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EVERYDAY WORKING LIFE OF WORKERS OF INDUSTRIAL FACTORIES OF THE KAZAKH SSR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract: *The article examines the everyday working life of Soviet workers, using defence factories in Kazakhstan, both local and evacuated during World War II, as examples. The evacuation demonstrated not only the possibilities of organising production under the extreme conditions of war but also revealed a complex picture of workers' everyday labour. This complexity was reflected in the Soviet leadership's system of priorities, in labour relations, in workers' living conditions, and in the structure of production in the new regions.*

Keywords: *World War II, evacuation, Kazakh SSR, labour history, defence factories.*

Rezumat: Viaţa cotidiană a muncitorilor din fabricile RSS Kazahe în timpul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial. *Articolul examinează viaţa profesională cotidiană a muncitorilor sovietici, folosind exemplul fabricilor de apărare din Kazahstan, atât cele locale, cât şi cele evacuate în timpul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial. Evacuarea a demonstrat nu numai posibilităţile de organizare a producţiei în condiţiile extreme ale războiului, ci a revelat şi o imagine complexă a vieţii profesionale cotidiene a muncitorilor. Acest lucru s-a reflectat în sistemul de priorităţi al conducerii sovietice, precum şi în relaţiile de muncă, condiţiile de viaţă ale muncitorilor şi structura producţiei în noile regiuni.*

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II was a landmark event for an entire historical era. Researchers of the Soviet economy have shown that production and labour were fundamental elements that significantly influenced the potential for Soviet participation in the war.[1] However, behind questions of the efficiency of the Soviet economy and the experience of a reasonably successful evacuation lie the history of labour relations on the home front and the intersections of institutional powers across various structures. Moreover, this history provides essential insights into the challenges and complexities that the Soviet leadership faced in mobilising the workforce and resources necessary to achieve victory.

Alongside heroic examples of selfless labour and social cohesion, archival documents also reveal ambiguous images of social disintegration. These documents highlight a lack of coordination between economic and party bodies, as well as resistance within various power structures. Given the similarity of social processes in the pre-war USSR, it should be noted that evacuation and mobilisation significantly reshaped power and social relations in the Soviet state during the war years.

The effectiveness of the evacuation processes, which spanned most of the USSR, remains a subject of debate. Researchers note that the evacuation was a 'unique production operation'.[2] It helped establish a new base for the defence industry in the eastern Soviet Union. It provided the Soviet army with everything it needed to regain the territories occupied by the enemy.[3] While calling the evacuation a triumph of Soviet power, researchers observe that the pre-war hierarchy of people and places persisted throughout this massive relocation.[4]

This article demonstrates that, while evacuation served as an example of successful production organisation under wartime conditions, it also exacerbated existing problems and contradictions in the labour sphere, further worsening the

[1] Mark Harrison, *Accounting for War. Soviet Production, Employment, and the Defence Burden, 1940–1945*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 376 p.

[2] Georgy Kumanev, *Voina i evakuatsiya v SSSR. 1941–1942 gody* [War and Evacuation in the USSR. 1941–1942], in "Novaia i noveishaia istoriia", 2006, No. 6, pp. 7–27.

[3] Wendy Goldman, Donald Filtzer, *Fortress Dark and Stern. The Soviet Home Front during World War II,* New York, Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 56.

[4] Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station. Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009, p. 33.

working and living conditions of workers in the places of arrival.

This study aims to analyse labour relations and conflicts at defence industry enterprises in the Kazakh SSR during World War II. To achieve this goal, we will examine the impact of evacuation processes on the establishment and operation of defence enterprises in the republic, and identify the unique dynamics between the party and economic bodies within the enterprises, as well as conflicts between the administration and employees. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including the 'Special Folders', documents from the Party Control Commission, materials from the primary party organisations at the factories, and personal files of plant managers, this study will examine the administrative practices established at defence factories. The goal is to trace the specifics of relationships and conflicts within the labour collectives.

The labour relations and conflicts within collectives in the Kazakh SSR during the war period have not been the subject of in-depth analysis in either Soviet or post-Soviet historiography.

In Soviet historiography, ideological constraints led to an emphasis on the universal enthusiasm for labour among the masses in analyses of labour relations.[5] However, perestroika, the archival revolution, and the partial liberalisation of the early 1990s allowed historians to recognise the negative aspects of relations within Soviet labour collectives. During perestroika, Russian historians acknowledged the effectiveness of strict centralised management while stressing that such a system failed to address the needs and requirements of the individual.[6] The shift towards the history of everyday life in the 1990s provided a new understanding of Soviet society by studying the everyday practices of its citizens. Nevertheless, the authors emphasise that in Soviet works on the history of the working class, the worker is often in the background.[7]

In Kazakhstani historiography of the 1990s, the work of M. K. Manash Kozybaev and Nurlan Edygenov is particularly noteworthy. According to the

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[5] Ivan Vorozheikin, *Letopis' trudovogo geroizma: kratkaya istoriya sotsialisticheskogo sorevnovaniya v SSSR. 1917–1977* [Chronicle of Labour Heroism: A Brief History of Socialist Competition in the USSR. 1917–1977], Moscow, Politizdat, 1979, 326 p.

[6] Vladimir Kozhurin, *Neizvestnaya voina: deyatel'nost' Sovetskogo gosudarstva po obespecheniyu usloviy zhizni i truda rabochikh v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny* [The Unknown War: The Soviet State's Efforts to Ensure Living and Working Conditions for Workers during the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Academy of Social Sciences under the CPSU Central Committee, 1990, p. 10.

[7] Natalija Kozlova, *Gorizonty povsednevnosti sovetskoy epokhi* [Horizons of Everyday Life in the Soviet Era], Moscow, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1996, p.16.

authors, 'competitiveness in labour', which emerged in the 1930s, was later formalised, and *'continuous stakhanovizatsiya'* unfolded within labour collectives. In some cases, 'hothouse conditions' were created to set production records.[8] In contemporary Kazakhstani historiography, works devoted to women's contributions to labour and heroism on the home front can be identified.[9] Joint works by Kazakhstani and Russian authors examine characteristics of gender and professional segregation during the war, the relationship between party bodies, women's councils, and the population,[10] and specific aspects of everyday working life.[11] They also consider the influence of enterprises' social infrastructure on workers' motivation in the defence industry.[12]

In Western historiography, this problem has been studied using materials from different regions of the Soviet Union. Wendy Goldman and Donald Filtzer examined issues of labour discipline and the living and working conditions of workers.[13] Rebecca Manley analysed the peculiarities of industrial everyday life in Tashkent, paying attention to the region's specificities.[14] Fitzpatrick's research examines the

[8] Manash Kozybaev, Nurlan Edygenov, *Trud vo imya pobedy* [Labour for the Sake of Victory], Almaty, 1995, p. 100

[9] Zauresh Saktaganova, Zhanagul Tursynova, Ajdos Smagulov, *Zhenshchiny Tsentral'nogo Kazakhstana v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny, 1941–1945* [Women of Central Kazakhstan during the Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945], Karaganda, KarGU Publishing House, 2016, 256 p.

[10] Roza Zharkynbayeva., Evgenija Anufriyeva (Eds.), *Gendernye aspekty istorii Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny v Kazakhstane i Rossii: makro i mikrouroven* [Gender Aspects of the History of the Great Patriotic War in Kazakhstan and Russia: Macro and Micro Levels], Almaty, Qazaq Universiteti, 2020, 271 p.

[11] Roza Zharkynbayeva, Marina Potemkina (Eds.), *Proizvodstvennaya povsednevnost' na oboronnykh predpriyatiyakh Kazakhstana i Uralo-Povolzhskogo regiona Rossii v voennye gody (1941–1945 gg.)* [Production everyday life at defence enterprises of Kazakhstan and the Ural-Volga region of Russia during the war years (1941–1945)], Almaty, Qazaq University, 2023, 374 p.

[12] Marina Potemkina, Roza Zharkynbayeva, Evgenija Anufrieva, *Sotsial'naya infrastruktura predpriyatiya kak glavnyy faktor zhizneobespecheniya rabochikh v voennye gody (1941–1945 gg.)* [The social infrastructure of enterprises as the main factor of workers' livelihood during the war years (1941–1945)], "Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya 4: Istoriya. Regionovedenie. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, Vol. 28, 2023, No. 1, pp. 53–64.

[13] Wendy Goldman, Donald Filtzer, *Fortress Dark and Stern. The Soviet Home Front during World War II,* New York, Oxford University Press, 2021, 528 p.

[14] Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station. Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War,* Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009, 304 p.

everyday life of Soviet citizens and the mechanisms of social mobilisation.[15] Labour relations have also been studied through the example of industrial enterprises during the period of industrialisation in David Shearer's works, which examines social control and party intervention in enterprise management.[16]

In this study, we examine the above issues using the example of one local enterprise, the Chimkent Lead Factory (hereafter ChSZ), established during the First Five-Year Plan, and three enterprises relocated to the republic during the war years.

EVACUATION PROCESSES IMPACT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEFENCE ENTERPRISES IN THE KAZAKH SSR

During the war years, the central regions where industrial enterprises and evacuated citizens were located were in Siberia, the Urals, Central Asia and Kazakhstan.[17] The significant remoteness of these places from the theatre of war, along with the peculiarities of socio-economic development, had a substantial impact on the course and outcome of the evacuation.

From the beginning of the war to the end of 1942, 150 evacuated enterprises were relocated to the Kazakh SSR.[18] The republic was characterised by vast territory, the remoteness of industrial centres from one another, poorly organised transport and communications, low population density, multi-ethnicity, and a high proportion of special contingents. According to the 1939 census, the republic's population was under 6.2 million. However, during the war years, the population structure changed significantly: the number of males declined due to mass conscription into the Red Army. At the same time, the republic was replenished by special settlers and citizens evacuated from temporarily occupied and frontline

[15] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, 304 p.

[16] David Shearer, *Factories within factories. Changes in the structure of work and management in Soviet machine-building factories, 1926–1934*, in William G. Rosenberg, Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Eds.), *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1993, pp. 193–222.

[17] Roza Zharkynbayeva, Marina Potemkina (Eds.), *Proizvodstvennaya povsednevnost' na oboronnykh predpriyatiyakh Kazakhstana i Uralo-Povolzhskogo regiona Rossii v voennye gody (1941–1945 gg.)* [Production everyday life at defence enterprises of Kazakhstan and the Ural-Volga region of Russia during the war years (1941–1945)], Almaty, Qazaq University, 2023, p. 43.

[18] Manash Kozybaev, Nurlan Edygenov, *Trud vo imya pobedy* [Labour for the Sake of Victory], Almaty, Kazakhstan, 1995, p. 43.

regions.[19] By 1946, there were 987,533 special settlers and exiles.[20]

The proportions of residents (Kazakhs or other members of the local population) and evacuated workers differed between evacuated and local enterprises. At the evacuated factories, the share of evacuated workers across different periods of the war ranged from 13% to 76%, with the remainder recruited from the local population.[21] By 1945, Kazakhs accounted for only 8% of all workers in the republic's defence industry.[22]

In the south of the republic, at one of the local enterprises (ChSZ), the proportion of the indigenous population, Kazakhs and Uzbeks, was 40% before the war. By 1944, however, it had decreased to 30%. Nevertheless, in some departments, such as the water-jacket department, Kazakhs and Uzbeks accounted for up to 80% of the staff. Archives record interethnic issues at this factory. For example, in a letter to Stalin dated 15 August 1941, an Uzbek worker complained of being transferred from the electric shop to the water-jacket shop and noted that Kazakhs and Uzbeks were often assigned to hazardous conditions, which limited their opportunities for career advancement.[23]

At the same time, the organisation of the labour process in both evacuated and local enterprises was uneven and disorganised. Some evacuated enterprises produced goods in unsuitable premises, sometimes even outdoors, while their facilities were under construction. Local enterprises also faced difficulties. Most were put into operation in the early 1930s, during the first five-year plan, and their equipment and machinery were worn out or in disrepair. The stability of production and team relations was undermined by disruptions in material and component supply and by a shortage of skilled personnel. While studying changes

[19] Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj arhiv jekonomiki [Russian State Archive of Economy], f. 4372, op. 43, d. 79, l. 13.

[20] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan [Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan], f. 725, op. 4, d. 632, l. 47.

[21] Roza Zharkynbayeva, Marina Potemkina, (eds.), *Proizvodstvennaya povsednevnost' na oboronnykh predpriyatiyakh Kazakhstana i Uralo-Povolzhskogo regiona Rossii v voennye gody (1941–1945 gg.)* [Production everyday life at defence enterprises of Kazakhstan and the Ural-Volga region of Russia during the war years (1941–1945)], Almaty, Qazaq University, 2023, p. 104.

[22] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan [Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan], f. 708, op. 7.1, d. 1746a, l. 91.

[23] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv obshhestvenno-politicheskoj istorii Turkestanskoj oblasti [State Archive of Social and Political History of Turkestan Oblast], f. 234, op. 1, d. 224, l. 70-71.

in enterprise workflows and management during the years of industrialisation, David Shearer observed a characteristic feature of Soviet industrial enterprises: the absence of an integrated system of specialised production workshops. Often, such industrial enterprises were more like "a vast production city, a conglomerate of semi-autonomous shops, a patchwork of factories within factories."[24]

Although the evacuation of factories from the front line to the rear of the USSR often occurred under extreme conditions, a significant number of people and plants were relocated to safe areas, where they faced new challenges. One of the most considerable relocation projects in the history of strategically important defence plants was the evacuation of the Kirov Machine-Building Factory (hereafter Factory No. 175). It was initially moved from Tokmak, Ukraine, to Makhachkala. Later, in response to the threat of an offensive in the Caucasus in 1942, a second evacuation took place, with the plant relocating to Alma-Ata. From August to November 1942, amid challenging sea and rail transport conditions, the plant relocated to Alma-Ata.[25] The arrival of the plant brought approximately twelve thousand workers and their families. Transporting both equipment and personnel required more than 1,000 wagons and the formation of a large railway convoy. The equipment that arrived was initially stored in the basement of the tobacco factory and cinema. Construction work began in the workshops, with machines and tools being assembled while walls were being erected. The dispersion of production shops throughout the city also adversely affected production organisation forms and labour efficiency.[26]

The factory's workers described the negative impact of the evacuation on the labour organisation and the collective: "The moment of evacuation put a heavy strain on our party organisation. Our party organiser (*partorganizator*), Comrade K., left the organisation at such a crucial moment and was the first to leave. Our party organisation was not sufficiently united and 'friendly', and this is still felt today."[27] The Secretary of the Party Committee of the Alma-Ata Heavy Machine-Building Factory (hereafter *AZTM)* also noted that "evacuation and installation of the workshops weakened (*raskholodili*) the team…"[28]

The adverse effects of relocating workers and factories on production

[24] David Shearer, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

[25] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan [Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan], f. 1856, op. 1, d. 15, l. 19-20.

[26] Roza Zharkynbayeva, Marina Potemkina (Eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 75–76.

[27] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 1856, op. 1, d. 9, l. 7.

[28] *Ibid*., d. 17, l. 71.

processes and team dynamics are understandable. People were transported in crowded conditions and could go without food for several days. Poor sanitary conditions also affected the well-being of evacuees. Upon reaching their destination, many were physically and mentally weakened. This practice of transporting evacuated enterprises and workers was common across most factories.

Challenges in finding suitable premises during evacuation also affected the OGPU Machine-Tool Factory (hereafter Factory No. 317) of the People's Commissariat of Ammunition. Relocated from Melitopol to Akmolinsk in October 1941, the factory was assigned the facilities of a pedagogical school, which were wholly insufficient in terms of space. Placing parts of the factory in inadequate adobe sheds and separating essential technical shops, such as the power plant and thermal shop, from the central facility by significant distances increased production complexity.[29]

In addition to the logistical challenges of relocating enterprises, the NKVD also noted that some directors struggled with organisational issues. This was the case at one of the defence factories, which was built in a short timeframe and began producing fragmentation shells, mines, and grenades. However, the Head of the special department at the plant accused the plant director of poor organisation in evacuation matters. Because there was no thermal workshop, a small furnace was installed directly in the workshop, thereby violating thermal treatment standards and causing worker poisoning.[30]

On March 1942, the Directorate of People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (hereafter – *UNKVD)* continued to criticize the activities of the factory director: "According to the plan, the factory was supposed to be restored and to start working on 15 December 1941, but during the process of evacuation, it was revealed that acts of sabotage were allowed by the Director of the factory – as a result, some equipment of the factory was partially lost, especially the mechanisms of the electric facilities. The investigation revealed that the factory director and several other responsible workers did not focus on evacuating the plant; instead, they began evacuating their families and property. The factory director stated: .... (*obscene expression*) with your plant, my family is dearer to me than the factory. The director is the son of a gendarme, married to the daughter of a priest (*pop*), the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks (hereafter – *Obkom KP(b)K*) and

[29] *Ibid*., f. 708. op. 6.1, d. 644, l. 99.

[30] Central'nyj Gosudarstvennyj Arhiv Respubliki Kazahstan [Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan], f. 1430 C, op. 3, d. 105, l. 18-19 ob.

NKVD of KazSSR are informed about all these facts."[31]

This statement by the director of a large defence plant indicates that the evacuation policy was partially shaped at the local level, sometimes taking into account evacuees' preferences and decisions. Despite the authorities' strict directives and instructions, local factors and interests also influenced the organisation and conduct of the evacuation. Administration representatives created favourable conditions that benefited not only their own families but also their inner circle.

During the war, several factors, including poor coordination in production, material shortages, and poor living conditions, adversely affected relationships among the various working groups. As a result, employees were forced to adopt unconventional measures to address their problems and meet deadlines, leading to disagreements and conflicts among organisational units within enterprises. Because defence factories were crucial to producing essential weapons for the Soviet Union, tensions among the teams working in these facilities became particularly intense and complex.

The content of the archival documents makes it difficult to identify specific details about production processes and labour relations in local and evacuated factories during the war years. The situation was highly challenging for all factories in the republic, with irregular and intermittent production. At the same time, the situation in labour collectives and the degree of conflict were influenced by a complex range of factors, including patriotic propaganda and the ideal of hard work, economic incentives and the desire to survive, and, at times, ethnic factors.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARTY AND ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION

Labour and executive discipline at defence enterprises was generally believed to be strict, particularly given the imposition of martial law. However, a study of the documents of the enterprises' primary party organisations reveals a more complex and ambiguous picture of the situation.

The minutes of workers' collectives' meetings frequently record conflicts between the economic and party authorities at factories, as well as disputes among managers and workers over the production process. Overall, meeting state orders and defence production targets were considered essential tasks for both the management team and the party leadership. However, disagreements often

[31] *Ibid*.

arose between factory directors and local party committee secretaries over production strategies and the mobilisation of worker efforts.

The situation at the ChSZ exemplifies sharp disagreements between the factory director and the party leadership. On the eve of the war, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK) 's instructors positively assessed ChSZ's activities in their report. One-man management (*edinolichie*) at the plant had been strengthened, with the director and heads of various departments assuming greater roles. The report particularly emphasised that the plant's senior management consisted of individuals who had grown up at the plant and graduated from Soviet universities and technical schools.[32]

With the onset of the war, the challenges in mobilising the factory on a wartime footing led to significant changes in the situation. As a result, criticism was directed towards the plant's management for their actions. In July 1941, the party's representative criticised the production organisation and called for cleaning the shop of socially 'alien elements'.[33]

During 1941, the Party Bureau continued to demand immediate measures from the directorate to remove class alien and anti-Soviet elements from the factory. It sought to hold accountable those who undermined state discipline and failed to fulfil the plant's orders and instructions in accordance with wartime law.[34] As a result, in August 1941, the chief engineer was removed from ChSZ and prosecuted by the CPK for failing to meet production targets and for permitting emergency conditions in the furnaces, which led to mass poisoning among skilled workers. The factory director received a reprimand, a note was added to his personal file, and he was warned that failure to address such issues would result in dismissal from work and exclusion from the Party.[35]

By autumn 1941, tensions between the party organisation and the factory director were escalating. On 3 October 1941, the factory Party Committee bureau deemed it necessary to request intervention from the Regional Committee of CPK regarding the current director's inability to continue in his position.[36] On the same day, party officials prepared a report for Nikolai Skvortsov. It included proposals to dismiss the factory director from his position, hold him accountable to the

[32] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 708, op. 5/1, d. 194, l. 17.

[33] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv obshhestvenno-politicheskoj istorii Turkestanskoj oblasti [State Archive of Social and Political History of Turkestan Oblast], f. 234, op. 1, d. 213, l. 140-145.

[34] *Ibid*., l. 167.

[35] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 708, op. 1/1, d. 3, l. 47.

[36] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv obshhestvenno-politicheskoj istorii…, f. 234, op. 1, d. 213, l. 179.

strictest party responsibility, and reassign him to the position of 'rank-and-file employee'. The factory director was blamed for the fact that the lead production mobilisation plan was only 93.4% fulfilled in the third quarter. Along with that, he was blamed for the lack of communication with the Party organisation and NKVD (he) never visits the Party Committee unless invited, fails to inform the Party bureau about carried out activities, and hides accidents and malfunctions from the Party organisation and NKVD.[37]

As a result, the plant director was removed from the position. It appears that the decision to transfer him to a lower-level position was carried out. In his personal file, which runs from 3 March 1939 to 8 August 1941, the last entry reads "the director of ChSZ since February 1937" (there were no further entries in the personnel file).[38] Despite the acute shortage of specialists with higher education, the factory director, a graduate of the Moscow Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals, was removed from his post. We can assume that a crucial factor in his removal was not only the factory's failure to meet the plan but also its inability to build relationships with the party leadership, as well as his attempts to resolve production issues independently without consulting the Party Committee and NKVD bodies.

Actions by the Party and economic bodies at the ChSZ showed further inconsistency. For instance, during the next director's tenure, a significant conflict arose over personnel changes. The director argued that he had the authority to make these decisions. At the same time, the Party secretary countered that, since everyone shared responsibility for the factory, the transfer of Communist Party members should be coordinated with the Party bureau. The Party secretary also pointed out that 'partorganizator' is not a puppet (*marionetka*), but rather an assistant to the director.[39]

Studying the ChSZ documents reveals that, from the onset of the war, strained relations developed and were maintained between the party bodies and the enterprise administration. This suggests that the problem was not about one-man management at the factory, but rather about the control and accountability of the economic managers to the party leadership. Studies show that this reflects a well-defined system of stringent, multi-layered control exerted by the centre over the regions, implemented through the numerous structures of the party and

[37] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 708, op. 5/1, d. 794, l. 95-100.
[38] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv obshhestvenno-politicheskoj istorii…, f. 40, op. 1b, d. 2944, l. 4ob.
[39] *Ibid*., f. 234, op. 1, d. 236, l. 1-7.

state apparatus.[40] Factory directors did not always receive support from Party bodies or workers for their production decisions, and relations between shops and plant departments also were far from constructive.

The discrediting of the director's decisions by representatives of party organisations also weakened the director's authority within the labour collective. For example, the director of another defence factory expressed dissatisfaction with the party organiser's interference in the plant's production activities. As a result, the director's order to the shop chief to send 20 workers[41] to shop No. 2 was not carried out after consulting with *partorg*.[42] The factory director warned workers that "if the factory director issues an order, neither the party organisation nor the trade union (*proforganitsiya*) can cancel it. Operational work orders must originate from the plant director only."[43] However, the final decision often rested with the party leadership.

During wartime, defence enterprises needed to fulfil their plans effectively. Therefore, labour productivity took precedence in the interaction between production and party leadership. Failure to meet production targets or fulfil the plan carried severe consequences, including demotions, expulsion from the Party, and criminal prosecution. If Party representatives highlighted that the failure to meet the plan was due to production issues, shop managers often blamed it on insufficient ideological work among the workers. Both sides tried to minimise the threats they faced by blaming the other.

The conflict between the Deputy Secretary of the Party bureau at another defence factory and the Head of production is indicative of this tendency. The protocol stated that relations between them were 'strained' in April 1944. The Head of Production rejected the idea of close collaboration with the Party bureau representative and even allowed instances of bullying. The issue was brought to the Party bureau, where the majority agreed that the conflict should be halted. One Party member observed that, although most of the workers were from Leningrad and the collective was close-knit, communication between the factory

[40] Oleg Khlevnyuk, *Administrativnye praktiki v sovetskom tylu: mezhdu tsentralizatsiei i avtonomiey* [Administrative Practices in the Soviet Home Front: Between Centralisation and Autonomy], in B. Fizeler, and R. D. Markwick (Eds.) *Sovetskii tyl 1941–1945: povsednevnaya zhizn' v gody voiny* [The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: Everyday Life During the War], Moscow, Politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2019, pp. 257–276.

[41] Within the practice of assisting the backward shop, workers from some shops were transferred to backward ones.

[42] The secretary of the Party organisation at the AZTM.

[43] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 1110, op.1, d. 1, l. 184.

administration and the Party organisation remained limited. The Head of Production believed that the primary resource for production was people. According to his view, work in the shops was demanding; therefore, the workers needed to converse not just about technical matters but also about political ones. He pointed out that when the workers were left to themselves, they tended to 'talk very often and so much among themselves, and often about the wrong things'. The Party representative pointed out that Party work should not be limited to displaying slogans and posters, but should also involve addressing workers' everyday issues by organising *bani* (baths) and film screenings.[44]

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND LABOUR COLLECTIVES

The relationship between the administration and the labour collectives is also evident in the workers' letters, whether open or anonymous. These letters, which contain complaints about social injustice, highlight the complex dynamics and the lack of understanding between the administration and the workers, stemming from significant social distance.

Serious accusations were made in a letter from workers at the defence factories: "We, workers and employees of the Machine-Building Special Factory, evacuated from Voroshilovgrad, want to inform you about the outrageous behaviour of certain suspicious individuals…" The letter discussed unflattering aspects of the lives of some managers, including their involvement in the evacuation process and activities in Alma-Ata. According to the workers, products of "good quality and in sufficient quantity" were usually distributed but were then stolen. In conclusion, the letter made a request: "Do we not have wounded commanders who could successfully replace these dark people who hid from mobilisation and the war… The department of workers' provisioning (ORS) is a nest that hinders the work of the factory, and it is where they hide from the" war."[45]

Upon receipt of the letter, an order was issued to investigate the matter. As a result of the inspection, it was found that not all accusations against the factory administration were substantiated. Due to limited product availability, products were distributed via coupons. The higher allocation of products was given to top-performing production workers. Regarding unsatisfactory living conditions, the

[44] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv Zapadno-Kazahstanskoj oblasti [State Archives of West Kazakhstan Region], Fond 255, op. 1, d. 6, l. 56-59.

[45] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan , Fond 708, op. 6.1, d. 632, l. 131-131v.

facts presented were confirmed.[46]

The wartime distribution system for consumer goods, managed through state and cooperative trade networks, created a facade of equitable resource allocation, as all decisions originated at the central level. However, alongside this official system, a parallel shadow redistribution of goods occurred through unofficial channels, including the black market and personal connections.[47] Throughout the war, illegal practices such as self-supply, levelling, and theft permeated the distribution system. Many administrators secured privileged access for themselves and their associates through self-supply.[48]

One such case occurred at the factory, where workers were dissatisfied with social injustice in the distribution of consumer goods. The 'boundless indignation' of the workers was caused by a group that included the factory director and several senior managers, who were engaged in self-dealing. According to workers' accounts, *Obltorg* initially allocated goods to management; only one or two pairs of felt boots (valenki) reached factory workers, while others, such as guards and yard workers, went without proper clothing or supplies. Similar instances were reported frequently.[49] In 1949, the director of the same plant was accused of losing his 'Bolshevik humility' and abusing his official position. He used transport and workers from the plant's *OKS* for building his own house, which caused discontent among workers.[50]

Factory-wide party meetings, held across all enterprises to solicit and address critical feedback, can also highlight the collectives' disunity. At the AZTM meetings, workers openly criticised their managers for poor planning in the shops. One worker condemned the practice of mobilising workers from leading shops to help those lagging in production. She argued that sending more people to lagging Shop No. 2 would further overcrowd it and create inefficiency due to insufficient space. For example, the workers of the lagging Shop No. 2 were not working; instead, they "slept peacefully, having assigned a watchman."[51] In January 1944, some of the director of the ChSZ's suggestions were criticised by participants in

[46] *Ibid*.

[47] Nadezhda Paletskikh, *Sotsial'naya politika na Urale v period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [Social Policy in the Urals during the Great Patriotic War]. Chelyabinsk, 1995, p. 83.

[48] Wendy Goldman, Donald Filtzer, *Fortress Dark and Stern: The Soviet Home Front during World War II,* NY, Oxford University Press, 2021, p.129

[49] Central'nyj Gosudarstvennyj Arhiv Respubliki Kazahstan [Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan], f. 1430C, op. 3, d. 105, l. 18-19ob.

[50] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, Fond 708, op. 49, d. 5327, l. 17-19.

[51] *Ibid*., Fond 708, op. 8, d. 1747, l. 182.

the discussion as inconsistent with party policy.[52]

This situation was also common for defence plants in other regions. In the Urals, as mentioned in her research Vera Solov'eva, 'question and answer meetings' were held. It was a meeting between factory workers and their administration, which was practised very rarely. For instance, Isaak Zal'tsman, the famous director of the Kirov Chelyabinsk factory, had to address the workers of one shop amid whistles and shouts from the stands, who claimed that "we have been cheated for four years."[53]

The documents also record instances in which workers, foremen, or shop supervisors refused to carry out their assigned tasks and even accused and insulted their superiors, including the directorate. There were occasions when foremen disregarded orders from the shop manager and appealed directly to the plant director, resulting in the orders being cancelled. This lack of adherence to hierarchy and disobedience towards management eroded the authority of both foremen and shop stewards in the eyes of the workers. This situation led to disorganisation in factory operations, ultimately reducing production output.

The relationship between the administration and workers in this context often involved methods of both encouragement and coercion. Encouragement here refers to various social measures used to stimulate *Stakhanovisms*, while coercion might be described by the behaviour of some shop managers who acted more like gendarmes, closely monitoring their workers' actions. For example, managers at defence factories noted that shop heads were not administrators, but acted as gendarmes: "you stand over the worker, you stand over his soul, and only then the order is fulfilled (by workers)."[54]

Despite these coercive tactics, other managers sought to build constructive, occasionally friendly relationships with their subordinates. Informal, friendly relations between employees at different levels of the hierarchy were not welcomed within the industrial relations system at the plants. It was standard practice to address a superior not by first name but, according to Russian tradition, by both first name and patronymic. In Soviet culture, it is generally agreed that the Bolsheviks' policy sought to introduce 'culture' into the region's local

[52] Gosudarstvennyj arhiv obshhestvenno-politicheskoj istorii…, f. 234, op. 1, d. 236, ll. 1-7.

[53] Vera Solov'eva, *Bytovye usloviya personala promyshlennykh predpriyatii Urala v 1941–1945 gg.: gosudarstvennaya politika i strategii adaptatsii* [Living Conditions of Industrial Enterprise Personnel in the Urals, 1941–1945: State Policy and Adaptation Strategies], PhD thesis (Candidate of Historical Sciences), 2011, p. 143.

[54] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 725, op. 4, d. 650, l. 26-27.

communities. K. Kelly and N. Kozlova viewed this cultural introduction as "a Soviet version of the civilising mission or an implementation of Enlightenment ideas." Gradskova noted that Soviet cultural discourse focused on bringing culture to 'backward peoples,' including those in Central Asia, and that the Soviet construct was based on a dichotomy: the collective 'backward other' and the Russian centre as a symbol of progress.[55]

For example, there was a belief that if workers at the defence factories addressed their foreman by name, it was a sign of disrespect towards him and of the foreman's inability to command workers or enforce labour discipline. In November 1943, in one of the shops of AZTM, it was noted that achieving industrial discipline was impossible when workers "did not know how to respect their masters, calling them *Petya, Sasha* ..."[56] Similarly, in another shop, it was emphasised that some foremen had lost authority over the workers and could not effectively control their work. Transferring workers from machine work to heavy manual labour for a specific period was suggested as a form of punishment.[57]

Sometimes, informal relationships between individual workers and foremen in factories had a detrimental effect on production. For instance, in one of the Shops, the master covered up defects and misconduct by some workers. Despite a 50% defect rate, Master neither held any worker accountable for the spoiled goods nor imposed penalties.[58] This lack of accountability led to significant economic losses, waste of crucial materials, unproductive use of machines and labour, and failure to meet production targets due to undocumented defects in the shop.

The daily practices among factory employees involved harsh treatment and the use of profanity. Constant pressure, emergencies, fatigue, and unforeseen circumstances, including accidents and injuries, affected the behaviour and colloquial speech of the employees. At one enterprise, for example, a discussion at the Party bureau concerning a manager's abusive treatment of colleagues revealed that similar treatment of subordinates was standard among other plant managers. Taking advantage of the presence of representatives from the regional and city committees, the workshop heads began to accuse other key managers of

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[55] Zhanat Kundakbaeva, *Modernizatsiya rannei sovetskoi epokhi v sud'bakh zhenshchin Kazakhstana, 1920–1930 gody* [Modernisation of the Early Soviet Era in the Fates of Kazakh Women, 1920s–1930s], Almaty, Qazaq Universiteti, 2017, pp. 11-12.

[56] Arhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazahstan, f. 1110, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 309-310.

[57] *Ibid*., d. 1b. l. 282.

[58] *Ibid*.

the company of rudeness. Specifically, the plant's chief engineer threatened to send the workshop head to the front. Another manager complained about the plant director, who had, in his words, literally "beat him out."[59]

Characteristic criticism intensified in the post-war period was also directed at another defence plant. In addition to recognising positive aspects of his work, concerns were raised about his 'uneven' (*nerovnoe*) treatment of certain employees. Complaints in 1946 cited instances of rudeness and shouting, with some workers feeling fearful about visiting the director's office. Of particular focus was the situation involving Kazakh staff members: of the 360 employees at the plant, 60 were Kazakhs, and turnover among them was high. When confronted with allegations regarding comments made about Kazakhs, the plant director felt compelled to justify himself by affirming that he respects the state's national policy and had no intention of offending Kazakhs as a nationality.[60]

According to Matthew Payne, staff turnover in Kazakhstan was not due to a fundamental incompatibility between Kazakhs and 'rational labour', but rather to the terrible working conditions and discrimination they faced.[61]

Consequently, we concur with A. Antufiev's assessment that the labour achievements of the war years were not a spontaneous act of sacrifice, but rather a period of physically demanding work. This arduous labour was exacerbated by persistent malnutrition, sleep deprivation, and the emotional burdens of worry and loss for loved ones.[62] These factors collectively affected workers' daily lives, contributing to increased workplace conflicts. Therefore, it becomes clear that the war era demanded not only heroism on the battlefield but also resilience and tireless effort on the home front, where individuals faced daily challenges of physical and emotional strain.

CONCLUSIONS

The evacuation significantly affected the lives and activities of displaced workers, fostering new dynamics among enterprise employees and heightening

[59] *Ibid*.

[60] Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv goroda Astana [State Archive of Astana city], f. 89. op. 4. d. 17. ll. 3, 9v.

[61] Matthew Payne, *Stalin's railroad: Turksib and the building of socialism*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001, p. 135.

[62] Albert Antufiev, *Uralskaya promyshlennost' nakanyune i v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* [Ural Industry on the Eve of and During the Great Patriotic War], Ekaterinburg, 1992, p. 295.

conflicts at both management and worker levels. Disagreements frequently escalated into conflicts between production and party leaders, managers, and workers. Furthermore, the use of informal management practices, profanity, and the relentless pursuit of overfulfilling production targets worsened the overall atmosphere within the factories.

The Second World War and the forced mobilisation of labour resources had a significant impact on the relationship between production and the roles of party leaders, managers, and workers. Lack of labour experience, difficult material and living conditions of workers, malnutrition and devastation aggravated the atmosphere in working collectives. In this context, during the critical period of the war, the problems of relationship-building in the collectives became increasingly pronounced. A wide range of violations of labour and production discipline, including conflicts, was documented at industrial plants. Disagreements between production and party leaders, as well as managers and workers, often led to disputes. Informal management practices, swearing, and constant pressure to exceed performance targets created a tense atmosphere that negatively affected the production process.

The complex material conditions and living standards of workers significantly affected production processes and labour discipline at enterprises, often prompting authorities to overlook violations of labour and production discipline during the country's critical period.

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