

REVIEW ESSAY

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WESTERN STUDIES OF SOVIET LABOUR DURING THE THIRTIES

ANDRLE, VLADIMIR. *Workers in Stalin's Russia. Industrialization and Social Change in a Planned Economy.* Harvester/Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead 1988; St. Martin's Press, New York. xii, 243 pp. £ 22.50; \$ 39.95.

FILTZER, DONALD. *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization. The Formation of Modern Soviet Production Relations, 1928–1941.* Pluto Press, London, Sydney, Dover (NH) 1986. vi, 338 pp. £ 25.00.

KUROMIYA, HIROAKI. *Stalin's Industrial Revolution. Politics and Workers, 1928–1932.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle 1988. xviii, 364 pp. Ill. £ 27.50.

RASSWEILER, ANNE D. *The Generation of Power. The History of Dnepros-troi.* Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford 1988 [*recte* 1989]. ix, 247 pp. Ill. \$ 32.50.

SCHRÖDER, HANS-HENNING. *Industrialisierung und Parteibürokratie in der Sowjetunion. Ein sozialgeschichtlicher Versuch über die Anfangsphase des Stalinismus (1928–1934).* [Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte, Band 41.] In Komm. bei Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1988. 370 pp. DM 106.00.

SIEGELBAUM, LEWIS H. *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR, 1935–1941.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle 1988. xv, 325 pp. Ill. £ 25.00.

VIOLA, LYNNE. *The Best Sons of the Fatherland. Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization.* Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford 1987. xi, 285 pp. £ 27.50.

In 1980 the West German historian Hans-Henning Schröder observed that in the previous twenty years no studies on the Soviet industrial working class of the thirties had been published.¹ Less than a decade later we dispose of seven substantial works in which living standards, lifestyles, work, and,

especially, the social mobility and social interaction of this industrial working class play a central role. Reason enough for taking a closer look at this “explosive” growth, as well as for asking the reviewer’s usual questions about the nature of the problems investigated, the sources used, and the persuasiveness of the arguments put forward in these studies; it will be instructive too to consider whether the books have any features in common.

Western research from 1945 to the mid-1980s

After 1945 Western historians devoted little attention to the development of Soviet labour in the interwar period. This is a historiographical fact, and relates as much to the 1920s as to the 1930s. It seems impossible to give a satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon, although the comparative lack of available source material before the mid-1960s was probably one factor in this (see the section below on sources).

The only studies published in the West in which the Soviet working class plays a central role were Isaac Deutscher’s concise *Soviet Trade Unions* (1950) and the general surveys by Solomon M. Schwarz, *Labor in the Soviet Union* (1952), and Werner Hoffmann, *Die Arbeitsverfassung der Sowjetunion* (1956).² These were typical products of the late fifties and emphasized the unfree position of labour under the totalitarian Soviet system. That written by the Menshevik Schwarz was unusually well documented, but then Schwarz had been studying the development of Russian labour for almost fifty years. His summary, which remains a standard work on the subject, included chapters entitled “Growth and transformation of the working-class”, “Wages and living standards”, and the like. In using this *static* approach Schwarz was following a tradition in militant labour historiography which went back to the middle of the nineteenth century.

Naturally developments concerning Soviet labour were treated in more general works of historical scholarship in the West. The best-known example is E. H. Carr’s *A History of Soviet Russia*. A French example is Bettelheim’s *Les Luttes de Classes en URSS*. Studies by Kendall A. Bailes and Nicholas Lampert on the technical intelligentsia referred to the position of the industrial workers as well. A limited amount of data specifically concerning the industrial working class was also presented in the economic-historical contributions of, for example, Zaleski and Chapman.³

¹ H. H. Schröder, “Zum aktuellen Stand der Stalinismusforschung im Westen. Ein Literaturbericht”, *Das Argument*, 123 (1980), p. 719.

² All these all concerned with “free” labour. A classic work on non-free labour was written by David J. Dallin and Boris N. Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* (New Haven, 1947).

³ E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926–1929*, vol. 1 (I–II) (London, 1969); C. Bettelheim, *Les Luttes de Classes en URSS*, vol. 3 (I–II):

By the end of the 1970s new publications on Soviet labour in the interwar period again began to appear. Two waves can be distinguished here: the first, from 1977 to 1981, and the second from 1986 onwards. This distinction is to some degree artificial, especially in view of the limited number of titles involved. But it is clear that in the earliest of these publications⁴ much attention was paid to the composition and condition of the Soviet working class. In other words, they revealed the use of a mainly static approach. On the other hand, the post-1986 authors,⁵ including those of the seven works

1930–1941 (Paris, 1982–1983); K. E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin* (Princeton, 1978); N. Lampert, *The Technical Intelligentsia and the Soviet State* (London, 1979); E. Zaleski, *Planning for Economic Growth in the Soviet Union 1918–1932* (Chapel Hill, 1971), and J. Chapman, *Real Wages in Soviet Russia since 1928* (Cambridge, MA, 1963). Of course this list could be expanded; see the bibliographies of the books reviewed here.

⁴ Gert Meyer, "Industrialisierung, Arbeiterklasse, Stalinherrschaft in der UdSSR", *Das Argument*, 106–108 (1977–1978); John Barber, *The Composition of the Soviet Working Class, 1928–1940*, CREES Discussion Papers (Birmingham, 1978); Maria Hackenberg, *Die Entwicklung der Disziplinar- und Strafmaßnahmen im sowjetischen Arbeitsrecht im Zusammenhang mit der forcierten Industrialisierung 1925–1935* (Berlin, 1978); Gábor T. Rittersporn, "Héros du travail et commandants de la production. La campagne stakhanoviste et les stratégies fractionnelles en URSS, 1935–1936", *Recherches*, 32–33 (1978), pp. 249–275; Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934* (Cambridge, MA, 1979); Melanie Tatur, *Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsorganisation in der Sowjetunion 1921–1935* (Wiesbaden, 1979); John Barber, *Notes on the Soviet Working-Class Family, 1928–1941*, CREES Discussion Papers (Birmingham, 1980); John Barber, *The Standard of Living of Soviet Industrial Workers, 1928–1941*, CREES Discussion Papers (Birmingham, 1980); Sybille Plogstedt, *Arbeitskämpfe in der sowjetischen Industrie (1917–1933)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980); John Barber, *Housing Conditions of Soviet Industrial Workers, 1928–1941*, CREES Discussion Papers (Birmingham, 1981); John Barber, "The Standard of Living of Soviet Industrial Workers, 1929–1941", in C. Bettelheim (ed.), *L'Industrialisation de l'URSS dans les années trente* (Paris, 1981), pp. 109–122, and Gert Meyer, *Sozialstruktur sowjetischer Industriearbeiter Ende der zwanziger Jahre: Ergebnisse der Gewerkschaftsumfrage unter Metall-, Textil- und Bergarbeitern 1929* (Marburg, 1981).

⁵ Walter Süss, *Die Arbeiterklasse als Maschine. Eine Industrie-soziologische Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der aufkommenden Stalinismus* (Berlin, 1985), falls outside the scope of this review because half of it covers the period of the NEP; furthermore, it takes a mainly industrial sociological approach. John Barber, "The Development of Soviet Unemployment and Labour Policy, 1930–1941", in David Lane (ed.), *Labour and Employment in the USSR* (New York, 1986), pp. 50–65; R. W. Davies, "The End of Mass Employment", in Lane, *Labour and Employment*, pp. 19–35; R. W. Davies and S. G. Wheatcroft, "A Note on the Sources of Unemployment", in Lane, *Labour and Unemployment*, pp. 36–49; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, "Production Collectives and Communes and the 'Imperatives' of Soviet Industrialization", *Slavic Review*, XLV (1986), pp. 65–84; Donald Filtzer, "Labour and the Contradiction of Soviet Planning under Stalin: the Working Class and the Regime during the first years of Forced Industrialization", *Critique*, 20/21 (1987), pp. 71–103; Ann Todd Baum, *Komsomol Participation in the Soviet First Five-Year Plan* (Basingstoke, 1987), and Gábor T. Rittersporn, *Simplifications staliniennes et complications soviétiques. Tensions sociales et conflits politiques en URSS 1933–1953* (Paris, 1988). See also, of course, the books reviewed here.

reviewed here, made social mobility, social interaction and even forms of social resistance their central themes.

This growing interest in labour history since 1977 was just one aspect of the gradual departure in Western Soviet studies from the totalitarian model and the application of a broader range of socio-historical concepts.⁶ What interests us here primarily though is the fact that this new approach created opportunities for the introduction of new socio-historical concepts which had an important stimulating effect on the practice of labour history. Especially important was the concept of support, initiatives taken “from below” supporting Stalin’s revolution “from above”, and the concept of regime-sponsored upward mobility of workers and peasants to positions in the executive. These ideas emerged forcefully in the work of the American historian Sheila Fitzpatrick.⁷

But this social-historical reorientation did not take place exclusively in the United States, as some American colleagues seem to think.⁸ At the same time, in West Germany and England, long-term research projects were underway in which the early stages of Stalinism were being studied through the magnifying glass of industrialization.⁹ For all these approaches the industrial working class, because it had been the best-documented by Soviet publications in the interwar period, represented a very interesting layer of Soviet society. Thus labour history made a comeback: not through political engagement – although this is clearly present in the work of authors

⁶ See Hans Kaiser, “Vom ‘Totalitarismus’ – zum ‘Mobilisierungsmodell’”, *Neue Politische Literatur*, XVIII (1973), pp. 146–169; the debate in *The Russian Review*, LXV (1986), pp. 375–413, which follows on from Sheila Fitzpatrick’s “New Perspectives on Stalinism”, *ibid.*, pp. 357–373; Bernd Bonwetsch, “Stalinismus ‘von unten’: Sozialgeschichtliche Revision eines Geschichtsbildes”, *SOWI*, XVII (1988), pp. 120–124; “L’URSS actuelle. Ses origines, son analyse. Comptes rendus”, *Annales*, XL (1985), pp. 829–899, and XLII (1987), pp. 1195–1207.

⁷ See Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility*, *passim*, and her introduction to Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931* (Bloomington, 1978), pp. 6–7. Later she distanced herself from the idea of a revolution initiated from below. See Fitzpatrick, “New Perspectives”, p. 371. Chase has some revealing comments to make on this subject; see William J. Chase, *Workers, Society, and the Soviet State. Labor and Life in Moscow, 1918–1929* (Urbana, 1987), p. 300: “To ask which ‘revolution’ anticipated or precipitated the other is to skirt the most important issue. What makes the period distinctive is that the ‘revolution from above’ and the ‘revolution from below’ interacted, reinforced, and pushed each other along unforeseen lines.”

⁸ See the article by Fitzpatrick referred to in note 6 in which she names only Americans (and Gábor T. Rittersporn) in her discussion of new social historians. Compare note 23 further on.

⁹ The “Soviet Industrialisation Project” under the auspices of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) in Birmingham; the research project “Industrialisierung und Stalinisierung” promoted by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; and the project “Sozialgeschichte der UdSSR 1917–1941” at the University of Bremen.

like Filtzer and Andrle – but because a study of the working class was more rewarding than a study of other social classes in the Soviet Union.

Content and scope of their research

Four of the seven authors to be discussed here cover a period in time roughly equal to that of the first five-year plan (1 October 1928 to 31 December 1932); Kuromiya and Schröder extend this period to 1934. In three of these four works the focus is on the question of social mobility (Kuromiya, Viola, and Rassweiler, though in the last case it is the least explicit; there it would be better to speak of labour recruitment). This is not all that surprising: all three publications originated as dissertations written at Princeton University, where Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert C. Tucker both had taught.

Kuromiya's scope is the broadest of the three. He studies the condition and the mobilization of the industrial working class during the entire period of the first five-year plan and regards his work as the social and political counterweight to R. W. Davies' multi-volume series *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia* (p. xiii, n. 10). On the very first pages of this introduction Kuromiya refers to the recent discussions on "support from below" for the "revolution from above". "So uncritically have Western historians assumed that Stalin intimidated and terrorized the whole society that the question of popular support has largely escaped them (p. xvii)." So how did the Stalinist regime look for and find that support? By abrogating the policy of class conciliation which had been a feature of the NEP and proclaiming a class war in both industry and agriculture.¹⁰ This atmosphere of class war "facilitated the articulation of committed workers, Communist and Kom-somols, whose prejudices and aspirations in turn helped the political leadership to shake up the various institutions and organizations and place them under police control".¹¹

The focus of Lynne Viola's study is similar to that of Kuromiya's though it is more limited in scope. She is the first Western historian to research into the recruitment of 25,000 industrial workers to leading positions on collective farms during the first two years of a period of "massive" collectivization (1930 to 1931). By concentrating on the limited group of *dvatsatipiat-itishchniki* (limited in the sense that altogether 100,000 town workers were mobilized to participate in the collectivization, limited too in that the 25,000 represented a selective, highly qualified and politically active section

¹⁰ For an analogous use of the term "class war" see Fitzpatrick, *Education and social Mobility*, and Andrle, p. 2.

¹¹ Kuromiya, p. xiv. The last six words of this quotation are not explained here. See, however, p. 318.

of the working class), Viola hoped to build up a picture of part of the anonymous cadres who, as the vanguard of the working class, helped to push through Stalin's revolution. In this she asks, for example, whether the 25,000 really were recruited on a voluntary basis, for which category of worker did the campaign have the most appeal, and what useful effects did their presence in the countryside have.

Rassweiler's research is also quite specific. Strictly speaking its subject is not so much Soviet labour as the construction of the great dam on the Dnepr, one of the prestige projects of the first five-year plan. But the problems concerning the recruitment, schooling, and housing, as well as the political and social mobilization of the labour force committed at Dneprosro account for over half of the book.

Of the seven authors Schröder takes the broadest view. Although he realizes that as long as the Soviet archives remain closed it is not possible to "design a new, definitive version of the birth of the Stalinist system", he nevertheless, rather like a kind of *prolegomena*, sets out to study a series of socio-historical factors. In this he is primarily concerned with describing the working class and the state apparatus, economy and party, the social changes within these which culminated in the formation of a new working class, a new upper class, and the integration of the worker in the political system (pp. 9–14). One may observe that neither Rassweiler nor Schröder are explicitly researching labour history, but their results contain much data relevant to this subject.

Schröder differs sharply from his six colleagues in the way in which the data are presented. While the other six adopt an essentially traditional "verbal" method of exposition, supported now and again with relevant statistics, Schröder's 123 tables are an integral part of his analysis.

Although the contents of the books by Andrlé, Filtzer, and Siegelbaum's certainly do not overlap, they all relate to the same subject: the forms of social interaction which take place on the shop floor, in the factory, the mine, on the construction site. Andrlé and Filtzer cover the entire pre-war plan period (1928–1941); Siegelbaum is concerned with the years of the Stakhanov movement (1935–1941), though he also has a long first chapter on industrial relations from 1929 to 1935.

For Filtzer, who explicitly describes his analysis as Marxist, the concept of social resistance plays a central role. He thinks he can show that in the Soviet Union of the 1930s there were still forms of social struggle. The Soviet élite had indeed "atomized" the working class, but the workers were not entirely without means of resistance. Profiting from the fact that from 1930 onwards labour was a scarce good, workers succeeded in extracting considerable concessions from the managers on the shop floor and so were able "to appropriate considerable control over the individual labour process (work speed, quality of the product)" (pp. 1 and 116–122).¹²

Andrle's aim is to study the birth of a new working class in the 1930s, and specifically the pattern of interaction between politically instigated campaigns for industrial efficiency on the one hand, and labour–management relations on the shop floor on the other. In this way he wants to draw out the features of some “on the ground” aspects of the “revolution from above” and to describe some of the characteristics of the industrial order that became its legacy. This argument is structured more in a thematic than in a chronological fashion (Andrle is a sociologist); of the five chapters contained in his book, the two dealing with the relationship between management problems and political control and with shop-floor interactions are the most thoroughly worked out.

Siegelbaum's monograph is in fact the first generally accessible review of the Stakhanov movement. It contradicts a number of standard notions which Western authors have tended to perpetuate about the Stakhanov movement: the idea, for instance, that the Stakhanov movement was developed by the regime according to a preconceived plan (R. Conquest, M. Fainsod, D. Filtzer), the idea that the movement stimulated significant increases in production (A. Baykov, M. Dobb), and the idea that the Stakhanovites were a labour aristocracy in the Western tradition (I. Deutscher, D. Filtzer).¹³ Siegelbaum opposes these notions, which were usually based on a monocausal analysis, with the idea that labour history should not be seen in terms of the history of a single class, but in relational terms: “work itself simultaneously involves several dimensions – economic, political, ideological, and cultural – and its performance is subject to contestation, negotiation, and accommodation” (p. 7). In this sense, the central issue in his monograph is not whether the Stakhanov movement led

¹² According to Filtzer it is precisely this partial workers' control of the production process which blocked every attempt at reform after 1945 (pp. 120–121, 266–271).

¹³ For references to these authors see Siegelbaum, pp. 2–6. For Filtzer see his *Soviet workers*, ch. 7. For what is probably the first interpretation in terms of a labour aristocracy see L. Sedov, adopted by his father: N. Markin [L. Sedov], “Stakhanovskoe dvizhenie”, *Biulleten' Oppozitsii*, 47 (January 1936), pp. 4–10 (a French translation may be found in *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*, 13 (1983), pp. 104–115). Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York, 1937), pp. 123–128. A. Pasquier, *Le Stakhanovisme: L'Organisation du Travail en URSS* (Caen, 1937) is the first Western analysis published as a book. F. Benvenuti's *Fuoco sui sabotatori! Stachanovismo e organizzazione industriale in URSS: 1934–1938* (Rome, 1988) was only available to me in the form of an English summary, *Stakhanovism and Stalinism*, CREES (Birmingham, 1989). The study by Andrle being reviewed here has a not very analytical chapter on the Stakhanov phenomenon. The review by R. W. Davies of Siegelbaum's book in *Soviet Studies*, XLI (1989), pp. 484–487, cites two other articles, one written by J. P. Depretto in 1982 and a paper by John Barber, published by CREES (Birmingham, 1986). Robert Maier's *Die Stachanov-Bewegung: 1935–1938; der Stachanovismus als tragendes und verschärfendes Moment der Stalinisierung der sowjetischen Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1990), unfortunately appeared too late to be included in this review article.

to an increase in productivity, but the way in which the issue of productivity promotion was handled by the parties involved (p. 11).

Sources

It is well known that until recently Western scholars had no or, at best, only limited access to Soviet archives covering developments from 1917 onwards. This was also true for the seven authors whose works are being reviewed here. Only Viola managed to make use of Soviet archives in her research; she was able to study material relating to the Kolkhozsentr (which administered the employment of the 25,000) and the major trade unions which maintained written contact with “their” field workers. Besides this, the seven were able to peruse a number of archives which had “emigrated” to the West, like the Smolensk Party Archive (which has repeatedly turned out to be a good source of information), the Trotsky Archives and others. In her bibliography (p. 225) Rassweiler lists interviews and correspondence with people who had worked on Dneprostoi, but she does not explicitly refer to this in the text.

However, the accessibility of Soviet printed sources also remains a problem. Although the situation was improved since the 1950s in so far as a number of large libraries and special research institutions have greatly expanded their collections on interwar Soviet social history,¹⁴ the finding of certain key publications remains a *tour de force* which sometimes necessitates visits to foreign countries (including the Soviet Union).¹⁵

The question of whether it is possible to conduct research thoroughly into Soviet labour history, and more specifically into the problems posed by our seven authors, using only printed sources, can be answered with a conditional “yes”. The socio-economic experiment of enforced industrialization was accompanied by such extensive publicity – admittedly in a constantly varying mixture of propaganda and socio-economic analysis – that a reasonable amount of raw data suitable for further analysis is available.¹⁶ But towards the end of the first five-year plan, the informative value of socio-political publications starts to diminish. This is most clearly evident in the official statistics. Around 1930 four statistical economic bulletins ceased to

¹⁴ For example the Centre for Russian and East European Studies of the University of Birmingham (CREES).

¹⁵ Besides Viola, Rassweiler, Filtzer, Siegelbaum (and Kuromiya?) have, according to the prefaces of their books, visited libraries in the Soviet Union.

¹⁶ This is especially important in the case of the press, particularly for papers which represented a certain group interest, such as *Trud* (Trade Unions), *Za industrializatsiiu* (Commissariat of Heavy Industry), *Plan* (Gosplan), *Predpriiatie* (“The Managers”), *Stakhanovets*, *Dneprostoi*. Data were also published in various kinds of statistical publications, stenographic reports, sociological and economic monographs, political pamphlets, etc.

appear; from 1933 annual figures on the social composition of the party membership were no longer published. It becomes more and more difficult “making one’s way through the mythological labyrinth to get at what really happened”. But there is no need to “freeze historical research in a position of self-negation”, as Siegelbaum reminds us (p. 14).

Clearly we are not suggesting that there is no point to archival research, but it is a remarkable fact that the result of Viola’s archival research does not fundamentally change the picture presented by printed sources, and actually only supplements it in part (see the discussion below on the problems of proof). It seems doubtful whether this was a result of her being a Western researcher who therefore enjoyed more limited access to archival material. Soviet historians and sociologists writing about labour also refer primarily to printed material.¹⁷

Research findings

Considerations of space mean that we must limit ourselves here to a selection of the research findings presented by the seven authors.

The importance of the studies of Kuromiya and Schröder is that they provide for the first time thoroughly worked-out surveys of the Soviet working class during the period of the first five-year plan. Their views are generally reliable, as a rule confirm and sometimes supplement each other, and only rarely do they have opposing views. Considerable attention is paid by both authors to aspects of, and the results of, the rapid growth in the size of the working class; this growth was, as is well known, exceptional during the period 1928–1932. Thus the number of manual industrial workers grew from 2.7 million to 5.15 million and the total number of wage workers (in industry, transport, construction, agriculture, forestry and including white-collar workers and managers in all sectors of economic activity) increased from 11.6 million to 22.8 million: these figures imply, in both cases, a twofold increase. There was an increase in the total number of wage workers of 12.5 million persons (including 1.3 million replacing the dead and retired), of which 4 million (32%) came from the towns and 8.5 million (68%) from the countryside.¹⁸

¹⁷ See the often quoted O. I. Shkaratan, *Problemy sotsial’noi struktury rabocheho klassa SSSR* (Moscow, 1970), or A. I. Vdovin and V. Z. Drobyzhev, *Rost rabocheho klassa SSSR 1917–1940 gg.* (Moscow, 1976).

¹⁸ The figures describe the situation which prevailed halfway through the year; source: *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel’stvo SSSR* (Moscow, 1934), pp. 306–307. There are slight deviations in the total figures presented here compared with those from other contemporary sources. Data on the influx of workers come from *Itogi vypolneniia pervogo piatiletnogo plana* (Moscow, 1933), pp. 169–175.

In order to present a clear picture of what this massive increase entailed, both authors first describe the social characteristics of the traditional industrial workers, using the extensive trade-union census taken in the spring of 1929.¹⁹ Here Schröder's plain statistical tables are more revealing than the narrative method employed by Kuromiya,²⁰ who occasionally inserts statistical data into his text.

Furthermore, Schröder is able to compare these data with comparative data from the later trade-union census of 1932–1933 (the inquiries are not comparable on all counts). On the other hand, the impressionist Kuromiya gives a sharper picture of the entry of the “new workers” on the shop floor as well as the “crisis of proletarian identity”, the start of which he dates from 1928 onwards.

The crisis was not simply one of a cultural shock on the shop floor resulting from the differences between the “old” urban workers and the “new” labourers coming from the countryside (differences in schooling, work discipline, etc.); it also showed itself in the sharp fall in the standard of living index, which fell from 100 in 1928 to 53 in 1932.²¹ Finally, it showed itself too in the undermining of the privileged position of the older skilled workers in the workshop through an increasing application of Taylorism and wage equalization (*uravnilovka*) on the one hand, and the strong cultivation of the young yet relatively skilled “shock” workers by the regime, which regarded them as the most proletarian element and the vanguard in Stalin's “class war”.

It was indeed amongst this cohort that the “shock” actions which were intended to increase production and improve work discipline started to develop both within and outside the Komsomol from 1927 onwards. According to both authors, in the first two years initiatives were taken “from below”, but their treatment of this subject is too shallow to constitute a convincing refutation of the more traditional views, which emphasized outright or at least partial guidance by the regime.²² On the other hand, all

¹⁹ The most thorough analysis of the census to date is: Meyer, *Sozialstruktur sowjetischer Industriearbeiter*, 1981 (note 4).

²⁰ Examples of an impractical way of presenting figures may be found in Kuromiya, pp. 89–92 and 213–217.

²¹ This contradicts Schröder who dates the fall in living standards from 1930 (pp. 99–107). Schröder bases his argument on a study by U. Weissenberger, *Die Entwicklung von Realeinkommen und materieller Lage der Arbeiter und Angestellten in der Periode der Vorkriegsfünfjahrpläne (1928/29–1941)*, which was completed in 1980 and is now expected to be published in the autumn of 1990 as part of the Bremen project (see note 9).

²² Kuromiya, pp. 110–115; Schröder, pp. 110–111. For the concept of total guidance from above see Schwarz, *Labor*, pp. 188–193; for that of partial guidance from above see Carr and Davies, *Foundations*, pp. 513–515. Todd Baum, *Komsomol Participation*, pp. 24–30 holds views close to those of Carr and Davies.

the authors agree that, from 1929, in connection with the first five-year plan, the regime started strongly to encourage the shock movement and tied it to an active policy of individual and group promotion (*vydvizhenie*). However, the shock movement was rapidly watered down; on 1 March 1930 more than half of the industrial workers were shock workers, at least on paper, as Schröder rightly emphasizes.

It is noteworthy that both authors observe that social heterogeneity, which was pretty diverse on the eve of the first five-year plan, had increased even further by 1932, when the regime decided on a less “revolutionary” approach. They draw different conclusions from this however. Kuromiya sees in the restoration of order and the return of promotion based on technical expertise rather than political activism, support for the regime amongst the older skilled workers who had been brushed aside from 1928–1931. Schröder, on the other hand, believes that it was precisely the fragmentation of the working class which allowed the Stalinist group to maintain its position and expand its power base.

The perspective of Viola and Rassweiler is narrower; they give some idea of what is involved in a mobilization campaign with a specific aim – the employment of 25,000 industrial workers in the collectivization or recruitment of labour for Dneprostroi – and of all the things which can go wrong in the course of such campaigns. See, for example, Viola’s description of the crash programme to instruct the 25,000 (pp. 75–76) or her description of the non-cooperation of the local administration once they arrived in the countryside (pp. 77–89); see also Rassweiler’s description of the inability of the Dneprostroi management to organize any kind of satisfactory labour recruitment.

Now it was true that the problems met here attained unheard of proportions because the management of Dneprostroi (especially the chief engineer, Vinter) continually tried to increase the planned capacity of the hydroelectric scheme (a policy for which there was some support in the Supreme Economic Council) and attempted to compensate for the shortage of machines by employing extra manpower. This enormously expanded need for manpower was accompanied by a sudden decrease in 1930 in the traditional availability of qualified older seasonal construction workers from the countryside, as well as an influx the following year of younger, generally unskilled peasants, the majority of whom were no longer trying to obtain seasonal work but (in escaping collectivization) looking for a fixed source of income and shelter.²³ By using improved construction techniques

²³ Rassweiler bases her description of the changes in the labour supply on two informative polls which Dneprostroi held amongst the work-force in May 1930 and March 1931 and published in his in-house paper (pp. 140–141). According to these, peasant participation increased from 24.3% in 1930 to 65.1% in 1931. But those analyzing the census noted that the peasants in 1930 tended to underreport their involvement for fear

which facilitated working in the winter, management from that time on tried to solve the problem of recruitment by creating a permanent workforce. Unfortunately, this transition from seasonal to fixed labour is elaborated only in the conclusion (pp. 184–185) rather than in the main argument. Also unfortunate is the lack of any reference to another Western study of a giant construction project, Magnitogorsk;²⁴ but even so, Rassweiler's book presents a good survey of the recruitment problems at Dneprostroi, while also offering a good deal of other material.

One's judgement of Viola's study has to be less favourable however. Her description of the start of the "25,000 campaign", that is to say the recruitment of a selection of the "most advanced workers" (meaning those active in the party, Komsomol or trade-union work) from the factories, is adequate and sufficiently elaborated.²⁵ The problem of the administrative pressure brought to bear in 10–25% (the author's estimates) of the cases is handled satisfactorily (the fact that more accurate figures are not possible is not something for which the author can be reproached).²⁶ She could have paid more attention to the opposition which emerged to the policy of recruiting skilled industrial workers for agricultural work for which they were not qualified; this opposition was to be found not only amongst some of the

of being associated with the kulaks. They estimated that the proportion of peasants in 1930 was about 50%. In itself the sudden change in the labour supply from the village as reported by Rassweiler is exceptional for that period.

²⁴ Tatjana Kirstein, *Die Bedeutung von Durchführungsentscheidungen in dem zentralistisch verfaßten Entscheidungssystem der Sowjetunion. Eine Analyse des stalinistischen Entscheidungssystems am Beispiel des Aufbaus von Magnitogorsk (1928–1932)* (Berlin, 1984). Rassweiler does list two or three other German titles in her bibliography.

²⁵ A comparison with data relating to the composition of a group of 550 delegates attending the All-Union Congress of Shock Workers in Moscow, December 1929, as given by Kuromiya, pp. 319–323, results in the following:

	Shock workers	25,000ers
<i>Age</i>		
22 and younger	30.2%	9.0%
23–29	32.5%	47.1%
30–39	22.4%	32.1%
40 and older	14.9%	11.8%
<i>Women</i>	11.0%	7.7%
<i>Party or Komsomol</i>	73.5%	78.5%

Kuromiya's opinion (p. 321) that there were no particular differences between the composition of the delegations and that of the rank-and-file shock workers needs further substantiating.

²⁶ Mark von Hagen presents an opposing view in his review in *Slavic Review*, XLVIII (1989), pp. 637–640.

factory managers, sometimes acting in concert with the party cell and trade-union committee in the factory involved, but also amongst individual factory workers (pp. 46–53, 69). The descriptions she offers of the hastily organized two-week preparatory course, as well as of the lack of preparation at the places of reception for the 25,000, are convincing. However, her analysis of the functioning of the 25,000 in leading positions in collectivized agriculture (nearly 90% were appointed to collective farms – often as kolkhoz chairman) is sketchy and based on only a few sources. This was more or less inevitable because the real role of the 25,000 has been hidden from the historian by the Potemkin walls of propaganda. This in no way prevents Viola from making a number of unsubstantiated generalizations on the functioning of the 25,000. The 25,000 “had proved a success on the collective farm, because they spoke a common language with the collective farmers” (p. 158). Hence they could be seen as the “midwives at the birth of the collective farm system” (p. 178). But, unfortunately, what had begun in the period 1929–1930 as a true social revolution in the countryside had, by the end of the first five-year plan, when most of the 25,000 had returned to the factory, turned into repression (p. 4). Here Viola fails to see that in the campaign of the 25,000 and in the guise of an alliance between industrial worker and peasant, repression had been an instrument of collectivization policies right from the start.²⁷

It is on the shop floor that most of the action takes place in the studies by Andrlé, Filtzer, and Siegelbaum. Andrlé writes most extensively on the possible forms of interaction between workers and managers on the shop floor. In this he explicitly draws on the findings on this subject by sociologists (including W. G. Baldamus, M. Burawoy, W. E. Moore, and D. Roy). In his analysis he formulates the proposition that the social process of working in a factory has a distinctive aspect of its own, that shop-floor culture, meaning “the informally organized response of workers to managerial organization of ‘industrial culture’ ” (p. 125), is indigenous to industrial organization rather than to the political and economic environment. External factors, such as labour markets, trade unions or revolutions, actually do not define the social process of working within a factory. This is why shop-floor culture has a distinctive cultural aspect, which can be found in a factory whether it is in Chicago or in Stalingrad.

²⁷ It seems correct to mention the reviews of Viola’s book which have been available to me: Vladimir Brovkin in *Soviet Studies*, XL (1988), pp. 501–505; Terry Cox in *Revolutionary Russia*, I (1988), pp. 119–123; Vladimir Andrlé in *Social History*, XIV (1989), pp. 409–411; Von Hagen, *Slavic Review* (see note 26); Diane P. Koenker in *The American Historical Review*, XC (1989), pp. 1445–1446, and Stephan Merl in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, NF XXXVII (1989), pp. 295–297. Cox and Andrlé are more positive about Viola’s book than I have been; the others, if anything, are more negative.

The application of this supranational proposition is not convincing however. Andrlé does manage to raise the problem of the acculturation of millions of peasants to a higher level, by not automatically assuming that the many forms of undisciplined behaviour which took place in the factory in the 1930s (high labour turnover,²⁸ absenteeism, insubordination, alcoholism, damage to machinery) were due to a lack of culture amongst the new arrivals from the village, as Soviet and Western researchers usually do.²⁹ Reports of this from official Soviet sources are, in his view, biased (pp. 136–137). Moreover, recent studies of migrants in the Third World have shown that the acculturation of an industrial culture by those from an agrarian background can take place very rapidly, provided the labour process in the factory is organized in a way which can be easily overseen by the newcomer, and the workers are offered a privileged standard of living compared with that offered by other kinds of manual work (pp. 114–115). But it is precisely at this point that Andrlé breaks off his argument, so that the question of the application of both conditions in the Soviet Union is not considered. There can be no doubt though that he knows, just as many of his readers do, that, certainly in the 1930s, these conditions did not apply to the Soviet Union.

The author does not follow up his stimulating initiative in suggesting a supranational frame of reference for the subject of interaction on the shop floor either. The fact that shop-floor managers have to secure the cooperation of the workers if the production process is to keep moving, that the managers must hereby implicate themselves in the anti-official practices of the “game of making out” and must bend some of the rules of the bureaucratic factory organization, may be observed all over the industrial world. On the other hand, some very specific characteristics of shop-floor culture developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. These included all kinds of speed-up campaigns: socialist competition, Stakhanovism, “storming” (*shturmovchshina*), specialist-baiting (*spetseedstvo*), norm setting, protection (*blat*). Andrlé quite rightly pays much, and in general well-founded, attention to these specific phenomena, but this in itself implies that his supranational comparative approach is limited right from the start.

While Andrlé regularly looks across the border, Filtzer never leaves the domain of the Soviet Russian shop floor. This deliberate limitation of the scope of his study, combined with a careful search of the national press and a selection of regional publications (including *Rabochii Rostov* / Rostov-na-Donu, *Severnyi rabochii* / Yaroslav) for any report or vague indication of

²⁸ The most extensive statistics concerning labour turnover may be found in Filtzer, pp. 52–53. In 1930 the all-union turnover (discharges) amounted to 152.4% of the average number of people employed annually (1933: 122.4%; 1936: 87.5%).

²⁹ This also goes for Kuromiya, pp. 217, 290, Schröder pp. 77, 289–291, 300–301. In this, Rassweiler, p. 179, and Filtzer, pp. 7, 49, hold a more balanced view.

workers' unrest, has resulted in a great amount of data. Such a concentration of data and such indications of actual conflicts on the shop floor as well as details about their resolution cannot be found in any other study. In interpreting this data Filtzer uses a shop-floor interaction model which differs slightly from that of Andrlé. While Andrlé assumes that the relationship between managers and workers is to some degree symbiotic – although they are in unequal positions – and therefore that they make some concessions to each other, Filtzer's model implies that concessions are *won* from managers by workers' resistance.³⁰ In his description of workers' resistance Filtzer distinguishes two levels. In the first place there was the spontaneous, elementary, apolitical, more *individual* workers' resistance, which expressed itself by its opposition to speed-up campaigns, a high rate of labour turnover, unauthorized absenteeism, alcoholism, and the rough treatment of tools, etc. This resistance was usually spearheaded by older, skilled workers and peasant recruits. Besides this there were expressions of collective opposition, strikes and other forms of massive, spontaneous resistance resulting from anger at wage decreases, the poor quality of food, etc. The Soviet press did not usually report on this collective opposition, but the émigré press, especially the Menshevik *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, did. It is on the basis of these reports that Filtzer states that older, skilled workers participated, as well as "young people of proletarian background" and "in places [. . .] new workers [peasant recruits] who had come into contact with the older working class and had learned these forms of struggle from it" (p. 81).³¹

By 1934 the regime had succeeded in completely repressing collective workers' resistance, but only by breaking "down all collective aspects of the work process [. . .] to individualize the incentives [. . .] through shock work, socialist competition and later Stakhanovism" (pp. 117–118). In so doing, however, what was already a bad situation was made worse, for the individualization increased the workers' room for manoeuvre on the shop floor and this development was strengthened from 1930 onwards because of the permanent shortage of labour. Thus came about the paradoxical sit-

³⁰ The differences should not be exaggerated. In observing actual interactions both note comparable cases of collusive responses of workers and managers, as far as getting round the laws against unauthorized absenteeism was concerned (Andrlé, pp. 129–138, 200–201; Filtzer, pp. 112–115, 236–243).

³¹ Filtzer bases his double categorization on letters written from the USSR to the *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*, and supplements these with reports from the Soviet press. His sources refer to a total of 25 strikes and other forms of collective resistance which took place between 1929 and 1934. But Filtzer's categories are mentioned explicitly in only two of the reports (pp. 81–90). Menshevik and Filtzer's Marxist prejudices converge when it comes to crediting ex-peasants with the capacity to learn new methods of struggle. Both believe that the peasant is incapable of useful social action without help from the urban proletariat.

uation of the 1930s in which the introduction of the planned economy resulted in advance, because of the methods of implementation being used, in the weakening of the managers' grip on the production process. In order to retain some order on the shop floor the managers had to accept the late arrival and absenteeism of the workers, lax work practices, and they were forced to "manipulate work norms and wages as a partial insulation against official policies of speed-ups" (p. 119). The result was an atomization of the labour force, workers appropriating for themselves "a significant degree of control over their work" (p. 160), thereby making it impossible for those in nominal control – the managers – to exercise it in an organized and predictable manner. This gravely reduced the potential productive capacity of the Soviet economy.³²

While one must applaud Filtzer for gathering so much useful data on this topic, it is unfortunate that in analyzing it he tends too easily to generalization. Thus his claim that the workers were by and large hostile to industrialization is unfounded.³³ Furthermore, the three groups of workers identified by him in the strikes of the early 1930s cannot be found in the reports in *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik*. His equating chatting, reading newspapers in the companies' time, wandering about the shop floor, absenteeism, etc., with a significant degree of control by the workers over their work (p. 160) also seems to follow from a misunderstanding of the labour concept. This is disconcerting since his overall conclusions depend precisely on these generalizations.

Siegelbaum's most important finding is no doubt that there was no masterplan behind the Stakhanov movement. That, on the contrary, it was an "amalgam of practices, that both impinged on and were subjected to appropriation by different groups and institutions" (p. 6), and that initiatives were subjected to manoeuvres and accommodation on the shop floor, no matter which group concerned took them. This can be seen, for instance, in the fact that *Pravda* and the Commissariat of Heavy Industry (Ordzhonikidze) did not react until only a week after the coal miner Alexei Stakhanov, in the face of a challenge from his superiors, had set his famous record (making the existence of a Kremlin masterplan very unlikely). This can also be concluded from the fact that a selected group of technically extremely talented record chasers developed within a year into a mass movement in which one-third of the industrial workers was involved. This cannot easily be reconciled with the labour aristocracy described by Filtzer (pp. 181ff.).

³² Rittersporn sees similar effects in agriculture where, after collectivization, the harvest time doubled and yet the kolkhoz management attempted to reduce the level of compulsory deliveries. Rittersporn, *Simplifications staliniennes*, p. 57.

³³ According to John Barber in *Soviet Studies*, XL (1988), p. 150, and Hiroaki Kuromiya in *The Russian Review*, XLVII (1988), p. 199.

According to Siegelbaum the Stakhanov movement went through several stages of development. Its initial stage was marked by an emphasis by the movement on individual production records by a handful of qualified and fast workers, encouraged by local managers and party cadres, while the higher authorities made increasingly approving noises (September to the end of 1935). From the beginning of 1936 this situation shifted more and more towards one in which the regime used the movement simply as a means of increasing pressure on management (an element which had not, of course, been absent in the initial stage either) to intensify production. This involved making better use of underutilized capacity, through the division of labour in some cases, the combination of tasks in others, as well as by increasing the speed of work and employing other "Stakhanovite" methods, while not giving the managers the autonomy which they claimed was necessary for running the firms. After an interim stage of reconciliation (May to September 1936), the police terror used in the Great Purges (1936–1938) largely led to the replacement of Stakhanovism as a device with which to apply pressure on management: every assumed failure by any manager could be interpreted as "wrecking" activity. With this the Stakhanov movement was "marginalized", although its other aspect, the striving for organizational and technical innovation, remained untouched. This element, too, however, lost any meaning after the Purges and after the regime had again thrown its support behind management and technical personnel. What remained of Stakhanovism until 1941 can best be described as a "convenient idiom and soporific [. . .] to compensate individual workers" (p. 303).

According to Siegelbaum the mechanism of shop-floor relations continued to work throughout all these stages in the sense that there was room for manoeuvre and accommodation. This was true for the managers who, because of their "administration" of the Stakhanov movement, determined who was Stakhanovite and organized the setting of production records, etc.; it was also true for the Stakhanov workers, who were able to complain about real or imagined management opposition in the press, and for the non-Stakhanovite workers, who had the option of choosing to support or sabotage the work of the Stakhanovites. Even so, there was a shift of emphasis: the authority of the managers and foremen had clearly been reduced, while the bargaining power of the Stakhanov workers had improved strongly. "Stakhanovism thus intensified antagonism within an already fractionalized work force."³⁴ It was ironic that after the Great

³⁴ Here Siegelbaum takes issue (p. 298, n. 4) with Filtzer's view (p. 197) that "Stakhanovism has done nothing to shake up the fundamental set of relations between managers and workers on the shop floor". The polemic seems a little exaggerated because Filtzer is concerned here with deficiencies in the organization of work (supplies etc.). There is also less difference than Davies thinks between the conclusions of

Purges managerial authority down to the level of foreman had again been strengthened. But Filtzer's research indicates that accommodations with the workers in the period 1938–1940 “if not the norm, were frequent” (Siegelbaum, p. 300).

Siegelbaum's reconstruction of the Stakhanov movement seems quite convincing, but this does not mean that he provides answers to all the questions. In the case of the conclusion of the “Stakhanovite periods” campaign, for instance, he states emphatically that he cannot discern whether this happened because the periods had not served their purpose (which was to prevent further disruption of production), or because they had provoked further disruptions through their insensitive handling of management (p. 120). Nor does his use of the concept of “improvisation” offer a sufficient explanation of the motives of the Kremlin in its continuous zigzagging on the issue of Stakhanovism. However, his considerations on this point are thought provoking and the missing elements in his proof sufficiently well indicated (pp. 117–144).

Problems of proof: generalizations

In reviewing the findings of the research presented it appears that there are some problems as far as the evidence is concerned.

Viola's assumption that the 25,000 played a key role in the formation of the soviet kolkhoz structure is not supported by the facts. The printed sources to which she refers all support the official version that the agricultural workers, poor peasants and most of the middle peasants enthusiastically welcomed collectivization.³⁵ It is noteworthy that the Soviet archives, to which Viola, alone of the seven, had access, appeared to be of no relevance to this question. All she found here was an illustration of an image of the effective vanguard role of the 25,000, who were gradually being accepted by the peasants – an image which was already established during collectivization by the contemporary press.³⁶

The problem with Filtzer's interpretation of the two types of social resistance in the period 1929–1934 is not so much that this resistance did not

Siegelbaum and Filtzer concerning the disruptive effect that Stakhanovism had on industrial production (see Davies' review article, cited in note 13, p. 484).

³⁵ As is well known, Soviet historians have, by and large, also left this version behind them since 1988. See the report of the Round Table on Collectivization, held in Moscow on 24 October 1988: *Istoriia SSSR*, 3 (1989), pp. 3–62, esp. 17.

³⁶ Viola's chapter 6 “The 25,000ers at Work on the Collective Farms” has 106 notes, of which 10 refer to archives. Six of these serve, at best, only to reinforce what can be found in the printed sources; three relate to new data on the personal problems of individual members of the 25,000; one note relates to the shortage of animal feed in a particular region. None gives any information on the influence of the 25,000 on the progress of collectivization.

take place -- one can find vague indications of it in the Soviet press -- but Filtzer's identification of the working-class layers which participated. It is again interesting that Kuromiya, basing his argument *exclusively on what appeared in the Soviet press*, decides on a similar distinction when describing the opposition to shock work itself (comparable with Filtzer's less articulated, individual resistance) and describes the older, skilled workers and ex-peasants as the vanguard of this resistance. Schröder, on the other hand, uses practically the same papers employed by Kuromiya to establish a picture of "flight reactions and social protest" which virtually coincides with that of Filtzer, but he believes that "no data on the social origins and distribution by industry group of the carriers [of this resistance] are available" (pp. 303–305).

The accounts of the further course of resistance also vary. According to Filtzer only individual, less articulated opposition remained after 1934 and that even increased in intensity, while Kuromiya claims that opposition to the shock movement simply disappeared towards the end of 1929 as "both the older, skilled workers and the new, unskilled workers" began to rush to join the ranks of shock workers, "in hopes of sharing the benefits, honor and privilege accorded to the shock worker" (pp. 133–134). Schröder, too, sees the coming of integration, albeit three to four years later, through a combination of material incentives and coercion by the regime.

Problems of proof: statistics

The perestroika during the period of the first five-year plan was accompanied by a never-ending stream of statistical publications. Schröder's selection from this material has resulted in 123 tables, sometimes literally copied from Soviet sources and sometimes rearranged by himself, and it constitutes a unique compendium of Soviet social history in the 1930s. This does not mean that his six colleagues made too little use of the available statistical material. There is, however, a difference of approach: that which serves the six simply as material to illustrate their arguments forms the very essence of Schröder's work.

Schröder is also the only one who takes up the vexing question of to what extent the figures given in contemporary Soviet publications are reliable. According to him the figures up to about 1930–1931 are reasonably reliable, and after that the statistics covering the disappointing development of prices and wages and demographic data disguise the truth or become completely unreliable. On the other hand, the following continued to be reliable (at least during the course of the period covered by his study): data relating to labour inquiries, quantitative statistics on occupational structure, and figures presented by the party on its membership and social profile (pp. 14–17). But this approach to the problem of the reliability of

Soviet statistics (stated rather than argued by Schröder) is rather limited and ignores the phenomenon – shown convincingly in the case of the judicial statistics studied by Ger van den Berg – of the figures possibly being correct, but the definitions wrong, incomplete or no longer applicable.³⁷ For instance, when Schröder reproduces a table concerning unauthorized absenteeism, which shows a sharp decrease from 5.96 days in 1932 to 0.93 days per industrial worker in 1933, he ignores the possibility that the socio-judicial definition of the phenomenon of absenteeism may have changed and loses himself in speculations about more marginal causes, such as the effect of industrial modernization on the freedom of the worker to indulge in undisciplined behaviour. In fact definitions had been changed and, after the law of 15 November 1932, the figures on absence from work before and after that date are not comparable.³⁸

In looking at the social profile of the Communist Party, too, Schröder tends to ignore the “reverse side” of the statistics. In dealing with occupational structure (which in the jargon of that period meant the percentage of party members who at the time of the inquiry worked as industrial worker, peasant, or white-collar worker) he presents the figures in such a way that the percentage of industrial workers appears to grow by some seven per cent from 1927 to 1928. However, another series of much more plausible figures also exists, according to which the growth in the size of the proletariat from 1927 to 1928 was at most one per cent. Although, as is shown by an earlier publication of his, Schröder is aware of the existence of these figures, he does not comment on them.

Secondly, Schröder’s presentation ignores the changes in definition approved by the Central Committee in March 1927 and again in March 1928, when marginal changes were made in the definitions of proletarian, peasant or white-collar worker to be used by the party statisticians. This resulted in a higher figure for the proportion of the proletariat appearing in the party statistics.³⁹ All in all, Schröder’s figures are less convincing in showing that

³⁷ Ger P. van den Berg, *The Soviet System of Justice: Figures and Policy* (Dordrecht, 1985), esp. p. 347. Rassweiler is a victim of this phenomenon; for example, she mingles statistics on “workers and white-collar workers” with those on “workers” only (see tables 4 and 11, ch. 4; for her definition of labour force see p. 149, lines 23–28).

³⁸ Until the law of 15 November 1932 it was possible for employers to dismiss workers who were absent without permission for at least three days in a month. The new law made it compulsory for employers to fire every worker who was absent without permission for even one day. See Filtzer pp. 111–112 and note 205.

³⁹ The percentages were calculated every year by the statistical department of the Central Committee according to the level on 1 January. An overall party census was also organized on 10 January 1927, where the definitions which determined whether one was a worker, peasant, etc., were adjusted in order to make comparisons with the 1926 population census possible. This explains why the percentage of workers was 36.8% on 1 January 1927 and 30% on 10 January 1927 (*Sotsial'nyi i natsional'nyi sostav VKP (b)*).

there was an increase in the size of the proletarian element in the party than he thinks, although the growth percentages he gives are a fairly exact indication of the exertions of the party in this matter.

Concluding remarks

Despite the varied nature of the approaches used by the seven authors, and despite the thoughtful analyses they present, it is not unfair to conclude that the most impressive results of their research lie in their presentation and consideration of raw data from the primary source material printed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s as a contribution towards the reconstruction of Soviet society at that time. In this they have expanded our knowledge in many areas, which is not surprising in view of the limited extent of that knowledge hitherto. Their work has much new to say, especially about socio-political mobilization (shock work, Stakhanovism, the mobilization of the 25,000), labour recruitment, and interaction on the shop floor. Further research is necessary though, for instance on the influx of workers from the rural areas, on the social configuration of the countryside which led to this massive influx, on the social composition of the shock workers (in the early stages of the movement), on the standard of living, on the possibility of reconciling the sometimes contradictory statistics. It seems likely that researching local and sectoral developments will, for the time being, provide more insight than large-scale analyses, and it seems certain that Soviet archives will increasingly be used in this research. That is a pleasant prospect.

Itogi vsesoiuznoi partiinoi perepisi 1927 goda (Moscow, 1928), pp. 1–51). Since the figures for the period 1928–1932 are given as per 1 January, Schröder's choice of the 10 January statistic for 1927 is misleading. See H. H. Schröder, *Arbeiterschaft, Wirtschaftsführung und Parteidemokratie während der Neuen Ökonomischen Politik. Eine Sozialgeschichte der bolschewistischen Partei 1920–1928* (Berlin, 1982), where, on p. 337, both figures for 1927 are given. For the adjustments of March 1927 and March 1928 see T. H. Rigby, *Communist Membership in the USSR* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 116, 161–164.