

*Brian Kassof*

## **Ideology without Organization? Internal Central Committee Debates on the Functions of the Otdel pechati in the 1920s**

In February of 1924 the Press Sub-Section of the Central Committee's Agitation-Propaganda Department (hereafter Agitprop) was elevated to the status of a full department of the Secretariat of the Central Committee. For the next several years the staff of the Press Department (hereafter Otdel pechati) found itself in frequent conflict with the party leadership (above all, with Viacheslav Molotov, the Party Secretary who oversaw it) about the boundaries and proper focus of its work in the Soviet book publishing sector. On the surface, the source of the conflict was simple: Molotov wanted the Otdel pechati to employ its power surgically, intervening deftly and quickly when necessary. The Otdel pechati's staff believed, however, that some of the tasks it was delegated could only be addressed through broad and wide-ranging reforms and regulation. These conflicts recurred over several years and involved multiple staff members of the Otdel pechati, suggesting that the problem went beyond individuals and had deeper, more fundamental, roots.

Our understanding of the limits and scope of the actions of the Central Committee apparatus (hereafter TsK) outside the party during the mid-1920s is fairly limited. The TsK is often seen as the apex of a hierarchical system that attempted to control all aspects of Soviet society, an institution that claimed (even if it could not exercise) almost unlimited power and authority. Such a picture may be accurate, if oversimplified, for the decades after 1932, but earlier the role of the TsK outside the party was more limited. This article uses a series of clashes between Molotov and the Otdel pechati from 1924 to 1927 to illuminate aspects of the TsK's devel-

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opment and the evolution of the power dynamic between central party and state institutions in the 1920s, with particular attention to internal debates about the TsK's functions.

Soviet leaders had no model to follow in developing the relationship between party and state power, forcing them to experiment and improvise, as they sought the structures and techniques that would allow the party to act as an effective overseer or coordinator of state activities while still allowing for the diffusion of authority that characterizes modern societies. Their attempts to do this provide insight into how party leaders, particularly those around Stalin, tried to use the TsK in the 1920s. It also suggests that the later transformation of the TsK into the apex of Soviet power was not planned during the 1920s, but that there were also powerful forces and tendencies within the party that made such an outcome likely. At the same time, it demonstrates the tension inherent in the existence of a dual system of governance, where overlapping state and party bodies sought power and often disrupted or complicated one another's work.

This topic also highlights the problems created by the interaction of two aspects of the Bolsheviks' approach to ruling: Perspective and secrecy. The superiority of broader perspectives on events and policies and their relative significance (consciousness) was a cornerstone of Lenin's marxism, and justified not only the dictatorship of the proletariat, but also the guiding role of central party organs. But this could create serious complications when combined with another key aspect of Bolshevik political culture — secrecy<sup>1</sup>. As the interactions between Molotov and the Otdel pechati show, the combination of the two could produce confusion and clashing agendas even at the pinnacle of power, leaving members of the TsK with vastly divergent understandings of not only what policies TsK organs should pursue, but even the very purpose of these organs.

This study focuses on the Otdel pechati's relationship to the book publishing industry. The Otdel pechati's position vis-à-vis this sector was unique during the 1920s, as the only part of the TsK whose work focused (in part) on a specific economic sector (most TsK departments oriented outside the party focused on demographic groups). This required the Otdel pechati to intervene in the industry in ways unique for the period, foregrounding questions about the relationship between the TsK and state sector that had not yet arisen elsewhere. In distinguishing between the Otdel pechati's work with book publishing and newspapers, I am following a distinction made by the party itself: The Otdel pechati had three sub-departments, one responsible for Russian-language book/journal publishing, one for Russian-language newspapers, and one for 'nationalities' print. In general, newspaper and book publishing raised different types of problems for the party and they were dealt with separately.

Although numerous studies of high-level party politics have appeared over the last twenty-plus years, there has been relatively little written about the TsK itself (beyond the Politburo), particularly in the 1920s and 1930s<sup>2</sup>. Mikhail Zelenov has produced several important studies on

different parts of the TsK, including the Orgburo, Istpart, and the Otdel pechati, and Christopher Monty has published a useful article on the evolution of the Organizational/Assignment Department<sup>3</sup>. Other works have talked about the TsK's involvement with specific issues, but not the institution itself. Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, in his exhaustive examination of the TsK's so-called "Secret" (Особый) or General Department, downplays the significance of other TsK departments, arguing that they dealt primarily with nomenklatura assignments<sup>4</sup>.

From 1921-1928 the TsK had the following general structure. At the top were the three permanent organs, the Politburo, the Orgburo, and the Secretariat<sup>5</sup>. Regarding non-party institutions, the Politburo was responsible for establishing basic policies and strategies, and making high-level decisions. The Orgburo and Secretariat existed to oversee the practical implementation of the Politburo's strategies, translating them into concrete initiatives and following up on their fulfillment<sup>6</sup>. All three organs had responsibility for certain nomenklatura appointments. The various departments of the TsK provided support for all three of these organs, gathering information, formulating and executing practical initiatives, and following up on their fulfillment by other bodies.

Agitprop was founded in 1919; its Editorial-Publishing Sub-Department (Редакционно-Издательский Подотдел) was created in 1920 and renamed the Print Sub-Department (Подотдел печати) in November 1921. Throughout this period, its main function was to support the work of Agitprop. In February 1924, however, party leaders decided to remove the Otdel pechati from Agitprop and promote it to the status of a full Central Committee department, redefining its mission and functions in the process.

### **Establishing Boundaries, February 1924 – May 1925**

Although the TsK existed, in large part, to run the party itself, it had, since its creation in 1919, also been intended to "направляет работу центральных советских и общественных организаций..."<sup>7</sup> The primary method for doing this was through the nomenklatura system, as well as via party resolutions. But such means were not always sufficient, since party members working in Soviet organs could easily misinterpret or ignore party resolutions, or fail to recognize how they related to their work. This led, in some cases, to the creation of special bodies to deal with problematic issues and the use of TsK departments to oversee issues of particular sensitivity. According to Zelenov, the impact of the TsK outside the party increased considerably in 1922, when Stalin was made General Secretary and the apparatus was reorganized and reoriented<sup>8</sup>.

Over the next eighteen months, the Press Sub-Department supervised the enforcement of censorship and engaged in special tasks as needed. During a November 1923 Orgburo discussion of Agitprop's work party leaders criticized two aspects of its leadership of the press. One was insufficient vigor in criticizing 'factional' groups within the party, the other the party's

seeming lack of influence over much of the Soviet population, as seen during the 'Scissors Crisis' in 1923<sup>9</sup>. Stalin criticized Agitprop's disorganized approach to these tasks and called for the creation of specialized bodies to focus on different areas, including "печать"<sup>10</sup>.

By February 1924, the decision had been made to detach the Otdel pechati from Agitprop and raise it to full departmental status, allowing it to set an agenda independent of Agitprop. Party leaders' concerns were expressed in two Central Committee resolutions issued February 1924, which summed up the tasks assigned to the Otdel pechati<sup>11</sup>. One area of concern was the ideological dependability of editorial and publishing personnel. Decentralization of book production after August 1921 had led to the creation of hundreds of state, party, and private publishing operations. By 1924, there were 141 private publishers and about 1900 state/party publishing houses producing works in Russian. While many were small operations producing works for institutions' internal use, there were still hundreds producing books for the market<sup>12</sup>. Central Committee nomenklatura only covered a handful of publishing houses, and was unable to keep up with the stream of new operations.

Private publishing houses were subject to extensive regulation by the Main Directorate for Literature and Publishing Houses (Glavlit), that included not only the censorship of manuscripts, but also control over editorial and production plans and the pricing and press-run of each title<sup>13</sup>. State and party publishing houses had to register with Glavlit before they opened, and most (though not all) had to submit individual manuscripts to Glavlit for censorship. But there was otherwise little regulation or control over the expansion and production of state and party publishers; the only other Russia-wide agency with authority over print production was the Book Chamber, which simply registered new titles. Therefore one of the Otdel pechati's first tasks was simply to collect information on the personnel and production of Soviet publishing houses, so the Party knew who was in charge of them and what types of literature they were producing. Party leaders were concerned about the attitude of the non-party intelligentsia in the wake of Lenin's death and also the presence of supporters of Lev Trotsky and other party opposition groups<sup>14</sup>.

Party leaders' second group of concerns was addressed in the first of the two February 1924 Central Committee resolutions on print: The lack of affordable literature on specific subjects and for critical audiences that could increase the party's influence over the Soviet people. Books could be a flexible and effective vehicle for propaganda, but only if they were affordable and could reach readers. Of particular concern were rural audiences, for whom party leaders felt too few titles were being published. And titles intended for rural readers were not reaching the countryside, due to the disruption of the pre-revolutionary network of itinerant peddlers after 1914<sup>15</sup>. By 1924, the Soviets had still not developed a functioning replacement, and organized distribution was limited to areas along railways. The push for improving the number, quality, and distribution of books was part of the «Face to the Countryside» Campaign launched in early 1924<sup>16</sup>.

The Otdel pechaty was charged with ensuring that books were produced for key audiences such as peasants, that their prices were sufficiently low, and that they reached the countryside. How they were to do this was not clear. The Otdel pechaty lacked the legal status to set book prices or force publishing houses to produce certain books, nor did any state agency have such authority. The Otdel pechaty could send instructions to communists working at publishing houses, but it had no means of enforcing them or even verifying their fulfillment. The only real solution was to find a state agency to act as its partner.

Primary responsibility for these tasks fell to Aleksandr I. Berdnikov, who had been working in the Press Sub-Department since June 1923. Berdnikov, who was also sent to supervise Gosizdat's reorganization in 1924, was a deputy head of the Otdel pechaty, and in all likelihood, in charge of its Book/Journal section. Berdnikov probably acted with considerable autonomy given the very brief tenure of the Otdel pechaty's first two heads — Iakov A. Iakovlev, from February to June 1924, then Semen I. Kanatchikov, from June to October of that year.

Berdnikov hoped to work with an existing trade organization of state/party publishing houses, the USSR Association of Party/State Publishing House (hereafter OSP), that had formed under the guidance of the Press Sub-Department in 1923. Membership was voluntary, but about 70 major publishing houses already belonged. The Otdel pechaty and the OSP started issuing joint instructions about lowering the price of "массовый" publications in late February 1924. However, as a voluntary organization, the OSP lacked any legal power to enforce its instructions. Its only leverage was the ability to offer limited access to bank credit (which publishing houses had trouble getting) and some aid in distribution to those who complied with its instructions<sup>17</sup>.

While some publishing houses achieved a degree of success in reducing the price of mass publications, Berdnikov and most officials in the publishing industry, including the leaders of the OSP, were convinced that high book prices, poor distribution, and the lack of literature on some topics were the result of a more serious structural problem with the publishing industry — a disorganized nature that led to fierce competition. Unless this underlying problem was addressed, problems would continue to exist that undermined party goals. In theory, Soviet publishing houses were supposed to be self-regulating. Each was created to serve the needs of its parent organization (which had founded and funded it), to produce the books and journals required to accomplish its goals. It was easy for publishing houses to issue books on numerous topics, however: *Novaia Moskva* (New Moscow, the publishing house of Moscow City Soviet) argued that its mission was to provide books on any topic where reader demand was not being met, and by 1923 it boasted of producing books in eleven broad subject areas<sup>18</sup>. Nor was it unusual in this regard — in mid-1925 an official of the Otdel pechaty claimed that the average Soviet book publishing house issued works on 10-12 topics, leading to considerable overlap and competition<sup>19</sup>.

There were multiple reasons for this. It reflected the considerable jurisdictional and functional overlap in their parent institutions, something contemporaries were not inclined to admit.

It was also because Soviet publishing houses depended largely on rapid turnover to maintain or increase production levels. Some subsidies were available in the early 1920s, but these were drying up or reserved for important projects (like Lenin's works) by the mid-1920s<sup>20</sup>. If books sold quickly, capital turned over faster and it was possible to increase annual production. Publishing houses therefore had an incentive to publish books that would sell quickly and to concentrate on titles that would sell well in cities, where distribution was less expensive and the retail network better developed.

This had not posed a problem in 1921 when production levels were low. But growth, both in the number of publishing houses and in their production, was explosive between 1922 and 1924. Many major publishing houses increased production by 300 percent from 1922 to 1923; the Petrograd party publishing house, Priboi, by 600 percent<sup>21</sup>. By 1924 the number of Russian-language titles issued had risen by almost 70 percent since 1922 (from 7843 to 13126), and, because the average length of books had grown by 50 percent and the average press-run (тираж) had doubled in the same period, the total number of pages issued increased nearly four-fold<sup>22</sup>.

By 1924 a number of publishing officials were sounding the alarm about the deleterious effects of competition between Soviet publishing houses, and their concerns were easily connected to the problems the Otdel pechati was supposed to fix. The distribution of books in the countryside was more expensive and time-consuming than in the cities, slowing capital turnover and lowering profits, which, in turn, reduced publishing houses' productive capabilities. Publishing houses were also disinclined to invest in rural distribution systems that would tie up capital with little initial return. As a result, they focused on more lucrative subject areas, such as literary fiction and popular-science titles that appealed to urban readers<sup>23</sup>. This emphasis on certain subjects intensified competition, leading to the oversaturation of the market. As a result, resources were wasted and other audiences, such as rural readers, were ignored. Competition also inflated book prices, as publishing houses were forced to lower press-runs and pay higher honorariums to popular authors<sup>24</sup>. While neither publishing officials nor party leaders were calling for the end of all competition in 1924–25, they did want to eliminate 'universal' publishing houses issuing titles on 10 or more subjects, and have each publishing house focus on subjects or audiences directly related to their parent organization's main functions, as a means of reducing competition.

Many publishing officials believed competition could best be reduced by the implementation of typification (*типизация*), a process by which publishing houses would be limited to publishing books on one to three core areas that fit their profile<sup>25</sup>. This was the technique Glavlit used to ensure that private publishers focused their production on specific topics and did not become competitive with state publishing houses<sup>26</sup>. Many publishing officials became obsessed with typification, which they came to view as a panacea for the industry's ills. It would eliminate waste, lower prices by allowing for large press-runs, force publishing houses to address underserved audiences and subjects, and improve their distribution efforts. It would even improve the quality of books,

allowing publishing houses to gather the most competent editors and authors in fewer places. Basically it would replace the anarchy of the market with the type of planned, regulated system which the Bolsheviks understood to be one of socialism's advantages over capitalism. Supporters of the idea, who included Berdnikov, inserted a point calling for the future typification of publishing houses into the Thirteenth Party Congress' Resolution on Print in the spring of 1924<sup>27</sup>.

For typification to work, however, it required either voluntary participation by publishing houses or an external regulator to compel compliance. Berdnikov and the leadership of the OSP tried to pursue the first course in 1924, rewriting the latter's statutes to allow it to review and coordinate publishing houses' editorial and production plans (to eliminate competition)<sup>28</sup>. Members were to submit plans to the body's Central Bureau so it could eliminate titles judged to be redundant or outside a publishing house's area of specialization, as Glavlit did with private publishers. This effort was a major failure. Although most publishing houses endorsed typification in theory, few were prepared to allow an outside body to control their editorial plans. Only one of the OSP's seventy members submitted advanced editorial plans as requested in the fall of 1924<sup>29</sup>. This was likely due to a combination of factors — distrust that other publishing houses would comply, a desire for secrecy to avoid imitation, and the fact that some publishing houses probably lacked well-defined quarterly editorial plans. Even the Otdel pechati itself had difficulty in obtaining advanced editorial plans from publishing houses — in July 1925 the Otdel pechati had to send a second warning notice to over 25 publishing houses that were delinquent in submitting such plans for the quarter starting July 1, including major publishing houses such as Priboi, Molodaia gvardiia, Moskovskii rabochii, and Novaia derevnia<sup>30</sup>.

Berdnikov had also pursued some more immediate steps to address the issues raised by the Central Committee in February 1924. The Otdel pechati and OSP set maximum prices for popular publications at the end of February, and, after a series of further discussions with publishing houses, even lower price limits in July<sup>31</sup>. The Otdel pechati also met repeatedly with representatives from central publishing houses in 1924, pressuring them to increase their output of peasant oriented literature and to improve its quality<sup>32</sup>. This pressure succeeded, with the number of peasant-oriented titles tripling from 1923 to 1924, with a rise in press-runs as well<sup>33</sup>. Responding to calls to prevent more competitive chaos in this area as well, by the end of 1924 the Otdel pechati had taken it upon itself to oversee the production of peasant literature, holding reader studies and coordinating editorial plans<sup>34</sup>. These were, however, in Berdnikov's opinion, partial fixes — only typification could provide a real solution.

The OSP's failed attempt at typification convinced Berdnikov that direct party intervention was needed to impose order on the unruly publishing houses. He signaled these intentions in February 1925 when the Otdel pechati reported to the Orgburo on progress made in the areas of rural literature and print distribution. Berdnikov drafted the resolution on improving distribution and was the first speaker on the topic. In his introductory statement, he called for "контроль

и систематическое наблюдение со стороны партийных комитетов, в первую очередь Отдел Печати ЦК" in matter of distribution outside major cities<sup>35</sup>. His proposal for greater direct party intervention was essentially ignored by the members of the Orgburo in the subsequent discussion of the draft resolution<sup>36</sup>. Undeterred, in his closing comments, Berdnikov again stressed the need for systematic and continuing party intervention to solve problems such as print distribution: "в деле распространения *печати* требуется кулак, кулак партийный и кулак советский. Только при наличии этого мы сможем наладить дело... Необходимо усилить руководство и систематическую повседневную работу в этом отношении со стороны ОП ЦК и парткомов на местах вплоть до оперативного вмешательства в работу по распространению печати"<sup>37</sup>.

Berdnikov's statement was again ignored and he was left off the final editing committee for the ensuing resolution, "On the Price Reduction and Distribution of Printed Materials"<sup>38</sup>. The resolution made no mention of such aggressive interference by party organs; the Otdel pechati was instead instructed to "следить" the work of Soviet organs that were to carry out the actual work. The Otdel pechati's main role seems to have been to send circular letters to local party organizations, publishing houses, and print distributors<sup>39</sup>.

Undeterred, Berdnikov and others at the Otdel pechati, including its new head and deputy head, Iosif Vareikis and Pavel Bliakhin, pressed ahead with an ambitious plan to use the power of the TsK to bring order to the publishing industry via typification<sup>40</sup>. Berdnikov's plan had two parts. The first was to create a state regulatory agency to oversee aspects of book production such as prices and discounting<sup>41</sup>. This body, the Committee on Print Affairs (KDP), was established in May 1925 as part of the Commissariat of Internal Trade, and headed by Berdnikov until mid-1927. But typification's success, Berdnikov believed, would require the direct involvement of the Otdel pechati — only the TsK, he felt, could compel the publishing houses' cooperation.

Vareikis convinced Molotov to schedule a general discussion of book publishing questions in the Orgburo — possibly aided by the fact that Gosizdat and Molodaia gvardiia had both required major subsidies in the first months of 1925<sup>42</sup>. Vareikis submitted a draft resolution, "О руководстве издательствами", to Molotov sometime in April 1925. It called for the Otdel pechati to assume a leading role in the forced typification of Soviet book publishing houses: "Возложить на Отдел печати направлять работу издательств, корректируя их редакционно-издательские планы. Систематически вести работу по типизации издательства и журналов и по уничтожению универсализма"<sup>43</sup>.

The draft resolution was discussed in the Orgburo on 25 May, 1925 and defended by Vareikis and Bliakhin (Berdnikov was listed among attendees, but did not speak). They argued that uncontrolled competition made it impossible for the Otdel pechati to implement the party's instructions on the price of mass literature and to ensure the timely appearance of campaign literature. The only solution, Vareikis said, was for the Otdel pechati to oversee typification: "Поэтому, Отдел печати поставил перед собой задачу типизации издательств, как основную

задачу, наиболее важную, которую нужно во что бы то ни стало разрешить"<sup>44</sup>. All major publishing houses would have to submit advanced quarterly editorial plans to the Otdel pechati, which would edit and correct them, thus ensuring that publishing houses were focusing on their mission and addressing any party instructions<sup>45</sup>. Vareikis and Bliakhin cited concerns about wasteful competition and the relatively low percentage of reliable party officials working in the publishing industry to justify such actions<sup>46</sup>. The Resolution would also reinforce the Otdel pechati's authority; Vareikis pointed out that publishing operations overseen by several attendees at the meeting previously had ignored its instructions<sup>47</sup>.

The Orgburo's reception of the proposal was not only negative, but hostile. The only member of the Orgburo speaking in its favor, Nikolai Uglanov, admitted he knew virtually nothing about the topic<sup>48</sup>. Several of those present (including Klim Voroshilov, Andrei Bubnov, and Aleksandr Dogadov), spoke aggressively against the proposal. Voroshilov questioned its very premise, arguing that the Otdel pechati should restrict its activities to purely ideological questions, not economic ones. Others complained that the Otdel pechati was trying to assume the role of an industrial syndicate or state regulatory organ. A few took the opportunity to decry past actions by the Otdel pechati that they thought overly intrusive<sup>49</sup>.

Molotov took a different approach. He rejected the idea that the Otdel pechati should oversee the publishing industry's typification, arguing that it should focus on the specific tasks assigned by the party leadership, which did not require extra regulatory powers. He had even altered the draft resolution's original title «О руководстве издательствами» to the less overarching "О руководстве издательской работой" — the Otdel pechati was not to 'lead' the publishing houses, but only aspects of their work<sup>50</sup>. Molotov agreed that typification was a good idea, but said that this was the work of Soviet organs, not the Otdel pechati. He defended the Otdel pechati's right to intervene in economic questions, but only when it addressed TsK instructions, as it had regarding the pricing of mass literature. Yet when the discussion concluded, Molotov pressed for a vote to pass the resolution once it was edited to reflect the Orgburo's discussion<sup>51</sup>.

Molotov had several reasons for wanting to pass a resolution, but only in a highly altered form. The final version of the resolution lacked any mention of the Otdel pechati enforcing typification when it appeared in *Известия* on 9 June 1925<sup>52</sup>. There remained only a vague instruction to «взять курс на тенденцию книгоиздательств на устранение универсализма и вредного параллелизма в их работе.» Instead, the resolution reemphasized the idea that the Otdel pechati should focus on providing ideological leadership. It was to review the editorial plans of major publishing houses, but only to ensure they were addressing party priorities, «в целях осуществления партийного, идеологического руководства.»

Why pass this altered resolution? It could help strengthen the party leadership majority's position in political disputes. During the meeting, Molotov had spoken in generalities, except to say that it would not be in the public's best interest if just anyone could publish books "по

троцкизму, по ленинизму"<sup>53</sup>. Permitting the Otdel pechati to review editorial plans for specific subjects would allow it to police politically sensitive issues without becoming distracted by broader regulatory questions. Molotov was also sensitive to claims by Trotsky and others that the TsK was claiming too much power vis-à-vis both party and state institutions; the Otdel pechati claiming powers as a super-regulator over the entire publishing industry would play directly into their hands<sup>54</sup>. Molotov himself noted during the discussion about book publishing: "Тут масса ведомственных интересов, теоретически-научных интересов, интересы провинциальных органов, есть интересы центральных, и т.д."<sup>55</sup> Even supporters of the Central Committee majority, like Dogadov and Bubnov, spoke resentfully of the Otdel pechati's interference — no wonder the original title of the resolution had to be changed!

Lastly, Molotov could not foresee how the party leadership might want to use the Otdel pechati in the future. He sharply corrected Voroshilov's assertion that the Otdel pechati should stay out of 'economic matters' — how could ideology and economics be separated so cleanly?<sup>56</sup> The modified resolution quashed the Otdel pechati's pretensions while leaving the door open for future interventions. The outcome of the May 1925 Orgburo discussion should have made it clear to the Otdel pechati that it should end its attempts to rationalize the publishing industry. But although future attempts would take different forms, the Otdel pechati continued to try to create a new regulatory system for the publishing industry with itself at the center.

### **Evasions and Roadblocks, January 1926–May 1927**

At the Fourteenth Party Congress the Otdel pechati both was praised for its work and harshly criticized for its ambitions. A representative of the party's Central Audit Commission chastised it for attempting to expand its activities beyond their proper boundaries into "чисто организационные задачи." He pointed out the poorly defined responsibilities of state and party publishing regulators and a need to "размежать работу Отдела печати с теми советскими органами, которые также призваны ведать делом регулирования..."<sup>57</sup>

The need for such delineation was made more urgent by two factors. A combination of rapid expansion, poor title selection, and inadequate distribution in 1925 left publishing houses' capital tied up in large stocks of unsold books, plunging the industry into financial crisis. Dire predictions about the negative impact of competition seemed to be coming true. Molotov and other party leaders believed that the existing state regulators should be able to deal with the situation. But these organs had been created piecemeal to deal with specific problems and their work was uncoordinated, leaving them both ill-equipped to deal with the problem and prone to jurisdictional conflicts<sup>58</sup>.

Such a conflict was the second major problem to be solved. The most prominent state regulators of print, Glavlit (headed by Pavel-Lebedev Polianskii) and the KDP (headed by Berdnikov)

both claimed to be the appropriate institution to address universalism in the publishing industry, and both demanded the power to edit editorial plans and enforce typification. Complicating matters, a series of censorship lapses by Glavlit and complaints from prominent writers led to the creation of a special Orgburo commission to review Glavlit's functions in May 1926, leaving the parameters of its future powers and responsibilities undecided<sup>59</sup>.

The Otdel pechaty was instructed to sort out this mess, so that state agencies could rationalize the industry and it could focus on ideological matters. Vareikis had left the Otdel pechaty in November 1925 and was replaced by Sergei Gusev in March 1926. Gusev was well educated, but lacked publishing experience; his primary qualifications appear to have been his membership on the Central Control Commission, his staunch anti-oppositionist credentials, and his interest in writers' organizations<sup>60</sup>. Bliakhin, who remained in the Otdel pechaty until August 1926, was eclipsed by V. N. Vasil'evskii, the acting head of the Otdel pechaty from November 1925 until March 1926, a role he would continue to play during Gusev's frequent absences in 1926 and early 1927. Vasil'evskii, who had worked for several years as one of Molotov's assistants in the Secretariat, had been appointed to the Otdel pechaty in May 1925 and had considerable publishing experience<sup>61</sup>.

Both Gusev and Vasil'evskii accepted the idea that typification was necessary to rationalize the industry<sup>62</sup>. They also appear to have accepted the idea, advanced earlier by Berdnikov, Vareikis, and Bliakhin, that the Otdel pechaty was responsible for the smooth functioning of the publishing industry, if only so it could respond to the TsK's needs. Gusev and Vasil'evskii began their reorganization of the publishing system by drawing up a new draft statute (положение) for the Otdel pechaty, one which placed it at the core of a new regulatory order<sup>63</sup>. Their introduction stressed the Otdel pechaty's role providing ideological leadership and improving print cadres, but the section on the Book-Periodical Sub-Department envisioned it as a super-regulator: The second and third points of this section read: "б) работа по регулированию сети книгоиздательств и журналов; в) работа по руководству выработкой редакционных планов книгоиздательств и наблюдение за выполнением этих планов"<sup>64</sup>.

The statute also envisioned the creation of a «постоянно действующее совещание» under the Otdel pechaty that would bring together representatives from state regulators, newspaper and periodical editors, important publishing houses, leading party organs, and the trade unions to coordinate campaign work<sup>65</sup>. Under these statutes the heads of Glavlit, the KDP, and Gosizdat would also be made part of the Otdel pechaty's Collegium, further integrating their efforts and strengthening the Otdel pechaty's oversight<sup>66</sup>. It was not accidental, then, that a revised version of the statute was sent to Molotov within days of the Otdel pechaty's presentation of its proposed resolution "О работе советских органов, ведающих вопросами печати" to the Orgburo<sup>67</sup>. The statute's final fate is unclear — after many delays, in September Molotov was given permission by the Secretariat to decide the issue himself, meaning that there may not have been an official resolution on the question<sup>68</sup>.

A significant portion of the draft statute was also included in the draft «О работе советских органов, ведающих вопросами печати» presented to the Orgburo in May 1926. Since Molotov himself chaired the editorial commission that rewrote this resolution, the changes made between early drafts (written by Gusev and/or Vasil'evskii) and the final version can provide some idea of his and other party leaders' response to the draft statute<sup>69</sup>. Most of the language in both the statute and draft resolution designed to place the Otdel pechati at the heart of a print regulatory system was removed, while language stressing its ideological role (policing deviance and supporting party campaigns) was added. A comparison of the first points of the resolutions reflects the shift in tone. In an early draft, marked in pencil "Молотову", the first point read: «Констатировать, что функции существующих органов, ведающих вопросами печати, недостаточно уточнены и разграничены и что в работе этих органов имеется разноречивой и параллелизм». This point has a line through it<sup>70</sup>. The replacement language used in the final draft, meanwhile, reads as a rebuke to the Otdel pechati:

"что вследствие неразграниченности функции [так!] Отдела печати ЦК и советских органов, ведающих вопросами печати, Отдел печати ЦК перегружался вопросами советского порядка (по линии организационно-хозяйственной, производственной и финансовой) в ущерб его основной задаче—осуществления идеологического руководства"<sup>71</sup>.

This shift in focus and tone is found throughout the resolution. The call for the creation of a permanent conference of print regulators and editors under the Otdel pechati, included in the draft statute and one of Gusev's early draft resolutions, is gone<sup>72</sup>. Also removed was one of the proposed functions of the Otdel pechati: "Систематическая проверка выполнения решений и директив партии в области печати"<sup>73</sup>. The draft statute had called on the Otdel pechati «Рассматривает годовой редакционно-издательский план всей книжно-журнальной продукции» – this vague formulation left the door open for future attempts at typification<sup>74</sup>. The August 1926 Resolution was much more specific on this question: "Возлагается координирование производственной деятельности издательств и распространения произведений печати в соответствии с задачами партии (рассмотрение редакционно-издательских планов, разработанных советскими органами по делам печати..."<sup>75</sup> Oversight of editorial plans was now linked explicitly to the party's needs, and possible alterations (likely relating to typification) left to state regulators. More vague, yet aggressive language had also been inserted into the final draft, instructing the Otdel pechati to do things such as "Осуществление контроля, обеспечивающего идеологическую выдержку и необходимое качество печати и исправление ее недочетов"<sup>76</sup>.

The shift in language was a clear message from Molotov to the Otdel pechati to stop trying to involve itself in everyday regulatory matters and to focus on the political issues empha-

sized by party leaders, many of which were connected directly to the fight against the «Opposition.» Such an important message, in fact, that it took up most of the resolution, despite its title, «О работе советских органов, ведающих вопросами печати». Meanwhile, the relatively brief section on the KDP went untouched from the Otdel pechati's original draft to the final resolution, and Glavlit and all other print-related organs from Narkompros were absent altogether. This had not been the original intention — Gusev's original report on the question and early drafts included Narkompros institutions (and Gosplan), but these were dropped from the final version<sup>77</sup>. The main reason appears to have been the on-going Orgburo Committee discussion of Glavlit's functions and the possibility that these might change dramatically in the near future.

Yet this omission provided the best hope for advocates of typification in the Otdel pechati. Molotov would not allow the Otdel pechati to take direct control over enforcing typification, so the August 1926 Resolution assigned this task to the KPD, which would "работает под несосредственным наблюдением и руководством Отдела Печати ЦК"<sup>78</sup>. Even if the Otdel pechati could not act as a regulatory agent, the KPD (led by Berdnikov) could enforce typification on its behalf. At Vasil'evskii's urging, after the May discussion of the general resolution on print regulators, the Orgburo instructed the KPD "принять меры по упорядочению издательского дела в СССР в связи с большой затоваренностью издательств," laying the groundwork for an expansion of its powers<sup>79</sup>.

When the final draft of the August 1926 Resolution appeared, it retained the Otdel pechati's very broad language about the need for the KDP to have its powers redefined, with its primary task "Регулирование и согласование издательской, производственно-хозяйственной и коммерческо-финансовой деятельности всех книжных и газетных издательств..."<sup>80</sup> The language was left intentionally vague, so it could be seen as referring only to general production plans (производственный план или производственно-финансовый план) or more specific editorial plans (редакционный план). It also specified that the KDP should be removed from the People's Commissariat of Trade (Narkomtorg) and made an independent body under the All-Union Sovnarkom<sup>81</sup>.

Yet even this plan would fail. Vasil'evskii drew up a new statute for the KDP that would give it extensive regulatory powers, which was approved, pending minor changes, by the Orgburo in mid-September 1926<sup>82</sup>. But since the KPD was a state body, the Sovnarkom still had to approve of the new statute. And a simple Orgburo Resolution approving the new statute was not, it turned out, sufficient to prevent the opponents to its new powers, including Glavlit (which sought similar powers) and Gosizdat (which Berdnikov wanted to break up), as well as the leadership of the Sovnarkom's approval of the new KDP statute<sup>83</sup>. Berdnikov appealed to Vasil'evskii and Molotov, pointing out that the Sovnarkom's actions were in direct conflict with both the August 1926 Resolution and the Orgburo's approval of the new KDP statute<sup>84</sup>. Vasil'evskii tried, without success, to salvage or defend the KDP's powers, but he lacked the authority to do so on his

own<sup>85</sup>. Although the Orgburo had approved the statute, its leadership did not really care about it, and was not willing to defend it, leaving it vulnerable to attack in the state system. This was exactly why the Otdel pechati had sought these powers in the first place, because of its greater authority. The statute was withdrawn and a new one, without such expansive authority, drafted in spring 1927. As this was approved the Orgburo also removed Berdnikov from his post in the KDP, ending his three year quest to typify the publishing industry<sup>86</sup>.

The failure of Vasil'evskii and Berdnikov's attempt to make the KDP a powerful proxy for the Otdel pechati underlines the true significance of the August 1926 Resolution on Soviet Print Regulators. The only responsibilities assigned any state agency, the KDP, were thrown out, resulting in even more chaos among publishing regulators. But the resolution did achieve two of Molotov's goals. The Otdel pechati had been given a mandate to interfere in the work of state and party publishing houses when the leadership deemed it necessary, and its aspirations to supervise or 'fix' the state publishing sector had been quashed. As Party Secretary, Molotov's main concern with state regulation (censorship notwithstanding) was that it did not interfere with the Otdel pechati's ability to pursue party goals. This actually may have helped prevent Glavlit from gaining control over state publishing houses' editorial plans, since this could potentially undermine the Otdel pechati's ability to make sure publishing houses were addressing party priorities.

Even after all of this, the Otdel pechati's staff still found itself unable to leave 'organizational' issues alone. Before he left the Otdel pechati in spring 1927, Vasil'evskii attempted to place the issue of typification on the Otdel pechati's agenda at least twice. Each time the item was crossed out (either by Gusev or Molotov)<sup>87</sup>. Gusev, meanwhile, was berated by Molotov for his focus on organizational issues over ideology during a March 1927 Orgburo session<sup>88</sup>. Gusev acknowledged that the Otdel pechati had gotten bogged down in "бюрократические" issues<sup>89</sup>.

By this point many of the reasons the Otdel pechati had been raised to the status of a full department were becoming irrelevant. Oppositionists had been removed from most key publishing positions, the price of mass literature had been reduced, and the TsK had succeeded in large degree in gaining control over the publication of literature on key topics, such as Leninism and Party history. Campaign work and mobilization were increasingly the focus of TsK activity, and these could be managed through Agitprop. The new head of Agitprop, Alexander Ivanovich Krinitskii, appointed in March 1927, aggressively involved that body in matters that had previously been the sole concern of the Otdel pechati, such as a review of the publishing activities of the Communist Academy<sup>90</sup>. This, combined with Gusev's frequent absences, made the continued independence of the Otdel pechati even more doubtful.

Ironically, one of the final nails in the Otdel pechati's coffin was the very thing its staff had sought — the Orgburo's decision to mandate the typification of book publishing in early 1928. By 1928 the publishing industry actually was fairly well along the path to typification, helped by the economic crisis that had started in 1925 and led to the closure or consolidation of numerous

publishing houses. In reality, however, Molotov and Stalin had little interest in typification itself; their concern, rather, was to protect Gosizdat, which had become a reliable producer of agitational literature for the TsK. Most publishing officials believed Gosizdat's break-up was essential to the success of any typification plan<sup>91</sup>. The main purpose of the Orgburo Commission created to deal with this question (actually a reconstituted version of the Orgburo's Glavlit Commission, whose last proposed resolution was rejected in January 1928), appears to have been to defend Gosizdat<sup>92</sup>. Once this was achieved the entire process was shifted to the Sovnarkom for implementation—the TsK would not play a role<sup>93</sup>. The resulting reduction in the number of major publishing houses made the existence of a TsK body to coordinate their campaign work even less necessary.

The Otdel pechati was formally merged with Agitprop in May 1928 with the creation of the Agitation, Propaganda, and Press Department (or APPO)<sup>94</sup>. The new department was under the control of Krinitskii and most of the book publishing related positions were eliminated during the merger; the closest remaining post was in the literary fiction sub-department (headed by Platon Kerzhentsev), which was responsible not only for publishing, but also criticism and writers' organizations. Krinitskii's original scheme did call for an assistant to help with issues relating to organizational-economic issues in book publishing; however, this position was cut during staff reductions later in 1928<sup>95</sup>. Instead, the APPO was organized by audience or topic, with sub-departments responsible for relevant publications of all sorts, along with all other aspects of campaign work.

The repeated clashes between the Otdel pechati and Molotov demonstrate two different understandings of the TsK's functions and responsibilities during the 1920s. Molotov wanted the Otdel pechati to focus on specific tasks. Sometimes these involved economic or organizational goals, like reducing the price of mass literature or increasing publications for peasants. But these were always done as part of one of the Otdel pechati's main functions, campaign work (other key functions included keeping track of personnel appointments, and, after 1925, policing publications on certain topics (such as Leninism) singled out by the party leadership). These tasks were often connected to the political goals of Stalin and his allies. The Otdel pechati was expected to work with numerous state publishing houses and regulatory organs in order to bring about the desired ends. The staff of the Otdel pechati, however, repeatedly tried to embrace a different, much broader, mission: Bringing order and efficiency to the Soviet book publishing sector. This was justified at times as a necessary step to achieve some specific goal, such as reducing the price of mass literature, or as a precondition for the publishing sector being able to respond to the party's demands in general. On the most basic level, these differences can be seen as the natural growing pains of an unprecedented system of political control.

There were, however, other dynamics and forces at work. One was the inherent tension in the relationship between the TsK and Soviet institutions, which was exacerbated by the

expansion of the TsK's powers in 1922. In theory, issues of strategy had become the domain of leading party bodies, while tactics and implementation were the realm of party members spread throughout different Soviet institutions. But the growing power of the TsK departments had the potential to upset this balance, as the Otdel pechati demonstrated. When it proved difficult to bring about reforms or regulation in the state sector (the failure of the OSP in 1924), the temptation to use the power of the TsK to impose order on the disorderly publishing sector was too great. This, however, drew fire from two directions. It angered Molotov, who wanted the Otdel pechati to focus on the tasks assigned by the party leadership, and it angered other party leaders, who saw this as an infringement on their authority in non-party institutions, as was demonstrated at the May 1925 Orgburo discussion of Vareikis and Bliakhin's proposal. Officials in Soviet organs might cooperate with the TsK on campaign related tasks, but refused to cede authority in general.

The subsequent debacle with the Resolution on Soviet Print Organs and the KDP in 1926 demonstrated, however, why those desiring industry-wide reform wanted to use the Otdel pechati. Although the plan to expand the KDP's powers won the approval of the Orgburo, its opponents were able to use Soviet processes to derail this effort. Had Molotov or other key party figures cared greatly about this question they could have tried to use political muscle to force it through. But without such support, the relative distribution of power within the Soviet apparatus allowed opponents, such as Lebedev-Polianskii, to defang the KDP's new statutes, despite the Orgburo's previous endorsement.

Two additional factors complicating the Otdel pechati's operations in the mid-1920s were secrecy and perspective. Certain goals of the party leadership, such as the elimination of supporters of the Opposition from key publishing positions, did not require elaborate explanation — the signals emanating from the top were unambiguous and people like Gusev were selected for their posts in part because of their willingness to attack the Opposition<sup>96</sup>. But other aspects of Stalin and Molotov's unspoken agenda, specifically their use of the TsK to create political advantage, could not be made as obvious, making it difficult for the Otdel pechati's staff to understand why some issues were so important, more important it appeared, than saving a book publishing industry they believed to be in crisis. Nor could they recognize just how sensitive Molotov and Stalin were to accusations that they were using the TsK to aggregate power, and how their plans to regulate book publishing would only have aggravated these, while distracting them from the seemingly secondary goals that Molotov wanted them to pursue.

The disagreement between Molotov and the Otdel pechati's staff also provides additional evidence for understanding how and why the TsK became entrenched at the apex of a hierarchical system of power. The path from the TsK's expansion of its powers in 1922 to its oversight of all aspects of Soviet society was neither smooth nor foreordained. As shown above, Molotov, at least, envisioned a limited and defined role for the TsK; his dissatisfaction with Gusev's

organizational focus and dismantling of the Otdel pechati in 1928 only reinforce this. The newly created APPO was designed to mobilize key populations, not to regulate.

Yet by the end of the Great Break the TsK had been transformed into a much larger organization that was expected to supervise directly Soviet institutions and their work. While the full reasons for this transformation go well beyond this article's scope, it demonstrates the existence of a yearning for such a powerful institution among some in the party, such as those working at the Otdel pechati in the 1920s. To some degree, this was an extension of the civil-war era "Commissar" mentality. But it also shows the problems and frustrations faced by those trying to achieve major reforms via state institutions, who wanted to realize socialist ideology's promise of rationality and order. Even though Stalin and Molotov had very specific reasons for creating an independent Otdel pechati in 1924, once such an organ existed, the draw to use its power to bring order to the chaotic publishing sector seems to have been irresistible, seducing one official after another, from Berdnikov, to Vareikis and Bliakhin, to Vasil'evskii and Gusev. Each was drawn to attempt to use the Otdel pechati's power to take control over and 'rationalize' the book publishing industry, only to have their ambitions frustrated by party leaders with an agenda of their own. This suggests that the striving toward such power was embedded in Bolshevik political culture. The creation of an all-powerful TsK was not inevitable, but the longing of mid-level officials to employ a «Партийный кулак» likely helped to clear the path to such an outcome.

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the role of secrecy and control of information until 1953, see: *Rosenfeldt N. E.* The "Special" World. Stalin's Power Apparatus and the Soviet System's Secret Structures of Communication. v. 1. Copenhagen, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> For the pre-war period, see multiple works by O. V. Хлевнюк including: *Хлевнюк О. В.* Политбюро. Механизмы политической власти в 1930-е годы. М., 1996; *Он же.* Сталин и утверждение сталинской диктатуры. М., 2010. Also see the numerous document collections published by ROSSPEN and Yale University Press.

<sup>3</sup> *Зеленов М.В.* Аппарат ЦК РКП(б)-ВКП(б). Цензура и историческая наука в 1920-е годы. Нижний Новгород, 2000; *Он же.* Рождение партийной номенклатуры // Вопросы истории. 2005. № 2–3; *Monty C. S.* The Central Committee Secretariat, the Nomenklatura, and the Politics of Personnel Management in the Soviet Order, 1921–1927 // The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review. 2012. № 39. P. 166–191.

<sup>4</sup> *Rosenfeldt N. E.* The "Special" World. P. 110.

<sup>5</sup> M. V. Zelenov provides an extremely detailed and informative discussion of how the various parts of the TsK worked and interacted — see: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. Гл. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Там же. С. 6–7.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from the 1919 Party Statutes: *Зеленов М. В.* Рождение партийной номенклатуры. ч. 1. С. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Там же. С. 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> "Из стенограммы заседание Оргбюро ЦК РКП(б). Прения по докладу Бубнова о плане работы агитпроп-поддела ЦК», reproduced in: *Зеленов М. В.* Рождение партийной номенклатуры. С. 8–13.

<sup>10</sup> Там же. С. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Постановление ЦК РКП(б) «Главнейшие очередные задачи партии в области печати» (О задачах книгоиздания) (6/2/1924) и «Постановление ЦК РКП(б) об усилении партийного руководства печатью и работой издательства» (15/2/1924). The portions of the first resolution relating to book publishing and the entire second resolution are in: Издательское дело в СССР (1923–1931): Сборник документов и материалов / Сост. Е. А. Динерштейн и Э. В. Гольцева, М., 1978. С. 16–20, 21–22.

<sup>12</sup> Российский государственный архив социально-политической истории (далее — РГАСПИ). Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 70–71.

<sup>13</sup> See *Kassof B.* Glavlit, Ideological Censorship, and Russian Language Book Publishing // *Russian Review*. 2015. № 74 (January). P. 74–81.

<sup>14</sup> Forty percent of key editorial and publishing positions were held by non-party members as of 1 January 1925, according to a Glavlit report commissioned by the Otdel pechati, although it is not clear if all publishing houses were included in this report, or only those which had to submit texts to Glavlit for approval; РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 271. Л. 215–216.

<sup>15</sup> See the February 1925 comments of Iosif Vareikis, head of the Otdel pechati: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 639. Л. 68. For a discussion of rural book distribution before 1917, see: *Brooks J.* When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature. Evanston, 2003. P. 101–108.

<sup>16</sup> See: *McDonald T.* Face to the Village. Toronto, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> For problems attaining bank credit, see: *Шварц Д.* Ближайшие задачи издательской работы // Книгоноша. 1925. № 17. С. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Издательство Новая Москва // Известия ВЦИК. 1923. 20 Октября.

<sup>19</sup> *Нарбут В. И.* Надо размежеваться // Журналист. 1925. № 10. С. 6.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of subsidizing “Leninist” publications, see РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 685. Л. 9, 133–170.

<sup>21</sup> As measured in printers’ sheets (листов-оттисков). These figures, and the ones immediately below, are taken from a 1925 report prepared by the Otdel pechati for the Orgburo: Там же. Д. 664. Л. 84–91.

<sup>22</sup> Там же. Л. 71–72.

<sup>23</sup> These two categories accounted for 38 percent of titles in 1923, while books written for peasant audiences accounted for 2.3 percent: Там же. Л. 72–74.

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the problems created by competition among publishing houses, see: Там же. Л. 76–77; *Накорянов Н.* Первопричина кризиса и выход из него // Журналист. 1925. № 11 (Ноябрь). С. 11–15.

<sup>25</sup> Exact definitions of the term varied, but according to two members of the Otdel pechati in 1925, a typified publishing house would focus between 60 and 75 percent of its production on a single subject or specialized audience. РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 77; *Нарбут В. И.* Надо размежеваться. С. 5–6.

<sup>26</sup> It was believed that typification and other Glavlit measures had neutralized any commercial threat posed by the private publishers. РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 76. Also see: *Kassof B.* Glavlit. P. 78–79.

<sup>27</sup> Тринадцатый съезд РКП(б), Май 1924 года, Стенографический отчет. М. 1963. С. 652. The term differentiation was used here in place of typification. For Berdnikov’s participation; Там же. С. 300.

<sup>28</sup> Государственный архив Российской Федерации (далее — ГАРФ). Ф. 2306. Оп. 69. Д. 197. Л. 1–2. Both Berdnikov and Vladimir Ivanovich Narbut, the poet, head of the Zemlia i fabrika publishing house, and part of the Otdel pechati’s staff, were on the OSP’s Board of Directors; Там же. Л. 3. For Narbut’s connection to the Otdel pechati, see: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 266; Hoover Institution Archives of the Soviet Communist Party and Soviet State Collection, reel 2.1808 (РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 9. Д. 1875. Л. 213).

<sup>29</sup> Задачи издательского хозяйства (Доклад т. Шварц) // Книгоноша. 1924. № 44–45. С. 14–16.

<sup>30</sup> Hoover Archives, reel 2.1505 (РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 86. Д. 186. Л. 34–34 об.)

<sup>31</sup> See the decrees published in: Известия ВЦИК. 1924. 19 Февраля; Правда. 1924. 26 февраля; Правда. 1924. 7 Июля. С. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Оборин А.* Наша крестьянская литература. Часть 1 // Правда. 1924. 22 апреля. С. 1; РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 12. Д. 639. Л. 68–69.

<sup>33</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 73–74.

<sup>34</sup> For concerns about competition, see: *Оборин А.* Наша крестьянская литература. Часть 2 // Правда. 1924. 23 апреля. С. 2; О крестьянской литературе // Известия ЦИК. 1924. 20 Июня. С. 5. For Otdel pechati attempts to coordinate this literature, see: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 639. Л. 71, 73; Д. 648. Л. 9. Such a section was created, but quickly shunted off to the Main Directorate for Political Enlightenment (Glavpoliprosvet) within Narkompros, robbing it of most of its authority.

<sup>35</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 639. Л. 65. A corrected stenographic report on the meeting can be found at: Там же. Л. 59–95.

<sup>36</sup> The only member of the Orgburo who even acknowledged Berdnikov's plan was Alexander Dogadov, who rejected it out of hand: Там же. Л. 76–77.

<sup>37</sup> Там же. Л. 94. Italics in original.

<sup>38</sup> For an early draft of the document: Там же. Л. 121–24; Berdnikov was also the first and last speaker in the discussion on the resolution (Л. 57–65, 94–95). For the editing commission, see: Там же. Л. 7. The resolution itself is on Л. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Там же. Л. 126–130.

<sup>40</sup> For Vareikis' support, see below. For other members of the Otdel pechati, see: *Нарбут В. И.* Надо размежеваться. С. 5–6. And comments by Pavel Bliakhin in a report to the Orgburo: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 76–77.

<sup>41</sup> Discussion of such an agency dates to the fall of 1924: *Шварц Д.* Издательское хозяйство и его организация (Тезисы к всесоюзному съезду совпартизд-тв) // Книгоноша. 1924. № 38. С. 1. And comments by Berdnikov: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 639. Л. 121.

<sup>42</sup> Their total requests exceeded 3.5 million rubles: Там же. Д. 629. Л. 325–326; Д. 656. Л. 3, 159.

<sup>43</sup> Там же. Д. 664. Л. 20. Emphasis in original.

<sup>44</sup> Там же. Л. 25. The transcript for the entire discussion is at Л. 21–69.

<sup>45</sup> Там же. Л. 28, 31.

<sup>46</sup> See the comments by Vareikis and Bliakhin at: Там же. Л. 28, 48. Also see Bliakhin's negative evaluation of the editorial staffs at 10 major publishing houses: Л. 79–94.

<sup>47</sup> Там же. Л. 63–66. Vareikis attacked Dogadov, who oversaw cultural work among the Trade Unions, in particular. Two attendees, Bubnov and Broido, actually admitted during discussion that their publishing operations had ignored instructions from the Otdel pechati with which they disagreed: Там же. Л. 39, 62.

<sup>48</sup> Там же. Л. 41–43.

<sup>49</sup> See the comments of Dogadov (Л. 34–37); Bubnov (Л. 39–40); Ivan Lepse (Л. 43–45); Voroshilov (Л. 49–51); and Grigorii Broido (Л. 61–62).

<sup>50</sup> For the alteration of the title, see: Там же. Л. 20–21. Molotov also used the new formulation in the course of the discussion: Л. 33.

<sup>51</sup> Там же. Л. 67–69.

<sup>52</sup> The published resolution can be found in Издательское дело в СССР. С. 46.

<sup>53</sup> Molotov's main contribution to the discussion is at: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 51–55. Quote is from Л. 53.

<sup>54</sup> This remained a sensitive issue for the Stalinist leadership until 1927; Kotkin S. Stalin. Vol. 1: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928. London, 2014. P. 506–508, 579–583.

<sup>55</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 112. Д. 664. Л. 51–52.

<sup>56</sup> Там же. Л. 52.

<sup>57</sup> XIV Съезд ВКП(б). Стенографический отчет. М. 1926. С. 94; also see: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 286–287.

<sup>58</sup> This fact was noted by Sergei Gusev, the new head of the Otdel pechati, in a report prepared sometime in early 1926; Архив Российской Академии Наук (далее — АРАН). Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 6–10. Gusev failed to note the irony of the situation, which mirrored the disorganization of the very publishing houses they were meant to regulate.

<sup>59</sup> There were a number of investigations of Glavlit during this period — two separate Politburo commissions (both on its treatment of writers), a TsKK investigation (about lapses in censorship regarding the journal *Новая Россия*), and the Orgburo Commission that started in May 1926; see: ГАРФ. Ф. 5446. Оп. 55. Д. 2638. Л. 1; Ф. 374. Оп. 27с. Д. 708. Л. 1–4, 7, 16, 17 об. For a slightly different version of the origins of the Orgburo Committee, see: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК РКП(б). С. 286–289.

<sup>60</sup> *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК РКП(б). С. 289–290. For Gusev's appointment as head of the Otdel pechati, see: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 173. Л. 7, 199. For a reference to Gusev as the future head of the Otdel pechati from November 1925: Там же. Д. 193. Л. 94.

<sup>61</sup> Bliakhin was named as acting head of the Otdel pechati on 25 January 1926, but then replaced (apparently at Molotov's behest) by Vasil'evskii three days later: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 162. Л. 3, 18; Д. 165. Л. 8.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Gusev's draft resolution on departmental publishing from April 1926: Там же. Д. 188. Л. 93–94.

<sup>63</sup> Discussion of drafting a new statute dates from November 1925 and Vasil'evskii was deeply involved with the project, which was submitted to Molotov on 16 March, 1926; Там же. Д. 197. Л. 94. The version discussed here was resubmitted for approval on 21 May; Л. 70. While there was never a resolution approving them, much of the May 1926 was incorporated into the August 1926 Resolution О работе Советских Органов, Ведающих Вопросами печати; the May 1926 draft is at Там же. Л. 91–93.

<sup>64</sup> Там же. Л. 92.

<sup>65</sup> Там же. Л. 91. Another draft foresaw a council focused solely on book publishing; АРАН. Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 9.

<sup>66</sup> The heads of Gosizdat and Glavlit were already members of the Otdel pechati's collegium, and were sometimes (though not always) noted as such in Orgburo and Secretariat Protocols. They rarely appeared before either body, however, unless their own institutions were being discussed.

<sup>67</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 197. Л. 94; Д. 223. Л. 2.

<sup>68</sup> The draft statute appears to have been forwarded to Stalin for review, although it is no clear if he ever read it — there are multiple notations that it had not yet been read on its карточка контроля attributed to «Поскребышев», Aleksandr Poskrebyshchev, who was one of Stalin's assistants at this time: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 197. Л. 94.

<sup>69</sup> Там же. Д. 203. Л. 147.

<sup>70</sup> Three drafts are at Там же. Д. 223. Л. 40–51, quote from Л. 40; an additional early draft signed by Gusev is at: АРАН. Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 7–10.

<sup>71</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 233. Л. 10; the full Resolution is on Л. 10–13. The published version, which lacked some of the instructions included in the approved resolution, can be found in Издательское дело в СССР. С. 74–76.

<sup>72</sup> АРАН. Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 9.

<sup>73</sup> This line was crossed out in red pencil in the draft resolution sent to Molotov (likely by Gusev) at: РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 223. Л. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Там же. Д. 197. Л. 91.

<sup>75</sup> My emphasis. Там же. Д. 223. Л. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Там же. Л. 11, 45.

<sup>77</sup> АРАН. Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 2–4, 7–10.

<sup>78</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 223. Л. 12. This section was left out of the published version of the Resolution. This interpretation also fits with M. V. Zelenov's argument that the Otdel pechati and Glavlit were involved in a power struggle at this time, providing another reason why the Otdel pechati would support Glavlit's institutional rival: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 287–297.

<sup>79</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 203. Л. 147–148. This is an excerpt of a resolution taken several weeks earlier.

<sup>80</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 223. Л. 12.

<sup>81</sup> Там же. An unpublished section of the August Resolution instructed to the Otdel pechati to present a new statute for the KPD to the Orgburo; Л. 13. The KDP's original placement in Narkomtorg had been justified by its commercial-financial focus; now it would function more like a «Commisariat of Print», an idea that had been floating around for several years. In his initial analysis of publishing regulation, Gusev also had recommend such a move: АРАН. Ф. 597. Оп. 3. Д. 10. Л. 4.

<sup>82</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 226. Л. 2.

<sup>83</sup> For Glavlit's claims: Там же. Д. 271. Л. 119. Also see: *Kassof B.* Glavlit, Ideological Control... P. 86–87. Zelenov discusses this issue from a slightly different perspective as an institutional battle between Glavlit and the Otdel pechati: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 290–295. For Narkompros' role in blocking the new statutes, see: ГАРФ. Ф. 2306. Оп. 69. Д. 775. Л. 2, 4. For opposition by A. P. Smirnov, a member of the Orgburo and Deputy Chairman of the Sovnarkom, see: ГАРФ. Ф. 9660. Д. 8. Л. 68–72. There were also budgetary complications; Российский государственный архив экономки (далее — РГАЭ). Ф. 7927. Оп. 1. Д. 6. Л. 103–105, 107–108.

<sup>84</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 226. Л. 42–46.

<sup>85</sup> Там же. Л. 47; Д. 271. Л. 145.

<sup>86</sup> Там же. Д. 299. Л. 4, 168–171. Berdnikov apparently did not see his removal coming; he published an article on typification in *Pravda* just a month before it happened: *Бердников А.* Издательское дело и его ближайшие задачи (2. Книжное дело) // Правда. 1927. 7 Мая.

<sup>87</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 276. Л. 198–199. For his departure, see: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 296.

<sup>88</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 276. Л. 73. Molotov was speaking here specifically about newspapers, but the thrust of his comments seem to apply to print in general.

<sup>89</sup> Там же. Л. 57.

<sup>90</sup> Там же. Д. 276. Л. 7; Д. 313. Л. 9–10, 43–44.

<sup>91</sup> See the comments made at a meeting arranged by the acting head of the Otdel pechati, N. I. Smirnov, in February 1928; ГАРФ. Ф. 374. Оп. 28с. Д. 2966. Л. 158–223.

<sup>92</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 584. Л. 1–2. For the party leadership's support of Gosizdat, see the letter by its director, Artemii Khalatov, at: ГАРФ. Ф. 374. Оп. 28с. Д. 2966. Л. 70.

<sup>93</sup> РГАСПИ. Ф. 17. Оп. 113. Д. 631. Л. 2–3.

<sup>94</sup> Там же. Д. 621. Л. 2.

<sup>95</sup> For Krinitskii's initial scheme, see: Там же. Л. 35–38; for the staff in mid-1928 see: Д. 643. Л. 110–113; for the elimination of the position see: Д. 670. Л. 41.

<sup>96</sup> Gusev launched a devastating attack on Zinoviev and Kamenev at the Fourteenth Party Congress in December 1925: *Зеленов М. В.* Аппарат ЦК. С. 289–290. Since the decision had already been made to appoint Gusev to the Otdel pechati, his performance at the Congress was not the cause of his selection, but rather indicated one of the reasons why he was chosen for the post.

## **Kassof B. Ideology without Organization? Internal Central Committee Debates on the Functions of the Otdel pechati in the 1920s**

**ABSTRACT:** This article examines a series of on-going debates between Viacheslav Molotov and the staff of the Central Committee's Press Department (Otdel pechati) about that body's responsibilities and powers regarding the Soviet book publishing industry during the 1920s. Molotov wanted the Otdel pechati to focus on a specific set of tasks that revolved largely around Central Committee initiated campaigns. The staff of the Otdel pechati maintained that campaign goals could only be attained through a more general regulation of the publishing industry, which required the Otdel pechati's oversight. This set off a series of confrontations between Molotov and the Otdel pechati's staff about that organ's proper functions and powers over non-party institutions, as Molotov insisted that the Otdel pechati focus its efforts narrowly on the tasks it was assigned, and its staff tried to use its authority to bring order to what they saw as a chaotic publishing industry. These conflicts likely contributed to the Otdel pechati's reintegration with the Agitational-Propaganda Department in 1928. This subject provides insight into several important aspects of Soviet rule, such as the evolving relationship between central party and state institutions, the function of the Central Committee apparatus, and the ways Molotov and Stalin manipulated that apparatus for political gain during the mid-1920s. It also considers whether or not the later establishment of the Central Committee apparatus as the apex of Soviet power was inevitable.

**KEYWORDS:** Otdel pechati; Central Committee apparatus; book publishing; 1920s; politics.

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