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Housing Partnerships, ZhAKTy, or Housing Trusts? A Study of Moscow's Housing Management System, 1917–1937

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This article traces the changing process of the housing management system in Moscow during the period spanning twenty years from the 1917 Revolution to 1937. Through the work, the study attempts to modify a fixed image of great transformation from the NEP to Stalinism at the end of the 1920s, and further add some new findings to recent arguments surrounding the public sphere that existed under the Stalinist regime.

Generally speaking, housing is a vital need for ordinary people, almost equivalent to eating. In the twentieth century, the need for housing prompted welfare states to carry out their public housing policy oriented toward the populace. It is common knowledge that the Soviet state, presumably a type of welfare state,¹ also focused on solving the problems around workers' residences, through confiscation and redistribution of private houses immediately after the Revolution and further construction of new residences for workers. However, housing supply under the Soviet regime continued to be a major bottleneck that frustrated the improvement of daily services. In particular, in the 1930s, when industrialization and urbanization advanced dramatically, the housing situation took a drastic turn for the worse. Trying to find even a room in an apartment, like procuring basic foods, became a crucial and difficult task for each family.

Social historians, who have directed their interest toward daily life under Stalin, naturally investigated the actual conditions of Soviet housing. In so doing, the *kommunalka* (communal apartment) became a main focal point for them. In this type of Soviet housing, each family occupied a room of an apartment and had the use of certain common facilities such as kitchen, toilet, bath, and so on. The situation inevitably created conflict among residents in terms of securing privacy and use of common facilities. While police authorities utilized the situation of mutual surveillance in living spaces to collect information, there were also some citizens willing to denounce their neighbors to the authorities for the purpose of acquiring a better living space. The struggle to

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1 On understanding the Soviet Union as a type of welfare state, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 23.

survive at the residence level and the mechanisms of the regime's rule were common in "extraordinary" ordinary life under the Stalinist regime.²

However, my concern lies in another area. This study approaches the much more public issue of the management of each house, not the conflicts among residents pursuing individual- or family-oriented interests. What housing management system did the Soviet authorities design? Whom did they entrust with the management of each house in practice? In so doing, to what degree did the residents themselves participate in the management work? This is a subject that most social historians have thus far not fully considered. As a matter of fact, in the early Soviet period, ZhAKTy (*zhilishchno-arendnye kooperativnye tovarishchestva*), house-leasing cooperative partnerships, which started to be organized in 1924 and were liquidated in 1937, became the main housing management units. Although the directorate of ZhAKTy elected by the cooperatives' members, with support from personnel such as janitors and accountants employed by ZhAKTy, was supposed to play a key role in administrative work, other members were also expected to take an active part in this work. In some cases, residents themselves appear to have performed self-management of houses and even constructed a local community at the residence level. If that were the case, it may lead to reconsideration of "the public" under Stalin.

In fact, some scholars have recently started to discuss various aspects of the public sphere and the relationship between the public and the private in Soviet-type societies, sometimes paying attention to the ZhAKTy system in terms of this issue.³ In particular, J. Obertreis's book is considered to be the most valuable. Using the term "public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*)" as an analytical tool that enables making visible a sphere mediating between politics and everyday life, she analyzed Soviet housing policies and organizations (ZhAKTy), and residents' life-world in Leningrad in 1917–37.⁴ I have also been

2 For some studies on *kommunalka* and various conflicts in communal apartments, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 46–50; Natalia Levina, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' sovetskogo goroda: normy i anomalii. 1920/1930 gody* (St. Petersburg, 1999), pp. 178–202; Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), Chapter 2; Ekaterina Gerasimova, "Sovetskaia kommunal'naia kvartira kak sotsial'nyi institut: istoriko-sotsiologicheskii analiz na materialakh Petrograda-Leningrada, 1917–1991." Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchennoi stepeni kandidata sotsiologicheskikh nauk (St. Petersburg: European University, 2000). On ordinary life in extraordinary times, see Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.

3 Gabor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf and Jan C. Behrends, eds., *Public Spheres in Soviet-Type Societies: Between the Great Show of the Party-State and Religious Counter-Cultures* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 23–35, 423–452; Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 10.

4 Julia Obertreis, *Tränen des Sozialismus: Wohnen in Leningrad Zwischen Alltag und Utopie 1917–1937* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2004), p. 410.

working on similar subjects without any knowledge of her book because of the linguistic obstacle, and examined some local community activities performed by ZhAKTy and residents such as childcare services and **out-of-school work** for children, especially the little-known community business of canteens in the 1930s. This approach, by showing the existence of the micro-public sphere in the local community, in other words by shedding light on some cases where collectively realizing public values was attempted from below on the basis of residents' communality, might be a challenge to the traditional understanding of Stalinist society as an object of mass mobilization from above and to social historians' core understanding of houses as a battleground in which a selfish survival game among residents unfolded.⁵

This article, which basically follows the viewpoint mentioned above, although sharing some issues and the conceptual framework of the public sphere with Obertreis's work, could also be unique in that it focuses on Moscow's housing management system. For Moscow in the 1920s was working on a different form of housing management from the ZhAKTy, one that was more strongly controlled and supervised by municipal housing authorities, and it was not until March 1931 that the ZhAKTy system was finally introduced, about five years later than in Leningrad and other cities.⁶ Moscow's distinctive line and delay in transfer brought about acute disputes and controversies among housing officials and housing cooperatives' leaders and activists. While Moscow's housing authorities criticized the ZhAKTy, arguing that they were unnecessarily dependent upon residents' self-activity (*samodeiatel'nost'*) that mantled their collective's pursuit of self-interest, potentially hampering the Soviet industrialization project, ZhAKTy supporters viewed Moscow's form of housing management as a manifestation of bureaucratic thinking. Put simply, the controversy was related to which form of housing management would be more adequate in a Soviet state promoting socialist construction, administrative control or self-management by residents. At the end of the 1920s, in Moscow, the former position was on the brink of gaining a victory against the latter, yet a swing back took place, and in the end, the latter, the ZhAKTy, became the main housing management units in March 1931, although they once again provided a path of direct control by local soviets in October 1937.

Thus, an examination of the zigzagging process of Moscow's housing management system can illustrate the continuous aspect of Soviet history in

5 Yasuhiro Matsui, "Stalinist Public or Communitarian Project? Housing Organisations and Self-Managed Canteens in Moscow's Frunze Raion," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60:7 (September 2008); Idem, "Sutarin taiseika no kokyosei to jenda: Mosukuwa jutaku kyodo kumiai no 'Bunka katsudo' wo tegakari ni [Gender and the Public Sphere under the Stalinist Regime: A Study of 'Cultural Work' of Housing Organizations in Moscow]," *Shiso* 987 (July 2006).

6 For an overview of Moscow's housing system, see Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 159–174, 306; Nobuo Shimotomai, *Moscow under Stalinist Rule, 1931–34* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 112–118.

the 1920s and 1930s in a more insightful manner than the case of Leningrad presented by Obertreis.⁷

FOUNDATION OF HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS, 1921–1924

On August 20, 1918, declaring a decree on the liquidation of privately owned real estate in urban areas with a population exceeding one thousand, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee officially confirmed for local soviets the confiscation of housing with real estate. Following this decree, on November 1, 1918, the Moscow Soviet, which had already seized over 4000 large-scale houses in Moscow by the end of 1917, decided to municipalize housing and land bringing in a monthly income of over 750 rubles, and further extended the boundary of municipalization to small-scale houses whose management their owners had abandoned. During this period, the Moscow government set up departments of housing and land (*zhilishchno-zemel'nyi otdel*) at the city level, district branches at the *raion* level, and housing committees (*domovye komitety*) or janitors (*komendanty*) at the residence level in order to manage housing and distribute living space to the working class.⁸

A series of housing measures implemented by the Bolsheviks, coupled with the great number of people who left Moscow as soldiers or as a result of the food shortage, temporarily improved the housing conditions of the people who had lived in the corners of rooms and in barracks in the pre-revolutionary period, at least in terms of the average living space per capita, which rose from 7.3 m² in 1915 to 9.3 m² in 1920. On the other hand, however, the deterioration of housing deepened due to lack of maintenance and repair. First, an injunction against rent increases during World War 1 along with rising inflation depressed apartment income and led to a lack of incentive to do any repairs. This trend was exacerbated during the Revolution and War Communism because of the complete loss of monetary value. As a result, around 25 percent of the living space in comparison with the prewar level, about 40,000 apartments, was supposedly lost during the continuing war.⁹ The housing administration introduced after the Revolution further damaged the housing situation. Since housing authorities arbitrarily decided upon occupation and eviction of residents and prohibited the residents themselves from implementing such without the permission of the authorities, it was difficult to instill a positive attitude toward housing preservation and repair without providing any assurance that they could continue living there. Although a supervisory commission

7 Obertreis, *Tränen des Sozialismus*, p. 407.

8 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 19–20 (1927), pp. 119–122; *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, Tom 25 (Moscow, 1932), p. 447; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo* 10–11 (1923), p. 7. In this article, the term “house (*dom* or *domovladienie*)” signifies a housing unit or complex that had an address number, such as No. 18 Gor'kii Street, and sometimes consisted of multiple buildings.

9 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 19–20 (1927), pp. 123, 128.

(*nabliudatel'naia komissiiia*) whose members consisted of residents was to be set up at each house, I am unable to find any evidence of its effective functioning. Thus, at the beginning of the 1920s, when the civil war ended and the advent of a housing shortage was predicted with the return of ex-residents to Moscow, it became necessary to introduce a new housing management system to prevent housing degradation and promote new housing construction.

One of the new housing policies in the wake of the introduction of the NEP in March 1921, based on the decision of the All-Russian Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) on December 28, 1921, was the return to ex-owners of small houses municipalized during War Communism. This return of housing was expected to promote repair work using owners' own money. In Moscow, the new policy finally started in 1923, applicable to houses holding less than five apartments and left in a state of ruin.¹⁰ Another policy intended to promote housing repair was to strengthen residents' active participation in housing management in exchange for some type of incentive. By adopting a directive on housing management on August 8, 1921, confirming that housing repair was the residents' obligation, the Sovnarkom worked out a new policy to provide stable accommodation for a given period for residents or residents' collectives who contributed to restoring deteriorating houses and housing infrastructure such as water, electricity, gas, central heating, and so on.¹¹ Following this new policy, on September 3, 1921, the Moscow Soviet adopted a directive on the foundation of housing partnerships (*zhilishchnye tovarishchestva*), residents' organizations responsible for managing and maintaining the houses in which they lived.¹²

According to official procedures, housing partnerships were established on the initiative of the residents themselves. The procedure for foundation and registration started by submitting a written petition for the establishment of a housing partnership with the signatures of over three fifths of the residents, a list of all residents, and certificated documents providing a summary of the subject house to Moscow's housing authorities (Moscow Administration of Real Estate [Moskovskoe upravlenie nedvizhmogo imushchestva], hereafter MUNI, and its district [*raion*] branches, RUNI). Within one week of registration, the residents would hold a general meeting and elect the directorate and inspection commission of the housing partnership. Afterwards, an on-the-spot investigation would be conducted by the authorities, and a lease contract for the subject house would be concluded between a representative

10 N. M. Aleshchenko, *Moskovskii sovet v 1917–1941 gg.* (Moscow, 1976), p. 311; *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 1 (1922), p. 7; 19–20 (1927), pp. 124, 126; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo* 2–3 (1923), p. 41.

11 *Zhilishchnye zakony: Sistematicheskii sbornik zakonov SSSR i RSFSR, vedomstvennykh materialov i postanovlenii po g. Moskve i Moskovskoi oblasti na 15 maia 1931 g.* (Moscow, 1931), pp. 516–517.

12 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 8 (1921), p. 26.

of the directorate and the authorities.¹³ As of December 10, 1921, around three months after the announcement of this directive, the authorities had received 525 petitions. Among these, 256 cases completed the official procedure, 181 were under investigation, and 88 were rejected because of failure to satisfy the prescribed conditions. A journal that reported the actual situation of the registration procedure attributed the delay to the fact that the directive had not been publicized among the population.¹⁴

After the initial delay, however, the number of housing partnerships skyrocketed. The total went from 4468 in October 1922 to 8358 on July 1, 1924, which was approximately 30 percent of all houses (*domovladieniia*) in Moscow, in which over half the population of the city lived. Further, toward the beginning of 1927, the total number reached 11,000, which was equivalent to around 40 percent of the houses in Moscow.¹⁵ The reason for the rapid growth in the number of partnerships is explained by the effectiveness of the incentives. The opening essay of the journal, *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo*, first published in September 1922, noted that "it was the assurance and benefit given to the members of partnerships of not being evicted, the right to sublease apartments based on agreement, and so on that operated as a great incentive."¹⁶

In short, the incentives consisted of two aspects. One is that residents were given dwelling assurance for a fixed period. According to the directive of the housing partnerships, administrative measures concerning occupation and eviction thus far exercised arbitrarily by the authorities were excluded. Compulsory eviction was eventually enforced mainly on residents who repeatedly disturbed communal life and was executed upon approval by two thirds of the participants in a general meeting of the housing partnership and through a legal, not administrative, process. This directive and the model charter sanctioned on October 5, 1921 determined the maximum period of a leasing contract to be six years. However, since the guideline stipulated that the authorities could not refuse a demand for contract renewal proposed by a partnership, as long as adequate housing repairs had been made, this may have made it possible to create among residents a sense of responsibility, as a party, for maintenance and management of housing.

Another incentive is that the right of distribution of living space among residents was placed in the hands of each housing partnership. Although housing partnerships were required to transfer 10 percent of the living space of leased housing to the authorities, they were able to distribute the remaining space among residents in a self-managed manner. If vacant space was produced by residents moving out, housing partnerships had the right to allocate the

13 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 2 (1922), p. 39; 5 (1922), p. 21.

14 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 1 (1922), pp. 24-25.

15 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 15-16 (1922), p. 11; 3 (1924), p. 20; 5-6 (1927), pp. 56, 58; 19-20 (1927), p. 126.

16 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo* 1 (1922), p. 3.

space to a member waiting in turn to acquire the space, and in the case of surplus space, after having distributed the defined space norm per capita (8.2 m² in the early 1920s), it was possible to rent the space to a nonmember, even to NEPmen, to expand their own financial standing.¹⁷

Naturally, these incentives and rights were accompanied by certain obligations. Housing partnerships were required to pay rent to the authorities, maintain their houses by continual repair work on their own, and collect rent (*kvartplata*) and part of the repair costs from the residents. It is doubtful that the housing partnerships in those days completely fulfilled all the defined functions, but it is certain that they appeared as a new actor in Soviet society of the NEP era. The acquisition of a legal personality as a housing partnership made it possible to obtain financing from banks and perform housing repairs.¹⁸ If residents positively wished to improve their housing situation and did not spare any effort, it became possible to do so. The establishment of housing partnerships is seen as an attempt congruent with the framework of the NEP, which aimed at activating economic and social initiatives.

However, the Bolsheviks, promoting this policy, were caught in a dilemma. As the NEP revived part of the former elite and rich people, the transfer of housing management to residents and partnerships probably paved the way for the intrusion of “non-working people” into directorates. At first, the membership of housing partnerships was not restricted and all adults could enter. The reason that membership restrictions were not imposed based on social class was due to the expectation of bringing in money and management skills from the ex-elite and rich. Nevertheless, as it was reported that non-working people were eagerly engaged in occupying directorates to maintain their own larger space, the issue of restricted membership was laid on the table for consideration. After all, the new model charter revised in March 1924 deprived non-working people of the right to membership, although they still had the right to live there.¹⁹ During the same period, when elections for new directorates and inspection commissions were held throughout Moscow, a strong campaign was launched to elect workers and party members. As a result, the so-called proletarianization of directorates and inspection commissions proceeded.²⁰

17 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 3 (1923), p. 26; 20 (1923), p. 16; 23 (1923), pp. 23–24; 19–20 (1927), pp. 128–129; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo* 2–3 (1922), p. 4.

18 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 20 (1923), p. 16.

19 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 17 (1923), pp. 10–11; 8 (1924), pp. 10–11; 9 (1924), pp. 18–19; 5–6 (1927), p. 58.

20 According to an analysis of 3,599 housing partnerships whose election results had already been clarified as of May 1924, 52 percent of the directorate and inspection commission members were blue-collar workers, 42 percent, white-collar workers, 3 percent, students, 2 percent, independent professionals, and 1 percent, craftsmen. See *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 10 (1924), p. 11.

Judging from the above, housing partnerships that were required to autonomously manage and maintain houses were undoubtedly put under the control of the housing authorities. Housing partnerships were often mentioned as “auxiliary organizations” of the authorities, “not cooperative,” or “one half cooperative and the other half administrative” in comparison with the ZhAKTy.²¹ That status is endorsed by the direct and formal relationship between the authorities and partnerships as follows. It was an institution introduced by a decision of the Moscow Soviet Executive Committee on May 3, 1923 that directorates and inspection commissions had to be approved by MUNI, and in particular cases, one third of the members had to be replaced by candidates that MUNI recommended.²² This was presumably contrived from the need to maintain the class composition of directorates and inspection commissions, to enable the authorities to secure firm control over housing partnerships.²³

ZIGZAGGING AROUND THE TRANSFER TO ZHAKTY, 1924–1931

The Introduction of ZhAKTy

This form of housing partnership extended to other cities in the Soviet Union. Against the backdrop of the successful development of the NEP, however, a new movement emerged to promote ZhAKTy, a new type of housing organization, more empowered in terms of management and more independent of the authorities. The thrust seems to have come from several ministries including the NKVD and the People’s Commissariat on Health, which were respectively concerned with housing organizations. Their representatives collaborated to form an organizational bureau of housing cooperatives, and the First All-Union Congress of Housing Cooperation was held on December 13 and 15, 1923.²⁴ A draft of the decree compiled and proposed by the bureau in this congress anticipated the basic framework and contents of a decision of the All-Union Executive Committee and Sovnarkom, “On housing cooperation,” dated August 19, 1924. An essay summarizing this congress gave some appraisal of the role that housing partnerships had played in renovating houses for two years, yet put clear emphasis on the need to transfer to housing cooperatives, arguing that they could be “the most adequate form for self-activity of working people.”²⁵

As indicated in Lenin’s article entitled “On cooperation,” since the introduction of the NEP, some Soviet leaders came to expect good performance

21 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 18 (1924), p. 52; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 4 (1924), p. 11; *Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, Tom 25, p. 467.

22 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 23 (1923), pp. 22–23; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel’stvo* 44 (1928), p. 8.

23 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 7 (1926), p. 9.

24 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 4 (1924), pp. 16–19; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 1 (1924), p. 15.

25 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 1 (1924), pp. 15–18.

from a variety of cooperatives, especially in the fields of agriculture and trade. At the thirtieth Communist Party Congress held in May 1924, A. Andreev, who reported on “On cooperation,” referred to Lenin’s article and extolled the meaning of cooperative movements, and further mentioned some activities of housing cooperatives. According to him, since the central and provincial governments alone could not undertake the many activities to solve the great lack of housing, “it is a combination of various organizations’ efforts that should play a fundamental role.” Housing cooperatives were anticipated as “a better form” for the purpose.²⁶

Under these circumstances, the decision of the Soviet government on August 19, 1924, “On housing cooperation,” was published. Declaring that the Soviet state “supports the development of housing construction and the most effective use of existing housing facilities on the basis of self-activity developed by a wide range of the working masses,” the decision promoted the establishment of housing cooperatives comprising the following forms: 1) house-leasing cooperative partnerships (ZhAKTy); 2) workers’ house-construction cooperative partnerships (*rabochie zhilishchno-stroitel’nye kooperativnye tovarishchestva*: RZhSKTy); and 3) general civil (*obshchegrazhdanskie*) house-construction cooperative partnerships.²⁷

Since no one raised any objection to promoting housing construction cooperatives, here I deal with ZhAKTy alone, comparing them with housing partnerships. According to an explanation from the juridical perspective, housing partnerships, on the one hand, were legal persons in *public* law, whereas on the other hand, ZhAKTy were those in *civil* law. “[The two] are not the same...as the subjects of rights and self-sufficient units in the economy.”²⁸ Under Article 8 of the decision mentioned above, ZhAKTy gained more opportunities to expand their financial standing compared to housing partnerships, through levying of initial money deposits from members, although not over 20 rubles, as well as entrance fees and monthly apartment rent, and subleasing non-living space in the form of commercial facilities and offices. Also, by expanding each member’s share of responsibility for the cooperative’s debt to five times that of each initial deposit (Article 11), ZhAKTy acquired a better chance of extracting a larger amount of money from banks.²⁹ Furthermore, in addition to the extension of monetary stock, the capability of ZhAKTy concerning distribution of living space was enhanced. While housing partnerships had to transfer 10 percent of the living space to the housing authorities after concluding the rental contracts, ZhAKTy were exempted from this obligation.³⁰

26 *Trinatsatyi s’ezd RKP(b). Mai 1924 goda: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 429.

27 *Sobranie zakonov i rasporiazhenii raboche-krest’ianskogo pravitel’sтва Soiuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik* 5 (1924), pp. 65–72.

28 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 21 (1924), p. 33; 5–6 (1927), p. 56.

29 *Sobranie zakonov i rasporiazhenii* 5 (1924), p. 67.

30 *Kommunal’noe khoziaistvo* 24 (1924), p. 63.

However, taking into account the severe lack of housing in Moscow, the Sovnarkom RSFSR decided on November 21, 1924 to continue with an additional 10 percent confiscation by the authorities in Moscow alone regardless of the form of housing organization.³¹ And, by decree of the Moscow Soviet on September 29, 1923, prior to the introduction of ZhAKTy, housing partnerships in Moscow were already allowed to rent from the housing authorities entire houses including non-living space and to earn additional money by subleasing any or all of the space.³² Therefore, it is difficult to find a clear difference between the two types of housing organization, at least in Moscow.

What was the greatest point distinguishing ZhAKTy from housing partnerships? It was the absence of a housing official's direct control over the directorates and inspection commissions, which had been embedded in the housing partnership system. As mentioned before, housing partnerships needed official approval for the composition of their executive organs, sometimes accompanied by partial substitution. This control mechanism was not introduced into the ZhAKTy system. Therefore, ZhAKTy institutionally reinforced an aspect of self-management, pushing official control into the background. And the fact that the maximum period of the lease contract under the ZhAKTy system was extended from six to twelve years may also have led to the strengthening of their autonomous management and residents' initiative.³³

Those who energetically pushed the transfer from housing partnerships to ZhAKTy especially emphasized that ZhAKTy, more than housing partnerships, would make it possible to foster among the residents themselves a sense of responsibility as parties of the housing management and thereby mitigate the worsening housing degradation. They expected that residents living in ZhAKTy would make considerable effort in the form of offering their own money and time into improving their housing environment. "When a much broader working population fully understands the differences [between housing partnerships and ZhAKTy]..., they will direct their energy into organizing strong housing cooperations, which will lead their work on the housing crisis to success."³⁴ In so doing, the keyword was "self-activity" of residents. In terms of self-activity, ZhAKTy were supposed to be superior to housing partnerships. Supporters of ZhAKTy argued that housing partnerships and ZhAKTy "are different from each other in their legal position, and moreover, are in exact opposition [in terms of self-activity]. In the former, self-activity

31 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 24 (1924), p. 63; Iu. A. Katkovskii, *Zhilishchno-arendnye i zhilishchno-stroitel'nye kooperativy: spravochnik po zakonodatel'stvo v voprosakh i otvetakh* (Moscow, 1936), p. 45. In exchange for submitting 10 percent of the space, monetary compensation was also permitted.

32 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo* 15-16 (1923), p. 28; 2 (1924), p. 3.

33 *Sobranie zakonov i rasporiazhenii* 5 (1924), p. 66.

34 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 21 (1924), p. 34.

of residents is extremely limited and used as an auxiliary resource to support administrative apparatus (MUNI) in the operation of housing management. In the latter, self-activity plays a dominant role, all housing cooperative buildings are based on it, and housing administration appears only as a counterpart to the contract, maintaining its authority to supervise ZhAKTy and make certain claims only within the framework of the lease contract."³⁵

In addition, some advocates seem to have held the idea that ZhAKTy based on residents' self-management and self-activity would open the road to Socialism, and further, to Communism. Although it was published in 1929 in the midst of the controversy surrounding the introduction of ZhAKTy in Moscow, an article from *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia*, a central journal by two promoters of ZhAKTy, the All-Union Council of Housing Cooperation (VSZhK) and the All-Russian Central Union of Housing Cooperation (Tsentrozhilsoiuz), stressed the historical meaning of ZhAKTy, citing a remark by ZhAKTy supporter A. P. Smirnov, vice chairman of the Sovnarkom RSFSR, that "the form of workers' self-control in houses in future will become the highest, because Communism will be moving toward it" and attaching to it the phrase, "There is nothing for us to add to it."³⁶ In their opinion, flourishing housing cooperatives would be conducive to the realization of a self-control-type socialism. In fact, as ZhAKTy were expected to develop a variety of "cultural and daily living work (*kul'turno-bytovaia rabota*)" at the residence level, being guided by slogans such as "emancipation of women from housework" and "collectivization of daily life," housing cooperative activists attempted to construct a new way of life suitable for a new socialist society through residents' self-activity and cultural and daily living work. It is thought provoking that the first chairman of Tsentrozhilsoiuz was Iu. Larin, a key person who drove the movement of collectivization of daily life during the Cultural Revolution in 1928–31.³⁷

The decree of the Soviet government "On housing cooperation" itself not so much shared this revolutionary ideal as promoted the transfer to ZhAKTy from the pragmatic viewpoint of encouraging residents' initiative in overcoming the housing crisis. In any event, as of October 1, 1925, around one year after the publication of the decree, in the RSFSR, the number of ZhAKTy reached 24,304 and occupied around half the living space of all municipalized houses.³⁸ In Leningrad, the second capital of the Soviet Union, the movement was reportedly delayed at first. However, with a campaign developed during the period from November 1 to December 15, 1925, the transfer to ZhAKTy

35 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 4 (1924), p. 11.

36 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 6 (1929), p. 24.

37 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 7 (1925), p. 55. On housing cooperatives as a foothold of collectivization of daily life, see Iu. Larin, *Zhilishche i byt: zhilishchnyi vopros v rekonstruktsionnyi period* (Moscow, 1931).

38 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomii (RGAE), f. 7754 [Vsesoiuznyi sovet zhilishchnoi kooperatsii], op. 1, d. 1, l. 16; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 2 (1926), p. 35.

accelerated, and finally, in the course of 1926, over 90 percent of the housing partnerships, which covered about 80 percent of the municipal housing in Leningrad, became cooperatives, and Leningrad came to be known as the "Mecca of cooperation."³⁹

Moscow against ZhAKTy

Under these circumstances, Moscow stubbornly stood out against this policy. The Moscow Soviet and MUNI had consistently disapproved of ZhAKTy, from the time the draft of the decree on housing cooperatives was presented in late 1923. One reason for this was that there was no major difference between housing partnerships and ZhAKTy, apart from the name "cooperative" attached to the latter, especially in Moscow where housing partnerships had already acquired the right to sublease non-living space, while they had to provide housing authorities with 10 percent of the living space even after introducing the ZhAKTy system. Moreover, housing partnerships had originated in Moscow and were firmly established there. The residents themselves as well as the housing authorities most likely considered the new policy unnecessary. On the other hand, Moscow's position left some room for doubt that "if nothing changes intrinsically, why do the Moscow Soviet, MUNI, and housing officials categorically refuse to change the signs?"⁴⁰

Moscow's housing authorities presumably objected to ZhAKTy because of apprehension over the loss or weakening of their control over housing management at the residence level. As analyzed later in detail, they were apt to consider the limitation of residents' participation in management more favorable. This attitude may have derived from a characteristic of bureaucrats in general who adhere to their capability, yet there were other reasons. The housing authorities insisted that they needed to be concerned about the allocation of living space in favor of workers, bearing in mind the much more serious housing situation in Moscow and the need to secure a conduit of direct control over each housing directorate to curtail the influence of non-Soviet elements, the proportion of which was supposedly larger in Moscow.⁴¹ An article pointed out another reason for Moscow's objection, arguing that the housing partnerships provided the housing authorities with considerably more arbitrary space than ZhAKTy because MUNI could unilaterally cancel lease contracts with housing partnerships, although not with ZhAKTy, without judicially confirming infringement of contract.⁴²

Moscow's position on this issue was clarified when the NKVD RSFSR and Tsentrozhilsoiuz worked out a strong line of applying their policy in

39 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 24 (1925), p. 1; 22 (1926), p. 1, *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 11-12 (1927), p. 173; *Zhilishchnoe delo* 22 (1925), p. 3; 8 (1926), p. 11.

40 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 4 (1924), p. 17.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 7 (1929), p. 13.

Moscow. This line responded to the decree of the Russian Sovnarkom dated May 21, 1926, "On some measures concerning housing management." The decree requested that the NKVD come up with a directive on the transfer of housing partnerships to the model charter of ZhAKTy, "taking into account the opinion of the local [soviet] executive committee." Based on this decree, on December 19, 1926, the NKVD issued a directive on the procedure for transfer, expecting its fulfillment in Moscow starting October 1, 1927. The plan, however, triggered vehement objection from Moscow, in particular because the Tsentrozhilsoiuz announced the directive as if it had already been decided, without any discussion among those concerned, leaving the Moscow Soviet completely in the dark. The Presidium of the Moscow Soviet issued a special statement that the directive of the NKVD had been presented "without any agreement of the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet" and that "the transfer of the housing partnerships of Moscow city to the cooperative's charter was not scheduled, much less ready by the present time, and there was no direction with respect to the time of the transfer," and furthermore, on December 23, 1926, declared the following decision:

Housing management of Moscow city, through the existing form of administration, is basically restored, and is pouring considerable income from commercial facilities into the budget of the Moscow Soviet, which is completely directed toward housing construction for workers. The special conditions of Moscow, as a capital of the Soviet Union experiencing a formidable housing shortage, require unweakened and direct guidance on housing management from the side of the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet... The experience in other cities of transfer of housing partnerships to the cooperative's charter showed, according to the opinion of responsible workers, that it was unsuccessful and only caused an increase in expenditure on housing management and administration and delayed restoration of housing. It is to be admitted that the transfer of housing partnerships in Moscow city to the cooperative's charter is managerially and politically inadequate.

This decision clearly shows the harsh evaluation of the ZhAKTy system by Moscow's authorities and their preference toward direct control over housing management. On December 28, 1926, five days after the decision of the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet, the Sovnarkom RSFSR admitted that "the announcement of the directive by the NKVD was inadequate," and moreover, proposed to solve the issue of transfer "through agreement between local executive committees and local housing [cooperative] unions."⁴³

The Introduction of Housing Trusts in Moscow

Extracting a certain concession to their position and running in parallel with the process, Moscow authorities embarked on the introduction of a new

43 On the conflicting processes and temporary solutions, see *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 1-2 (1927), p. 48; 5-6 (1927), p. 57; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 3 (1927), p. 14.

form of housing organization distinct from both the housing partnerships and ZhAKTy. This was an attempt to establish housing trusts (*domovye tresty*). In the course of the controversy and dispute surrounding ZhAKTy, Moscow selected the alternative of moving from housing partnerships not to ZhAKTy, but to housing trusts.

The housing trust was a type of housing organization in which multiple houses were bundled under the direct control of MUNI and RUNI. They were generally established based on large-scale houses and commercial facilities. A crucial difference between housing partnerships or ZhAKTy and housing trusts was that the former had directorates and inspection commissions elected by residents, while the latter did not; therefore, self-management and residents' participation in housing management including distribution of living space was institutionally weakened. Residents' self-activity, emphasized in housing partnerships and ZhAKTy, was pushed into the background in housing trusts. As a means of residents' involvement in housing management, supervisory commissions (*nabliudatel'nye komissii*) selected in residents' general meetings and comprising three to seven residents were expected to be set up. Yet the task of these commissions was sharply limited to the role of observer. Management of each house was assumed to be conducted by a housing janitor (*komendant* or *upravdom*) charged with looking after several houses and dispatched by housing administrations (*domovye upravleniia*) under housing trusts.⁴⁴

The introduction of the trusts must have been a new means for the authorities to maintain conventional control over municipal housing in Moscow. However, a new explanation regarding the effective accumulation of capital for the construction of new houses was added. Considering information about surplus money stored at profitable housing partnerships not being put into funds for new housing construction, but in some cases being spent on excessive repairs or facilities of existing houses, the authorities started to contend that housing trusts under their direct control would become a stable circuit for stocking surplus money.⁴⁵

A project for organizing housing trusts was implemented in November 1926 under the name "Sub-department of [housing] exploitation (*P/otdel eksploatatsii*)" attached to MUNI. Under this sub-department, 15 large-scale profitable houses located in the city center were bundled. The total living space was 126,698 m², non-living space, 97,202 m², and the number of commercial facilities, 668. The sub-department managed them through five housing administrations and reportedly achieved excellent results during the initial one-year "experiment." Some articles reported that the amalgamation brought about a dramatic reduction (around 25 percent per 1 m²) in labor costs and expenditure for housing services such as cleaning and garbage collection. Furthermore, the gross rental income coming in from apartments

44 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 3-4 (1929), pp. 105-107.

45 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 7 (1926), pp. 5-6.

and commercial facilities reached 4,224,556 rubles, 74.28 percent of which was sublease rent from the latter. After subtracting the rent for non-living and living space to MUNI – the former was 2,759,437 rubles and the latter was 97,685 rubles – around 1,370,000 rubles allegedly remained as cash in hand.⁴⁶

Before long, Moscow's experiment appeared to obtain partial sanction from the Russian government. On July 11, 1927, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Sovnarkom RSFSR issued a decree "On the organization of trusts for administration of municipalized houses" and approved the transfer of part of the municipal housing to the control of the newly organized housing trusts with conditions attached: houses under direct control of municipal housing authorities and newly constructed houses alone shall be transferred to trusts; houses rented by ZhAKTy shall be transferred to trusts only in cases where ZhAKTy do not wish to renew their contracts with the authorities or where they have committed a breach of contract.⁴⁷ Even though the decree did not clarify how to deal with the housing partnerships in Moscow, some of them, especially large-scale houses, began to be incorporated into housing trusts.

When the restoration of the national economy was considered to have been completed in the middle of the 1920s, the next task of industrialization and the related extension of monetary resources surfaced. Thus, a campaign was launched for the "regime of economy" as a means for capital accumulation. The new form of housing organization promoted by Moscow matched the flow of the campaign, and moreover, may have acquired policy legitimacy by demonstrating that housing trusts led to expansion of the monetary basis for new housing construction.

Renaming this sub-department of exploitation as housing trusts, Moscow further pushed the movement and, at the same time, attempted to solidify the theoretical grounds for trusts in the process of controversy with cooperatives in the latter half of the 1920s, ranking the trusts as "the highest form" of housing management.⁴⁸ Moving away from their previous position in support of housing partnerships against ZhAKTy, the housing authorities in Moscow came to understand that both housing partnerships and ZhAKTy were antiquated housing organizations that would be unable to respond to the present and coming needs. For example, an article entitled "Housing partnerships, ZhAKTy or Trusts" published in 1929 at the peak of the dispute contrasted the former two with the third, and argued that "while housing trusts are an especially centralized and statist form of housing administration (*tcentralizovannaia gosudarstvennaia forma upravleniia domami*), housing partner-

46 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 40 (1927), p. 1; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 22 (1927), pp. 16–17.

47 *Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii raboche-krest'ianskogo pravitel'stva Rossiiskoi Sotsialisticheskoi Federatsionoi Sovetskoi Respubliki* 75 (1927), pp. 908–911.

48 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 3 (1927), p. 14; 6 (1929), p. 22.

ships and ZhAKTy are distinguished from trusts by their own character of predominance of public self-activity (*obshchestvennaia samodeiatel'nost'*)," and further insisted that the "so-called public form (*obshchestvennaia forma*) of housing administration is unable to fully satisfy state requests" in terms of halting housing degradation and satisfying current requests for industrialization. "To the housing organizations are directed not general requests for supplying housing stock consisting of municipalized houses for working people [in general], but concrete requests for distribution of space strictly in accordance with the needs of developing industry. In this situation, the role and meaning of housing cooperatives (housing partnerships and ZhAKTy) in the operation of space allocation are declining more and more..." Given that "developing industry of the country, first of all, requires living space" and "priority in this case should be given to workers and white-collar workers in industry and transport," "the state is obliged to grasp the work of distribution of space in its own hands... Therefore, the controversy surrounding which form, housing partnerships or ZhAKTy, responds more to the present needs, is more theoretical than practical and effective. A statist form of housing administration best meets the present needs and policy... The road to development of a national economy requires the transfer of administration of housing management directly to state organizations."⁴⁹

As shown in this paper, the position that emphasizes administrative control from above as opposed to the cooperative principle and residents' self-activity had been consistently expressed in Moscow's official remarks. However, an article entitled "Problems of Housing Trusts" published in February 1927 during the early promotion of housing trusts was very conspicuous in its critical attitude and low estimation of cooperatives and their self-activity. "The collective form (*kollektivnaia forma*) of housing administration cannot be the final ideal at all. Now that housing management has already been restored, further residents' self-activity is unnecessary in the work of housing restoration. In cases where housing management is not only restored, but is also beginning to provide some profit, collective administration is redundant and residents' self-activity could become an obstacle to the accumulation of money stock for new housing construction."⁵⁰ Put simply, these statements are equivalent to saying that the collective form of housing management and self-activity are invisible cloaks to hide residents' private or egoistic interests.

In sum, Moscow seized on the one hand housing partnerships and ZhAKTy as a collective or public form of housing management and on the other hand housing trusts as a centralized and statist form, and thus decided to focus predominantly on the latter at the time of industrialization. Therefore, in answer to the question of whether to select housing partnerships or ZhAKTy, the better form for Moscow would be the one that was easier to control, which

49 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 10 (1929), pp. 3–6.

50 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 6 (1927), p. 1.

was housing partnerships. In short, the transfer of housing partnerships to ZhAKTy was out of the question. "An attempt to replace housing partnerships with ZhAKTy is a violation of the right of local soviets to control housing management and accomplish forms of housing administration based on centralization and rationalization..."⁵¹ Yet Moscow admitted that housing partnerships should be kept for the time being, since it would be impossible to immediately extend housing trusts to all municipal housing in Moscow.⁵²

Housing Cooperatives Approaching Moscow

As readily expected, housing cooperatives' leaders and activists felt some apprehension about "the extremely dangerous blow" that the trusts might bring to the development of housing cooperatives, and strongly criticized the housing trusts as only producing "administrative delay (*volokita*) and bureaucratism," which "we experienced during War Communism."⁵³ The criticism of "bureaucratism" thrown at housing trusts was consistently found in statements by supporters of housing cooperatives. As an example, at a conference of cooperatives' activists from Leningrad held on September 5, 1927, the following resolution was adopted including the keyword of bureaucratization:

Mass transfer to trusts, that is, transfer to an administrative form of management through *komendanty*, would deprive the working people of fundamental stimulus to participate in management and to be closely and directly concerned with the work of maintenance and restoration of housing stock, thereby producing the danger of bureaucratization... and elimination and weakening of the public basis (*obshchestvennaia osnova*) in housing management.⁵⁴

However, responding to the emergence of industrialization policy and the development of a campaign for the economic regime, and reasonably anticipating that certain demerits could be brought by firm refusal without any compromise or alternative, the conference continued the resolution as follows:

At the same time, taking into account the extremely important task of creating flexible housing stock in preparation for the influx of workforce..., the conference considers it necessary to adopt appropriate measures. In so doing, [we] must not halt in front of some curtailment of the rights of ZhAKTy... to possess living space over an average standard [per capita]. The emptied space of these ZhAKTy should be transferred to housing stock to satisfy the needs mentioned above.⁵⁵

51 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 10 (1929), p. 8.

52 *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 10 (1929), p. 6.

53 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 18 (1926), p. 3.

54 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 18 (1927), p. 33.

55 *Ibid.*

As seen in this resolution, housing cooperatives showed some signs of flexibility concerning their authority to distribute living space under ZhAKTy. And the attitude was not limited to Leningrad, but reflected a new position of the Tsentrozhilsoiuz, which had reportedly already been adopted as of May 1927. As a result, a new decree was issued by the Sovnarkov RSFSR on November 15, 1927, **“On measures of housing management in urban areas,”** which stipulated that part of the capability to distribute living space should be transferred to city soviets. According to a commentary on this decree, the draft on which the decree was based was drawn up by leading members of housing cooperatives, in whose constituencies Iu. Larin, chairman of the Tsentrozhilsoiuz, was included.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the decree included another significant provision. To strengthen control over ZhAKTy, it stipulated modification of the model charter of housing cooperative unions that had built a network of ZhAKTy at the district or city level, and gave the cooperative unions the capability to practice reelection prior to the term of directorates and inspection commissions through convening general meetings of members. Employing a remark from another commentary on this decree, the provision presented the idea that **“the same method of reelection as had been applied in Moscow’s housing partnerships,”** that is, the partial exchange system of directorate, should be introduced between ZhAKTy and cooperative unions, as between housing partnerships and MUNI.⁵⁷

In this manner, ZhAKTy were gradually approaching the institutional framework of housing partnerships, partly losing their initial autonomy. According to the judgment of housing cooperatives’ leaders, however, such a compromise should have contributed to securing the position of ZhAKTy in the housing management system as a whole. While the decree issued on November 15, 1927 reduced the sphere of capability of ZhAKTy, it was supposed to reconfirm their position as seen in some clauses of the third chapter entitled **“On the Reinforcement of the Juridical Position of Housing Cooperations.”** Those clauses stipulated that the minimum term of contract to be concluded between ZhAKTy and housing authorities was to be no less than nine years, and the contract could not be terminated without juridical judgment of breach of contract by ZhAKTy. Although it seems to only clarify some previously stipulated provisions, a commentary on the decree evaluated it highly, arguing that **“this decree is a great acquisition for housing cooperations. It fixes not only the still-acquired position, but also opens enormous opportunities for further successful development.”**⁵⁸ That evaluation may concern the intention of housing cooperatives’ leaders to mitigate discontent spreading on the spot.

56 *Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii* 118 (1927), pp. 1511–1519; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 17 (1927), p. 2.

57 *Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii* 118 (1927), p. 1513; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 1 (1928), p. 13.

58 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 17 (1927), p. 2

Yet before the thrust of housing trusts, for housing cooperatives to secure a footing would have been significant. In addition, the cooperatives' approach to the institutional framework of housing partnerships may have been an attempt to lower some hurdles in promoting the transfer of housing partnerships to ZhAKTy. At the third session of the All-Union Council of Housing Cooperation held on January 13, 1928, with many voices warning against housing trusts, a resolution was adopted stipulating that the Tsentrozhilsoiuz reach an agreement with the Moscow Soviet, and "draw representatives of the Moscow Soviet into the present work of reviewing the model charter of ZhAKTy."⁵⁹ This was understandably an attempt at problem solving by reducing the differences between the two institutions.

The second step of the cooperatives' side in approaching the Moscow housing authorities is related to the enlargement of housing management units, that is, the merger of housing organizations, including ZhAKTy. This was distinguished from simple criticism of trusts by presenting a position that understands the emergence of housing trusts not so much in opposition to ZhAKTy, but rather as an attempt to overcome the inefficiencies of small-scale housing organizations.⁶⁰ The survival of ZhAKTy also naturally motivated this position. Among the cooperatives' activists there was not only a skeptical attitude toward the evaluation of more efficient housing trusts, but also objections that ZhAKTy, in which members of the directorate were working without payment, were more economical;⁶¹ however, the opinion that overcoming the small-scale character of housing organizations would enhance efficiency gained general consensus.⁶² By early 1927, the project of consolidating housing management units including ZhAKTy had started in all urban areas in the RSFSR. In Moscow, the MUNI embarked on the merger of housing partnerships based on the decision of the Moscow Soviet dated February 23, 1927, and by the end of March 1928, 500 housing partnerships had been consolidated into 89 units.⁶³

From Housing Partnerships through Trusts to ZhAKTy

Thus, the emergence of housing trusts, coupled with the industrialization drive and the economic regime, invited a somewhat more flexible stance among

59 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 2 (1928), pp. 24–27.

60 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 1 (1927), p. 23; 2 (1927), p. 14.

61 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 6 (1929), p. 22.

62 However, there was some dissent against the merger on the grounds that it might cause further disturbances on site; it would not be economical; it is an illusion that the merger would make it easier to acquire money for repairs; and so forth. See *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 19–20 (1927), pp. 138–139. In any event, the surrounding dispute, about the more cost-beneficial form of housing management, was not so much based on objective evaluation as a kind of discourse tactic used to present one's superiority against the other.

63 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 1–2 (1927), p. 49; 11–12 (1928), p. 99; *Zhilishchnoe tovarishchestvo – zhilishche i stroitel'stvo* 28 (1927), p. 1.

housing cooperatives' leaders and reduced the difference in institutional setting between ZhAKTy and housing partnerships. However, in spite of the closer approximation of the systems, there is no doubt that the basic strands of the relationship between Tsentrozhilsoiuz/VSZhK and MUNI had been colored by conflict. While MUNI viewed ZhAKTy as "consumer organizations" giving priority to cooperatives' members, and therefore having "petty bourgeois" nature, housing cooperatives criticized the introduction of housing trusts as the appearance of bureaucratism and low estimation of residents' self-activity.⁶⁴ This controversy reached its peak in 1929 and both main journals repeatedly exchanged sharp words, which is perhaps why housing trusts did not spread in Moscow. Consequently, the transformation of housing organizations did not advance.

Under these circumstances, the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate (RKI) RSFSR that proceeded with the investigation of housing trusts in Moscow in 1929 presented a new policy decided on June 20, 1930, which became a turning point. The decision, positioning trusts as the basic form of housing administration in Moscow, proposed complete transfer to trusts. Yet at the same time, it also added the experimental introduction of ZhAKTy in one district in Moscow. According to an article commenting on the decision, the new policy stemmed from the "superiority of trusts over other forms of housing administration," especially by "successfully conducted management activity." It reported that housing trusts in Moscow had generated a profit of 4,899,265 rubles in the 1928–29 fiscal year. On the other hand, the investigation also observed some defects. In particular, there was concern over "weakness in drawing the public (*obshchestvennost'*), that is, residents into management activities." This led to "not always sufficient service to residents and delay of realization of residents' needs." Hence, the defects pushed forward the partial introduction of ZhAKTy. Immediately responding to the RKI decision, the Moscow Soviet accelerated the transfer of municipalized houses to trusts and at the same time by a decision of the Presidium on August 21, 1930, selected Zamoskvorech'e raion as the object for conducting an experimental introduction of ZhAKTy.⁶⁵

Thus, Moscow's housing system encountered fluctuations. As of October 1, 1929, there were 71 residential sites (*dvorovye uchastki*) with living space of 207,000 m² under 15 housing trust administrations. After the decision, as of January 1, 1931, the number of these sites skyrocketed to 5514 with 4,762,900 m² under 200 administrations. This means that the amount of living space increased 20 times. Since the entire municipal housing living space in Moscow was about 10 million m², nearly half was administered under trusts. On the other hand, during the same period, the number of housing partnerships (including ZhAKTy) decreased from 12,100 to 600 with 10,919 residential sites

64 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 4 (1924), p. 17; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 13 (1926), pp. 17–18; *Zhilishchnoe khoziaistvo*, 9 (1930), p. 9.

65 *Zhilishchnoe khoziaistvo* 24–25 (1930), pp. 4–5, 10.

and living space of 4,287,000 m², coupled with the results of the merger as well as transfer to trusts. Consequently, at the time, housing trusts exceeded housing partnerships in terms of living space.⁶⁶

On the other side, in Zamoskvorech'e *raion*, which was divided into two, Zamoskvorech'e and Lenin *raions*, after the reorganization of Moscow's districts in 1930, the experiment started. By early 1931, 88 ZhAKTy were reportedly established. Since the merger of housing partnerships had already advanced and 1833 houses had been incorporated under 86 housing partnerships, the experiment was performed in such a way as to follow the movement of the previous merger and in addition, seize the available 73 houses under trust.⁶⁷

However, apart from two *raions*, as the introduction of trusts was extending from large-scale houses with a higher proportion of commercial space, in other words with a small number of residents, to middle- or small-scale houses, some initial shortcomings of the trusts were eventually recognized among the population. As early as late 1930, many complaints surrounding the transfer to trusts began to be reported. In residents' meetings held at various places in Moscow, considerable criticism was directed toward the housing trusts and merged housing partnerships. Finding fault with "estrangement of housing apparatus from residents, bureaucratism, disorder, continuous degradation of housing funds, dearth of residents' activities, lack of political and cultural work at residences, etc.," participants reportedly insisted that "a means of overcoming the crisis – is to break up the existing unwieldy housing organizations." Since strong criticism was being directed toward the trusts, ZhAKTy surfaced as the only remaining alternative for a housing organization. One report noted the atmosphere of a meeting held in Sokor'niki *raion*, where a representative from RKI was unable to present persuasive data for endorsing the rationality and economy of trusts, and thus the vast majority of participants approved a resolution to "liquidate trusts and establish ZhAKTy." Furthermore, the Moscow City Party Committee joined in this trend. The decision of the committee loudly denounced a main housing authority of Moscow by name, contending that "MUNI completely mistakenly conducted the reorganization of the housing administration, massively centralized the administration, and enlarged the housing management in a series of *raions*, which led to the practice of poor management... and the worsening of residence service." A leader of MUNI, referring to the fact that "thousands of voters' mandates (*nakazy*) demanding change and improvement of this [housing] system came to the Moscow Soviet" during the period of Soviet election campaigns, admitted that the promotion of trusts in 1930 "turned out unsuccessfully."⁶⁸

66 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 6 (1931), p. 12.

67 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 1 (1931), p. 18; 9–10 (1932), p. 19; *Zhilishchnoe khoziaistvo* 24–25 (1930), p. 11.

68 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 1 (1931), pp. 14–17; *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 2 (1931), pp. 25–26; 6 (1931), p. 15.

Thus, via repeated zigzagging, a new opportunity again visited Moscow. A decision of the Moscow City Party Committee and Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet dated March 14, 1931, "On the reorganization of the administration of housing management," critically summarized the results of the promotion of trusts and merger of housing units, pointing out that "extraordinary centralization in housing administration and lack of concrete guidance in housing management led in practice to poor management and irresponsibility in housing, the worsening of service to residents, and weakening of self-activity and initiative of residents themselves in housing administration." Based on this estimation, the decision ordered the reorganization of Moscow's housing administration as follows: Among all municipal housing, houses including large-scale commercial facilities such as the former Miur and Meriliz department stores shall be incorporated into the Kitai-Gorod trust directly controlled by MUNI; houses holding living space of over 1000 m² shall be administrated by housing trusts under district soviets (not beyond 45 percent of the total living space of the municipal housing); the remaining housing fund (over 55 percent), apart from houses fixed by government offices or leased to state organs and enterprises, shall be transferred to under the "direct control of residents of their houses..., by organizing ZhAKTy." In sum, almost all houses under the housing partnerships and a considerable number of houses held by the housing trusts were to be transferred to newly organized ZhAKTy.⁶⁹ Thus, Moscow was positioned in the same institutional framework as other cities including Leningrad.

Since this decision also meant basically setting up one ZhAKT per house, it presented a clear idea of setting up housing organizations by residents to the extent possible and once again promoting residents' participation in housing management. In this respect, the decision aimed at reversing the driving force that had expanded the housing administration units and their distance from residents themselves. However, this decision was not immediately accomplished, as was so often the case in the policy process under the Soviet regime. Although a series of operations concerning the transfer should have been concluded by April 25, a Moscow newspaper reported some delay of transfer by introducing the actual situation in various places where residents' meetings had not yet been held, where directorates had not yet been elected, and so on. In particular, the most serious problem was that ZhAKTy were organized not for each house, but for housing units comprising dozens of houses. Therefore, the Presidium of the Moscow Soviet Executive Committee had to issue an additional decision commanding "determined decentralization and closing of housing to residents" and "liquidation of enlarged units of ZhAKTy."⁷⁰ As a result of the additional measures, by April 1932, about a year

69 *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 5 (1931), pp. 21–24.

70 *Rabochaia Moskva*, April 19, 1931, p. 3; May 5, 1931, p. 4; May 16, 1931, p. 4. In Lenin raion, which had already proceeded with the introduction of ZhAKTy, 49 ZhAKTy were divided into 1662 units during the period from April to June 1931. See *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 9–10 (1932), p. 19.

after the initial decision, 14,272 ZhAKTy holding 16,172 houses (*domovladieniia*) and 1,567,215 people with a total living space of 6,736,285 m² had been set up in Moscow. Since the municipal residential sites (*dvorovye uchastki*) in Moscow totaled 19,120 with living space of 10,328,900 m² as of January 1, 1931, if leaving aside a time lag of over one year and the difference between the two terms used, it would mean that the ZhAKTy system had seized around 65 percent of the living space of Moscow's municipal housing.⁷¹

ZHAKTY IN MOSCOW, 1931-1937

The decision dated March 14, 1931 provided Moscow's housing system with a new framework that continued until 1937. Most municipal housing was administered by ZhAKTy and housing trusts. Non-municipal housing including dormitories and barracks were placed under the control of government agencies, state enterprises, and various other organizations, and partly the workers' house-construction cooperative partnerships (RZhSKTy) that managed the houses that they constructed or renovated in the same way as ZhAKTy. The following provides a brief sketch of ZhAKTy, housing trusts, and RZhSKTy in 1930s Moscow.⁷²

ZhAKTy, the scale of which in April 1932 is mentioned above, retained their position as the main housing organization in Moscow until 1937. As of January 1937, the number of ZhAKTy was 14,827 with 1,623,200 residents, slightly exceeding the 1932 figures. As the living space under ZhAKTy amounted to 7,497,100 m² as of April 1936, this also exceeded the 1932 figure. According to a survey of total ZhAKTy in Moscow carried out throughout 1932, among the 8838 ZhAKTy that responded to inquiries by August 1933, 11.5 percent held living space over 1000 m² and 66 percent held 500 m² or less.⁷³ On the whole, these figures endorsed the policy decision of March 1931, whereby municipal houses holding living space over 1000 m² would be administered under the trusts. In short, ZhAKTy managed small- or middle-scale houses.

On the other hand, housing trusts acquired many large-scale, well-equipped houses in terms of communal facilities.⁷⁴ The housing trusts in Moscow were divided into two forms: city housing trusts and district housing trusts. City housing trusts had 179 housing administrations (*domoupravleniia*) with 538 buildings (*stroeniia*) as of January 1, 1936. The total living space was 1,047,004 m², one seventh that of ZhAKTy, and residents numbered 181,700. In short,

71 *Kommunal'noe khoziaistvo* 6 (1931), p. 15; Tsentral'nyi arkhiv goroda Moskvy (TsAGM, byvshii Tsentral'nyi munitsipal'nyi arkhiv Moskvy: TsMAM), f. 1495 [Moskovskii gorodskoi soiuz zhilishchnoi arendnoi kooperatsii: Mosgorzhilsoiuz], op. 1, d. 1, l. 45.

72 For a similar sketch, Shimotomai, *Moscow under Stalinist Rule*, pp. 114-118.

73 TsAGM, f. 1495, op. 1, d. 49, ll. 6, 24-25; d. 1135, l. 148; d. 829, l. 90.

74 *Vecherniiaia Moskva*, January 1, 1934, p. 2; TsAGM, f. 1289 [Moskovskaia gorodskaiia rabochekrest'ianskaia inspektsiia i moskovskaia gorodskaiia kontrol'naia komissiia VKP(b)], op. 1, d. 432a, l. 3.

the average living space and number of residents per housing administration surpassed 5000 m² and 1000 people, respectively.⁷⁵ With respect to district housing trusts, the only available data is the figure of 878 houses (*doma*) held in 1932 or 1933,⁷⁶ although the number of residents and total living space under district housing trusts is supposed to have been higher than those of city housing trusts.

There is also little data on RZhSKTy. According to one report, 112 RZhSKTy were operating in Moscow in 1931, including 55 housing cooperatives owning their houses. The total number of cooperative members was 186,000 as of October 1, 1931, among which around 54,000 members, only 29 percent, had acquired their own living space. As of January 1, 1937, there were 395,000 RZhSKTy members throughout the Soviet Union, but 138,900 were still awaiting acquisition of space.⁷⁷

The paucity of information prevents a detailed explanation of the housing management system in 1930s Moscow. Instead, I provide the following overview of the actual situation of housing management under ZhAKTy. While the main journal on housing cooperations frequently applauded the activities of exemplary ZhAKTy, archival materials provide a more multifaceted perspective. For example, an investigation of all Moscow trusts and ZhAKTy in May 1932 reported the “unsuccessful situation” of housing management as follows: frequent turnover of janitors, disorganized management, ignorance on the part of directorates in terms of residents’ demands, weak resident participation in management of trusts, indifference to housing administration by party factions and members, inadequate repair work, and so forth.⁷⁸ Furthermore, an investigation of 15 ZhAKTy conducted by instructors of the Moscow City House-leasing Cooperative Union (Mosgorzhilsoiuz) in the same period draws our attention to its analytical approach and conclusion. The most interesting point is the presentation of its conclusion, whereby the 15 ZhAKTy are classified into three categories: 1) large-scale ZhAKTy with several paid personnel; 2) middle-scale ZhAKTy with a few personnel partly paid or holding another position; 3) small-scale ZhAKTy where the directorates perform considerable public duties without paid personnel. The conclusion was that a magnitude of residents and income or the existence of paid personnel did not assure the success of ZhAKTy activities. Regardless of scale, some ZhAKTy performed better and some did not. Finally, the report argued that the performance of ZhAKTy depended on “the election of persons to directorates and sub-commissions.”⁷⁹ In short, the human factor – who and what types of people were elected – was

75 TsAGM, f. 490 [Glavnoe upravlenie zhilishchnogo khoziaistva], op. 1, d. 2, ll. 41ob.-42; d. 3, l. 53.

76 TsAGM, f. 1289, op. 1, d. 662, l. 43.

77 TsAGM, f. 1289, op. 1, d. 388, l. 29; RGAE, f. 7754, op. 1, d. 116, ll. 18, 21.

78 TsAGM, f. 1289, op. 1, d. 387, ll. 78–84.

79 TsAGM, f. 1495, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 32–34ob.

most significant. The notion could be considered simple common sense, yet it may also be the point on which to focus to gain a deeper understanding of Stalinist society. **Although the phenomenon where directions from above are not always fulfilled at the bottom was observed broadly and everywhere under the Soviet regime, in this case of housing management, one of the reasons that policy from above concerning the establishment and promotion of ZhAKTy in Moscow was achieved in a different manner at the bottom was the human factor at the residence level, that is to say, the quality of human networking and mutual trust among residents and their representatives, or if using a term popularized by the political scientist, Robert Putnam, the accumulation of "social capital" in each house.**⁸⁰ This viewpoint could lead to the perception that the attitude of residents and their representatives toward the common project of housing management, in other words, their sense of civic responsibility, was indispensable even, or especially, under the Stalinist regime and it played a key role in the performance of ZhAKTy.⁸¹

Here, I introduce two individual cases. The first is ZhAKT No. 397 located in Krasnaia Presnia raion. According to a record compiled on October 31, 1932 by the inspection brigade, the house under ZhAKT No. 397, built in 1910, comprised three stone buildings with four floors and was well equipped with communal facilities including central heating and baths. Judging from the fact that the number of apartments and rooms was respectively 36 and 186 with living space of 3210 m², it belonged to the category of large-scale ZhAKTy. Total monthly income was estimated to be about 2000 rubles. The number of residents, heads of households, and ZhAKT members was 631, 174, and 155, respectively. Having this many non-members was also very often seen in other ZhAKTy. The records show that the administrative work in this ZhAKT was deficient, confirmed by the complete absence of general meeting protocols. This problem was closely related to inactivity of the directorate, almost all of whose members belonged to the party except for one housewife. The record states that "the directorate does not conduct any practical activities with respect to housing management and administration with the exception of some meetings, although these are held extremely rarely." In fact, several paid personnel administered this ZhAKT. "A janitor was shouldering the entire workload, for which the directorate side hardly provided any necessary support." The janitor had worked there since February 1932 and earned 200 rubles a month. In addition, this ZhAKT employed two accountants (in all, 250 rubles) holding other positions, a sweeper (90 rubles), a cleaning woman (70 rubles), and a boilerman (130 rubles). In addition to a critical remark about overpayment of personnel, the inspection brigade pointed out various other problems in terms of housing management: unauthorized financial admin-

80 Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

81 On this viewpoint, see also Matsui, "Stalinist Public or Communitarian Project?"

istration such as excessive payment for garbage collection and misallocation of water charges; low frequency of general meetings; no setting up of sub-committees such as for cultural and daily living needs; absence of cultural and daily living facilities such as laundry and kindergarten; and so forth. The inspection brigade concluded that the Mosgorzhilsoiuz must intervene in this affair and undertake reelection of the directorate and inspection commission of ZhAKT No. 397.⁸²

The second case, ZhAKT No. 8 set up at No. 86 Gor'kii Street, is based on a petition signed by the head of the directorate and sent to the Moscow City Party Committee.⁸³ The petition is not dated, but it was included in a file of documents dated 1932–1933. ZhAKT No. 8 had 120 residents (87 adults) including 67 cooperative members. While ZhAKT No. 8 was not categorized as large scale or financially solid, it was awarded for its significant activities at the Congress of All-Russian Housing Cooperatives. The petition emphasized that a majority of residents had actively participated in the work of the ZhAKT. By virtue of such strong resident involvement, ZhAKT No. 8 stopped employing a janitor, proudly noting that “except for a sweeper, a cleaning woman, and a boilerman (in the winter season), we have completely transferred to housing administration on a voluntary basis (*v poriadke obshchestvennosti*).” In short, an attitude corresponding to the mindset of self-managed ZhAKTy was observed among the directorate and cooperative members. However, the chairman of the directorate raised a serious problem. The transfer “ought to have enjoyed maximally lively reverberation and palpable support mainly from the side of the housing and communal administrations, yet actually, we have encountered the opposite phenomenon.” The petition insists that the administrative organs’ bureaucratic responses created a predicament for the ZhAKT’s activists.

We have already indicated that at the present, [our] ZhAKT’s work is mainly based on the public and this is right. In the composition of the directorate are included good activists, who so often bear the excessive burden of their job and hold public obligations one after another in addition to the work of the ZhAKT. Therefore, they can only do the work of the ZhAKT late in the evening or on holidays... While the work of the ZhAKT has been restructured and strengthened, the housing authorities leading and supporting ZhAKTy have not been restructured because the organizations concerned (sub-district housing unions, housing trusts, and others) do not operate on the standard holidays. Therefore, the ZhAKT leaders have no opportunity to systematically maintain an active connection [with their organs] and to solve many problems. [We] are obliged to ask our workplace superiors for permission to spare work time in order to visit various organizations concerning ZhAKT work. During the month of June alone, the directorate chairman and secretary each spent 15 hours of work time on ZhAKT work. Such a situation cannot be approved. This is all taking place because those concerned have not restructured their

82 TsAGM, f. 1289, op. 1, d. 387, ll. 18–33.

83 TsAGM, f. 1495, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 52–62.

work in accordance with the working conditions of ZhAKTy.... At Registration Bureau No. 2 of Oktiabr' raion, the process for issuing ordinary certificates and ration books is organized in a terrible manner. People frequently stand in line for several days, and then receive insufficient instructions. People are forced to rush around trying to obtain various certificates, documents, and so on. The bureau officials' attitude toward visitors is rude and careless. Our active housewives, who do all the work concerning ration books on a voluntary basis (*v obshchestvennom poriadke*), have been reduced to tears by vituperation and discourtesy.

It can be seen from these two cases that the performance of housing management by ZhAKTy first and foremost depended on the human factor. However, in Stalinist society, where ordinary people had to spend hours, sometimes days, to acquire daily basics including food, coupled with the bureaucratic ineffectiveness of the Soviet administration, the self-management of housing through ZhAKTy was a harsh experience that imposed a heavy burden on the residents. While self-activity of residents was continuously demanded, there was a conspicuous absence of any support mechanism to strengthen the micro-public sphere.

On the other hand, cases of arbitrary or despotic management by directorate chairmen, as well as their inactivity as in the case of ZhAKT No. 397, are recorded in archival files: a chairman who lost his authority after repeated incidents of drunken, violent behavior including wife beating; a chairman who allocated extensive space to his relatives; a chairman who misused funds to repair a friend's space; and so forth. In the last case, which was disclosed in 1936, a general meeting to denounce the chairman was held with the participation of Bandi, chairman of the Mosgorzhilsoiuz. Criticizing him because "he was a good chairman only for himself and those closest to him," the decision was made to call for criminal prosecution.⁸⁴ There were most likely countless incidents of despotic chairmen or directorates besides the cases mentioned above.

In sum, while ZhAKTy in 1930s Moscow were in some cases a kind of micro-public sphere accompanied by active participation of residents, they were in general battlegrounds where survival games unfolded.

LIQUIDATION OF ZHAKTY, 1937

On October 17, 1937, a decree was issued by the Central Executive Committee and Sovnarkom USSR, "On maintenance of housing funds and improvement of housing management in cities."⁸⁵ The decree was in fact a death sentence for the housing cooperative movement, as it ordered the

84 TsAGM, f. 1495, op. 1, d. 86, l. 159; d. 364, l. 55; d. 851, ll. 11–45.

85 *Resheniia partii i pravitel'stva po khoziaistvennym voprosam, Tom 2 (1929–1940 gody)* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 617–627.

liquidation of all ZhAKTy and almost all RZhSKTy. Although details of the policy process for this decree remained ambiguous, the decree itself clearly expressed the Soviet government's perception of the actual situation of housing administration.

Housing administration and legislation, which regulate housing construction and distribution and use of residences, retain the detrimental remains of the period of national economy, when local soviets were obliged to transfer their authority concerning housing management and distribution and use of living space to individual residents' collectives – ZhAKTy – because of organizational and managerial weakness. As a result, instead of state distribution and use of houses to be practiced through local soviets, for the most part, state housing funds are basically seized by small residents' collectives, which are uncontrolled by, and independent of, local soviets and have only been formally consolidated into housing cooperative unions... As a matter of fact, housing funds administered by ZhAKTy... are in a completely unsatisfactory condition. In their overwhelming majority, ZhAKTy do not administer houses, consider their repair, or keep them in cultural condition... Housing legislation, which has permitted the expenditure of state capital for cooperative housing construction and has transferred houses constructed by the state to respective citizens' groups (housing construction cooperatives), and which has also permitted the transfer of houses belonging to the state and constructed by state enterprises and organs for direct administration and use by respective citizens' groups (ZhAKTy), was conducted during the period of 1924–1930, when local soviets and state enterprises were unable to secure proper administration of housing funds.

As indicated in the decree, the Soviet government, by stressing dysfunction of most ZhAKTy, completely condemned the existing housing management system, the institutional and juridical framework of which was basically constructed during the NEP period. The notion that this form of housing cooperative was introduced due to weakening of local soviets, which originally were to directly control municipal housing, almost exactly repeated what the Moscow housing authorities had contended with ten years earlier. The tone elicited a sense of crisis in that housing cooperative organizations were inadvertently permitted to treat municipal houses that were state property as if they were privately owned. Issuing the decree would be closely related to the adoption of the Stalin Constitution at the end of 1936, which declared a victory for Soviet Socialism based on socialist property.⁸⁶

The decree outlined a new housing management system: ZhAKTy and housing cooperative unions would be abolished; RZhSKTy would be similarly dealt with, except those that could repay their loans of state funds within six months; local soviets would directly administer all houses under ZhAKTy, trusts, and RZhSKTy; for this purpose, local soviets would organize housing

86 I thank Prof. Akira Uegaki for drawing my attention to the feasible relation between the decree and the Stalin Constitution.

administrations (*zhilishchnye upravleniia*), to be set up one per district, up to two in large districts in Moscow and Leningrad; the respective house or houses would be managed by janitors (*upravdomy*), to be appointed by housing administrations; janitors would be set up one per alley for 10–15 small-scale houses, while large-scale houses with living space over 3000 m² or more than 500 residents would have their own janitor; rental contracts, the maximum term to be five years, would be concluded between the janitor and heads of households (*s'emshchiki*).

It is no surprise that the Soviet newspapers and journals quoted only those residents who responded favorably to the decree, and yet in their voices some valid arguments for the government decision were suggested. For example, one resident emphasized that directorate chairmen who had their own job during the day and tackled housing management work as a public obligation had no time to consult with upper housing unions and organs or to fulfill difficult tasks such as procurement of construction workers and repair materials.⁸⁷ On the other hand, the liquidation of housing cooperatives was unexpected, in particular for district activists, and an atmosphere of demobilization and stagnation spread among them. Yet Tsentrozhilsoiuz and Mosgorzhilsoiuz, which were also destined to be abolished in the near future, immediately criticized their attitude and pressed them to do the final work, warning that individual responsibility would be pursued.⁸⁸

Although the transfer of houses under ZhAKTy and trusts should have been finished by December 10, 1937 and those under RZhSKTy, by December 15, the usual delays and zigzagging were reported. Afterwards, 36 housing administrations were established under 23 district soviets in Moscow, to which all municipal housing was transferred, including almost all the houses under RZhSKTy. The conclusion of new rental contracts between appointed janitors and heads of households started on April 1, 1938. This operation also had some problems, as at the end of 1938, the contract procedure had reportedly started again. However, 800,000 contracts were concluded as of May 1940 and the transfer process was basically finished.⁸⁹

During the restructuring of the housing system, barely 16 house-construction cooperatives remained, but afterwards, the number gradually increased.⁹⁰ This means that housing cooperatives survived. Yet house-leasing cooperative partnerships, ZhAKTy, were completely abolished by the decree of 1937 and were not revived during the subsequent history of the Soviet Union. Replacing rental contracts between housing authorities and ZhAKTy, the janitors as agents of housing administrations, in short, the Soviet state, and

87 *Zhilishchnoe khoziaistvo* 19–20 (1937), p. 15.

88 TsAGM, f. 1495, op. 1, d. 1165, ll. 1–6.

89 *Rabochaia moskva*, November 27, 1937, p. 4; November 29, 1937, p. 4; March 30, 1938, p. 4; December 16, 1938, p. 1; *Moskovskii bol'shevik*, May 17, 1940, p. 4; May 24, 1940, p. 3.

90 *Moskovskii bol'shevik*, August 23, 1940, p. 3.

the residents themselves as the two parties of the rental contract faced each other directly, not via housing organizations. ZhAKTy, although severely limited in terms of autonomy and authority, continued to be a unique presence throughout the 1920s and 1930s, as a kind of intermediate corporation positioned between state and citizens. Therefore, the liquidation of ZhAKTy might be viewed as a symbolic final establishment of state Socialism.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

The zigzagging process of Moscow's housing management system traced in this article provides an opportunity to reconsider Soviet history of the 1920s and 1930s, in other words, the long-discussed issue of the dramatic transition from the NEP to Stalinism. As the rapid industrialization and wholesale collectivization of agriculture that started at the end of the 1920s is called a "revolution" from above, the border between the 1920s and 1930s is rightfully seen as a great threshold in Soviet history. However, housing management appears to have proceeded along a different path. Cooperative housing management introduced under the NEP cut through the border and continued until 1937. In spite of the fact that in Moscow, along with the birth of industrialization policy, administrative control over housing was about to achieve a victory against cooperative management including housing partnerships as well as ZhAKTy, after all, in March 1931, Moscow also decided to join the policy of other cities including Leningrad. It is not unfeasible that the cooperative housing management system, which took into consideration residents' initiatives and their private and collective interests based on the mindset of the NEP, extended its influence in the 1930s. It must be noted, however, that the housing situation changed greatly with the end of the NEP. Proletarianization was promoted not only in the membership of housing partnerships and cooperatives, but also in the composition of residents through enforced removal of non-working people from municipal housing. Even though the idea of transferring the right of property itself to ZhAKTy was presented in the mid-1920s, somewhere along the way, it disappeared.⁹² The capability of ZhAKTy to distribute living space among members was curtailed in October 1927, while they were mandated to control their residents regarding the administration of passports and ration books and mobilize them to attend public festivals and memorial events such as the October Revolution and May Day.

Nevertheless, it is significant that this system, in which cooperative members elected a directorate to handle housing management with residents' participation, was maintained until 1937. The decree of 1937 deprived residents'

91 For similar remarks, see Orbertreis, *Tränen des Sozialismus*, pp. 6, 407.

92 *KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s"ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, Tom 3* (Moscow, 1984), pp. 400–402; *Zhilishchnaia kooperatsiia* 14 (1925), pp. 1–2; 15 (1925), pp. 8–9; 16 (1925), pp. 5–10.

organizations of even limited autonomy, considering them as actors infringing socialist property. Thus, a state monopoly on housing was basically accomplished. Newly appointed janitors were positioned as follows: "Janitor – this is a representative of Soviet power, the Soviet state. He is obliged to secure and reinforce public and socialist property as a sacred and inviolable basis of the Soviet regime..."⁹³

One reason for the survival of the cooperative housing management system may be attributed to the dual character of Stalinism. While seeking total control and mobilization, from above, of human and material resources, at the same time, it welcomed initiative, self-activity, and active participation from below and attempted to channel this into socialist construction projects. This matches the view that Stalinism was not only repressive, but also productive in its power to subjectivize the people.⁹⁴ However, another explanation appears vital to understanding the dualism of Stalinism. Since total state control of all aspects of social life would be impossible in practice, in the end, the state is obliged to depend on social and public initiatives from below to maintain social life and realize various values, including communal services. Although housing cooperatives could not fulfill their function as expected and inevitably brought their private and collective interests against the authorities' direction into the work, some ZhAKTy had played such a public role in the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, as reported in contemporary newspapers, the liquidation of ZhAKTy caused some decline in community activities at the residence level.⁹⁵

93 *Zhilishchnoe khoziaistvo* 2 (1938), p. 6; 3 (1940), p. 1. Since the perception of the late 1930s, especially the year 1937, as a great turning point in Soviet history has been shared by most historians, my argument cannot be considered original at this point. However, the purpose of this article is to show that the form of the cooperative, whose role in economic and cultural development came to be positively reevaluated by some Bolshevik leaders such as Lenin in the process of transfer from revolutionary radicalism of War Communism to the NEP, survived the era of renewed radicalization of revolution from above since the end of the 1920s, despite the fact that in Moscow, the form of housing cooperatives was on the brink of being discarded under the industrialization drive. In short, the year 1937 for the housing cooperative movement should be seen as the final abandonment of the NEP, rather than as a sort of Great Retreat (Nicholas S. Timasheff).

94 On subjectivity under Stalin, see Kotkin, *Magnetic mountain*; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

95 *Rabochaia Moskva*, May 23, 1938, p. 4; July 10, 1938, p. 4; January 26, 1939, p. 3; *Moskovskii bol'shevik*, May 20, 1939, p. 2.