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Pomposity:**

**The Everyday Life of Komsomol  
Cadres in the 1920s**



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## **Profiles in Exhaustion and Pomposity: The Everyday Life of Komsomol Cadres in the 1920s**



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*Image from cover:* Komsomol meeting at the Magnitka Plant, 18 November 1932.  
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## **Abstract**

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This essay examines the daily lives of Young Communist League (Komsomol) cadres in the 1920s and argues that their ability to establish local authority through consent was often undermined by their everyday conditions. The article addresses the emergence of the Komsomol's nomenklatura and cadre appointment system after the Russian civil war, cadre workload, working conditions, health, attitudes, and the Komsomol leadership's efforts to subordinate cadre malfeasance and corruption through public scandal. The article demonstrates that without a sturdy material base upon which to generate consent, local Komsomol cadres often relied on domination to exert their authority over their rank-and-file members and to some extent the local population. This reliance ultimately perpetuated itself. The more cadres employed coercion, the more the means of consent atrophied, which led them to turn time and again to domination. The use of domination over consent had grave implications on the nature of Bolshevik rule. Often Komsomol cadres were the only representative of the Soviet state in rural localities, and their methods of garnering authority were representative of prevailing trends of Bolshevik governance throughout the 1920s.

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## **Profiles in Exhaustion and Pomposity: The Everyday Life of Komsomol Cadres in the 1920s**

Throughout the 1920s, the Young Communist League (Komsomol) rapidly spread across the Soviet Union. Although seemingly a fragmented patchwork, the Komsomol was tied together by an army of cadres that staffed the League's central, provincial, and district committees and cell bureaus. These human knots were vital to the organization's day-to-day local functioning. Perhaps more importantly, they often served as the sole representatives of the Soviet state and, by extension, the emerging socialist system. As Nikolai Chaplin, who would later become General Secretary of the Komsomol, stated at the Fourth Komsomol Congress in 1921, cadres were "a special element" that central leaders "had to seize upon to take hold of the Komsomol network."<sup>1</sup> Seizing, let alone keeping a hold of, the League's "special element," however, would prove to be an elusive endeavor.

The history of the cadres that mediated the Komsomol's Central Committee (TsK) and its rank and file has yet to be written. Scholars have discussed the growth of the Komsomol in the 1920s, particularly in the countryside, and have noted its expanding bureaucracy and systematization as its institutional structures multiplied and became wedded to the Bolshevik Party.<sup>2</sup> But who were the cadres that staffed these structures? What were their living and working conditions? How did these conditions shape a cadre's relationship with and ability to lead their rank and file? This article seeks to shed light on these questions.

Examining the Komsomol apparatus by focusing on the individuals that inhabited it yields a simple but important contention: Komsomol cadres' ability to establish authority through consent was often undermined by their everyday conditions. Without a sturdy material base upon which to generate consent, local cadres often relied on domination to exert their authority over their rank-and-file members and, to some extent, the local population. This reliance ultimately perpetuated itself; the more cadres employed coercion, the more the means of consent atrophied, which led time and again to domination. Of course, many local Komsomol cadres used a combination of tactics to administer their local organizations. However, the use of domination over consent was a prevailing trend throughout the 1920s as local cadres tried to exert authority. This tendency repeatedly alarmed the rank and file and leadership alike. An exploration of social and material relations serves to explain the roots of this administrative behavior.

What do domination and consent mean in this context? I use domination as the deployment by an individual or a group of cadres of their authority, power, and position to force, exclude, and command the rank and file into action, obedience, or submission. Consent, on the other hand, means building leadership through the use of persuasion, inclusion, and guidance. In short, the differences between the two can be gleaned from this statement, which purported to describe local party officials in Ilino district in Smolensk province in the 1920s: “They strive to criticize, to command, but they do not . . . explain practically how it is necessary to work . . . [They] lashed into everything, saying, in general, that the sections are not working, that the work is not set up as it should be, etc., dictating vague trite phrases, but not getting down to concrete cases.”<sup>3</sup> Similar observations were made of Komsomol cadres.

A reliance on domination affected the functioning of the Komsomol at the local level as well as its position as one of the “transmission belts” of Soviet rule. One major outcome was to further confirm the fragmented and fragile nature of Soviet local governance. Indeed, Vladimir Brovkin argued that the Komsomol represented a “transmission belt that snapped,” meaning that the Komsomol failed to function as a link between the Party and society. Given the state of the League’s local cadres, perhaps the real issue is that there was never a belt to snap.<sup>4</sup>

Several scholars have noted the limits of Bolshevik penetration into the structures of local governance in the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> Even where the Party did make inroads, its ability to control local cells was often restricted by local clientelism, patrimonialism, poor communication networks, social and economic conditions, as well as the population, customs, institutions, and practices of each locale. <sup>6</sup> Scholarship in this vein points rather clearly to the Bolshevik state as devoid of substantive hegemony. Indeed, as Tracy McDonald observed, the Bolsheviks’ “obsession with loyalty” on the ground “captures poignantly [their] sense of its own fragility as a state and a government.”<sup>7</sup>

Such loyalty at the base level is easily seen when examining the cadres of the Young Communist League. The Komsomol was integral to the expansion of Bolshevik influence in the 1920s; in fact, its membership in the provinces dwarfed that of the Party. The Bolshevik Party’s membership reflected an overwhelmingly urban demographic. In 1927, only 307,000 of the 1.3 million Party members resided in the countryside.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, of the Komosol’s 1.7 million members in 1925, over 1 million lived in rural areas.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, the Komsomol was *the* representative of the Soviet system in the countryside. Thus, understanding the nature of Soviet rule in the 1920s must also take into account the conditions in which the Komsomol’s cadres worked and the methods they used to establish authority.

## What is a “Cadre”?

As V. Kuzmin reminded readers in the *ABCs of a Komsomolets*, “The Komsomol demands from every member activism (*aktivnost*) in struggle, labor and study, it stands as the foremost condition of his membership.”<sup>10</sup> In practice, however, “activism” ranged from doing as little as attending meetings to taking an official position in the local cell. According to one primer, every member who “engage[d] in active participation in cell work” was considered an activist and not simply those “who are elected or hold a position or give speeches at meetings.”<sup>11</sup> This broad notion of activist was in line with the League’s populist impulses; rank-and-file participation in League or Soviet life facilitated members’ political and ideological development and prepared members for promotion. To differentiate from this broad definition of “activist,” I use the term “cadre” to refer specifically to those who staffed the Komsomol’s structures and offices.<sup>12</sup>

Grassroots participation was essential for inter-League democracy. Each active rank-and-file member, it was believed, helped to hold the apparatus accountable to the masses. Yet getting youth involved in local cells on a day-to-day basis was difficult. Activism pulled young people away from their friends, families, studies, and leisure. Most members, therefore, maintained a minimum commitment—going to a meeting here or to a demonstration there—to keep their standing as members.

In contrast, cadres constituted that small coterie of members who held official positions and shouldered the vast majority of Komsomol work. Their “elected” posts included secretary positions for cell, district, provincial and Central Committee bureaus as well as administrative roles such as political instructors, agitators, and organizers.<sup>13</sup> Some of them were paid; being a cadre was their profession. Many others, especially at the cell and district levels, volunteered and balanced Komsomol work with making a living elsewhere. But the most important factor that distinguished a cadre from a rank-and-file activist was responsibility: cadres were held accountable for their actions or lack thereof, while rank-and-file members were not.

For a young communist interested in becoming a cadre, there was no formal evaluation procedure, screening, or interview process.<sup>14</sup> Cadre work resulted from election, volunteerism, recommendation, or promotion at the behest of the local or central superiors. Sometimes becoming a cadre was arbitrary, as one commentator explained: “They call to the cell a komsomol-newcomer, who is still unaccustomed to his komsomol position and ask him: ‘What kind of work do you want? What interests you the most?’ The fellow is at a loss and answers, ‘I’ll do whatever you give me.’ Well, they do without finding out what this guy is most skilled in.”<sup>15</sup> A

budding cadre did not have to apply or demonstrate any organizing skills, let alone any adherence or knowledge of Marxist ideology. Most cadres had only a basic grasp of reading and writing. Often a youth was given the position of cell secretary because he was the only one who could read. A member, therefore, could become a cadre simply by having a modicum of skill, showing a desire, and displaying a measure of responsibility for carrying out the League's work. The open acceptance of anyone willing to serve resulted as much from a scarcity of willingness and talent than it did from the Komsomol's populism. Because of the shortage of talented and dedicated cadres, a resourceful activist could rise up the Komsomol command chain quite rapidly.

The end of the civil war dramatically altered the type of cadres that the Komsomol required. According to one critic, the cadre of the civil war was "first and foremost an *administrator*." He worked in an atmosphere without "a plan or order" and had to take on "various functions and tasks." The exigencies of the war required him to estrange himself "physically and psychologically" from the masses. Cadres thus became masters of "the method of mobilization and organization"; they "learned how to *boss (rasporiazhat'sia) the masses of League members* (even then not always successfully), but did not *lead them*."<sup>16</sup> This type of cadre became obsolete when the war ended. In this new era, M. Teterin wrote, "organizational ability and enthusiasm alone are not enough."<sup>17</sup> Instead, the Komsomol required local cadres who could lead rather than boss, foster consent rather than rely on coercion, and serve as political and cultural role models. "Less coercion and more persuasion," wrote Aleksandr Mil'chakov, the Komsomol's Second Secretary, in 1926. "A culturally and politically adept leader uses first and foremost persuasion ... such activists unite, rally and more so, genuinely lead the masses." Those cadres who lacked the "power of persuasion" had to rely on "shouting, pressure, and raw and naked force."<sup>18</sup> The Komsomol leadership expected each cadre to keep an open rapport with the general membership; in the case of disagreements or apathy, the cadre would need to calmly and comprehensively explain the correctness of the Party line. The leadership desired these cadres to be serious, organized, conscientious, accurate, orderly, abstinent, the "masters of politics and the Party's policy," and "politically developed enough" to answer any komsomol's questions.<sup>19</sup> According to Nikolai Bukharin, this required: "a psychological type who possesses the good features of the old Russian intelligentsia in terms of Marxist preparation and broad aptitude with American pragmatism. We need Marxism plus Americanism."<sup>20</sup> Such skills were in short supply.

## The Komsomol Apparatus in Disarray

The civil war had detrimental effects on the Komsomol's burgeoning apparatus between 1918 and 1922. Committees and cells established after the Komsomol's founding in October 1918 quickly atrophied or collapsed as members were mobilized to the front. The demands of the war were so acute that in the Komsomol stronghold of Petrograd, its cadres were depleted to the point where "all League activity stopped" or committees were handed over to members with "relatively limited organizational experience." Despite efforts to call cadres back from military service to run local committees, and even after reaching an agreement with the Party to liquidate Komsomol military detachments, the League was in desperate need of revival at the end of the war.<sup>21</sup>

The Komsomol leadership had no accurate account of the quantity and quality of its ranks; the war had weakened the few solid ties the Komsomol TsK had with its network outside of Russia's main urban centers. As delegates to the Third Komsomol Congress in 1920 noted, TsK directives rarely reached distant organizations. Those that did often arrived late, were ignored, or were deemed irrelevant in light of local conditions. Part of the problem was that the TsK had only intermittent contact with its local organs. Central cadre rolls were poorly maintained and, in many cases, the leadership of the local groups was a mystery.

This confusion was intensified due to rapidly swelling membership; between October 1918 and 1920, the Komsomol grew from roughly 22,000 members to 400,000.<sup>22</sup> These numbers were a rough approximation, since bureaucratic confusion resulted from war casualties, poor records, the lack of a uniform Komsomol card (local organizations often issued their own), tenuous organizational structure, and weak communications between center and periphery.<sup>23</sup> As a writer known as M. P. stated, "Not only could the TsK not definitively indicate the number of members ... the regional committees don't know the official number of its 'paper' members or the actual number of organizations. It's impossible to get the local leadership and its work on the right track without this knowledge"<sup>24</sup> This uncertainty also extended to information on the Komsomol's local cadres. As the Komsomol sought to make the transition to peacetime, knowledge about its composition would be vital to effectively manage the vast and rapidly growing organization. As Petrograd district secretary Petr Smorodin stated at the Third Komsomol Congress in 1920, "An army general who doesn't know his soldiers will be defeated. If we don't know our workers, we won't know how to use them."<sup>25</sup>

To get a sense of its actual composition, the Komsomol's leadership ordered a re-registration of its membership throughout the winter and spring of 1920–1921 in order to accomplish three tasks.<sup>26</sup> First, it sought to provide an account of the Komsomol's membership and put local record-keeping in order. Second, it sought to purge the Komsomol of undesirables. Finally, the re-registration was a way for the center to reestablish contact with local organizations and in particular their cadres by mandating new elections of the local executive committees and cell bureaus. Thus, in addition to purging the organization and getting a better sense of actual membership, the re-registration was vital to the center's efforts to consolidate its control over the periphery.

The campaign was implemented haphazardly and, in some cases, not at all. It mostly proved how chaotic the Komsomol's rolls really were. By the end of the campaign, overall membership plummeted by almost 50 percent to 250,000.<sup>27</sup> Entire cells crumbled because they lacked the members to sustain them.<sup>28</sup> Though the Komsomol TsK ordered its local units to file monthly reports in 1920, a survey in 1922 showed that these often arrived in Moscow two months late, and that two-thirds of the 107 provincial committees sent nothing. The problems included both poor lines of communication and the anti-bureaucratic mentality of cadres. As a certain F. Leonov explained, many cadres saw filing reports as “bureaucratic red tape” and believed that others should take on the tasks of “statistical-reporters.”<sup>29</sup>

In the end, the re-registration created as many problems as it aimed to solve. Despite the steep downward revision of membership, the figures resulting from the re-registration apparently were only somewhat more accurate than before. Also, poor reporting of periodic census tallies persisted. As late as June 1923, the membership figures General Secretary Smorodin presented at the Third Komsomol Conference were only partial. Of the Komsomol's 72 provincial committees, Smorodin presented records from only 23, while 49 provincial committees either failed to count or send their tallies.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, serious questions persisted about the quality of the League's cadre core. For many, the Komsomol seemed to be in an institutional crisis.

## **The Pains of Allocating and Distributing Cadres**

With this in mind, the TsK conducted a review (*peresmotr*) of its cadres in 1922 to get a better sense of its ranks. The review's main goal was to “decisively regroup the cadre of active workers and remove from the ranks those unnecessary and inhibiting elements” by evaluating the competency of cadres. One obvious goal was to account for who was available for cadre work.<sup>31</sup> Cadres were to present

themselves to a higher committee and to submit a short autobiography describing their Komsomol work experience, their attitude toward the work, and the types of duties they would want to fulfill in the future. Higher committees composed of dual Party-Komsomol members (who joined no later than 1919) conducted the reviews of their subordinates. Thus, a provincial cadre appeared before the Central Committee, a district cadre in front of a provincial cadre, etc.

These reviews concerned themselves with the leadership qualities of cadres, especially their competency and authority among rank-and-file members. Thus, the cadre review in the town of Sapozhka, Ryazan province, described the activist Shevrigin as having “such authority among the League masses that there was no smudge against him” and noted that he “used his authority completely in keeping with his title of an activist.” In contrast, the activists Sablina and Vazhenov were relieved of their positions because they were “unprepared” or “did not seriously carry out their duties.”<sup>32</sup>

The cadre review was only the first stage in TsK’s efforts to further consolidate its authority and establish a consistent organizational structure. In the fall of 1923, the Komsomol Central Committee conducted another census of its cadres and established a *nomenklatura* ranking system. The resulting account of Komsomol cadres included an archive of the central and local secretaries and staff members along with each one’s skills and backgrounds. This information was meant to create more precise allocation and distribution of personnel across the League’s expanding organizational structure. The Komsomol’s Organization-Assignment Department (Orgraspred) provided these lists to the Party “for the purpose of studying [its] reserve.”<sup>33</sup> This information gave the Komsomol leadership a better sense of its workforce and allowed for promotion of rank-and-file members into leadership positions or of cadres into Party work. Yet it reaffirmed that many of the local Komsomol structures were wholly dependent on a small staff of workers and that many committees were understaffed.<sup>34</sup>

The registration, cadre review, cadre censuses, and *nomenklatura* system were intended to better facilitate the increasingly normative practice of appointing cadres to local leadership positions. The Komsomol faced a conundrum similar to the one the Party had confronted at the end of the civil war. In order to build an effective organizational network, the Komsomol leadership had to, in the words of Graeme Gill, strengthen the “integrity and coherence of individual [League] bodies” and regularize the “linkages between different levels.” Building organizational integrity and linkages in the conditions of postwar Russia required appointments of cadres from above. As within the Party, Komsomol appointments “liberated” secretaries from the democratic whims of the rank and file; instead cadres became dependent

upon and indebted to their superiors for not only their present positions but also potential future promotions.<sup>35</sup> Appointments from above had important ramifications on the Komsomol's ability to exercise consent at the local level. By crippling cadres' ability to develop authority among the rank and file, the appointment system stymied the participation of the general membership and created local leaders who had few ties to, let alone knowledge of, local populations and conditions.

Throughout the 1920s, the Komsomol lacked talented personnel to staff its local committee branches. To more efficiently allocate its scarce human resources, the TsK relied on appointing cadres. "You see, comrades," Lazar Shatskin told delegates at the Third Komsomol Congress in 1920, "we have an extremely small staff of active workers." He went on to note that among that small number there were "extremely few good [ones]." The TsK's ability to tightly control its pool of personnel became one of the few means to carry out its directives, consolidate authority, and maintain institutional stability.<sup>36</sup> Still the Komsomol's bureaucratic chains were slow and often unresponsive. "District committees wait for the provincial committees, the provincial committee very often waits for the TsK," General Secretary Tseitlin complained in 1921, presaging a problem that would continue throughout the decade. Direct appointment of a known and trusted cadre was a way to enforce accountability and to circumvent the normal chain of command. The practice of appointments, although mandated, was in some instances welcomed by local committees; they were eager for qualified personnel and repeatedly requested staffing from the Komsomol's central office.

The Lenin Levy, which opened the Komsomol and the Party to a mass influx of new members, only increased the League's demand for cadres, particularly in the countryside.<sup>37</sup> Over a three-month period—February–April 1924—167,000 new recruits flooded the League; A. M. Selivanov estimated that the Komsomol increased by 3,000 members a day. This pace was faster than the League's apparatus could absorb, yet it did not stop at the end of the Levy. The Komsomol periodically staged recruitment drives in factories and villages, especially on the annual anniversaries of the October Revolution.<sup>38</sup> In an eighteen-month period, (July–January 1926), the Komsomol's national membership rose from 822,000 to 1,769,519, and the number of cells increased from 28,516 to 52,783. The number of peasants in the membership rolls tripled to 753,817 and the number of rural cells doubled to 38,796. In Smolensk alone, the number of rural cells went from 296 to 631.<sup>39</sup> Such growth brought the League's rural network, in the words of Isabel Tirado, to "the brink of becoming an autonomous political organization."<sup>40</sup> Hundreds of newly minted peasant komsomols petitioned to have cells recognized without leadership "from above."<sup>41</sup>

To rapidly fill vacant positions, the Komsomol TsK was forced to appoint less experienced members to positions of authority. The majority of new cadres in factory and village cells had joined the Komsomol only two years before getting their positions; a survey of district committees in Ryazan province in 1927 showed that one-third of cadres had only one year of cadre experience.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, urbanites transferred to the countryside were often ignorant of rural conditions. As a result, some local organizations even refused to take new transfers from cities: a certain V. Rulev, for example, was sent back to Moscow because he had only four months of activist experience. Many village cells sent cadres back to their original organizations because they were “poorly familiar with League work in the village.”<sup>43</sup> Local Komsomol leaders complained that they were sent cadres without the qualifications, and often, as a certain Breitman reported, “not a single one [of the cadres] corresponded to the transfer agreement.”<sup>44</sup>

While local organizations refused to take on incompetent cadres, technically, cadres had some say in their own transfers. A cadre could request a transfer as long as the sending and receiving organizations agreed to the move. If either organization refused the request, it had to justify that refusal with a written rationale. Most transfers, however, occurred by order of a cadre’s superiors. And while cadres could theoretically decline an ordered transfer, such a refusal was taboo. Every komsomol, after all, was duty-bound to execute orders from above. Committees often drew on this commitment by appealing to an intransigent cadre’s “komsomol duty and conscience.” When such entreaties failed, superiors in the organization simply threatened cadres with expulsion.<sup>45</sup>

The Komsomol’s reliance on transfers reinforced cadres’ estrangement from the local membership and the broader communities that they served. Cadres spent little time, often less than one year, serving in a particular area, and rarely worked in their home districts. For example, from May to December 1925, the Kursk provincial committee transferred forty-eight cadres to its various districts and only seven of those were natives to the province.<sup>46</sup>

These Central Committee–initiated transfers to rural areas, which often occurred as part of larger campaigns to fill vacancies in the countryside, resulted in cadres who had no personal or cultural ties to the areas in which they worked. Cadres’ efforts to make connections with locals were further hindered by geography of their assignments; some cadres had as many as twenty cells spread out over 300 miles and no means to travel between them.<sup>47</sup> Other cadres—such as Dmitrii Yashin, who was sent to work in the Kerch district committee in the Crimea—simply found themselves on committees that treated them as invading outsiders. When Yashin arrived, his

fellow bureau members refused to put him on the rolls and denied him work. He eventually discovered that the root of such hostility was a widespread perception that cadres “divided [themselves] between ‘us’ and ‘them’” and that newcomers were spies for the center. Yashin, who had expected to be included into the community of fellow young communists, decided to leave the Komsomol completely since “when a komsomol lands in Kerch, he’s not considered a komsomol.”<sup>48</sup>

Unsurprisingly, newly transferred komsomols became personally disillusioned, isolated, or unable to adjust to their new surroundings. This was especially the case for cadres sent to the countryside from cities and towns. These activists were often unprepared for village life or politics; some who were “afraid of the village” were reported to “have shown weakness and [run] away.” Others simply chose not to comply with their transfer orders. One report explained that activists “panicked” at the prospect of going to the village, leading some to “refuse to work” and to “sometimes consciously not fulfill the decisions of League committees.”<sup>49</sup>

Rough and intolerable local conditions prompted many cadres to immediately look for a way out of their posts, whatever the cost. They used tactics like foot-dragging, feigning incompetency, or purposely fueling discord within their organizations. To save face (and to rid themselves of a useless worker), local leaders usually requested the re-transfer of reticent cadres. One report sent from Kazakhstan noted that four of their new arrivals—Mosin, Goldenberg, Bernat, and Koslov—used a combination of intentional slacking, incompetence, and offensive actions in order to be sent back to Russia. Eventually “feelings of mistrust” began growing in the organization because of these cadres’ disparaging treatment toward other komsomols. Finally, the provincial committee requested that the TsK transfer them out reporting: “The comrades don’t want to work and constantly think about returning to Russia and look at their stay in Syr-Dar’e as a temporary exile. . . . The Syr-Darinskii provincial committee considers the further stay of these comrades in Komsomol work in our province impossible and ask you to allow the transfer of [them] into your command and if this is impossible, we ask you to permit their transfer into Soviet work.”<sup>50</sup>

Another tactic that cadres used to get out of village assignments was to emphasize their faithful Komsomol service. Luba Zabolotskaya, for example, appealed to Komsomol General Secretary Nikolai Chaplin, explaining that she had arrived in the countryside in 1924 “full of enthusiasm, heroism, and devoted to all work forgetting myself entirely.” Upon her arrival, she started a local Komsomol cell and even began a Pioneer group. “Everyone’s strength was focused on work and the results were visible as youth began to hold their heads high,” she declared.

After eighteen months of hard work, Zabolotskaya realized that although her constant dedication bore fruit, it left her no time “to expand her horizons.” She wanted to move to the city in order to “learn or serve,” emotionally proclaiming, “It torments me that this [place] is not Leninist.” Worried that Chaplin would interpret her personal desire to be unbecoming of a komsomol, Zabolotskaya declared: “It is difficult to find the right moral path.” But, she asserted, “I sincerely worked for two years to the end of the school year and now I will apply all my effort to get back to the city.”<sup>51</sup> Whether she made it or not is unknown.

Frequent transfers could be a burden on an activist and his or her family. One komsomol, for example, pleaded to the Ryazan *gubkom* (provincial committee of the Party) to stop bouncing him from one organization to another. He had been transferred to six different districts, he complained, and could not continue to move around because of the strains it put on his family.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps most interestingly, komsomols transferred at their own risk. Neither the sending nor receiving organization could “guarantee them work or material support.”<sup>53</sup> Cadres often arrived to horrible living conditions and to salaries that were either delayed for two to three months or that never arrived (negligence and slow paperwork were usually to blame). Purchasing the necessities of daily life could prove impossible. Cadres fell delinquent on their rents and even found themselves taken to court by their landlords. Others could not find a place to live at all.<sup>54</sup>

## **Becoming a Cadre**

Since the end of the civil war, the Komsomol had been elevated to the “helper” and “reserve” of the Bolshevik Party. The Komsomol’s role as “reserve” was codified in the new regulations adopted in 1926. Only then it was clearly stated that the Komsomol and the Party were linked in a chain of promotion in which “the best members of the Komsomol enter into the [Party’s] ranks and must be prepared to be worth of fulfilling its great and laborious duties.”<sup>55</sup> Cadres were considered the “best members” and were guaranteed Party membership. The Party held periodic mass recruitments in efforts to, on one hand, promote cadres and, on the other, to strengthen Party leadership over the League.<sup>56</sup> In reality, however, internal League reports lamented the low percentage of cadres who were dual party members and their marginalization from party life, particularly in the provinces.<sup>57</sup>

### **A Case Study: Semen Kozyrev**

Cadre work did benefit some young people. The autobiography of Semen Kozyrev, for example, portrays the smooth and rapid rise of a Komsomol cadre in the early 1920s. After a mere year and a half in the Komsomol, the nineteen-year old Kozyrev climbed from his position as a worker in a dye factory to the chairman of the Komsomol's economic commission. His life story between 1921 and 1925 demonstrates one story of how the Komsomol attracted young people of the time by offering a potentially viable avenue by which to improve facets of their lives.

Semen Kozyrev was born in 1903 to a working-class family in Moscow province. His parents both worked in the Gerasimov dye factory. Kozyrev worked alongside his mother at a textile-twisting machine until he was eight years old (he did not state when he began working). He then studied in a village school for three years but fell one year short of finishing. The outbreak of WWI brought hard times on his family and, just a few months shy of twelve years, Semen was forced to quit school and return to work in the factory.

The war brought dramatic changes to the Kozyrev family. Semen noted that between 1914 and 1918, they moved to the countryside where they worked "a small patch of land." Although factory wages had supported the family prior to the war, during the war they "had nothing, not even a hut in the village of Streltsakh." To make ends meet, his father began working as a forest guard. The younger Kozyrev continued working at the Gerasimov factory, first at a stamping machine and then as a packer. After the Revolution broke out in 1917, he fell in with a group of "social democratic youth." He was drawn to them because he liked to read the newspapers at their meetings. Soon after, he began hanging out with a worker named Filimonov, who introduced him to the Bolsheviks. At this point Kozyrev became politically active. Along with seven other youths, he formed a "batch of youth" between the ages of fifteen and nineteen who "collectively" read the newspaper *Social Democrat* and "supported Bolshevik orators at workers' meetings." He also joined the textile union, where he was elected to represent worker youth on the factory subcommittee on wages.

In 1921, Kozyrev joined the Komsomol and volunteered for the Red Army, where he served in a Special Purposes Unit for five months. He began active Komsomol work in 1922. His Komsomol career quickly took off from there. Already seasoned by revolution and soldiering, which made him a popular choice among his fellow comrades, Kozyrev was selected to be a district committee member and, by the end of 1922, to be its secretary. In addition to his Komsomol work, he became a Party candidate member in June 1922 and a full member eight months later. His class lineage, position as cell secretary, and military background certainly helped

his rapid promotion into the Party and then from candidacy to full membership. In 1923, he was elected to the Komsomol Riazan provincial presidium as the chairman of its economic commission, a position he was still holding in 1925, when he wrote his autobiography.<sup>58</sup>

What can be inferred from Kozyrev's biography about Komsomol cadres? First, Kozyrev's social and economic background is representative: most Komsomol cadres came from worker or peasant backgrounds with little education. For example, a 1927 survey of Ryzan cadres reported that 88 percent of secretaries of village cells came from peasant backgrounds, while 75 percent of secretaries of factory cells came from worker backgrounds. Similarly, the majority of Ryzan district secretaries were from worker and peasant backgrounds: 45 percent and 42 percent, respectively.<sup>59</sup> A national survey found similarly high rates of workers and peasants leading cells and district committees.<sup>60</sup>

The Komsomol offered new prospects to lower-class youth, and Kozyrev was one of the curious young men for whom activism provided opportunities for self-improvement. Time and again, he referred to the Komsomol as a space in which young people collectively read news about the world. Komsomol membership opened up new horizons to youths like Kozyrev who, if they were politically deft, could easily carve out careers at a time when talent was short.

### **“It Is Impossible To Work In Such Conditions”**

Despite the potential benefits of service, the life of a Komsomol cadre was far from glamorous. Cadres were perpetually overburdened with work, which often contributed to their failure to develop good relations with the general membership. Given the daily pressures, cadres found it easier and more expedient to rule by domination rather than consent.

Despite the ease with which a rank-and file-member could become a cadre, there were never enough members willing to take on the League's daily work. The center expected its cadres to carry out its directives while catering to the interests of the membership. In addition to filing reports, answering queries, and fulfilling directives, cadres were supposed to organize social and cultural events. The center demanded that cadres not only serve on the soviets but also organize and participate in reelection campaigns. Cadres ran the local reading rooms and facilitated reading circles, discussion groups, clubs, and other cultural-ideological work. They were also responsible for leading the local Pioneer troops. Cadres were most successful in providing cultural activities for local youth; reading rooms were particularly popular,

and tended to lose their political message amid the entertaining environments. In response, the Party appointed trained educators to run the reading rooms, which diluted the influence of the Komsomol.<sup>61</sup>

Cadres who found themselves solely responsible for the existence of their cells often became resentful, which helped them justify their continued reliance on domination. As *Komsomolskaya pravda* noted, “Activists frequently take all the work onto themselves, run from meeting to meeting, delve into circulars, plans, give speeches etc. The Komsomol masses do nothing.”<sup>62</sup> Many cadres had no time for personal enrichment and study, let alone rest and leisure. As a result, cadres were overtaxed, had low morale, suffered from work-induced mental and physical ailments, and often lived a poor quality of life despite promises of better living.

No Komsomol secretary, regardless of administrative level, was a member of just one bureau or committee. One secretary named Dmitri Smirnov, for example, complained that one of his comrades held a litany of positions: he was the secretary of his cell, a district committee member, responsible for leading three village cells, chairman of labor security committee, a member of the district peasant committee, a member of the village peasant committee, head of the reading room, and a member of the club’s board.<sup>63</sup> One commentator wrote, “5-10 cadres in good faith fulfill a workload that is roughly speaking for 40 members.”<sup>64</sup>

Owing to all of these positions, a majority of a cadre’s time was spent in meetings. As V. A. Kasimenko, the deputy of the League’s propaganda department, noted, “In the Krasnaya Presnia district in Moscow every cell worker has 14 meetings a week . . . and even the cell secretary has 14 meetings in a week, maybe the situation is better in the village but there it is even worse.”<sup>65</sup> Multiple duties on top of multiple meetings created a scheduling nightmare for cadres; meetings often overlapped, forcing a cadre to choose which to attend and which to miss. As one cadre complained, “At one and the same time I was nominated to the Party meeting (for my report), the meeting of the Trade Union (for my report), and the bureau of the [rural district committee] (for my report). I decided to go to the Komsomol meeting but I sent my certificate materials to the rest. On my certificate they replied: ‘1) You are a Party member, so do not forget your Party discipline; 2) You are a member of the trade union, and you must not forget trade union discipline.’ How does one find a way around this?”<sup>66</sup> Each meeting could last for hours. A typical factory cell meeting was described this way:

The meeting was called at 7:30. It’s already 8. Only 300 komsomols out of 634 showed up. The meeting opened at 8:30. The orator hurled thunder and

lightning on the heads of Poincare and Chamberlain. It was smoky and stuffy in the hall. Some talk in one corner, nibble on sunflower seeds in another, and in a third ardently practice boxing. The orator says "In short . . ." The rows [begin to] empty. The first speaker gives way to a second, the second to a third. After every report the chairman beseeches the meeting, "Who wants to speak in discussion? Petrov, would you like to?" There is a dead silence among the attendees; an unknown voice timidly sounds, "Everything is clear." "Did the report have some kind of proposal?" Again, dead silence. The clock has already struck midnight.<sup>67</sup>

Weighty silences often met the business at hand in Komsomol meetings. Often, attendees chatted with friends, boxed in a corner, played games like blind man's bluff or cards, or slouched in a corner asleep rather than engaging with the meeting. Some men used the opportunity of close quarters to flirt with women. Adding to the obstacles presented by an indifferent rank and file, cadres showed up to meetings unprepared, ragged from overwork or unable to juggle their litany of duties. The secretary of a meeting in the Matusov factory suggested that they skip the agenda item of inducting new members because he had "forgot the applicants' applications at home."<sup>68</sup> Unresponsive, disinterested crowds, unprepared secretaries, and boring speech after boring speech were made worse by drawn-out sessions. Secretaries and attendees alike were happy just to get through the meetings, sometimes even working to shut down discussions. When members of one cell wanted to discuss their secretary's report, he turned to them and said, "I'm tired. I just can't. I ask that discussion not be opened."<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the multiple and never-ending meetings, cadres also complained about the deluge of paperwork. Each secretary was expected to keep a daily log of his cell's activities and file monthly reports to the district committee. These reports tended to consist of several pages cataloguing the organization's composition, mood, activities, living conditions, and relations with the local population. In addition, secretaries had to send information and materials requested by the upper echelons. As one cadre from Leningrad complained, "There are commissions, meetings, conferences, plenums, circulars, resolutions, protocols, subscriptions, relations, committee work, membership cards, questionnaires, the coordination of questions and problems, and so on and so on."<sup>70</sup> The Komsomol leadership was aware of the overwhelming amount of paperwork required of local cadres. "Ninety-five percent of an activist's time," Nikolai Chaplin reported, "is spent on a variety of paperwork, writing circulars, and on defining the so-called 'line.'" This paper pushing, Chaplin explained, translated into "the well-known danger of ossification of our activists, his bureaucratism, and his isolation from the masses."<sup>71</sup> Often, paperwork was ignored

amid a perpetual stack of incoming and outgoing documents or, as one provincial secretary named Kliuchinskii explained, left undone for lack of supplies. “We also don’t send [reports], but not because we are against them in principle, but because there is no money to buy paper and we can’t print up the forms.”<sup>72</sup>

The shortages of materials, stacks of backlogged requests from the center, circular memos, and other paper must have driven a cell secretary mad. Despite these labors, rank-and-file members were often uninterested in and unappreciative of the cadres’ efforts. Moreover, office conditions were not conducive to managing the deluge of paperwork. The dearth of office space was reflected in the TsK call for “the creation a special office for activists in several organizations” in order to give cadres a permanent place to work and a mailing address to which the TsK could send its directives. Most village activists worked and conducted meetings at the local Party office (if there was one), the local club (if there was one), or at a space rented from a local resident. Sometimes a cell secretary’s office was his own apartment. Regional Komsomol offices were usually located in a small room containing a desk stacked with files and papers, surrounded by a few wooden chairs. If the bureau was really lucky, it had a cabinet in which to store its documents and supplies.<sup>73</sup> Memos attempting to discipline office work suggest that working conditions were poor and discipline was lax, even at the Central Committee offices. One memo chastised TsK employees for throwing “garbage, paper, broken glass etc.” out their office windows. Another ordered workers to make sure everything was in order before they left for the evening. This included making sure all desks were cleared of “files and papers,” as well as “doors locked, windows closed, and lights turned off.”<sup>74</sup>

Cadres found long hours even more difficult to bear because they received little monetary compensation. Only cadres at the level of or above district committee were paid a salary, and that was, on average, quite low. A rural district cadre received an average of twenty-five rubles a month, while a city cadre collected thirty rubles. By comparison, the average monthly wage for a worker in 1925 was sixty-four rubles.<sup>75</sup> A cadre’s monthly salary was hardly enough to live on; lucky cadres supplemented their Komsomol income with coveted positions such as forest wardens, mailmen, or policemen.<sup>76</sup> Other cadres sent appeals to their superiors for more money or sent threats to quit Komsomol work altogether. Abandoning activism because of low pay was especially acute in the countryside during the summer months. With school out and no harvest to attend to, young cadres ran to the nearest town to pick up extra income working in factories; this brought local Komsomol activity to a halt.<sup>77</sup> To make matters worse, cadres’ pay was often delayed, disorganized (over who should be paid and how much), or simply nonexistent. Complaints about low pay reflected

cadres' need and desperation. Nikolai Lutkov, a district secretary, was taken to court for not paying his rent, and, as a result, his organization threatened to expel him for violating "League discipline." He wrote to Secretary Chaplin that he was paid only fourteen rubles a month but paid twenty rubles a month in rent. "This is utter mockery," he wrote. "Do you think 14 rubles is enough for me to exist on, if I don't own my own farm and I'm in a strange village and must rent an apartment for 20 rubles?" Clearly committed to his Komsomol work but unable to support himself, Lutkov lamented, "I don't know what to do in this situation." He continued, "I lie in a bed without enough clothes or shoes, and if I leave, the organization will inevitably collapse because almost all of the active workers have left. After all we have 73 people in the organization and several district committees have 30–40 people who are on the TsK payroll. They chastise me for [writing] this letter, saying that I engage in squabbles, but I don't know how to work it out. . . . If nothing is done, then I'll probably quit."<sup>78</sup> Similarly, a district secretary from Ryazan described how his pay hardly covered his living expenses. He paid twenty-four rubles for a room with a desk and five rubles in dues to the Komsomol and other organizations. After these expenses, he was left with only two rubles to live on.<sup>79</sup>

Others did not bother to explain their situation and simply demanded that the Komsomol leadership pay for their service. A certain Levek wrote to the TsK to explain that his activism left his family in poverty. He often traveled back and forth to help his household, but the situation had become even worse after his brother was drafted into the army. "I don't work now, but study," Levek explained. "My family situation is catastrophic. . . . Therefore I appeal the TsK for assistance and ask it to give me 10,000 rubles for my family's relief."<sup>80</sup>

Some cadres took a more direct route to make up for their poor income: embezzling Komsomol funds. One telling example involved a man named Abaildinov, a provincial secretary who embezzled 104 rubles from membership dues that he collected. After he was caught, Abaildinov denied the crime and argued that he was only guilty of miscalculating the dues. According to records, Abaildinov was "strongly convinced that he had a right to use dues for his salary" because, "he had not received his salary." In addition, he argued that, after all, "he took very little." Abaildinov was also accused of accepting a blanket instead of dues from a member named Toidenazarov.

Other cadres collected membership dues but never turned the money over to the Komsomol. One report from the Narynsk district stated, "the cell's work is limited to the collection of dues. All the dues are collected by a representative who takes them in three categories: 3 rubles, 1 ruble 50 kopecks, and 90 kopecks." The district

committee cadres divvied up the cash among themselves, claiming that they had not been adequately paid.<sup>81</sup> Still other cadres embezzled funds and then skipped town before they were caught. One circular from the TsK warned members to be on the lookout for Vasilii Zaranin, a former secretary of a village soviet in Novosibirsk who ran off with 186 rubles. Before he disappeared, he made sure to steal his photograph, personnel file, certificates, references, and recommendations from committees on his past work. Presumably, Zaranin figured (most likely correctly) that he could easily turn up somewhere in a Komsomol organization and begin anew.<sup>82</sup>

A Komsomol cadre, therefore, had to be willing to live a very spartan lifestyle and be an adroit juggler of time and energy. His responsibilities included: convening and facilitating meetings; making sure those meetings were focused and did not drone on too long; keeping a record of members, their dues payments, and meeting attendance; writing up meeting protocols and other paperwork; filing monthly reports; coordinating the local study, drama, and other political education circles; keeping track of outgoing and incoming correspondence from above; and other secretarial tasks.<sup>83</sup> In turn, the cell secretary was expected to be the face of the Komsomol and, in many places, of the Soviet state. He often had to be the liaison between the local soviet, the Party, and other institutions. He also had to address the complaints and needs of local youth. Though all Komsomol members were duty-bound to fulfill their cells' plans, the enactment of that responsibility fell squarely on the secretary's shoulders.

These activities and responsibilities had detrimental ramifications on the health and well being of cadres. Concern about the effects of overwork prompted the Komsomol leadership to commission a survey of cadres' health, living conditions, leisure, and morale. One 1925 survey questioned 300 cadres. It is perhaps a testament to their overload that only 125 responded to the Central Committee's inquiries. The results, published as *The Labor, Leisure, and Sleep of a Komsomol-Activist* in 1926, reveal telling—though unsurprising—facts about cadres' lives. The survey found that Komsomol cadres worked an average of 12 hours and 17 minutes daily; on Sunday, their supposed day off, they logged an average of 8 hours and 19 minutes.<sup>84</sup> One repeated complaint in the survey was that this schedule left cadres little time to eat. One cadre reported that he had not taken a lunch break in over two months because he “couldn't fit it in.” Another explained that the constant filling out of reports prevented him from having a decent meal. “I never eat lunch at the appropriate hour and very rarely eat hot food, but I snack on something.”<sup>85</sup> “And it's like this all the time,” added one activist. “The TsK [needs to] correctly and appropriately study this issue because it is impossible to work in such conditions. Frequent reports (which

are unacceptable to refuse) and all kinds of meetings take up a lot of time. To fill one's bag with theory and broaden one's horizons appears impossible. I think that the TsK needs to decisively spell out the workload of an activist."<sup>86</sup> The TsK tried throughout the 1920s to alleviate the burden on local activists by passing resolutions to limit the number and length of meetings, create subcommittees to improve League work, and draw in more rank and file participation.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately, such measures did little to alleviate overburdened cadres or to increase general participation.

According to the respondents, almost two-thirds of Komsomol cadres were stricken with an ailment. These included anemia, neurasthenia, cardioneurosis, bronchitis, respiratory inflammation, tuberculosis, defective heart, malaria, chronic rheumatism, and poor eyesight. Granted, Komsomol cadres had endured the same hardships between 1914 and 1921 as had the general population and were therefore inflicted with many of the common diseases of the day. Yet many of them also suffered from ailments directly related to stress and overwork, such as chronic headaches and neurasthenia. As one activist, who worked nights because of the "urgency of the work," complained, "I work from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. Beginning at 4 a.m. my head terribly hurts all day."<sup>88</sup>

Cadres' living conditions contributed to their poor health. Technically, the Komsomol was to help cadres find housing, but shortages and bureaucratic backlogs kept many waiting. Though activism promised the chance to get away from home, many cadres were forced to continue living with their parents, where the long hours spent attending to Komsomol work caused family conflicts. Komsomol surveys found cadres living on their own suffered from "hunger and cold" in cramped and stuffy rooms. Few had their own beds; many slept in shifts, two to a bed, or on the floor. Cadres slept five to seven hours on average, and much of that was restless. Some activists suffered from insomnia and slept only one to three hours a night.<sup>89</sup> The lucky ones were able to find a place in dormitories, while rural cadres spent the summer months in dachas and returned to the city in the winter. Many cadres, however, simply felt they were "at a dead end."<sup>90</sup>

The lack of housing for cadres extended to employees in the Central Committee. One report from 1926 noted that one-third of Central Committee cadre families were left without housing and that their situation had become "extremely critical" after the Party Administration Committee reneged on its promise to allocate apartments. One appeal came from Beliakov, a worker for TsK Istmol (Commission for the Study of the History of the Russian Youth Movement).<sup>91</sup> Beliakov wrote to Nikolai Chaplin and Istmol Chairman Shatskin requesting to be moved up the queue to receive an apartment from the Management Department. He was fourth in line, he reported,

and according to the department head he could expect to wait at least five months for an apartment. Beliakov rationalized, “I think that comrades in line ahead of me have more possibility to wait 2–4 months for an apartment because they all have some kind of room.” Unlike these comrades, Beliakov and his wife were living in the kitchen of a communal apartment. He claimed that because of these “abnormal conditions his wife’s health worsened every day.” To make matters worse, he was supporting his brother and sister, each living in an individual room, and thus had to pay for three living spaces. Such conditions, he argued, were having detrimental effects on his Istmol work. In addition, after the Istmol staff reduction in October 1926, all of the organizational and technical work of Istmol had fallen on him. “I am extremely burdened with work as the only worker in Istmol,” he wrote. The labor for the upcoming Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution was so great that he worked from home five to seven hours a day, but only after midnight “when the children stop crying and the cannonade of pots and pans ceases.” If his request for a new apartment could not be met, Beliakov asked to be removed from Central Committee work so he could join the army because his present conditions were starting to affect his morale and health.<sup>92</sup>

Stress levels, low pay, poor health, and inadequate living conditions had profound effects on activists’ attitudes toward their work. The burnout was visible in a survey of delegates attending the Eighth Komsomol Congress in 1928. The survey made clear that activists were “split into two camps”—new and old. The longer activists worked in the Komsomol, the more the job weighed on them. Favorable attitudes were more prevalent among those active for less than a year. One respondent went so far as to say that Komsomol work was “the most lively and interesting work that always seethed with healthy creative meaning.” Seasoned cadres, on the other hand, were “weighed down and overburdened.” One district secretary wrote, “I’ve been working for six years. I feel that I’m starting to not have the energy I used to before. I’m sick of this work. I want to leave.”<sup>93</sup> Another secretary concurred, “I see work in the Komsomol as a job (*sluzhba*). I’m sick of it because I’m overloaded to capacity.” Others became quite cynical, viewing their Komsomol duties as “useless.” They found the work took “a lot of strength and energy” but could “not see any beneficial results.” Cadres thus sometimes chose to “go work in industry and get training.” As one cadre wrote, “It’s better to work in a factory. I will not be a secretary.”<sup>94</sup> When one secretary from Vladimir province found that he was not reelected to his cell’s bureau, he declared, “Thank god, I’m free.”<sup>95</sup>

Several activists pointed out that the deluge of paperwork made them long for the simplicity of factory work. “When I’m in the factory, I feel great,” wrote

one union representative. “But when I return to the committee, I’m grief stricken: summaries, handouts, and summaries. I’m barely literate and [when] I sometimes make mistakes in the wording, the guys laugh . . . I would be happy to go back to the factory, but they won’t let me.” A provincial secretary wrote that he was tired of the constant squabbling among committee members. “I was always in high spirits, but recently the squabbles in apparatus of my region make me very uneasy. They unfortunately flare up not on the principle [but] . . . to pad one’s resume—that is the cause of our squabbles.” A secretary of a city district simply got fed up with the sheer hypocrisy of his superiors. “I view life positively, but sometimes depression seizes me especially when I see how often words are divorced from deeds. Take this example. Our gubkom secretary always shouts about proletarian morals and he himself left his wife and baby for another. They know about this in the Party gubkom and they just laugh. What remains is a child left to the mercy of fate.”<sup>96</sup> One district secretary summed everything up: “We don’t have the special energy which moved Tsarist Russia to the October Revolution in our time. We remain far behind our old Bolshevik guard.”<sup>97</sup>

## Romanovshchina

By 1926, there was a growing sense, even among the Komsomol’s top leadership, that cadres were becoming more and more isolated from the rank and file. Interestingly, the divide was neither class nor age-based. Cadres not only had similar class backgrounds to their members but also were usually of the same age. In 1927, 74 percent of Komsomol members fell between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two years old, and the majority of cadres also fell within this range. In Ryazan, for example, the majority of factory and village cell secretaries, 69 percent and 52 percent respectively, were between twenty-one and twenty-four years old.<sup>98</sup> The gap between cadres and the general membership, therefore, was based in power and position rather than in demographic metrics. Thus, while cadres complained about their workload and its impact on the quality of their lives, the general perception among the rank and file was that the Komsomol’s cadres ruled over them. Instances in which cadres used their position and power for their own personal advantage only reinforced this image. Ordinary members flooded the TsK with letters of complaint citing examples of cadre corruption and malfeasance. The komsomol Ablov wrote that his district secretary considered “work generally unimportant” because he was more interested in “engaging in hooliganism, drunkenness, and playing the accordion.” To make matters worse, Ablov complained, some cell secretaries were

following his example: “Meetings occur irregularly, the cell secretaries are under the influence of the district secretary, and the district secretary is under the influence of samogon [moonshine].”<sup>99</sup> For Grigorii Abramovich, a longtime Komsomol member and civil war veteran, cadres had become nothing but hopeless careerists and bureaucrats who “attach a star on their lapel” and thought they had “a right to hold on to their posts.” Abramovich believed that cadres who took on Komsomol work to ensure “climbing into the Party” symbolized how they had become a separate layer within the League. “The Komsomol is broken into two camps: activists and non-activists,” he wrote.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, many komsomols viewed cadres simply as “staff activists”: bureaucrats and officials (*chinovniki*) who monopolized and controlled all speech and activities, stifled general participation, or used their authority to coerce others and their position for profit.<sup>101</sup>

Cadres’ reliance on and protection of their authority confirmed Abramovich’s charge that the Komsomol was split between “activists and non-activists.” Indeed, activists deployed a particular lexicon that inflated their aptitude and importance, attempted to make up for their shortcomings, and tried to browbeat rank and filers into submission. Cadres incorporated the stilted discourse of internal documents into their everyday speech. Some of this confused rhetoric not only befuddled the rank and file but also became a topic of much derision in the Komsomol press. Cadres used words like “reconcile” (*soglasovyvat*), “coordinate” (*uvyazyvat*), “make it plain” (*vyyavit*), and “ascertain” (*ustanovit*). Common cadre phrases included “concrete measures” (*konkretnoe meropriyatie*), “set by the line” (*napravit’ po linii*), “concentrate facts” (*skontsentrirovat’ dannye*), “proceed to the right moment” (*pereiti k nadlezhashchemu momentu*), and “raise a question directly” (*stavit vopros rebrom*). Cadres even used this “muddy flow of bureaucratic tongue twisters” “at home, around friends, [and] at the movies.” Terms and phrases alien to common people were used “to show off”; cadres “muttering words with no regard to their meaning” were said to be displaying their expertise and “imaginary education.” Indeed, according to one cynical report, when one cadre gave a speech littered with these words and phrases, peasants “seized every word of this ‘enlightener’ and after listening to the report became ‘competent’ in international affairs. The peasants decided that the Triple Entente declared war on the League of Nations that they don’t pay the salaries of the mercenaries of global capital, and they assembled to strike.”<sup>102</sup>

Cadres also showed a propensity to spout off slogans gleaned from newspapers, speeches by Party notables, and texts by Marx and Lenin. This kind of parroting demonstrated dialectical dilettantism rather than political erudition: “On the one hand the sunset cannot be firmly declared (*konstatirovat*),” one budding dialectician

explained, “but on the other it’s necessary to recognize the moonrise, and altogether perceive a definite lack of coordination [between the two].”<sup>103</sup> When pressed into a corner, one cadre declared at a general meeting, “Comrades! Turning specifically to the current issue, after summarizing and schematizing all my calculations, I think we need to approach such issues as economic work with great caution and not open it up for debate. For now, I suggest we only confine ourselves to making a plan.” M. Teterin, who quoted this passage, explained that this was just one example of activists who “go and drum memorized slogans not having a damn clue about them (*sam ni khren ne ponimaia*).”<sup>104</sup>

Komsomol critics such as M. Teretin perceived such sloganeering and bureaucratism as symptoms of a larger disease afflicting the Komsomol’s cadres: the so-called know-it-alls. “Know-it-all” cadres were characterized by the saying, “Well, I’m an activist and I know everything though I’ve studied nothing and I always shut the rank and files up.”<sup>105</sup> These cadres saw themselves as the embodiment of Komsomol authority rather than inspirational figures to help youth to become active participants in building socialism. They exercised power with declarations that they viewed “as compulsory and authoritative” rather than gaining influence through leadership, discussion, and the inclusion of the rank and file in decisions. Many of these “know-it-alls” were guilty of what Lenin called “communist arrogance” (*komchvanstvo*) in that they disregarded the opinions of everyone around them. Insecure about their ability to maintain control, these cadres took any challenge as an affront to their authority. They tended to shut down discussions and used pressure (*nazhim*) rather than persuasion to argue their positions. When general members spoke at meetings, “know-it-alls” shouted down, ignored, laughed, or sat in a corner with other cadres and whispered.<sup>106</sup> Some cadres considered it beneath them to even talk to the rank and file. As one member complained, “Our activists think that members of the bureau—the secretary, political educator, representative to the district committee—are the cell and no one else.”<sup>107</sup> Critics proclaimed that these cadres only fostered inactivity and conservatism in the Komsomol apparatus.<sup>108</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to reduce the “know-it-alls” to insecure, power-hungry individuals. In many ways, they reflected activists’ material and work conditions. To a great extent, cadres were caught in a catch-22. After all, how else could they exert authority over or promote inclusion among the rank and file—let alone know the ins and outs of political theory or the latest political line—when they were busy filling out reports and running back and forth between meetings? As one cell secretary explained, “I would be happy to promote a guy to any kind of

work, but if he's not developed and incapable of doing this work, then it is in my interest to just do it myself."<sup>109</sup>

The Komsomol leadership attempted to improve the quality of its activists, even requiring them to attend short training courses ranging from a few days to a few weeks. These courses included seminars titled Leninism, Contemporary Politics, Capitalism and Class Struggle, and the Economy of the USSR, as well as more practical courses on how to give a speech, run a cell meeting, or set up a reading hut or wall newspaper. Cadres were schooled on the details of village life and the tasks of the Komsomol and Party.<sup>110</sup> The courses, like some Komsomol meetings, could be long (up to eight hours a day), intense, and boring. In addition to listening to lectures, cadre students engaged in discussions about various League matters and methods. Cadres were charged with applying and building on this knowledge after they arrived at their posts. In reality, the workload of a district or cell secretary left little time for further study. As one cadre from Gutovsk district, Novosibirsk, reported, "You see, to be engaged in systematic self-education, you won't have the chance to attend meetings and fulfilling my duties in social organization, and even Komsomol work itself suffers."<sup>111</sup> A cadre often had to choose between self-improvement and practical Komsomol work. Many chose to rely on coercion over the masses because the energy, time, and patience needed to exercise persuasion were in short supply.

On July 1, 1926, however, the Komsomol Central Committee drew a hard limit on the amount of coercion that cadres could exercise. The TsK sent a memo demanding that all lower organizations turn their attention to a letter sent to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* from the town of Korsun. Signed "Svoi," the letter detailed a sex scandal involving a Komsomol cell secretary and district bureau member named Romanov. The scandal erupted when locals learned that Romanov had left his wife, Sonia Greenberg, and their newborn child for a sixteen-year-old Pioneer girl named Kasaeva. According to the letter, Romanov began an affair with Kasaeva while serving as her Pioneer troop master. "Svoi" considered Romanov's liaison as an act of "moral murder" against both Greenberg and Kasaeva. Worse yet, "Svoi" claimed that other komsomols had taken up Romanov's "example" and begun trolling the Young Pioneers for girls. "And where did our prudence, charter, program and discipline go?" "Svoi" asked. "Who would join our ranks now? Who could join such [an organization] and what worker would allow his children to join us, if everyone disregards prudence? . . . This is not our Komsomol. There must not be sickness in our ranks . . . Our ranks must be healthy. We honestly say that we are an upright and strong organization and at any moment all this sickness can be excised and create a healthy daily life."<sup>112</sup>

The “Romanov Affair” indicated the growing gap between activists and the Komsomol masses not only because of the actions involved but also due to the nature of the communications that followed. Romanov tried to use his authority to silence his accusers, and when that failed, his superiors interfered to protect him, even though the majority of cell members had voted for his expulsion. Such negligence in dealing with moral and political corruption was compounded by the cadres’ use of authority to protect each other. Both factors contributed to the perception that the cadres—and by extension the Komsomol and Party—were nothing more than a new ruling class that wantonly preyed upon the population with impunity.

Usually, such matters were dealt with quietly through the Komsomol’s Conflict Commission.<sup>113</sup> However, amid growing concerns and criticisms of the Komsomol’s cadres, the Komsomol press transformed the letter from “Svoi” into a public scandal.<sup>114</sup> To the rank and file, the “Romanov Affair” signaled that the Komsomol leadership was aware of such abuses and would take appropriate action against officials like Romanov. To cadres, it was a sign that the Central Committee was increasingly intolerant of corruption and abuse of power. In the ensuing months, numerous debased activists were connected to Romanov’s name, so much so that a phenomenon was declared: *Romanovshchina*.

What was this new plague infesting the Komsomol’s ranks? G. Bergman, who coined the term, spelled out the Romanov case and the meaning of *Romanovshchina* in two articles in *Komsomolskaya pravda*, “Untouchable” and “Boomerang,” which appeared two weeks apart in July 1926. Both articles were based on the letter from “Svoi” and the protocols of cell meetings at the First State Paint Factory during Romanov’s expulsion trial. V. Repin, the chairman of the TsK’s Conflict Commission, referred to the Romanov case in his report titled “On the struggle with sicknesses,” which was published in the journal *Young Communist*. At the end of the media flurry, Romanov and *Romanovshchina* came to represent the “complete misunderstanding on the part of several local organizations of communist ethics and the spirit (*dukh*) of inter-League democracy.” The “crimes” of Romanov and those of his ilk represented the ills infecting Komsomol activists as a whole and proved that the leading cadres of the organization had truly “separated (*otryv*) from the masses.”<sup>115</sup> But before such public unanimity, there had been much obfuscation.

Over the first half of 1926, members of the Komsomol First State Paint Factory cell repeatedly attempted to expel Romanov. Their efforts were to no avail, despite public outcry and the dramatic appeals by Romanov’s wife that the cell bureau should take action against him. As the rank and file quickly learned, Romanov’s position as cell secretary and *raikom* (district committee) member granted him

protection from “higher organs.” According to “Svoi,” two raikom secretaries named Staliniskii and Kaniuka stood by Romanov and used their power to intimidate cell members. Without their backing, Romanov’s theatrics would have certainly gotten him expelled. As “Svoi” explained it, Staliniskii and Kaniuka subverted any attempt to expel Romanov: they stood before the cell and argued that Romanov’s personal life had no bearing on his standing as a good Komsomol. They went on to claim that the charges were overblown and that he had committed forgivable mistakes. After all, they contended, if “Trotsky could be mistaken, then why not Romanov?” They added, “there is nothing to be afraid of and if he made a little mistake, then so what, who hasn’t made mistakes?” Kaniuka declared, “Romanov went with a Pioneer-komsomolka who was already 16 years old. She could already get legally married. Therefore Romanov did not commit any crime.” Staliniskii replied, “True, [Romanov] held an incorrect line toward the pioneer organization. He undermined the authority of the cell. But this is in no way a crime. You can’t expel him from the Komsomol for this, but you should give him a strong reprimand and put it in his personal file.”

When cell members challenged the raikom secretaries, Staliniskii and Kaniuka turned to more forceful tactics. They “berated the komsomols for engaging in such nonsense” and accused the cell of spying because it had been keeping track of “whose house [Romanov] visits” and spreading “such gossip.” They also warned, “if anyone said anything more about Romanov, they would be expelled from the Komsomol.” Romanov, they maintained, “would never be expelled” because he was a good activist and raikom member. “Without his work you would have nothing,” they scolded. Objections to Romanov’s behavior were branded part of a political campaign by “squabblers” to disrupt the organization.

Romanov also exercised his own authority to protect his position. At first, he trotted out the oft-played assertion that “it wasn’t the Komsomol’s place to interfere in his personal life,” adding, “If I want two wives, then it is my business.” He even justified his actions by claiming that his wife possessed a “meshchanka’s psychology.”<sup>116</sup> Communist ethics repeatedly urged men to avoid entangling themselves with the morally corrupt and politically suspect “meshchanka.” When his twisting of Komsomol logic proved unconvincing, Romanov abruptly ended the meeting, but not before pummeling the cell’s members with profanity and threatening to expel anyone who brought up the issue again. As “Svoi” recounted, “Everyone fell silent when the cell bureau heard such authoritative words from a cell secretary and a raikom bureau member.”

After Romanov had lost reelection and was no longer the cell secretary (but still remained in the bureau), he changed his tune. At a later meeting, “Svoi” reported, “The bureau couldn’t do anything because Romanov began to put on some kind of act. He began crying and screaming that he would shoot himself if he were expelled. The bureau was afraid.” To many, Romanov’s conduct proved his dubious character. “When Romanov was ‘in power,’” wrote G. Bergman, “he terrorized the masses and used his position for self-defense; now he changed his tune and became hysterical.”<sup>117</sup>

Romanov’s pressure (*zazhim*) against criticism from the rank and file constituted a violation of League democracy. Komsomol internal democracy assured the general membership a check against authority if officials violated Komsomol ethics and political doctrine. If an activist violated the consensus of the cell majority (as long as that consensus was within the confines of Komsomol’s political line), he was duty bound to accept the cell’s judgment.

Armed with the letter from “Svoi,” G. Bergman lambasted Romanov and his protectors in the pages of *Komsomolskaya pravda*. For Bergman, the issue was not so much Romanov’s sexual escapades but rather the attempts to whitewash them. “What is the special meaning of the [Romanov] case? The bureau “cannot” in any way deal with one of its scoundrels (*prokhvost*). The entire cell is pressured first with intimidation then cajoled by rhetoricians from the raikom. They bent over backwards to defend an ‘irreplaceable worker’ in front of the worker masses. The special meaning of *Romanovshchina* is in the gross violation of inter-League democracy, repression [of the voice of rank and file], and the division of activists from the masses.”<sup>118</sup>

The members of the Kurson raikom were not going to remain silent in the face of Bergman’s accusations. In response to the article “Untouchable,” the raikom sent a collective letter saying that Bergman’s narrative was “inaccurate to the core” and “did not correspond to the real state of things in the Kurson organization.” There was no “coercion” exerted upon the rank and file or any “separation from the masses” whatsoever. Raikom members tried to prove this by referring to the last cell bureau elections, in which over half of those elected were freshmen activists. Bergman responded by citing statements from meeting protocols, such as these two statements from the rank and file interspersed with Bergman’s interjections:

Marchekhovskii: The question of Romanov had already stood before the cell a second and third time. When Romanov was secretary he said that no one had the right to interfere in his personal life, and that he’d punch in the mouth anyone who carried on or talked about him and closed the meeting (*this is not coercion?*—G. B.). My suggestion: expel Romanov from the Komsomol for

the corruption of the Pioneers and un-Komsomol behavior.

Svetsitskii: Comrade Romanov undermined the authority of our cell. Raikom secretary Stalinskii prevented discussion of this question at the meeting (*This is not coercion?* G. B.), and because of this, the question remains uninvestigated. This issue has once again come to light. Such a komsomol must be expelled from our ranks.

Bergman cited other rank-and-file members who described how Romanov's behavior caused parents "to curse and beat" their children for joining the Pioneers and how komsomols such as Romanov needed to be "driven out of the organization." For Bergman, these testimonies exemplified the crisis of Komsomol democracy.

As if the attempts by Romanov, Stalinskii, and Kaniuka to silence the rank and file were not enough, the three raikom members went even further in their own efforts to protect the position of the officials (as separate from the position of the general membership). They claimed that the attacks on Romanov were perpetrated by cell members who "engage in squabbles against Romanov and other comrades." Another defender, Mnishchenko, claimed, "there were no facts" to support the charges against Romanov. The most forceful exclamation came from a raikom member named Radchenko: "We must get to the bottom of this "*Romanovshchina*" [and] the instigators appear to be Kagan and Marchkhovskii. . . . We will give an answer to [Bergman's] article, and now investigate the group which engages in squabbling in the cell. . . . Romanov, as a worker, cannot be intimidated with philistine (*meshchankii*) bourgeois degenerates.

The Korsun raikom's defense amounted to nothing. Bergman's articles were enough to force the hand of the Central Committee's Conflict Commission, which took the unprecedented step of publishing its verdict in *Komsomolskaya pravda*. Romanov was expelled from the Komsomol for "gross violation of Komsomol ethics and the violation of the principles of inter-League democracy." But the TsK's verdict went further. It concluded that the Romanov case disclosed "abnormalities" in the Kurson organization and called for the Ukrainian TsK to conduct a full investigation. What came of that investigation remains unknown.<sup>119</sup>

The Romanov case encapsulates, in many ways, the themes of this article. Putting aside Romanov's dubious character, cadres like him were, in many ways, "irreplaceable workers." They shouldered much of work and received little compensation for doing so. The rank and file was often apathetic to cadres' efforts, and frequently indifferent to Komsomol politics and activities. Cadres were left with few tools to actuate participation from below in order to fulfill the many tasks

and responsibilities raining on them from above. These realities often rendered it more expedient for cadres to rely on domination. Thus, Romanov's behavior and his comrades' protection were not the main factors that separated them from the masses. Rather, these actions only served to push the status quo into an intolerable stage. The growing division between cadres and the rank and file was truly a reflection of the inability of the Komsomol and, by extension, the Soviet state, to *establish* and *maintain* authority rooted in consent.

As Nikolai Chaplin stated, Komsomol cadres were a "special element" within the Komsomol. Though he did not intend it, the two words that make up this designation spoke directly to cadres' experience. They were "special" because they had power and responsibilities as local leaders. They were charged with implementing directives, maintaining and carrying out work in their organizations, and representing the regime. But cadres were also supposed to be attentive to their local members, advance their interests, and lead by example. However, being "special" came at a price. Life as a local leader was hardly glamorous and often unrewarding. While Komsomol cadres committed themselves to League work out of dedication to ideals, personal development, or career advancement, these potential benefits rarely materialized as fully or as quickly as they had hoped. Cadres were often caught in the moral pincers of their superiors and their subordinates, subject to harsh working and living conditions, and disappointed by how hoped-for benefits of a cadre position were frequently pushed into the future.

In fact, it was the stress and strain of a downtrodden and tedious that became the "special" distinguishing mark of a cadre. United by common experience, cadres increasingly regarded themselves as a distinct layer that exercised influence and, when necessary, closed ranks to protect each other from attempts to dilute their scrap of power and privilege. Despite their internal fractiousness, discord, and competition, cadres could at times act as a corporate body when under threat. As the Romanov case showed, cadre solidarity could prove a potent force at the local level and often easily navigate the floods of hostile local public opinion. Cadres' corporate power was rooted in their ability to dominate their subordinates. Only the Central Committee had the real authority to break it.

Yet cadres' efforts to maintain their position through domination contradicted their function as the mediation between the center and periphery within the League and the Soviet system writ large. Cadres were on the front lines of Soviet power, making their relations with the rank and file and the communities that they inhabited a reflection of that power. However, the conditions in which a cadre found himself were hardly conducive to building consent. It was often more practical to simply

browbeat one's subordinates into submission or simply exclude them from the process entirely.

Komsomol cadres' reliance on coercion certainly speaks to governing practices that would become indicative of the Stalinist years. And while connections can be made to the 1930s, the methods Komsomol cadres used to govern their members relays something more about the nature of Bolshevik power in the 1920s. It reaffirms the fact that the Bolshevik state was weak, and that its hold over the country was fragile and even tenuous. Moreover, the tendency toward force rather than consent signifies how Russia's rulers had few mechanisms at their disposal for instituting the soviet system. The story of the Komsomol's cadres suggests that the Bolsheviks and their adherents operated as an alien force against the population. This foreignness would become even starker with collectivization, a campaign Lynne Viola aptly called, "nothing less than the internal colonization of the peasantry."<sup>120</sup>

Thus, in the end, Komsomol cadres represented a distinct alien element reinforced by their common experience. The everyday life of a Komsomol cadre was at best bittersweet, and at times wholly tragic. Their positions could command authority, a few perks, and even respect, but the costs could erode the benefits to insignificance. If they serve as even a minute example of the human quality and daily challenges of local Komsomol leaders, it is no wonder that the League leadership's efforts to seize its cadre network proved so elusive throughout the 1920s.

## Notes

1. P. Serebrennikov, *Vospitanie i vydvizhenie komsomolskogo aktiva* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1926), 13–14.
2. Isabel Tirado, “The Komsomol and Young Peasants: The Dilemma of Rural Expansion, 1921–1925,” *Slavic Review* 53, no. 3 (1993): 74–79, 142–46; Matthias Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917–1932* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Anne Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 83; Isabel A. Tirado, *Young Guard! The Communist Youth League, Petrograd 1917-1920* (Greenwood Press, 1988), 97–98, 195–97.
3. Quoted in Roger Pethybridge, *One Step Backwards, Two Steps Forward: Soviet Society and Politics in the New Economic Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 152.
4. Vladimir Brovkin, *Russia after Lenin: Politics, Culture and Society, 1921–1929* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 107. Matthias Neumann also complicates Brovkin’s metaphor of the Komsomol as a transmission belt. Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917–1932*, xvi.
5. Graeme Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 113–34.
6. T. H. Rigby, “Early Provincial Cliques and the Rise of Stalin,” *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 1 (1981); William G. Rosenberg, “Smolensk in the 1920s: Party-Worker Relations and the “Vanguard” Problem,” *Russian Review* 36, no. 2 (1977); Daniel R. Brower, “The Smolensk Scandal and the End of NEP,” *Slavic Review* 45, no. 4 (1986); Christopher Monty, “The Central Committee Secretariat, the Nomenklatura, and the Politics of Personnel Management in the Soviet Order, 1921–1927,” *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 39, no. 2 (2012); Christopher S. Monty, “Moscow is Far Away: Stalin’s Party Inspectors and the Politics of Personnel during the New Economic Policy, 1921–1928” (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2004). On the quality of rural party cadres, see Aleksandr Livshin and Igor Orlov, *Vlast i obshchestvo: dialog v pis'makh* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 36–62.
7. Tracy McDonald, *Face the Village: The Riazan Countryside under Soviet Rule, 1921–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 13; C. J. Storella and A. K. Sokolov, *The Voice of the People: Letters from the Soviet Village, 1918–1932* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 12–18.
8. Pethybridge, *One Step Backwards*, 151.
9. E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country, 1924–1926*, vol. 2 (New York: Penguin, 1970), 112.

10. VI. Vitin and A. Slepkov, *Azbuka komsomol'tsa*, Biblioteka raboche-krest'ianskoi molodezhi; ([Moskva]: Novaia Moskva, 1926), 100.
11. Serebrennikov, *Vospitanie i vydvizhenie komsomolskogo aktiva*, 22.
12. Though by the middle of the 1920s, *aktiv* (“active”) and *aktivnyi rabotnik* (“active worker”) became synonymous with what I term “cadre,” I use the latter to avoid confusion. I only retain the term “activist” in translations of *aktiv* or *aktivnyi rabotnik* to maintain the integrity of the primary source material.
13. At the Second Komsomol Congress in 1919, Oskar Ryvkin admitted that much of the work of the Central Committee was done by “a ‘narrow staff’ of eight, and sometimes only two or three.” Ralph T. Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of Congresses of the Komsomol, 1917–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 32; Neumann, *Communist Youth League*, 74. For a list of the various workers in the Pribaikal gubkom in 1921, see V. M. Pykin, *Istoriia komsomola Buryatii: dokumenty, fakty, imena 1920–1991* (Ulan-Udz, 2002), 14.
14. See Serebrennikov, *Vospitanie i vydvizhenie*, 20–21.
15. M. Teterin, “Zhizn i rabota komsomola v mestakh,” *Izvestiia TsK VLKSM*, no. 1 (1926): 6.
16. L. P., “Chem dolzhen byt' aktivist,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 11 (1921): 11 (italics in original).
17. M. Teterin, “Protiv vseznaistva, uzkolobogo deliachestva i oblomovshchiny,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 2 (1927): 23.
18. Aleksandr Mil'chakov, “Kakoi Aktiv neobkhodim komsomolu,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 13 (1926): 25.
19. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI hereafter) f 1M, op. 23 d. 81, l. 81
20. Quoted in Teterin, “Protiv vseznaistva, uzkolobogo deliachestva i oblomovshchiny,” 32.
21. Tirado, *Young Guard! The Communist Youth League, Petrograd 1917–1920*, 100–1.
22. Fisher, *Pattern for Soviet Youth: A Study of Congresses of the Komsomol, 1917–1954*, Appendix B; T. H. Rigby, *Communist Party Membership in the USSR, 1917–1967* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 52.
23. The Komsomol repeatedly issued new Komsomol cards throughout the 1920s. For early exchanges of Komsomol cards see “Instruktsiia o pogubernskom chlenskom soiznom bilete,” RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 67, l. 61–64. Also, in August 1919, the Bolshevik Party mandated that all members under twenty years old join the Komsomol, which undoubtedly contributed to a lot of paper members. Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the*

*Soviet Union, 1917–1932, 72.*

24. M. P., “Vserossiiskaya pereregistratsiia,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 21–22 (1920): 8.

25. *Tretii Vserossiiskii s’ezd RKSM 2–10 oktiabria 1920 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet*, (Moskva: Leningrad, Molodaia gvardiia, 1926), 114.

26. “O pereregistratsii” RGASPI f. 1M, op. 3, d. 1a, l. 64. For the reregistration in Petrograd, see Tirado, *Young Guard! The Communist Youth League, Petrograd 1917–1920*, 101–2.

27. *IV s’ezd RKSM; stenograficheskii otchet. 21–28 sentiabria, 1921 g.* (Moskva: Leningrad, Molodia gvardiia, 1921), 110. Historians often attribute the steep drop in Komsomol membership as a reaction to the New Economic Policy. The revision of membership numbers resulting from the registration is a more plausible explanation. Namely, the Komsomol did not have as high of a membership in the first place.

28. For example, out of the twenty-three organizations in Ryazan, seven collapsed and six were folded into other cells. See Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Riazanskoi oblasti (GARO hereafter) f. P-478, op. 1, d. 172, l. 14–15. Even in the Komsomol stronghold of Petrograd 117 out of 439 organizations were liquidated. Tudzhikin, “Itogi pereregistratsii,” *Iunyi proletarii*, no. 3–4 (1921): 37. Similar organizational shrinkage occurred throughout many of the League’s provincial networks. A. M. Selivanov, *Sotsial’no-politicheskoe razvitie sovetskoï derevni posle perekhoda k NEPu* (Iaroslavl’ 1983), 16.

29. F. Leonov, “Pis’ma o rabote,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 1–2 (1923): 102.

30. Istmol TsK VLKSM, *Tretia Vserossiiskaya konferentsiia RKSM: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1929).

31. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 67, l. 50.

32. GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 350, l. 9

33. TsK VKP, *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo, 1924), 120. Unfortunately, the archive of the Komsomol’s Orgraspred is fragmented and incomplete for a systematic analysis of the League’s appointment process. The Komsomol’s creation of its nomenklatura mimicked the Party’s. For an example of the Komsomol list, see RGASPI 1M, op. 23, d. 659, 30–32. For discussions of the Party’s nomenklatura system see Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, 163–66; T. H. Rigby, “The Origins of the Nomenklatura System,” in *Felder und Vorfelder russischer Geschichte. Studien zu Ehren von Peter Scheibert*, ed. Inge Auerbach, Andreas Hillgruber, and Gottfried Schramm (Freiberg: Rombach Verlag, 1985), 241–54; J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism: The Enduring Archaic in Russian Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, Forthcoming); Monty, “The Central Committee Secretariat, the Nomenklatura, and the Politics of Personnel Management in the Soviet Order, 1921–1927.”

34. A. A. Slezin, "Aktiv v strukture komsomola v rogy NEPa," in *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaya zhizn Rossiiskoi provintsii XX veka* (Tambov: 1993), 63.
35. Gill, *The Origins of the Stalinist Political System*, 32–33, 46–47.
36. *Tretii Vserossiiskii s'ezd RKSM 2-10 oktiabria 1920 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet*, 243.
37. Beginning in 1924, the Komsomol Central Committee began dispatching members in bulk to run provincial organizations. For examples see RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 436, l. 1 and RGASPI M f. 1M op. 23 d. 480, l. 14. Also Slezin, "Aktiv v strukture komsomola v rogy NEPa," 64. On the Komsomol's rural expansion see Tirado, "The Komsomol and Young Peasants: The Dilemma of Rural Expansion, 1921–1925.," John Hatch, "The "Lenin Levy" and the Social Origins of Stalinism: Workers and the Communist Party in Moscow, 1921–1928," *Slavic Review* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1989).
38. Selivanov, *Sotsial'no-politicheskoe razvitie sovetsoi derevni posle perekhoda k NEPu*, 29; TsK VLKSM, *Tovarishch komsomol: Dokumenty s'ezdov, konferentsii i TsK VLKSM, 1918–1968* (Molodaia gvardiia, 1969), 132–37.
39. Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (New York: Vintage, 1963), 410.
40. Tirado, "The Komsomol and Young Peasants: The Dilemma of Rural Expansion, 1921–1925," 470.
41. Selivanov, *Sotsial'no-politicheskoe razvitie sovetsoi derevni posle perekhoda k NEPu*, 30–31.
42. GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 730, l. 158.
43. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 436, l. 12, 17.
44. *IV s'ezd RKSM; stenograficheskii otchet. 21-28 sentiabria, 1921 g.*, 123, 37.
45. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 315, l. 34.
46. Slezin, "Aktiv v strukture komsomola v rogy NEPa," 63-64.
47. Tirado, "The Komsomol and Young Peasants: The Dilemma of Rural Expansion, 1921-1925," 470.
48. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 679, l. 38
49. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 400, l. 55.
50. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23, d. 695, l. 22

51. RGASPI f. 1M, op 23, d. 313, l. 236
52. GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 117, l. 86.
53. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 480, l. 14.
54. Gavriushin, "O prislannykh "litsom k derevne"," *Kommunist*, no. 2 (1926): 18. For a complaint about not getting paid see RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 315, l. 34.
55. VLKSM, *Tovarishch komsomol: Dokumenty s"ezdov, konferentsii i TsK VLKSM, 1918-1968*, 250.
56. *VKP(b) o komsomole i molodezhi: sbornik reshenii i postanovlenii partii o molodezh, 1903-1938* (Molodaia gvardiia, 1938), 93.
57. See for example, GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 730, l. 158ob and RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 111, l. 78.
58. GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 262, l.
59. GARO f. 478, op. 1, d. 730, l. 158-159
60. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 499, l. 29, 31
61. Tirado, "The Komsomol's Village Vanguard: Youth and Politics in the NEP Countryside," 433–35.
62. "Aktiv yacheiki," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, November 13, 1925, 4.
63. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 504, l. 98
64. Teterin, "Zhizn i rabota komsomola v mestakh," 6.
65. RGASPI f. 1M op. 2. d. 10, l. 109
66. Quoted in Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, 83.
67. Teterin, "Zhizn i rabota komsomola v mestakh," 5.
68. "Komsomolskie nozhnitsy," *Komsomolskaya pravda*, January 12, 1926, 4.
69. *Ibid.*, 3.
70. Quoted in Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, 83.

71. *VIII Vsesoiuznyi s"ezd VLKSM 5-16 maia 1928 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet*, (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1928), 46.
72. *Vtoraia Vserossiiskaia konferentsiia RKSM 16-19 maia 1922 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet.*, (Moskva–Leningrad: Molodaia gvardiia, 1928), 149.
73. Serebrennikov, *Vospitanie i vydvizhenie komsomolskogo aktiva*, 67. Also see RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 111, l. 76 on the lack of adequate office space for cadres. For a memo complaining about TsK cadres showing up late to work see RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 292, l. 43
74. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 292, l. 2
75. William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1929* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 177.
76. Tirado, "The Komsomol's Village Vanguard: Youth and Politics in the NEP Countryside," 433.
77. RGASPI-M f. 1 op 23 d. 313, l. 198. In comparison, the monthly salary of the Komsomol Central Committee worker ranged from just below 200 to 40 rubles a month. See RGASPI, f. 1M, op. 23, d. 486, l. 24–25ob.
78. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 314 l. 74
79. GARO f. P-478, op. 1, d. 730, l.162
80. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 104, l. 35.
81. Molodezhnoe dvizhenie, 175-177
82. GARO f. P-478 op. 1 d. 682, l. 21
83. E. V. Kodin, ed. *Deti i molodezh Smolenshchiny, 1920-1930-e gody* (Smolensk: Madzhenta, 2006), 36–37.
84. M Masunin, "Rezhim vremeni aktivista," *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 11–12 (1927): 70.
85. *Trud, otдых, son komsomol'tsa-aktivista*, ed. Tsk RLKSM statisticheskii otdel (Moscow: Molodiia gvardiia, 1926), 85.
86. *Ibid.*, 20.
87. Tsk VKP, *Spravochnik partiinogo rabotnika* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo, 1926), 28–29.
88. *Trud, otдых, son komsomol'tsa-aktivista*, 19–20.

89. Ibid., 85.
90. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 695, l. 87.
91. On Istmol, see Sean Guillory, “The Shattered Self of Komsomol Civil War Memoirs,” *Slavic Review* 71, no. 3 (2012): 546–47.
92. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 803, l. 62-62ob.
93. Ibid., 39
94. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 499, l. 95ob.
95. “Komsomolskie nozhnitsy,” 4.
96. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 313, l. 38.
97. RGASPI f. 6M, op. 8, d. 11, l. 40.
98. On the Komsomol’s age see A. Balashov, *Komsomol v tsifrah* (Molodaia gvardiia, 1931), 15. For the ages of Ryazan cadres see GARO f. 487, op. 1, d. 730, l 158-159.
99. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 313, l. 38.
100. Tsentral’nyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskoi istorii Moskvy (TsAOPIM hereafter) f. 634 op. 1 d. 98, l. 9ob.
101. As Anne Gorsuch notes, young militants in particular decried the growing bureaucratization of the Komsomol and viewed its numerous meetings and didactic speeches and political education as having “no value.” Gorsuch, *Youth in Revolutionary Russia: Enthusiasts, Bohemians, Delinquents*, 83.
102. S. Poleseva, “Pomesi frantsuzskogo s nizhegorodskim, o “blatnom zhargone”, o kulture rechi,”” *Iunyi Proletarii*, no. 20 (1927): 23.
103. Ibid., 24.
104. Teterin, “Protiv vseznaistva, uzkolobogo deliachestva i oblomovshchiny,” 25.
105. Ibid., 24.
106. B-N. Gernikh, “O ‘kvasnom aristokratizme’ i chvanstve,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 2 (1927): 56.
107. “Komsomolskie nozhnitsy,” 3.

108. E. Fainberg, “Na ‘aktivnye’ temy,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 7 (1927): 50.
109. RGASPI f. 1M, op. 23, d. 499, l. 41.
110. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 241, l. 1; RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 112, l. 4
111. RGASPI f. 1M op. 23 d. 499, l. 41
112. TsAOPIM f. 634 op. 1 d. 98, l. 44
113. On the workings of the Komsomol’s Conflict Commission, see Sean Guillory, “We Shall Refashion Life on Earth!: The Political Culture of the Young Communist League in Soviet Russia, 1918–1928” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2009), chap. 5.
114. The Central Committee often turned dramatic episodes of Komsomol daily life into public scandals as a means to discipline, regulate and set the concretize borders of acceptable and unacceptable forms of Komsomol behavior. For another example of a “Komsomol soap opera” see Neumann, *The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917-1932*, 133-36. For the role of scandal and agitation trials in Soviet political culture see Elizabeth A. Wood, *Performing Justice: Agitation Trials in Early Soviet Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).
115. V. Repin, “Na bor’bu s boleznennymi iavleniiami,” *Iunyi kommunist*, no. 22 (1926): 42-43; G. Bergman, “Neprikosnovennyi,” in *Komsomol’skii byt: Sbornik*, ed. I. Razin (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1926), 307-09; S. Smidovich, “O Koren’kovshchina,” in *Partiinaiia etika: Dokumenty i materially diskussii 20-kh godov* (Moscow: 1989); G. Bergman, “Bumerang,” in *Komsomol’skii Byt: Sbornik*, ed. I. Razin (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1926), 310-15.
116. The term “meshchanka” was often equated to being petite-bourgeois, but in this context meshchanka also meant Jewish, given that Romanov’s wife’s name was Greenberg. The conflation between meshchanka and Jewish women was often made in Komsomol soap operas.
117. Bergman, “Neprikosnovennyi,” 308.
118. Ibid., 309.
119. The Central Committee resolution was republished in I. Razin, ed. *Komsomol’skii byt’: Sbornik* (Moscow //ANY PUBLISHER?//: 1927), 315.
120. Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Oxford, 1996), 3.