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Pragmatists and
Puritans: The Rise
and Fall of the Party
Control Commission

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At its widely celebrated "Congress of Victors" in 1934, the Soviet Communist Party reorganized and redeployed its disciplinary and verification efforts into a Party Control Commission *Komissiiia partiinogo kontrol'ia*, KPK. With a strong explicit mandate and considerable publicity, the party leadership put the KPK in charge of investigating party malfeasance at all levels and of ensuring "fulfillment of decisions" throughout the party. Stalin assigned high-ranking and authoritative party leaders (first L. M. Kaganovich, then N. I. Ezhov) to lead the new body, whose agents were vested with the power to give "obligatory instructions" to any party or state body. Almost immediately, the KPK began a struggle with regional party leaders over contested prerogatives of center and periphery, as well as attitudinal and juridical differences between uncompromising, straitlaced inspectors and more pragmatic, flexible administrators. Yet despite its high-level mandate and the destruction of many of its enemies in the purges, by 1938 the KPK had failed to fulfill its promise and was essentially discarded as an inspection agency. This essay looks at the Party Control Commission in the 1930s as an ultimately unsuccessful Stalinist political tactic.¹

At Lenin's suggestion, the party leadership had created a Central Control Commission (*Tsentral'naia Kontrol'naia Komissiiia*, TsKK) in the early 1920s to check on the activities of party committees from cell level up to the Central Committee, to prevent bureaucratism, and to identify ideological heresy. The TsKK of the 1920s was to fight against party bureaucratism and red tape by investigating breaches of discipline (moral or financial corruption, drunkenness, abuse of position, failure to fulfill party tasks, and so on) among party members. Party leaders made the TsKK independent of the Central Committee (TsK) and its network of party committees in order to prevent conflicts of interest and to guarantee that TsKK members could investigate members of the Central Committee itself. No one could be both a control commission and party committee member simultaneously, and the TsKK was to have independent authority to "go after" any party member accused of

bureaucratism or violation of discipline, regardless of their rank. Its state counterpart, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection (Rabkrin), was charged with parallel investigations of state and economic bodies.

In practice, the TsKK worked in three principal directions. First, very early in its history, the TsKK was used against the Trotskyist and other left oppositions. Although it was technically supposed to be neutral in political disputes, the Stalinist faction co-opted and controlled the central TsKK quite early on: dissident activities of party members were defined as a breach of discipline. Leaders of the TsKK in the 1920s (Shkiriatorov, Kuibyshev, Ordzhonikidze, Iaroslavskii, and others) were all loyal Stalin supporters. Thirteen times in the 1920s, the supposedly neutral and independent TsKK met jointly with the Central Committee; the Stalinists used TsKK votes against the oppositions to supplement their majorities in the Central Committee.²

Second, the TsKK busied itself with investigations of nonpolitical cases of personal corruption and nonfulfillment of economic plans. One TsKK resolution from the period listed the "main tasks" as verifying quality in heavy industry, agriculture, and light industrial production, struggling against corruption, and guaranteeing fulfillment of governmental plans.³ To these ends, local and regional control commissions received and processed thousands of written and oral complaints from average citizens about the work of various party leaders. In 1933, the Western Region (*oblast'*) Control Commission (ZapOblKK) and the Rabkrin processed over twenty-nine thousand complaints.⁴ Of these, eight thousand-nine hundred were specifically directed to the ZapOblKK, eight thousand were investigated, and 49 percent of those investigated were expelled from the party.⁵ According to their official report, the ZapOblKK settled 55 percent of the complaints to the complainant's satisfaction. In most cases, expulsion from the party was followed by transfer of the case to police or judicial authorities.⁶

Third, the control commissions, through a network of "party collegia," heard appeals from those expelled by party committees, routinely reversing one-half to three-fourths of the expulsions it considered. For example, in the Western Region in

1931, 55 percent of all those expelled from the party locally were readmitted upon appeal to the *oblast'* control commission, and another 4 percent were readmitted by the Moscow TsKK over the heads of the ObIKK.⁷ In 1933, the Smolensk ObIKK found that 75 percent of all expulsions from *kolkhozy* were "incorrect" and reinstated the victims.⁸

Although the original charter of the TsKK had specified independence from the regular party committees, practice in the 1920s had been to subordinate control commissions to local party bodies. Members of control commissions at regional level and below were "elected" locally.⁹ This effectively meant that the composition of control commissions, which were supposed to be checking the activities of party committees, was controlled by the party committees themselves. By the late 1920s, local branches of the TsKK across the country had fallen under the sway of the territorial party committees they were supposed to police, becoming little more than "institutions running errands" for party committees.¹⁰

Indeed, by the early 1930s, local party machines had come to dominate much in the Soviet countryside. These local and regional party committees were the government for most of the population. First secretaries of *oblast'*, *krai* (territory), city, and even *raion* (district) party organizations were powerful men. Because they were often distant from Moscow, because communications (and therefore controls) were poor,¹¹ and because Moscow desperately needed some political presence in the countryside, local and provincial officials were practically autonomous satraps. Especially in the 1929–1932 period when Moscow relied on them to carry out collectivization and industrialization, these officials became "little Stalins" in their bailiwicks. While Moscow gave the orders, it seems that local party bodies and leaders, far removed from the capital, carried out policies independently and frequently at odds with those desired by Moscow. Campaigns—including purges—could be stalled, sped up, aborted, or implemented in ways that suited local conditions and interests.¹² Local judiciary bodies carried out trials and pronounced sentences wildly at variance with the procedures prescribed in the center, but in accord with the political interests of local machines.¹³

Although Moscow needed these viceroys to govern an often stubborn and hostile countryside, central officials began to complain about the situation in sharp terms. Stalin, in his 1934 speech to the Seventeenth Party Congress, referred to provincial chiefs as "appanage princes" who felt that central decisions "were not written for them, but for fools." He noted that local officials did their best "to hide the real situation in the countryside" from Moscow and complained that local officials did not fulfill central directives. "These overconceited bigwigs think that they are irreplaceable, and that they can violate the decisions of the leading bodies with impunity."¹⁴

By 1934, the complete domination of control commissions by party committees precluded them from effectively policing the party, and a major reorganization was ordered.¹⁵ In his 1934 speech, Stalin said: "The proper organization of checking the fulfillment of decisions is of decisive importance in the fight against bureaucracy and red tape. . . . We can say with certainty that nine-tenths of our defects and failures are due to the lack of a properly organized system to check up on the fulfillment of decisions."¹⁶ In order to guarantee such fulfillment, Stalin announced the conversion of Rabkrin and the TsKK into a Soviet Control Commission and a Party Control Commission (KPK).¹⁷ He justified the conversion of the TsKK into a KPK by claiming that the old TsKK's main role had been preventing a split in the party. Now that the opposition was defeated and there was no longer a danger of a split, "we are urgently in need of an organization that could concentrate its attention mainly on checking the fulfillment of the decisions of the party and of its Central Committee."¹⁸

Unlike the old TsKK, the KPK was under (*pri*) the direct Central Committee chain of command. One obvious explanation might be that Stalin did not trust the TsKK to go after oppositionists as ferociously as he would have liked and wanted to concentrate more power in his hands; the KPK after 1934 was a direct arm of his Central Committee apparatus. But it is hard to sustain the idea that Stalin distrusted the old TsKK or its members, or that he needed to exercise direct control over its activities. First, there was strong continuity in leading personnel between the old

TsKK and the new KPK. Of the twenty-five full members of the last TsKK Presidium, twelve became full members of the KPK or of the new Soviet Control Commission (KSK). Another six were promoted to Central Committee membership. The two secretaries of the old TsKK's Party Collegium (M. F. Shkiriatorov and E. Iaroslavskii) became the two secretaries of KPK's Collegium, and six of the seven members of the new KPK's directing *buo* had been members of the TsKK Presidium. Second, Stalin hardly needed to formally subordinate it to the Central Committee simply to control it. He already dominated the TsKK.

The real reason for the transformation of the TsKK into the KPK had less to do with bringing it under Stalin's control than with taking verification activities out of the hands of local party leaders who had manipulated local TsKK commissions. One strident Stalinist, who would become the representative of the KPK in Smolensk, wrote in 1933 that Control Commission purges (*chistki*) of party committees since 1929 had been controlled by leaders of those very committees: "The basic deficiency. . . was exactly that the conduct of the purge was organized by selecting party members [for purge commissions] from their own organization. This sometimes introduced into the purge elements of *mestnichestvo*, local attitudes, and influence."¹⁹ In other words, local party secretaries, through their domination of local control commissions, were able to steer purges away from their friends and toward their opponents. As we shall see, giving the KPK the backing (*pri*) of the Central Committee would give it more authority in dealing with local barons.

Accordingly, the Seventeenth Party Congress decided that regional plenipotentiaries (*upolnomochennye*) of the new KPK were to be appointed by the Moscow KPK and confirmed by the Central Committee of the party; that is, by Stalin.²⁰ The new plenipotentiaries were to be completely independent of local party secretaries and were to answer only to Moscow. As newly appointed KPK chief L. M. Kaganovich rather bluntly put it, "The party created the KPK at the congress as an operational organ of our Leninist Central Committee."²¹ Such a reorganization threatened the power of regional power (*obkom*) secretaries in two ways. First, it reduced their power to appoint and manipulate local control personnel. Second, it

meant that the centrally dispatched plenipotentiaries of the KPK would be agents of central power functioning inside the territorial political "family circles." Stalin had decided to place such agents--the "king's men" as it were--inside the regional party committees as an institutional measure to insure the "fulfillment of decisions" locally. The reorganization fostered a new built-in hostility, a turf battle, between the local-minded, pragmatic party committees and the central-minded, strict KPK checkers. As we shall see, the regional party leaders displayed considerable resilience and strength in resisting this new interference from the capital.

Who were the antagonists in this struggle? In Smolensk, the two poles of competing authority were Western *obkom* First Secretary Ivan Petrovich Rumiantsev and KPK Plenipotentiary to the Western Region Leonid Andreevich Paparde. Rumiantsev, a longtime Stalin supporter, had been a Central Committee member since 1925. Paparde, unlike most regional KPK representatives, was a full member of the KPK from its inception in 1934. Both were powerful officials, but their jobs, politics, and ultimately their personalities were quite different.

Rumiantsev was a typical provincial party boss. A distinguished Old Bolshevik of proletarian stock, he was a metalworker who had joined the party in 1905. During the Civil War he served in several military and political capacities, including leadership of a revolutionary tribunal and punitive detachment. He thus had a solid revolutionary and Civil War pedigree and had ruled the Smolensk region since 1929 with a personal touch. Large photographs of him and his assistants appeared frequently in the press, and his birthday sparked a two-day celebration complete with congratulatory messages from common folk and adulatory telegrams from his underlings. His speeches were invariably published in full and his good-natured but efficient rule was regularly emphasized. The democratic-minded Rumiantsev invited ordinary workers to dine at his home, where they were allowed to use the good crystal. In the region of Smolensk, factories, enterprises, and one entire district were named for him. In the speeches of his minions, Rumiantsev was "the best Bolshevik in the region."²² He was also a privileged member of the national party elite and had

the right to receive Politburo appropriations of valuable American dollars to fund his vacations abroad.²³

In 1935, Leonid Andreevich Papatse was appointed plenipotentiary of the KPK to the Western Region. Before that, he had worked in Siberia, having been chairman of the Western Siberian TsKK (1932–34) and KPK plenipotentiary in Sverdlovsk (1934–35). Like his predecessor in Smolensk (Ian Bauer), and like so many officials in police and other control agencies, Papatse was not a Russian. Son of a Latvian peasant, he was one of the early members of the Latvian Social Democratic Party, which he joined in 1911 with party card number 124. He was a combat veteran of the Civil War, during which he received the Order of the Red Banner on the Kolchak front.²⁴ From the little we know about him and his career, he seems to have been a stalwart Stalinist centralizer. Two years before he came to Smolensk, he had written two pamphlets in Novosibirsk on the 1933 *chistka* and on revolutionary legality. In the first of these, he had explicitly blamed local party leaders for using their influence and "familyness" to protect their own and had ominously warned that the class enemy would now act "on the sly" to undermine the Soviet regime.²⁵ In the second work, he had offered a strong defense of the draconian "Law of August 7" (1932), which authorized the death penalty for even minor theft of state property, warning of the persistence of hidden class enemies and the dangers of "bourgeois sentimentality." For the puritanical Papatse, enemies were everywhere, and "the chief thing, I repeat, is the organization of security, the mobilization of mass vigilance."²⁶

The chief thing for Rumiantsev, on the other hand, was getting things done. His performance was evaluated largely by results: getting in the flax harvest, running the *kolkhozy* as smoothly as possible, meeting industrial targets. Up to the mid-thirties, Moscow was not too picky about how he accomplished these things as long as he showed results. Rumiantsev had almost complete control over personnel assignments in the *oblast'*; his appointees staffed the organs of district party government, justice, and the procuracy. If someone had talent and necessary experience, the Rumiantsevs would appoint and use him, no questions asked, even

if his class or political background were dubious.²⁷ Like any Soviet industrial/agricultural manager (for that is what *obkom* secretaries had become by 1934), he authorized his subordinates to push hard to show practical results for which he answered directly to Moscow.²⁸

Paparde, by contrast, was a stickler and a checker. Like his counterparts in the NKVD, he was always on the lookout for discrepancies, violations, and crimes. His performance was also evaluated by results: how many investigations, how many expulsions did he sponsor? Unlike the Rumiantsevs, the Papardes were not practical types. For Paparde, present and former class enemies (there was no difference) were everywhere and anyone who had dealings with them was suspect, whatever the reason or circumstance. Never having run anything, they did not understand the need to use talented people regardless of their background, to cut corners, to push for supplies in gray areas, and to not worry too much about the letter of the law. The Papardes were straitlaced and puritanical; like St. Just, they believed that any violation of law or of revolutionary morality should be punished severely.

Both the pragmatic and the puritanical views had their adherents at all levels of the apparatus, and there was constant disagreement about whether or not stern measures should be taken. For example, Stalingrad KPK Plenipotentiary Frenkel said in a closed-door speech that workers at the Machine Tractor Stations (MTS) "carried away" tractor parts. Kaganovich interrupted him, saying that he was being too polite.

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Kaganovich: | You are using flowery language. |
| Frenkel: | The workers steal parts and sell them. |
| Kaganovich: | Who says that is not theft? |
| Frenkel: | [People] in the <i>krai</i> and in Moscow. |
| Kaganovich: | Who? |
| Frenkel: | There are certain comrades. I forget their names now. [Laughter in the hall.] They don't consider this theft. |

Kaganovich: How is that? [*Kak zhe*] It is common theft. It is an organization of embezzlement and theft.²⁹

Frenkel recounted another incident that illustrates how, higher up in the economic structure, the blurred line between theft and pragmatic dealings was a way of life. Once, when he had finished a speech against pilfering and illegal dealings, a state farm director and an MTS chief had come up to him, asking if he wanted to hear the real truth. They told him how they routinely received construction plans and orders from on high but without materials to implement them. "We think, what to do? We went to supply organizations, showed them the plan and the documents and said, give us the materials. They just stared at us and said they had no materials and that [construction materials in] the plan were already distributed. Then the supply apparatus people said, 'Ivan Ivanovich, if you give us meat, bread, and money--on a certain freight car are nails and glass; you will get everything.' We thought again, what to do? If we wait, we cannot build. If we break the law, we can. We decided to break the law."³⁰

For Frenkel, the supply apparatus people who offered the nails and glass were criminals.

Frenkel: Comrade Shkiryatov does not like such things, but in Stalingrad they say, "Influence [*blat*] is a great thing."

Shkiryatov: Influence. . .yes. . . [Laughter in the hall.]

Frenkel: It is not a joke. Enemies do not think to take us on openly, but rather by fouling our plan of construction. The courts are too lenient on this³¹...

KPK official Akulinushkin of Ukraine reported to a KPK plenum on the bartering system that characterized the work of virtually all economic agencies:

"They even swap in the Vinitsa *obkom* cafeteria." He went on to report how one state farm director had sold 450 of the farm's pigs independently.

- Voice: Where did the money go?
- Akulinishkin: It went to the state farm. It doesn't matter where the money went, but rather who gave the director the right to sell 450 of the state's pigs?
- Shkiryatov: How did the party district committee view the matter?
- Akulinishkin: When we [the KPK] examined the case, it turned out that the *raikom*, the district soviet, and district prosecutor had received pigs from the state farm, and everybody was happy.³²

The "feudal" nature of power relations in the 1920s and 1930s presented the Moscow leadership and the general population with severe problems and contradictions. Moscow needed the Rumiantsevs, but at the same time feared and resented the power they deployed locally and the loose way they did business. Local misconduct and disobedience of central directives were endemic. They discredited the regime as a whole, but what could be done? A frank discussion of local abuse might well expose the regime's own undemocratic foundations to an undesirable public discussion.³³ Wholesale replacement or annihilation of miscreant local officials would destabilize an already precarious political situation in the countryside and, in any case, would not correct the built-in structural-geographical-political problem.

The regime needed both Rumiantsevs and Papardes. For a Rumiantsev to show results, he needed tremendous authority; but to have that authority put him in a position of relative independence from Moscow.³⁴ To prevent political fragmentation of the system and to reign in the power of the Rumiantsevs were the jobs of the KPK plenipotentiaries. From 1934 to 1937, the regime tried to maintain a kind of dialectical tension between the Rumiantsevs and the Papardes: first tipping

the scales one way and then the other in order to have a system that would show economic results in the countryside without fragmenting the Moscow power base. As we shall see, this latest attempt by Moscow to govern a chaotic and rapidly changing system—an institutionalized system of tension/control—failed in 1937, as this and other similar attempts at nonviolent centralization collapsed.

On the last day of the Seventeenth Party Congress (February 10, 1934), the newly elected seventy-one-member Central Committee and sixty-one-member KPK held separate meetings. Very little is known about this *pervoe zasedanie* of the KPK.³⁵ According to the laconic "informational communication," the meeting elected a chairman of the KPK (L. M. Kaganovich), a deputy chairman (N. I. Ezhov), and a seven-member *buro*. At the session, the KPK directed its *buro* to draw up a statute (*polozhenie*) for the KPK in the near future, and a special commission chaired by Ezhov was formed to work out the structure and procedures for the KPK leadership.³⁶

A few weeks later, in March, the statute appeared. It gave three main tasks for the KPK: checking on the fulfillment of Central Committee decisions locally, bringing violators of discipline to party responsibility, and bringing violators of "party etiquette" to justice. To do this, KPK was "to organize operational control of fulfillment of decisions" of the party congress and Central Committee. Its charter gave it wide powers. The KPK had the right to recruit party members for its work, and to control its staff (*apparat*) in the countryside. KPK members and plenipotentiaries had the right to read the protocols of meetings of the Politburo, Orgburo, and Secretariat and to attend meetings of the Central Committee and of any party organization in the country. Leaders of KPK operational groups also had the right to attend Politburo meetings.³⁷

KPK plenipotentiaries were regarded as representatives of the center for "operational control of fulfillment," and they had the obligation to "systematically communicate" with the center on the progress of fulfillment locally. Indeed, the KPK plenipotentiaries were empowered, in cases of clear local violations of Central

Committee decisions, "to give obligatory instructions to all soviet and economic organs. . .and to *raikoms* of the party and primary party organizations."³⁸

This early statute foresaw the possibility of conflict between KPK representatives and party secretaries. It stated that KPK plenipotentiaries "should" work and make "proposals" through the appropriate channels of *oblast'* and *krai* leadership. But the statute also required local party committees to consider and act upon violations by their members, when such violations were reported by the KPK. If the party committees refused to take action, the KPK was required to notify the Central Committee of this fact. In case of disagreement between KPK plenipotentiaries and local party secretaries, KPK representatives "will make their proposals to the Central Committee."³⁹

Three months later, the KPK had its second plenum, which took place on June 26–28, 1934, just before the June plenum of the Central Committee.⁴⁰ The KPK plenum heard speeches from several leaders and passed resolutions aimed at strengthening control in agriculture, the fishing industry, trade unions, and the press.⁴¹ For our purposes, though, the most important topic discussed at the plenum was the emerging conflict between local party bosses and the representatives of the KPK. Because the KPK and Central Committee plenums took place almost simultaneously in Moscow, it is reasonable to suspect that members of the Central Committee who were regional party secretaries were available to make their views known to the KPK.

In the few months since the KPK's inception, its plenipotentiaries had taken their investigatory role seriously, and some of them had already run afoul of the regional party organizations they were supposed to police. In their recounting of conflicts with local party leaders, the KPK plenipotentiaries sometimes elicited knowing and ironic laughter from their colleagues.

Plenipotentiary Shadunts (from the Azov Black Sea Territory), mentioned the powerful territorial first secretary, Boris Sheboldaev, by name, and complained that the party leadership (*kraikom*) had blocked KPK proposals to remove certain party leaders accused of malfeasance.⁴² In one case of KPK-party conflict, the chairman of

a local rural soviet had illegally arrested citizens, imposed fines on large numbers of people and threatened collective farmers by waving his revolver at them. The local procurator had filed charges against him but had been fired by the district party committee, which sought to protect "their own" chairman. The KPK had then intervened to restore the procurator and sack the district party leaders.⁴³

Shadunts complained that the *kraikom* intentionally delayed and sometimes forbade publication of KPK decisions in the local press. "The *kraikom* wishes to put the plenipotentiaries of the KPK in the position of the former TsKK, first so that all decisions of the KPK would agree with the *kraikom* and second to make party control in its work dependent on the *kraikom* (to get resources, buildings, and so forth)."⁴⁴

Plenipotentiary Frenkel from Stalingrad reported to the KPK plenum that he had criticized the Stalingrad *kraikom* at a plenum: "I tried to maintain in this maximum loyalty. (Laughter in the hall.)" Nevertheless, the head of the territorial soviet executive committee publicly protested against Frenkel's criticism. Plenipotentiary Akulinushkin (Ukraine) had a similar experience. When he spoke critically of the regional party committee at its plenum, Odessa *obkom* First Secretary Veger supported him. "I then went on vacation. When I returned, my speech or even presence [at the plenum] had not been recorded in the protocols. (Laughter)."⁴⁵

Indeed the regional party secretaries were powerful figures who not only protected their authority but also marshaled reasonable arguments in defense of that power. KPK chief Rubenov from Kiev recounted that "our *obkoms* tell us that KPK interference prevents them from competing with other *obkoms* where there is less control." He went on to pinpoint the legal crux of the matter: the KPK statute authorized plenipotentiaries to give direct orders to state and party organs, but this was "complicated" in economic areas where such orders could duplicate existing chains of command. Further, the statute mandated that all "important" decisions should be routed through the regional party leadership. The trick, as Rubenov noted, was in deciding what were "the most important questions."⁴⁶ As KPK leader Paparde noted, given the prevailing political situation in the provinces a KPK plenipotentiary would have to be quite brave to try and set up "a real system of control."⁴⁷

No stenogram of the plenum was ever published, and none of the speeches directly relating to the KPK plenipotentiaries saw light of day, but L. M. Kaganovich wrote in the party press that "at the plenum, much was said about the independence of plenipotentiaries from the *obkoms* and *kraikoms*." Apparently summarizing the discussion, he observed that "Arguments between kraikoms and plenipotentiaries do and should take place" in the natural order of things. He also noted that such disputes had been "serious business" in the past three months. Without an unseemly public discussion of the nature of all the disputes, Kaganovich was at pains to smooth over the friction by making suggestions to the plenipotentiaries. He advised them to keep the party committees apprised of their investigations: "They [*obkom* secretaries] should not have to read about it in the press." Kaganovich forbade KPK plenipotentiaries from publishing the results of their investigations in the press without the approval of the party committee. He counseled the plenipotentiaries to pose "concrete practical questions" to the party committees; the two groups should avoid fighting over every issue because "they have the same goals." He suggested three informal "approaches" to control: First, KPK representatives should simply call people up on the telephone and point out problems. If that did not work, they should write letters to party secretaries, committees, and/or commissars. Finally, and only as a last resort, the KPK plenipotentiary could appeal to the KPK and Central Committee, where "Comrade Stalin personally" would resolve the dispute.⁴⁸

The gist of Kaganovich's June 1934 speech was to dampen the conflict between the two groups by reining in the activities of the plenipotentiaries. They had apparently been fairly high-handed in their conduct: hiding their investigations from party committees, publishing criticisms in the local press without clearing them with the *obkom*, and generally "fighting it out" with local leaders. Kaganovich was trying to quiet the situation down without destroying the independence of the KPK plenipotentiaries from the local leaders. It seems, though, that regional party leaders had scored a point against the "meddling" of the KPK inspectors.

For the next several months, a chastened KPK stayed out of the news. The plenipotentiaries seem to have spent much of their time investigating politically

neutral cases of corruption. In the early weeks of 1935, KPK sections in the party's organizational journal described a series of actions against criminals and various malefactors, all of whom turned out to be local leaders. Without again provoking the wrath of the powerful regional party lords, the KPK managed to make its points against them.

Thus the director of the Middle Volga Soviet executive committee had been dispensing free food to friends, under the very nose of the party committees and with the connivance of two executive committee secretaries. "Systematic drunkenness" in the leadership of both soviet and party organizations had allowed him to operate freely. The local KPK plenipotentiary had broken the case and moved against the high-ranking participants.⁴⁹ In Stalingrad region, the *raikom* secretary, Maslov, managed to block investigation of large numbers of complaints directed against "his people." His assistant, the secretary Pimenov, managed to quash forty-three indictments on grounds of insufficient evidence. Under the direction of the Maslov/Pimenov group, local courts would confiscate the property of convicted persons and then sell it to friends (including wives of the judges!). Meanwhile, Maslov, Pimenov, and their fellow secretary Leonov were running the Novoannenskii *raikom* through a drunken haze without holding any party meetings. Killjoys from the KPK penetrated the ring and expelled all three party secretaries and the judge of the *raion* court.⁵⁰

Another example highlighted the KPK's antilocal leadership attitude. Comrade Samurin, a conductor on the Kiev railroad, was expelled by his local party committee for white-collar social origins and leaving work without permission. He appealed his expulsion to the local KPK, which launched an investigation. It turned out that Samurin, a loyal railroad worker for thirty years, had been the victim of a "baseless" vendetta because he had "discredited a member of the *partkom buro*" (party committee). The KPK reversed his expulsion and took action against the high-handed leadership of the party committee.⁵¹

Meanwhile, local organs of the KPK were investigating and expelling cadres from the party for more routine offenses. Once or twice per month, local newspapers

reported these nonpolitical disciplinary investigations. In February 1935, the Western (Smolensk) OblKK expelled twenty-one persons: five for drunkenness, five for dereliction of duty, four for familial or other contact with "alien elements," three for not fulfilling party duties, three for unspecified "illegal acts," and one for deceiving the party.⁵²

After a year of such muted "criticism by analogy," the KPK became more visible and audible in the middle of 1935 in connection with the continuing screenings (*chistki*) of the party. Unlike the screenings of the 1920s, the purges of the mid-30s were conducted by the regular party committees, not the control commissions.⁵³ It became the job of the KPK plenipotentiaries to watch over the purging and to correct mistakes made by the regular party committees and secretaries.

In May 1935, the Central Committee announced the upcoming "Verification [Proverka] of Party Documents." The general idea was that party organizations were to purge themselves of careerists, opportunists, "enemies," drunks, bureaucrats, and those not having proper party membership documents.⁵⁴ Party secretaries were enjoined personally to supervise the process, to use care and attention to each member and his/her dossier, and to check the actual party cards and files assiduously. On May 26, the Western *obkom* held a meeting of all *raikom* secretaries to acquaint them with the letter and to spell out the procedures.⁵⁵ At that time, KPK plenipotentiary Papatde made a speech warning party officials against "adventurers" in the party and warning them to be responsible and careful in carrying out the *proverka*.⁵⁶

One month later, in a published resolution, the Central Committee blasted the Western Region for bungling the verification.⁵⁷ The Central Committee complained that in Smolensk, the operation had been entrusted to minor clerical personnel who had rushed the matter through, expelling large numbers of innocent members in batches. Western *obkom* Second Secretary Shil'man was criticized by name (and threatened with expulsion from the party), as were several other local officials. Two days after the Central Committee decision, Papatde delivered a fiery and sharply

critical speech to the assembled officials of the Smolensk City Party Organization. Quoting from the published decision, he noted that it was not just a matter of little mistakes but "fundamental problems" in Smolensk. He denounced the party secretary and Rumiantsev's assistant Arkhipov personally, claiming that the latter's shoddy leadership had allowed enemies to slip through the *proverka*. His very strong speech (whose publication was delayed in the party-controlled newspaper) asserted that bureaucratism had penetrated the highest levels of city party leadership and accused Smolensk party officials of being *chinovniki* (bureaucrats (perj.) in their baseless and cursory expulsions of rank-and-file party members.⁵⁸

It seems likely that the KPK had instigated the Central Committee censure of Smolensk. Papatseva's speech was peppered with examples of party misconduct from around the *oblast'*; clearly he had researched the bungling of the *proverka* before the Central Committee censure. And, as we shall see below, similar Central Committee attacks in other regions specifically mentioned the KPK's role in uncovering problems with the screening. In the case of the verification, the KPK was acting as Moscow's informant on the bureaucratic conduct of party tasks.

Under the pressure of the KPK/Central Committee attack, Smolensk party officials hurried to cover themselves with contrite speeches, articles, and public confessions of their poor work. The Western *obkom* quickly held a plenum and passed a resolution denouncing itself and recognizing the Central Committee criticism as "completely justified."⁵⁹ The besieged Shil'man wrote a series of exculpatory pieces in the local press, and several *raikom* secretaries did the same.⁶⁰ Both Rumiantsev and Shil'man published repentant articles in the national party organizational journal, and Rumiantsev publicly admitted that "the *burow* as a whole, and I as first secretary in particular, made gross political mistakes."⁶¹

Most of these articles, while accepting the Central Committee's criticism of the *oblast'* leadership, put much of the blame on *raikom* officials in the districts. One district secretary noted that the "fire" of criticism "was especially sharp against the *raikoms*."⁶² In Smolensk, at least, the KPK/Central Committee pressure was so intense that party secretaries broke ranks and began to accuse one another of

mistakes. One powerful and ubiquitous *raikom* secretary, Fedor Bolshunov, wrote in the party press that while he and his fellow *raikom* officials were guilty, so were higher-ranking members of the regional leadership: "I do not want to put all the blame on the *obkom*. I, as secretary of the *raikom* and member of the *obkom buro* fully recognize my blame, but the *obkom* of the party gets much blame too." He further noted that an *obkom* instructor had been present in his district when the *proverka* had become fouled up.⁶³

The importance of Papatde's attacks on *raikom* leaders and their reactions would depend on their concrete relations with the *obkom* chiefs. Much more research is required to establish the relationship between *raikom* secretaries and their *obkom* superiors in general. It is not clear, for example, if all *raikom* secretaries were part of the same compact provincial "family." If they were, Papatde's attacks on any of them would have been not-so-veiled attacks on the *obkom* itself.⁶⁴ The 1937 backbiting among the secretaries could then be seen as a fundamental breakup of the family or as the circle's sacrifice or scapegoating of some of its *raikom* members to save others.

On the other hand, it is possible that the *obkom* family circle never included all the *raikom* secretaries in the first place. In this case, the 1937 rift among them could indicate the widening of a preexisting conflict between insiders and outsiders among *raikom* secretaries. Even if they were not all clients of the *obkom* circle, Papatde's attacks on *raikom* leaders nevertheless threatened the *obkom* institutionally, if not directly in terms of patronage.

In the following months, Papatde hardly let up. After the required repetition of the *proverka* in Smolensk, he made another speech to the *obkom* plenum in which he admitted that things had improved: the second attempt was better. Still, though, there was a striking lack of self-criticism on the parts of *raion* leaders. Singling out the leaders of El'ninskii, Krasinskii, and Sukhinicheskii *raions* by name, he complained about continued bureaucratism. Making an example of one of them, Zimnitskii of Sukhinicheskii, Papatde said that "Comrade Zimnitskii did not say

much at the plenum. . . Evidently the lessons of the *proverka* have not penetrated into the consciousness of Comrade Zimnitskii."⁶⁵

The occasion of the verification uncovered the political warfare taking place between regional party leaderships on the one hand and the KPK and Central Committee on the other, with the KPK acting as the eyes and ears of Moscow in the provinces. Relations between Papatde and the officials of the Smolensk party organization were not good. Papatde frequently summoned *raikom* secretaries to his office for questioning and reprimands, sometimes making them wait in his corridor for hours. (On one occasion, he assembled several *raikom* secretaries in his office at 1 a.m. and kept them there until daybreak.) Party leaders complained about Papatde's "nonparty methods" and long-winded lectures to them; after such a session one of them said that "never in my life have I had such a headache." Local party leaders did all they could to bypass Papatde, preferring to deal with their chief Rumiantsev. For his part, Papatde defended his authority and stressed his independence from *obkom* (that is, from Rumiantsev's) control.⁶⁶

Regional KPK plenipotentiaries like Papatde were not able directly to attack powerful *obkom* first secretaries, many of whom were Central Committee members. So the plenipotentiaries made their criticism in two ways. First, as we have seen, they attacked the *raikom* party leaders, thereby casting doubt on the work of the whole regional party organization. Second, they secretly reported on the work of the powerful regional lords to the Central Committee. Sometimes, as in Smolensk, the regional party leadership retreated and beat its breast in public.

But at other times, *obkom* and *kraikom* leaders fought against the "interference" of the KPK and even the Central Committee. The best example comes from Saratov, where powerful A. I. Krinitskii was first secretary. There, in the course of the *proverka*, the local KPK representatives had complained to Krinitskii and his *kraikom* about excessive expulsions. Krinitskii had ignored their complaints, and the KPK plenipotentiary (one Ivanov) had then reported to the Central Committee. Krinitskii was a Central Committee member and former chief of one of the Central Committee departments, so it was necessary to bring big guns to bear.

The Politburo formed a commission chaired by Ezhov and dispatched Central Committee Secretary A. A. Zhdanov to Saratov to sort things out.⁶⁷

Zhdanov addressed the assembled members of the Saratov *kraikom*, accusing the local leadership of "mass repression" in expelling party members.⁶⁸ He noted that Krinitskii had summarily fired twenty-six of thirty-seven *raikom* secretaries without consulting the Central Committee, and had removed other party workers who were technically on the Central Committee's nomenklatura. Aside from these local abuses, however, Zhdanov defended the actions and powers of the local KPK representatives. Observing that the KPK plenipotentiary was right to report to Moscow with "the material upon which the Central Committee decision was based," he attacked Krinitskii for running roughshod over the KPK. "The attitude of the Saratov *kraikom* and of First Secretary of the *kraikom* Comrade Krinitskii to the representatives of party control in Saratov *krai*, who uncovered and in a timely manner put the question of the mistakes of the *kraikom* before the Central Committee, did not serve the interests of the matter."⁶⁹ Krinitskii defended the prerogatives of the *kraikom* by claiming that the activities of the KPK in his region "constitute a second center" of political power which competed with the *kraikom*. In his concluding remarks, Zhdanov called such complaining about the KPK "mistaken chatter" that ignored the correct suggestions of the KPK. "It is necessary to speak of the personal shortcoming of Comrade Krinitskii as a leader, to whom the Central Committee has entrusted leadership of one of the largest party organizations in the country."⁷⁰

Krinitskii was humiliated but generally unrepentant. Some weeks later, he wrote the traditional recognition of wrongdoing which always followed national public criticism of a major figure.⁷¹ But Krinitskii's *mea culpa* was hardly that. He claimed that much had been done since Zhdanov's visit to correct mistakes, but he claimed that those mistakes had existed only in the *raikoms*. Everything was better now. Surprisingly, Krinitskii's article did not contain the customary formulation: that the Central Committee had been "completely correct" in criticizing him. It said nothing at all about his personal mistakes, nothing about the major jurisdictional dispute between party organizations and the KPK (which was not even mentioned),

and very little on the necessity of the *kraikom* to carry out the usual *kritika/samokritika*.⁷²

In 1935, the KPK was back on the offensive. Enjoying the backing of the Central Committee, the KPK plenipotentiaries had led the attack on the work of regional party leaders in the 1935 *proverka*. But it would be a mistake to believe that these party secretaries, from the obsequious Rumiantsev to the truculent Krinitskii, were without influence nationally. In early 1936, the regional leaders struck back, using the third plenum of the KPK in March of 1936 for a general dressing-down of the KPK.

The previous (second) plenum of the KPK in July 1934 had called for a national plenum every three months. So, to begin with, the third plenum of the KPK was a year and a half overdue. And when it came, on March 7-10, 1936, it was signaled only by a brief, forty-word "*soobshchenie*" (communication). None of the speeches delivered at the plenum were published or mentioned in the press. There were none of the usual explanatory press editorials or articles accompanying the terse announcement. Clouded in secrecy, the third plenum of the KPK produced only two published resolutions.

One of these related to the work of the party collegia of the KPK— the sections whose work related to routine expulsions and appeals of party members. But hidden amidst technical points of the resolution was highly ambiguous language restricting the rights of KPK collegia to investigate the work of party *organizations*. Apparently, in addition to their routine work processing appeals, KPK collegia had busied themselves with investigations of party leaders. It seems that some Moscow leaders approved of this, while others favored limiting the collegia to the narrow appeals process, because the strange compromise wording on this point suggests indecision:

The limitations on the tasks of party collegia to consider appeals do not exclude their consideration of statements or declarations from members and candidates of the VKP(b) or nonparty persons on this

or that offense [*prostupok*] by a party member, or wrongful activity by various party organizations. Accordingly, however, party collegia should not consider themselves obligated to examine them. In many cases, party collegia are obliged only to guarantee receipt of the statements by the responsible party organization.

But the next point read:

Party collegia are forbidden to occupy themselves with any work not having direct connection to their basic work of considering and receiving appeals in declarations on party offenses by various members of the party.⁷³

In other words, party collegia were to concern themselves with appeals, not complaints about party leaders. But if they received such complaints, they could "consider" them, or not. Their only obligation in such cases was to transmit the complaint to the appropriate party organization. Such a procedure, however vague, would serve the interests of party leaders by protecting them from KPK party collegia investigation and by ensuring that they received all complaints made against them. Another passage of the resolution, which insisted that the work of party collegia should always be "closely connected" to *obkoms*, *kraikoms*, and Central Committees of national parties, emphasized the apparent victory for party secretaries' authority. Before carrying out expulsions, readmissions, or transfers to candidate status, KPK collegia should secure agreement from *obkoms* or *kraikoms* and national Central Committees.

Party secretaries had succeeded in muzzling the KPK's party collegia, and scored even more points against the part of the KPK that threatened them most: the plenipotentiaries. The second resolution from the third plenum concerned them directly. After an initial statement praising the independence of KPK plenipotentiaries

and citing their good work in Saratov and elsewhere, the resolution proceeded to criticize their activity and to reiterate the statutory limitations on their powers.

The heart of this resolution was an attempt to force the plenipotentiaries of the KPK to "work with" and be "closely connected" with the territorial party committees. It is difficult to know how this could be consistent with true independence, but the resolution made some strong statements about the relationship and came down on the side of the secretaries: "The plenum of the KPK obliges all plenipotentiaries to regularly inform the first secretaries of *obkoms*, *kraikoms*, and the Central Committees of national parties of their plans of work." (The 1934 *polozhenie* had only suggested that plenipotentiaries *should* do this.). Failure to do so in a timely and satisfactory manner "is not a correct understanding of the independence of the KPK plenipotentiaries from local party organizations" and is harmful to the general effort. The resolution went on to make the somewhat hollow claim that "these measures do not in any way limit the independence [*nezavisimost'*] or autonomy [*samostoiatel'nost'*] of the plenipotentiaries." As a sop, the KPK plenipotentiaries received a promise that "any time any question of disagreement arises concerning the suggestions [of the KPK plenipotentiary] to *obkoms* or *kraikoms* or Central Committees of national parties, it can be submitted to the KPK or the Central Committee for resolution." To add insult to injury, the resolution closed with a call for the Moscow leadership of the KPK to check the credentials of KPK plenipotentiaries to make sure that they were qualified for their jobs.⁷⁴

These resolutions show a strong resurgence of power on the part of the pragmatic party secretaries, and their success in convincing Stalin of their claims. The result was a virtual chastisement of the KPK checkers. The draft resolution discussed above had set the tone for the meeting, and the KPK envoys were clearly in retreat. A contemporary press treatment noted that N. I. Ezhov (head of the KPK and soon to become head of the secret police) spoke at the meeting and that he stressed the "independence" of KPK plenipotentiaries, but the overall tone of the resolution was the exact opposite.⁷⁵ In fact, Ezhov berated the plenipotentiaries for worrying too much about their independence and for thinking that their job was only

to criticize party organizations. "This, of course, is completely wrong." But Ezhov went much further. He put forth the proposition that it was the KPK plenipotentiaries (rather than the party or economic organizations involved) who were responsible for economic fulfillment. "Our plenipotentiaries and KPK groups must understand that they answer to the Central Committee and the *buvo* of the KPK for the correct and timely fulfillment of Central Committee decisions." The KPK was to be responsible when a decision or plan was not fulfilled because they did not organize proper control.⁷⁶ According to Ezhov, the job of the KPK was not to criticize or to "spend your time thinking up new questions to put before the Central Committee." They were to verify fulfillment and nothing else.⁷⁷

Sensing the changing winds, and smarting under the high-level criticism, the plenipotentiaries made contrite and apologetic speeches at the plenum. Brike, of Azov-Black Sea, related how the provincial party first secretary, Sheboldaev, had chastised him for going behind the *kraikom's* back and complaining to the Central Committee. Rather than defending himself, Brike stressed the smooth relations between the KPK and the *kraikom*. Plenipotentiary Rubenov, who had been one of the more strident speakers at the previous plenum, now claimed that there was no friction between him and the *obkom*. And Sharangovich of Kazakhstan crooned that "on concrete questions of our work there have not been any serious disagreements" between the KPK and the regional party organization. Plenipotentiaries Shadunts and Frenkel, who had also been fierce critics of party organizations, were directly criticized for being too "severe" in their "style of work."⁷⁸

Back in the provinces, the KPK retreated. In Smolensk, the KPK plenum received the obligatory publicity from party organs, but local KPK officials were silent. The texts of the resolutions were published in the *oblast'* party journal with commentaries clearly showing that their gist was to prevent the KPK from stepping on the prerogatives of party secretaries, considering questions rightly belonging to party committees, and generally overstepping their bounds. KPK personnel were warned to inform the *obkom* before and during their actions, rather than simply afterward.⁷⁹ Because of sheepishness, anger, or fear, no article on the decisions of

the third plenum written by a KPK official appeared in the local press of the Western Region. After all, the national press had noted that the decisions of the meeting were taken on Stalin's personal initiative.⁸⁰

The two resolutions from the meeting suggest that party secretaries still had significant clout and influence in the Politburo. Though they had taken a beating during the membership screenings of 1935, they were able in 1936 to force a limitation and censure of the KPK. Gone were the 1934 rules enabling KPK representatives to give binding instructions to *raikoms*; the suggestion to cooperate with local party bosses had become an obligation. The ability of KPK collegia to investigate complaints against specific leaders had been curtailed and discouraged; KPK plenipotentiaries were now obliged to tell party secretaries who they were investigating and to reveal their future investigative plans. They themselves were now made responsible for fulfillment of decisions, but without the authority to criticize or sort out blame among various organizations.

For more than a year following the March 1936 third plenum, the KPK was almost invisible in the national and local press. Paparde, for his part, seems to have been chastened. At the Western *obkom* plenum following the third KPK plenum, he refrained from his usual attacks on local party leaders, preferring instead to deal with agriculture, the "safer" topic from the June TsK plenum.⁸¹ Occasionally, a short article would announce the routine expulsion from the party of some drunks, embezzlers, and crooks, but the struggle between the party secretaries and the KPK plenipotentiaries was for a time hidden from public view.

Despite its press eclipse, the influence of the KPK seemed to receive a major boost in the fall of 1936. In September, KPK chief Ezhov was appointed to head the secret police (NKVD), simultaneously retaining his KPK position. As a secretary of the Central Committee, Ezhov's authority was already very significant. As commissar of internal affairs it was now tremendous.

In the spring of 1937, there was a revival of the war between the local KPK and the party committees, culminating in a dramatic personal confrontation between Rumiantsev and Paparde. The context was the February 1937 plenum of the Central

Committee which in addition to condemning Bukharin, Rykov, and other members of the "Right Opposition," had criticized the regional party secretaries for "bureaucratism." Based on a strong keynote speech by A. A. Zhdanov and seconded by Stalin, the plenum had attacked the highhanded, authoritarian, and "undemocratic" practices that had made regional party secretaries such powerful magnates. Making a play for grassroots support against the "feudal princes," the Central Committee had denounced the secretaries for a lack of self-criticism and had scheduled new party elections for the spring of 1937.⁸² The elections showed that Stalin and his leadership were becoming serious about trying to weaken the power of the territorial secretaries: the voting was to be by secret ballot, with multiple candidates nominated from below.⁸³

The revival of the attack on party bigwigs was mirrored in local KPK activity. The February plenum had given encouragement and sanction to those who wanted to attack "feudal princes" locally, and for the first time powerful *obkom* secretaries came under direct attack. For three days, the Western *obkom* plenum discussed the February plenum. After hearing the reports of local party leaders, Paparde interrupted Smolensk City Party Secretary Arkhipov's speech, demanding to know why no practical steps were taken to reduce bureaucratism. Several speakers then attempted to defend Arkhipov and Rumiantsev by criticizing Paparde and his activities.

Paparde turned his fire against Rumiantsev personally by bringing up the case of one Reznikov--an official of the *obkom* since 1934 and a member of Rumiantsev's "team." The KPK had told Rumiantsev that there was compromising evidence against Reznikov, and had got the local procurator to sanction his arrest. Rumiantsev then called NKVD headquarters in Moscow, which replied that there was nothing on Reznikov; this was confirmed by Smolensk NKVD officials. Rumiantsev refused to sanction Reznikov's arrest or expulsion and instead scheduled a meeting of the *obkom buro* to discuss the question. In the meantime, Paparde went over Rumiantsev's head and expelled Reznikov from the party anyway. Rumiantsev protested to Paparde about this usurpation of the *obkom's* authority.⁸⁴

When his turn came to speak at the March *obkom* plenum, Papatse sarcastically paraphrased Rumiantsev's complaint about the *obkom's* wounded prestige. This was too much for Rumiantsev, who interjected from the floor that the KPK also was bound by the antibureaucratic decisions of the February TsK plenum. "Which ones, specifically?" Papatse shot back. The ones about self-criticism, replied Rumiantsev, who went on: "You [vy] wanted to say that. . . 'there's a blind *obkom* for you, under their very noses they found this Reznikov, don't you see?'" Papatse retorted that the KPK and the *obkom* seemed to have "different ideas about self-criticism; Rumiantsev accuses me of not wanting to take it, but his criticism is not businesslike." Papatse went on, accusing Rumiantsev of trivializing the matter by raising jurisdictional questions:

"I consider that to stand on a petty, unprincipled path, on the path of any captious fault-finding [*pridirka*] in the formal order of things, when the matter is about serious questions--purging the party of two-faced elements--is no good."⁸⁵

The battle even leaked into the party press. In the local round of party meetings following the February 1937 plenum, Papatse lashed out at the secretaries: "Evidently, the party activists do not recognize and understand the basic meaning of the Central Committee plenum's decisions. . . It is necessary to criticize directly, truly, regardless of person."⁸⁶ Although he spread his fire across several *raions*, the attack on the leadership of Monastyr' was the best publicized. Personally attending a party meeting there, Papatse complained that local leaders spent all their time talking about fuel supplies, economic questions, how to get themselves good apartments and to ignore the suggestions of workers. "In Monastyr' *raion* there are gross violations of party instructions and leadership," he complained. He singled out *raikom* First Secretary Kosykh by name, denouncing him for rudeness and haughty attitude toward subordinates.⁸⁷

The criticism directed against provincial party secretaries was severe, but it had a limited impact. In Smolensk, Rumiantsev drew his wagons into a circle against Papatde and the KPK. He confided to his intimates that Papatde was a "petty intriguer" who was "not one of us." On another occasion, Rumiantsev dressed down one of his own *raion* secretaries: "Who is your boss, Papatde or the *obkom*?" In the words of one insider, Rumiantsev began an "open struggle" against Papatde.⁸⁸

In general, regional party machines seem to have been able to withstand the new offensive against them. In the May 1937 party elections mentioned above, none of the more than seventy *oblast'/krai* first secretaries in the party were voted out of office. They were able to sacrifice lower party officials to the popular wrath in order to protect themselves: many *raikom* and cell officials were in fact voted out. And when the populist, antibureaucratic campaign from above and below threatened *raikom* secretaries who were clearly part of the *obkom* family circle, the *obkom* sheltered and protected them. In Belyi *raion* following the February plenum, popular denunciation of First Secretary Kovalev got out of hand from the *obkom* point of view, and despite firm attempts by the *obkom* and even the NKVD to protect him, Kovalev was denounced by his membership and voted out of office. Yet the *obkom* was finally able to save Kovalev from a worse fate by promptly giving him a job on its own staff.⁸⁹ (For this protection, the *obkom* took considerable criticism from below.)⁹⁰

Similarly, Papatde's attack on Secretary Kosykh in Monastyr' was ultimately ineffective. Although Kosykh was raked over the coals publicly for a considerable period of time, he was not removed from office. (His assistant, Second Secretary Zheltov, was sacked.) Kosykh's connections were strong enough to save, and indeed, to promote him: he was still secretary of Monastyr' in May 1937 and was "elected" to the *obkom* plenum at that time. He was running the *oblast'* land administration (*oblzemustroi*) in July, and as late as January, 1938 was still a member of the *obkom*. Indeed, he may have outlived Papatde, who was last heard from at the beginning of 1938.⁹¹

Stalin finally broke the power of the *obkom* leaderships in the middle of 1937. The tactics of populist pressure, party elections, membership screenings, and KPK institutional vigilance having failed, the regional family circles were decimated by force. In June 1937, L. M. Kaganovich descended on Smolensk, presided over an extraordinary meeting of the *obkom* plenum, and supervised the arrest of Rumiantsev and nearly all the provincial leadership.⁹² Similar decapitations in other regions were carried out by Politburo emissaries Malenkov, Molotov, Andreev, Zhdanov, and others.

At the *obkom* plenum attended by Kaganovich, the breast-beating theme of the remarks from surviving Smolensk officials was "why did we not see Rumiantsev's treason?" Papatse emerged as the hero of the day because of his history of fighting Rumiantsev, who was now revealed as a traitor. Several speakers reminded the plenum of Rumiantsev's sins in attacking Papatse. Papatse could not resist a certain amount of gloating at his victory.⁹³ In the course of the next several *obkom* meetings, Papatse continued to have his revenge by persecuting the remaining Rumiantsev holdovers.⁹⁴

Nothing better symbolized the local political conflict than the immediate aftermath of the purge of the Smolensk leadership. The gaping vacuum in political leadership was filled by the KPK itself. None other than KPK plenipotentiary Leonid Papatse was named acting second secretary of the Western *obkom* in the wake of Rumiantsev's fall.⁹⁵ Although Papatse was only a temporary replacement, and his immediate role, if any, in Rumiantsev's downfall is unknown, the appointment makes a certain political sense: the leading puritan inspector replaced the fallen pragmatic feudal baron.⁹⁶

Our knowledge of Smolensk KPK activities after Rumiantsev's fall and Papatse's promotion in June 1937 is practically nonexistent. But it is clear that the victory of the KPK was short-lived. Its members and representatives were soon caught up in the expanding, wild terror of 1937-38. Papatse disappears from the archives after November 1937. He was arrested in January 1938 and expelled from the party by Ezhov's personal order.⁹⁷ It is ironic that charges of "familyness,"

similar to those that he had leveled against Rumiantsev, were leveled against Paparde. His alleged sins had little to do with his work in Smolensk; this was not directly a purge of the purgers. Paparde was accused of participating in a "Right-Trotskyist Fascist organization" led by R. Eikhe, his former Siberian boss back in 1932-34; Paparde was arrested at the same time as Eikhe. After a fifteen minute trial at which he confessed to everything, he was shot on August 29, 1938.⁹⁸

Paparde's chief KPK assistant, Kokushkin (head of the KPK Party Collegium), remained in his post for more than a year later until he was denounced in late 1938 for protecting "enemies of the people."⁹⁹ The press was almost completely silent about the KPK for almost two years: from the last quarter of 1937 until the middle of 1939. There were no known plenums of the KPK, no more stories about the KPK calling party leaders to account, and no publicized speeches by KPK officials. There were no signs of the KPK/party committee friction that had characterized the 1935-37 period; even the routine, didactic expulsions of nonpolitical malefactors disappeared.

Why did the KPK disappear from sight in late 1937? We cannot be sure, but there could be several answers. First, N. I. Ezhov seems to have come under a shadow by mid-1938, and it may be that the KPK, as his agency, was similarly suspect. Ezhov may well have secured the execution of Paparde and other of his KPK minions in self-defense to display his own vigilance. But such an answer would not explain the decline of the KPK as early as mid-1937, in Ezhov's heyday. A more likely explanation for the inactivity of the KPK in this period could be simple chaos; the terror disrupted all party organizations. We know that in Smolensk at least, after mid-1937 party meetings and plenums at the *obkom* level were held infrequently, without previous announcement, and apparently amidst great confusion. Sometimes entire party *buero* memberships were "acting" (*I.O.*), and we hear from several sources that some party bodies simply ceased to function. The rapid turnover of personnel caused by the terror seems to have made the orderly functioning of party organizations well-nigh impossible, and it would not be unreasonable to suspect that the KPK suffered from similar disorder.

A third possible explanation for the fading of the KPK from public view (and one not incompatible with the two above) has to do with institutional realignments in the period. Stalin's attempts to centralize and directly control peripheral party organizations had culminated in the bloodbath that began in June 1937. Virtually every *obkom* and *kraikom* party secretary was arrested and many were executed by the end of 1937.¹⁰⁰ The massacre was accompanied, at least since the early months of 1937, by a populist campaign to stir up the grassroots against their leaders, and we know that several party bosses fell victim to hostility from below even before the police actions of midyear. But this campaign and the accompanying police terror not only weakened specific leaders, but questioned and threatened the nature of leadership itself. If party leadership was so infiltrated with "enemies," and if any directive from any party leader could be possible "wrecking," then the entire hierarchical structure of the party-state was open to doubt. Who could be safely obeyed? The antileadership bent of the entire terror process implicitly (and paradoxically) encouraged disobedience at the lower ranks, not automatic conformity and obedience.

There are signs that even while the killing continued, the Stalinist leadership became concerned about the structural effects of mass violence against leaders, as a group. As early as May 1937, while it lauded the continuing hunt for saboteurs, the central press took steps to shore up the idea of leadership by warning against uncontrolled specialist-baiting and false arrests of industrial leaders.¹⁰¹ In June, *Pravda* warned that "excessive" criticism and purging could weaken production and rather perversely claimed that such overzealous attacks on managers were equivalent to Trotskyism.¹⁰² In October, Stalin made one of his rare speeches during the purge period, in which he defended the "socialist intelligentsia" as deserving the respect of the people; the explicit lesson of his speech was that all leaders are not bad.¹⁰³ That same month, the Central Committee secretly decided to cancel the previously announced contested, multicandidate elections to the Supreme Soviet. Archival evidence shows that the Stalinist leadership was afraid that the antibureaucratic fever of the time (which they had helped instigate) could lead to disastrous results for the

regime's candidates in a free election. The more familiar, single-candidate elections were substituted at the last minute.¹⁰⁴ Again, "leadership" was protected; in every case, the official candidates for the Supreme Soviet were the *oblast'* leaders. Again, the prerogatives of hierarchical leadership were affirmed.

The spring party elections of 1938, unlike those the year before, were not conducted openly; the populist nominating procedures of 1937 were replaced by nomination by leading committees; again, the institution of hierarchical leadership was affirmed in mid-1938.¹⁰⁵ N. I. Ezhov, who savaged the *obkom* leaderships, was removed later in the year, and the Eighteenth Party Congress early in 1939 abolished mass purges altogether.¹⁰⁶ Socially, of course, this restoration of hierarchical command authority was manifested in the rise to power of the new Stalinist technocrats and the increase in white-collar membership in the Communist Party.

We find that as part of this general resurrection and reinforcement of regular institutions, the radical KPK was losing institutional stature; as the prestige of party leadership revived, the KPK slipped into oblivion. In June 1939, after a long period of KPK oblivion, the Central Committee confirmed a new thirty-one member membership for the KPK, supposedly chosen by the Eighteenth Party Congress. Half the size of the previous KPK, the general members included no holdovers from the 1934 KPK. Of the five-person *Buro* of the KPK, only M. F. Shkiriatov was a holdover from the previous leading group. The KPK leadership that under Ezhov had struggled with the territorial party leaders had been replaced wholesale.¹⁰⁷

A series of editorials and directives that accompanied the 1939 reorganization were just as indicative of the reduced clout of the new KPK. KPK party collegia (who were chastised in 1936 for treading on party *obkom* turf) were formally liquidated and their responsibilities transferred to the *obkoms* themselves.¹⁰⁸ In the matter of party discipline, expulsions, and appeals, the party secretaries would now police themselves. It will also be remembered that the original 1934 charter of the KPK gave plenipotentiaries the power to give "obligatory" direct instructions to *raikoms* and below. In 1939, this power to issue direct orders seems to have disappeared altogether, and KPK officials were required to subordinate their activities

to the *obkoms* and *kraikoms* of the party; their party collegia were actually swallowed by the *obkoms*. It is surely indicative of the new situation that after early 1938, neither the central nor local press mentions the activities, or even the name, of the local KPK plenipotentiary.¹⁰⁹

By mid-1939, strong territorial-based leadership, as a principle, had won the institutional struggle with the KPK, even though few of the party secretaries who had fought the KPK lived to see the victory. In this sense, Stalin had won the battle with the regional baronies but lost the war. By 1939, the power and authority of party secretaries, which Stalin had challenged, had been restored and strengthened, even as the former officeholders were being shot. The representation of territorial party leaders on the Central Committee tells this macabre story statistically. From an all-time high of about 27 percent, representation of regional secretaries on the Central Committee fell to perhaps zero in late 1937–38, when virtually all of them were arrested. But by early 1939, their proportion was climbing again and had already reached 10 percent.¹¹⁰ The Stalin regime found that to maintain its hierarchical dictatorship, it simply could not do without fairly powerful and independent provincial satraps.

The Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934 had seen the redeployment of the Control Commission away from investigating ideological heresy and toward checking up on the workings of local party organizations. For the next four years, local party control commissions functioned as Moscow's eyes and ears inside the local provincial party machines. Because of its very purpose and mandate, the KPK was bound to come into conflict with influential territorial party secretaries who valued their prerogatives and operational independence. The Stalinist leadership knew just how powerful these worthies were and foresaw the conflict; it constantly stressed the "independence" of the KPK and endowed the verification organ with the necessary standing: to make the KPK "*pri TsK*" and carefully to note each time that its decrees were "*utverzhdeno TsK VKP(b)*" (approved by the Central Committee).

Nevertheless, in the long run, party machines were able to resist the intrusions of the apparently well-armed KPK. The pragmatists were capable of defending themselves against centralizing institutions for quite a time in the mid-1930s. We have seen how the vaunted powers and independence of KPK puritans were whittled away almost from the beginning. It is also perhaps a sign of the defensive situation within the KPK that it was unable even to hold (or to publicize) its plenums on schedule. Its rules called for a national plenum every three months; from mid-1934 through 1938 it should have met some nineteen times. But as far as we know, there were only three such meetings: two in 1934, and one in 1936. The KPK seems not to have held a plenum at all in 1935, 1937, or 1938.

In the end, the regional machines could only be crushed, in Stalin's unimaginative and primitive view, by the wild onslaught of police terror. Stalin showed that he was capable of killing a lot of people in his quest for centralized power; indeed, he could have killed his disobedient barons much earlier and in covert ways less perilous to his state order, had this been his original plan. It obviously was not; his struggle with them was incremental, reactive, and sometimes even defensive. Stalin and his system were incapable of creating regularized, procedural mechanisms of inherent centralization and coordination that are present to some degree in all modern states.¹¹¹ This latest strategy for control and centralization also failed. The rise and fall of the KPK as a centralizing institution in the mid-thirties indicates not the strength of the Stalin system but its weakness, and shows that Stalin could govern the way he wanted to only by force.

Notes

1. In this connection, the Russian word *kontrol'* should be translated as "checking," "monitoring," or "verification," rather than "control."
2. See Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1971), 260–62, 271–78, 323–24.
3. Ian Bauer, "Boevye zadachi kontrol'nykh komissii VKP(b). K itogam IV plenuma TsKK VKP(b)," in VKP(b) Tsentral'naia kontrol'naia komissia, *Resheniia 4-go plenuma TsKK VKP(b) i 3-i partkonferentsii zapadnoi oblasti* (Smolensk, 1932), 3–7. See also "Rezoliutsiia III oblastnoi partkonferentsii po otchetnomu dokladu ZapoblKK VKP(b)," *ibid.*, 25; and M. F. Shkiriakov, *O rabote KK-RKI v raione. Doklad na IV plenum TsKK, VKP(b) 9 fevr. 1932g.* (Moscow, 1932).
4. The capital and main city of the Western Region was Smolensk.
5. Ian Bauer, *Otchetnyi doklad OblKK-RKI IV Oblpartkonferentsii* (Smolensk, 1934), 29–32. Bauer was head of the Western Region's control commission and Rabkrin until 1934. See also his *Prevratim kazhduiu KK-RKI v zorkii glaz partii* (Smolensk, 1932), for local control activities.
6. Smolensk is the local case examined here, because of a groundwork of previous studies, along with the availability of party archives and the national and local press. Whether or not Smolensk and the Western Region were "typical" or not could be debated at length, but an examination of standard census variables and a comparison of the size of *oblast'* party organizations suggest that the Western Region was very near the median in every category; it was Moscow and Leningrad that were atypical of the USSR as a whole. See J. Arch Getty, "A Guide to the Smolensk Archive," in Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola, eds., *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History in the 1930s* (New York, 1990), 84–96, reprinted in *Sovetskie Arkhivy* 1 (1991): 93–101.
7. Ian Bauer, *Ob ocherednykh zadachakh oblastnoi i raionnykh KK-RKI* (Smolensk, 1932), 13.
8. Bauer, *Otchetnyi doklad*, 30.

9. I. N. Moskalenko, *Organy partiinogo kontroliia v period stroitel'stva sotsializma (zadachi, struktura, metody deiatel'nosti kontrol'nykh komissii 1920-1934 gg)* (Moscow, 1981), 143-44.

10. E. A. Rees, *State Control in Soviet Russia: the Rise and Fall of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, 1920-34* (Birmingham, 1987) , 216; see also Schapiro, *Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 260-61.

11. See *XVII s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b) 27 ianvaria - 10 fevralia 1934 g: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1934), 103; Smolensk Archive File WKP 362, pp. 12, 231-32.

12. See Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, (New York, 1958); J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (New York, 1985), chs. 1-4; Gabor T. Rittersporn, *Stalinist Simplifications and Soviet Complications: Social Tensions and Political Conflicts in the USSR, 1933-1953* (London, 1991); Roberta T. Manning, "Government in the Soviet Countryside in the Stalinist Thirties: The Case of Belyi Raion in 1937," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, 301 (1985); Gabor T. Rittersporn, "The State Against Itself: Social Tensions Behind the Rhetorical Apotheosis," *Telos* 41 (1979), 85-104 and "Rethinking Stalinism," *Russian History* 11:4 (1984), 343-61; Nobuo Shimotomai, "Springtime for the Politotdel: Local Party Organization in Crisis," *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 4 (1986), 1-34, and T. H. Rigby, "Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin," *Soviet Studies* 3 (Jan. 1981), 3-28. For a look at "localization" of party organizations in the 1920s, see Daniel Brower, "The Smolensk Scandal and the End of NEP," *Slavic Review* 45 (Winter 1986), 689-706.

13. Peter H. Solomon, "Local Political Power and Soviet Criminal Justice, 1922-1941," *Soviet Studies* 37 (July 1985), 305-29 and Gabor T. Rittersporn, "Soviet Officialdom and Political Evolution: Judiciary Apparatus and Penal Policy in the 1930s," *Theory and Society* 13 (1984), 211-36.

14. *XVII s'ezd*, 23, 33, 34-35.

15. The first hint of the reorganization had come from L. M. Kaganovich in his speech to a Moscow party conference: *IV Moskovskaia oblastnaia i III gorodskaia konferentsiia VKP(b): Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1934), 51-55.

16. *XVII s'ezd*, 35.

17. On the TsKK and Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, see Rees, *State Control*; and Paul Cocks, "Politics of Party Control: The Historical and Institutional Role of Party Control Organs in the CPSU," Ph.D. diss. Harvard University, 1968. Soviet-era works include S. N. Ikonnikov, *Sozdanie i deiatel'nost' obedinennykh organov TsKK-RKI v 1923-1934 gg.* (Moscow, 1971); I. M. Moskalenko, *Organy, and TsKK v bor'be za edinstvo i chistotu partiinykh riadov* (Moscow, 1973); F. I. Potashev, *Reorganizatsiia Rabkrina i TsKK* (Rostov-on-Don, 1974). There are also several Soviet studies, of varying quality, of local and republican TsKK activities in the 1920s: for a few examples see A. R. Amadzhdanov, *Deiatel'nost' TsKK-RKI respublik Srednei Azii v period stroitel'stva sotsializma* (Moscow, 1987); F. A. Burganova, *Organy kontroliia Tatarii v bor'be za sotsializm, 1920-1934 gg.* (Kazan 1975); A. N. Donin, *Rol' mestnykh kontrol'nykh komissii VKP(b) v bor'be za edinstvo i chistotu partiinykh riadov, 1926-1934 gg.* (Saratov, 1987); M. I. Zlontik, *Deiatel'nost' organov partiino-gosudarstvennogo kontroliia BSSR v gosudarstvennom stroitel'stva (1917-1934 gg.)* (Minsk, 1969); E. N. Orlov, *Deiatel'nost' Moskovskoi kontrolnoi komissii-Raboche-krest'ianskoi inspektsii v 1924-1934 gg. (v oblasti partiinogo stroitel'stva i sovershenstvovaniia gosaparata)* (Moscow, 1972). Prolonged reference searches in the Russian National Library, INION, BAN, and Istoricheskaia Biblioteka produced no books or articles on the KPK in the 1930s.

18. *XVII s'ezd*, 35.

19. L. A. Papparde, *O podgotovke k chistke parti: Doklad na plenum Zap-Sib. Kraikoma VKP(b) 22-25 iuniia 1933 g.* (Novosibirsk, 1933), 32-33.

20. V. I. Menzhulin, *Organizatsionno-partiinaia rabota KPSS v usloviakh bor'by za pobedy i uprochnenie sotsializma (1933 iun'-1941 g.)* (Moscow, 1975), 257-59. See also Moskalenko, *Organy* 143-44, who suggests that the organizational tree of the new KPK differed little from that of the old TsKK. Moskalenko believes that the chief difference between the TsKK and KPK was central appointment of the latter's plenipotentiaries.

21. L. M. Kaganovich, "O zadachakh partiinogo kontroliia i kontrol'noi rabote profsoiuzov, komsomola, i pechati," *Pravda*, July 4, 1934. See also Kaganovich's remarks in *Partiinoo stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1934): 10.

22. For biographical information on Rumiantsev see M. Nikitin and M. Ivanov, "S rabochei prostotoi," in *Soldaty partii* (Moscow, 1971), 201-18. See also *Rabochii put'* (Smolensk daily newspaper), Jan. 8 and 13, 1935; Jan. 1-3, 1935 (coverage of his birthday), Jan. 8, 1935 (biographies of local leaders); March 16, June 15, 1935, and Sept. 2, 1936 (for coverage of

his speeches); *Partiets*, (Smolensk party journal), no. 12 (Dec. 1935): 41, 72 and no. 4 (1937): 10. Merle Fainsod called Rumiantsev "the Great Lord of Smolensk." See *Smolensk*, ch. 2. For interesting observations on cults of personality in earlier eras of Russian history, see Claudio Sergio Ingerflom, *Le citoyen impossible: Les racines russes du Léninisme* (Paris, 1988), 43.

23. *Rossiiskii tsentr khraneniia i izucheniia dokumentov noveishei istorii* (RTsKhIDNI), f. 17, op. 3, d. 982, l. 48.

24. RTsKhIDNI, f. 589, op. 3, d. 11746, ll. 19–20; *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii* (GARF), f. 3316, op. 8, d. 110, l. 3.

25. Papatde, *O podgotovke*, 16, 32–33.

26. L. A. Papatde, *Novoi etap klassovoi bor'by i revoliutsionnaia zakonnost': Doklad Tov. L. A. Papatde na kraev. soveshanii rabotnikov iustitsii* (Novosibirsk, 1933), 23–26.

27. Rumiantsev defended this attitude as late as March 1937, when oppositionists were under heavy attack. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, o. 21, d. 4091, ll. 170–74.

28. Smolensk Archive File *WKP* 228, pp. 14–15, for an example of Rumiantsev reporting to Moscow.

29. *Tsentr Khraneniia Sovremennoi Dokumentatsii* (TsKhSD), f. 6, op. 1. d. 5, l. 54.

30. *Ibid.*, ll. 55–56.

31. *Ibid.*, l. 58.

32. *Ibid.*, ll. 81, 88–89.

33. Rittersporn, "The State Against Itself," and "Rethinking Stalinism."

34. Such authority included the right to make arrests and control prosecutions. In Belorussia, for example, party provincial secretaries had sought to control railroad personnel through illegal arrests. "Tens, hundreds were arrested by anybody and sit in jail." In the Briansk Railroad Line, 75 percent of the administrative-technical personnel had been sentenced to some kind of "corrective labor." See TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 165–66.

35. TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 1-5; "Pervoe zasedanie KPK," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7 (Apr. 1934): 46. Because the next full meeting of the KPK, on June 26-28, 1934, was designated the *second plenum* of the KPK, it is strange that this first session was labeled only *zasedanie*. The difference between the *zasedanie* and a *plenum* was never explained in this case.
36. *Pravda*, Feb. 12, 1934. *Buro* members were Kaganovich, Ezhov, Shkiriatov, Iaroslavskii, I. A. Akulov, D. A. Bulatov, and Ia. Kh. Peters.
37. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 940, l. 33; TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 7-12; "Polozhenie o Komissii Partiinogo Kontroliia pri TsK VKP(b): Priniato Komissiei Partiinogo Kontroliiai utverzhdeno TsK VKP(b)," in *Polozhenie: O komissii partiinogo kontroliia pri TsK VKP(b)* (Moscow, 1934), 1-3.
38. *Polozhenie*, 7.
39. *Ibid.*, section III.
40. *Pravda*, July 4, 1934. See also "Informatsionnoe soobshenie," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 14 (July 1934): 44.
41. Every published resolution, decision, or statement of any kind from the KPK was specifically labeled as having been confirmed by the Central Committee: the powerful imprimatur "*Utverzhdeno TsK VKP(b)*" appeared on every document of the KPK.
42. TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 10, 12.
43. *Ibid.*, l. 27.
44. *Ibid.*, l. 30.
45. *Ibid.*, ll. 40-41, 81.
46. *Ibid.*, ll. 90, 95, 98-99.
47. *Ibid.*, l. 133.

48. L. M. Kaganovich, "O zadachakh partiinogo kontroliia i kontrol'noi rabote profsoiuzov, komsomola, i pechati," *Pravda*, July 4, 1934, and *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1934): 3–10. There is indeed evidence that Stalin concerned himself with KPK affairs. One plenipotentiary noted that Stalin was quick to answer their questions and requests, leaving none of them unanswered. See TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 5, l. 31.2
49. "V komissii partkontroliia: O rabote khoziaistvennogo otdela srednevolzhskogo kraispolkoma," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 3 (Feb. 1935): 47.
50. "Kalenym zhelezom vyzhech' politicheskoe i bytovoie razlozhenie," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 14 (July 1935): 45–47.
51. "Delo o neobosnovannom iskluchenii iz partii Tov. Samurina," *ibid.*, 47.
52. *Rabochii put'* (Smolensk), Feb. 27, 1935, p. 4. For other examples, see the issues of June 9, 1935, p. 4; August–October 1935, *passim.*; Feb. 1, 1936, p. 3.
53. On *chistki* see Getty, *Origins*, chs. 2–3.
54. *Ibid.*, ch. 3.
55. See Smolensk Archive File 116/154e for these early preparations.
56. *Rabochii put'*, May 24, 1935, p. 1.
57. "O vypolnenii zakrytoe pis'mo TsK VKP(b) 13 maia g. v partorganizatsiakh zapadnoi oblasti," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1935): 46, and *Pravda*, July 7, 1935.
58. Papatde's speech received wide local publicity. See *Partiets* (Smolensk), no. 6 (June 1935): 9–11, and *Rabochii put'*, July 6, 1935, p. 3. But the two-week delay in publishing his remarks in the *obkom*-controlled daily *Rabochii put'* may be the result of the *obkom*'s attempt to protect Arkhipov from public attack. Papatde also made a pointed speech on the bungled verification to an extraordinary session of the Western *obkom* plenum on July 1, 1935: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4087, ll. 278–96.
59. "Postanovleniia plenum Zapobkoma VKP(b)," *Partiets*, no. 3 (June 1935): 25; and RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4087, ll. 181–300.

60. See M. Malkov, "Bez uchastiia partiinykh mass," *Partiets*, no. 6 (June 1935): 22; A. Shil'man, "Ulushchit' sistemu partiinogo rukovodstva," *ibid.*, 3-9; V. Arkhipov, "Ispravliaem dopushchennuiu oshibku v proverke partdokumentov," *ibid.*, no. 7 (1935): 25.
61. See Rumiantsev's report to city party activists in Smolensk in *Rabochii put'*, July 2, 1935, p. 1; and I. P. Rumiantsev, "Vtoraia proverka partdokumentov," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 17 (Oct. 1935): 19-21, and A. Shil'man, "Tekushchie voprosy partiinoi raboty," *ibid.*, no. 19-20 (Nov. 1935): 49-54.
62. F. Khlopotukhin, "Vyshe uroven' samokritiki," *Partiets*, no. 7 (July 1935): 23-26.
63. F. Bolshunov, "Proverku partdokumentov v Rudne proveli po-biurokraticheski," *Partiets*, no. 6 (June 1935): 19-20.
64. Another question not answered by our documentation would be whether Stalin, through the KPK, already intended to launch a major attack on the *obkom* leaders, many of whom were members of the Central Committee. This would have been a major step. On the other hand, it is also possible that the eventual assault on the *obkom* leaders only followed Stalin's failure to get results at the *raikom* level.
65. L. Papatde, "Ustav partii--nezyblemaia osnova vsei raboty," *Partiets*, no. 13 (Dec. 1935): 9-11. See also Papatde's "Do kontsa izvlech' politicheskie uroki," *ibid.*, no. 9 (Sept. 1936): 29-38, in which he returned to the theme of the mistakes of Arkhipov and the Smolensk city party organization.
66. See RTsKhIDNI f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 42, 52, 71, 87, and d. 4087, l. 278, for these and other examples.
67. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 965, l. 3.
68. "Uroki politicheskikh oshibok Saratovskogo kraikoma," *Pravda*, July 12, 1935. Zhdanov's speech was published in *Pravda*, in *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo* (nos. 13 and 15, July 1935), and as a separate pamphlet of the same name. Given later events, the application of the term "mass repression" in connection with the rather benign expulsions of 1935 seems strange.
69. *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 13 (July 1935): 45.

70. *Ibid.*, no. 17 (Oct. 1935): 17–18

71. A. Krinitskii, "Saratovskie bol'sheviki v bor'be za ispravlenie oshibok," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 17 (Oct. 1935): 39–41.

72. Krinitskii ran a tight shop in Saratov. The local party journal rarely criticized the *kraikom*, and even in 1937 when regional party machines were falling over themselves to self-criticize, the Saratov machine preferred to boast of its successes. See, for example, "Rech' tov. A. I. Krinitskogo pri zakrytii plenuma Obkoma VKP(b), 2 ianvaria 1937 goda," *Partiinaia rabota* (Saratov), no. 1 (Jan. 1937): 13, and no. 3 (Mar. 1937): 45, for Krinitskii's report on the February 1937 Central Committee Plenum.

73. "O rabote partkollegii KPK i poriadke nalozheniia partiinykh vzyskanii na chlenov i kandidatov VKP(b)," *Pravda*, March 17, 1936.

74. "O rabote upolnomochennykh KPK," *Pravda*, March 17, 1936.

75. "Tretii plenuma Komissii Partkontrolia," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 7 (April 1936): 4, and V. Bogushevskii, "III Plenum Komissii partiinogo kontrolia," *ibid.*, no. 8 (April 1936): 11.

76. TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 149–51.

77. *Ibid.*, l. 155.

78. *Ibid.*, d. 13, ll. 41–42, 95, 113–23, 188.

79. "O rabote upolnomochennykh KPK," *Partiets*, no. 3 (March 1936): 1–4. See also the article by *obkom* instructor B. Okun', "O partvzyskaniiaakh," *ibid.*, no. 4 (April 1936): 44–49.

80. V. Bogushevskii, "Vypolnenie reshenii plenuma Komissii partiinogo kontrolia," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 11 (June 1936): 21. Bogushevskii was a secretary of the KPK's national *bufo*.

81. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4090, ll. 87–91.

82. For a detailed examination of the February plenum and its aftermath, see Getty, *Origins*, 137–53.

83. The elections were in fact so conducted. See Smolensk Archives Files *WKP* 110, pp. 258–79; *WKP* 322, pp. 52–57; *WKP* 105, *passim*. For the national election results, see *Pravda*, May 23, 1937. Nationally, about half of all party secretaries were voted out of office.

84. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4095, ll. 161–70. Attacking an important leader by criticizing his handling of a particular personnel case was a common tactic in the 1930s. See, for example, Kosior's attack on Postyshev over the latter's handling of one Nikolaenko at the February 1937 plenum of the TsK: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 612, tom 3, ll. 10–15.

85. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 167–75. Although Papatse got the last word, Rumiantsev asserted his authority by having the *obkom* plenum formally expell Reznikov. Papatse unsuccessfully objected that this was improper, since the KPK had already expelled Reznikov; he said the *obkom* only had the right to confirm this.

86. *Rabochii put'*, March 16, 1937, p. 2.

87. "Nebol'shevistskii stil' rukovodstva," *Rabochii put'*, March 17, 1937, p. 2; and "Sobranie monastyrshchinskoi partorganizatsii," *ibid*, March 29, 1937, p. 2. For Papatse's original attack on Kosykh, see RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, l. 114.

88. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 211, 298–99.

89. See Smolensk Archive Files *WKP* 111, pp. 2–66, 91–110 and *WKP* 321, pp. 87–96. See also "Obankrotivshchiiisia rukovoditel'," *Rabochii put'*, March 30, 1937, p. 3, and "Pravoopportunisticheskaia praktika v bel'skom raione," *ibid.*, June 23, 1937, p. 3.

90. See Rumiantsev's defense in his "Otchet o rabote obkoma VKP(b) V oblastnoi partiinnoi konferentsii," *Partiets*, no. 4, n.d., 1937. On another occasion, Rumiantsev was attacked for readmitting a thrice-expelled Trotskyist: RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 214.

91. *Rabochii put'*, May 20, 1937, p. 1; July 11, 1937, p. 2; Sept. 15, 1937, p. 1; Jan. 10, 1938, p. 1. The last mention of Papatse in either the Smolensk Archive or the local press was in November 1937: *Rabochii put'*, Nov. 22, 1937, p. 1.

92. Getty, *Origins*, 168–71. Rumiantsev was formally removed as first secretary by Politburo order on June 16, 1937, and replaced by the second secretary of the Moscow *obkom*, D. S. Korotchenkov. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 988, l. 3

93. RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 181-93.
94. *Ibid.*, d. 4093, ll. 8-15.
95. See protocol of the Western *obkom* plenum of June 26, 1937, in Smolensk Archive File WKP 238. The transcript is in RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 4091, ll. 179-334.
96. Papatde was replaced as second secretary on July 26, 1937, by another "Moscow man," M. S. Savinov, who had been dispatched to Smolensk directly from the Moscow party organization. Later, Savinov became first secretary of the *obkom*. See *Rabochii put'*, July 11, 1937, p. 2; July 27, 1937, p. 1; Sept. 15, 1937, p. 1; Nov. 18, 1937, p. 1; Jan. 9, 1938, p. 1; Feb. 15, 1939, p. 1. Savinov remained acting (I.O.) first secretary of the Western (then of the renamed Smolensk) *obkom* until his confirmation in September, 1938. He was removed by the Central Committee in February 1939 for agricultural failures and replaced by V. M. Denisenkov, another longtime veteran of the centralizers' personnel pool, the Moscow party organization.
97. RTsKhIDNI, f. 598, op. 3, d. 11746, l. 16. We do not know why Ezhov turned against his own people in KPK around this time.
98. *Ibid.*, l. 98. A year later, in connection with the purge of the Ezhov group in the NKVD, a military tribunal in Siberia found that the charges against Papatde had been false; witnesses against him had been coerced and supplied with prescribed testimony by Ezhov's investigators (*ibid.*, ll. 17-18). He was not formally rehabilitated, however, until May 1956 (*ibid.*, l. 98).
99. "Kto vozglavliaet partkollegiiu v Smolenske?" *Rabochii put'*, Dec. 9, 1938, p. 2.
100. Krinitskii of Saratov, Rumiantsev of Smolensk, and six other territorial party secretaries were shot on the same day, October 30, 1937; see "Who Was Repressed?" *Moscow News*, no. 28 (1988): 16.
101. *Pravda*, May 11, 15, 1937.
102. "Bol'shevistskaia samokritika i trudovaia distsiplina," *Pravda*, June 24, 1937, p. 1.
103. *Pravda*, Oct. 31, 1937, p. 1.

104. J. Arch Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin: Constitutions and Elections in the 1930s," *Slavic Review* 50 (Spring 1991): 18–36.

105. *Pravda*, March 30, 1938, p. 1.

106. *XVIII s'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii* (b), 10–12 marta 1939 g. Stenograficheskii otchet (Moscow 1939): p. 28.

107. TsKhSD, f. 6, op. 2, d. 1, ll. 1–2. See also "V Tsentral'nom Komitete VKP(b): Sformirovanie Komissii Partiinogo Koltrol'ia pri TsK VKP(b)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 12 (June 1939): 62. In the press, the date of the confirmation of membership was only given as *na dniakh*.

108. "O rassmotrenii v obkomakh, kraikomakh, TsK kompartii soiuznykh respublik reshenii raikomov, gorkomov partii ob iskliuchenii is riadov VKP(b) i apeliatsii iskliuchennykh na eti resheniia (Postanovlenie TsK VKP(b) ot 15 iyunia 1939 g.)," *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo*, no. 12 (June 1939): 63.

109. A search of the Smolensk Archive and of the local newspaper and party journal could not reveal the name of the KPK plenipotentiary, if there was one, in Smolensk after this time. In March 1939, no person from the KPK was elected a voting member of the region's delegation to the Nineteenth Party Congress, as had been the custom in the past.

110. J. Arch Getty, William Chase, and Charles Wetherell, "Patterns of Party and State Office-Holding in the Soviet Bureaucracy," unpublished working paper of the Soviet Data Bank (1991).

111. Scholars are divided on the question of whether Stalin ever intended or wanted a regularized, legal state as opposed to the voluntarist and violent system usually attributed to him. For various views, see Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System* (New York 1985): 281–85; Getty, "State and Society Under Stalin;" O. V. Khlevniuk, *Politbiuro. Mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody* (Moscow, 1996): 128–57.