Stalinist Public or Communitarian Project?

Housing Organizations and Self-Managed Canteens in Moscow's Frunze *Raion*

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Introduction

This article attempts to demonstrate the existence of a kind of micro-public sphere stemming from local initiatives in Stalin's Moscow during the 1930s. More concretely, it analyzes the little known community business of canteens organized and self-managed under housing organizations such as "house-leasing cooperative partnerships" (ZhAKTy: Zhilishchno-arendnye kooperativnye tovarishchestva) at the residence level, especially those in Moscow's Frunze *raion*.

Food and housing, the two intertwining focal points of this article, were crucial factors for people living under the Stalinist regime. Stalin's revolution – radical industrialization and forced agricultural collectivization driven since the end of the 1920s – brought about an unprecedented food crisis in most regions of the Soviet Union and severe famine in some areas, and the rapidly growing stream of people to big cities such as Moscow and Leningrad further deteriorated the cities' housing situation. The food and housing crisis, decisive in approaching ordinary people's daily lives in the 1930s, is a main target of research by social historians seeking to produce works of value. With respect to food matters, we have already acquired many findings including the "hierarchy of consumption" based on the discriminatory distribution system for food and other consumption goods; several cases of mass resistance by parts of the population located at lower hierarchical positions; and the extended phenomenon of *blat*, a sort of private, informal network for obtaining goods.[1] Similarly, concerning housing matters, we have learned about the distinctive housing system called *komunalka* (communal apartments), in which multiple families live together in an apartment – usually one family to a room – and share basic living facilities such as the bathroom and kitchen; the ways in which the regime controlled the residents through *komunalka*; the

[1] On the hierarchy of consumption, see Elena Osokina, *Ierarkhiia potrebleniia: o zhizni liudei v usloviiakh stalinskogo snabzheniia, 1928-1935,* M., 1993; for an excellent study on mass resistance in the early 1930s, see Jeffrey Rossman, *Workers Resistance under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor,* Harvard University Press, 2005; on the phenomenon of *blat*, see A. Legeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*, Cambridge University Press, 1998 and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s,* Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 62-66; for a comprehensive study of Soviet trade and consumption in the 1930s, see Elena Osokina, *Za fasodom "stalinskogo izobiliia": raspredelenie i rynok v snabzhenii naseleniia v gody industrializatsii, 1927-1941*, M., 1997 and Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953*, Princeton University Press, 2004.

ever-present friction and conflict among residents; and the arguments for creating the new Soviet men and women in a new Soviet culture under *komunalka*.[2]

We can conclude from the above findings that social historians have generally succeeded in elucidating the regime's rule over the masses through the total control of vital goods such as food and housing; the mass resistance movements against the regime's policies; and the survival tactics developed among ordinary people as a basic tone of the era.

This article is rather unique compared with recent trends in researching these issues. First, the main research object is the self-managed canteens (samodeiatel'naia stolovaia), which were basically eliminated from historians' main concerns and almost completely ignored by preceding researchers, despite the fact that self-managed canteens had been mentioned in newspapers, including major ones such as *Pravda* and *Izvestiia*. Second, the research on canteens run by housing organizations and residents is interestingly positioned between food and housing. Third, this community business possibly existed beyond the boundaries of the power relationship between the ruler and the ruled and the survival tactics developed among the ordinary people. Indeed, community canteens started with a small number of housewives working to promote collective food purchase and cooking among residents during the growing food crisis in 1929, and several administrative organizations, including the Commissariat of Provisionment, Tsentrosoiuz (Central Union of Consumer Societies), VSZhK (Vsesoiuznyi sovet zhilishchnoi kooperatsii =All-Union Council of Housing Cooperatives), and Tsentrozhilsoiuz (Central Union of Housing Societies in RSFSR) demonstrated a positive and supportive attitude toward their activities from the viewpoint of enlarging the network of public canteens. In short, this process demonstrates a kind of cooperation among residents and collaboration between authorities and residents, whereby a scenario emerges in which the residents attempted to realize public values based on communality, with some support from the regime.

Before examining the self-managed canteens, it is necessary to take a brief look at the housing organizations and their activities in the 1930s. After the October Revolution in 1917, the Soviet government confiscated countless houses and residential buildings from their owners and allocated much of

[2] On the *komunalka*, see Fitzpatrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-50; Natalia Levina, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' sovetskogo gorada 1920-1930 gody,* SPb, 1999, pp.178-202; Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia,* Harvard University Press, 1994, pp.121-167. For arguments for creating Soviet men and women under *komunalka*, see Ekaterina Gerasimova, Sovetskaia kommunal'naia kvartira kak sotsial'nyi institut: istoriko-sotsiologicheskii analiz (na materialakh Petrograda-Leningarada, 1917-1991, Kandidatskaia dissertatsiia, SPb, 2000. For the most recent and inclusive study of *komunalka* and housing organizations in Leningrad, see Julia Obertreis, *Tränen des Sozialismus: Wohnen in Leningrad Zwischen Alltag und Utopie 1917-1937*, Böhlau Verlag, 2004.

this space to the working masses. In the transition to the New Economic Policy (NEP), relatively small scale residences were returned to the previous owners, but most remained in the hands of state enterprises and governmental organizations, especially municipalities. During the 1920s, the percentage of houses controlled by municipal organizations increased steadily and the gradual establishment of housing cooperatives started in the early 1920s.[3] Implementation of these cooperatives relied on the argument that control and management by the residents themselves would enable effective maintenance and repair of houses that suffered from short supply and decay. The decision of the Soviet government "On housing cooperatives" on August 19, 1924 attempted to promote maintenance of old houses and new construction, using residents' participation in housing management through mainly two types of cooperatives: "house-leasing cooperative partnerships" (ZhAKTy) and "housing construction cooperative partnerships" (ZhSKTy: Zhilishchno-stroitel'nye kooperativnye tovarishchestva).[4]

In Moscow, selected as the main target area for our research, a different form of housing management, "housing partnerships (Zhilishchnoe tavalishchestvo)," had been spreading since the early 1920s, and around half the inhabitants of Moscow lived under housing partnerships by the mid-1920s.[5] In addition, most large-scale houses were run by "housing trusts" (Zhilischchnye or Domovye tresty) under the direct control of the Moscow Soviet. During the 1920s, bitter controversy persisted over which form of housing management was most adequate for maintenance and preservation of houses. Finally, after policy zigzagging from the end of the 1920s through the beginning of the 1930s, the decision of the Moscow City Party Committee and the Moscow Soviet dated March 14, 1931 "On reorganization of housing management and administration in Moscow city" judged ZhAKTy to be the most effective form, and all houses under the housing partnerships and the majority of houses held by the housing trusts – over 55% of the municipal housing in Moscow – were transferred to the ZhAKTy system.[6]

Through this process, the following management system for residential buildings owned by the Moscow Soviet was established in the 1930s. Over ten thousand ZhAKTy took responsibility for managing and controlling the majority of houses; housing trusts held suitable large-scale houses with good living facilities under their control; and a small number of housing construction cooperative partnerships held a small number of houses. This system lasted up until 1937, when the Soviet government decided that all

[3] *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, Tom 25*, M., 1932, pp.447-450.
[4] *Kommnal'noe khoziaistvo,* No. 17, 1924, pp.88-91.
[5] *Kommnal'noe khoziaistvo,* No. 3, 1924, p.20.
[6] *Rabochaia moskva*, March 17, 1931, p.3.

ZhAKTy and almost all ZhSKTy that had not yet completed repayment of monetary aid from official funds would be liquidated and all municipal houses would be transferred to the direct control of local Soviets.[7]

The form of housing management continued to change after the Revolution, but these housing organizations were expected to fulfill several basic functions in addition to maintenance and repair. The first is the role of controlling the populace at the residence level, at the bottom of the power hierarchy. In the 1930s, ZhAKTy and other housing organizations implemented the control of passports and ration books, and the political mobilization of residents, especially women and children, to periodic festivals and memorial events such as for the October Revolution, May Day, etc. These mobilization activities were called "cultural and mass work" (kul'turno-massovaia rabota). While housing organizations assumed the role of controlling and mobilizing residents, they also performed functions to supply basic services for daily living, i.e. childcare facilities and communal laundries. This supply of services was called "cultural and daily living work" (kul'turno-bytovaia rabota). For this purpose, a "Cultural Committee" (kul'turnaia kommisiia) or "Cultural and Daily Living Committee" (kul'turno-bytovaia kommisiia), whose members comprised several representatives of the residents – in the NEP era "Cultural and Daily Living Cells" (kul'turno-bytovaia iacheika) – was organized in ZhAKTy and ZhSKTy, and "Support Councils" (sovety sodeistvii) were formed in the housing trusts. The establishment of canteens was consistently included in the activities of the committees or cells, although during the NEP period the scale and scope of work was limited and it was almost impossible to realize community canteens, which required considerable money and equipment as well as available space. However, when the Revolution came to the fore and the food crisis reached a critical level, activities began for establishing community canteens (presently referred to as self-managed canteens).

The birth and development of self-managed canteens

After analyzing a number of reports on the emerging movement of self-managed canteens,[8] we were able to confirm that they began in 1929, through the initiative of active housewives, and among white-collar employees and intellectuals living in the city center (Tsentr), not in the raion where most

[7] *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stova po khoziaistvennym voprosam, Tom 2 (1929-1940 gody),* M., 1967, pp.617-627.

[8] In the formative period of self-managed canteens, other names were often used – kukhnia stolov; kollektivnye stolovye; Kommnal'naia stolovaia, etc. See RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.79, ll.3, 43; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No. 3, 1930, p.9; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.5, 1929, p.33. Self-managed canteens were also organized in dormitories, offices and small factories.

manual workers lived.

For example, in Moscow, a self-managed canteen (No. 171), originally named "canteen self-managed by housewives", was established on March 8, 1929 on Trubnikovskii pereulok Nos. 4-6-8. Another canteen located on Kolodeznaia ulitsa No. 7 was organized on September 23, 1929. Since a number of reports in major journals basically coincide with regard to the year 1929, we conclude that the date is historical fact.[9]

The question of why the canteens emerged in the year 1929 appears to be related to the second initiative of the housewives. Both issues were deeply concerned with the grave food crisis caused by the forcible grain procurement policy and the introduction of the ration system in the Soviet Union. In 1928-29, city residents were enrolled in consumption cooperatives and were obliged to acquire food and other daily necessities at specified stores. However, the ration system did not secure reliable or easy purchase of goods for the people. Long hours were spent standing in endless lines, which was one of the most distressing aspects of daily life for the vast majority of working people as well as housewives.

The movement to establish community canteens started under these circumstances.[10] Based on some rather fragmented information, we can assume that the establishment of the earliest canteens is as follows. Several housewives, living in the same apartment and frequently encountering each other in the kitchen, developed a plan to gather together their ration books and then purchase goods and cook the food on a collective basis, by rotation.[11] As they began receiving ration books from other residents, the canteens that started with a few dozen people gradually expanded in scale and developed to the level of providing meals for 250-300 residents.[12] In the process, the housewives appear to have entered into negotiations with the authorities, including consumption cooperatives, about the possibility of obtaining food under the same

[9] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.6; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.5, 1930, p.3; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.5, 1929, p.33; No.23-24, 1931, p.22.

[10] A report compiled by All-Union Council of Housing Cooperatives in 1932, referring to the fact that the self-managed canteens project started in 1929, mentioned that "there existed the purpose of abolishing the lines accompanying the introduction of the individual ration system" as well as the famous slogan "the liberation of women from cooking in each family." See RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.12.

[11] An essay published in an early 1930 journal remarked, "Collective canteens were rapidly emerging in large-scale houses where housewives frequently encountered each other in the kitchen. It seems perfectly natural that the idea emerged that housewives not go shopping separately and cook in front of a kerosene heater, but that two or three housewives cook the food, by rotation. These canteens were named "self-managed canteens". Around 20 canteens were organized in a short time in Moscow." See *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.3, 1930, p.9. At a Moscow conference on self-managed canteens held in May 1930, one housewife reported, "Collective buying and cooking produced considerable convenience and economy...under the leadership of veteran women cooks." See *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.12, 1930, p.11.

[12] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.11.

conditions as other public canteens, in short, the direct supply of food from cooperatives in exchange for transferring collected ration books in a lump amount, and they succeeded in persuading administrators of housing organizations to provide suitable canteen space and equipment.

What undoubtedly deserves attention is the fact that the residents were willing to hand over their precious ration books to the canteens, even considering the convenience of having a canteen in their own residence. It would have been impossible to start this project and continue to run the canteens if there had not existed this mutual trust based on communality, and the kind of public consciousness necessary for embarking on collective action to improve daily life, which is quite different from taking egoistic action for an individual's or single family's survival. Indeed, the Soviet authorities appear to have paid close attention to this project and gave or at least attempted to give material and other support. As early as 1929, and regularly since the beginning of 1930, the establishment and activities of self-managed canteens were discussed in articles and essays appearing in several major journals, and in authorities' archives.[13] In particular, Tsentrosoiuz and its subordinate organs paid more attention than other authorities to the residents' efforts, and issued a directive dated June 7, 1930 whereby local consumer cooperatives were to deliver staples and food in short supply to self-managed canteens at wholesale prices, directly from the food bases of cooperatives, sometimes adding as much as 10–20% to the total amount of ration books collected.[14] Thus, the Tsentrosoiuz tried to provide an incentive to the canteen project, although additional food supply and other incentives depended on the region, and the transfer of individual ration books was mandatory, as mentioned: "Self-managed canteens acquire an additional amount of food according to confirmed norms, but the operation of canteens must be based on food supply through ration books handed over by the canteen users themselves".[15]

The issue of incentives is likely related to the fact that most canteens were located not in the workers' *raion*, but in the city center (Tsntr) and, therefore, the social strata of users was generally that of white-collar employees.[16] While production workers, in particular those in key industries, received a

[13] We find some mention of canteens run at the residence level in *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia,* a organ of VSZhK and Tsentrozhilsoiuz, of 1929, although the name varies. See *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.5, 1929, p.33; No. 9, p.24; No.16, p.14; No.21, p.10; No.22, p.31, passim. As far as I know, the earliest mention of canteens referred to as self-managed is found in one of the agendas of an Organizational bureau meeting on January 21, 1930 held under Tsentrosoiuz preparing for the All-Union Conference of Public Dining. See RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.18, l.238.

[14] GARF, f. 5452, op.14, d.68, ll.142,145; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.3, 1930, p.9; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.18, 1931, p.28.

[15] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No. 13, 1930, s. 13.

[16] An investigation of Moscow's self-managed canteens revealed that "they were mostly located in the

relatively large amount of food compared to the population from other social strata, and had access to canteens set up in the factories, ordinary white-collar employees held a lower position within the consumption hierarchy and endured limited access to public canteens. Therefore, the establishment of self-managed canteens accompanied by incentives would have provided a definite advantage and attraction for a stratum such as white-collar employees. In fact, Soviet authorities often expressed some concern about this. The handwritten document "On the work of self-managed canteens", which was included in a file of the Tsentrosoiuz, expressed the following criticism: "Self-managed canteens have been organized spontaneously (stikhinno), without any planning and particularly in some areas that are not workers' *raion,* which shows the lack of class approach in this project. Many canteens have been organized based solely on the preference for receiving an additional amount of short-supply food."[17] The same opinion was publicly proclaimed in the central organ for public dining. "They [self-managed canteens] for the most part emerged during the last few months in Moscow. Unfortunately, there are fewer in the workers' residences, and an increasing number of canteens are being set up for the purpose of receiving additional collective ration books that the Moscow Provincial Union of Consumer Associations (MOSPO) provides as incentives."[18]

In response to this evaluation of the canteen project, M.F. Lozhechkina, a member of the directors' board of Tsentrozhilsoiuz, issued the following rebuttal: "Self-managed canteens are generally not included in planned distribution and are not given collective ration books… Furthermore, they often fall under suspicion of being organized exclusively for the purpose of acquiring 'additional distribution', an additional ration book above [the total amount of] individual ones handed over by each canteen participant. It is then forgotten that workers and employees who usually eat in public canteens also receive a surplus above their individual ration books. [Therefore] such an approach to self-managed canteens is completely wrong."[19]

Tentr and a majority of their users were white-collar employees in terms of social composition." See GARF, f. 5452, op.14, d.68, l.151. Another article analyzing Moscow's self-managed canteens mentioned, "80% of canteens users were white-collar employees, as against workers solely 20%." See *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.23-24, 1931, p.20. A Moscow newspaper reported, "There were no self-managed canteens" in some *raions* where many workers lived, especially in Stalinskii raion and Proletarskii *raion*. See *Vecherniaia Moskva,* May 18, 1932, p.2.

[17] RGAE, f. 484, op.8, d.843, l.7.

[18] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.5, 1930, p.2. This "defect" remained an unsolved problem thereafter. The first All-Union Conference on Self-Managed Canteens held by Vsekoopit (All-Union Autonomous Section of Public Dining under Tentrosoiuz) in February 1932 referred in the resolution to the smaller proportion of workers and their families in all users as a defect of the canteens, the reason attributed to "the lack of control over the social composition of users." See RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.45ob.

[19] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.5, 1930, p.6. The tendency toward fewer self-managed canteens in the workers' *raion* was explained by other factors. An investigative report presented by a branch of the

Yet the Soviet authorities, in general, welcomed the project of self-managed canteens, and showed a positive attitude in promoting them, including the promise of material support. The Presidium of the Central Control Commission of the Party and the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate of the USSR in a decision dated March 23, 1930 "On the situation and perspectives of public dining" emphasized that "all organizations must give maximized support in order to develop the network of self-managed canteens in house communes, ZhAKTy and housing partnerships for the purpose of bringing workers' families to public dining halls," and in a plenary meeting on April 23, 1930, the Moscow Soviet confirmed that "Public dining was one way to raise the material and cultural level of working masses and to liberate working women from the influence of the old life" and proposed that "MOSPO take over the leadership of developing new branches of self-managed canteens."[20]

As partly revealed in the decisions mentioned above, the Soviet authorities found significance in the canteens' movement from several viewpoints. One was the imperative to expand public dining facilities. Since the food crisis brought about the need for efficient product distribution through the public dining system, the authorities expected the development of self-managed canteens that would "mitigate the pressure on public canteens unable to deal with growing demands."[21] And, as commented, that "bringing cultural and daily living facilities closer to houses would contribute to improving the living conditions of male and female workers and to raising labor productivity," the self-managed canteens could be also evaluated from the viewpoint of production.[22] Beyond these viewpoints, however, a distinctive social mood growing under the so-called Cultural Revolution appears to have played a much more significant role in evaluating and promoting self-managed canteens. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks continued to discuss their plan for "socialization of daily life" or "collectivization of daily life" to liberate women from domestic affairs, and theorists and activists of housing cooperatives shared the general idea.

Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate attributed one reason to the difference in housing conditions between the central city and the workers' *raion*. "In the city center, many residential buildings have spaces for stores and warehouses for keeping warm, which enables allocation for canteen space and kitchens. This is not the case in the workers' *raion.*" See *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.12, 1930, p.10. Another reason could be that in the city center there existed many specialists and intellectuals presumably needed to draw up the plans for the canteens and managing them.

[20] GARF, f.5452, op.14, d.67, l.113ob; D. 66, ll.74-74 ob.

[21] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.10. Begge, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of All-Union Association of Public Dining (Vsenarpit: Vsesoiuznoe ob'edinenie po obshchestvennomu pitaniiu), who supervised the canteen project in those days, stated at a board meeting on January 13, 1931, "The development of self-managed canteens would mitigate the jam in the network of public canteens," although he demonstrated a considerably passive attitude towards supporting them. See RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.19, l.48.

[22] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.13, l.182.

Under the circumstances of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the canteen construction project was a huge step toward realizing collectivization of daily life, in particular the liberation of women from the kitchen. Rozhechikina argued, "Public canteens located in houses in which working people live have great significance. The experience with self-managed canteens … shows that they are becoming the basic hearth of domestic communes, and are contributing to the liberation of women working on production and housewives from domestic work and affairs. The organization of these canteens promotes activities for housewives – it is the first practical school for housewives to participate in public and cultural work."[23]

The self-managed canteens, however, were favorably evaluated not just from the ideal or utopian point of view, but also from the practical one. That was the imperative to attract women to production in terms of radical industrialization and the subsequent lack of labor force. Although at production sites and factories, many male workers and lower-ranking directors offered unceasing opposition, from the end of 1930, drawing women into production on a massive scale became one of the regime's fundamental policies, to be realized without hesitation.[24] To fulfill the policy, it was crucial to expand living facilities at the residence level and establish canteens together with childcare facilities and communal laundries, etc. The All-Union Conference of Women's Labor and Life held on February 1, 1931 declared, "The introduction of women laborers to industries became the most important nationwide task." And, according to one of the articles, a basic condition for attracting women to industries was the development of a network of public dining with unprecedented speed together with childcare facilities.[25] Several remarks were made about self-managed canteens being necessary for the introduction of women to public activities in general as well as to production.[26]

Housing organizations, including ZhAKTy and their associations on the raion level, were provided with a sort of vanguard position for drawing women into production. The Tsentrozhilsoiuz in RSFSR presented the control figures for the mobilization of women living in housing cooperatives under its supervision: 300,000 in 1931 and 400,000 in 1932, although they were unable to reach the target figures. The main reason was the conspicuous delay in constructing living facilities.[27] In Moscow, the same effort

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[23] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No. 5, 1930, s. 6.
[24] Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, chap.7.
[25] *Trud*, February 1, 1931, p.4; February 2, 1931, p.3.
[26] RGAE, f. 484, op.15, d.39, l.19.
[27] *Trud,* October 1, 1931, p.4; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.18, 1931, p.27; No.23-24, 1931, p.14.

was made. In 1931, the Moscow City Union of Housing Cooperatives argued that "housing cooperatives must develop activities for attracting housewives to production" and presented the *raion's* housing associations and housing construction cooperative partnerships with the control figures for the fourth quarter of 1931, which showed the number of women to be mobilized to production and the number of self-managed canteens to be newly constructed for each *raion*. According to the figures, 59 self-managed canteens in total, 30 in the ZhAKTy system and 29 in housing construction cooperative partnerships (ZhSKTy), had to be constructed.[28] Considering the promotion of canteen construction, the authorities attempted to establish a fund for renovating the space allocated for self-managed canteens and preparing the equipment. For example, the control figures of RSFSR in 1932 allocated 5,64,000 rubles, 10% of the total budget for supply of cultural and daily living facilities at the residence level, to the construction of canteens.[29]

In addition to the issue of control figures and funding, the Soviet authorities embarked on institutionalizing the movement of self-managed canteens. As early as 1930, the public dining section of the Tentrosoiuz undertook the development of a model charter, which included a plan to gather at least 15 housewives to manage canteens,[30] yet the official publication was likely delayed due to conflict among organizations over the control of canteens, especially among the Tsentrosoiuz, the Commissariat of Foreign and Domestic Trade, and the Commissariat of Provisionment, and the subsequent reorganization of concerned organs for controlling public dining in general. Eventually, the Central Committee of the Party issued the decision "On measures for improvement of public dining" in August 1931, that the Commissariat of Provisionment and subordinate organs, the Soiuznarpit (Chief Directorate of National Dining) would supervise all canteens located in certain industrial centers, i.e. Moscow and Leningrad, and the Tsentrosoiuz and subordinate organs, the Vsekoopit (All-Union Autonomous Section of Public Dining) would supervise canteens in other areas. Accordingly, the control of self-managed canteens was also divided into two levels. Through a series of reorganizational processes, the directive board of the Vsekoopit, Tsentrosoiuz and the VSZhK (the All-Union Council of Housing Cooperatives) issued a model charter for self-managed canteens on November 5, and immediately afterward, the Soiuznarpit and the VSZhK did the same.[31]

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[28] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.20, ll.1-3.
[29] RGAE, f. 7754, op.1, d.91, l.11.
[30] GARF, f.5452, op.14, d.65, ll.134-145ob., 174-176.
[31] RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.21, ll.167-170; RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, ll.2-6. Both charters have the same

Around the same time, a model contract between the Vsekoopit or Soiuznarpit and the VSZhK, as well as between their subordinate organs, was concluded to develop a concrete cooperative relationship and mutual support to promote the canteen project. These contracts included the following clauses: The housing cooperatives shall provide canteens with space, main facilities (cooking stove, counters, etc.) and water, gas, electricity and heating at wholesale prices; the consumer cooperatives or a branch of the Soiuznarpit shall provide food through collective ration books and from outside of the queues (vne ocheredi); the canteens shall bear responsibility for collecting individual ration books, organizing users' active involvement in canteen activities by rotation, and so on.[32] Moreover, starting at the beginning of 1932, in order to coordinate the activities of the organs concerned, a "Bureau of Self-Managed Canteens" was organized at each level from Union level to *raion*. Representatives from the Party Committee, distribution organ, Trade Union Council, mass media, and so on at each level were expected to join the Bureau.[33] Additionally, with the objective of exchanging accumulated experience among canteens and furthering their activities, ALL-Union Conferences on Self-Managed Canteens were held under the auspices of the Tentrosoiuz in February 1932 and under the auspices of the Soiuznarpit in April 1932.[34]

How far did this project spread in terms of the number of canteens? Since the movement started and developed on a spontaneous basis, it was extremely difficult even for the authorities to grasp the actual situation. To further complicate matters, self-managed canteens were sometimes organized at small offices and factories, although basically they were set up in residences. In addition, apartment buildings were managed under different organizations including state enterprises, governmental agencies and municipalities, and even municipal housing was controlled under three housing organizations: housing trusts, housing construction cooperatives partnerships (ZhSKTy) and house-leasing cooperative partnerships (ZhAKTy). Moreover, canteens were supervised on two levels: the Vsekoopit and the Soiuznarpit. Accordingly, since statistical figures on self-managed canteens are limited and fragmented, we can only surmise the figures, relying on rather chaotic information.

Based on the above premise, we approach the issue of the number of self-managed canteens. According to data from the Vsekoopit, 552 self-managed canteens were operating in RSFSR and 890 throughout the Soviet Union as of December 15, 1931. Other data from January 1, 1932 indicates that

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basic contents.

[32] *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.23-24, 1931, p.15; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.12, 1930, pp.11-12; RGAE, f. 7754, Op. 1, D. 92, ll.7-9.

[33] RGAE, f. 7754, Op. 1, D. 92, ll.22, 66, 71-72.

[34] RGAE, f. 7754, Op. 1, D. 92, ll.21, 33, 45-46.

985 canteens were providing meals for 268,400 users in the USSR. Around a year later, the number at the all-union level reached 1507, including 980 at residences and 527 at small factories and offices.[35] On the other hand, according to the Soiuznarpit, which covered canteens in Moscow, Leningrad and other industrial centers, 220 self-managed canteens were operating as of January 1, 1932.[36] It is difficult to judge the accuracy of these figures, but it is known that the authorities were expecting a much greater rate of expansion; their control figure for operation planning was 1496 canteens as of January 1, 1932, against the actual figure of 985. The fulfillment rate was 65.8%.[37]

Meanwhile, in Moscow, different reports presented varying figures ranging from 50 to 100 canteens, although notations are included about not having a full grasp of the number, particularly because of canteens that were operating but not registered. According to an investigation conducted by the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, there were 55 canteens in Moscow in May 1930, and in June, at the time of the investigation, 68 canteens were operating.[38] Furthermore, data from the Soiuznarpit shows the presence of 75 canteens in Moscow as of January 1, 1932, and a Moscow newspaper dated May 18, 1932 published a figure of 84.[39] It is important to note that these figures might include self-managed canteens located not only at residences, but also at factories, offices, dormitories, etc. The following figures on canteens operating under the ZhAKTy system support this.

As explained earlier, the Moscow City Party Committee and the Moscow Soviet decided on March 14, 1931 to transfer almost all the houses owned by housing partnerships to the ZhAKTy system. At the time, 6 self-managed canteens operating under housing partnerships were also transferred to ZhAKTy,[40] and the number increased to 11 by July 1932, to 12 by December 1932, and to 15 as of June 1, 1933. A central organ of the All-Union Association of Housing Cooperatives reported that 20 self-managed canteens were operating under the ZhAKTy system in Moscow in 1933.[41] According to various data, the number reached its peak in 1933 and subsequently declined. Some reports show a figure of 8 in 1934 and 7 in October/November 1935. Since the figure as of 1935

[35] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, ll.29, 45; RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.55, l.16.
[36] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.42.
[37] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.45ob. *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* presented a much more pathetic figure. According to the RSFSR plan, 743 canteens should have been constructed within the year 1931, but as of September 1, 1931, only 37 canteens, 4.1%, opened. See *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.18, 1931, p.28.
[38] GARF, f.5452, op.14, d.71, l.127, d.73, l.142; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.10.
[39] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.42; *Vecherniaia Moskva,* May 18, 1932, p.2.
[40] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, ll.4, 15.
[41] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.1, l.16, d.91, ll.4, 8, 42; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.12, 1933, p.18.

was based on an investigation of cultural and daily living facilities that was carried out in almost all the sub-*raions* in Moscow, the data is considered to be reliable.[42]

Collecting relevant data on canteens in other housing organizations (ZhSKTy and housing trusts) is more difficult. At least seven self-managed canteens appear to have been operating under the ZhSKTy system in 1932,[43] and 6 canteens as of January 1, 1936 and 2 canteens as of January 1, 1937 existed under the auspices of housing trusts. The data from the housing trusts is considered reliable as it covers a broad range of detailed information including the number of houses, residents, social composition, etc. as well as the number of cultural and daily living facilities including canteens.[44]

The 1939 and 1940 Moscow telephone directories list the telephone numbers of two self-managed canteens: No. 155 on Lebiazhii pereulok No. 8/4 and No. 172 on Chistyi pereulok No. 6. Other self-managed canteens equipped with a telephone are not listed, so the directories are not all-inclusive.[45] However, by the end of the 1930s, the number of self-managed canteens located at residences in Moscow probably did not exceed ten.

The above information leads us to the following conclusion. In spite of the authorities' positive and supportive attitude toward the self-managed canteen project and their attempts to institutionalize bottom-up initiative, the total number of canteens in Moscow never exceeded a hundred even at its peak in the early 1930s, and only about 20–30 canteens were operating at the residence level. In short, this project did not expand in scope as expected.

What is the reason behind the limited expansion? Needless to say, establishing and managing a canteen was an extraordinarily harsh business in contemporary Soviet society. Obtaining food and acquiring and renovating space took tremendous effort. With respect to space, there is frequent mention of the fact that the directors' board of each housing organization and the residents themselves disliked allocating space for canteens. The severe shortage of residential space naturally led to the conclusion that any surplus should be allocated to residents, not to canteens, even if the space was

[42] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.584, l.4; op.3, d.42, ll.31, 35, 87, 97, 122, 127, 139. The figure as of 1935 (7 canteens) was calculated based on data acquired from 47 of the 48 sub-*raions*, excluding a data sheet presented from one *raion*. Because this sheet noted only the number of canteens in the *raion* without any other concrete data, such as space, number of users, and so on, it did not appear reliable. If this data were to be included, the total number of canteens as of 1935 would be 10.

[43] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.91, l.2.

[44] TsMAM, f.490, op.1, d.2, l.42; d.3, l.52ob.

[45] *Spisok abonentov moskovskoi gorodskoi telefonnoi seti*, 1939 g., M., 1939, p.442; *Spisok abonentov gorogskoi telefonnoi seti*, 1940 g., M., 1940, p.501. Canteen No.171, as later mentioned, was still operating in 1940 and was equipped with its own telephone, but was not noted in the directories.

located underground and not suitable as living quarters.[46] There are reported cases of local Soviets confiscating space in which a canteen was operating.[47] Also, the acquisition of space did not guarantee the opening of a canteen. Surplus space was generally inadequate for a canteen, not to mention for living, without renovation. In addition, cooking and serving equipment was needed. Many activists working to open their own canteen encountered the even more complex problem of procuring labor, housing materials and funds. In some cases, a certain amount of money could be obtained from the cultural and daily living fund set up by the Soviet authorities. However, the shortage of housing materials frustrated the effective use of this money.[48] Some activists set up their canteens by obtaining funds from local businesses in exchange for receiving their employees as users. As a result, they became subordinate-like canteens of those companies.[49]

First, however, the acquisition of food was the most difficult task. A directive issued on June 7, 1930 by the Tsentrosoiuz, which stipulates that canteens be provided with food from surplus supply directly from food bases, was often ignored in local areas. A conference was held on August 15, 1930, in which representatives of Tsntrosoiuz, Vsenarpit, the Moscow Provincial Association of Consumer Cooperatives (MOSPO), housing cooperatives and activists of self-managed canteens discussed a variety of problems facing the canteens, especially the issue of food supply. "The important thing in managing canteens is supply. Without additional food supply, canteens cannot exist." But the focal point of the discussion was that the directive was unknown at the lower level, and consumer cooperatives on the *raion* level resisted fixing canteens to their food bases.[50] One article pointed out the same phenomenon: "MOSPO is obliged to supply food to self-managed canteens from its own key storehouses. Sometimes that obligation is not fulfilled. Sokol'niki *raion's* Association of Consumer Cooperatives, for example, declared that it knew nothing about such a decision and at any rate was not obliged to obey it."[51]

An enormous number of complaints about unsupportive consumer cooperatives flooded the

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[46] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.10; TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, l.49.
[47] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.33.
[48] On financial difficulties, see *Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.3, 1930, p.9. It was reported that "Self-managed canteens could not obtain the necessary kitchen equipment even through their own funds." (*Obshchestvennoe pitanie,* No.12, 1930, p.10) Public canteens were generally not able to reach the year's control figure due to the shortage of housing materials and equipment. See *Trud*, December 6, 1931, p.2.
[49] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, l.5.
[50] GARF, f.5452, op.14, d.68, ll.142-152.
[51] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.10.

authorities concerned. In response, however, one city Narpit replied: "You are supposed to be a self-managed collective; if so, you must get out of your predicament in a self-managed way (*v poriadke samodeiatel'nosti*) however you like. We have nothing to give you."[52] On August 24, 1931, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate in the Moscow Frunze *raion*, receiving an appeal from self-managed canteen No. 14 against the decision of the complaint bureau, decided as follows: "The decision of the complaint bureau dated 31 July [1931] shall be repealed… It shall be considered necessary to provide additional supply of food on the same basis as other canteens."[53] This case suggests that there might have been other instances in which the Tsentrosoiuz directive was nominal. There are numerous reported cases of cooperatives not supplying food, even in exchange for ration books, as well as additional supply.[54]

The Soviet authorities themselves were unable to provide sufficient material support under the worsening food crisis. At a meeting of the directors' board of the All-Union Association of Public Dining (Vsenarpit), Begge frankly expressed that "We must develop self-managed canteens and provide some support, for example, in the form of equipment or credit. [But] With respect to food, we probably could not provide anything, especially food in short supply. Canteens would have to rely on ration cards only."[55]

As the famine extended and the food situation deteriorated even in the major cities, the Soviet authorities had little room to provide material support to the canteen project. The Plan for the Development of Self-Managed Canteens, compiled by the Vsekoopit administration and dated March 21, 1933, enumerated resources from which self-managed canteens should obtain food: a) by switching individual food allocation [to canteens], b) by their own auxiliary food production, c) by self-procurement and through collective farm markets.[56] In short, the mention of additional food supply vanished. Food support to canteens was nearly impossible during the food crisis, which was reflected in the number of canteens. The situation in Moscow province under the Vsekoopit, which differed from that in Moscow city under the Soiuznarpit, worsened dramatically. While the number of canteens was 11 in December 1932 and 14 as of January 1, 1932, only one canteen remained as of

[52] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.33.
[53] TsMAM, f.1474, op.7, d.213, l.140.
[54] GARF, f.5452, op.14, d.73, l.142.
[55] RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.19, l.48.
[56] RGAE, f.484, op.15, d.55, l.15.

January 1, 1933.[57] Within one year, the self-managed canteen project was destroyed there. Judging from the years 1932-33, it is obvious that the food crisis led to the termination of canteens.

Self-managed canteens in industrial centers under the Soiuznarpit might have enjoyed a relatively more favorable situation. However, as the figures show, even in Moscow the project was unable to expand and, after its peak in 1933, the number of canteens decreased. Further after 1935, as the ration system was abolished step-by-step, interest in the project itself appears to have declined. We could not find any mention of it in official journals or newspapers. The reason is clear: Soviet people were eventually able to purchase food freely, even though prices climbed dramatically. With the official revival of the free market and the reduced dependence on canteens, many public canteens, including those in factories and offices, closed down.

Under these circumstances, it might appear unnecessary to further investigate the canteen movement. Expansion of this project was certainly limited. However, the focal point here is not the number of canteens, but the collaboration between authorities and citizens, the cooperation among residents, and the possible creation of a community and micro-public sphere through this self-managed canteen project. Accordingly, there remains some room to examine the movement in depth. In particular, the difference between areas in the development of the canteen project is very important. For example, in Moscow's Frunze *raion* and its successive *raions* (in April 1936, *raions* were reshuffled), more energy was put into this project in the formative period and through the 1930s. In the course of the 1930s, especially after 1935, most canteens in other *raions* closed down, but some remained in Frunze and successive *raions* into the 1940s. What factors contributed to the difference? To answer this question, we need to examine the canteens themselves.

Cases examples in Frunze *raion*

Frunze *raion*, renamed from Khamovniki in 1930, was one of 10 *raions* in Moscow in the first half of the 1930s. It included Arbat, one of the most famous streets in Moscow, and the vicinity. When the 10 *raions* were reshuffled in April 1936, the northern part of the Frunze *raion* across the present New Arbat Street, which was not yet constructed at the time, was incorporated into the Krasno-presnensk *raion*, Albat and the vicinity was included in a newly constructed district, Kiev

[57] RGAE, f.7754, op.1, d.92, l.29; f.484, op.15, d.55, l.13.

raion, and the rest of the area remained in the new Frunze *raion*.[58] A number of reference materials list around a dozen streets on which self-managed canteens were located, and a considerable number of them were registered in the Frunze *raion*. For example, Nos. 30, 35, 51, 52 on Arbat Street, Bol'shaia Molchanovka No. 21/a, Lebiazhii pereulok No. 4/8, Skaternyi pereulok No. 11, Trubnikovskii pereulok No. 3 and Nos. 4-6-8, Chistoi pereulok No. 6 and so on.[59] A central organ of the public dining section of the Tsentrosoiuz, *Obshchestovennoe pitanie*, published a photograph of a self-managed canteen located at No. 51 Arbat Street with the caption "The first self-managed canteen established in Moscow."[60]

Available data on self-managed canteens in the Frunze *raion* is introduced in this section. In April 1933, at the peak of the movement, 17 canteens were operating there.[61] Frunze Narpit, a governmental agency for public dining in the Frunze *raion*, presented the following figures on canteens: 13 in 1931, 17 in 1932, and 18 in 1933.[62] Since the total number of self-managed canteens in Moscow at the time was around seventy or eighty, not over a hundred, we contend that those in Frunze had considerable importance in this project. In addition, since the mid-1930s, the persistence of the movement in Frunze is even more noteworthy. In 1934, as mentioned before, only 8 canteens remained under the ZhAKTy system, half of which were located in Frunze. According to the ALL-raions investigation, 7 canteens in total were operating under the ZhAKTy system, 2 of which were in Frunze. Although the total number of canteens notably decreased, those in Frunze appear to have continued operating up until 1940.[63] When the 1939 and 1940 Moscow telephone directories listed two self-managed canteens, both addresses – Lebiazhii pereulok No. 4/8 and Chistoi pereulok No. 6 – were located in the former Frunze *raion*.[64]

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[58] TsMAM, f.1495, op.3, d.746, ll.40, 42, 49, 59, 81, 106-122.On the reorganization of Moscow's districts, see Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995, pp.182-185, 303-304; Nobuo Shimotomai, *Moscow under Stalinist rule, 1931-34*, Macmillan, 1991, chap.4.

[59] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, l.42; f.1474, op.7, d.209, l.8ob.; *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.9, 1930, p.17.

[60] *Obshchestvennoe pitanie*, No.12, 1930, p.12.

[61] *Vechernaia moskva*, April 28, 1933, p.2.

[62] *Frunzenskii trest* <Narpit>, *Obshchestvennnoe pitanie frunzenskogo raiona ot XII k XIII raionnoi partkonferentsii*, M., 1934, p.8.

[63] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.584, l.4; op.3, d.42, ll.31, 35, 87, 97, 122, 127, 139.

[64] *Spisok abonentov moskovskoi gorodskoi telefonnoi seti*, 1939 g., M., 1939, p.442; *Spisok abonentov gorogskoi telefonnoi seti*, 1940 g., M., 1940, p.501. Other materials indicate the importance of the Frunze *raion*. According to the plan for new construction and renovation of cultural and daily living facilities under ZhAKTy in 1935, in the ten *raions* of Moscow, 5 canteens – 3 in Frunze and 2 in Krasono-presnensk – were to be newly constructed, but as of January 1,

Why was the Frunze *raion* more active in the movement in the early 1930s than other districts in Moscow, and some of the canteens there were able to continue operating up until 1940? It's a difficult question to answer, but I will make an attempt to approach this issue based on some relevant materials.

On April 28, 1933, the *Vechernaia Moskva* reported on the development of self-managed canteens in Frunze *raion*, expressing admiration, and attributed the difference from those in other districts to successful organization of the *raion's* bureau under the ZhAKTy system. The bureau allegedly played a core role by coordinating the operation of canteens. For example, the *raion's* self-managed canteens as a whole succeeded in collecting advance payment of 110,000 rubles from its users, and through a contract that the bureau concluded with the *raion's* Narpit, canteens could receive 15% of the food that the Narpit procured without any plans. Moreover, the canteens collectively acquired 30 hectares of farming land in Kuntsevo, on the outskirts of Moscow city, and were growing livestock and vegetables. The report concluded as follows: "How many such hearths of new life are there in Moscow? This is a riddle for the Narpit and housing organizations. Nobody planned such canteens, and they are emerging by themselves. This is not wrong. But it is very wrong that no one is providing guidance or support. The Frunze bureau is the first step to reinforcing "self-managed Narpit" in terms of management and organization… A few years ago, the same bureau existed in all *raions*. The all-city basis was a sound system, but they somehow managed to ruin it. It is not important to know the reason, but it is important to revive this system. All the *raions* of Moscow must follow the lead of Frunze. Moscow's Narpit and housing organizations must support them."[65]

Frunze's Narpit, the counterpart with which the Frunze bureau concluded the contract, might have carried off another core function in the growth of self-managed canteens in this district. In 1934, referring to the development of canteens in Frunze, the Narpit printed 2000 copies (not for sale) of a pamphlet introducing its activities and displaying many photographs. Included were data and

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1936, only 2 canteens in Frunze and 1 in Krasono-presnensk actually opened. See TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.568, l.11. A similar construction and renovation plan based on the new district system in 1936 shows that only one canteen was to be constructed in Frunze, and five canteens – one each in Frunze, Kiev and Kranoso-gvarudiia *raions* and two in Krasno-presnensk *raion* were to be renovated. It is uncertain whether or not the latter two in Krasono-presnensk were located in the former Frunze *raion*. However, the proportion in the former Frunze *raion* is large, including one in Kiev *raion*. See TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.568, l.11; d.830, l.109ob.-110.

[65] *Vechernaia Moskva,* April 28, 1933, p.2. The Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate in Frunze raion had critically investigated an unsuccessful livestock project conducted by a ZhAKTy housing association located in Frunze *raion*. This case possibly supports the omnipresence of such projects in Frunze *raion*. See TsMAM, f.1474, op.7, d.213, ll.4-5.

photographs of self-managed canteens located in Frunze *raion*, indicating that Frunze's Narpit most likely demonstrated a positive and supportive attitude toward the movement.[66]

Judging from the establishment of the *raion's* bureau and the Narpit's positive attitude, it appears that the Frunze authorities developed relatively well-coordinated activities as well as a favorable relationship with the canteens. We are able to confirm this through the analysis of two canteens: one organized under ZhAKT No. 470 and the other – canteen No. 171 – organized under ZhAKT No. 56 (thereafter renumbered 1454).

Canteen on Skatertnyi pereulok No. 11

The self-managed canteen under ZhAKT No. 470 was established at Skatertnyi pereulok No. 11 in Frunze *raion* (in April 1936, the pereulok was incorporated in the Krasno-presnensk *raion*). This apartment building was controlled under a housing trust until 1931, at which time it was transferred to the ZhAKTy system in accordance with the decision of the Moscow City Party Committee and the Moscow Soviet. According to the data from 1936, ZhAKT No. 470, which was of medium size, had a population of 238, 1782 m^2 of living space and 254 m^2 of other space.[67] Here, at the end of 1932, was one self-managed canteen, and on a day in 1933 it served a total of 255 meals for 91 workers and their families, 57 employees and their families and 20 pensioners. Local residents were among the users because the plan for this canteen originated from leading activists working in a cultural committee established by several apartment buildings including Skatertnyi pereulok No. 11. However, the project was stymied during the transfer to the ZhAKTy system. Eventually, a newly formed network of cultural work across multiple buildings, the "First Cultural and Daily Living Section", was organized and it contributed to raising funds from residents for the canteen.

With respect to its construction, a leading activist of this movement – he called himself Chotti – wrote a few dozen pages of memorandum, which were kept in a Moscow archive. Chotti was a leading member of the cultural committee and might have been a party member as a leader of the MOPR (international organization for aid to soldiers of the revolution) in this area. The fact that a member of the cultural committee wrote a memorandum, in which reference is made to a colleague drawing a blueprint of the canteen, indicates that intellectual committee members took initiative in establishing

[66] *Frunzenskii trest* <Narpit>, *op. cit*. I was unable to find any similar pamphlets printed by the Narpit of other *raions*.
[67] TsMAM, f.1495, op.3, d.746, l.81.

the canteen, although self-managed canteens in general were allegedly organized by housewives.

Based on this memorandum, we obtain a picture of the clear-cut framework of confrontation between cultural activists, including Chotti, attempting to set up a canteen and their opposition, including the chairman of ZhAKT No. 470. The latter, assuming that it would be impossible to manage a canteen due to the difficulty of obtaining food, insisted on allocating the space for a residence, not for a canteen, although earlier, the residents had decided to set up a canteen in this space. According to Chotti, even after the construction of the canteen started, the chairman and his entourage not only refused to provide support, but they actually interfered with the work. However, Chotti and other activists, appealing to the *raion's* Party Committee and other authorities, continued with the construction.

In his memorandum, Chotti repeatedly expresses his gratitude to the Frunze housing association, which warmly welcomed their canteen project and provided material support. Several leaders of the housing association paid a visit to the construction site and donated 1355 rubles. On the contrary, Albat sub-raion's housing association generally displayed a passive attitude toward the project. The reorganization of housing associations in 1932 resulted in transferring the real power in managing ZhAKTy from the *raion* to the sub-*raion* level. And that, Chotti emphasizes, placed the canteen project in jeopardy, delaying its construction and the opening. However, as mentioned before, the First Cultural and Daily Living Section, organized across apartment buildings and officially approved by the Moscow City Union of Housing Associations in September 1932, embarked on active support, and at the final stage, residents provided 3000 rubles. Thus, the self-managed canteen in Skatertnyi perulok No. 11 reached its opening day by the end of 1932.[68]

Another interesting point, besides the description of confrontations in this memorandum, is Chotti's remarks that reveal how the construction and management of their canteen was combined with a manifestation of public spirit among the residents. For instance, retorting against criticism from the opposition regarding the delay in construction, Chotti wrote "It must not be forgotten that the public (*obshchestvennost'*), who [are able to] spare time for this project only by freeing up hours from their work, is constructing the canteen."[69] And, expressing his deep concern that the position taken by official organizations such as the Arbat sub-*raion* housing association attempting to gain strict control

[68] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, ll.48-63.
[69] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, l.60ob.

over the canteen not be brought to light, he contends that: "The fundamental idea of the self-managed canteen – that is complete establishment of canteen members' active participation in its management and in the practice of public control, and their participation in the canteen according to their ability. Only through these means is it possible to achieve maximized economy of canteen funds, improvement of meal quality, and reduced lunch prices. Consistent practice of these principles would enable the transformation of self-managed canteens into accessible, attractive and comfortable canteens for members of ZhAKTy… From this, it is obvious that the canteen must be managed by the public (*obshchestvennost'*) on the spot under the leadership of the Council of the First Cultural Section and its fractions. The management of all self-managed canteens would be constructed according to this principle, and hence the canteen of the First Cultural Section cannot be the exception to this principle. It is necessary to bring to an end the administrative control system in cooperative housing organizations, which still exists in apartment buildings under housing trusts. In the management system of ZhAKTy, cooperativeness and publicness (kooperativnost' i sviazannaia s neiu obshchestvennost') is an imperative for its development…Solely under those conditions is the canteen worthy of its name, self-managed and public (*obshchestvennaia*)." [70]

It is crucial that this argument was uttered not by a top leader or an ideologue of the Party, but by an activist who was working to establish a canteen at the residence level. Thus, considering the organizational process of the self-managed canteen, the enormous energy and effort put into the project by activists living in the residence and the psychological and material support from the authorities were indispensable to its development.

Canteen No. 171 at Trubnikovskii pereulok Nos. 4-6-8

Canteen No. 171 was one of the earliest canteens established, as indicated by an article in the *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* on March 15, 1929, which refers to a "communal canteen" located on Trubnikovskii pereulok No. 6.[71] This canteen also lasted for a longer time than the others, operating until 1940. When the canteen closed, a series of materials collected by the liquidation committee was turned over to the government archives, providing us with information on various canteen activities. According to data from the five files of archived material, the canteen was formally established on

[70] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, ll.64-64ob.
[71] *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, No.5, 1929, p.33.

March 8, 1929 and was closed on the decision of canteen members at a general meeting held on June 17, 1940, a week after the Presidium of Kiev *raion's* Soviet approved the decision to liquidate Canteen No. 171.[72]

The five files include little material on the early years of the canteen except for some items from 1931 related to employee wages. Wage slips dated July 1931 indicate that only two or three cooking staff were employed at the time, and additional support was provided by a few "women activists (aktivisty obshchestvennitsy)" in exchange for the small amount of 40–60 rubles a month. However, from the latter part of 1932, the canteen consistently employed at least 10 people, including a director (350 rubles a month in 1940), an accountant (400 rubles), and a chief cook (400 rubles).[73] Thus, the canteen's business continued to expand even in the early 1930s during the food crisis and further after the ration system was abolished in 1935. Other materials from the archive confirm the canteen's stable growth during the 1930s, although it experienced an interruption in 1936. Gross sales rose from 91,228 rubles in 1934 to 155,179 rubles in 1935; to 249,115 rubles in 1937; to 269,178 rubles in 1938; and to 323,854 rubles in 1939. The total amount of soup and main dishes supplied each year rose steadily until 1937 and then slightly declined in 1938: 74,196 in 1934; 108,518 in 1935; 149,984 in 1937; and 136,000 in 1938 (1939 data not available).[74] The number of registered canteen users and the amount of money deposited was also stable: 404 people and 3654 rubles as of January 1, 1934; 449 and 4432 as of January 1, 1935; 494 and 4409.5 as of January 1, 1936; 492 and 4409.5 as of January 1, 1937; 483 and 4262.5 as of January 1, 1938; and 480 and 4189.5 as of January 1, 1939.[75]

Also noteworthy is the reestablishment of the canteen's position in the local community, especially after the ZhAKTy system came to an end in October 1937. The residents' loss of autonomy, however limited, led to the general stagnation of cultural and daily living activities, as mentioned in Moscow's newspapers at the time.[76] But the residents at Trubnikovskii pereulok Nos. 4-6-8, where Canteen No. 171 was located, and residents in the vicinity worked together to organize a new cultural and daily living committee (CDLC). On April 5, 1938, residents from the sixty-one apartments in the six buildings of Trubnikovskii pereulok Nos. 4-6-8 and Durnovskii pereulok Nos. 1-1a-3, held a meeting at which they approved the Organizational Committee's proposal to establish the CDLC, with

[72] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, ll.6, 40-42; d.4, l.15ob.
[73] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.1, ll.1-28, d.3, l.38.
[74] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.2 ll.5-6, 29, 49, 73, 78.
[75] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.2, ll.23, 36, 59, 63.
[76] *Rabochaia moskva*, 9 December 1937, p.4; *Vechernaia moskva*, 15 June 1940, p.2.

six subsections (Culture, Movie, Library, Physical Culture, Hygiene, and Canteen) and a comrade tribunal, and elected their members. In short, the establishment of the new CDLC in 1938 meant that Canteen No. 171 would operate under the Canteen Section of the Committee.[77]

The "Regulation of Self-Managed Canteen No. 171", which was confirmed at a regular CDLC meeting on February 6, 1939, followed by submission for approval by the *raion's* authorities, includes some significant clauses on the position and role of the canteen as well as its relationship with CDLC.[78] The first of the ten clauses in the regulation states: "Canteen No. 171 is a public enterprise (obshchestvennoe predpriiatie) of CDLC, operating on the basis of cost accounting with an independent balance and having a current account with the State Savings Bank under the name CDLC."[79] The term "public enterprise" might refer to the third-sector Soviet type, considering its parallel use with the terms "state enterprise" and "cooperative enterprise" as choices in filling out documents for tax registration.[80] Skipping the second clause and moving on to the third one, which refers to the main role of the canteen as a meal service provider, it is most interesting to note that canteen users comprised not only the residents concerned, but also personnel from the local Snegirev Hospital at Sabachiia ploshchad' No. 1. In short, the canteen played a role in supporting the hospital, a community facility indispensable in the residents' lives. The fourth clause covers finances for managing the canteen, such as funds from CDLC and profit from the canteen, and the fifth to eighth clauses stipulate the required level of competence for a canteen director, who "is appointed and dismissed by CDLC (fifth clause)," as follows: "He shall control, in accordance with the law, all funds and property of the canteen; hire and dismiss employees of the canteen excluding the accountant who is appointed and dismissed by CDLC; conclude contracts and arrangements necessary for management of the canteen…(sixth clause); prepare quarterly and yearly balance reports for ratification by the CDLC (seventh clause); and bear responsibility for all operations of the canteen and for disciplines in terms of planning, financing and contracting on the laws concerned (eighth clause)." The ninth clause specifies investigations and inspections of the canteen conducted by CDLC, and the final clause

[77] Actually, the Canteen Section might not have played such a definite role. A protocol from the Cultural and Daily Living Committee meeting held on April 11, 1939 mentioned that "As the Canteen Section had not worked and was not working, Chairperson Rakhmanov should inspect accounts until a new leader of the Canteen Section is appointed." See TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.11. Management of the canteen was basically placed under the charge of G.P. Rakhmanov, a CDLC chairperson and the canteen's director.
[78] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.18.
[79] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.20.
[80] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.6.

stipulates that "the canteen shall stop operation in accordance with the procedure set forth by CDLC and confirmed at a general meeting of residents".[81] In summary, Canteen No. 171 was a public enterprise that CDLC, established by residents, controlled through its direct appointment of an accountant and a director, who managed daily operations based on the level of competence stipulated in the regulations.

Meanwhile, additional information from the archived files, particularly the directives (prikaz) on employee wages and bonuses as well as reprimands, provides us with some insight into the contribution made by Rakhmanov, a CDLC chairperson obviously committed to overseeing the canteen's daily operation. He visited the canteen on a regular basis and was cosignatory of many directives with the canteen's director. For example, on February 7, 1940, Rakhmanov and the canteen's director cosigned Directive No. 25 on the dismissal of an employee, Makeeva, who came to work drunk, and on reprimanding the chief cook, Shatkova, who allowed Makeeva to work while intoxicated and attempted to hide the fact from Rakhmanov who happened to visit the canteen that morning.[82] On the other hand, we also learned of an incident in which the canteen's director took part in a CDLC meeting where he received directives on the method for purchasing food and the adoption of rationalization measures aimed at reducing the price of meals.[83]

Thus, Canteen No. 171 was in the center of activities conducted by CDLC. Of considerable significance in their relationship is the arrangement to transfer part of the canteen's profit to CDLC. In the 1939 fiscal year, approximately 7240 rubles from the canteen's net profit of 17,392 rubles were transferred to Committee funds,[84] which enabled financing of other community activities. As the 1939 figures show, Canteen No. 171 continued to operate successfully. Also in that year, the canteen received 450 rubles in financial aid from CDLC based on its decision on March 7, 1939, and commemorated the tenth anniversary of its establishment in 1929.[85]

The satisfactory performance of the canteen makes it difficult to understand why it was suddenly closed in 1940. The business plan for 1940 shows an expected profit of 10,150 rubles, with a transfer of 7250 rubles to the Committee, although suspension of operations was scheduled for the

[81] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, ll.20-21.
[82] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.4, l.12ob.
[83] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.19.
[84] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.2, l.78; d.3, l.17.
[85] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.33.

month of June for canteen renovations.[86] Only one document from the files, an investigation report dated June 4, 1940 written by an inspector from the *raion's* financial bureau, hints at the looming crisis that the canteen encountered in 1940. The report warns of the deteriorating financial affairs of the canteen and asks that Rakhmanov and the canteen's director and the accountant cease any expenditure not approved by the bureau. The report attributes a major part of the problem to the canteen's dependence on kolkhoz markets and purchasing at retail prices from State stores. But this trend was probably due to the resumed food crisis. According to leading historian Osokina, the present food crisis peaked during the winter of 1939/40 and spring of 1940 for many reasons, including the beginning of World War II, the invasion of Soviet troops in Poland and the Baltics, and the Soviet-Finland War. Even those living in Moscow experienced severe food hardships. Unfortunately, the Soviet government responded to the crisis not by reintroducing the ration system, but by raising prices.[87]

In light of the situation in 1939/40, it is easier to understand the worsening financial state of Canteen No. 171. At this time, unlike in 1929, residents could not address the situation by gathering together their ration books. In the summer of 1940, Canteen No. 171, which emerged from the food crisis in 1929 to survive and develop through the 1930s, brought the curtain down on over 10 years of operation.

Conclusion

Were the self-managed canteens part of a Stalinist public or a communitarian project? Here, I use the term "Stalinist Public" as the regime's official mobilization of the masses to public events, festivals and projects within the framework of Soviet Socialist construction and based on Communist ideology. In addition, I emphasize as a distinctive feature of Stalinist public the interest in a strong women's presence and the energetic invitation of women to public projects, in contrast to the bourgeois regime's exclusion of women from the public realm as second-class citizens, for the most part remaining unorganized at least until the end of the 1920s. From this perspective, the self-managed canteen project might be adequately understood under the concept of Stalinist Public, because the project contributed to the expansion of public canteens in general, which would be highly regarded in

[86] TsMAM, f.2474, op.1, d.3, l.37.
[87] Osokina, *Za fasadom "stalinskogo izobiliia,"* p.206-218; E. Osokina, "Krizis snabzheniia 1939-1941 gg. v pis'makh sovetskikh liudei." *Voprosy istorii*, No.1, 1996.

terms of mass mobilization to rapid industrialization and improved labor productivity. In addition, the canteen project was inextricably linked to the mobilization of women into production and other public activities. The CDLC, undertaking the organization and management of the canteen as one of its own "cultural and daily living projects", also played an important role in mobilizing residents, especially housewives, to festivals, elections and public events. Chotti, a local leader of the canteen movement, was eager to mobilize housewives to manage canteens. He pledged to "establish a rotation system among housewives" in canteen management.[88] We could even surmise a type of gender-biased idea of mobilizing housewives into the canteen project to liberate women from their own kitchen.

Nevertheless, even though the authorities showed strong interest, the movement was unable to expand as expected and its development was uneven among Moscow's districts. In short, it was not always a successful project from the viewpoint of the regime. Therefore, from 1935, interest in the movement gradually faded. Even under these bleak conditions, however, several self-managed canteens, such as Canteen No. 171 in Frunze/Kiev *raion*, survived and continued to develop. To understand this movement as a whole, including a few exceptional cases, we cannot remain within the conceptual framework of the "Stalinist Public." The self-managed canteens fulfilled the function of supporting the daily life of residents. Especially Canteen No. 171, providing meals for the employees of a neighborhood hospital as well as local residents, operated as a center of the local community and in the late 1930s began to turn a profit, providing funds for other community activities. From this perspective, we can grasp the movement as a communitarian project under the Stalinist regime.

What factors led to the project's respectable performance, albeit limited to only part of Moscow's districts? This is a difficult question to answer, but several elements came into play. Certainly some degree of support from the authorities was inevitable under the Soviet regime, because it took over most human and material resources. The mutual confidence among residents, however, also played a crucial role, as seen by the phenomenon in which individual ration books were collected for a common project. In this sense, the self-managed canteen movement might have emerged and grown based on accumulated "social capital", a concept developed by Robert Putnam.[89]

[88] TsMAM, f.1495, op.1, d.91, l.65ob.
[89] Robert D. Putnam, ed., *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society,* Oxford University Press, 2002.