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## Institutional Change in the 1970s: The Case of the USSR People's Control Committee

In the continuing debate among Western students of Soviet affairs about the direction in which the Soviet political system is moving, all participants agree that accurate analysis is imperative. How one interprets the evidence of change determines one's view of current Soviet reality and one's perception of the opportunities and threats involved in U.S.-Soviet relations. This crucial issue is addressed in the following pages by examining the current situation of an important, evolving institution, the USSR People's Control Committee (Komitet narodnogo kontrolia, or KNK). To a remarkable degree this organization, in its twelfth year of existence, demonstrates the continuing process of de-Stalinization in the Soviet polity. The committee stands today as a forceful reminder of how far the present regime has moved away from the Stalinist days when coercion by the political apparatus, or "control from above," was the principal means of achieving the compliance of the masses. At present, 9.5 million public inspectors provide the state inspectorate with a massive instrument of "control from below." Even more important, "People's Control" is playing a growing role in the Soviet political system, as decisionmakers increasingly rely upon KNK mechanisms and personnel to provide information, advice, suggestions, and even legislative proposals "from below."

This paper will survey the orientation, activities, and recent structural changes of the People's Control Committee, focusing in particular upon the all-union committee of seventeen members—including its staff personnel and four hundred volunteers—appropriately headquartered on Kuibyshev Street in Moscow.<sup>1</sup> This examination is particularly timely because of a series of actions taken by Soviet leaders, beginning in 1974 with the Supreme Soviet elections, that effected important changes in the agency's personnel and organization. These actions included the long-delayed appointment of a new KNK chairman, an al-

1. V. V. Kuibyshev was the first chairman of the joint Party Central Control Commission and Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, created in 1923, which was the forerunner and model for Khrushchev's Party-State Control Committee (November 1962–December 1965), now the People's Control Committee. For a brief account of the 1965 transformation, see Jan S. Adams, "Soviet Inspectors General: An Expanding Role?," *Soviet Studies*, 20, no. 1 (July 1968): 106–11.

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This article is based on material found in chapter 7 of Jan S. Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union: The People's Control Committee* (New York and London: Praeger, 1977). The author would like to thank Ohio State University for financial support, and the USSR People's Control Committee for the cooperative assistance that made it possible to interview at length more than sixty control officials and workers in Moscow and Leningrad in December 1975. The principal institutional settings included the USSR KNK, the Zhdanovskii Raion KNK in Moscow, the editorial offices of *Izvestiia*, the Kirov Watch Factory in Moscow, the Lenin State Library, the Leningrad City KNK, and Elektrosila Production Association in Leningrad.

most complete reconstitution of the highest Committee of People's Control, and a major reorganization of the USSR KNK apparatus. They were accompanied, on the eve of the Twenty-fifth Party Congress (in October 1975), by much discussion about increasing the effectiveness and the role of People's Controllers in helping the nation to achieve the anticipated goals of the Tenth Five-Year Plan. Whether these events are viewed negatively, as indicating the existence of shortcomings urgently in need of remedies, or positively, as demonstrating the leadership's confidence in the Control Committee's ability to improve upon an already satisfactory record, it is clear that they were intended to increase the KNK's effectiveness in achieving national objectives of high priority to party and government leaders.

Since no institution exists in a void, it is essential to set the KNK in the broader context of the 1960s and 1970s and to outline briefly some of the main policy concerns and problems that led the leadership to recast the KNK in the way that it has. The most important policy concerns have been political and economic.

Political concerns figured principally in the reorganization (in December 1965) of Khrushchev's Party-State Control Committee (Komitet partiino-gosudarstvennogo kontroliia, or KPGK) into the KNK. At just this moment, the eye of the political storm had focused upon Alexander Shelepin, chairman of the KPGK. Newly elected (in November 1964) to the Presidium of the Central Committee, already a secretary of the Central Committee and a deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, Shelepin also enjoyed unique political opportunities as chairman of the KPGK. The KPGK was a superorganization standing outside of, but encompassing, the dual hierarchies of party and state and possessing the dangerous capability of achieving a position superior to both. For the chairman, political leverage existed in the right of the KPGK to carry out surveillance and checking, to punish and fire (that is, eliminate opposition and, as a corollary, build patronage) in all branches of the nation's economy and administration. The chairmanship of the KPGK in fact housed a power potential that with shrewd manipulation might well have challenged the party Secretariat. It was, moreover, an institution which in the past had frequently been drawn into political infighting at the highest levels, and at local levels tended to usurp control functions traditionally exercised by local party agencies.<sup>2</sup>

The reorganization of the KPGK (which eliminated the party as an integral part of the formal structure of the committees) and Shelepin's replacement as chairman by Pavel Kovanov (who, unlike Shelepin, brought to the Control Committee no personal aura of authority) constituted a political master stroke on the part of Shelepin's political opponents, neutralizing the dual threat presented to

2. On the KNK's embroilment in high-level political infighting, see Grey Hodnett, "Khrushchev and Party-State Control," in Alexander Dallin and Alan F. Westin, eds., *Politics in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1966), pp. 113-64. For a discussion of the KPGK's jurisdictional disputes with local party agencies, see Paul Cocks, "The Rationalization of Party Control," in Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, 1970), pp. 175-76; Paul Cocks, "Politics of Party Control: The Historical and Institutional Role of Party Control Organs in the CPSU" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1968), pp. 629-32; and Christian Duevel, "The Dismantling of Party and State Control as an Independent Pillar of Soviet Power," *Bulletin of the Institute for the Study of the USSR*, 13, no. 3 (Munich, 1966): 3-18.

them by Shelepin and his committee. This reorganization substantially weakened the political authority which the KNK had enjoyed as a party agency. When the KNK Statute appeared in December 1969, it was clear that the KNK was no longer capable of becoming involved in high-level politics as a threatening, independent source of power, and that it had been redesigned to serve the party simply as an obedient administrative state agency.

By this time it was also clear that the economic concerns of the Soviet leadership increasingly guided the reshaping and the activities of the new KNK agency. In an unpublished speech to the December 1969 Central Committee plenum, Brezhnev defined what was to become the major thrust of his policies for the early 1970s: peace abroad and concentration upon domestic affairs in an all-out effort to arrest lagging economic growth. Soviet references to this speech indicate that he forcefully criticized deficiencies in agriculture and the waste and inefficiency that were undermining the higher levels of productivity in industry. Specific targets of his criticism were party organizations (for not giving proper guidance to economic activities) and People's Control agencies (for failing to prevent economic losses).<sup>3</sup> Following the December plenum, the KNK was sharply criticized for inadequately monitoring economic objectives and for not having worked hard enough to prevent production shortages in the important areas of fuel, power, metals, and cement.<sup>4</sup> This kind of criticism indicated that the Soviet leadership expected the KNK to pursue its economic objectives more vigorously in the 1970s. The replacement in 1971 of KNK chairman Kovanov by Politburo member G. I. Voronov (chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers since 1962) appeared to be a further effort to strengthen its economic orientation.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime, far from abandoning the substance and intent of Khrushchev's bold reincarnation of Lenin's workers' and peasants' inspectors, continued to support volunteer inspectors as a useful complement to the state control establishment.<sup>5</sup> This was evidenced by the gradual but steady growth of the membership of the KNK's public component during this period. In the KNK's first six years (1966–71), the membership of Groups and Posts, where most of the volunteers are located, grew at an average rate of 8 percent per year; between October 1971 and January 1976, this growth continued at a slower but constant annual rate of 4 percent. Thus, as shown in table 1, when the KPGK was transformed into the KNK it comprised about 5 million public inspectors. By October 1971 this volunteer membership had climbed to more than 8 million.<sup>6</sup> During the 1971 elections,

3. See "Soviet Economic Failures Affect Party Unity," *Radio Free Europe Research Report*, no. 0541 (Munich, April 3, 1970), p. 2; and V. I. Turovtsev, *Narodnyi kontrol'* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 37–38, 156.

4. *Sovetskaia Belorussia*, June 23, 1970.

5. Jerry F. Hough notes that the "widespread impression of a post-Khrushchev counter-revolution against popular participation in decision-making" must reckon with a steady upswing during the past two decades of statistics related to the numbers of Soviet citizens joining the party, the Komsomol, local soviets as deputies and activists, and other "independent organizations," as well as NK agencies (Jerry F. Hough, "Political Participation in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies*, 28, no. 1 [January 1976]: 4 and 8). Lenin's Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate existed from 1920 to 1934.

6. A. Tuzhikov, "V narodnye kontrolery—dostoinykh," *Partiinaia zhizn'*, 1971, no. 19, p. 40.

Table 1. *Volunteer Membership in the USSR Party-State Control Committee, 1963–65, and in the USSR People's Control Committee, 1965–77*

Date	Groups	Posts	Members
March 1963	142,000	227,000	under 2,000,000
August 1963	193,000	323,000	3,000,000
July 1964	260,000	500,000	4,300,000
1965	284,000	502,000	more than 4,700,000
1969	(900,000 Groups and Posts)		just under 7,000,000
October 1971	470,000	595,000	more than 8,000,000
January 1974	545,000	648,000	more than 9,000,000
January 1976	595,000	682,000	9,500,000
January 1977	649,000	659,000	<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Data unavailable.

Sources: March 1963: *Pravda*, March 22, 1963; August 1963: *Pravda*, August 3, 1963; July 1964: *Pravda*, July 31, 1964; 1965: *Spravochnik narodnogo kontrolera* (Moscow, 1965), p. 83 (*Pravda*, December 13, 1965, claims 5,000,000); 1969: V. A. Gorin and V. T. Stepanov, *Organy narodnogo kontrolya v SSSR* (Moscow, 1969), p. 20; *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1969, no. 2, p. 9; October 1971: *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1971, no. 19, p. 41; January 1974: V. I. Turovtsev, *Narodnyi kontrol' v sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* (Moscow, 1974), p. 99; January 1976: *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1976, no. 8, p. 27; January 1977: A. M. Shkol'nikov, "Povyshat' effektivnost' raboty organov narodnogo kontrolya," *Kommunist*, 1976, no. 18, p. 26.

moreover, new Groups and Posts were introduced into large schools, village soviets, and other organizations. Enterprises were instructed to create factory-wide Groups, taking care to avoid overlapping membership with shop Groups. According to KNK estimates, 56 million citizens took part in the election meetings.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, the ranks of the People's Controllers, growing more slowly, reached 9.5 million by the organization's tenth anniversary in December 1975. This did not include the 20 million people annually drawn into ad hoc mass inspections or consulted informally as technical specialists.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, while the regime evidently felt that volunteer inspectors could usefully serve important national objectives, after 1975 there were new signs of the regime's reservations about the trustworthiness of the *nonparty* volunteer inspector. In the past these reservations had been indicated by the insistence of party leaders and KNK officials that local party activists assume leadership posts in KNK volunteer agencies. Thus, by December 1976, more than 90 percent of the chairmen of NK Groups were said to be members of party bureaus, party committees, or deputy secretaries of their party organizations.<sup>9</sup> In addition, after 1975, new emphasis was placed upon increasing party saturation of the

7. V. Churaev, deputy chairman, USSR KNK, "Povyshat' aktivnost' grupp i postov narodnogo kontrolya," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1973, no. 23, p. 29.

8. Interview with Ivan Petrovich Burmistrov, deputy head of the Organization Department of the USSR KNK, December 9, 1975; confirmation of Burmistrov's membership total appears in "Otchety vybory grupp i postov," *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1976, no. 8, p. 27.

The inspection contingent of the Komsomol—the *Prozhektor* (Searchlight)—had grown as well. According to Oleg Anatol'evich Il'in, deputy head of the department of *Komsomol'skii prozhektor*, of the All-Union Komsomol Central Committee, the 500,000 *Prozhektor* detachments in December 1975 contained 4 million Komsomol members—that is, one out of nine Komsomol members had enlisted in the *Prozhektor*—and one in four *Prozhektoristy* belonged to an NK unit (interview with Il'in, Moscow, December 9, 1975).

9. A. Shkol'nikov, "Povyshat' effektivnost' raboty organov narodnogo kontrolya," *Kommunist*, 1976, no. 18, p. 28.

KNK's public component. Previously, party members had typically constituted about one-third of the membership of Groups and Posts. By December 1976, 4 million of the 9.5 million People's Controllers were party members, and another million were Komsomol members; party and Komsomol saturation of the KNK popular contingent thus exceeded 50 percent. This was a major commitment on the part of the CPSU, involving the time and efforts of more than one-fourth of the party's rank-and-file membership. The magnitude of party involvement demonstrated the importance that party leaders attributed to the work of the KNK. It seems clear that the party leadership, overwhelmingly preoccupied with the achievement of state objectives in the economic sphere, has concluded that the KNK has made significant contributions to the economic effort and will continue to do so.

Other evidence supporting this view can be found in the staff changes and reorganizations of the USSR KNK that began in 1974. Of first importance was the appointment, on July 26, 1974, of Aleksei Mikhailovich Shkol'nikov to fill the post of chairman. Because of the significance of this assignment for the orientation and operation of the KNK, Shkol'nikov's credentials as an administrator deserve careful examination.

In the main, Shkol'nikov's record is that of a quietly competent party-state administrator with a long successful career in a succession of posts. Born on January 15, 1914, of Great Russian peasant stock, he graduated from an industrial *tekhnikum* at the age of nineteen and spent the first ten years of his professional life (1933–43) working in industry, as shift foreman, senior craftsman, section manager, and finally chief power engineer in a factory in Perm oblast.<sup>10</sup> During this time he also completed three years of correspondence courses at an industrial academy and, in 1940, joined the Communist Party.

Entering full-time party work in 1943, he spent the next twenty-three years in the party oblast organizations of no less than a half-dozen Russian Republic oblasts. During the last fourteen years of this period, after completing a three-year program at the Higher Party School, Shkol'nikov officiated in the demanding role of obkom first secretary at three different locations: first in Tambov (1952–55), next in Voronezh (1955–60), and finally in Stalingrad (1960–66). As an obkom first secretary during Khrushchev's ascendancy, Shkol'nikov focused his attention upon agriculture; and, accordingly, when the Stalingrad oblast party organization was divided into industrial and agricultural sectors, he chose the position of rural first secretary (November 1962–November 1964). His speeches at Central Committee plenums and party congresses during the 1960s were filled with details of bountiful harvests and hardheaded demands for the necessary investment funds to improve agricultural production.<sup>11</sup> In 1966, this full-time party professional stepped into the government apparatus as first deputy chair-

10. The biographical information in this section comes primarily from *Who's Who in the USSR 1965–1966*, ed. Andrew I. Lebed, Heinrich E. Schulz, and Stephen S. Taylor (New York, 1966); from *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR: Sed'moi sozyv* (Moscow, 1966); from Philip D. Stewart, *Political Power in the Soviet Union* (Indianapolis, 1968); and from Soviet press notices.

11. See, for example, his speeches to the Twenty-first Party Congress (*Izvestiia*, February 5, 1959), to the Twenty-second Party Congress (*Pravda*, October 28, 1961), and to the Central Committee plenum (*Pravda*, March 9, 1962).



man of the Russian Republic Council of Ministers, where he remained for the next eight years, until he was tapped for the chairmanship of the KNK at the age of sixty.

Although Shkol'nikov's list of job titles describes his competence as an administrator, it does not tell the whole story. Other evidence attests to his special talents as legislator and committeeman. In his roles as delegate to the USSR Supreme Soviet (since 1953), member of the CPSU Central Committee (since 1956), and delegate to CPSU congresses (since 1952), he has consistently gravitated toward certain types of activity. Thus, prior to 1974, Shkol'nikov not only enjoyed a long working relationship with the inner circles of management in the government and party apparatus, but also assisted in the examination of legislative proposals, in the critical and sensitive work of framing policy decisions, and in the organizational work of prestigious party meetings.<sup>12</sup> His subsequent appointment to the KNK was undoubtedly an indication of his superiors' recognition of his skill and experience in handling legislative and central management problems.

It is also likely that Brezhnev and the Politburo majority selected Shkol'nikov because they believed that he understood how to move the KNK in the direction they wanted it to go.<sup>13</sup> In this regard it is significant that, unlike the first two chairmen of the USSR KNK (Shelepin and Kovanov), Shkol'nikov was called upon during most of his working career to concern himself with economic achievement. Not only did he spend ten years working in industry, but, as an obkom first secretary, he found himself on the economic firing line, personally experiencing the rough impact of Khrushchev's vigorous efforts to force party secretaries to take direct responsibility for production decisions and failures. In contrast, Shelepin spent the better part of his career in the Komsomol, and Kovanov, upon leaving the army after World War II, worked for twelve years in the Central Committee apparatus and for six years in the ideologically sensitive

12. Specifically, as a member of the Supreme Soviet, Shkol'nikov served on the Legislative Proposals Commission of the Council of the Union, 1958–62 and 1966–74, and on the Foreign Affairs Commission, 1962–66 (*Izvestiia*, March 28, 1958; *Pravda*, April 24, 1962; and *Deputaty Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, p. 500). On March 20, 1974, he reported to a joint meeting of the Legislative Proposals Commission on revisions of the "Principles of Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics on Administrative Responsibility" (*Izvestiia*, March 21, 1974). At party meetings, moreover, he participated in the commissions that prepared the summary resolutions of the following party congresses (starting in 1956) and plenums (starting in 1962): Twentieth Party Congress (*Pravda*, February 21, 1956), Twenty-first Party Congress (*Pravda*, February 4, 1959), Twenty-second Party Congress (*Pravda*, October 28, 1961), November 1962 CPSU Central Committee plenum (*Pravda*, November 22, 1962), March 1965 CPSU Central Committee plenum (*Stenograficheskiĭ otchet*, March 24–26, 1965, p. 87), and Twenty-fourth Party Congress (*Pravda*, April 6, 1971). Finally, as a member of congress presidiums and secretariats, he helped to arrange the agenda of successive all-union congresses (Twenty-second CPSU Congress Presidium [*Pravda*, October 18, 1961] and Twenty-fourth CPSU Congress Secretariat [*Pravda*, March 31, 1971]).

13. This is not to imply that the Brezhnev policy represents an abrupt break with the past. Shelepin and his deputy chairman, V. I. Zaluzhnyi, were also concerned with economic goals and appeared to value the KNK as a mechanism for motivating the Soviet citizen to higher levels of achievement. The differences between earlier leaders and Shkol'nikov are essentially differences in the *relative* emphases placed upon parallel goals. This topic is dealt with more exhaustively in Jan S. Adams, *Citizen Inspectors in the Soviet Union: The People's Control Committee* (New York and London, 1977).

post of second secretary in the Georgian Republic, before moving into control work. Both leaders were inclined by training and experience to emphasize the task of socialization, an activity they were professionally best qualified to deal with. Problems of economic achievement were less familiar to them and more likely to be assigned secondary status. It is not surprising, therefore, that under their guidance the agency's economic objectives were pursued primarily through the indirect, long-range strategy of socializing the worker.

In the mid-1970s, Soviet leaders appeared far less inclined than Khrushchev had been to rely upon the dynamism of utopian rhetoric and the futuristic visions of the 1961 party program to propel the economy forward. The Brezhnev-Kosygin regime was determined to concentrate upon the immediate achievement of concrete economic goals, and the choice of the new KNK chairman was congruent with this direct and realistic approach.

To an operation that essentially lacked sustained, strong leadership since Shelepin's departure in 1965, Shkol'nikov brought a useful measure of personal prestige, and he quickly displayed signs of being a firm, "take-hold" administrator. Evidence of his forcefulness was demonstrated by several personnel changes and reorganizations effected within the KNK apparatus, indicating that he was moving purposefully to put his administrative house in order.

Although the membership of the new USSR KNK elected at the Ninth Supreme Soviet in July 1974 was not formally announced, several appointments and dismissals were published the following year: first, the appointments in June of A. I. Shitov, as first deputy chairman, and K. V. Danilenko, as deputy chairman, and within a month the release of an incumbent deputy chairman, Iu. A. Polenov.<sup>14</sup> (Shitov, it should be noted, had been associated with Shkol'nikov in Volgograd, where Shitov served from 1964 to 1967 as first secretary of the City Party Committee.) This was followed by another shuffle during the period from August to October: I. D. Konakh and V. G. Khor'kov joined Shkol'nikov's staff as deputy chairmen, displacing the last of Shelepin's deputies, V. I. Zaluzhnyi.<sup>15</sup> Thus, by December 1975, the new committee had taken shape:

- (1) chairman, Aleksei Mikhailovich Shkol'nikov
- (2) first deputy chairman, Aleksandr Ivanovich Shitov
- (3) deputy chairman, Viktor Mikhailovich Churaev
- (4) deputy chairman, K. V. Danilenko
- (5) deputy chairman, I. D. Konakh
- (6) deputy chairman, V. G. Khor'kov
- (7) manager, Organization Department, USSR KNK, I. D. Zhuravaev
- (8) secretary of the Trade Unions, Aleksei Vasil'evich Viktorov
- (9) secretary, Komsomol All-Union Central Committee, V. S. Iaroshovets
- (10) deputy editor, *Pravda*, Aleksei Illarionovich Lukovets
- (11) deputy editor in chief, *Izvestiia*, Aleksei Vasil'evich Grebnev
- (12) chairman, Moscow City KNK, K. N. Kosulnikov
- (13) chairman, Ukrainian KNK, Vasili Stepanovich Kutsevov

14. *Sobranie postanovlenii pravitel'stva SSSR*, nos. 11 and 13 (1975).

15. *Ibid.*, nos. 16 and 18 (1975).

- (14) chairman, Belorussian KNK, Mikhail Ivanovich Lagir
- (15) chairman, Kazakh KNK, Petr Semenovich Kantseliaristov
- (16) chairman of a kolkhoz in the Moscow oblast, V. F. Isaev
- (17) worker from Leningrad, V. A. Smirnov, Hero of Socialist Labor.

The extent to which the committee's membership as a whole reflected Shkol'nikov's preferences is, of course, impossible to say; nevertheless, four of the five deputy chairmen were his personal appointees.

Another action attributable to Shkol'nikov was the major reorganization of the KNK apparat in November 1975. On November 14, TASS announced that the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet had formed a People's Control Committee for the Russian Federation. This notice was followed three days later by a terse TASS explanation that the measure was aimed at "improving the coordination of work in the republic's oblast organs of people's control."<sup>16</sup>

Until this time the Russian Republic had been the only union republic without a republic-level People's Control Committee. Its oblast committees were administered directly by the USSR KNK's Organization Department. For the all-union committee, such a burden, added to its other responsibilities, may well have proved intolerable. Thus, although the delegation of responsibility for day-to-day coordination of the Russian oblast operations was in principle a decentralization of the KNK central apparat, the reorganization was probably designed to improve the ability of the Organization Department—and Shkol'nikov himself—to maintain more effective oversight and policy direction of the operations of the Russian Republic control network, a move which would strengthen the authority of the committee chairman.<sup>17</sup> In point of fact, Shkol'nikov, as first deputy chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers from 1966 until 1974, had been in an excellent position to observe any shortcomings which the control operations in the RSFSR oblasts might have exhibited.<sup>18</sup> It is most likely, therefore, that he initiated the November 1975 reorganization as a forceful attempt to improve the operation of the NK agencies in the RSFSR, to lighten the burden of the all-union committee, and to simplify the supervisory responsibilities of the USSR KNK chairman.

A second reorganization affecting the staff apparat of the USSR KNK also took place at this time, reducing its fifteen departments to fourteen:<sup>19</sup> the Organization Department, the General Department, the Bureau of Complaints and Proposals,<sup>20</sup> and departments for each of eleven areas of economic and social

16. *Radio Liberty Research*, RL 474/75, November 17, 1975.

17. A Radio Liberty analyst asserts, however, that it is "difficult to assume that Shkol'nikov would have proposed any such reorganization of the people's control organs himself, since it amounts to a diminution of his central 'control empire' in Moscow" (*ibid.*).

18. *Ibid.*

19. Much of the information in this section is based on the author's interview with I. P. Burmistrov in Moscow, December 1975, which was a follow-up to an interview in July 1973 with the deputy head of the Information Department of the USSR KNK in Moscow, Vladimir Timofeevich Stepanov.

20. It is interesting to note that the number of citizen contacts recorded by the Bureau of Complaints and Proposals between January 1974 and July 1975 (430,000 letters and 580,000 visitors) compared favorably with the volume of mail received by *Izvestiia's* Department of Letters. In 1975, according to Deputy Editor Grebnev, *Izvestiia* received an average of 1,500



activity, including Chemical and Oil Processing Industries; Heavy Industries; Construction and Construction Industries; Machine Construction Industries; Transport and Communications; Light and Food Industries; Agriculture; Trade and Public Catering; Planning and Financial organs; Science, Culture, and Health Care; and Military and Administrative bodies. The fifteenth department prior to the reorganization had been the Information Department, which now became a subsection of the Organization Department.

The Organization Department, shorn of its former responsibility for monitoring the work of the Russian Republic NK oblast committees, was still the most important of the departments, and it was the only one whose head was a member of the all-union committee. In December 1975, the Organization Department consisted of three subdivisions: Press and Communications, General Oversight, and Methods. The mission of the Press and Communications Subsection was to publish and disseminate control literature. The Subsection for General Oversight was responsible for monitoring and coordinating the work of all the control branches across the country. And the Methods Subsection was charged with generalizing control experience, improving control methods in various sectors of Soviet administration, and working with cadres.<sup>21</sup>

Shkol'nikov's reorganization of the KNK and reshuffling of personnel at the highest level were accompanied by a press campaign, initiated in September 1975, calling for a strengthening of the party's leadership over KNK agencies from the republic level down and for an improvement in the effectiveness of KNK operations. The substance of the message was expressed in a series of articles and in a widely publicized Central Committee resolution assessing the work of the Latvian Republic People's Control Committee.<sup>22</sup>

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letters a day, or over one-half million per year. On this basis, the USSR KNK Bureau could legitimately claim to be attracting a sizable volume of citizen input related to questions of improving economic production processes, management practices, and many other matters. Control officials repeatedly emphasized the specialized character of the majority of the messages they received and insisted that in cases of genuine grievances public criticism often revealed sources of mismanagement that led to correction (based on interviews at the USSR KNK and the editorial offices of *Izvestiia*, December 9 and 12, 1975).

21. The comments of a staff inspector in the Methods Subsection are worth quoting for the suggestion they give of the magnitude of the assignments of the Organization Department, and by implication, of the all-union NK Committee as a whole. During an interview, Inspector Vladimir Il'ich Babentsev explained that his current assignment was devoted to the analysis and improvement of the inspection methods of NK Groups in the ministries. This work, he said, "is extremely complicated, chiefly owing to the fact that each ministry has quite literally hundreds of firms under its direction." Babentsev has described one phase of this work in his article, "Gruppy narodnogo kontroliia v proizvodstvennykh ob'edineniakh," in S. G. Berlin, ed., *Gruppy narodnogo kontroliia v sfere upravleniia* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 51-62.

22. See, for example, the editorial in *Izvestiia*, September 12, 1975; and "O partiinom rukovodstve organami narodnogo kontroliia v Latviiskoi SSR," *Partiinaia zhizn'*, 1975, no. 17, pp. 5-7. Follow-up articles appeared in November: "Partiinye organizatsii i narodnyi kontrol'," *Partiinaia zhizn'*, 1975, no. 22, pp. 48-53; and "Pravo kontroliia obiazvaet," *Pravda*, November 19, 1975. It does not appear that the Latvian NK operation was chosen as a target because it deserved special censure, but rather because the campaign required a concrete focus. Comments by local NK officials in Moscow and Leningrad in December 1975 clearly indicated their understanding that the Latvian articles were intended as instructions for all NK agencies. In subsequent months, party meetings throughout the country repeatedly referred to the Latvian case. See, for example, the article in *Zaria vostoka*, February

The Latvian KNK operation was praised for its generally businesslike attitude and performance, which were credited mainly to the attentive support of local party organs. It was also praised for its proper selection of cadres.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, however, organs of People's Control were criticized for still "failing to measure up to their potential for strengthening the supervision of fulfillment over all parts of the economy and of cultural building."<sup>24</sup> The primary offense was seen as the tendency of KNK agencies to register shortcomings mechanically, without taking measures to correct them. On this score the Latvian NK organs had allegedly failed to analyze the *causes* of economic shortcomings, a practice which was recommended as a preventive measure as well as a solution. In general terms, the Latvian message called upon People's Controllers to pursue their economic targets with greater energy and purpose.<sup>25</sup>

Concurrent with the party's press campaign at the close of 1975, NK officials were preparing for the sixth biennial report-and-election meetings held throughout the country during March and April 1976. Although one aim of these elections is to draw more new members into the organization in order to broaden the educative impact of control work, control officials have acknowledged that not all workers are sufficiently principled, interested, or committed to serve as people's inspectors.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, those who serve faithfully can frequently expect to be retained at their posts. At the giant Elektrosila Production Association in Leningrad, at least 40 percent of the members of existing Groups and Posts are customarily reelected. It seems likely that this percentage prevails generally, for the experience of dedicated inspectors provides necessary guidance and continuity to the work of the Groups and Posts. Leadership positions, in particular, are often retained by conscientious workers. The chairman of the central association NK Group of Elektrosila held his chairmanship for six years and worked as a People's Controller in the plant for thirteen years. In recognition of his service, he received the NK Award of Merit.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, the report-and-election meetings in the spring of 1976 completed the process, begun with the ninth convocation of the Supreme Soviet in 1974,

17, 1976, p. 2, on the work of Georgian party units in strengthening party guidance over NK agencies in accord with the Latvian decree, and similar references in *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1976, no. 8, p. 27; *Pravda*, April 13, 1976; and *Izvestiia*, April 21, 1976.

23. In the republic, thirty-five out of the forty-one chairmen of NK committees were elected to gorkom and raikom bureaus; almost half of the committee members are deputies of soviets, almost 90 percent of the leaders of Groups are deputy secretaries or members of the bureaus of primary party organizations (see *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1975, no. 17, p. 5).

24. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

25. This message was underscored in December by a Central Committee plenum, which discussed the difficulties of monitoring the economy and the necessity for NK organs to help resolve these problems. Speaking of that plenum and looking toward the upcoming Twenty-fifth Party Congress, Ivan Burmistrov prophesied that NK organs would be asked to intensify their role in the achievement of the new five-year plan.

26. In this connection it is worth recalling that 4 million of the 9.5 million People's Controllers are Communist Party members.

27. With respect to awards, it is interesting that one chairman of an NK Committee in Leningrad, Nikolai Nikolaevich Rusakov, received the Order of Lenin for his participation in the work of the KNK. "This award," said Vladimir Nikolaevich Egorov, chairman of the Leningrad City KNK, "shows the respect of our leaders for our work" (interview at Smol'nyi, headquarters of the Leningrad City and Oblast KNK, December 15, 1975).

of the reconstitution of the USSR KNK membership from top to bottom. Reorganized and with new leadership, the committee gave the appearance of starting its second decade with vigor and a clearly defined sense of direction acquired under the Brezhnev-Kosygin regime.

In December 1975, *Partiinaiia zhizn'* summarized "the main task of People's Controllers" as that of "checking the factual fulfillment of directives of party and government in the areas of the *economy*, of economic and cultural construction."<sup>28</sup> Strong reaffirmation of the leadership's commitment to economic goals was subsequently expressed by Brezhnev at the Twenty-fifth Party Congress when, ranking the tasks of the party cadres, he placed economic activities first, even ahead of the party's several educational and political assignments.<sup>29</sup> Instructive articles simultaneously appeared which directed control officials and volunteers to give priority in their work to introducing new technology into production processes, increasing labor productivity, improving quality of product, lowering production costs, and eliminating waste. Thus the primary object of KNK surveillance in the 1970s was the nation's economy, but the definition of economic objectives was broad. KNK inspections initiated by party and government decrees concerned such widely disparate matters as consumer goods and services, water pollution, administrative reform, transport, energy conservation, agricultural procurements, and the development of rural industry.<sup>30</sup>

Given these objectives, how were NK agencies proceeding to achieve them? During extensive conversations with the author in December 1975, KNK officials provided significant insights into the major activities and concerns of the all-union committee.<sup>31</sup> Five general areas were discussed: (1) the investigations initiated at the request of central party and government agencies, often directed toward specific branches of the economy; (2) the KNK's participation in the planning process; (3) the committee's substantial and varied legislative efforts; (4) actions concerned with improving the conditions of management; and (5) the KNK's work with ministries. This list illustrates not only the immense scope of the committee's activity, but also its special interests and priorities. Moreover, as the following brief elaboration of KNK activity will show, the all-union committee, designed primarily as an economic and administrative inspectorate, by the mid-1970s had developed a political role as well.

The first area of activity—investigations initiated at the government's request—primarily concerns the systematic monitoring of the performance of economic ministries in fulfilling specific party and government directives. In addition, the committee is frequently asked to investigate a particular problem within one or more branches of the economy. In 1975 the KNK looked into such diverse economic matters as the quality of output in the synthetic fibers industries, economical use of energy resources in textile industries, pricing policies of trade

28. *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1975, no. 22, p. 50; emphasis added.

29. *Pravda*, February 25, 1976.

30. See, for example, *Partiinaiia zhizn'*, 1973, no. 23, p. 28; *Izvestiia*, July 5, 1973; and editorial in *Pravda*, December 8, 1973.

31. The following brief overview of KNK activities in 1975 is essentially a summary of the carefully considered but spontaneous responses of KNK officials to the question of what major activities were of greatest concern to the all-union committee currently and during the preceding year.

establishments, the care and use of fertilizers in agriculture, and methods of livestock care, including barn construction and mechanization. These investigations were above all fact-finding missions, which identified problems and channeled information concerning these problems to party and government decisionmakers.

The second area—preparation of budget and economic production plans—is a perennial function of the KNK and of its subordinate committees. For the all-union committee, the major purpose of planning investigations is to seek out hidden resources which can be reported to Gosplan. But the committee does more than simply investigate. On the basis of its inspections, the committee devises proposals for the more effective use of labor and materials. The proposals are forwarded to Gosplan annually and, if approved, are incorporated into Gosplan's requests to the government for inclusion in the annual plan. NK committees at the republic level follow similar procedures. According to Burmistrov, hundreds of millions of rubles are saved annually by the participation of NK committees in the planning process.<sup>32</sup>

The third area of KNK activity, legislative work, assumes several forms and is growing. For example, acting on information from NK surveys, the committee regularly formulates proposals on a broad range of matters. These are forwarded to the Supreme Soviet through a variety of channels or submitted directly to ministries at all-union and republic levels. Similarly, local NK committees draft legislation to be considered by their respective soviet organizations.

Government and party agencies frequently solicit KNK advice concerning draft legislation. This takes several forms. According to control officials in Moscow, one procedure, which is not provided for by statute, has become well established in practice. Burmistrov stated categorically to the author that government authorities submit all draft plans of legislation to the committee for advice or investigation. Another common practice is the inclusion of People's Control staff members in selected party and government policy-making deliberations. KNK officials, for example, participated in the December 1973 Central Committee plenum that considered measures dealing with industrial management and the formation of all-union production associations. More recently, with respect to the latest ecological legislation, the KNK was asked to undertake a systematic search for information to assist in preparing conservation laws. Similarly, in late 1975 the committee was asked to formulate a decree based on its investigations of power resources in the textile industries.

32. Other sources are more specific. V. I. Turovtsev, for example, states that "the USSR KNK in 1970 proposed to Gosplan increases in the output of consumer goods and other products totaling 1 billion 300 million rubles" (V. I. Turovtsev, *Narodnyi kontrol'* [Moscow, 1970], p. 42). NK committees have an impact on the enterprise plan at local levels as well, as the following case shows: in late 1971 People's Controllers discovered that the Proletariat Plant in Leningrad had inflated its report of production by distorting certain elements of the unit-cost of product, raising wholesale prices and concentrating on the production of those articles that brought the highest return. Contrary to the plant's official report, the NK investigation revealed that commodity output had actually declined over the previous two years, labor productivity had grown at 8.9 percent, instead of 19.2 percent as had been claimed, and the company's wage fund had been overexpended. The Leningrad City KNK fined the plant 78,000 rubles and called for a revised plan based upon NK calculations (V. Egorov, "Vse li zalozeno v plan?," *Pravda*, November 16, 1971; see also V. I. Turovtsev, *Narodnyi kontrol' v sotsialisticheskoi obshchestve* [Moscow, 1974], p. 138).

Another form of legislative activity is the KNK's input into the work of the Supreme Soviet through its links with the latter's standing commissions. In mid-1974 three members of the all-union committee were elected to standing commissions of the Council of the Union.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, it seems likely that such representation will take on added significance over time, since the role of these commissions has been growing in recent years. Since 1972, when D. Richard Little published his authoritative study on the subject,<sup>34</sup> the addition of a fourteenth commission in each chamber attests to the continuing expansion of their legislative activity. The fact that the KNK actively gathers information about the nation's economy and administration and attempts to formulate solutions to current problems suggests that the commissions must find the KNK's input most useful. As for the KNK, this avenue of access to government policymakers obviously increases its ability to influence legislation. This potentially significant development deserves to be closely watched.

The fourth major area of KNK activity—improvement of management and administrative systems—requires constant follow-up investigations. Some of these inspections concern superfluous business trips and man-days lost through excessive scheduling of workers' meetings within an enterprise. For the most part, however, their aim is to determine the size and cost of administrative staffs and to ferret out practices that waste human resources and lower labor discipline in ministries, enterprises, and other organizations. In carrying out these inspections the KNK often combines forces with the financial inspectorates of the state banks, the statistical board, and Gosplan. All administrative units are supposed to conform to a particular staff size as prescribed by a nationwide formula. Frequently, however, as control officials in Moscow have admitted, KNK inspections show that managers of ministries and administrations maintain larger staffs than they need. Where these abnormalities are found, the KNK orders the responsible minister to adjust his staff size to conform with regulations, and these orders are followed up by repeated checks which reveal varying degrees of compliance.<sup>35</sup>

The fifth area of investigative activity—which was of great concern to KNK officials in 1975—is, in their words, “work with the ministries at all levels.” While this category clearly overlaps several of those already mentioned, it deserves separate attention if only because of the magnitude and importance of its targets, which relate directly to those areas where the greatest losses occur within the Soviet economic system. In this regard, it is necessary to point out that the most substantial losses are not those caused by shortages, waste, and theft at enterprises—losses with which NK Groups and Posts in enterprises and farms are concerned daily. As noted by a prominent Soviet jurist, these “account for no more than 1 percent of the total volume of losses” in the nation's economy; the remaining 99 percent arise from “*improper fulfillment of duties*

33. On July 26, 1974, Shitov and Kutsevol joined the Standing Commission for Consumer Goods (the latter as deputy chairman), while Viktorov was given a seat on the Legislative Proposals Commission (*Izvestiia*, July 26, 1974).

34. D. Richard Little, “Soviet Parliamentary Committees after Khrushchev: Obstacles and Opportunities,” *Soviet Studies*, 24, no. 1 (July 1972): 41–60.

35. See A. Novikov, “Narodnyi kontrol' i perestroika struktury upravleniia,” in Berlin, *Gruppy narodnogo kontroliia*, pp. 20–26; and the articles by L. Shimov and F. Babich in the same collection.



by officials (losses from *defective output* account for 30 percent, fines for *late delivery* for 30 percent, and fines for *freight-car demurrage* for 30 percent [*sic*])."<sup>36</sup>

In 1975 the KNK made a major effort to check the implementation of plans and timely delivery in a number of economic ministries; timber, electrification, power, trade, agriculture, and construction were mentioned specifically. Although the ministries have their own inspection apparatus, the committee frequently finds this internal mechanism to be ineffective.<sup>37</sup> KNK officials claim that ministry inspectors often show a "narrow-sector" approach to the business of control and are oblivious to "certain shortcomings" in the ministries' financial and economic accounting systems.<sup>38</sup>

In assessing the significance of this brief overview of KNK activity in 1975, the chief point to be emphasized is the extent to which these activities demonstrate an institution in evolution. As a state inspectorate, the KNK is organized to fulfill certain traditional duties, that is, to investigate the implementation of government and party decrees by economic and administrative ministries and enterprises. Yet, in the mid-1970s, in addition to carrying out these tasks, the KNK was performing a number of political functions, by channeling information, advice, and suggestions to policymakers from below and participating directly in the legislative process. These political functions in turn signified that the Soviet policy-making process itself was evolving as mechanisms multiplied to increase the flow upward of "all manner of influences" to political decisionmakers.<sup>39</sup>

36. N. G. Kuznetsova, Doctor of Jurisprudence, "Ukrepnenie sotsialisticheskoi zakonnosti organizatsii bor'by s prestupnost'iu v svete reshenii XXIV s'ezda KPSS," *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i pravo*, 1975, no. 3, pp. 122-30 (translated and abstracted in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 27, no. 26 [1975]: 7); emphasis added. Kuznetsova's figures add up to only 90 percent.

Moscow control officials illustrated their internalization of the meaning of these statistics when they evaluated the importance of the various tasks subsumed under "work with the ministries": first place was given to "checking the implementation of plans and timely delivery."

37. V. Egorov accuses ministry officials of sweeping information about violations under the rug (see V. Egorov, "Sovet po koordinatsii kontroliia," in Berlin, *Gruppy narodnogo kontroliia*, pp. 105-7).

38. An *Izvestiia* article ("Proverka ispolneniia v ministerstve," January 15, 1976) illustrates the USSR KNK's work with the ministries. The basis for the article was a report delivered directly to the all-union NK Committee by the chairman of an NK Group within the USSR Ministry of Assemblage and Special Construction. The chairman's report was a survey of the results of a series of investigations into how well the ministry apparatus was fulfilling its main construction tasks, as well as its subsidiary goals of increasing labor productivity, introducing new technology, and making better use of material resources. Of particular interest was the indication that close ties are maintained by the ministry NK Group with the USSR KNK's Department of Construction and Construction Industries. By means of this liaison, the ministry Group was constantly advised by the KNK Department with respect to its work plans and even given particular targets for inspections. Similar contacts are maintained between other economic departments of the all-union KNK and NK Groups within allied ministries.

39. Robert V. Daniels, "Soviet Politics Since Khrushchev," in John W. Strong, ed., *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev and Kosygin* (New York, 1971), p. 23; for further discussion of this point, see Jerry F. Hough, "The Soviet System: Petrification or Pluralism?," *Problems of Communism* (March-April 1972), pp. 25-45.

By 1975 the operations of the USSR KNK had settled into well-established patterns. Changes in procedure were likely to be incremental, based upon the discovery of new control techniques effective enough to be widely applied. One obviously fruitful area of experimentation was the development of informal cooperative relationships among NK Groups located in different institutional settings but sharing related production interests. This kind of cooperation was described by the chairman of an NK Group in the Ministry of Assembly and Special Construction. His Groups maintained close contact with NK Groups located in several other union republic ministries, namely, the Ministry of Construction of Heavy Industry Enterprises, the Ministry of Industrial Construction, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy. When the interests of any of these Groups coincided, members of the respective Groups collaborated in joint inspections.<sup>40</sup> Such interministerial cooperation by inspection teams with common goals can establish important channels of communication across ministerial boundaries which could have a lasting impact in expediting economic tasks.

Contacts between NK Groups in manufacturing enterprises and Groups in supplier firms were also becoming more frequent. A refrigerator factory in Saratov, for example, found that it was turning out an inferior product because it was being supplied with defective thermostats. To remedy the situation, the firm's NK Group contacted People's Controllers of the oblast KNK and Groups in the plant supplying the defective parts. They received a pledge from the supplier firm that no more defective thermostats would be forthcoming and assurance that NK Groups in that firm would monitor the pledge.<sup>41</sup>

People's Control Groups within the separate enterprises of a large production association were also profiting by joining forces. In the Elektrosila Production Association in Leningrad, the firm that was to produce the axle for a 1.2 million kilowatt turbogenerator was behind schedule. As a result, completion of the turbogenerator in the main assembly plant was sure to be delayed. An NK volunteer named Grekhov, who worked as an engineer in the assembly plant's testing laboratory, learned of the impending delay through his contacts with People's Controllers in the axle firm. Thereupon, Grekhov invented a new system of testing axles that shortened the testing period of the axle by a full half-year. With the adoption of this technique, the axle firm was able to ensure delivery on schedule. This success story was consummated early in 1975. By the end of the year, cooperation between the NK Groups of the two enterprises had become an ongoing process.<sup>42</sup>

It is easy to understand why NK literature in the 1970s stressed the necessity for public inspectors to go beyond simply establishing the fact of a shortcoming and to insist upon taking active steps to remove it and prevent its reoccurrence. All too often the deficiencies were glaring, highlighted by sta-

40. See note 32.

41. A. Kulolev, "Podvodiat' postavshchiki," *Izvestiia*, January 15, 1976.

42. As the engineer, Grekhov, pointedly remarked to the author: "Had the axle been delayed, the axle plant would have paid a fine to the turbogenerator plant, but this wouldn't really have helped us. We needed to receive the equipment on time. This was the main thing. The goal of NK's in both enterprises is really the same—turning out the completed turbogenerator—so we continue to cooperate closely toward this end" (interview at Elektrosila, Leningrad, December 16, 1975).

tistics on losses and shortfalls in production, fines levied, defective products, excessive production costs, low productivity, and embezzlement losses. Simply disclosing these irregularities was an empty gesture which did little to improve the situation. The far more valuable service that public inspectors like Grekhov could perform was to take the correction of these problems into their own hands.

Such action goes far beyond the traditional state inspector's responsibility for simply identifying violations and imposing fines. Fines, for example, do little to accomplish the many economic objectives of the NK's, which, over and above monitoring plan fulfillment, include introducing new technology, improving the quality of products, preventing waste, increasing labor productivity, and lowering the costs of production. People's Controllers in the 1970s—at work in a single enterprise, sometimes in close cooperation with the nonstaff departments of NK committees, joining forces with NK inspectors in other enterprises, or relating directly to the all-union KNK—had established informal patterns of cooperative activity that were having some discrete successes in achieving these more ambitious objectives. In so doing, they were also helping to expand the role of an institution which, under Stalin, had performed strictly as a state inspectorate.

In sum, it should be said that in the mid-1970s the Soviet leadership had clearly expressed its commitment to public participation in the state's major inspectorate by consistently supporting the growth of the KNK's public component and by giving active attention to the staffing and restructuring of the agency. *There is reason to believe that the leaders did so because they judged the institution capable of making a genuine contribution to achieving the objectives of the Tenth Five-Year Plan.*

However, the evidence presented here suggests more than the leaders' positive assessment of the KNK's economic utility. It demonstrates that while compliance remained the KNK's primary task, Soviet leaders were also aware of the institution's effectiveness in performing certain political functions. In the mid-1970s, therefore, the KNK as an institution was transformed into something more than an economic inspectorate. By gathering information of use to policymakers and by participating in various forms of planning and legislative activity, the People's Control Committee was providing daily input into the policy-making process. And this changing role had further major implications for the Soviet political system as a whole. Jerry Hough has suggested that there are certain kinds of "incremental changes that, taken individually, appear relatively insignificant but which, over time, cumulatively transform society and the political system in a most fundamental way."<sup>48</sup> The functional transformation of the KNK appears to be this kind of change.

43. Hough, "The Soviet System," p. 35.