CHAPTER ONE

The Socialist Offensive

THE YEAR 1929 marked the beginning of the full-scale collectivization of agriculture, the key element of what was, in the terminology of official propaganda, a "full-scale socialist offensive on all fronts."[1] The slogan, with its connotations of attack and advance, was absolutely typical of Communist rhetoric at this time. It eclipsed more gradualist and organic metaphors, such as growing into *(vrastanie)* socialism, which N. I. Bukharin and others had employed during the heyday of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Impatience with compromises, fear that the country was growing into capitalism rather than out of it, and disgruntlement among rank-and-file workers who bore the brunt of rationalization, economization, and other efficiency drives were only part of what constituted the crisis of NEP. Politically, the crisis followed upon Stalin's consolidation of power as general secretary and his faction's successive victories over the Left and Joint Oppositions within the party. Toward the end of 1927 the Stalinist "center" lurched leftward: it appropriated the recently silenced opposition's agenda for rapid industrialization based on massive investments in heavy industry, promoted campaigns for self-criticism and against bureaucratism within party and state organs, and otherwise intensified class-war rhetoric. Efforts by Bukharin, A. I. Rykov, and M. P.

Tomsky to tone down this rhetoric and minimize the danger of a "capitalist offensive" earned them the opprobrium of the Stalinists and the sobriquet of right opportunists.

The new policy was doomed to constant failures for which excuses had to be sought, for which the desired had to pass for the real. Trotsky called this "the policy of half-shut eyes," one that involved the application of the term *socialist* to everything that occurred inside the Soviet Union. But it is doubtful that anyone, including Trotsky, knew just what that new order should be, and what might result from naked ideas thrown onto the soil of a society bearing the burden of many years' trials and suffering from many evils and vices.

The Socialist Offensive began in accordance with all the rules of military operations. Battlefronts were declared: the Industrialization Front, Collectivization Front, Tractor Front, Ideological Front, Cultural Front, Antireligious Front, Literary Front, and so forth. Each front had its "armies," "bases," heroes, and "saboteurs." Every ton of coal or iron produced, every village collectivized, every individual converted to godlessness, every "bourgeois" writer exposed was a victory for socialism. Thus could a young worker in the Moscow subway construction project write verses with the refrain: "As we fought then, in 1918, not sparing our young years / So we must fight now for each meter built."[2]

For storming the fortresses that the Bolsheviks could not fail to take, they needed mass support. At the beginning of 1929 a campaign was launched to develop nationwide mass socialist competitions in factories and plants, and among transport and construction workers. Socialist competition was declared to be one of the main battlefronts in the class struggle and a prerequisite for fulfilling the goals of the First Five-Year Plan. The competition's main form was the shock worker and shock brigade movement. As V. V. Kuibyshev, chairman of VSNKh (*Vyshii Sovet Narodnogo Khoziaistva* [supreme council of the national economy]) and one of Stalin's close comrades in arms, said at the first All-Union Congress of Shock Brigades in December 1929, the chief task of shock brigades was to create a new type of worker. Correspondingly, newspaper articles propagandizing the shock worker movement appeared with such titles as "A New Man Is Being

Born" and "A New Society Is Being Forged." According to Kuibyshev,

> Socialist competition and shock brigades constitute the most effective attack on the petty bourgeois psychology still strong in certain strata of the working class. They mark the end to the old rule of "Every man for himself and God for everyone." They deal a crushing blow to old work traditions, old habits, the old psychology cultivated for decades under capitalism. Precisely this makes socialist competition and shock brigades a unique front in the class struggle. . . . The lack of uniformity in the working class, naturally, adds extreme urgency to the task of the shock brigades, gives it a special importance because we must reeducate by means of the finest examples possible those strata of workers now pouring into the factories who are removing themselves from agriculture.

Kuibyshev also pointed out that socialist competition and shock brigades were meeting opposition from bureaucratic staff in the form of quiet sabotage and scornful attitudes.[3]

There can be no doubt that a substantial part of the working class was imbued with the competitive spirit, especially, as statistical information about shock workers testifies, young people and Komsomol members. At the First Congress of Shock Brigades more than 30 percent of the participants were people under age twenty-two, while those over forty made up only 15 percent.[4]

The sizable scope of the movement was achieved through clever use of exaggerated claims, healthy rivalry, the eagerness of the young to take part in anything new, and their desire to stand out, to appear in displays, on the pages of newspapers, at rallies, meetings, and assemblies. Hence the notion of competition as holiday and parade was constantly fanned by the press. Hence rush work, the race for figures, mass calls for and mobilization of shock workers. Shock brigades were formed to eliminate hitches in production. At many plants "antireligious shock brigades," Komsomol "light cavalry" detachments, and the like were active. In the Subway Project the women's "reformatory" shock brigade became famous for "reforming" men who were drunkards, absentee workers, and loafers. To fall behind women in work was something even the most inveterate rowdies could not suffer. The form of this work—collective shock work—was also characteristic of the spirit of the time, as it was of the working traditions of the Russian peasant

commune *(obshchina)* and the artel: all together, all at once, all in one stroke, "One, two—heave! Once more—heave!"

Soviet historians created a large corpus of literature on the topic of socialist competition and published a great number of documents about work achievements, heroism, and worker self-sacrifice for maximal output during the first Five-Year Plans. Quite a few of the published documents clearly smack of journalistic cant, contain political twaddle, and repeat hackneyed expressions. In as much as they have already been published, there is no sense in citing them again. But we would like to pay heed nonetheless to several that convey the "aroma" of the epoch.

Here, for example, is an excerpt from the address of worker A. N. Voronin, speaking in the language of a "metalworker" to the First Congress of Shock Brigades:

Document 1

Speech by A. N. Voronin to First Congress of Shock Brigades, December 1929. *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s"ezd udarnykh brigad (k tridts. s"ezda)* [first all-Union congress of shock brigades (for its thirtieth anniversary)], Moscow, 1959, pp. 127–128.

The worker-peasant government has decided to build on the remote steppes of Kazakhstan a railroad in order to connect Turkestan and Siberia. For this the government has allocated approximately two hundred million rubles and has given us the task of trying our best to build a railroad in five years, which will be called the Turkestan-Siberian Line.

> We, the workers and the engineering and technical staff, taking into account the warlike and urgent need for this line, have decided that we will build it not in five years but 3.5. Accordingly we will shorten construction by eighteen months. We have said that we will build it at little cost, and build it well and solidly. Some hysterical persons have told you that we will not be able to build it quickly and solidly.
>
> I will give you an example, Comrades. The example is a very important one. In the eighth construction section, at one time the fifth construction section, at the Alma-Ata station is Poganka Brook. Here was built a reinforced concrete bridge. Now when they finished constructing it and got it completely ready, a locomotive was brought up and stood six hours on this bridge, and in the final analysis it turned out that the bridge settled one thousandth of a meter. So the words of the hysterical ones were not justified.

It's all very well that the Turk-Sib builders succeeded in building the railroad fast, at little cost, and solidly, in spite of the doubts of the "hysterical ones." Often, though, accelerated production speeds were attained to the detriment of the quality of work completed. Frequent stoppages, production breakdowns, and difficulties putting newly completed projects into service are proof of this. As a matter of fact, the shock workers themselves inspired an ambiguous attitude on the part of other workers. This is the subject of an excerpt from G. B. Gelman's address to the First Congress of Shock Brigades on behalf of workers of the Proletariat's Victory *(Pobeda proletariata)* textile factory in the city of Yegorevsk. Criticizing management for not devoting enough attention to the problems of competition, he said, among other things:

Document 2

Speech by G. B. Gelman to First Congress of Shock Brigades, December 1929. *Pervyi Vsesoiuznyi s"ezd udarnykh brigad (k tridts. s"ezda)*, Moscow, 1959, p. 100.

. . . It's necessary that those agreements we put together be comprehensible to the workers so that each worker who signs an agreement will know that in doing so he takes upon himself such and such obligations. We have achieved at our factory some two hundred cases of reduced production costs, in some departments workers voluntarily increased their productivity per shift, etc. Thanks to this, we carried out our tasks and even more. If the delegates here say that they intend to fulfill the Five-Year Plan in four years, then our workers have adopted that rate of speed needed to fulfill their Five-Year Plan in three years, for we have already cut costs by 21 percent and reduced the number of rejects.

Working in the foremost lines of the economic battlefront, one must not forget that we find ourselves amid the fiercest class struggle. I wish to present as an example the following facts: the workers of the dyeing division changed from one type of jigger to another, raising labor productivity by more than 100 percent. On the night shift a shock worker fell into the machine, and when he was being beaten by this jigger, when his legs were being broken, when he was being boiled in the hot dye, a worker standing nearby did not stop the machine. When the matter was investigated, it turned out that [the latter] was a well-to-do kulak.

Another instance. When the boiler room firemen were to start increased work shifts, they nearly tossed our initiator into the furnace.

Document 2 *continued*

We're not afraid of battling with the enemy we see, but the enemy who works along side us at a machine, the enemy who is dressed in the same overalls as us, this enemy we're afraid of. We can't for a minute forget that the class enemy is mighty powerful, and we will be victorious only by the fiercest struggle with him.

Significantly, all remarks against competition, regardless of the motives for making them, were subject to ruthless class-related judgment and considered intrigues of secret enemies of the Soviet government. Just who were these "enemies," "hysterical persons," "bearers of the petty bourgeois mentality," "backward workers," "bureaucrats," and so forth? Why were they against competition, and why was it necessary to fight them in the fiercest manner? Gelman's speech makes it quite clear why workers spoke out against competition: the unavoidable reduction in labor costs, tightening of the work schedule, increase in the physical intensity of work. But not only this. Storming and campaigning ran counter to the requirements of modern industrial production, with its steady pace, monotony, and precision. No wonder that competition produced its best results in situations where only wheelbarrows and spades were required, where everything depended on applying physical effort. Thus, whether competition and opposition to it should be treated solely in the sense of a struggle between the new and the old is open to doubt. Gelman points to one of the "enemies" of competition as a "former kulak" who had managed to find work in a factory. It is not hard to understand why the "former kulak" dipped an industrial front-runner in hot dye, but it is highly unlikely that all the stokers at the Proletariat's Victory factory were "former kulaks."

Soviet publications did not include documents that set forth the arguments of those objecting to shock work, nor of people who doubted the benefit of the movement. Mention is made, of course, of the existence of "whiners and those of little faith," of bureaucratism and overrigid organization of the movement that damaged "the Great Cause." There is really no mention at all of the degeneration of socialist competition when there were observed—against a background of impressive growth in the number of shock

workers, shock brigades, factory shock departments and sections, and even of entire shock plants—production stoppages, standstills, falls in productivity, and so forth, and a resultant slowing down of the indicators of growth in the economy.

Let us look at a letter by a young Leningrad worker who, responding to a Komsomol appeal, went off to work at one of the shock construction sites of the First Five-Year Plan, Magnitka.[5] The letter was written in June 1931 and, after being subjected to a thorough examination, became an object of great attention on the part of political organs, never reaching the addressee:

Document 3

Personal letter by a young Leningrad worker from Magnitogorsk, June 1931. GARF, f. 7952, op. 5, d. 172, ll. 59–60. Typed copy.

Hello, Uncle Fedia. Greetings from Magnitogorsk. Uncle Fedia, we arrived at the place here safe and sound. They did a poor job of meeting us at Magnitogorsk. We sat and waited a very long time for the bus to take us to the place we were going. Toward evening the bus came for us. Brought us to open country and left us. They showed us a tent in which there was nothing except the tent itself. The first night we slept on the bare ground, for the second they made sawhorses and paneling for us. We slept on the bare boards. The third day they sort of knocked together a floor in the tent for us out of boards. They handed us blankets and empty mattress cases, gave us straw, and we stuffed the mattresses. So began our camp life.

Uncle Fedia, here dinners in the cafeteria are eighty kopecks and a ruble ten kopecks and they're no good at all, so we have to go hungry, and there's nowhere else to get food. Uncle Fedia, they don't give us work by specialty since nobody knows when the machine installation will begin. Four days we did nothing, or sat in tents, or walked around looking for the bosses. Finally, they gave us something to do: building temporary housing. We raised a fuss and handed to the employment office a request to have our agreement annulled, but they came back to us with time conditions: if by 10 June they didn't give us work by trade and did not lodge us in temporary housing and did not distribute overalls to us, then on the eleventh the agreement would be voided. We're waiting until 15 June, and no matter what I'm coming back to Leningrad. So we've fallen into a trap. No matter how hard you try, you can't find a way out. Right now we're building temporary housing. But you can understand yourself what sort of carpenters we are. But otherwise there's no work. A large number of workers leave to go back to where they came from

Document 3 *continued*

every day, but it's very hard to get out of here. They won't let you out for anything, but no matter what I'm coming back since life here is impossible: first of all, there's no work by trade, they don't give you overalls, the chow is awful, we're living in tents, and the weather is cold and rainy all the time. The tents always leak and after a rain everything is soggy. Strong cold winds come down from the mountains so it's very cold to live in the tents, we're freezing, and the bosses don't give a damn. Now when we were being sent off, we heard pretty, sweet words. You're going, they said, to a shock construction project. They're waiting for you. The project (installation of machinery) can't proceed without you, they said. But in fact this is what is actually the case: we are not needed at all since there are many workers here and we're putting up temporary housing.

Uncle Fedia, there is such a mess here that you wouldn't be able to make head or tail of it. Our big shots here are nothing but bureaucrats, there's complete confusion, you can't find anything anywhere.

Uncle Fedia, I'm going to stop writing for now. I'll write more later.

There can be no doubt that the letter is accurate. Indeed, the problems mentioned not only were not concealed but rather were featured in romanticized accounts of the First Five-Year Plan and "the heroic working life of our pathfinders." The creation of this myth is probably more the product of later years and the numerous books, movies, and memoirs that tell us about "roaring industrialization": plants springing up in empty places erected by the shock work of Soviet workers and engineers. But many sources depict a life quite unromantic. In the document cited above one finds nothing heroic—just muddle and disorder, and that at a construction site considered a model for the entire country, a distinctive symbol of the First Five-Year Plan. In the push to expand construction in the country, sanitary and epidemiological conditions took a sharp turn for the worse. In a memorandum to party bodies sent at the end of 1931, the People's Commissariat of Health *(Narkomzdrav)*, citing very incomplete data, noted that morbidity in 1931 had increased from the previous year, typhoid fever had risen by 64 percent, typhus had doubled, and smallpox had tripled. Doctors attributed these catastrophic indicators to the mass concentration of people at new construction sites and to the unsanitary conditions and absence of elementary hygienic practices. In workers' temporary housing each person was allotted less than one square meter

of living space. Special inspections of the construction sites at Kuznetsk, Magnitogorsk, and Bobriki showed that instances of mass epidemics were concealed by site directors. In infirmaries at temporary living quarters that were inspected in winter, terrible cold prevailed, 5–6° C., along with filth, bedbugs, and lice. Because of interruptions in the water supply, sick people did not wash for days. At the Bobriki site it was revealed that for forty-seven sick people there were only eight spoons. The corpses of those who died were left in the infirmaries for up to four days, and when they were finally dispatched to the morgue, they were put on carts along with dishes, utensils, and food products. Mass outbreaks of venereal disease were recorded. At the Kuznetsk site alone it was revealed that there were twelve hundred patients with venereal disease. Tuberculosis was widespread.[6]

No wonder that the confrontation with reality caused the initial enthusiasm of the builders of the new society to dry up and be replaced by a profound disillusionment. What is more, in the sources one can trace the transition of such emergency situations into permanent features in the daily life of people at Soviet construction sites. But what in actual fact did "construction site" mean? It meant brick, cement, glass, machinery, and equipment that existed on paper but not at the site. Economically unfounded decisions resulted in plans coming apart at the seams. Soaring tasks, including among other things the approval of counterplans—a form of socialist competition in which workers proposed to outdo management's planned targets—that had no material underpinning, aggravated the confusion still more and had destructive consequences for the entire economy.

The general worsening of the economic situation in the country was accompanied by increased shortages, by much broader use of rationing (introduced at the end of the 1920s), by the closing of many private stores, large and small, and by a resultant flourishing of speculation on the black market. Life became increasingly burdened with diurnal concerns, deprivations, and difficulties, and this determined peoples' habitual behavior despite all the talk about high matters and sacrifices in the name of socialism.

The summary compiled from letters to *Pravda* for September 1930 included the report of a "promotee" *(vydvizhenets)* named

Tarasov about the supply situation in Moscow (which, incidentally, was better than in the country as a whole):

Document 4

Letter to *Pravda* included in summary report "The Sukharevites Are in Charge," September 1930. RGAE, f. 7486s, op. 1, d. 102, ll. 242–243. Typed copy.

. . . The denizens of Sukharevka, of the Central, Smolensk, and other markets are experiencing spring, are they not? The secondhand dealers have truly bred like hell, haven't they? Occupying themselves now with the very lively resale business are seasonal workers and dairy sales women and invalids and some of the non-class-conscious workers with their wives and those sent to work at various construction projects. They employ a huge number of work methods. So here the cooperative's records have been cleaned up, here also entirely fake records, here two or more of these registers under one and the same name, here a false due date for your pregnant wife and here travel document abuse and unscrupulous use of someone else's ration books. It's got to the point that even a backward worker nearly five times in the course of a week or two stands [in line] for women's hose and, beating his breast, as a worker demands "Get it for me now. You are giving things to the profiteers. May you croak, give to me too." A whole mass of deathly ill invalids of one sort or another and people who have been patients at Kanatchikov's Summerhouse [the popular name for a psychiatric clinic in Moscow] have appeared and with extraordinary arrogance abuse their position: "Give to us or don't expect us to account for our actions."

What is more, in this "activity" there is a clearly marked tendency to remove from the Soviet state market any sort of goods by any means—and fast. Toss men's winter shoes on the market and let people buy as many as they want. Women will buy many pair each, in a few hours it will look like a fire has cleaned the shelves no matter how full they were.

"Someone" came up with the notion that you should take what's here today and take it no matter what the cost because on the morrow there won't be anything and who knows when it will appear again because, as they say, now it's all industrialization. In some cases it's even happened that store windows get broken, metal barriers are knocked down and there's a wild, inhuman crush. In the Central Department Store (in the retail part of Mostorg [Moscow trading firm] that's on the Petrovka) because of such uncontrolled force from this type of customer the fourth floor is in danger of collapse. The public is very definitely becoming more and more insolent with every day, and the ones who resell secondhand store goods are the first to unleash antagonism.

Document 4 *continued*

On 23 July in Mostorg's Store no. 5 that's at the Smolensk Market customers beat one woman clerk unmercifully. Another clerk was beaten so badly by customers that she had to be doused with water.

On 21 July in that store work went on thanks only to the presence of an entire detail of police. You work under siege and the thought of a very probable rout of the store doesn't leave the staff even for a minute. It's clear that this business is guided by those from Sukharevka who give their catchwords to the crowd. The huge Moscow group of activists should mobilize and crush these "Sukharevites."

Complaints about standards established for supplying workers, about huge lines in stores, about salesclerks hiding goods so that they can sell them on the side—such is the standard fare of these documents. Workers inveighed against increased prices for food and other essential items in 1931 and a subsequent increase in prices at worker cafeterias. The summary compiled apropos of this protest provides evidence of such discussions at the Moscow Electro-Plant *(Elektrozavod):* "Cafeteria no. 4. 'Those bastards jumped dinner prices up from thirty-seven to fifty-five kopecks. You really get fleeced for every meal. . . . ' Cafeteria no. 2. ' . . . OK, great, so this is how we'll build socialism sooner.'"[7]

An analysis of reports from various localities shows that nowhere in the country was the situation any better. Here, for example, is the report of a certain Buslaev from Mordovia, included in the same *Pravda* summary under the rubric of "How Profiteering Starts":

Document 5

Letter to *Pravda* on supply situation in Mordovia, September 1930. RGAE, f. 7486s, op. 1, d. 102, l. 239. Typed copy.

The worker settlement of Vindrei in the Zubovo-Poliansk Raion of Mordovia Oblast was forgotten by the trade department and the consumer cooperative, and the Vindrei Sawmill in particular was forgotten.

The workers for their part made every effort to fulfill the industrial and financial plan and fulfilled it by more than 100 percent, but how are they supplied? The ration is received only by the worker, except for rye flour, his wife

Document 5 *continued*

and small children receive nothing. Workers and their families wear worn-out clothes, the kids are in rags, their naked bellies are sticking out. You need to buy something badly, and where are you going to buy it? In the worker's co-op! A big waste of time. Nothing but empty shelves and bottles of perfume. At the market? The profiteers skin workers alive. A meter of calico costs thirty-five kopecks. The exact same calico now from a profiteer at the market costs a ruble thirty-five kopecks a meter. The workers are outraged that the profiteer has calico and other items, and in the worker's co-op there is nothing. I think it's clear what atmosphere may emerge at the plant, but surely there are ways to prevent it. All you have to do is have the right person put pressure in the right place.

This very demand that "the right person put pressure in the right place" is typical of the mentality of the time, reflecting the conviction that all problems can be solved by means of administrative and punitive measures. Archival sources from this period testify to growing social resentment. It is expressed in thousands of appeals to the authorities regarding the ever-increasing difficulties of buying food, the disgusting meals served in workers' cafeterias, and scandalous behavior occurring in lines. Ration portions established for various categories of the population were not met. For "trade" in coupons there simply wasn't enough food. Because of this, abuses and corruption by those in charge were frequent. Reports were received about people destroying stores and cooperative shops, about "women's riots."

A letter from worker B. N. Kniazev from Tula describes increased dissatisfaction and grumbling among workers and compares the working class to a horse that has been driven too hard:

Document 6

Letter of complaint to *Pravda* from B. N. Kniazev, Tula, September 1930. RGAE, f. 7486s, op. 1, d. 102, l. 241. Typed copy.

The building of socialism is not done by Bolsheviks alone. It should not be forgotten that many millions of workers are participating in the building of socialism. A horse with its own strength can drag seventy-five poods, but its owner has loaded it with a hundred poods, and in addition he's fed it poorly.

Document 6 *continued*

No matter how much he uses the whip, it still won't be able to move the cart.

This is also true for the working class. They've loaded it with socialist competition, shock work, overfulfilling the industrial and financial plan, and so forth. A worker toils seven hours, not ever leaving his post, and this is not all he does. Afterward he sits in meetings or else attends classes for an hour and a half or two in order to increase his skill level, and if he doesn't do these things, then he's doing things at home. And what does he live on? One hundred fifty grams of salted mutton, he will make soup without any of the usual additives, neither carrots, beets, flour, nor salt pork. What kind of soup do you get from this? Mere "dishwater."

Worker P. Skatov from Moscow wrote *Pravda* in the summer of 1930: "When they tell you that today there's a lecture at the shop on religion or some such thing, in response you sigh and spit because you don't want to listen to these highfalutin words. We've learned to speak a hundred times better than to do our work." An anonymous letter writer from the Donbass declared: "The press trumpets 'Give us coal, steel, iron, and so forth and so on. Shame on those who fail to fulfill the industrial and financial plan.' I say the following: dear newspaper trumpeters, 'Come and visit us in the Donbass. We'll treat you to a bottle of hot water (instead of tea), a hunk not of bread but something incomprehensible, boiled water without sugar, and then, dear friend, kindly go and mine the coal quota.'"[8] The difficulties were intensified by the offensive against the private sector involving as it did the elimination of several traditional forms of existence characteristic of the way of life of industrial and office workers in the provinces. This is the subject of an anonymous letter to *Pravda* from the city of Aktyubinsk in Kazakhstan:

Document 7

Anonymous letter of complaint to *Pravda* from Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan, 1932. RGAE, f. 7486s, op. 1, d. 236, ll. 11–12. Typed copy.

Comrade Editor, Please give me an answer. Do the local authorities have the right to forcibly take away the only cow of industrial and office workers?

Document 7 *continued*

What is more, they demand a receipt showing that the cow was handed over voluntarily and they threaten you by saying if you don't do this, they will put you in prison for failure to fulfill the meat procurement. How can you live when the cooperative distributes only black bread, and at the market goods have the prices of 1919 and 1920? Lice have eaten us to death, and soap is given only to railroad workers. From hunger and filth we have a massive outbreak of spotted fever.

Having liquidated private tradesmen, the government suddenly discovered that basic things that were impossible to do without had begun to vanish. Unable to meet their burden, the restaurants, cafes, and snack bars, the barbers and hairdressers, the tailors and repair shops that had provided the everyday bases of existence closed shop. The influx of huge numbers of rural dwellers into the cities aggravated the shortages. It turned out that retail trade, eating establishments, and consumer services were indispensable. Like it or not, the question of organizing state-run institutions of trade, eating services, and everyday needs had to be addressed. At first, it seemed that here too the problems could be solved at a stroke by creating giant enterprises. In 1931 construction began for the Moscow meat processing and packing factory (subsequently the Mikoyan Plant), old candy and cookie factories were reconstructed, and a network of state stores, service shops, and workers' cafeterias was created. Attention focused initially on large industrial centers. But all these measures proved to be insufficient. The unwieldy state trading, public catering, and other state-run services and activities coped poorly. The disdainful attitude toward small things against the background of great political questions was telling. The term "for mass consumption" *(shirpotreb)* cropped up in the 1930s for merchandise produced to meet everyone's daily needs. It acquired a certain pejorative connotation and became a blanket term for inferior quality, which, along with poor services, crudity, and boorishness, found expression in lines such as "gobble up what you are served" and "there are lots of you, and I am but one woman here."

The documents make clear a gradual intensification of social conflict. Socialist competition sowed discord among workers, dis-

cord that was officially viewed as opposition to the new movement by backward strata in the working class. Workers' hostility intensified toward people from rural areas onto whom the leadership tried to shift blame for ever-increasing difficulties. Peasants escaping in great numbers to industrial work sites because of the mass collectivization effort and the dispossession of kulaks in the countryside were often regarded as parasites, human riffraff unfit for building socialism. Worker Cherkasov, for example, wrote about how "the old foxes run away from collectivization. In Moscow there's a great influx of peasants who don't want to be on collective farms. They are drunkards, crooks, and thieves. There are hundreds and thousands of them. They'll be a hindrance to us as we build socialism." Another report asserts that the Moscow horse park's workforce consists mostly of country people who "make their way via vodka and debauchery and influence [other] workers to do the same." The troubles at Magnitogorsk were explained by the fact that "kulaks have wormed their way in."[9]

How this attitude was perceived by young people coming to work in industry is described in a letter written in 1930 by I. P. Koniukhov from the village of Dubrovka in the Duminichi Raion, Sukhinichi Okrug of the Western Oblast:

Document 8

Letter to *Pravda* from I. P. Koniukhov, Western Oblast, 1930. RGAE, f. 7486, op. 1, d. 100, l. 21. Typed copy.

Worker and peasant youth have taken this path with ardor to master it, to get to know one another on this path, to unite, so that by its end there is no division into workers and peasants, but one whole with proletarian consciousness and feeling. Starting down this path we see proof (we won't speak of what is put down on paper) of a new variety of anti-Semitism: persecution of the muzhik [a derogatory term for peasant]. They try to belittle peasants working at the plant by calling them "Hairy Muzhik." Nicknames like this say "How backward the countryside is."

The old workers, moreover, were hostile not only toward those with rural backgrounds but also toward those who, responding to

mass appeals, had come from far away to work in industry. One of the documents tells how miners jeered Komsomol members mobilized for work in the mines of the Donbass, doing everything they could to drive them out. In mine no. 1 in Shcheglovka, Komsomol members "met with hostility. At first the miners cursed them, then they began to act openly against them. The cutting instructor deliberately sent them to work in a shaft tunnel not shored up. A collapse resulted. One [Komsomol member] was smothered, another suffered a broken leg, a third escaped with bruises. When they were going down the shaft to a tunnel at that same place, a machine operator started his cutter and a huge chunk of coal . . . knocked out the rib of one Komsomol member." Evidence of anti-Semitism is also reported. In mine no. 29 in Makeyevka "they terrorize Jews at every turn, threatening to kill them if they don't leave." Among mine workers, conversations of this type also took place: "Jewboys came to us from Berdichev. D'ya think they're really gonna work? They go into the mines wearing their coats, just like they're at a health resort. . . . Four hundred and fifty Komsomol members, all kikes, are coming to us in Budyonnovka. We'll see how well they're gonna work."[10]

Meanwhile, the Socialist Offensive picked up speed in rural areas, especially after the November 1929 party plenum. The leadership envisaged the wide-ranging effort to organize collective farms as a mighty avalanche that would sweep away kulak opposition, obliterating them as a group and paving the way to build socialism in the countryside. The kulaks, said Stalin, had to be hit so hard that they would not be able to stand on their own feet again. "This is what we Bolsheviks call a true offensive."[11]

Special collectivization staffs were formed at all levels. They included practically every available "proletarian activist." Their chief assignment: increase the number of collective farms being created. The initial idea was essentially to complete collectivization during the First Five-Year Plan. At the local level, however, campaigns that had set out to increase the pace of collectivization caught on, making for a race that often shortened projected collectivization schedules by a half or two-thirds.

Worker Zakharin from Leningrad sent Stalin a letter in which he reported that in his administrative zeal "the secretary of the Raion