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# The Teikovo Cotton Workers' Strike of April 1932: Class, Gender and Identity Politics in Stalin's Russia

JEFFREY J. ROSSMAN

In April 1932, Nikolai Shvernik, the head of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, informed Stalin and Lazar Kaganovich that Soviet workers were rebelling against “starvation” rations implemented on the first of the month. Shvernik did not offer details about the most serious episode of unrest—a wave of strikes by over sixteen thousand textile workers in the Ivanovo Industrial Region (IPO)—because Kaganovich himself orchestrated the suppression of the protests. Although Stalin already knew from OGPU (secret police) reports that his policies had alienated the working class, Shvernik emphasized that the recent unrest was marked by political overtones: “In all the cases cited, counterrevolutionary and Trotskyite elements attempted to exploit the temporary difficulties in worker supply.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the IPO strikes were never publicized, they served as the subtext of speeches at the national trade union congress that met that month in Moscow. During appearances before delegates, Shvernik ridiculed officials from the towns where the strikes occurred, Ian Rudzutak, the head of the party's Central Control Commission, admitted that workers were “steeped in foul moods,” and Kaganovich attributed the crisis of morale to the “petty-bourgeois” attitudes of new workers, the persistence of “bourgeois influences” among experienced workers, and the “subversive work” of “class-alien elements” who allegedly had infiltrated Soviet enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, rumors of unrest stoked the flames of opposition within the party. Circulated surreptitiously among Communists in 1932, Riutin's platform argued that the regime

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<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Moscow, f. 5451, op. 42, d. 250, ll. 17–18.

<sup>2</sup> *Deviatyi vsesoiuznyi s'ezd professional'nykh soiuзов SSSR: Stenograficheskiĭ otchet* (Moscow, 1933), 96–99, 194, 659–60, 708.

would be overthrown by the masses if Stalin were not removed from power and his disastrous economic policies abandoned.<sup>3</sup>

Several scholars have explored worker resistance under Stalin, but the inaccessibility of sources made it difficult for them to reconstruct the uprisings that shaped battles over power and policy in Moscow.<sup>4</sup> Drawing on new archival sources, this article provides the first narrative of one of the strikes that occurred in April 1932.<sup>5</sup> By restricting the focus to the strike in Teikovo, I forego the opportunity to provide a “big-picture” narrative of the events that precipitated a transformation in relations between the Stalin regime and Soviet society. Such a narrative is sorely needed, but the richness of the sources requires that it be written one chapter at a time. A drama of ordinary people struggling to overcome an extraordinary situation, the Teikovo uprising nonetheless reveals much about the dynamics of class, gender and identity politics in Stalin's Russia.

The morale of cotton workers in Teikovo, one of the IPO's oldest mill towns (pop. 24,000) and the site of a large textile combine, had been deteriorating for months. Shortages of food, fuel and raw cotton, declining output and earnings, unpopular labor intensification measures, unsatisfactory living conditions, and the influx of inexperienced workers created a volatile situation.<sup>6</sup> Compounding the crisis, hundreds of peasant households recently had abandoned the district's collective farms. A local notable, Teikovo newspaper editor Nikolai Kochnev, recorded his concerns in a diary:

31.03.32: “We have built the foundation of socialism” (from a TsK VKP(b) decree). The notion is very relative, because it's not easy to understand where the foundation ends and where it begins.

[Early] April 1932: The situation in the country really is tense. There isn't enough bread. . . . For the class enemy, it's solid ground for struggle, for gossip. . . . The *meshchanstvo* of all ranks is urgently raising a whining grumble. The style of all work has somewhat begun to resemble the era of war communism. Some sabotage is reported. . . . Labor obligations have embittered the peasant.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Martem'ian Riutin, “Stalin i krizis proletarskoi diktatury,” cited in B. A. Starkov, “Delo Riutina,” in *Oni ne molchali*, comp. A. V. Afanas'ev (Moscow, 1991), 162, 164.

<sup>4</sup> The best recent work is Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization: The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928–1941* (Armonk, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Based primarily on recently declassified Russian archival sources, including the OGPU files of strike participants and materials of the Central Control Commission VKP(b), the IPO Obkom, and Soviet trade unions, my account of the IPO strike wave diverges from the (brief) reports that have appeared in diplomatic cables, émigré journals and secondary works. This article is an abbreviated version of a dissertation chapter. For a full account of the IPO strikes, their background and aftermath, see Jeffrey J. Rossman, “Worker Resistance under Stalin: Class and Gender in the Textile Mills of the Ivanovo Industrial Region” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> The Teikovo combine consisted of spinning, weaving and finishing mills. At the time of the strike it employed from 4,300 to 5,100 workers, a majority of whom were women (Rossman, “Worker Resistance under Stalin”).

<sup>7</sup> Nikolai Kochnev, “Diary,” 1, 17 and 31 March and c. 1 April 1932, cited in Vladimir Smirnov, “Iz zapisei Nikolaia Grigor'evicha Kochneva (1932 god): Dnevnik, zapiski, dokumenty” (n.d., photocopy). I am indebted to the Smirnov family for this source.

**Friday, 8 April 1932**

The “class enemy” began its work on this day in the machine shop of the combine’s calico factory, when word spread among workers that rations had been reduced by anywhere from 31 to 47 percent. The (male) machinists expressed dissatisfaction and supported the proposal of a fitter (Kobakov) to summon an administrator. Their messenger returned with inflammatory news: the director of the factory (Novikov) refused the request for talks. Discontent over the new policy soon gave way to complaints about the way management treated workers. Informed that operations in the machine shop had ground to a halt, Novikov appeared—alongside the mill’s party secretary (Bazakin)—to restore order, but found that workers from the finishing and folding sections already had joined the protest. Queried about rations by a group of eighty workers, Novikov stonewalled: “It’s a state decree, and there’s nothing to explain to you.” The strikers insisted, however, that he answer their questions. During the exchange that followed, Gavril Chernov, a thirty-seven-year-old joiner with eighteen years at the combine, condemned the new policy: “I knew even before that the party was carrying out an incorrect policy, and that the lowering of rations could be done by some other means—by means of a curtailment of rations in the fall. It’s impossible for the worker to work with this level of rations. Indeed, it’ll be starvation!” Chernov also spoke out against the reduction of dependents’ rations, comparing them sarcastically to the generous allotments enjoyed by administrators: “A family member can’t exist on four kilograms [the amount of bread distributed to workers every ten days]. You yourselves couldn’t live on four kilograms.” Though dissatisfied with management’s response, strikers eventually went back to work.<sup>8</sup>

**Saturday, 9 April**

The next morning workers arrived at the calico factory and again expressed concern about the new ration levels. One hundred twenty-four of them laid down their tools at 9:30 A.M. in support of demands by Chernov and Vasili Shishkin—a thirty-seven-year-old fitter with two decades at the combine—for an impromptu assembly. Factory committee (Fabkom) members appeared at the scene, but their explanations failed to suffice. Rather, their refusal to convene an assembly exacerbated tensions, as did the retort of a Communist foreman: “No problem, you won’t kick the bucket.” Their passions inflamed, the workers petitioned Novikov to convene an assembly, but displayed their willingness to compromise by agreeing to meet outside regular working hours.<sup>9</sup>

Though well aware of the volatile state of shop-floor morale, Teikovo’s leaders were shocked by the day’s events. In his only diary entry during the strike, Kochnev admitted that he never would have believed the rumors he was hearing had the forces unleashed not confronted him in person:

<sup>8</sup> GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 93; Arkhivnoe podrazdelenie upravleniia Federativnoi sluzhby kontrrazvedki po Ivanovskoi oblasti (APUFSKIO, formerly the Ivanovo KGB archive), Ivanovo, d. 8535-p, ll. 2–3ob., 18ob., 30ob.-33.

<sup>9</sup> GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 88; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 2–2ob., 27ob., d. 8535-p, ll. 18ob., 32, and d. 8551-p, l. 22.

09.04.32 . . . The rations for workers were cut back, so they started making a fuss. The Teikovo calico factory—it's impossible to believe—has gone on strike. Yes, yes! . . . a real Italian strike. What a horror. The fifteenth year of the revolution, and suddenly. . . . It simply can't be. But? . . .

I walked around town today, agitated by the news of what had happened. My look was serious and tense. Near the cooperative . . . a worker who had drunk a fair amount stopped me and began to shout loudly into my ear: "My friend, when will you let us eat, you devils!"<sup>10</sup>

If Kochnev found it difficult to fathom the turn of events at the combine, he must have been stunned by what followed.

### **Sunday, 10 April**

When machine-shop workers arrived at the calico factory the next morning, they were confronted by Novikov, who rejected requests to hold an assembly, demanded an end to the strike, and threatened that anyone asking for food "can be dismissed." His remarks only added oil to the fire. By the time an unauthorized assembly came to order, calls for talks gave way to demands for rations equal to those of metal-workers, who enjoyed a higher supply rating. The strike's most active supporters at this point were three nonparty men with families: Shishkin, Chernov, and Vasili Anan'ev, a thirty-year-old assistant fitter with seventeen years at the combine. By late afternoon, workers from the finishing and folding sections again joined the discussions that were under way in the machine shop.<sup>11</sup>

As rumor of the strike circulated, workers in other parts of the combine began to stir. In the cafeteria, weaving overlooker Pavel Vakhrovskii openly denounced the new ration levels. Arriving for the start of their 12:30 p.m. shift, spinners and weavers (mostly women) succumbed to strike agitation. Inspecting her ring frame, Praskov'ia Lavrent'eva, a spinner at the mill for thirty-six of her forty-eight years, was confronted by a friend: "None of us is going to work, and you'll be ashamed" if you do. Shearing machines whirred around fifty-seven-year-old carding operative Pavel Asafov when a group of agitated women barged in: "Stop working!" they demanded. "Don't you want to eat, or what?"<sup>12</sup>

Out of feelings of solidarity or fear—or simply because their machines had been sabotaged—Lavrent'eva, Asafov and many others joined the strike. Meanwhile, a few encounters turned hostile. "Twenty-five thousander" Aleksandr Malov, one of the Komsomols mobilized by the district committee (Raikom) to keep production lines running, alleged that Shishkin called him a "strikebreaker," "self-aggrandizer" and "tormentor of kolkhoz peasants" as the job action got under way. Others who refused to abandon the shop floor allegedly were branded "traitors."<sup>13</sup>

By early afternoon, thousands of workers were on strike. Though not coordinated, the protests occurred simultaneously in various locations, and were accompanied by an eruption of verbal activity: women workers demanded a restoration of rations in speeches at the factory courtyard, the cooperative, and the workers' club;

<sup>10</sup> Kochnev, "Diary," 9 April 1932.

<sup>11</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 2ob., and d. 8535-p, ll. 21, 23.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., d. 8551-p, ll. 28–28ob., 35ob., 56, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 15ob.–16ob.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., d. 7951-p, ll. 14–14ob.

weavers attempted in vain to persuade Fabkom officials to support the shop-floor's demand; 250 workers from the calico factory assembled in the machine shop, argued with the party secretary, and debated strategy; and groups of strikers marched to the town square, where they spread the word and listened to speeches by women workers and Nazar Gradusov, a thirty-six-year-old who once had been a party member and mill employee. (One of the few acts of violence by protesters occurred that day on the square, where women workers dragged a Communist off the rostrum after he condemned the strike.) Remarkable in this diversity of action was the uniformity of the workers' demand: the restoration of rations to their previous levels or equilibration with metalworkers.<sup>14</sup>

### **Monday, 11 April**

Only 130 spinners and weavers—mostly Communists and Komsomols—reported to their posts the next morning. Chernov arrived at the machine shop at 7:30 A.M. and sided with Shishkin and others against several mechanics who wanted to work. Soon a group of female strikers (both spinners and weavers) intervened: “You really don’t want to eat?” they inquired incredulously. Debate ended, and Shishkin led everyone to the calico printing shop, where discussions about the food supply were already under way. Meanwhile, groups of women weavers and a handful of spinners and disaffected Communists swept the combine for stragglers, appealing for all to strike (“Stop work! All the workers have left the factory!”), forcibly idling equipment, and warning scutchers to “stop work—and if you don’t, they’ll find your heads in the machine.” Shop floors emptied quickly, and the crowd in the courtyard swelled to over two thousand.<sup>15</sup>

While mobilizing the ranks, some strikers threatened party loyalists. For example, the Komsomol Malov reported that a group of women weavers attempted to defenestrate him into the river, and that he escaped retribution only after several Communists intervened. Although such incidents were blamed on Shishkin, it is clear that the workers who enforced the strike generally acted on their own initiative.<sup>16</sup>

When Chernov arrived in the courtyard, a woman worker was publicly condemning the performance of the cooperative. Next Shishkin called on strikers to demand nothing besides better rations, to resist giving in to provocation (such as threats by the Fabkom to deprive them of rations altogether), and to beware the OGPU, which tried to “probe” him the night before “under the pretext of having keys made.” He was followed by Vakhrovskii, who told of his own encounter with the secret police and justified his support for the strike with reference to his responsibilities as the head of a household: “It’s impossible for a family to survive on four kilograms of bread. I have a large family. We’ll have nothing to live on.” Their speeches were applauded by the crowd, but the response to party and union representatives who opposed the protest was impatient (“Bread . . . give us bread, and then we’ll work!” “Away with you!”) and disdainful (“Down with the big-mouthed

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 2ob.-3, 28, d. 8535-p, ll. 21, 27, d. 8543-p, ll. 19, 22, d. 8551-p, ll. 5ob., 35ob., 56, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 2, 15ob., 27.

<sup>15</sup> GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 88; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 3, d. 8535-p, ll. 3ob., 18ob., 21, and d. 8551-p, ll. 18, 20, 26ob., 30ob.

<sup>16</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 14–16.

jabberer!" "Wipe your nose, sniveler!" "Down with the whore!"). Clearly, the opponents of collective action lacked authority among the rank and file.<sup>17</sup>

Led by Shishkin and Chernov, the strikers marched toward the center of town. Hundreds joined the procession as it wound its way past the spinning mill and through the streets of Teikovo. On the way, strikers stopped at the cooperative and demanded an audience with its director. He was away—or hiding—so they went to the city soviet (*gorsovet*) instead. Although four members of its Presidium, including the chairman, supported the strike, the official who appeared on the balcony insisted that everyone go back to work. The demonstrators rejected the request, but eventually headed to the site that was proposed for negotiations: the town theater.<sup>18</sup>

When it reached the square, the crowd was over four thousand strong. Though satisfied that workers were displaying a high degree of solidarity, Shishkin felt uncomfortable that many who had no relation to the mill—"invalids, housewives . . . kulaks and *lishentsy* [persons deprived of their civil rights]"—had joined the demonstration, either out of curiosity or sympathy. He kept his concerns to himself, however, no doubt aware that the extra bodies increased the force of the workers' protest.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, many bystanders—including artisans, woodsmen, peasants, and pensioners—agreed that "it's really difficult for a worker to live on such a ration," and responded sympathetically to the strikers' speeches. Andrian Lipin, the forty-one-year-old head of production at a cobblers' artel and a long-time critic of the regime, shared his opinion of the uprising with his colleagues: "The workers are striking and they are right to do so. By these means they will get their way." After declaring that "we mustn't suffer any more" and asserting that the protesters "want workers in neighboring factories . . . to strike," he issued a threat to the artel's chairman ("Soon we will come to you to ask for bread") and appealed for solidarity. The head of a large family, Lipin spent many hours on the square. He joined the fray only once, however, when he argued against *gorsovet* requests for the election of a strike committee. Such a move, he believed, would make the movement's "ringleaders" more vulnerable to arrest.<sup>20</sup>

Intrigued by what he had seen thus far, the fifty-five-year-old pensioner Vasilii Khudiakov arrived at the square at 11:00 A.M. The meeting had been under way for some time: Shishkin, Chernov and others denounced the cutbacks ("It's impossible to live on such a ration!"), while a weaver and strike activist named Mokeeva attacked administrators' privileges ("We must get them to keep the old rations and make cuts in executives' [rations]—for they eat, while we starve!"). Intermittently and unsuccessfully, town officials attempted to restore order. Soon Khudiakov "approached the tribune": "A worker . . . asked me to give a speech," he testified. "I agreed, but first . . . found out what demands the workers made, and was told . . . that they requested that March rations be kept, and nothing else. With this directive,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., I, 5, d. 8535-p, I, 3ob., and d. 8551-p, I, 25ob.; Kochnev, "Diary," 17 April 1932.

<sup>18</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, II, 3-4, d. 8535-p, II, 18ob., 21, and d. 8551-p, II, 20, 64; GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 1352, I, 12.

<sup>19</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, II, 4, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., d. 8535-p, I, 27, and d. 8543-p, II, 17, 19, 38-39, 59.

I gave a speech—not as one of the combine’s factory workers, but as a worker-pensioner who supported the workers’ demands.” Khudiakov recounted his speech for investigators:

“We’ve gone from the Leninist starvation to the Stalinist starvation. There’s no improvement in 1932 compared to 1919. I consider this policy of the Soviet regime utopian because at one end of the country we’re digging trenches, but internally we’re losing the confidence of the workers.” . . . [Then] I explained to the workers the causes of the 1919 starvation and the approach of the different starvation of 1932, which was caused by the unchecked exportation . . . of bread, poor inventorying, and the absence of a system of controls.

Witnesses testified that Khudiakov also uttered a series of “anti-Soviet” remarks that were critical of the nation’s elites and attributed popular suffering to their “utopian” policies:

We must reduce the rations of the Red Army and GPU, for they grow plump while the workers starve . . . The Communists and the GPU live well, earn a lot, and receive good rations.

The new bourgeoisie—the Communists—sit in the homes of the former mill-owners. . . . They live well, they have their closed shops, but everyone else starves.

During the past thirty-six years I’ve never seen Teikovo workers go without bread, but now it has happened. Lenin certainly wouldn’t have allowed this. . . . But now we have not a “Communist” party, but some kind of “utopia.”

This regime is a “utopia.” The working class is perishing.

Year fourteen of the revolution—and starvation continues.

The policy of Lenin (sic) and the Soviet regime is incorrect.

We must declare a boycott of the Soviet regime.

We must overthrow the Soviet regime. . . . Help for the strikers will come from abroad. . . . Not only Soviet but also foreign miners will support our demands because they . . . [once] went on strike and won.

If bread isn’t going to be added and we’re going to stay like this, then it’s better to be down with Soviet power!<sup>21</sup>

Notwithstanding the discrepancies in the sources, it is clear that Khudiakov’s speech was sprinkled with generous doses of anti-Soviet, anti-communist, anti-Stalinist, and possibly anti-Leninist rhetoric. These, in turn, must be situated against the backdrop of the Russian working class’s traditional responsiveness to discourses of anti-elitist egalitarianism. More to the point, Khudiakov’s remarks elicited a range of responses that illustrate some important nuances of identity politics in the early Stalin era.

Although some sympathized with Khudiakov’s views, others did not. Indeed, calls for the overthrow of “Soviet power”—a term, incidentally, that was not synonymous with the Stalin dictatorship in every worker’s mind—punctured the boundaries of publicly acceptable speech. After the strike, Khudiakov admitted that “the workers responded animatedly” to his remarks; what he neglected to mention was

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 7951-p, l. 6, d. 8551-p, ll. 3, 5ob., 8ob., 18, 20–21, 40ob., 56, 63, d. 8535-p, ll. 4ob., 18ob., 23, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 3ob.



that he surrendered the rostrum after some in the crowd voiced their objections. As for the strike's leaders, most of whom had known Khudiakov for years, they worried that his speeches attracted "anti-Soviet" elements, diminished the protest's singularity of purpose, and handed the authorities a weapon to use against them in propaganda and the courts. Therefore, Shishkin, Chernov, Anan'ev, and others refused to endorse what they later testified were Khudiakov's "patently counterrevolutionary" and "purely anti-Soviet" remarks.<sup>22</sup>

Predictably, local notables exploited such episodes in their efforts to break the strike. The Communist director of the Teikovo Savings Bank, for example, argued that the uprising had become the vehicle for class enemies like Khudiakov, the "trader" (*torgovets*). In the language of social identity, officials found a weapon to wield against their radical opponents. Despite fifteen years of work in a calico printing artel, a decade of employment as a factory guard, and almost three decades of involvement in the labor movement, Khudiakov could be branded with the pejorative label "trader" because his father—who was still alive and received a worker's pension—ran a grocery store after being fired from the combine in 1896 for strike activity, and because he himself had worked as a shop assistant in his youth. Furthermore, some workers felt that Khudiakov's stint as a factory guard disqualified him from membership in their class. After making a radical speech, therefore, Khudiakov effectively could be stigmatized by the authorities as a *byvshii chelovek*—a decrepit member of the old "exploiting" classes.<sup>23</sup>

Although the bank official also was forced from the rostrum, Khudiakov already had undermined his standing by making such provocative, not to mention impractical, remarks. Vasili Matiuskin, a forty-nine-year-old fitter with three decades on the shop floor, supported the strike but harbored reservations about Khudiakov's role—which, under interrogation, he exaggerated—in it:

I consider Khudiakov to have been the organizer and inspirer of the strike. His father was a trader and he himself traded alongside his father. I've known his family for thirty years, and although he considers himself a worker, in fact he is a trader—if he did work, then it was only as a guard. At all the assemblies, wherever they occur, Khudiakov speaks out against the measures of the Soviet regime.

E. V. Balashev, a forty-two-year-old lugger and carpenter and former Communist, also supported the strike, but hastened to repudiate its radical spokesman: "We will not follow Khudiakov—he is not ours." Fedor Letkov, a forty-one-year-old condenser operator, testified that "the workers supported [Balashev's] speech."<sup>24</sup>

Soon after Khudiakov's appearance, Gradusov addressed the crowd: he supported the strikers' demand ("We must strive for Soviet organizations to maintain the March rations") and "called the workers to order, warning them of the consequences" of their actions. "My speech was of a purely economic character," he recalled. "I spoke on my own initiative on behalf of the combine's workers and the

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., d. 7951-p, ll. 5–6, 8, d. 8535-p, ll. 4ob., 23, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 3ob.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., d. 8551-p, ll. 3ob., 5ob.-6ob., 18.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., ll. 5ob.-6ob., 17–21, 47ob., 56.

town's working people." Gradusov also told investigators that he intended to serve as an agent of moderation, and that the crowd dismissed his appeals for compromise ("They won't make concessions. We won't end the strike, but will strike until the first of May!"). On the other hand, witnesses countered that his "long speech" was more provocative than conciliatory: according to their accounts, which are mutually corroborating, Gradusov called on strikers to persevere until their demand was met; attacked the level of executives' rations; proposed that Moscow—and foreign workers—be petitioned for assistance; demanded that Teikovo's leaders be sacked; reiterated "Khudiakov's anti-Soviet statements"; and appropriated one of the regime's old slogans in an appeal to popular sentiment ("Our children should be flowers in the future, but they 'wither' from hunger"). Undoubtedly, he was an influential speaker who enjoyed more authority than Khudiakov. Even Kochnev acknowledged his abilities: "Gradusov is crazy, but the son-of-a-bitch conducts himself capably." Still, his provocative remarks and years of employment outside the mill (as a *Chekist* and, more recently, cesspit cleaner) made it difficult for some workers to see him as "ours." Concerned about the direction in which the radicals were headed, several prominent strikers criticized them. For example, Chernov distanced himself from their attacks on the privileges of select social groups: "We must not apply Red Army and GPU standards to the workers, since they have more work than us."<sup>25</sup>

Anan'ev recalled the interaction between the crowd and its radical spokesmen as follows:

At the head of the workers on the street were Khudiakov and Gradusov, who before Shishkin's appearance wanted, by means of their anti-Soviet speeches, to send workers on a different path altogether. . . . More than anyone else, Khudiakov and Gradusov stirred up the masses. After their appearances, the masses were disposed in an unruly and anti-Soviet manner, and especially after the long and harsh speeches by Gradusov. . . . Maybe their speeches could have been more successful, but the fundamental mass of workers condemned them for it. *Undoubtedly, the layer of backward workers and the whole audience of recently arrived, extraneous non-workers supported them.*<sup>26</sup>

Anan'ev's testimony reveals much about efforts to shape interpretations of the uprising and the prevalent categories of social identity. Soon after the IPO strikes ended, a struggle over meaning began: where émigrés, diplomats and protesters saw working-class discontent, officialdom spied the machinations of class enemies.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, the contest ensued within the Soviet bureaucracy itself. In a report written on 22 April 1932 by the IPO Control Commission, the terms "strike" and "strike movement," which carried positive valences in Marxist rhetoric, were employed lib-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 8535-p, ll. 2, 4ob.-5ob., 23–24, 27, 29, d. 8551-p, ll. 43–43ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 3ob., 9ob.; GARE, f. 5457, op. 13, d. 86, l. 17; Kochnev, "Diary," n.d.

<sup>26</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, ll. 25–26 (emphasis added).

<sup>27</sup> Sketchy (and quite inaccurate) reports of the uprisings surfaced in the émigré press and diplomatic cables. See *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, 23 July and 26 November 1932; *Biulleten' oppositsii*, 1932, no. 29/30; and D. Cameron Watt, ed., *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Part 2, Series A, *The Soviet Union, 1930–1932* (Frederick, MD, 1992), 16:93, 146.

erally. When the report arrived in Moscow, however, Rudzutak or one of his deputies substituted neutral or pejorative terms. For example, the title of the document was altered ("Memorandum on the ~~strikes events~~ in . . . the [IPO]"), as was the last sentence of its introduction:

As a result of [delays in explaining the new ration policy to workers] and the existence of huge deficiencies in the performance of supply agencies and cooperatives, unhealthy moods arose among a certain segment of workers, and these moods were used by Trotskyites and class-alien enemies, who managed to put significant groups of backward workers under their influence and organize a ~~strike movement~~ *an assault against party and Soviet organizations*.<sup>28</sup>

Moscow's editorial changes point to the discrepancies of perspective that existed between center and periphery. Not that the procedure of political translation was alien to provincial authorities; after all, the report's authors understood that it was imperative to describe working-class strike activists as "Trotskyites and class-alien enemies," and their supporters as "backward workers." (How many problems of analysis were eliminated by such slippery categories!) If the report laid bare the process whereby observed social reality—in this case, a strike wave—was coded by officialdom into a language that was safe for (internal or public) consumption, it also highlighted the difficulty the regime had coming to terms with recent events: were these strikes by workers, or the assaults of the class enemy? (Another possibility—that workers had *become* the class enemy—was conceded in some corridors of power.) At the same time, Anan'ev's testimony ("the layer of backward workers") shows that official categories permeated the popular psyche as well.<sup>29</sup>

Now to translate Anan'ev's observations into an analysis of social support for the strike's leaders. Shishkin and Chernov represented the majority of demonstrators who, out of fear, exhaustion, an appreciation of the balance of forces, or acceptance of Soviet power, wanted to focus exclusively on an economic demand (higher rations), while Khudiakov and Gradusov conveyed the views of a minority whose hostility toward the dictatorship and its policies of forced industrialization, collectivization, dekulakization, expropriation, political persecution, rights deprivation, and so on, inclined them to approve more radical critiques. The sources do not allow us to determine with certainty who supported Shishkin, on the one hand, and Khudiakov, on the other, but they do suggest that a majority of strikers supported the former and that constituencies for the latter included exceptionally disaffected workers, peasants in collective farms, former supporters of non-Bolshevik political parties, disgruntled leftists, *lishentsy*, *byvshie liudi*, pensioners, mothers whose children were starving, and members of the other malcontent groups that populated IPO towns and villages in 1932.

Following the controversy caused by Khudiakov and Gradusov, Anan'ev con-

<sup>28</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 92–93. Italics indicate words that were edited by hand into the typewritten report.

<sup>29</sup> For official and unofficial interpretations of the IPO strike wave see Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin."

demned the performance of the cooperative and the trade union and appealed for moderation: “We must settle the supply and work situation and come to an agreement with local organs.” The next speaker, thirty-eight-year-old union functionary Praskov’ia Maleeva, was less conciliatory: “Brothers (*bratssy*) . . . have a look: our children have become lice-ridden, sugar has disappeared, there’s no millet, and the children are whining from hunger. Brothers, you could say it’s practically consumption.” A Communist, former spinner, and former underground labor organizer, Maleeva proclaimed that in such conditions workers “could do nothing other” than strike, at which point “the crowd applauded.” Shishkin spoke in an effort to buttress everyone’s resolve: “We will strive to preserve the old March rations,” but “do we go back to work or not?” A chorus of voices—or rather, according to the testimony, *women’s* voices (recall that a majority of the combine’s workers, hence strikers, were female)—responded: “We will not go back to work!” Having quelled the disturbance caused by Gradusov and Khudiakov and found local authorities unresponsive, Shishkin seized on an idea that had been circulating for some time: “We are not in agreement with local organizations, so let’s send a telegram to Molotov in the capital.”<sup>30</sup>

The strikers deputized a commission to draft an appeal to Molotov, the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom). No elections were held, but the most active strike participants—Shishkin, Gradusov, Khudiakov (!), Anan’ev, Mokeeva, and a certain Bagazhkova—were dispatched to the Raikom. Khudiakov suggested that the commission consider itself a formal strike committee, but this was rejected by its other members as too provocative. As if in retaliation, Raikom officials denounced Khudiakov as a “former trader,” an “anti-Soviet person,” and a “nonworker who has no relation to the workers,” and refused to negotiate in his presence. Repudiated, Khudiakov departed for his shift as a night watchman. Nothing was resolved during the talks that followed, and officials warned the delegates that they would be held responsible for any further disturbances. This frightened Gradusov, but officials rejected his request to step down. Next Shishkin and his colleagues drafted an appeal to Molotov: they requested the restoration of rations or, alternatively, the dispatch for negotiations of Sovnarkom representatives to Teikovo. Surprisingly, the Raikom approved the text for transmission to Moscow. Strikers were still on the square when their leaders returned. Gradusov recited the appeal and incorporated rank-and-file suggestions, while Shishkin collected sixty rubles to pay for express delivery. After voting to continue the strike until Moscow responded, the crowd retired. Finally, Shishkin and Gradusov delivered the telegram to the post office.<sup>31</sup>

### **Tuesday, 12 April**

As the new day got under way, scores of Communists and Komsomols and a smattering of nonparty workers struggled to keep the combine’s most vital production lines operating. Their efforts were not entirely successful. Since many skilled workers

<sup>30</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, ll. 4ob.-5ob., 21, 24–25, and d. 8551-p, ll. 25ob., 29–29ob., 43ob.; Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Ivanovskoi oblasti (TsDNIIIO, formerly the Ivanovo Party Archive), Ivanovo, f. 327, op. 4, d. 449, l. 92; Kochnev, “Diary,” 17 April 1932.

<sup>31</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 6, d. 8535-p, ll. 5ob., 21, 24–25, d. 8543-p, l. 23, d. 8551-p, ll. 6ob., 36ob.-37ob., 56, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 3ob.-4ob., 9ob.-10; GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 87–88.

had joined the strike, and since Tuesday was a day off for most employees anyway, equipment performed unreliably and the quality of work suffered accordingly. Strike-breakers also remained vulnerable to aggression: no sooner had the doors been locked and operations begun in one shop of the calico factory, when two hundred women weavers broke in and forced production to a halt.<sup>32</sup>

Though strikers often interfered with the activities of anyone who opposed them, they did not prevent “essential” tasks from being performed. For example, strike leader Chernov skipped several hours of speeches in order to fix trolleys, “since repairs are done on days off.” He knew that if his duties were not fulfilled on Tuesday (technically, a “day off”), then the vehicles would be unavailable when the strike ended—which, in turn, would place an unfair burden on luggers and suppress the earnings of those whose tasks required the timely circulation of supplies. Uncompensated labor by joiners who supported the job action and the lack of opposition to them lay bare the moral universe of the strikers: theirs was not a blind rage, but a finely targeted one.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, several thousand strikers and hundreds of sympathizers gathered in the square. Speeches by strike activists—Shishkin, Gradusov, Anan'ev, Mokeeva, Bagazhkova, Chernov (who arrived after repairing the trolleys), thirty-two-year-old auxiliary spinning operative Ivan Semenov, and a certain Iakovlev—continued until midafternoon. As usual, Shishkin spoke “very well in defense of the workers.” His message was one of moderation, directed at those who had nearly come to blows with their most aggressive adversaries: “It’s impossible to exist on such a ration, and therefore we must demand the old March rations from the government. But don’t curse at and fight with the Komsomols.” If danger lurked in confrontations with “true believers,” however, it lay also in brushes with *byvshie liudi*: “We have assembled to request bread. We must not yield to provocation because there are people in the crowd who are not ours—and we are not against Soviet power.” Shishkin’s caution was matched only by his determination to prevail, reflected in his threat to expand the movement if necessary: “Comrades, we will strike until we achieve an increase in rations, and if we get no response from the capital by the 13th, then we’ll go on the morning of the 14th to Ivanovo in order to resolve this issue jointly with Ivanovo workers at the Palace of Labor.” Frustrated by the lack of response from Moscow (one rumor was that postal workers had refused to send the telegram out of fear or disapproval), the strikers authorized Shishkin to set up direct talks with Molotov. Although local officials approved the proposal, nothing ever came of it.<sup>34</sup>

Khudiakov again appeared on the square at 11:00 A.M. and supported calls for escalation: “We’ve lived poorly for fifteen years in a row.” “The regime won’t compromise with us. We must go on a hunger march to get help from the Ivanovo workers.” Some protested when he denounced the regime (“Down with Soviet power!”), but the reaction was more muted than before, if only because the mood now was

<sup>32</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 87–88; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 14, and d. 8551-p, ll. 21, 27ob., 30.

<sup>33</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, l. 6ob.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., d. 7951-p, ll. 20ob., 28, d. 8535-p, l. 21, d. 8543-p, ll. 8ob., 24, 31ob., and d. 8551-p, ll. 6ob., 15, 16, 21, 27ob., 37ob.

characterized more by frustration than exhilaration (“Many women were weeping,” a witness recalled). Gradusov also addressed the crowd: “In his speech,” Balashev testified, “Gradusov agreed with Khudiakov and agitated for a hunger march and drew a series of anti-Soviet conclusions. He also demanded that Teikovo workers write a letter abroad about their situation.” A bold promise concluded Gradusov’s remarks: “We’ll struggle with you in the front ranks until [achieving] complete victory in what we demand from the province’s and the town’s rulers.”<sup>35</sup>

Although his presence provoked concern in some quarters, Khudiakov continued to play a leading role in the protest. “In talks at the tribune,” he recalled, “I spoke with many individuals about strike methods and advised [them] to elect a delegation for a trip to the capital.” His proposal was heeded, as a result of which Shishkin, Gradusov, Mokeeva, Semenov, a worker named Prokor’ev, and Khudiakov himself were elected to the new body. After more inflammatory remarks, however, Khudiakov was quietly compelled to relinquish his seat.<sup>36</sup>

Party loyalists again called for an end to the strike, but were rebuked by angry female demonstrators. Even provincial leaders found it difficult to get their message across: one who started giving a speech was interrupted by Stepan Andrianov, a fifty-eight-year-old, unemployed *lishenets*: “For fifteen years, the workers have listened to your speeches. Now we’re quite sick of it all, and people are hungry even in Moscow!” Signaling their determination, the crowd supported calls to persevere until rations were increased or word arrived from Sovnarkom. Only a small fissure appeared in the workers’ united stand against officialdom: it occurred when Vakhrovskii warned against escalation (“It’s time to back down from this bad stuff, ‘the hunger march’”). Meanwhile, spontaneous conversations continued to erupt across town, as civilians expressed sympathy for the demonstrators and shared rumors about the authorities’ efforts to contain the ever-expanding IPO strike wave.<sup>37</sup>

By 3:00 P.M., an Obkom official (Maksimov) arrived in Teikovo with representatives from the IPO Control Commission and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspectorate, and invited the strikers to assemble for talks in their club. The invitation was accepted, but the Fabkom chairman restricted participation to current mill employees. As a result, hundreds of demonstrators, including Gradusov and Khudiakov, were excluded. As a concession to the rank and file, however, Komsomols also were banned from the meeting. The head of the Fabkom chaired the assembly, which convened at 4:00 P.M., while Anan’ev served as its secretary. After officials spoke at length about the food crisis, Chernov, Semenov and several women workers condemned the performance of the district’s supply agencies and insisted that it was impossible to get by on the new rations. Provincial leaders responded by recommending that a commission of strike leaders be sent to Moscow. This was approved, at which point the workers elected Shishkin, Gradusov, Chernov, Semenov, Mokeeva, and several others to represent them. But Shishkin, who arrived late, persuaded his followers to rescind the vote. Although he had supported the idea when

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., d. 7951-p, l. 28, d. 8535-p, l. 22, d. 8543-p, l. 24, and d. 8551-p, ll. 6ob., 19, 21–22, 27ob.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., d. 8551-p, ll. 8ob.-9ob., 15ob.-16.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., d. 7951-p, l. 28, d. 8535-p, ll. 21, 27, d. 8543-p, l. 18, d. 8551-p, l. 15ob., and d. 8950-p, ll. 3, 18.

Khudiakov proposed it earlier that day, he feared that it was now part of an official strategy to get the strike's leaders out of town. Besides, he asked rhetorically, what assurance did the commission have that it would be able to meet with government leaders who thus far had failed to respond to an urgent telegram? Savoring his influence, Shishkin whispered a boast to Maksimov: "The workers don't listen to you, but I can persuade the masses—and you can't." Twisting the knife, the assembly voted to reconvene at 8:00 A.M. and to strike until Sovnarkom's representatives arrived. Finally, after five hours of debate, the conference adjourned.<sup>38</sup>

### **Wednesday, 13 April**

The next morning Shishkin led a group of workers from the combine to the town square, where several thousand awaited his arrival. Because the kolkhoz bazaar was open for business and because nervousness had begun to set in, the crowd was smaller than on previous days. Shishkin opened the meeting: "We must come to an agreement. We can't sit here with nothing to do. . . . What do we do next?" The strikers responded with determination: "We won't go to work as long as the rations don't satisfy us." "Since you don't want to go to work," echoed Shishkin, "we'll continue the strike." After several women spoke in support of the workers' demand, Gradusov pointed out that the cut in rations would trigger a drop in output, productivity, and wages, and concluded with a thinly veiled threat of escalation: "If Soviet organs don't make concessions . . . then we must take certain measures." Chernov followed with a report that management had settled on a method of retaliation: apparently, those who failed to go immediately to the mill's cashier would forfeit their wages, and perhaps also their job. Evoking remarks made earlier by Gradusov, however, he assured everyone that there was no reason to capitulate: "We'll have time to get [our money], but we'll strike for as long as they [refuse to] increase our rations. Soon it'll be the first of May, spring flowers will (bloom), but our flowers—the children—are going to wilt from a lack of food." Chernov then excused himself from the meeting (during his absence, speeches were given by Khudiakov, Semenov, local and provincial authorities, and others) in order to help Shishkin ascertain the fate of the telegram. The *gorsovet* had no information, but postal workers confirmed that it had been sent. Upon returning to the square, they reported their finding. Anan'ev attempted to alleviate the crowd's disappointment by publicizing a minor victory: the price of food at the cooperative and the cafeteria had been reduced—in the case of milk, by a substantial 67 percent.<sup>39</sup>

The other good news was that the public continued to support the strike. "We considered the workers' demands correct," recalled the fifty-three-year-old pensioner Ignatii Matrosov, "and deemed it impossible to survive on such a ration." Consequently, citizens listened sympathetically to appeals made at the forge by Shishkin's wife: "My husband is suffering for the people, so you must make sure they don't put him in jail." Eventually, popular hostility toward officialdom escalated to

<sup>38</sup> GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 86; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 20ob., d. 8535-p, ll. 5ob., 12-12ob., 21, 24, 27, d. 8543-p, l. 22, d. 8551-p, ll. 6ob., 32ob.-33, 37ob.-38ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 4ob.

<sup>39</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 14ob.-15, d. 8535-p, ll. 7ob., 24, 27-28, d. 8543-p, ll. 9, 23, d. 8551-p, ll. 26ob., 33-33ob., 56, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 9ob.

the point where strike activists won support for a proposal to inspect shop floors forcibly so that weavers rumored to be operating looms against their will could be “liberated.” Efforts by a group of strikers to penetrate the combine failed, however, because management had sealed the premises.<sup>40</sup>

Such provocations contributed to the radicalization of the strike. Although a “hunger march” had been discussed for days, it won popular support only after Shishkin—and, to a lesser degree, Gradusov and Khudiakov—seized on it in an effort to overcome the disappointments of 12–13 April. “Since the authorities won’t come to us for a meeting,” he declared, “we have to go on a hunger march to the Ivanovo workers to ask . . . for bread.” During the debate that followed, many spoke in favor of the march proposal, several against it. Finally, Shishkin motioned for a vote, at which point “an absolute majority” indicated their approval. Although the procedures were democratic, Chernov recalled some discomfort over the way the decision was reached:

Some workers in the crowd said that we don’t have to go on a hunger march, but Shishkin put this question to a vote and a majority decided to go. Not only workers but also the entire audience . . . —perhaps up to and including *lishentsy*—voted. I believe that the hunger march took place not through any fault of the workers, but on the initiative of Shishkin and Gradusov, who stirred up the crowd of workers more than anything else. And if one of them had said to the workers that we don’t need to go on a hunger march, then I’m certain that the march would not have taken place.

Though provocative, Chernov’s testimony should not be granted too much significance: he was absent while most of these events transpired, and he underestimated the sense of desperation that had overcome the rank and file by the sixth day of unrest. Of course, Shishkin and Gradusov *were* persuasive speakers—but the decision was their followers’ to make. While the participation of *lishentsy* may have “tainted” the vote, their influence was limited because workers tended to regard them with suspicion.<sup>41</sup>

Having voted to march to Ivanovo, the crowd was told by Gradusov (“out of pity for the workers,” he recalled) to pack “bread and mugs for the road.” Then, in order to include those who had families, to augment the moral force of the protest, and to make it harder for the authorities to resort to violence, Shishkin asked everyone “to bring their children.”<sup>42</sup> By late afternoon, the strikers adjourned. Some went to market, others dropped by the mill to agitate, but most went home to prepare for the thirty-kilometer trek to the provincial capital. Meanwhile, rumors about the plan reached the OGPU, which made the first wave of arrests—in typical fashion—overnight. The targets were the most radical strike leader (Khudiakov), the pensioner

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 7951-p, l. 15, d. 8535-p, ll. 27–28, and d. 8551-p, l. 38ob.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 7951-p, ll. 18ob., 20ob., d. 8535-p, ll. 7ob.-8ob., 12, 21, 24–26, 28, d. 8551-p, ll. 26ob., 38ob.-39ob., 56, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 4ob., 15ob. On workers’ attitudes toward *lishentsy* see below.

<sup>42</sup> On the strategic deployment of children in lower-class protests see Barbara Alpern Engel “Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance, 1870–1907,” in *Cultures in Flux: Lower-Class Values, Practices, and Resistance in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Stephen P. Frank and Mark D. Steinberg (Princeton, 1994), 43.



Matrosov, the *lishenets* Andrianov, and three disgruntled cobblers who at one time or another publicly approved of the protests.<sup>43</sup>

The vote in favor of a “hunger march” signaled an escalation of the workers’ conflict with the authorities: by taking their protest on the road, they threatened to arouse the disaffected peasantry; and by selecting Ivanovo as their destination, they threatened to ignite a general strike. If it is true, as an IPO Control Commission report suggests, that officials believed that Shishkin intended to unite his followers with strikers in other mill towns, then the decision to march probably was interpreted from above as a sign that the radicals in the movement had prevailed.<sup>44</sup> Before the vote, the authorities displayed little inclination to fulfill the protesters’ demand; afterwards, the opportunities for compromise decreased just as the potential for violence increased.

The march was less of a threat than imagined, however, if only because its proponents reacted coolly to proposals that would have inspired a broader (urban or rural) revolt. Shishkin recalled his personal reluctance to expand the strike’s basis of social support:

As a result of the strike, factories came to a standstill. And if the march per se had been organized rather than spontaneous, then the exacerbation [of the social climate] would have been greater, [but wasn’t] because march participants held differing opinions. When the workers proposed that I become the leader of the march, I refused. And if I’d wanted to assume a position at the head of the march, then in my personal opinion we would have had to join—and could have joined—striking peat bog workers. And as a result, Ivanovo could have been left without electrical power. There were shouts from the crowd on this issue, about joining the peat bog workers and even the peasants, but the crowd came to no decision at all.<sup>45</sup>

Shishkin’s desire to limit the participation of nonworkers is reflected in his cautious attitude toward the march. He also may have been intimidated by the OGPU arrests (he changed his clothes often during the strike to confuse the authorities.) At any rate, he prevailed: notwithstanding pleas from the rank and file for the mobilization of other social groups, the stated goals of the “hunger march” remained to meet with Ivanovo workers at the Palace of Labor and to appeal to them for support.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Thursday, 14 April—Sunday, 17 April**

Three thousand demonstrators assembled on the square the next day. Many women brought their children, and tears flowed freely as shouts cracked the morning air: “There’s nothing to eat!” “We must go to Ivanovo!” At 8:00 A.M., Shishkin called

<sup>43</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, ll. 12, 24, 28, d. 8543-p, ll. 30ob., 58–60, 64–67ob., d. 8551-p, l. 7ob., d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 4ob., and d. 8950-p, l. 3.

<sup>44</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 87.

<sup>45</sup> The sources do not confirm that peat bog workers were on strike at this time, but the latter protested frequently in 1930–31 against dismal work and living conditions and probably would have responded favorably to calls for solidarity (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Ivanovskoi oblasti, Ivanovo, f. 1276, op. 23, d. 2, ll. 40, 105, d. 3, l. 39, and d. 7, ll. 170, 332). Traditionally, communication between the workers of Teikovo and Ivanovo was strong during periods of social unrest. See V. A. Babichev, I. I. Zimin, and V. M. Smirnov, *Teikovskii khlopchatobumazhnyi: Istoricheskii ocherk* (Iaroslavl’, 1966), 12, 19.

<sup>46</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 5, 7–8, d. 8535-p, l. 17ob., and d. 8551-p, l. 22.

for order: "Since we have decided to go, let's go. There's nothing to wait for." "Whoever wants to eat, let's go to Ivanovo." A woman called for the release of Khudiakov, but Shishkin, who viewed the radical with disdain, quashed her appeal: "The arrest of Khudiakov is the authorities' business, and the workers needn't interfere." Sensing doubts among some, Vakhrovskii renewed his opposition to the plan: "It's not expedient to go on a hunger march. We must wait here for results." His comment launched a new debate in which Shishkin argued for perseverance: "Well, comrades? We haven't received any responses; therefore, we have to go to Ivanovo. Otherwise, we'll get nothing." "Since we started trouble and began the strike, let's carry it through to the end." Having said his piece, Shishkin surrendered the rostrum to others, including march proponents Anan'ev and Chernov. Before a final vote was held, however, he told the strikers to determine their own fate: "Comrades, I decline to take responsibility . . . for the hunger march."<sup>47</sup>

In the end, it was not debate but provocations by officialdom that solidified support for the endeavor. Having rebuffed appeals by Shishkin and a woman worker to address the crowd, the Raikom alienated itself further by publicly denouncing strikers as "counterrevolutionary elements" and by ordering singing, banner-waving Komsomols to parade through town while the debate was under way. Ironically, such behavior made it harder for fence-straddlers to support the calls for a delay. Had it not been for such tactical mistakes, Gradusov recalled, "the working masses perhaps would not have gone" on a hunger march that day.<sup>48</sup>

In the event, the strikers reaffirmed their plan with a show of hands. At 11:00 A.M., they assembled into rows of six, which soon became disorganized, and headed for the first designated rest spot (a stream on the west side of Teikovo). Most dissenters, like Vakhrovskii, immediately bowed to popular opinion and joined the procession, but others had to be encouraged: "It's not worth being left behind," strikers told Andrei Syrov-Shishkinov, a forty-one-year-old employee in the dye works. "You have a family and . . . [are hungry]. Therefore, it's necessary to support us." Fifty-year-old scutcher P. E. Romanov succumbed after strikers accused him of "not supporting the workers." The spinner Lavrent'eva recalled her neighbors' appeal: "Come along with everyone to Ivanovo!" Their enthusiasm was infectious, so she "went to ask for bread, like everyone else." Why did so many participate? Some believed that a direct appeal to the Ivanovo workers, who still enjoyed higher ration levels, was the only option left after a week of failed protests at home. Others went to slake their curiosity or sense of adventure, to partake in a carnivalesque journey, to visit loved ones or buy bread in Ivanovo—or simply to enjoy a beautiful spring day.<sup>49</sup>

Certainly, the Teikovo uprising evinced shades of popular carnival: inversions of the social hierarchy, transgressions of the codes of publicly acceptable speech and

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 7951-p, ll. 7, 18ob., 21ob., d. 8535-p, ll. 8ob., 19ob., 24–26, d. 8543-p, l. 16, d. 8543-p, l. 24, d. 8551-p, ll. 22, 27ob., 28ob., 39ob., 56, 62, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 5ob., 10–10ob., 11ob., 15ob., 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 8535-p, l. 25, d. 8551-p, l. 28ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 5ob., 21.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 7951-p, ll. 18ob., 28, d. 8535-p, ll. 19ob., 20ob., 25, d. 8551-p, ll. 17ob.-18, 26–26ob., 27ob., 28ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 4ob.-5ob., 16ob., 21.

behavior, ridicule of official culture, evocations of the symbolic role of collective food and labor, even the conquest of fear. On the other hand, the participants were cast in a Stalinist tragedy rather than a Rabelaisian comedy. "Every act of world history was accompanied by a laughing chorus," wrote Bakhtin.<sup>50</sup> Also, we would add, by a weeping one. Among the thousands of marchers—especially the many women and children—there were few cries of laughter, and many of pain.<sup>51</sup>

Not surprisingly, some workers refused to join the march: for example, of the 1,503 employees scheduled to work that morning, 628 (41.7 percent) reported to their posts. Many of these were party loyalists, but some were strikers who abandoned the movement after it veered in a radical—and potentially dangerous—direction. The Komsomol Malov was not an entirely credible witness, but he probably was telling the truth when he claimed that some workers condemned the "madness" of Khudiakov's anti-Soviet statements and Shishkin's trek to Ivanovo.<sup>52</sup>

Although some witnesses portrayed him as an instigator of the march, Gradusov recalled that he harbored concerns even after it began: "I walked along the road, unconfident. And I thought: this march will miscarry. And I considered it not a 'hunger' march, but a 'Susanin' [suicidal] march." Aware that the Raikom would hold him accountable for any disturbances, he "feared the consequences that could occur on the road," and made a point of keeping order. Although he hesitated to assume a position of leadership, Gradusov eventually was compelled by supporters to walk at the head of the crowd, next to Shishkin. Thus, workers kept the reins of control firmly in their leaders' hands. Although Shishkin occasionally barked at stragglers ("Come on! Let's go! Don't fall behind!"), he, too, lowered his profile: "When after the second vote the crowd of some two to three thousand strikers decided to organize a 'hunger march' to Ivanovo to demand that bread rations be returned to the levels of March, I was sympathetic [*solidaren*] with the crowd, *didn't want to be viewed as a coward*, and went along . . . although without actively taking part."<sup>53</sup> Shishkin's concern about losing face shows that cultural assumptions about masculinity—that men should display courage and protect the "weaker" members of their community—may have contributed to some workers' decision to undertake the arduous journey.

The procession of several thousand strikers crossed the town line, encountered travelers on horseback, opened its ranks to sympathizers, and made its only stop of the day in a small village (Lifanovo). The delay was motivated by a need for rest, and by rumors—which turned out to be false—that officials were on their way to negotiate. During the interval, nineteen young workers led by Chernov and Vakhrovskii entered a rest home and cheekily asked the maid for food: "[We] are going on a hunger march to Ivanovo. . . . You must give [us] dinner. Present the bill for the cost of the dinner to the VKP(b) Raikom." The maid, whose Old Bolshevik boss

<sup>50</sup> On carnival see Pam Morris, ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov* (London, 1994), 199–200, 209, 220–21, 225–26, 229, 244.

<sup>51</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8551-p, l. 39ob.

<sup>52</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 86–87; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 15.

<sup>53</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 7, d. 8535-p, ll. 15ob., 19ob., 20ob., 25–26, d. 8551-p, ll. 15ob., 25ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 4ob.-5ob., 9–10, 11ob., 21 (emphasis added).

had looked askance at the marchers when he rode past them earlier in the day, prepared food for her uninvited guests, whom she recognized. Ninety minutes later, the march resumed.<sup>54</sup>

It was a solemn affair. Exhausted after months of shortages and a week of protests, participants mulled over their sufferings, wept quietly, attended to children, and watched for trouble. The leaders of the march also were weary: they did not strategize among themselves, sing songs to boost morale, or call for agitation among the peasantry. But the event was not lacking in spontaneity. For example, a female marcher mounted makeshift platforms and explained her purpose to curious bystanders: "It's very difficult for workers to work. They pay little. We're hungry and demand that goods be cheap and sufficient in quantity." Such appeals persuaded some peasants, including children, to join the march.<sup>55</sup>

At one point, several workers expressed displeasure toward Semen Dvorianchikov, the former proprietor of a trading enterprise and dye works: "Why are you going, *lishenets*? We're going for bread. We don't need any *lishentsy*." The old man ignored their remarks, which were fleeting, and was not challenged again. Still, strike organizer Semenov testified that Dvorianchikov's presence proved "that *lishentsy* and *byvshie liudi* wanted to use workers' dissatisfaction for their own purposes"—a concern shared by Shishkin as well. Former members of the "exploiting classes," *lishentsy* endowed the protest with political overtones that made some workers uncomfortable and, more importantly, a favorable outcome less likely. On the other hand, strikers expressed even more hostility "against the Communists who went with us," which compelled Gradusov to take defensive measures on their behalf.<sup>56</sup>

There also were confrontations with the police. At a railroad crossing near Teikovo, OGPU troops tried to stop the crowd, but were overwhelmed by its size. Attempts to capture the strike's leaders ensued: with the assistance of Bagazhkova and others, Shishkin repulsed armed officers on four occasions. Despite fear and exhaustion, the marchers reached villages on the western edge of Ivanovo by late afternoon. They would have proceeded to the Palace of Labor, but the road was blocked by Communists and Komsomols (both workers and students) who had been mobilized by provincial leaders to intercept them. At the head of the delegation stood Nikolai Kubiak, the chairman of the IPO Executive Committee and an Old Bolshevik member of the Obkom and the party's Central Committee. Backed by police, Kubiak's cadres agitated intensively among the exhausted marchers and herded them into an empty passenger train that had been commandeered for the occasion. Ruses to capture the strike's leaders were deployed: Gradusov was speaking with one of the Ivanovo Communists when someone shouted his name; turning to see who it was, he was identified and arrested. Sensing danger, Shishkin, Chernov, Vakhrovskii, Bagazhkova, and others broke from the crowd, scuffled with the police, and escaped into the woods. Meanwhile, Semenov called on his followers to penetrate the block-

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., d. 8535-p, l. 20ob., d. 8551-p, ll. 22, 29, 62, and d. 8535-p, l. 25.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., d. 8535-p, ll. 8ob., 15ob., 25–26, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 5ob., 21; Mikhail Vladimirovich Smirnov, interview with author, Ivanovo, 20 April 1994. The quote is from Natalia Ivanovna Golubeva, interview with author, Ankudinovo, Ivanovo Region, 2 May 1994.

<sup>56</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8551-p, ll. 16, 22, 31, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 10ob.

ade and proceed to the Palace of Labor; they shielded him from arrest, but were overwhelmed by the show of force and therefore unable to heed his call. Besides Gradusov, a handful of workers who attempted to go to Ivanovo for personal reasons were immediately taken into custody by the OGPU.<sup>57</sup>

The train brought its passengers to Teikovo and released them. Meanwhile, several marchers who headed home on foot were arrested in Pelgusovo by mounted officers. Shishkin and Chernov were luckier. After discussing the day's events, they fell asleep in a haystack. A sympathetic peasant woman fixed breakfast for them the next morning and listened to their remarkable story. Upon arriving in Teikovo at 1:00 P.M., they encountered a group of women workers near the district headquarters of the OGPU. Chernov paused to tell his story, while Shishkin publicly taunted his pursuers: "If they want to arrest me, then let them take [me]! But if they come at night to make an arrest, then let them kill me—or I [will kill] someone!" Next they went to the combine's courtyard, where the authorities demanded that workers immediately end the strike. As Chernov took a knife and sliced the boots off his painfully swollen feet, a hardheaded Shishkin addressed his followers for the last time: "Since they won't make concessions, then we have to make concessions ourselves." Reluctantly concurring, the workers voted to call off the strike; within hours, 2,200 of them were back at their posts. On 16 April "an overwhelming majority" of the combine's employees reported to work, and by the following day the protest had been "completely liquidated."<sup>58</sup>

The OGPU targeted three groups for arrest and interrogation: strike leaders, marchers who failed to return to Teikovo by train, and "class-alien" elements (especially current or former *lishentsy*) who in any way took part in the demonstrations.<sup>59</sup> Although some women were hauled in for questioning, none appears to have been prosecuted—which is not surprising, since nonviolent female strikers rarely were subject to criminal charges during these years.<sup>60</sup> What price did the targets of repression pay for their "crimes"? Shishkin and Khudiakov, both of whom defended the strike to the end, were exiled to Kazakhstan. More willing to condemn it *ex post facto*, Gradusov and Chernov were prohibited from living in the IPO and other populated areas. The *lishenets* Andrianov was exiled to Novosibirsk, and four disgruntled cobblers who had the misfortune of being the offspring of *byvshie liudi* were sent to White Sea Canal labor camps. All the punishments carried a term of three years.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 87; APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 7, 11, d. 8535-p, ll. 15ob., 19ob., 20ob.-21, d. 8551-p, ll. 15ob., 18, 22, 27ob., 39ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 10; *Bol'shoi entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1993), s.v. "Kubiak, Nik. Af."

<sup>58</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, ll. 15ob.-17ob., 19ob., d. 8551-p, l. 18, and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 21; GARE, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 87.

<sup>59</sup> Arrests were carried out from 14–21 April 1932. (Afraid of provoking another disturbance, the authorities seized Shishkin and Chernov last.) Most of those taken into custody were released after questioning, but the defendants were imprisoned and interrogated several times. Indictments were filed within two months, and sentences were handed down by an OGPU court on 2 July 1932 (Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin").

<sup>60</sup> Their relative immunity from prosecution was one reason that Russian women traditionally were more visible than men in incidents of lower-class unrest (Engel, "Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance," 41–44, 47, 53).

<sup>61</sup> Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin." The defendants were convicted under Article 58,

After months of conflict over wages, food shortages, intensification measures, and the conditions of work and daily life, the Teikovo uprising began spontaneously on 8 April 1932 as a result of failures by local authorities to prepare the labor force for the introduction of “starvation” rations. The workers, especially those with families, accurately perceived a threat to their survival, and were incensed when calls for talks were rejected by their superiors.

Shishkin articulated majority opinion and became the strike’s most influential leader. By declaring repeatedly that the strike had only one goal, he served as a beacon for those who supported Soviet power but found it impossible to reconcile themselves to current conditions. A proponent of perseverance and moderation, he prolonged the strike by making it viable, even as he fought to keep it from taking the radical trajectory promoted by some. Shishkin never retreated from his belief in the shop floor’s right to resist: “I believe that the strike was necessary and consider such a strike the only correct method of mass protest for workers against the reduction of rations,” he testified. “Given the situation created in Teikovo as a result of the reduction of rations, I believe that the only way out was a strike.” Sarcastically employing a term for one of the regime’s recently abandoned wage policies, he also condemned the emerging hierarchy of supply: “I believe there must be leveling (*uravnilovka*) in, to be exact, gastric matters, insofar as everyone works equally.” In this regard, Shishkin echoed the strike’s most radical leader: “It’s impossible for the worker to live with existing supply [levels];” Khudiakov told investigators, “and I consider the differentiated supply of workers totally incorrect, since according to their gastric needs all workers are the same.”<sup>62</sup> While Shishkin and Khudiakov agreed that Stalin’s policies—including the entire program of forced industrialization and collectivization—were wrongheaded, they disagreed over the legitimacy of “Soviet power” itself. Unique biographical experiences and the personal narratives that shaped their interpretation constructed their discrepant views: Khudiakov, a labor organizer for three decades, never shed the idealism that generated his disdain for Bolshevik rule; Shishkin, eighteen years younger and a veteran of the Red Army’s Civil War triumph, maintained loyalty to the regime even though he came to believe during the First Five-Year Plan that it had betrayed its *raison d’être*.<sup>63</sup>

Shishkin put his life on the line twice: first for the infant proletarian dictatorship, then for workers who suffered under economic Stalinism. He perceived no contradiction therein, however, for in both cases he fought in the name of laboring classes against exploitative elites. In his view, he erred during the Civil War by associating himself briefly with the anarchist Nestor Makhno, and in Teikovo by allowing the opponents of Soviet rule to assume influential positions in an uprising whose goal he felt should have been economic rather than political:

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Section 10, and Article 59, Section 2, of the Criminal Code, which forbade “anti-Soviet” and “counter-revolutionary” speech and behavior (*Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR: Redaktsii 1926 goda s izmeneniami do 1 iulia 1931 goda* [Moscow, 1931]).

<sup>62</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 8, 13, and d. 8551-p, ll. 9ob., 13.

<sup>63</sup> For a thorough account of the biographies and opinions of the strike’s leaders see Rossman, “Worker Resistance under Stalin.”

As a former commander in the Red Army and participant in the Civil War, I am a worker by birth and have a record of twenty-one years in the factory. And I consider it my duty to state that at the height of the strike when I, standing virtually at the head of the crowd, demanded only the improvement of the workers' economic condition (because I radically disagree with the party's policy of reducing workers' rations), at that moment there were extraneous persons in the crowd, such counterrevolutionary personalities as Khudiakov. They made political demands and generally expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime.

I consider my mistake to be that we carried out the strike within view of the entire region—particularly, for example, the hunger march on Ivanovo. And the whole trouble is that *lishentsy* and other anti-Soviet individuals used the strike for their agitation. I believe that we should have carried out the strike on the strength of the workers alone so that extraneous people did not participate. My deficiencies notwithstanding, I must say again that I am not a counterrevolutionary.

But as for my character, I do not agree with the social condition of the workers. All the same, bearing in mind the loss that the strike caused the government, I readily agree to bear the punishment for my crimes. But I do not want to be considered a rebel [*buntovshchik*], because I am prepared to defend Soviet power at any moment. Therefore, I ask the OGPU not to prescribe a heavy punishment for me.<sup>64</sup>

Deprived of the opportunity to press grievances in a legitimate manner, supporters and opponents of the regime pursued the only possible course of action: public demonstrations against a policy that condemned them to gradual starvation. That a strike appeared on the horizon of action and was well organized indicates the depths of popular disaffection, but owes much as well to the Ivanovo region's illustrious history of labor militance.<sup>65</sup> The traditions of resistance persisted in collective memory and official myth, which for many years after the Revolution supplied shop floors with models of speech and behavior that could be wielded effectively against superordinate authorities.<sup>66</sup>

Popular morale was so low by the end of the First Five-Year Plan that the Teikovo strike was able to overcome many obstacles. Shishkin, Gradusov, Khudiakov, Chernov, Semenov, Anan'ev, Mokeeva, Maleeva, and Bagazhkova led strikers from one event to the next despite the differences and "distrust" (Gradusov's term) that separated them from one another. The strike's leaders debated strategy infrequently, often fell into disagreement when they did consult, and never had prior knowledge of—let alone the power of approval over—what would be said by the many speakers who addressed the crowd. In short, the strike had a weak structure of leadership that evolved in response to the demands of the authorities (who were looking for nego-

<sup>64</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, ll. 11–12.

<sup>65</sup> According to James C. Scott, collective action by members of the lower classes usually is a last resort that signals "great desperation." See his *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985), xvi.

<sup>66</sup> On the traditions of worker resistance in Teikovo see Babichev, *Teikovskii khlopchatobumazhnyi*, 12–14, 16–27, 31–32, 40; G. K. Shutov, *Dva veka v rabochem stroiu* (Iaroslavl', 1987), 18–20, 22–25, 27, 30–31, 33, 36; and David Pretty, "Neither Peasant nor Proletarian: The Workers of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Region, 1885–1910" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, forthcoming).

tiators and, ultimately, scapegoats) and the needs of the workers (who deputized their most trusted, articulate peers to represent them).<sup>67</sup>

As for authority figures of every stripe, they exerted little influence on the strikers. Outnumbered nine to one on the shop floor, Communists enjoyed privileges that made them vulnerable to ridicule by a labor force that viewed them as self-aggrandizing hypocrites; wisely, all but the truest of believers maintained a low profile during the crisis. Whether out of fealty to superiors, a desire to maintain privileges, or disagreement over the selected forms of protest, 90 percent of party members stayed on the job, while just about everyone else went on strike. Discipline flagged even among the elect, however, and no less than thirty-one Communists and thirty-seven Komsomols joined the demonstrations. Not that this shielded them from popular hostility: while party members who condemned the strike were overpowered verbally or physically, even those who sided with the workers remained vulnerable to abuse.<sup>68</sup>

Members of the combine's trade union organization were more likely to share the shop floor's concerns; consequently, 170 out of 477 members (35.6 percent) of the union *aktiv* joined the strike, as did half the Fabkom staff. While union representatives enjoyed more respect than Communists (the categories, of course, overlapped), this does not mean that the union itself was perceived as a vehicle for the defense of working-class interests (few strikers were surprised when the Fabkom chairman sided with management). Most union representatives knew that their function was to keep the labor force passive and productive; many tried, therefore, to get workers off the streets. As for the minority who supported the strike, they did so out of sympathy, fear of losing face, or a desire to keep "anti-Soviet" elements at bay.<sup>69</sup>

The hostility felt toward management is the least difficult to appreciate. Even though workers were upset by a policy formulated in Moscow, they did not go on strike in large numbers until administrators callously dismissed their concerns. On top of the physiological assault that reduced rations represented, insults from their superiors were simply too much to bear.

What does the Teikovo strike tell us about the effectiveness of those in power? If the question is one of center-periphery control, then it is clear that party, state and union organizations fulfilled their role as "transmission belts"—but poorly. Orders from Moscow and Ivanovo to prepare the population for lower rations were ignored because agit-prop departments had fallen into dormancy and party cells into disarray. More important, officials at all levels were terrified of publicizing, let alone defending, the new policy on the shop floor. As a result, decrees from above were implemented furtively, rumor gave way to panic, and nothing was done to improve morale until it was too late.

While officials never lost power in Teikovo (as they did in Vichuga the same week), they were compelled to cede the public stage to the lower classes and wait

<sup>67</sup> APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, ll. 9ob., 25, d. 8551-p, l. 8ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, ll. 5ob., 10.

<sup>68</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 86–88; TsDNIIIO, f. 327, op. 4, d. 366, l. 31; APUFSKIO, d. 8535-p, l. 30ob., and d. 8583-p, tom 1, l. 10ob.; Kochnev, "Diary," 17 April 1932.

<sup>69</sup> GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, l. 86; TsDNIIIO, f. 327, op. 4, d. 449, l. 161.



for attrition and arrest to take their toll.<sup>70</sup> Compared to others in positions of influence, OGPU officers were effective, if brutal, and could be counted on to produce results when everything else failed. It is no wonder that the regime came to rely so heavily upon them.

Not that we must embrace attempts by the center to lay blame for the strikes on local authorities, who truly found themselves in an impossible situation: after months of implementing state-decreed assaults on society, they knew that most social groups opposed Stalin's revolution "from above."<sup>71</sup> On the eve of the uprising, peasants were abandoning collective farms, workers were sabotaging labor-intensification measures, and criticism of the "proletarian dictatorship" and its policies was ubiquitous in the most vibrant loci of unofficial worker culture: the shop-floor washroom and smoking lounge. In the polarized conditions that prevailed in the provinces in 1932, inaction was the rational response for officials trapped between impossible decrees and embittered social groups.

Kochnev characterized the situation shortly after the IPO strikes were suppressed: "Class stands against class."<sup>72</sup> A decade of Bolshevik rule and four years of Stalin's dictatorship created a relationship of mutual suspicion and hostility between the producers of surplus value and its beneficiaries. Interpretive lenses popularized by the regime itself laid bare the fundamental contours of social reality. In short, the First Five-Year Plan (re)created in the region a self-conscious working class that was prepared to defend its interests by means of extralegal, collective action.

Economic Stalinism and the collective memory of resistance were centripetal forces that brought workers together for a week of strikes against Moscow's supply policy. What were the centrifugal forces that drove them apart? Workers occupied different positions on the spectrum of support for the regime: if some lauded Khudiakov's and Gradusov's anti-Soviet speeches, others did not. Consequently, differences of opinion about "Soviet power," on one hand, and the Stalin dictatorship, on the other, affected the viability of collective action.

Gender also influenced the strikes in profound, if ambiguous, ways. During these years, industries in which women predominated—such as cotton textiles—involuntarily financed the construction of (male-dominated) heavy industries. Yet women, socialized to be the primary caregivers of children in Russia, felt disproportionately burdened by food shortages, which traditionally inclined them to riot when hunger loomed.<sup>73</sup> If this explains why the most significant strikes occurred in a region of light rather than heavy industry, so too does the fact that lower-class women still were willing to take advantage of the old gender stereotypes—for example, that they were victims of their emotions, predisposed to unruly behavior—

<sup>70</sup> On the violent strike in Vichuga see Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin."

<sup>71</sup> For Moscow's critique of local officialdom see GARF, f. 374, op. 27, d. 1988, ll. 82–5; and TsDNIIO, f. 327, op. 4, d. 509, ll. 60–72, and op. 5, d. 972, l. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Kochnev, "Diary," 21 April 1932.

<sup>73</sup> Anne Bobroff-Hajal, *Working Women in Russia under the Hunger Tsars: Political Activism and Daily Life* (Brooklyn, 1994). It should be recalled, however, that men also employed familial rhetoric to justify their involvement in strikes such as the one in Teikovo.

that consistently made them less vulnerable to prosecution.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, women continued to occupy a narrow space on the stage of political action—a majority of strikers were women, but most strike leaders were men—and this diminished the movement's appeal in other industries. Thus, the cultural dynamics of gender made collective action more likely in the IPO even as they limited the ramifications of resistance.<sup>75</sup>

Unfortunately, a thorough discussion of the repercussions of the events of April 1932 is beyond the scope of this article. Briefly, labor unrest compelled the dictatorship to shift substantial resources from heavy to light industry and enact a series of measures (for example, the legalization of collective farm markets and the elevation of industrial wages in, respectively, May and October 1932) that improved urban food supplies and increased workers' purchasing power. Such concessions, in turn, made it possible for hundreds of thousands of lower-class families to survive the Great Famine. But the uprisings also exacerbated the crisis of civilian morale and precipitated a crackdown on shop-floor resistance and indiscipline (for example, the laws of August and November 1932 on, respectively, the theft of socialist property and absenteeism). The legacy of the strikes, therefore, is an ambiguous one.<sup>76</sup>

The study of the IPO strike wave may lead us to reconsider several aspects of the recent historiography. First, the history of Soviet labor appears very different when we shift our attention away from the small minority—mostly young, urban, male workers who were Komsomols or Communists—who profited from Stalin's revolution "from above." The experience of such individuals has been explored by Soviet scholars and Western "revisionists," both of whom tended to exaggerate working-class support for the regime.<sup>77</sup> The fact that the IPO strikers ostracized the cheerleaders of the regime's policies, especially the Komsomols, illustrates the value of studying other members of the labor force, including those who participated in these events: women, non-Communists, workers with families to support, and those who had a living memory of the pre-Soviet labor movement and the autocratic capitalist regime.<sup>78</sup> Second, we should not assume that the protagonists in the revisionists' narrative, especially male workers who fought in the Red Army during the Civil War, supported Stalin's economic program: indeed, Shishkin, Semenov, and many other strikers came from this cohort. Third, it is time for scholars to devote serious

<sup>74</sup> Engel, "Women, Men, and the Languages of Peasant Resistance"; Lynne Viola, "*Bab'i Bunty* and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization," *Russian Review* 45 (January 1986): 23–42.

<sup>75</sup> That the most prominent striker was a skilled male worker from the machine shop is not unusual. Shishkin himself felt compelled to lead the strike because it was "we, the fitters, who started it" (APUFSKIO, d. 7951-p, l. 8). Shishkin's paternalism notwithstanding, we have seen that other shops struck simultaneously—including the weaving mill, which employed many women—and that women played a vital role in enforcing the job action.

<sup>76</sup> For an extended treatment of these issues see Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin."

<sup>77</sup> Examples of so-called revisionist interpretation include William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State: Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1929* (Urbana, 1987), 297–304; and Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland: Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* (Oxford, 1987), 210–18.

<sup>78</sup> With few exceptions, the leaders of the Teikovo strike were nonparty workers who had many years of shop-floor experience and families to support. Several also worked in the combine before the Revolution, participated in the underground labor movement, and had a history of opposition to Soviet policies (Rossman, "Worker Resistance under Stalin").

attention to the phenomenon of working-class resistance under Stalin. Notwithstanding claims made in a recent study of Magnitostroi, worker enthusiasm was the exception rather than the rule in the years following the dictator's rise to power.<sup>79</sup> Assertions about the absence of collective action are not credible now that we have access to sources that recount strikes, riots, and other forms of working-class resistance during the formative period of the Soviet system.<sup>80</sup> Fourth, the significance of class as a basis of social identity in interwar Russia needs to be reevaluated. The workers who participated in the IPO strikes transcended alternative sources of identity and organized themselves with sophistication and resolve in an effort to compel the authorities, whom they perceived as the beneficiaries of their labor, to increase rations. The language and experience of class brought the protests to fruition, and we must therefore entertain the possibility that under certain conditions Soviet shop floors could be cradles of working-class consciousness.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the role of gender in shaping the geography of unrest illustrates the need for further research that will enable us to decipher the particular social, political, and discursive conditions in which class became a basis for collective action among Soviet workers.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995), 199, 209, 213–15, 221–24, 227–30, 235–37, 358–61, 495.

<sup>80</sup> As a result of his Foucauldian approach to “power relations” and his unfortunate inability to gain access to archival sources on popular morale, Kotkin offers a rather naive account of workers’ attitudes toward the regime (*ibid.*, chap. 5).

<sup>81</sup> Scholars of the Stalin period recently have tended to minimize the significance of class as a basis of social identity (see, for example, the editors’ introduction and the essays by the historians of the USSR in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* [Ithaca, 1994]). Meanwhile, those who have studied the functions of official discourse—the language of class, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the cult of Stalin—have concluded that it mobilized working-class support for the regime (for example, Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928–1932* [Cambridge, 1988], xiv–xv, xvii–xviii, 316–18; and Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 221–30, 234–37, 356–63, 365). The unwillingness to view official discourse as a potential basis for resistance apparently springs from the assumption that Soviet workers “could not use the language of class to stir rebellion when Party leaders had co-opted it as a means of political legitimation” (David Hoffman, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929–1941* [Ithaca, 1994], 211) and a belief that the regime’s ideology rendered opposition “irrational,” “psychopathic,” or “impossible” (Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 226, 236). But the new archival evidence suggests that official discourse—including but not limited to the concept of class—was a double-edged sword that could generate either support or resistance. Indeed, the official claim that the USSR was a workers’ state gave workers motive to express dissatisfaction when they perceived that their interests had been betrayed.