Akulov’s request was nothing extraordinary. In the past, when confronted with a campaign that did not develop as the central leadership had envisioned, it would castigate lower officials for insufficient work and call on them to look for class enemies who may have wormed themselves into the process and threatened it from the inside. However, the Central Executive Committee’s requests for information about the behavior of class enemy activities during the discussion suggested that they were no longer convinced that class enemies had been as thoroughly destroyed as the official rhetoric of the public discussion about constitutionality and the draft constitution indicated. While it could be argued that the Soviet leadership had never believed its own rhetoric about the destruction of class enemies, the first appearance of this specific line of inquiry two months into the discussion suggests that the leadership had indeed believed in what it had said and that it was safe to make the USSR more participatory. But it seems that something had occurred during the course of the discussion to change the leadership’s assessment of the situation.

It is unclear from my research what exactly triggered this reassessment of the discussion. In his studies of the repression, J. Arch Getty argues that the central

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<sup>614</sup> GARF, f. R- 3316, op. 8, d. 222, l. 39

party and state administration was increasingly suspicious of disobedience and silence about the fulfillment of campaigns on the part of regional officials.<sup>615</sup> Given that Kalinin felt it necessary to criticize regional officials for their failure to send regular and complete reports to the Central Executive Committee, perhaps regional party and state officials' unresponsiveness triggered this tightening of central control over the discussion and the request for information about class enemies.

In the Kirov region, both party and state officials set about providing Akulov and the Central Executive Committee with the requested information about class enemies, the progress of the discussion and possible class enemy activity. But the same handful of anecdotes about class enemies keep reappearing in various sources from Kirov, leading me to conclude that such incidents were rare and these few examples were all that the local officials could find to fulfill Moscow's request. However, while perhaps not representative of the public discussion in the Kirov region, this material is important because the information that the central authorities received from the provinces was the material that they used to evaluate the overall progress of the discussion in the Kirov region and the USSR as a whole.

Most of the anti-Soviet incidents recorded in the Kirov region were statements or suggestions made during meetings about the draft. Some participants used the discussion of the draft constitution to express dissatisfaction with the material conditions and living standards that Soviet power had provided. Others felt that the draft constitution would not result in a positive change in their lives. As noted in the

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<sup>615</sup> Getty's works on the topic include: *The Road to Terror*: (with Oleg Naumov), "Excesses Are Not Permitted': Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s," and *Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations.*"

overview of life in Kirov, the standard of living varied greatly for many of the inhabitants of Kirov. Some of those less fortunate residents used the discussion of the draft constitution as an open forum to express their dissatisfaction to the state. Whether under pressure from Moscow or of their own accord, local officials labeled such complaints “anti-Soviet.” They compiled them and sent them to Moscow. Like the suggestions to the draft constitution, which were often local in nature but took on national significance when sent to Moscow as the voice of dissent.

For example, there were several complaints from both rural and urban inhabitants about material deprivation in the Kirov region. I. M Cherninov, a collective farmer,<sup>616</sup> said “we, from the very beginning of Soviet power waited for improvement, we work like slaves, on our backs they build the cities, factories, but we peasants, our lives become poorer and poorer.”<sup>617</sup> Another collective farmer, S. V. Ogorodnikov<sup>618</sup> announced: “the new constitution helps nothing, we pay a lot of taxes and these are the benefits derived from Soviet power. Tsar Nikolai II didn’t take anything from us and under his rule we lived better.”<sup>619</sup> Even some local officials expressed dissatisfaction with the living conditions in the USSR. Yegor Avdeevich Gontsov, a Komsomol organizer and member of the Koppashinskii rural soviet said, “we live now as we earlier lived. As we starved earlier [under the Tsar] in this way, we are hungry today. The new constitution didn’t bring [sic] improvement to us.”<sup>620</sup> Even those who recognized the constitution as a positive

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<sup>616</sup> From the “Bolshevik,” collective farm, Ankushinskii rural soviet, Kirovskii *raion*

<sup>617</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>618</sup> From the “Unified Labor” collective farm, Viazovskii rural soviet, Kirovskii *raion*

<sup>619</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 36-40 This anecdote also appears in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>620</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op.1, d. 474 l. 122

document were sometimes critical of the quality of life for the people of the Kirov region. At least on some occasions, these comments were labeled anti-Soviet. For example, Koz'minykh, a medical assistant, was reported as saying, "the constitution as a document is good, but not everything is in accord with it. I was in one school where three students sat without a jacket."<sup>621</sup> Just as disconcerting to regional and central officials was the fact that those who believed that the constitution had little bearing on their lives simply refused to engage in the discussion at all. A service worker in the office of Khromonii factory stated that, "we are not interested in the Constitution and will not discuss it."<sup>622</sup> Unlike the validators who had their letters and notes reprinted in newspapers to bolster the claims of an improved life under the victorious socialist system, these people questioned or rejected the idea of the draft Stalinist constitution as the embodiment of progress. They used the discussion to point out how the Soviet state had failed to fulfill its end of the social contract with the people; some rejected Soviet power outright.

Most such complaints were nipped in the bud when they were voiced during the discussion. Meeting organizers, who considered such opinions anti-Soviet, would often set those dissenters up as straw men in order to reinforce the central state narrative of progress and a rising standard of living in the USSR. For example, the abovementioned Gontsov was verbally rebuked and his critique of the USSR tackled head on by the chairman of the rural soviet, comrade P. S. Khodyrev, chairman of the collective farm N. A. Goiatsov and other collective farmers in attendance.<sup>623</sup> Similar

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<sup>621</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op.2, d. 394, l. 11

<sup>622</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d.43, l. 26

<sup>623</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 122

challenges to politically incorrect statements were noted in a report to the Central Committee's political administration. The report's author, Bel'kavich, noted that the party organizers and laborers in every case "gave a Bolshevik rebuff to all the worming in of class enemies."<sup>624</sup>

As noted in the discussion of the implementation of the discussion, central authorities chastised the Kirov regional officials for not being well organized, and for conducting agitational and propaganda campaigns in a way that left room for interpretations of the draft constitution that challenged the narrative of a progressive socialist society. While statements made at group meetings could easily be cut off by watchful meeting organizers, "anti-Soviet" interpretations of the draft constitution, particularly those that empowered religious groups or individual smallholders to challenge state policy, proved more worrisome as the draft constitution provided them with some legitimacy. For example, one Tairikov,<sup>625</sup> who had been formerly sentenced to hard labor, gathered the collective farmers around him and campaigned among them. He is recorded as arguing that, "so far as the freedom of speech, press and individual small holding are now permitted in the constitution, it is better for the collective farms to become individual smallholders." As a result some of the collective farmers reportedly ran away to get out of work on the collective farm.<sup>626</sup> P.I. Nekrasov and M. T. Kharin, kulaks who had been deprived of rights,<sup>627</sup> told people in their village that, under the new constitution, all those who had been deprived of rights would have full citizenship rights restored. Hence it

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<sup>624</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, l. 36-40

<sup>625</sup> The "Sower", collective farm, first Kliuchevskii rural soviet

<sup>626</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 472, l.17

<sup>627</sup> N. Lemanovskii rural soviet, Ziuzdinskii *raion*,

was not necessary to fulfill any obligations to the state and that all arrears to the state were going to be withdrawn.<sup>628</sup> Such interpretations of the draft constitution could have real consequences because they challenged the collectivized agricultural system that the state had worked so hard to create. Additionally suggestions to form trade unions among the collective farmers were rejected as anti-Soviet. Vylegzhanin, a collective farmer,<sup>629</sup> made a suggestion “about the organization of professional unions on the collective farms.”<sup>630</sup> A similar suggestion came from Kaiskii *raion*, where the bookkeeper on the Dzerzhinskii collective farm, E. P Istomin, suggested giving the right to collective farms to create professional unions for agricultural workers.<sup>631</sup> Because trade unions had on occasion posed challenges to the state by agitating for greater rights for the workers that they represented, some Kirov officials viewed such calls as “anti- Soviet”. Given that the peasants were implicitly denied vacation rights and pensions in the constitution, the creation of an organization that might organize its members to agitate for such benefits could pose a threat to the Soviet state.

For similar reasons, a wide array of pro-religious interpretations of the draft constitution were also labeled anti-Soviet. Among them were comments such as those made by S. A. Korobintsyn, the accountant at the *raion* communications section,<sup>632</sup> who wanted to add the right to religious propaganda following the words

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<sup>628</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117, this incident is also reported in GAKO, f. 2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 50 and GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 132

<sup>629</sup> Kashylinskii rural soviet, Nagorskii *raion*

<sup>630</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117, this anecdote is also recorded in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 36-40

<sup>631</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>632</sup> Kumenskii *raion*

“freedom of antireligious propaganda.”<sup>633</sup> His comments were carefully documented. Despite almost two decades of sustained state repression, the church apparatus remained more or less intact, and it was the only organization with enough of a network and resources to organize widespread opposition to the Soviet state. So when people like Semina, a female worker at the “Stasovoi” *artel*,<sup>634</sup> stated that, “in the draft constitution it is stated about the freedom to leave religious cults, however, everywhere they close churches even though the majority of the population is against it,”<sup>635</sup> local, regional and central state and party officials took notice.

In the Kirov region, the best-organized religiously motivated anti-Soviet behavior took place in Sanchurskii *raion*. One report from the party apparatus there blamed individual smallholders for conducting agitation against the chairman of the Zaozerskii rural soviet, comrade Mykhin.<sup>636</sup> However, a different report portrayed the culprit as a religious fanatic and small holder (религиозный фанатик-единоличник) who interpreted the draft constitution to mean that, during the election campaign, it was permissible and even necessary to push priests into the membership of the rural soviet.<sup>637</sup> He used this interpretation of the draft constitution to agitate against the chairman of the rural soviet (comrade Mykhin).

<sup>638</sup> Such activity fueled many leaders’ worst fear—that anti-Soviet elements would challenge and attempt to replace communists and other defenders of Soviet power

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<sup>633</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117, this anecdote is also recorded in GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, l. 36-40

<sup>634</sup> In the city of Kirov

<sup>635</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1293, op. 2, d. 43, l. 26

<sup>636</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>637</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 50

<sup>638</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 50



in local positions of power. Additionally, multiple sources record that one Abramovich, a cult member from Sanchurskii church, addressed the *raion* executive committee about having religious processions without the approval of the organs of power “on the basis of the draft constitution.”<sup>639</sup>

Such interpretations of the draft constitution challenged, however indirectly, well-known state policies, including the collectivization of agriculture, the use of taxation to encourage collectivization, the closing of churches, and the active struggle against religion. The creation of collective farm unions might have created an organization that could have challenged state policy regarding collective farmers’ rights and benefits. While such incidents were rare, their challenge to established state policies qualified them as “class enemy interpretations” rather than “mistaken” interpretations. They were attributable to “anti-Soviet” behavior rather than to the ineptitude of those conducting agitational and propagandistic work in the countryside. Such rejections of the master narrative of steadily improving living standards and such “anti-Soviet” interpretations of the draft constitution made up the bulk of the reported incidents of “anti-Soviet” behavior.

The only reported instances of anti-Soviet violence directed against members of the collective farm administration or party members, were in Votkinskii *raion*. There “class enemy elements” on the collective farm “Niva” stabbed the deputy chairman of the collective farm and dumped him in the river (зарезали и бросил в реку). An informational report to the TsIK enumerates other violent

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<sup>639</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117 this incident is also reported in GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 473 l. 50 and GAKO, f. R-2168, op. 1, d. 474, l. 26

occurrences, citing a sharp struggle by class enemy elements against the local *aktiv* as the precipitating factor for such acts. During a meeting of the “17<sup>th</sup> Party conference” collective farm, someone burned down the apartment of the collective farm chairman, comrade Shkurikhin.<sup>640</sup> There was also a case of arson on “Red Hill” collective farm in Balanyrinskii rural soviet. The *Raiispolkom* there alleged that, in connection with the low grain harvest in the *raion*, the kulaks disseminated rumors about the difficulties with bread and urged the dismantling of collective farms. On the collective farm “Excavator,” an individual small-holder, Sobin, angry about his agricultural taxes, beat up comrade Romanov from Upolnomochenskii rural soviet<sup>641</sup> and attacked a female tractor driver.<sup>642</sup> Given that the reports of such violent behavior came from Votkinskii *raion*, it seems likely that local conditions, perhaps connected with the poor harvest in 1936, and local relationships triggered such violent acts. Whatever the cause, they were reported as the activities of “class enemy” elements.

In fact, the number of violent “anti-Soviet” actions that took place during and soon after the discussion of constitution were very few and were locally concentrated. The fact that the same non-violent incidents, anti-Soviet rhetoric, and critical interpretations of the constitution were used in multiple reports to the Central Executive Committee, suggests that “anti-Soviet” behavior was unlikely to have been a widespread problem in the Kirov region. Moscow’s soliciting of such

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<sup>640</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1255, op. 2, d. 394, ll. 114-117

<sup>641</sup> GAKO, f. R-2168, op.1, d. 473, l. 50. The murder of the deputy chair of the collective farm and the burning of Comrade Shkurikhin’s apartment are mentioned in this report as well.

<sup>642</sup> GAKO, f. R- 2168, op.1, d. 474, l. 338. This report also contained the story of the deputy chair’s murder, the two arsons and the rumors spread by kulaks.

information is more likely a reflection of central anxieties than mounting local threats. Despite their relative rarity, reports on any “anti-Soviet” activities, which were regular features in reports coming from the *Kraikom*, reinforced central anxieties about the intentions or activities of class enemies. Anxiety about class enemies and their potential to exercise the new rights that the 1936 constitution gave them intensified as the preparations for local elections at the end of 1936 and the 1937 elections to the Supreme Soviet unfolded. Some local officials feared that these new rights provided the formerly disenfranchised with a way enter local organs of power and to promote their own agendas.

## **The Ratified Constitution and the Elections of 1937**

Despite reports of anti-Soviet activity during the popular discussion of the draft and widespread popular disapproval of the expanded franchise, Stalin defended his decision to grant universal suffrage. In his speech on the draft constitution made at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets in December 1936, Stalin reiterated his argument that the Soviet state had deprived “dangerous elements” of voting rights during a time when they were waging open war against the people and undermining Soviet laws. But now that the exploiting class had been destroyed and Soviet power had strengthened, the time to introduce universal suffrage had come. He countered the argument that universal suffrage would allow enemy elements to worm their way into soviet organs of power<sup>643</sup> by replying that not all former kulaks

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<sup>643</sup> J. Arch Getty, “Excesses Are Not Permitted”: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s” notes these complaints were also frequent from regional party leaders, who resisted the

and white-guardists were harmful to Soviet power and, if the people somewhere elect dangerous people, it would mean that the agitational and propagandistic work was not effectively carried out.<sup>644</sup>

While some in the central leadership may have been convinced that full democracy was a viable option, the language in reports on election preparations from Kirov's Regional Party Committee and district party organizations suggests that, like its citizenry, Kirov's regional and local officials were unsupportive of full citizenship rights for former class enemies. Although the number of incidents may have been few, it appears that local officials saw them as harbingers. Or at least reasons for anxiety. They too felt that the former *lishentsy* were undermining Soviet authority, particularly in the countryside.<sup>645</sup> Getty has argued that such sentiment was part of a national trend as "the regional leaders felt that anti-Soviet feeling was strong enough in the country to threaten party control, and open elections would give it voice. They resisted the new voting system from the beginning."<sup>646</sup>

Reframing the formerly disenfranchised as "class enemies" rather than as

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implementation of a multicandidate system from its inception. "Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations" James Harris, ed., *Anatomy of Terror: Political Violence under Lenin and Stalin*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). This comment therefore could be seen as a subtle way of checking their resistance.

<sup>644</sup> *Pravda*, November 28, 1936, 4

<sup>645</sup> The weakness of the Soviet state in the countryside had long been a problem, causing a great amount of frustration as the center tried to implement its plans and campaigns in places where its representatives were few and often outnumbered. Because the state was weakest in the countryside, the countryside was seen as most vulnerable place for the infiltration of anti-Soviet elements. For further information on the weakness of the state and party apparatus in the countryside see: Getty, J Arch and Oleg Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the self-destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Charles Hier, "Party, Peasants and Power in a Russian District: the Winning of Peasant Support for Collectivization in Sychevka Raion 1928-1931," (unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2004), Lynne Viola, *Best Sons of the Fatherland: workers in the vanguard of Soviet collectivization*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Roberta Manning "Government in the Soviet Countryside in the Stalinist 1930's: The Case of Belyi Raion in 1937" *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, No.301 (University of Pittsburgh, 1984).

<sup>646</sup> Getty, "Pre-election Fever: the Origins of the 1937 Mass Operations"

rehabilitated citizens, as Stalin portrayed them, may have served as a way for local and regional officials to undermine the new voting system.

It is unclear from the documentary evidence from the Kirov region just how strongly the regional and local leadership opposed the new voting system or what steps they may have taken against it. However, minutes of the meeting of the Murashinskii district NKVD party cell suggest that local officials did not share Stalin's belief that re-enfranchising such people would not result in increased enemy activity. This meeting followed on the heels of the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, in December 1936, at which Stalin dismissed concerns about class enemies using the constitution to their own ends and at which the Constitution was ratified. However, the mood at this local party meeting was quite different. Comrade Zabodokin spoke on the question of the elections and of those formerly deprived of voting rights. In the past, he noted, the class enemy wormed itself into the Soviet organs and now it can do so again, particularly where there will be poor preparatory work for the elections. There the class enemy will conduct its own work. Therefore, Zabodokin opined, we must know the class enemy's plan and stop it promptly. Comrade Zherekhov said that, in connection with the new system of elections to the soviets, the harmful elements would of course attempt to use this opportunity to give their vote to their people. The task of monitoring harmful elements placed a great responsibility on party members and the NKVD, particularly those sections in which one or another communist works.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> GASPI KO, f. 861, op. 1, d. 145, ll. 67-68

Despite some local officials' doubts, the central leadership maintained its stance on expanded election rights well into August 1937. In the protocol of the general party meeting of the Nolinskii district party cell of the NKVD from August 12, 1937, on the topic of elections, the assembled NKVD members noted that "All members and candidate members of the All Union Communist Party, [should] not allow the violation of the Stalinist constitution, and quickly quash any violation of the constitution regardless of who they are, but particularly on the part of workers of the District Party Committee."<sup>648</sup> The presence of this sort of directive implied that the state was serious at least through August about maintaining the electoral standards set forth in the constitution. But it is interesting to note that the meeting seemed especially concerned that "workers of the District Party Committee," that is local party members, might be the ones who violated the constitution. However, the increasing pressure from local and regional officials in the face of what the latter regarded as serious efforts by anti-Soviet elements to gain a foot-hold in local organs of power influenced how the central leadership dealt with the question of open and multicandidate elections.

Reports from the Kirov region in early 1937 to the Regional and Central Party Committees consistently noted counter-revolutionary incidents following the ratification of the constitution and the extension of citizenship rights to the formerly disenfranchised. The motivation behind the formulation of the reports and the examples chosen is not clear, but the activities that they recounted and the language used in the reports most likely helped shape the central leaderships' view of the

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<sup>648</sup> GASPI KO, f. 790, op. 1, d. 201, l. 54

Kirov region and the effects of the new electoral policy there. The existence of such reports does not prove that regional authorities were taking the initiative and bringing these counter-revolutionary acts to the attention of the central government. Rather, the frequency and regularity of the reports and their form suggested that they were issued in response to a central directive.<sup>649</sup> However, the language in the reports implied that anti-Soviet activities were ongoing in the region, and at a level sufficient level to presumably make authorities at all levels uncomfortable.

The intensity of reported anti-Soviet enemy activities varies dramatically, ranging from reported rumors to outright agitation. In Ziuzdinskii district, the District Party Committee reported that harmful elements prepared for the elections to the Supreme Soviet and the lower soviet organs. Their reportedly harmful work was conducted in differing ways: including individual statements, underground meetings, and writing slogans against Soviet power on trees in the forest and on tablets.<sup>650</sup> Some of these reports stimulated agitational and propagandistic work before the elections. In a report from Regional Party Committee and District Party Committee instructors about the state of preparation for the elections to the Supreme Soviet, the instructors noted that they had intensified their work because the counterrevolutionary elements used weak districts where political work was absent to conduct anti-Soviet agitation.<sup>651</sup> As in the discussion of the draft

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<sup>649</sup> During the discussion of the draft constitution similar reports regularly detailed “enemy activity” and they were issued in compliance with a Central Executive Committee order requiring *Krai* and *oblast’* officials to gather and send reports of such activities to the TsIK GARF, f. R-3316, op 8, d. 222, l. 38.

<sup>650</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op.1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

<sup>651</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, l. 18

constitution, officials blamed poor agitational and propagandistic work for such situations. Stalin himself had addressed the importance of agitprop work in his address on the ratified constitution and the leadership in many, but clearly not all, districts responded to his call for increased mass work. In Shestakovskii district, the District Party Committee reported that they stepped up anti-religious agitation during the lead up to the elections, including offering a seminar entitled “the Stalinist Constitution and the fight with religion.”<sup>652</sup>

While in some cases enemy activity may have simply been a foil for increasing party work, there were incidents of “enemy activity” that were genuinely threatening to local order. In the village of Kora,<sup>653</sup> the former head of the collective farm, Fir Ovsizhnikov, agitated for the elimination of pig farms, incited the collective farmers to divide up the pigs, ridiculed animal husbandry, called rabbits Soviet sheep, and goats Soviet cows. He agitated against communists saying, “on the collective farm it is possible to allow one communist for breeding and remove his eyes . . .”<sup>654</sup> Although it is unclear what exactly he meant, his intent is clear. In the view of local officials, Ovsizhnikov’s hostility towards the state and its policies, and his veiled threats of violence towards its representatives in the countryside posed a potential threat to state control and local stability.

That some former class enemies exploited the weakness of the state in the rural areas to return to positions of power is undeniable. Noskov, the former kulak

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<sup>652</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op 1, d. 61, l. 43

<sup>653</sup> Barminskii rural soviet, Zuevskii district

<sup>654</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 18-27



from the village of Kir'iai<sup>655</sup> who had become chairman of the rural soviet, allegedly told a local candidate, "if you [the candidate] will work for us [Noskov and his supporters] then we will vote for you under the new Constitution, but if you will not be together with us, then we will not vote for you."<sup>656</sup> Noskov had already become chairman of the rural soviet, despite his past as a kulak, and undoubtedly wielded some power in the district. His statement makes clear that he intended to use his influence and position to see that like-minded people who shared his interests rather the state's would be elected. Further defiance of the state's power and subversion of its interests came from others in Ziuzdinskii district. Some of the individual smallholders of Kharinskii rural soviet (I. K. Ichetovkin, Sh. S. Kazakov and others), categorically refused to fulfill any state obligation, arguing that the constitution guaranteed the equal rights of all citizens.<sup>657</sup> Under collectivization, collective farmers had to pay taxes but individual smallholder had to fulfill additional state obligations because of their individual status; these extra burdens on them were part of the way that the state encouraged people to collectivize. However, with the ratification of the constitution and the proclamation of equal rights, these individual smallholders refused to pay what they viewed as discriminatory taxes. Such incidents posed the threats to the already over-taxed local administrators trying to keep order in the countryside.<sup>658</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Kolychevskii rural soviet Ziuzdinskii district,

<sup>656</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op 1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

<sup>657</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op.1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

<sup>658</sup> For a more in depth review of the politics of local administration in the Kirov region, see Larry Holmes *Grand Theater: Regional Governance in Stalin's Russia, 1931-1941*. Lexington Books: 2009.

In addition to challenging or subverting state control in the countryside, others used the open forum of election meetings and their new constitutional rights to express dissatisfaction with state policies and the state itself. On one collective farm in Iaranskii district, a collective farmer urged people to vote against Stalin because he “takes bread from us and it is necessary to vote for someone who will not take bread.” At the pre-election meeting, there was not a single vote against this proposal.<sup>659</sup> A telegram from the Kirov Regional Committee to the Central Committee listed other incidents as well. In the village of Kozlakh,<sup>660</sup> rumors circulated that on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December in Moscow, there would be a different administration, life would be better and the collective farms would be dissolved. In the village of Polom, in the same voting district, Paraskovia Plastinina stated that “we will vote for the Antichrist” . . .<sup>661</sup> Such incidents suggest that some people still felt that their lives would be better without Soviet power, and, in extreme cases, life under the Antichrist may even have been preferable.

Others took a less extreme approach in demonstrating their dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime by focusing on questions of democracy, and the violation of the new Constitution and regulations of elections. For example, a telegram from the Kirov Regional Party Committee addressed to Stalin himself noted that in a number of districts, there were questions and speeches in meetings about how the registration of only one candidate per seat in the Soviet of the Union undermined

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<sup>659</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 18-27

<sup>660</sup> Verkhoshizhenskii district

<sup>661</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 134-5 This is reminiscent of reports about collectivization as cited in Lynne Viola, “The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside,” *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 62, No. 4 (Dec., 1990), pp. 747-770

the democratic nature of the electoral laws.<sup>662</sup> While such statements may not have questioned the legitimacy of the elections, others took it a step further and declared the elections illegitimate because they violated the rules that the state itself had set forth. For example, in Omutninskii district, after comrades Stalin, Andreev, Litvinov, Budennney and Rodin did not give their approval to being placed on the ballot in Omutninskii voting district, there remained only one candidate on the ballot for the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities. Reportedly, “enemies of the people” took advantage of this situation and spread rumors that it is useless to go to the elections because without two candidates it meant that the regulations on elections had been violated and that democracy did not exist. The author noted that, in response, agitators were organized to explain that this assertion was false; reportedly, the enemies were beaten up by an unknown party.<sup>663</sup>

Whether such incidents truly qualify as a credible threat is not clear. But the evidence suggests that regional and local officials viewed—or at least presented—them as being “anti-Soviet.” That such anti-Soviet sentiment existed, in spite of the central leadership’s assurances that class enemies had been crushed, required an explanation. The oft-given explanation was the counter-revolutionary elements were taking advantage of the new constitutional rights bestowed upon them, as much of the populace had feared. Stalin, of course, viewed it as a failure of agitational work.

Many reports from district party committees clearly ascribed new incidents of counter-revolutionary activity to the ratification of the new constitution. A report

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<sup>662</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 134-5

<sup>663</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290 op. 1, d. 56, ll. 122-124

from the Ziuzdinskii District Party Committee to the Secretary of the Regional Party Committee, Comrade Stoliar, makes this clear. The report noted that, "the complete facts demonstrate that, in connection with the approval of the Stalinist Constitution, the counter-revolutionary activity of harmful elements, particularly clergymen has revived in Ziuzdinskii district".<sup>664</sup> Those in attendance at the March 20, 1937 general party cell meeting of the Nolinskii district NKVD reached a similar conclusion. Party members noted that the new electoral system and the constitution gave the opportunity for harmful elements to participate in elections and to be elected. Therefore, it concluded that the party organization as a whole and every member of the party individually must conduct mass political work among the population in order to exclude alien people from the soviets.<sup>665</sup> At the previous meeting (on February 19) meeting of the Nolinskii party cell of the NKVD, comrade Kolomytsev stated that

the approved new Stalinist Constitution gives the right to vote to all adult citizens, with the exception those deprived of the right to vote by the court. Several counterrevolutionary groups, particularly members of different types of cults are using these laws to begin carrying out anti Soviet agitation. They conduct this agitation not only among those of advanced age but they also draw in the youth.<sup>666</sup>

Whether rooted in long-established Soviet trends or the prejudices, fears or personal experiences of local officials, members of already suspect groups, such as

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<sup>664</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op.1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

<sup>665</sup> GASPI KO, f. 790, op. 1, d. 201, l. 26

<sup>666</sup> GASPI KO, f. 790, op. 1, d. 201, l. 12

former kulaks and members of the religious establishment, were often named as the perpetrators of counter-revolutionary activities. For example, at a 1937 pre-election meeting on the “Country of the Soviets” collective farm,<sup>667</sup> a drunken administrative exile, N. P. Shestakov, was present and he allegedly created an uproar by shouting counter-revolutionary statements, for which he was arrested.<sup>668</sup> In other examples, former kulaks and clergymen are depicted either as detached from the people or as trying to seduce them. For example, in Shabalino, during the discussion of the candidacy of Smertina, a former kulak, Ustiuzhanov stated: “you can write down any growth figure you want, maybe having grown not 16 tsenters but more. It is all self-delusion.” He was reportedly rebuffed by a 65 year-old collective farmer who said: “Blockhead, if you could be taken back 40 years, we grew only 2-3 tsenters of potatoes on one hectare, but now hundreds grow from collective farm land and there is the wonder.”<sup>669</sup> The people who believed in the advances that the Soviet system brought to farming rejected his criticisms. One might think that that would be the end of the affair, but in both cases the men’s pasts were important. As a former exile, Shetakov was already on the fringe of local society and Ustiuzhanov was a former kulak. Perhaps for this reason both men caught the attention of local officials.

Local and regional officials acknowledged that the church still held some sway in the countryside and they often portrayed clergymen as seducers of good Soviet citizens. For example, a report from Ziuzdinskii district notes that the harmful

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<sup>667</sup> Gostevskii rural soviet, Kotel’nicheskii district

<sup>668</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 18-27

<sup>669</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 18-27

anti-Soviet work of the clergy lately was concentrated primarily in three or four rural soviets.<sup>670</sup> In these districts, all churches had been closed, but the clergy still had influence there. Political work, therefore, was concentrated against the clergy, who had the support of part of the population. The chairman of the Ziuzdinskii District Party Committee, Batyrev, noted that the clergy used this support to agitate for their own interests. In March, 1937, the Bishop Zhuravlev, living in exile near the city of Omsk charged the priest, Samodurov (from Vereshaginskii district, Sverdlovsk *oblast'*), to work with the priests of the city of Omutninsk "to perform religious rites for the believers." Upon the priests' arrival, former kulaks, individual smallholders, and some of the collective farmers of the Ivanovskii, Kir'ianskii and other collective farms gathered around them. The clergymen focused their work on the opening of churches. An individual small holder from the village of Kuvakushka, Sidorov, who was also a former psalm reader, headed up this work.

In his report, Bratyev made his opinion clear—the work of such "harmful elements" demonstrated the political intentions and activity of the clergymen. Reportedly, there had already been repeated endeavors to collect materials and money and Noskov,<sup>671</sup> the former kulak who was the chairman of the rural soviet, acted as the keeper of such funds. Not only did those who supported the clergymen's push for the opening of churches, they also reportedly conducted preparations for the elections to the Supreme Soviet. The exact number and identity of the people

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<sup>670</sup> Kuvakushskii, Afonas'tvskii, Kolychevskii and Evzhinskii rural soviets

<sup>671</sup> This is the same abovementioned Noskov, who was the chairman of the rural soviet and former kulak.

with whom they were working was unknown, but to Bratyev and his comrades their intentions posed a threat.<sup>672</sup>

Of all the activities in which former kulaks and clergymen engaged, the agitation for their own candidates was probably the most disquieting for the central leadership and most directly threatening to local leaders. For example, in the village of Rodygino,<sup>673</sup> the Regional Party Committee reported that class enemies conducted agitation to the effect that Kalinin should not be elected because he did not have a higher education. It also noted that in the same village, one Rodygin, a Trotskyist, who had been purged from the party, agitated for the nomination of class alien people to the Supreme Soviet.<sup>674</sup> In the village of Natiunicha<sup>675</sup>, S. A. Chiudinovskikh stated "here is the priest Filip'ev, who has a higher education, maybe he should be elected to the soviet."<sup>676</sup>

The fears of the party and state leadership were realized in part when, in local elections, former class enemies were indeed elected to positions of power. At a NKVD cell meeting, comrade Kozel noted that many people did not understand very well the power of the secret ballot as evinced by their election of delegates to professional organs, but class enemies seemed to understand that power as evidenced by the fact that former kulaks were elected.<sup>677</sup> The new constitution provided the impetus for such activity precisely because it re-enfranchised former kulaks and clergy, and allowed them to stand for election. In these cases, the

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<sup>672</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op. 1, d. 56, ll. 120-121

<sup>673</sup> Sovietskii district

<sup>674</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op. 1, d. 61, ll. 18-27

<sup>675</sup> Verkhovinskii district

<sup>676</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op.1, d. 62, l. 22

<sup>677</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1922, op. 1, d.164, l.33

exercise of these new rights threatened to remove politically reliable people and replace them with class alien people. The state's representatives regarded such prospects with horror. Whether these facts represented a genuine upsurge in anti-state activity on the part of former class enemies or, if when asked to look for enemies, local and regional officials simply turned to the usual suspects, as David Shearer argues, is unclear.<sup>678</sup> But the increased concerns about anti-Soviet acts perpetrated by formerly suspect members of society helped to refocus attention on these groups and to define or redefine them as class enemies.

Reports from the elections themselves furthered these fears. A report from Omutninskii district listed a number of anti-Soviet acts that had taken place during the elections to the Supreme Soviet.

1. In Kirs, the clergy worked very strongly to spread rumors that those who went to the elections would also be voting for the closure of churches.
2. In the 19<sup>th</sup> voting district in the city of Omutninsk, on one voting bulletin someone wrote, "we want Aleksander Kerensky, we want Trotsky."
3. In the 26<sup>th</sup> voting district someone wrote on one bulletin, "you will vote against your will for our candidates when there are no other candidates"
4. In Uninskii district there was an incident, when in several separate bulletins, it was written "I vote for Jesus Christ"

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<sup>678</sup> *Policing Stalin's Socialism*



5. In the city of Omutninsk on the evening of the elections, there arrived from the Urals an unknown worker who stayed with Anton Nikolaevich Loginov in building 40 on Komsomol Street. When the agitator arrived, this unidentified worker answered, “that if you will go to the elections with us then I won’t go. The electoral system is incorrect and I don’t agree with it. Our elections in the Urals don’t go thusly.” This was sent to the NKVD for investigation.<sup>679</sup>

In reaction to this list, the chairman of the district election commission, Riakin, concluded that all of these facts showed that there were many enemies and that “they must be fished out and destroyed.”<sup>680</sup> Riakin’s comments suggest a shift towards viewing “counter-revolutionary events” perpetrated by former class enemies as part of an organized network, which needed to be rooted out and destroyed, rather than being the isolated acts of individual “class enemies.” Such a change in perception can also be found in the NKVD party cell meeting protocols.

Minutes from the local NKVD party cell meetings in the early months of 1937 demonstrated a belief that, while it was dangerous to allow the participation of the formerly disenfranchised, the situation could be managed with proper vigilance. At the March 10, 1937 closed party meeting of the NKVD party cell of the Falenskii District Organization, comrade Bystrov stated

that according to the Stalinist Constitution the up-coming elections will allow the participation by cult members, former White Guardists, Kulaks and

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<sup>679</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op.1, d. 56, ll. 122-124

<sup>680</sup> GASPI KO, f.1290, op.1, d. 56, ll.122-124

others. They will not only vote but they can also be elected. In order to not exclude communists from the soviets, we [the NKVD and the Party] need to be exceptionally vigilant and to develop work among the masses. But I believe that among us in the party organization not everyone has studied the constitution, for example, Smetanin who is the leader of the *militia*, even though he is laden with work, it is necessary for him to study.<sup>681</sup>

Other calls for increased mass work and vigilance came from the Sovetskii district NKVD. At a closed meeting on March 9, comrade Polushin noted that it was necessary to further explain the Stalinist Constitution so that there will be no violations of democracy during the elections to the Soviets. At the same meeting, Comrade Kasbianov stated that, at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Soviets, when Comrade Stalin put forth the question, “Can former people who up until the new constitution were deprived of voting rights get into the soviets?” Comrade Stalin answered that “It is necessary to work, not to complain (хныкать)”.<sup>682</sup> Kasbianov cited Stalin’s answer to those who suggested limiting the rights of the former class enemies so they did not infiltrate state offices. His statement reiterated the central leadership’s assertion that any remaining anti-Soviet sentiment could be managed with appropriate mass work.

But as the election campaign progressed and concrete examples of anti-Soviet behavior surfaced, the amorphous class enemies became increasingly associated with former kulaks and clergymen. At the March 15, 1937 closed party

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<sup>681</sup> GASPI KO, f. 2158, op. 1, d. 7, l. 9

<sup>682</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1460, op. 1, d. 236, l.4. Similar calls for vigilance were also present in the protokoly from the closed party meeting on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1937.

meeting of the Verkhoshizhenskii district NKVD, it was noted that the task of the party organizations following the passage of the new constitution was immense. The party cell concluded, much like its counterparts in Falenskii and Sovietskii districts, that it was necessary to conduct work among the masses so that alien elements do not worm their way in. The Verkhoshizhenskii NKVD noted that “to us Chekists it is important to have special vigilance because of the upcoming elections under the new constitution. The remnants of the kulaks in the countryside, the tail end (охвостъе) of Trotskyism in connection with the elections will conduct a cruel struggle. This struggle has taken on a more hidden character.”<sup>683</sup> This was the first time that concrete class enemies, particularly the formerly disenfranchised, were specifically named in material from the Kirov region’s NKVD.

Concern about the use of the elections to the benefit of class enemies and the need for increased vigilance dominated the March 25 meeting of the Kaiskii NKVD party cell. Comrade Agafokov opened the meeting stating, “on the basis of the new constitution class enemies will meddle in the conduct of our work, and based on that we must be vigilant.”<sup>684</sup> Several of his colleagues echoed his concern. Comrade Vladimirov noted that, “the re- elections of party organs (*perevyborov partorganov*) on the basis of the new constitution will proceed by secret ballot voting. Taking advantage of this, class enemies might worm in as deputies in the rural soviets. Therefore we must have revolutionary vigilance. . . .”<sup>685</sup> Comrade Uiferev argued that

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<sup>683</sup> GASPI KO, f. 2198, op. 1, d. 127, l. 15

<sup>684</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1922, op. 1, d. 164, l. 8

<sup>685</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1922, op. 1, d. 164, l. 8

on the basis of the new constitution, the decision of the Central Committee specifically touched upon the question about revolutionary vigilance and being ready for new re-elections. But we are poorly prepared and the class enemies are preparing better than us, they will try to use this new constitution to force in their deputies to the Soviets. Right now in this place of exile, settlers declare that if the new constitution doesn't give us passports, we will run away. Now there some people who ran away, but in Biserovskii district the chairman of the rural soviet doesn't chase after the run-aways."<sup>686</sup>

Uiferev provided specific examples of class enemies actively engaging the state and using the language of the new constitution to agitate for greater rights. His fellow party member, Khlust'ianov, offered further illustrations that the agitation of class enemies on the basis of the new constitution was not just the imaginings of a paranoid state. He reported that "on the basis of the new Constitution, Kulaks come and say – we need passports, if we will elect deputies in the *oblast'* then how can we go without passports."<sup>687</sup> The members of the party cell concluded that "the presence of class enemy elements in our district, who receive citizenship rights under the new constitution, present our party organization with the task of the further strengthening of vigilance, the unmasking of the schemes of class enemies, [and] remembering the words of Comrade Zhdanov at the plenum of the Central Committee, that the enemy is acting among us and thoroughly preparing for the election."<sup>688</sup> Presented with concrete examples, the language of the protocols of the

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<sup>686</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1922, op. 1, d. 164, l. 8

<sup>687</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1922, op. 1, d. 164, l. 9

<sup>688</sup> GASPI KO, f.1922. op. 1, d.164, l.10

district NKVD party meetings changed. Class enemies exploiting their new rights against the state and worming their way into organs of power was now no longer just a possibility, something that might happen if the party did not conduct adequate work among the masses. These were now facts that forced the local NKVD and party to take action.<sup>689</sup>

The protocol of the July 12, 1937 meeting of the Verkhoshizhenskii NKVD party cell illustrates this change clearly. The assembled party members noted that, although the last constitution limited the rights of alien and former people, the new constitution gave equal rights to all former people together with all laborers. The speaker then noted: "BUT THAT DOES NOT MEAN <sup>690</sup> that the remnants of the past won't be harmful to us and class struggle won't start up again, quite the opposite, class struggle will sharpen. Therefore the organs of the proletarian dictatorship, the soviets and our organs, must raise revolutionary class vigilance in all aspects of socialist construction."<sup>691</sup> The sharpening of class struggle was considered inevitable, given the use of constitutional rights to promote anti-Soviet aims. <sup>692</sup> The intensification of struggle with the newly rebranded class enemies and the mantra

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<sup>689</sup> While specific incidents in the District Party Committee and Regional Party Committee reports are harder to date because these reports are compilations from various sources, it would appear that by March "anti-Soviet" activity was reported to the District Party Committee and as the election campaign wore on these reports became more frequent. Most of the Regional Party Committee reports to the TsK were issued in the latter half of the year. Whether or not this is when more anti-Soviet acts occurred, this is when the Regional Party Committee, and more importantly the TsK began to receive such reports in volume.

<sup>690</sup> Capitalization in the original

<sup>691</sup> GASPI KO, f. 2198, op. 1 d. 102 l. 27

<sup>692</sup> A similar report comes from the September 7<sup>th</sup> protocol of the Iaranskii district NKVD cell. Comrade Ternov noted that it is absolutely correct for comrades, who have thoroughly discussed the regulations on elections, to say that the class enemy is trying to use this law to his own use, and therefore Bolshevik vigilance must be the fundamental focus of work. He stated that it was necessary to remember that the class enemy studied the constitution in several cases better than several of our comrades. GASPI KO, f. 1177, op. 1, d. 185, l.1

of increased vigilance became the hallmarks of the language of the NKVD reports from this point on.

As the elections approached, the language became increasingly belligerent and one sees a tendency to dehumanize those labeled as class enemies. A participant at the July 25 Zuevskii district NKVD cell meeting stated:

Comrades, I would like to remind you that our collective in the upcoming election campaign must be more vigilant than ever or the class enemy will begin to put out his tentacles. As we know from the press, using the broad rights of the new constitution, members of religious sects, priests and other henchmen (прихвостень) conduct a hidden struggle. They want to defame our best people so they won't get into the organs of administration of Soviet power.<sup>693</sup>

As the concerns about class enemies evolved, their alleged goals became more concrete: to occupy the local positions of power themselves and to destabilize the Soviet system. This alleged change spurred Soviet officials at all levels to accept the existence of such an organized and highly motivated sleeping enemy in their midst.

Given popular opinion on the re-enfranchisement of the formerly disenfranchised, the struggle for governance in the countryside, and NKVD reports, it is doubtful that local and regional officials in Kirov ever believed that restoring voting rights to former kulaks and clergymen was a viable option. However, central party and state leaders pushed regional and local officials to support and attempt to implement the expanded electoral process outlined in the Stalinist constitution and

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<sup>693</sup> GASPI KO, f. 1331, op 2, d.108, l. 41

the subsequent “Regulations on Elections.” This policy change meant re-classifying former class enemies as full citizens. However, their new status quickly eroded as regional and NKVD reports detailing anti-Soviet activity were sent to the Central Committee. These reports began to consistently associate these activities with the formerly disenfranchised and offered increasingly specific incidents even though the numbers (at least from Kirov) of the incidents was limited. At the same time, NKVD Chief Yezhov was pushing for increased vigilance,<sup>694</sup> a sentiment that was quickly picked up by the lower NKVD organs. By mid-year, the complete certainty of the NKVD organs, even at the lowest level, that class enemies were worming into local organs of power during the election period, combined with reports of anti-Soviet activities from various provinces, contributed to the decision to unleash mass arrests of “anti- Soviet” elements beginning in July 1937. The intensification of repression against such groups only escalated after that.

Despite its limitations, the archival material available in Kirov provides enough evidence to hypothesize that the discussion of the draft constitution and the ensuing elections to the Supreme Soviets in 1937 contributed to an atmosphere that urged increased repression against certain segments of the population.

Both widespread deviations from the prescribed central narrative and reports of outright anti-Soviet activities were present in the discussion of the draft constitution. Central and regional authorities blamed local party and state authorities for the development of “personal” suggestions during the discussion,

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<sup>694</sup> For more on Yezhov’s policies see David Shearer, *Policing Stalin’s Socialism* and J. Arch Getty “Excesses are not Permitted”: Mass Terror and Stalinist Governance in the Late 1930s, *Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (January, 2002), 113-138

claiming that such suggestions were the result of improperly conducted agitational and propagandistic work. The Central Executive Committee issued a strict directive about the type and frequency of reports that it needed from the local and regional officials so as to try to hold such officials accountable and to force them to implement the discussion as the central leadership had envisioned. Local party and state leaders failure to implement yet again a campaign to the specifications of the central leadership may have contributed to those leaders' repression in 1937, as Getty and Naumov argue.

The most direct link between the popular discussion and election campaigns connected with the 1936 constitution, subsequent elections, and repression, however, involved the repression of the formerly disenfranchised. While reports of anti -Soviet activities during the popular discussion do not appear to have been sufficient to have prompted the central leadership to rethink the new franchise, the reports during the election campaign of anti-Soviet elements, such as priests and former kulaks, promoting their own candidates caused alarm at both the local and central levels of party and state leadership. As the election campaign for the Supreme Soviet of the USSR unfolded and the elections of these "opposition" candidates to local organs of power such as rural soviets and professional unions, demonstrated that the formerly disenfranchised had some popular appeal, the tone of the local NKVD party reports began to change. Such reports stopped considering the enemy infiltration of organs of power as a possibility. Rather they made clear that they viewed this penetration was a reality that the NKVD as well as party and state leaders had to fight against. This change in tone reflected rising anxiety over



enemies and perceived enemy activity that gripped the central leadership in 1936 and 1937; such reports about enemy infiltration in the Kirov region and other provinces undoubtedly increased such anxieties.

The available sources do not allow one to argue that the discussion and ratification of the 1936 constitution caused the repression in 1937. Nor do archival sources in Kirov clarify whether local anxieties deepened because of the increasingly strident rhetoric coming from party leaders or, as Getty argues, anxieties and pressures from the regions convinced the center that the threats were real. However, the increased reports of enemy activity both reflected and contributed to an overall state of anxiety about enemy activities in this period. These reports and the evidence that they offered no doubt influenced in some measure, the central leadership's decisions to repress certain segments of the population. What the available evidence from Kirov clearly suggests is that the issue of the relationship between popular attitudes and activities during the discussion of the draft constitution and the ensuing elections in 1937, and the increased anxieties of central officials who ultimately authorized repression deserve further research.

## Conclusion

This work is the first English-language in-depth examination of the popular discussion of the 1936 draft constitution. As such, it both fills a rather glaring gap in the existing historiography as it focuses on what some people outside of the central leadership in Moscow thought about the draft and it de-centers the sparse existing historiography. Despite the constitution being popularly referred to as the Stalin Constitution, this work is not focused on Stalin nor on the central leadership. Stalin played an important role in the drafting of the constitution and in its ratification, but he plays only a minor supporting role for the majority of this study. Instead of focusing on the grand state building goals of the central leadership, the focus on the Kirov region allows the reader to see how the local and the personal considerations of everyday life came to bear on Stalinism, as the citizens of the Kirov region agitated for rights and privileges that would affect their everyday lives. The strength of this study is that it uses the discussion of the draft constitution to explore some broader issues of state-citizen relations. The citizens of the Kirov region are the main actors.

Employing a regional case study, in this case, of the Kirov region, has enabled a tight focus that establishes the local context in order to understand why citizens made the suggestions and had the reactions that they did to the draft constitution. This approach reveals quite clearly the mechanisms put in place for a discussion of the draft constitution and the problems of implementation of central decrees at local and regional levels. It also allows for the examination of the varied responses to the

discussion and popular suggestions by distinct governing and party organs at the local and regional level. Regional studies like this one demonstrate that the Soviet citizens were not without agency. On the contrary, they often shrewdly sought to manipulate state goals, rhetoric and campaigns to their own ends. But as this study argues, the population of the Kirov region did not always speak with one voice. Urban residents and rural residents often had divergent views, as did local elites and the local population, and at times so too did different generations.

However, the central leadership's view of constitutional theory in the USSR and how it used this theory to formulate the draft constitution had a profound effect on the discussion. Stalin and the central state leadership initiated a popular campaign and the popular response that followed revealed much about how the people of the USSR conceived of the role of state and citizen, and the latter's role in constructing socialism. Soviet leaders decided to rewrite the constitution for several reasons, the most important of them and the ones about which they spoke publicly being: the class enemies had been vanquished; it was time to expand the franchise; and the state needed citizens' active participation to enhance the construction of Soviet socialism. Additionally rewriting the constitution represented an important step in modernizing the Soviet state as a state, by creating for example a uniform central code of laws.

The central leadership did not view single party rule and popular participation as antithetical. Indeed, leaders encouraged popular participation, within a strict framework and a one-party state, as a way to strengthen social and economic development in the USSR. The re-definition of citizens and citizenship,

which included the re-enfranchisement of former priests and kulaks, as well as its focus on state building illustrate how the central state sought to create a new social contract with its citizens and what it expected from them in return. The direction that the central leadership tried to give to the popular discussion reflected the changes that the central leadership hoped to bring about: a more participatory society within a one-party state, and a culture with the shared purpose of building a socialist society. These expectations were reflected in the narrative that the central authorities set forth in recommended lesson plans and newspaper articles.

While the central leadership envisioned a people devoted to selflessly building socialism, the people of the Kirov region had a somewhat different set of expectations. They believed that they should exercise more local control over an array of issues and that the state should provide them with increased material benefits because of the sacrifices that they had made and expected to make for a while longer. Many of the popular suggestions that came out of Kirov *Krai*, especially its collective farms, were personal and local: they focused on citizens' rights, access to social welfare programs, local power, and safety and security. The people of the Kirov region embraced some state programs because they were beneficial to their everyday lives and they rejected others. But they always used the language of the discussion and state-building, as articulated by Moscow to frame and legitimate their requests. Their comments and suggestions often made references to the principles, such as equality, enunciated in the draft constitution.

This study has argued that many of the citizens of Kirov *Krai*, especially the collective farmers, participated in the public discussion and used the opportunity to

express their concerns and their pride. The peasant participants in this study defy easy stereotype. They were neither sullen nor docile. Although not highly literate, they valued the promises of education. They were politically astute in various ways. Many appreciated the changes that the revolution had brought, but they were still critical of certain policies. As this study suggests, local or regional studies are essential if we are to understand local concerns, especially those of the collective farm system and collective farmers.

As the popular discussion indicated, Kirov's citizens—and presumably many citizens across the USSR—reacted to the draft in complex ways. On the one hand, many applauded it for what it represented and promised. After all, a mere score of years earlier, there was no constitution, nor were there citizens. But Kirov's residents' comments and suggestions convey what they wanted out of this social contract and those needs were often very specific. Liberal conceptions of the rights of individuals are less evident than demands for more social control, especially at the local level. The class and social suspicions, often rooted in local experiences but fueled by central campaigns, that appeared in the popular discussion make clear that the USSR in the mid-1930s was still a society in formation.

The focus on local and personal interests demonstrates that underlying the common language that unified the central state's narrative and popular suggestions were often rather different interpretations of the rights and roles of the state and citizens. Many Kirov residents, for example, were critical of the proposed guarantees of *habeas corpus*, not on principle but because crime was a regular feature of rural life. Tensions such as these between the central state leadership's

interpretation of the rights and duties of citizens, and citizens' interpretations became more apparent when some of the recently enfranchised former people seized upon their new constitutional rights and began to set forth their own candidates, who advocated for their own interests in the subsequent elections. Reports of anti-Soviet activities in the region and instances of former people nominating their own candidates for local offices were often sent to Moscow, where these reports most likely served to exacerbate the anxieties of the central leadership.

The onset of mass repression in 1937, followed by the massive destruction of Soviet society during World War II, meant that some of the aspirations enunciated in the Constitution remained unfulfilled. But one should not dismiss the 1936 Constitution out of hand. The opening up of the electoral franchise combined with a public forum for the discussion encouraged many Soviet citizens to engage the state in a dialogue, albeit a long distance one, about their needs and responsibilities. At no point in this dialogue can we find any trace of western liberalism. The draft constitution, while granting many of the rights and freedoms found in constitutions in Western Europe and North America, conveyed an entirely different vision of the role and function of a constitution. This was a social contract in a literal sense, one in which benefits and rights were specifically enunciated. The Soviet constitution was a roadmap to a socialist society and a specific type of democracy—Soviet democracy. Given the influence of the 1936 Soviet Constitution, the lack of scholarly attention that it has received seems odd. The author hopes that this study will not be the only study of that foundational document and popular reactions to it, nor of

the influence that it had on later Soviet and post- Soviet constitutions. As this study shows, such studies can provide keen insight into the desires and dislikes of the Soviet citizenry in the 1930s.

# Appendix 1

## The Draft Constitution of the USSR

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### Chapter I

#### Social Construction

**Article 1.** The Union of Social Socialist Republic is a socialist state of workers and peasants.

**Article 2.** The Soviets of Laboring People's Deputies, which grew and attained strength as a result of the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists and the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, constitute the political foundation of the USSR.

**Article 3.** In the USSR all power belongs to the laboring people of the town and country as represented by the Soviets of Laboring People's Deputies.

**Article 4.** The socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the means and instruments of production firmly established as a result of the abolition of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private ownership of the means and instruments of production and the abolition of the exploitation of man by man, constitutes the economic foundation of the USSR.

**Article 5.** Socialist property in the USSR exists either in the form of state property (the possession of the whole people), or in the form of cooperative and collective farm property (property of a collective farm or property of a cooperative association).

**Article 6.** The land, its natural deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, means of communication, large state-organized agricultural enterprises (state farms, machine and tractor stations, etc.) as well as municipal enterprises and primary housing stock in the cities and industrial centers, are state property, that is, belong to the whole people.

**Article 7.** Social enterprises in collective farm and cooperative organizations with their living and inanimate stock, used in collective farm and cooperative organization production, equally with their communal buildings are property of the collective farms and cooperative organizations. Every collective farm household can have a small garden plot and personal property for subsidiary economic activity on the garden plot, productive livestock, fowl and petty agricultural stock as specified in agreement with the charter of the artel'.



**Article 8.** The land occupied by collective farms is secured to them for an unlimited time, that is, in perpetuity.

**Article 9.** Alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the predominant form of economy in the USSR, the law permits the small private economy of individual smallholders and artisans based on their personal labor and precluding the exploitation of the labor of others.

**Article 10.** The right of citizens to personal ownership of their incomes from work and of their savings, of their dwelling houses and subsidiary household economy, their household furniture and utensils and articles of personal use and convenience, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law.

**Article 11.** The economic life of the USSR is determined and directed by the state national economic plan; in the interest of increasing the public wealth, of steadily improving the material and cultural level of the laborers, of consolidating the independence of the USSR and strengthening its defensive capacity.

**Article 12.** Labor is considered the duty of every able citizen on the principle “he who does not work does not eat”. In the USSR the principle of socialism-“ From each to his ability, to each according to his needs” is implemented.

## **Chapter II**

### **State Construction**

**Article 13.** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a unified state, formed on the basis of the voluntary association of Soviet Socialist Republics having equal rights, namely:

The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic  
The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Azeri Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Tadjik Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic  
The Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic

**Article 14.** The jurisdiction of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, as represented by its highest organs of state authority and organs of government, covers:

- a. Representation of the Union in international relations, conclusion and ratification of treaties with other states;
- b. Questions of war and peace;
- c. Admission of new republics into the USSR;
- d. Control over the observance of the Constitution of the USSR and ensuring conformity of the Constitutions of the Union Republics with the Constitution of the USSR;
- e. Approving the alterations of boundaries between Union Republics;
- f. Organization of the defense of the USSR and the leadership of all armed forces of the USSR;
- g. Foreign trade on the basis of state monopoly;
- h. Safeguarding the State security;
- i. Establishment of the national economic plans of the USSR;
- j. Approval of the single state budget of the USSR as well as of the taxes and revenues dealing with the educational all-Union, Republican and local budgets;
- k. Administration of banks, industrial and agricultural establishments and enterprises and trading enterprises of All-Union importance;
- l. Administration of transport and communications;
- m. Leadership of monetary and credit systems;
- n. Organization of state insurance;
- o. Raising and granting of loans;
- p. Establishment of the basic principles for the use of land as well as for the use of natural deposits, forests and waters;
- q. Establishment of the basic principles in the areas of education and public health;
- r. Organization of a uniform system of national economic statistics;
- s. Establishment of the principles of labor legislation;
- t. Legislation on the judicial system and judicial procedure; criminal and civil codes;
- u. Laws on union citizenship; laws on the rights of foreigners;
- v. Issuing of All-Union acts of amnesty;

**Article 15.** The sovereignty of the Union Republics is limited only within the provisions set forth in Article 14 of the Constitution of the USSR. Outside of these provisions, each Union Republic exercises state authority independently. The USSR protects the sovereign rights of the Union Republics.

**Article 16.** Each Union Republic has its own Constitution, which takes account of the specific features of the Republic and is formulated in complete conformity with the Constitution of the USSR.

**Article 17.** The right freely to secede from the USSR is reserved for every Union Republic.

**Article 18.** The territory of a Union Republic may not be altered without its consent.

**Article 19.** The laws of the USSR have the equal strength within the territory of every Union Republic.

**Article 20.** In the event of divergence between a law of a Union Republic and an all-Union law, the all-Union law prevails.

**Article 21.** For citizens of the USSR, a single Union citizenship is established. Every citizens of a Union Republic is considered a citizen of the USSR.

**Article 22.** The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic consists of these regions (krai): Azovo- Black Sea region, the Far Eastern region, Western Siberian region, Kransoiarsk, Northern Caucasian region; (oblast') Voronezh region, Eastern Siberian region, Gorky region, Western region, Ivanov region, Kalinin region, Kirov region, Kuibashev region, Kursk region, Leningrad region, Moscow region, Omsk region, Orenburg region, Saratov region, Sverdlovsk region, Northern region, Stalingrad region, Chliabinsk region, Yaroslavl region; Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics: Tartar republic, Bashkir republic, Dagestan, Buriat-Mongol republic, Kabardino-Balkar republic, Kalmytsk republic, Karelia republic, Komi republic, Crimean republic, Marii republic, Mordovsk republic, Volga German republic, Northern Ossetia, Udmurt republic, Chechno-Ingushetia, Chuvash republic, Iakutia; Autonomous regions: Adygeisk region, Jewish region, Karachevsk region, Oirotsk region, Khakassk region, Cherkessk region.

**Article 23.** The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic consists of the Vinnitsa, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Chenigov regions and Moldovsk Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic.

**Article 24.** The Azeri Soviet Socialist Republic includes the Nakhichevan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region.

**Article 25.** The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic includes the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Adjar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region.

**Article 26.** The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic includes the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

**Article 27.** The Tadjik Soviet Socialist Republic includes the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region.

**Article 28.** The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic consists of the Aktyubinsk, Alma-Ata, East Kazakhstan, West Kazakhstan, Karaganda and South Kazakhstan Regions.

**Article 29.** The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, Belorussian SSR, Turkmen SSR, and Kirgiz SSR don't have any autonomous regions within their borders.

### **Chapter III** **The Highest Organs of State Power of the USSR**

**Article 30.** The highest organ of state authority of the USSR is the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 31.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR exercises all rights conferred on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in accordance with Article 14 of the Constitution, in so far as they do not, by virtue of the Constitution, come within the jurisdiction of organs of the USSR that are accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, that is, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the People's Commissariats of the USSR.

**Article 32.** The legislative power of the USSR is exercised exclusively by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 33.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR consists of two Chambers: the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities.

**Article 34.** The Soviet of the Union is elected by the citizens of the USSR on the basis of one deputy for every 300,000 people.

**Article 35.** The Soviet of Nationalities is elected by the citizens of the USSR, allocated by Union and Autonomous Republics, and Soviets of Laborers Deputies of Autonomous Regions on the basis of 10 deputies from each Union Republic, five deputies from each Autonomous Republic, and two deputies from each Autonomous Region.

**Article 36.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR is elected for a term of four years.

**Article 37.** Both Chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, have equal rights.

**Article 38.** The Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities can in equal measure initiate legislation.

**Article 39.** A law is considered adopted if passed by both Chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR by a simple majority vote in each.

**Article 40.** Laws, passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, are published with the signatures of the Chairman and Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 41.** Sessions of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities begin and end at the same time.

**Article 42.** The Soviet of the Union elects a Chairman of the Soviet of the Union and two Vice-Chairmen.

**Article 43.** The Soviet of Nationalities elects a Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities and two Vice-Chairmen.

**Article 44.** The Chairmen of the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities preside over the sittings of the respective Chambers and direct the internal proceedings of these bodies.

**Article 45.** Joint meetings of both Chambers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are presided over alternately by the Chairman of the Soviet of the Union and the Chairman of the Soviet of Nationalities.

**Article 46.** Sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR twice a year. Special sessions are convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at its discretion or at the request of one of the Union Republics.

**Article 47.** In case of disagreement between the Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities, the question is referred for settlement to a conciliatory commission formed on an equal basis. If the conciliation commission fails to arrive at an agreement, or if its decision fails to satisfy one of the Chambers, the question is considered for a second time by the Chambers. Failing agreement between the two Chambers, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dissolves the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and orders new elections.

**Article 48.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR elects the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR at a joint sitting of both Chambers consisting of a Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 4 Vice-Chairmen, a Secretary of the Presidium and thirty one members of the Presidium. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for all its activities.

**Article 49.** The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR:

- a. Convenes the sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR
- b. Interpreting laws of the USSR currently in force, issues decrees;

- c. Dissolves the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in conformity with article 47 of the Constitution of the USSR and orders new elections;
- d. Conducts nationwide referendums on its own initiative or on the request of one of the Union Republics;
- e. Rescinds the decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and of the Councils of People's Commissars of the Union Republics in case they do not conform to law;
- f. Between sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, relieves of their posts and appoints individual People's Commissars of the USSR on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, subject to subsequent confirmation by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR;
- g. Awards decorations and confers titles of honor of the USSR;
- h. Exercises the right of pardon;
- i. Appoints and removes the higher commands of the armed forces of the USSR;
- j. In the intervals between sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, proclaims a state of war in the event of armed attack on the USSR;
- k. Orders general or partial mobilization;
- l. Ratifies international treaties;
- m. Appoints and recalls plenipotentiary representatives of the USSR to foreign states;
- n. Accept accredited diplomatic representatives from foreign states

**Article 50.** The Soviet of the Union and the Soviet of Nationalities elect Credentials Commissions, which verify the credentials of the members of each Chamber. On the recommendation of the Credentials Commissions, the Chambers decide either to endorse the credentials or to annul the election of the individual deputies.

**Article 51.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, when it deems it necessary, appoints auditing commissions on any matter. It is the duty of all institutions and public servants to comply with the demands of these commissions and to submit to them the necessary materials and documents.

**Article 52.** A deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR may not be prosecuted or arrested without the consent of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and during the period when the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is not in session, without the consent of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 53.** At the end of the term of office or after the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR prior to the expiration of its term of office, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR retains its powers until the formation of a new Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR by the newly-elected Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 54.** At the end of the term of office of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, or in case of its dissolution prior to the expiration of its term of office, the Presidium of

the Supreme Soviet of the USSR orders new elections to be held within a period not exceeding two months from the date of expiration of the term of office or dissolution of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

**Article 55.** The newly elected Supreme Soviet of the USSR is convened by the outgoing Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR not later than one month after the elections.

**Article 56.** The Supreme Soviet of the USSR at a joint sitting of both Chambers, appoints the Government of the USSR- the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR.

#### **Chapter IV** **The Highest Organs of State Authority of the Union Republics**

**Article 57.** The highest organ of state power of a Union Republic is the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic.

**Article 58.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic is elected by the citizens of the Republic for a term of four years. The basis of representation is established by the Constitution of the Union Republic.

**Article 59.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic is the only legislative organ of the Republic.

**Article 60.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic:

- a. Adopts the Constitution of the Republic and amends it in accordance with Article 16 of the Constitution of the USSR;
- b. Confirms the Constitutions of the Autonomous Republics forming part of it and defines the boundaries of their territories;
- c. Approves the national economic plan and also the Republic's budget;
- d. Exercises the right of amnesty and pardon of citizens sentenced by the judicial organs of the Union Republic.

**Article 61.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic elects the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic, consisting of a Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic, his deputy, and members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic. The powers of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic are defined by the Constitution of the Union Republic.

**Article 62.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic elects a Chairman and Vice-Chairmen to conduct its meetings.

**Article 63.** The Supreme Soviet of a Union Republic appoints the Government of the Union Republic, namely, the Council of People's Commissars of the Union Republic.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **The Organs of State Administration of the USSR**

**Article 64.** The highest executive and administrative organ of state power of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR

**Article 65.** The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR is responsible to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and accountable to it.

**Article 66.** The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issues decisions and orders on the basis and in pursuance of the laws in operation, and supervises their execution.

**Article 67.** The decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR are binding throughout the territory of the USSR

**Article 68.** The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR:

- a. Coordinates and directs the work of the All-Union and Union-Republican People's Commissariats of the USSR and of other institutions, economic and cultural, under its administration;
- b. Adopts measures to carry out the national economic plan and the state budget, and to strengthen the credit and monetary system;
- c. Adopts measures for the maintenance of public order, for the protection of the interests of the state, and for the safeguarding of the rights of citizens;
- d. Exercises general guidance in respect of relations with foreign states;
- e. Fixes the annual contingent of citizens to be called up for military service and directs the general organization and development of the armed forces of the country

**Article 69.** The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR has the right, in respect of those branches of administration and economy which come within the jurisdiction of the USSR, to suspend decisions and orders of the Councils of People's Commissars of the Union Republics and to annul orders and instructions of People's Commissars of the USSR.

**Article 70.** The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR is appointed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and consists of:

The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR;

The Vice-Chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR;



The Chairman of the State Planning Commission of the USSR;  
The Chairman of the State Control Commission  
The People's Commissars of the USSR;  
The Chairman of the Procurement Commission  
The Chairman of the Committee on Arts;  
The Chairman of the Committee on Higher Education;

**Article 71.** The Government of the USSR or a People's Commissar of the USSR, to whom a question of a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is addressed, must give a verbal or written reply to the respective Chamber within a period of not more than three days.

**Article 72.** The People's Commissars of the USSR direct the branches of state administration, which come within the jurisdiction of the USSR

**Article 73.** The People's Commissars of the USSR issue, within the limits of the jurisdiction of the respective People's Commissariats, orders and instructions on the basis and in accordance with the laws in operation, and also of decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and supervise their execution.

**Article 74.** The People's Commissariats of the USSR are either All-Union or Union-Republican Commissariats.

**Article 75.** The All-Union People's Commissariats direct the branches of state administration entrusted to them throughout the territory of the USSR either directly or through bodies appointed by them.

**Article 76.** The Union-Republican People's Commissariats direct the branches of state administration entrusted to them through the corresponding People's Commissariats of the Union Republics.

**Article 77.** The following People's Commissariats are All-Union People's Commissariats:

Defense,  
Foreign Affairs,  
Foreign Trade,  
Means of communication, (*putei soobshcheniia*)  
Communications (*sviazi*)  
Water Transport  
Heavy Industry

**Article 78.** The following People's Commissariats are Union-Republican People's Commissariats:

Food Industry,

Light Industry,  
Forest Industry,  
Agriculture,  
State Grain and Livestock Farms,  
Finance,  
Internal Trade,  
Internal Affairs,  
Justice,  
Public Health,

## **Chapter VI**

### **The Organs of Administration of the Union Republics**

**Article 79.** The highest executive and administrative organ of state authority of a Union Republic is the Council of People's Commissars of the Union Republic.

**Article 80.** The Council of People's Commissars of a Union Republic is responsible to the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic and accountable to it.

**Article 81.** The Council of People's Commissars of a Union Republic issues decisions and orders on the basis and in accordance with the laws in operation of the USSR and of the Union Republic, and of the decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and supervises their execution.

**Article 82.** The Council of People's Commissars of a Union Republic has the right to suspend decisions and orders of Councils of People's Commissars of Autonomous Republics, and to annul decisions and orders of Executive Committees of Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of Regions and Autonomous Regions.

**Article 83.** The Council of People's Commissars of a Union Republic is appointed by the Supreme Soviet of the Union Republic and consists of:

The Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Union Republic;  
The Deputy Chairmen;  
The Chairman of the State Planning Commission;  
The People's Commissars of:  
The Food Industry,  
Light Industry,  
Forest Industry,  
Agriculture,  
State Grain and Livestock Farms,  
Finance,  
Internal Trade,  
Internal Affairs,  
Justice,

Public Health,  
Education,  
Local Industry,  
Communal Economy,  
Social Maintenance,  
The Representative of the Provision Committee,  
The Head of the Art administration,  
Representatives of All Union People's Commissariat.

**Article 84.** The People's Commissars of a Union Republic direct the branches of state administration which come under the jurisdiction of the Union Republic.

**Article 85.** The People's Commissars of a Union Republic issue, within the limits of the jurisdiction of their respective People's Commissariats, orders and instructions on the basis and in accordance with the laws of the USSR and of the Union Republic, of the decisions and orders of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and that of the Union Republic, and of the orders and instructions of the Union Republican People's Commissariats of the USSR.

**Article 86.** The People's Commissariats of a Union Republic are either Union-Republican or Republican Commissariats.

**Article 87.** The Union-Republican People's Commissariats direct the branches of state administration entrusted to them, and are subordinate both to the Council of People's Commissars of the Union Republic and to the corresponding' Union-Republican People's Commissariats of the USSR.

**Article 88.** The Republican People's Commissariats direct the branches of state administration entrusted to them and are directly subordinate to the Council of People's Commissars of the Union Republic.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Highest Organs of State Power Of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics

**Article 89.** The highest organ of state authority of an Autonomous Republic is the Supreme Soviet of the ASSR.

**Article 90.** The Supreme Soviet of an Autonomous Republic is elected by the citizens of the Republic for a term of four years on the basis of representation established by the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic.

**Article 91.** The Supreme Soviet of an Autonomous Republic is the sole legislative organ of the ASSR.

**Article 92.** Each Autonomous Republic has its own Constitution, which takes account of the specific features of the Autonomous Republic and is drawn up in complete accordance with the Constitution of the Union Republic.

**Article 93.** The Supreme Soviet of an Autonomous Republic elects the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Autonomous Republic and appoints the Council of People's Commissars of the Autonomous Republic, in accordance with its Constitution.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **The Local Organs of State Power**

**Article 94.** The organs of state authority in territories, regions, autonomous regions, areas, districts, cities and rural localities (stations, villages, hamlets, kishlaks, auls) are the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies.

**Article 95.** The Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of territories, regions, autonomous regions, areas, districts, cities and rural localities (stations, villages, hamlets, kishlaks, auls) are elected by the laborers of the respective territories, regions, autonomous regions, areas, districts, cities or villages for a term of two years.

**Article 96.** The basis of representation for Soviets of Laborers' Deputies is defined by the Constitutions of the Union Republics.

**Article 97.** The Soviets of Laborers' Deputies direct the work of the organs of administration subordinate to them, maintain of public order, the observance of the laws and the protection of the rights of citizens, direct local economic and cultural organization and development and draw up the local budgets.

**Article 98.** The Soviets of Laborers' Deputies adopt decisions and issue orders within the limits of the powers vested in them by the laws of the USSR and of the Union Republic.

**Article 99.** The executive and administrative organs of the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of territories, regions, autonomous' regions, areas, districts, cities and rural localities are the Executive Committees elected by them, consisting of a Chairman, his deputy, and members.

**Article 100.** The executive and administrative organ of rural Soviets of Laborers' Deputies in small settlements, in accordance with the Constitutions of the Union Republics, is the Chairman and his deputy elected by them.

**Article 101.** The executive organs of the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies are directly accountable both to the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies, which elected them and to the executive organ of the superior Soviet of Laborers' Deputies.

## CHAPTER IX The Courts and the Procuracy

**Article 102.** In the USSR justice is administered by the Supreme Court of the USSR, the Supreme Courts of the Union Republics, the Territorial and the Regional courts, the courts of the Autonomous Republics and the Autonomous Regions, the special courts of the USSR established by decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and the People's Courts.

**Article 103.** In all courts cases are tried with the participation of people's assessors, except in cases specially provided for by law.

**Article 104.** The Supreme Court of the USSR is the highest judicial organ. The Supreme Court of the USSR is charged with the supervision of the judicial activities of all the judicial organs of the USSR and of the Union Republics.

**Article 105.** The Supreme Court of the USSR and the special courts of the USSR are elected by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for a term of five years.

**Article 106.** The Supreme Courts of the Union Republics are elected by the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics for a term of five years.

**Article 107.** The Supreme Courts of the Autonomous Republics are elected by the Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics for a term of five years.

**Article 108.** The Territorial and the Regional courts, the courts of the Autonomous Regions are elected by the Territorial and Regional Soviets of Laborers' Deputies or by the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of the Autonomous Regions for a term of five years.

**Article 109.** People's Courts are elected by the citizens of the district on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot for a term of three years.

**Article 110.** Judicial proceedings are conducted in the language of the Union Republic, Autonomous Republic or Autonomous Region with persons not knowing this language being guaranteed every opportunity of fully acquainting themselves with the material of the case through an interpreter and likewise the right to use their own language in court.

**Article 111.** In all courts of the USSR cases are heard in public, unless otherwise provided for by law, and the accused is guaranteed the right to defense.

**Article 112.** Judges are independent and subject only to the law.

**Article 113.** Supreme supervision over the strict execution of the laws by all People's Commissariats and institutions subordinated to them, as well as by public servants and citizens of the USSR, is vested in the Procurator of the USSR.

**Article 114.** The Procurator of the USSR is appointed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for a term of seven years.

**Article 115.** Procurators of Republics, Territories and Regions, as well as Procurators of Autonomous Republics and Autonomous Regions, are appointed by the Procurator of the USSR for a term of five years.

**Article 116.** District procurators are appointed for a term of five years by the Procurators of the Union Republics, subject to the approval of the Procurator of the USSR.

**Article 117.** The organs of the Procurator's Office perform their functions independently of any local organs whatsoever, being subordinate solely to the Procurator of the USSR.

## **Chapter X** **The Fundamental Rights and Duties of Citizens**

**Article 118.** Citizens of the USSR have the right to work, that is, are guaranteed the right to employment and payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality. The right to work is ensured by the socialist organization of the national economy, the steady growth of the productive forces of Soviet society, the elimination of the possibility of economic crises, and the abolition of unemployment.

**Article 119.** Citizens of the USSR have the right to rest. The right to rest is ensured by the reduction of the working day to seven hours for the overwhelming majority of the workers, the institution of annual vacations with full pay for workers and service workers and the provision of a wide network of sanatoria, rest homes and clubs for the accommodation of the laborers.

**Article 120.** Citizens of the USSR have the right to material security in old age and also in case of sickness or loss of capacity to work. This right is ensured by the extensive development of social insurance of workers and service workers at state expense, free medical service and the provision of a wide network of health resorts for the use of the laborers.

**Article 121** Citizens of the USSR have the equal right to education. This right is guaranteed by the existence of universal compulsory elementary education, free education up to higher school, a system of state stipends for the overwhelming majority of students in higher education and state aid for instruction in schools in native languages, the organization in factories, state farms, machine tractor stations

and on collective farms of industrial-technical and agricultural instruction for laborers.

**Article 122.** Women in the USSR are granted equal rights with men in all areas of economic, state, cultural, social and political life. The ability to use these rights is guaranteed to women by granting them an equal right with men to work, payment for work, rest, social insurance and education, and by state protection of the interests of mother and child, maternity leave with full pay, and the provision of a wide network of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens.

**Article 123.** Equal rights of citizens of the USSR, irrespective of their nationality or race, in all areas of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an inviolable law. Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or, conversely, any establishment of direct or indirect privileges for, citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.

**Article 124.** In order to ensure to citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the USSR is separated from the state, and the school from the church. Freedom from religious cults and freedom of antireligious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.

**Article 125.** In conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the USSR are guaranteed by law:

- a. freedom of speech;
- b. freedom of the press;
- c. freedom of assembly and meetings;
- d. freedom of street processions and demonstrations.

These civil rights are ensured by placing at the disposal of the laborers and their organizations printing presses, stocks of paper, public buildings, the streets, communications facilities and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights.

**Article 126.** In accordance with the interests of the laborers, and in order to develop the organizational initiative and political activity of the masses of the people, citizens of the USSR are ensured the right to unite in public organizations--trade unions, cooperative associations, youth organizations, sport and defense organizations, cultural, technical and scientific societies; and the most active and politically most conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other sections of the laborers unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is the vanguard of laborers in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and is the leading core of all organizations of the laborers, both public and state.

**Article 127** Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed the inviolability of their person. No one may be placed under arrest with the exception of under a court order or with the sanction of the procurator.

**Article 128.** The inviolability of the homes of citizens and privacy of correspondence are protected by law.

**Article 129.** The USSR grants the right of asylum to foreign citizens persecuted for defending the interests of the laborers, or for their scientific activities, or for their struggle for national liberation.

**Article 130.** It is the duty of every citizen of the USSR to observe the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to observe the laws, to maintain labor discipline, honestly to perform public duties, and to respect the rules of socialist conduct.

**Article 131** Every citizen of the USSR is obligated to take care of and strengthen social socialist property, as the sacred and inviolable foundation of soviet construction, as the source of wealth and power of the motherland, as the source of a prosperous and cultural life for all laborers. People, encroaching on social socialist property are considered enemies of the people.

**Article 132.** Universal military service is law. Military service in the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army is an honorable duty of the citizens of the USSR.

**Article 133.** The defense of the fatherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the USSR. Treason to the motherland--violation of the oath of allegiance, desertion to the enemy, impairing the military power of the state, espionage for a foreign state is punishable with all the severity of the law as the most heinous of crimes.

## **Chapter XI** **The Electoral System**

**Article 134.** the election of deputies to all Soviets of Laborers' Deputies--of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Supreme Soviets of the Union Republics, the Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of the Territories and Regions, the Supreme Soviets of the Autonomous Republics, and Soviets of Laborers' Deputies of Autonomous Regions, area, district, city and rural (station, village, hamlet, kishlak, aul) Soviets of Laborers' Deputies--are conducted on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot.

**Article 135.** Elections of deputies are universal: all citizens of the USSR who have reached the age of eighteen, have the right to participate in the election of deputies and to be elected, with the exclusion of insane people and those deprived of voting rights by the court



**Article 136.** Elections of deputies are equal: each citizen has the right to vote and be elected irrespective of race or nationality, religion, educational and residential qualifications, social origin, property status or past activities.

**Article 137.** Women have the right to vote and be elected on equal terms with men.

**Article 138.** Citizens serving in the Red Army have the right to vote and be elected on equal terms with all other citizens.

**Article 139.** Elections of deputies are direct: all Soviets of Laborers' Deputies, from rural and city Soviets of Laborers' Deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR are elected by the citizens by direct vote.

**Article 140.** Voting at elections of deputies is secret.

**Article 141.** Candidates for election are nominated according to electoral areas. The right to nominate candidates is secured to public organizations and societies of the working people: Communist Party organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, youth organizations and cultural societies.

**Article 142.** It is the duty of every deputy to report to the voters on his work and on the work of the Soviet of Laborers' Deputies, and may be recalled at any time in the manner established by law upon decision of a majority of the electors.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **The Coat of Arms, Flag and Capital**

**Article 143.** The coat of arms of the USSR consist of a sickle and hammer against a globe, surrounded by ears of grain, depicted in the rays of the sun and with the inscription "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" in the languages of the Union Republics. At the top of the arms is a five-pointed star.

**Article 144.** The state flag of the USSR is of red cloth with the sickle and hammer depicted in gold in the upper corner near the staff and above them a five-pointed red star bordered in gold. The ratio of the width to the length is 1: 2.

**Article 145.** The capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is the City of Moscow.

## **Chapter XIII**

### **Procedure for Changing the Constitution**

**Article 146.** Changes to the constitution can only occur upon the decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, adopted by a 2/3 majority in each house.

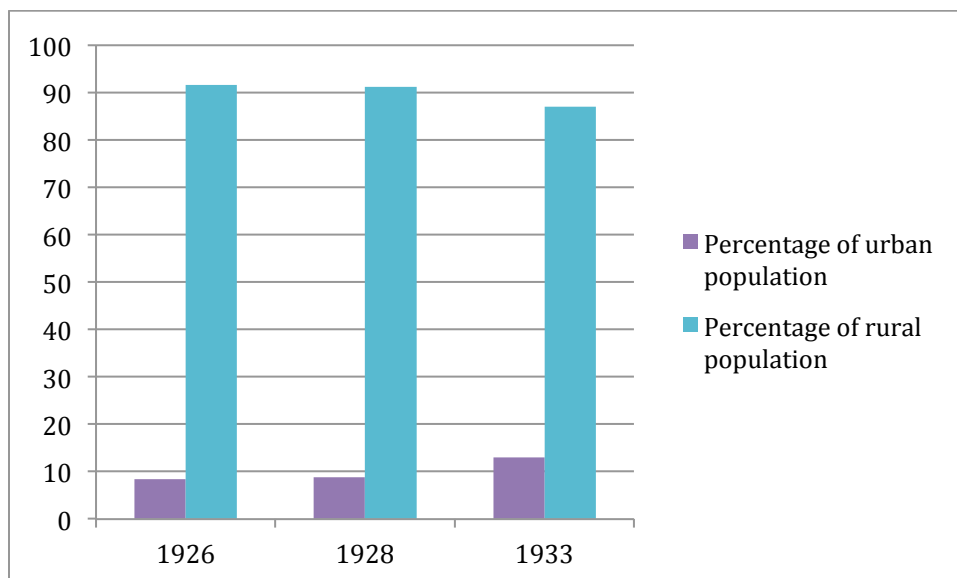
# Appendix 2

## Population Changes in the Kirov Region

Source: *Kirovskii krai v tsifrakh*, (Moskva: TsUNKhU GOSPLANA SSSR), 171.

<b>Territory</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1928</b>	<b>1933</b>
Total for the Krai	3176,900	3233000	3317000
City	267,600	285,400	432,500
Village	2909,300	2947,600	2884,500
Percentage of urban population	8.4	8.8	13
Percentage of rural population	91.6	91.2	87.0

### Changes in Rural and Urban population of Kirov Region 1926-1933

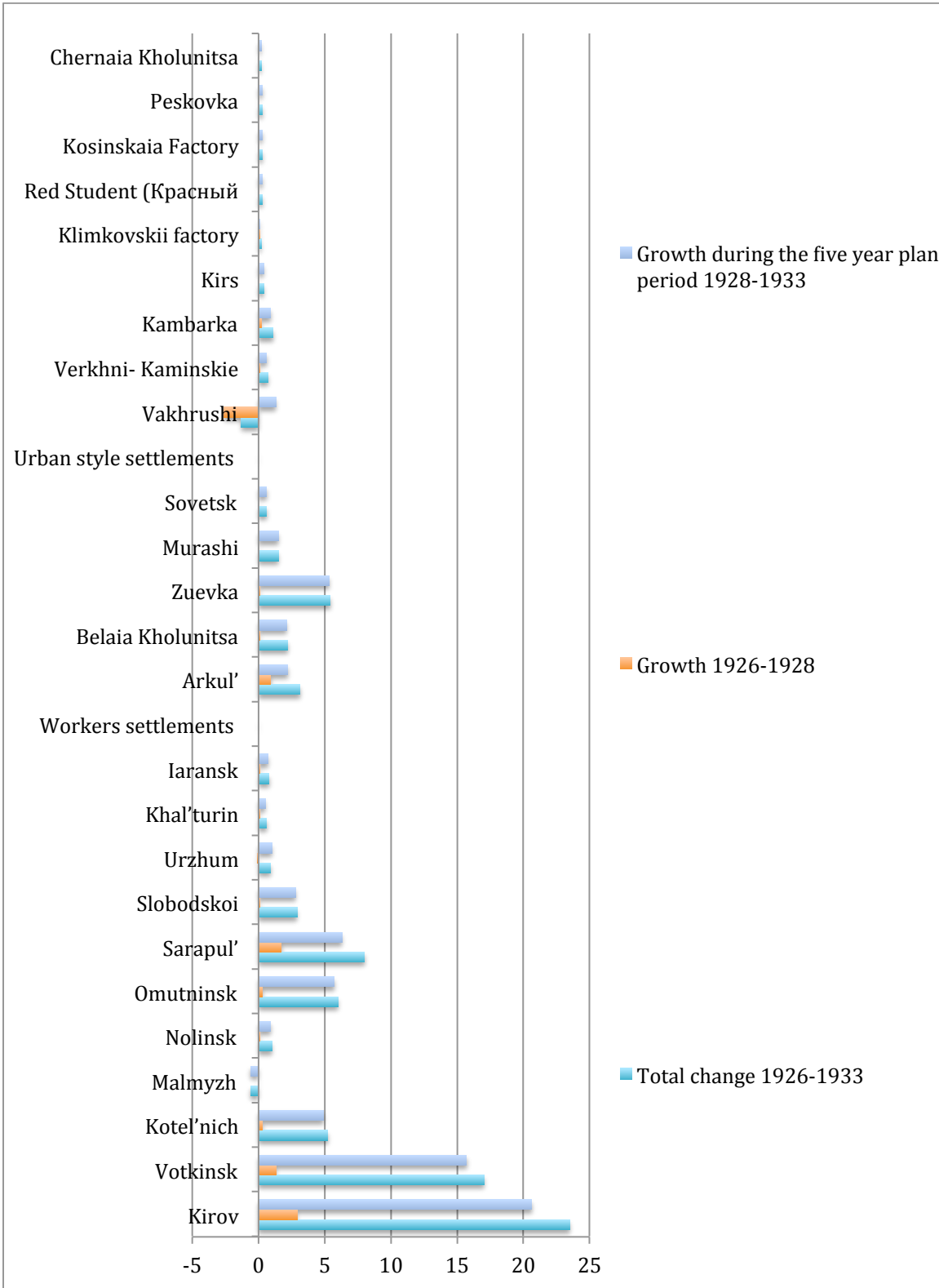


## The Population of Cities, Workers Settlements and Urban style settlements in thousands of people 1926-1933

Source: *Kirovskii krai v tsifrakh*, (Moskva: TsUNKhU GOSPLANA SSSR), 171.

Name of the City	1926	1928	1931	1933	Total change 1926-1933	Growth 1926-1928	Growth during the five year plan period 1928-1933	% of total increase	% increase 1926-1928	% increase 1928-1933
Kirov	62.1	65	74.4	85.6	23.5	2.9	20.6	27.5	4.5	24.1
Votkinsk	19.2	20.5	32	36.2	17	1.3	15.7	47.0	6.3	43.4
Kotel'nich	7.5	7.8	10.7	12.7	5.2	0.3	4.9	40.9	3.8	38.6
Malmyzh	5.6	5.6	4.5	5	-0.6	0	-0.6	-12.0	0.0	-12.0
Nolinsk	5.5	5.6	6.1	6.5	1	0.1	0.9	15.4	1.8	13.8
Omutninsk	6.4	6.7	7.5	12.4	6	0.3	5.7	48.4	4.5	46.0
Sarapul'	25.3	27	30.5	33.3	8	1.7	6.3	24.0	6.3	18.9
Slobodskoi	10.9	11	12.3	13.8	2.9	0.1	2.8	21.0	0.9	20.3
Urzhum	5.7	5.6	6.3	6.6	0.9	-0.1	1	13.6	-1.8	15.2
Khal'turin	4.7	4.8	4.6	5.3	0.6	0.1	0.5	11.3	2.1	9.4
Iaransk	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.9	0.8	0.1	0.7	11.6	1.6	10.1
Workers settlements										
Arkul' Belaia	0.09	1	3.2	3.2	3.11	0.91	2.2	97.2	91.0	68.8
Kholunitsa	3	3.1	5.1	5.2	2.2	0.1	2.1	42.3	3.2	40.4
Zuevka	3.6	3.7	6.2	9	5.4	0.1	5.3	60.0	2.7	58.9
Murashi	1.7	1.7	2.7	3.2	1.5	0	1.5	46.9	0.0	46.9
Sovetsk	4.8	4.8	5.2	5.4	0.6	0	0.6	11.1	0.0	11.1
Urban style settlements										
Vakhrushi	4	1.4	2.9	2.7	-1.3	-2.6	1.3	-48.1	-185.7	48.1
Verkhni-Kaminskie phosphorite	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.1	0.6	77.8	33.3	66.7
Kambarka	6.3	6.5	7.1	7.4	1.1	0.2	0.9	14.9	3.1	12.2
Kirs	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.3	0.4	0	0.4	9.3	0.0	9.3
Klimkovskii factory	1.5	1.6	1.6	1.7	0.2	0.1	0.1	11.8	6.3	5.9
Red Student (Красный курсант)	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.3	0	0.3	37.5	0.0	37.5
Kosinskaia Factory	0.7	0.7	1	1	0.3	0	0.3	30.0	0.0	30.0
Peskovka	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.7	0.3	0	0.3	8.1	0.0	8.1
Chernaia										
Kholunitsa	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.5	0.2	0	0.2	13.3	0.0	13.3

**The Population of Cities, Workers Settlements and Urban style settlements in thousands of people 1926-1933**

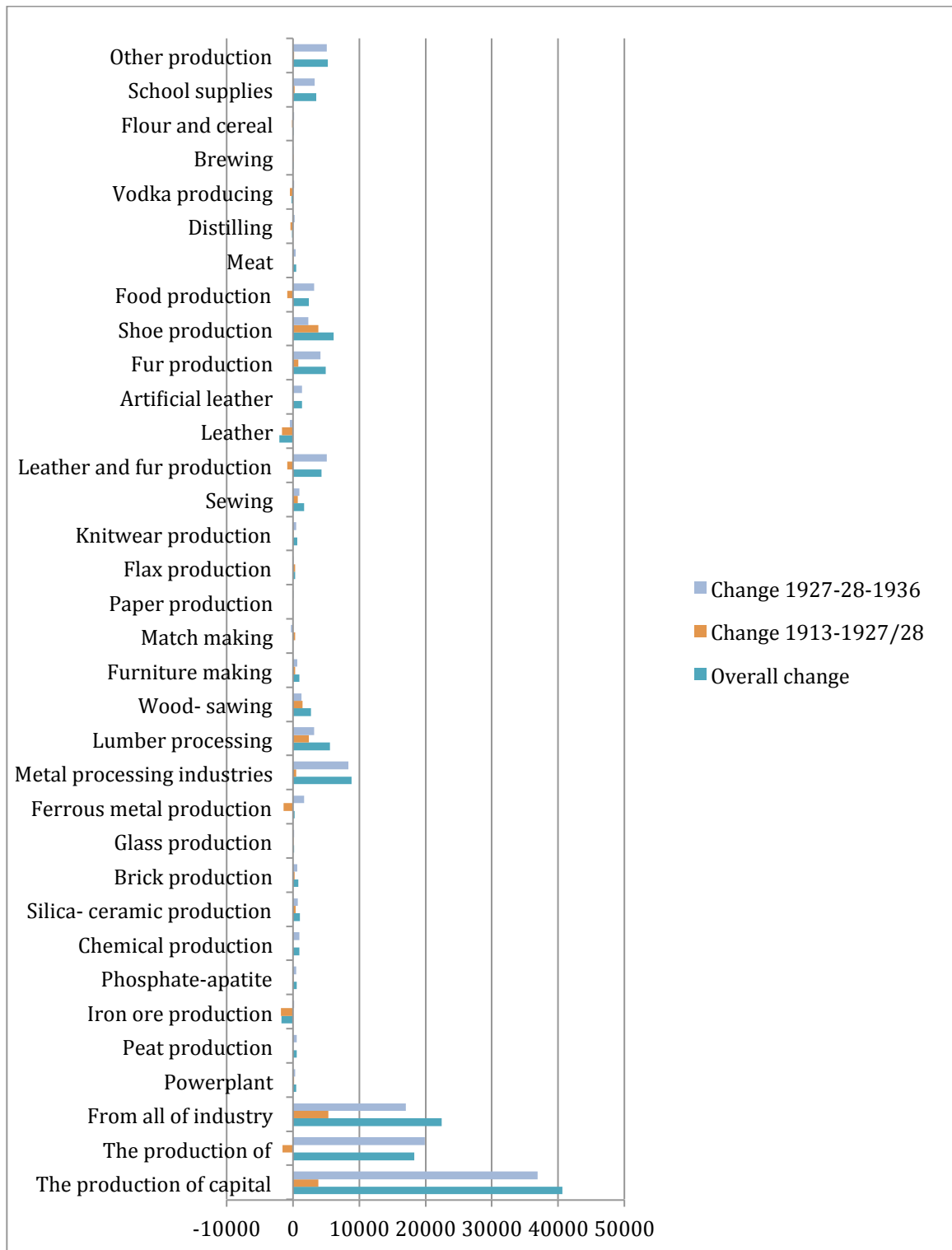


## Change in Number of People Engaged in Industrial Output in Kirov Region

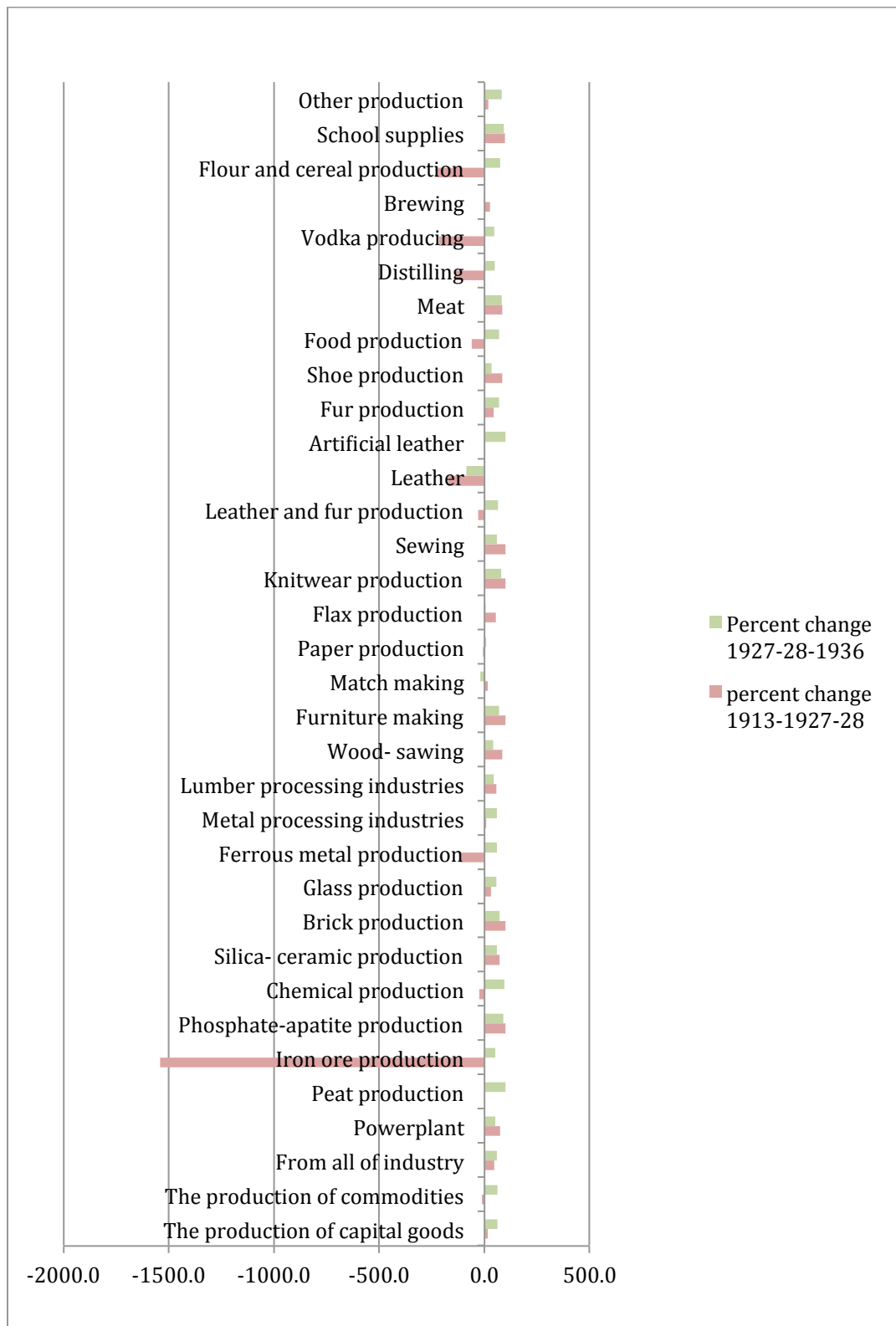
Source: Viatskii Krai v rubezhe tysiacheletii: istorii i sovremennost', (Kirov: komitet gosudarctvennye statistiki, 2002), 72.

	1913	1927\28	1932	1936	Overall change	Change 1913-1927/28	Change 1927/28-1936	Percent change 1913-1927-28	Percent change 1927-28-1936
All industry	20394	24180	49831	61050	40656	3786	36870	15.7	60.4
The production of capital goods	14036	12464	26652	32309	18273	-1572	19845	-12.6	61.4
The production of commodities	6358	11716	23179	28741	22383	5358	17025	45.7	59.2
Powerplant	72	270	268	558	486	198	288	73.3	51.6
Peat production	-	-	-	536	536	-	536	-	100.0
Iron ore production	1970	120	-	246	-1724	-1850	126	-1541.7	51.2
Phosphate-apatite production	-	68	353	589	589	68	521	100.0	88.5
Chemical production	77	61	1949	1037	960	-16	976	-26.2	94.1
Silica- ceramic production	148	514	1332	1221	1073	366	707	71.2	57.9
Brick production	-	230	946	839	839	230	609	100.0	72.6
Glass production	70	101	104	228	158	31	127	30.7	55.7
Ferrous metal production	2591	1194	2612	2854	263	-1397	1660	-117.0	58.2
Metal processing industries	5124	5583	10302	13914	8790	459	8331	8.2	59.9
Lumber processing industries	1812	4172	7324	7377	5565	2360	3205	56.6	43.4
Wood- sawing	293	1736	2582	2978	2685	1443	1242	83.1	41.7
Furniture making	-	288	1005	927	927	288	639	100.0	68.9
Match making	1501	1799	1115	1499	-2	298	-300	16.6	-20.0
Paper production	821	757	771	819	-2	-64	62	-8.5	7.6
Flax production	276	590	548	624	348	314	34	53.2	5.4
Knitwear production	-	122	86	604	604	122	482	100.0	79.8
Sewing	-	696	1602	1683	1683	696	987	100.0	58.6
Leather and fur production	3697	2858	5367	7964	4267	-839	5106	-29.4	64.1
Leather	2613	955	550	515	-2098	-1658	-440	-173.6	-85.4
Artificial leather	-	-	-	1366	1366	-	1366	-	100.0
Fur production	1084	1903	4706	6023	4939	819	4120	43.0	68.4
Shoe production	728	4521	8693	6834	6106	3793	2313	83.9	33.8
Food production	2192	1356	2628	4550	2358	-836	3194	-61.7	70.2
Meat	15	90	545	526	511	75	436	83.3	82.9
Distilling	647	272	413	518	-129	-375	246	-137.9	47.5
Vodka producing	649	205	230	387	-262	-444	182	-216.6	47.0
Brewing	266	364	280	376	110	98	12	26.9	3.2
Flour and cereal production	182	55	109	217	35	-127	162	-230.9	74.7
School supplies	8	239	1702	3517	3509	231	3278	96.7	93.2
Other production	878	1059	4294	6123	5245	181	5064	17.1	82.7

## Change in Number of People Engaged in Industrial Output in Kirov Region



## Percentage of Change in People engaged in Industrial Production in the Kirov Region



### Size of Named Enterprises in Kirov Region in 1935

Name of enterprise	Location	Number of workers in 1935
Votkinskii Machine building factory <sup>695</sup>	Votkinsk	5,458
Kosinskaia paper factory <sup>696</sup>	Zuevskii raion	189
Kordiazhskaia paper factory <sup>697</sup>	Zuevskii raion	163
Novo-Kanstaninovskaia paper factory <sup>698</sup>	Mal'myzhskii raion	127
"Bolshevik" forest products factory <sup>699</sup>	Mal'myzhskii raion	111
Kalininskii distilling factory <sup>700</sup>	Mal'myzhskii raion	69
Leather combine <sup>701</sup>	Sarapulskii raion	1,222
"Squirrel" Fur factory <sup>702</sup>	Slobodskoi raion	4,491
Lenin leather shoe factory <sup>703</sup>	Slobodskoi raion	1,790
The "Squirrel" Match Factory <sup>704</sup>	Slobodskoi Raion	442
The Anchor factory <sup>705</sup>	Slobodskoi raion	331

<sup>695</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 27.

<sup>696</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 35.

<sup>697</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 35.

<sup>698</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 65-66.

<sup>699</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 65-66.

<sup>700</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 65-66.

<sup>701</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 93.

<sup>702</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 98.

<sup>703</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 98.

<sup>704</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 98.

<sup>705</sup> *Raiony Kirovskoi oblasti*, (Kirov: oblastnoe izdatel'stvo, 1937), 98.



## Living conditions in the city of Kirov

Source: *200 let viatskoi guberny*, Kirov, 158

Name of the owner of the living space	Total square meters of living space	Square meters per person	Plumbing (running water)	Sewerage	Central heating	Electric Lighting
Total	704,800	..	19.9%	0.6%	2.4%	61.4%
Industry	326,300	4.4	8.0%	0.1%	2.2%	33.0%
Cooperative housing rental society (жилищные арендные кооперативные)	289,900	5.6	31.2%	..	0.4%	89.0%
Housing Trusts	37,400	6.0	37.3%	5.0%	21.6%	86.5%
Housing construction cooperative society (жилищно-строительные кооперативные)	44,200	4.9	21.0%	4.1%	..	79.9%
Housing directly used by the	6,600	..	4.6%	1.6%	..	40.9%

**Report on Collectivization of Kirov Region from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1936 based on the data of the Raion Land Organizations.**

Source: Kirov Region Statistical department of the Regional Land Administration GASPI KO, F. 1255, op. 2, d. 364. L36

The raion grain production administration	Number of Collective Farms	Number of households in the collective farms	Average number of collective farmers per collective farm†	Percent collectivized as of Jan 1.	Percent collectivized as of Oct. 1	Change in percent collectivized between Jan. and Oct.†	People capable of working		% collective farmers, capable of working, engaged in migrant work†	Those excluded from collective farms
							Total	Number engaged in Migrant labor		
Belokholunitskii	199	5213	26	97,7	97,6	-0.10	12079	1042	8.6	-
Viserovskii	43	2596	60	86,7	87,0	0.30	4908	276	5.6	68
Viatka Polianskii	139	9532	69	85,1	84,0	-1.10	21252	1904	9.0	73
Verkhoshizhenskii	260	6462	25	98,3	98,3	0.00	12680	1731	13.7	51
Vozhgal'skii	241	7427	31	97,9	97,9	0.00	15445	1905	12.3	38
Verkhovinski	333	8003	24	96,2	95,6	-0.60	18005	1912	10.6	17
Votkinskii	117	5749	49	82,2	81,3	-0.90	8437	516	6.1	42
Ziudzinskii	133	4987	37	85,7	79,8	-5.90	9454	719	7.6	10
Kaiskii	41	3144	77	-	97,7		6199	583	9.4	9
Kirovskii	461	12607	27	92,9	82,5	-10.40	26432	2208	8.4	68
Kil'mezskii	185	7126	39	85,5	85,5	0.00	12525	856	6.8	ений
Kumenskii	175	4892	28	94,1	92,9	-1.20	9892	1211	12.2	13
Kyrchanskii	152	5641	37	96,1	95,9	-0.20	11434	1110	9.7	ений
Karakulinskii	71	3424	48	68,3	69,6	1.30	6678	642	9.6	21
Киясовский	62	3704	60	86,8	85,7	-1.10	5876	548	9.3	25
Lebiazhskii	260	7912	30	94,5	94,6	0.10	15917	1722	10.8	29
Malmyzhskii	148	8229	56	79,7	82,7	3.00	16900	1251	7.4	93
Murashinskii	217	3799	18	96,8	95,8	-1.00	6826	679	9.9	21

Nemskii	115	5668	49	94,3	94,3	0.00	10323	1103	10.7	32
Nolinskii	173	6001	35	95,2	94,5	-0.70	13433	1334	9.9	50
Nagorskii	152	4186	28	95,1	95,1	0.00	8319	1073	12.9	ений
Omutninskii	65	3039	47	97,6	97,0	-0.60	6851	406	5.9	14
Orichevskii	422	10029	24	91,5	91,4	-0.10	21447	2604	12.1	4
Prosnitskii	243	6890	28	98,6	97,0	-1.60	13360	1550	11.6	-
Polomskii	125	3310	26	93,5	91,8	-1.70	6967	704	10.1	9
Sarapul'skii	168	8780	52	84,0	84,1	0.10	16283	1012	6.2	44
Slobodskoi	288	7861	27	94,4	93,8	-0.60	16432	2719	16.5	19
Sovietskii	276	8971	33	97,4	97,3	-0.10	19530	1998	10.2	28
Sunskii	278	7661	28	96,6	96,6	0.00	15120	1498	9.9	14
Taraurovskii	231	5060	22	96,3	96,2	-0.10	10500	1478	14.1	34
Urzhumskii	271	10830	40	94,6	94,5	-0.10	21099	2143	10.2	54
Falenskii	126	5088	40	97,4	96,9	-0.50	10068	1109	11.0	49
Khalturinskii	405	10032	25	94,4	93,3	-1.10	18789	2737	14.6	ений
Shestakovskii	208	4567	22	92,0	91,6	-0.40	9192	1249	13.6	28
Total in grain management Итого по управ	6922	225106	33	91,5	90,5	-1.00	450682	46423	10.3	1013
Arbzhskii	303	8332	27	82,8	77,9	-4.90	18112	2075	11.5	41
Bogorodskii	286	7861	27	98,8	97,6	-1.20	17160	1179	6.9	28
Bel'skii	168	4840	29	94,2	94,2	0.00	10795	747	6.9	17
Darovskoi	241	9142	38	88,7	85,4	-3.30	16936	1908	11.3	22
Zuevskii	390	9917	25	92,8	91,4	-1.40	19188	2175	11.3	57
Kinknurskii	257	9449	37	87,9	87,8	-0.10	21461	2338	10.9	24
Kotel'nicheskii	346	9590	28	-	86,1		18920	2035	10.8	12
Kichminskii	151	5304	35	-	96,4		10476	877	8.4	41
Makar'evskii	202	7245	36	96,7	96,2	-0.50	13986	2047	14.6	9
Pizhanskii	125	7014	56	94,8	94,6	-0.20	14171	2200	15.5	32
Sanchurskii	262	12043	46	83,1	82,4	-0.70	26640	2994	11.2	21

Salobeliaskii	183	6363	35	93,3	91,8	-1.50	13685	1585	11.6	11
Svechenskii	315	7277	23	89,7	90,0	0.30	13301	1838	13.8	22
Tuzhinskii	224	7331	33	79,7	78,6	-1.10	16306	1750	10.7	28
Uninskii	254	8102	32	93,5	92,4	-1.10	16043	936	5.8	5
Chernovskii	180	6486	36	92,3	91,5	-0.80	12436	1310	10.5	20
Shabalinskii	372	9898	27	94,0	94,0	0.00	21353	1369	6.4	62
Sharangskii	153	6914	45	82,0	78,9	-3.10	12676	1030	8.1	36
Iaranskii	298	8295	28	88,1	86,7	-1.40	17959	2294	12.8	25
The Udmurt Autonomous Republic (УАССР)	2988	122577	41	93,2	92,2	-1.00	256150	20556	8.0	446
Total in flax producing regionsИт. по Льнокону	7698	27398	4	91,1	90,0	-1.10	567754	53243	9.4	959
Total for the Krai	14620	499086	34	91,3	90,3	-1.00	1018436	99666	9.8	1972
						-0.93				

† these columns do not exist in the original document and were added to clarify and interpret the data. This table was also edited down from its larger form with columns deleted for brevity.

## Appendix 3

### Document 1

#### Letter from Chairman Bobkov to the Central Executive Committee

13.11.36

To the chairman of the kraiispolkom, Comrade Bobkov

From the available data provided by the instructor of the Presidium All Union Central Executive committee (ВЦИК) comrade Maslov, it is obvious that the act of compiling the additions and corrections to the draft constitution in the organizational section of the Kraiispolkom did not proceed without some problems: the statistical reports are very confusing and they had been made very tentatively, the Kraiispolkom doesn't know the exact number of additions. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, for example in the statistical accounting of the organizational section of the Kraiispolkom it was formally listed that the laborers of the krai had brought 1543 suggestions to the draft constitution, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October the quantity of suggestions had grown to 2 and a half thousand. The verification of Instructor Maslov established that such a number of suggestions were not present on either the 2 or 10<sup>th</sup> of October, but also did not turn up on the day the inspector verified things, (the 20<sup>th</sup> of October)

The organizational section of the Kraiispolkom used fictitious statistics in place of the actual accounted for 219 suggestions on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 660 on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, the organizational section reported 1543 and 2142 additions admitting in essence to whitewashing the organizational department of the Presidium of the All Union Central Executive Committee and all of that led to white washing and cheating and made your own situation awkward because of the deliberately false data given to you for your article in 'Pravda'. I ask you to pay attention to the organization of the statistical report of suggestions and additions that laborers bring to the draft constitution, and also report to us what you have done in connection with the stated facts in this letter.

Deputy Secretary of the TsIK – Novikov<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 122

## Document 2

### Comrade Bobkov's Letter to the Central Executive Committee

22.11.36

Deputy Secretary All Union Central Executive Committee- the Chairman of the Organization Section of the All-Union Central Executive Committee- Comrade Novikov

We received your letter from the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1936 about the apparently false information given to the Organizational section of the TsIK about the suggestions brought by the laborers of the Krai to the draft constitution of the USSR. I verified the data of our organizational section and established that:

1. In the summaries and telegraphed data received from the raiispolkomy, which lists I asked for on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, the number of the reported suggestions to the draft constitution was 1545, but in our report given to the TsIK on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October it stated 1543 suggestions, two less than reported.
2. In the information from the raiony on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October the number of recorded suggestions was 2177.
3. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, in the data of the raikomy there were counted 3015 suggestions, but we reported to you in our report 2788 suggestions, which is 227 less.
4. We sent you 2 books, one with 1563 suggestions and another with 1327 suggestions to the draft constitution. The first book was sent on the 23 of October and the second on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>707</sup>
5. Above all, in the organizational section of the Kraiispolkom there are around 900 suggestions that we have not sent because they were received late and because a portion of them cannot be brought to the draft constitution, but relate to the work of local organs of power.
6. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November in the raiony of the krai there were counted 3968<sup>708</sup> additions to the draft constitution 1,009,212 participated in the discussion of the draft constitution. I sent you a summary at this time.

All of this data as a whole refutes the fiction, which instructor Maslov reported to you, falsifying the true state of affairs.

Instructor TsIK Comrade Maslov in fact seized upon only the texts of the suggestions received by the Kraiispolkom, but not reported in Rikov's. In fact the Kraiispolkom received 219 texts of suggestions on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 600 on the 10<sup>th</sup> but 3302 on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November.

In reporting to you about this I ask you to exculpate us from the wrongful accusation of whitewashing.

Chairman of the Kraiispolkom Bobkov<sup>709</sup>

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<sup>707</sup> The material I have from GASPI KO, which was also replicated in GAKO, has 2,648 suggestions not the 2890 suggestions that Bobkov claims were sent to the TsIK

<sup>708</sup> I found 3,208 suggestions in all of the Raikom, kraikom, raiispolkom and Kraiispolkom materials

<sup>709</sup> GAKO, f. 2168, op. 1, d. 473, l. 123

## Document 3

### Comrade Ovechkin's Letter

Central Executive Committee

Suggestion in connection with the new Stalinist constitution, to include pensions from the insurance office. (српакка)

In connection with the working up of the Stalinist constitution, I will not describe that enthusiasm at the acceptance of the constitution, it is clear and thanks to comrade Stalin and his coworkers. And I cannot be silent about that true democracy which soviet power gives us and the most important additions and suggestions to it the most insignificant. Seeing this I would like to bring a suggestion to article 120, about guaranteeing of material security to elderly and disabled, apropos to existing regulations about assigning the disabled at work pensions from an insurance office

Pensions should be based on the final year's pay and in the absence of such reports, on the basis of qualifications or rating, reflecting the years of class struggle on the collective farms. Consideration should be given to those who freely served as qualified workers on weak collective farms to organize poor members, to the temporary disruptions of financial ability and progress such work caused as collective farms pay a very small rate to civilians, and in particular thoughtfulness should be given to the worker who saw this, but committed himself to the pursuit of class struggle and came to help, not paying attention to selfish question of low wages, who is in retirement at this time. The insurance office doesn't consider these activities when calculating pensions, or the qualifications of the worker, only the small collective farm wages. As a result, the worker loses part of his pension. In my opinion it is necessary for the insurance office to take stock of such invalids who participated in class struggles.

In the existing laws and regulations, the pensioner has the right to earn money on the side and not be stripped of his pension a total of not greater than three years, which takes into account the final year. This completely satisfies only pensioners with a large pension, who can work on the side, not losing their pension, but it doesn't satisfy those with small pensions. Also this should be reviewed in light of the raising of worker pay in the USSR, the improvement of the daily lives of the laborers and elimination of unemployment long ago. Allow a higher minimum with the surpluses for the year from which the calculations were done.

Distribute periodically additional funds to pensioners living not only in the cities, but also in the countryside. This abovementioned suggestion I request to add if it is possible, upon reviewing the regulations on insurance offices, in connection with the Stalinist Constitution. I very much ask this of the Central Executive Committee.

My suggestion, are request born of my own experience, which for clarity I shall briefly write out: In R-Mureka in 1927, a collective farm, which focused on forest products, was organized. Kulaks organized a sawmill but, finding themselves in subjugating agreements, the kulaks left at the end of 1928 leaving the poor peasants in need of an accountant, but no one was satisfied with the pay and the collective farm went out of business. The beginning of class struggle had caused me to throw aside

service as an accountant in a trade society (потребобществе) where the pay rate was around 7 rubles. With overtime and an apartment allowance I went to work on the collective farm for 45 rubles a month. In 1929 I became sick and over the course of the year had to retire. I wanted to move to a forest organization with a salary of 100 to 150 rubles as a consequence. But the collective farm didn't release me, promising in the future material support from the insurance office and also from the collective farm. The class struggle on the collective farms increased and I committed myself to this activity, and threw aside selfish demands. But, in March of 1932, I got married and retired, and found that my pay from overtime was only 54 rubles and as a pensioner from the third group, I today receive 18 rubles 59 kopeks. I cannot work permanently. I am sick. My qualifications are as an accountant of a cooperative or bookkeeper of a forest organization. By the regulations of the insurance office I have the right to make up to 2/3 more than my pension on the side, or 37 rubles and 18 kopeks. I have witness testimony from collective farmers and the rural soviet that to state I am worthy of a personal pension. I hope that they like the suggestion about insurance offices and also inquire about my suggestion on pensions because under the existing regulations I receive some money but for my selflessness it is enough.

I very much ask the Central Executive Committee to write to the village

T. Ovechkin 8\11\1936

Here is my address

Bochtiu otd. Russkii Tyrakh (Russian turn) Shurminskii raion, Kirovskii Krai,  
Ovechkin Timofei Petrovich

#### **Document 4**

#### **Yuri Krasnoperov's Letter**

"To the center of Moscow."

In connection with the new draft constitution, I ask that you pay attention to children's nurseries and kindergartens, in order to maintain children's health so that our young generation doesn't die from poor care and also make provisions for directors, in such cities as Sarapul, Kirovskii Krai. There are deadly sicknesses in the nurseries here, on account of their being insufficient nannies for children. We need children for the replacement of our ranks of school children and also defenders of our Motherland the USSR. Therefore I ask you earnestly to pay attention to my letter.

My address, city of Sarapul, Kirovskii Krai

Yuri Alekseevich Krasnoperov- 10 years old

It is my birthday.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 41, d. 84, l. 35



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