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Establishment and Activity of Petrograd Commission on Improving the Welfare of Scientists in the 1920s

1. Introduction

The period of 1920–1930 in the history of Soviet science in the XX century became the most controversial and full of drama. It was during this difficult period of time that the foundations of the relationship between the state and science, the Soviet government, and scientists had been laid, which were conditioned by the formation of a totalitarian regime. These relations were governed by the implementation of the proclaimed socially transformative and cultural-ideological program and determined the development of Russian science throughout Soviet history.

The purpose of the author of this article is to investigate the activities of Petrograd Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists (PetroCIWS) (Russian – ПетроКУБВ) in the context of studying the social history of the Soviet science, to reveal the peculiarities of the relations between the Soviet government, science and society at the regional level. The formation and operation of organizations dealing with the problems of scientists in certain regions have not received proper attention from modern scholars. The role of this Commission in the organization of research work remains the least explored. Scientific

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Petrograd, despite the colossal human and material losses during the revolutions and wars, remained the second after Moscow's center of science on the territory of the former Russian Empire. This city at all stages of Soviet history was in the priority plans of modernization and the Bolshevik scientific policy.

2. Soviet authorities and scientific intelligentsia

After the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Bolsheviks coming to power, there was a rather difficult economic situation in the country. Years of revolutions and wars brought devastation, destabilized the work of enterprises, transport, infrastructure. Famine, cold, epidemics, lack of clothing, and medicine only worsened the situation of the population which had already been disastrous. The city inhabitants, especially scientists, found themselves in a rather difficult situation. Lack of state funding did not allow to continue further research work. Under quite difficult circumstances of that time, the Academy of Sciences made attempts to fight for the preservation of scientific personnel and the domestic science itself.

In the early 1920s, repression became commonplace in science. The Soviet government, liquidating the bourgeoisie, added to its number all the free professions of intellectual labor, including scientists. In the process of liquidation of the "old classes", the country's scientific elite suffered the most. The new authorities immediately suspected the scientific elite as their potential enemies. Bolsheviks were suspicious of the intelligentsia for their opposition and rejection of Marxism, their unwillingness to silently endure the ban on freedom of speech. Scientists had become one of the most persecuted socio-professional groups. A large number of Russian as well as Ukrainian scholars, who were famous and well-known not only in the homeland, had faced reprisals, deportation abroad, and relocation in remote regions of Russia. Science was created in those days in cold laboratories by hungry, shabbily dressed people.

The writer M.Gorky, over time, expressed his thoughts on the role of the intelligentsia in the socio-political history of the state. In 1924, he wrote: "I have a divergence of views with the Communists regarding the assessment of the role of the intelligentsia in the Russian revolution, pre-

pared by this very intelligentsia, which included all Bolsheviks. The Russian intelligentsia – scientific and working – was, remains and will have been for a long time the only draft horse-drawn in the heavy cart of Russian history”². The Soviet government events that occurred to protect and provide scientists with material support, were connected with the name of M. Gorky. The writer was concerned about the material wealth and moral integrity of Petrograd scientists, tried to overcome the resistance of officials, to reach the top state management, to help in solving, first of all, the scientists’ problems of material standards and living conditions. On September 7, 1919, he wrote a letter to V. Lenin – the head of the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR, trying to pay his attention to the difficult situation in which scientists found themselves. The letter was sent to Moscow through the president of Military Medical Academy, Professor V. Tonkov³. In the following letter, which was dated October 19, 1919, the writer reacted angrily to the authorities’ delay by saying: “Yes, I am insane, but I am not blind, I am not a politician, but I am not stupid, as most politicians often have been. I know that you are used to “operating the masses” and the personality for you is quite a marginal phenomenon. But for me, Mechnikov, Pavlov, Fedorov – are brilliant scientists of the world – its brain. You, politicians, are metaphysicians, and I am an insane artist, but I am a rationalist even more than you are.

There are no many best brains in Russia, – continued M. Gorky, we have few talented people and too many swindlers, scoundrels, adventurers. This revolution is ours – for decades. Where are the forces that will lead it quite intelligently and energetically? A wise man must be more valuable to us today than ever before. He is the one, the only one, who can enrich the country with new intellectual energy, he will develop it, he will create the necessary army of technicians in all areas of the struggle of the human mind against dead matter”⁴. The government took this information into account and responded.

² Horkyi A.M. (1991), *Stranytsy tvorchestva. Knyha dlia chteniya s kommentaryami* [Pages of creative work. A book for commentary reading]. Moscow: Russkyi yazyk.

³ Ysakov S.H. (1992), *Neyzvestnye pisma M. Horkoho V. Lenynu* [Unknown letters from M. Gorky to V. Lenin]. *Revue des études slaves*, tome 64. Fascicule, s. 147.

⁴ *Dva pisma V.I. (1993), Lenynu ob otnosheniy k intelligentsii* [Two letters to V.Y. Lenin about the attitude to the intelligentsia]. *Kentavr*, no 1, pp. 61.

3. Organization of the PetroCIWS activities

On PetroCIWS assembly on December 23, 1919, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR decided at its meeting to approve the "Resolution on the Improvement of the Position of Scientists" and outlined the range of persons to whom that would apply – in hungry Petrograd there were nearly 500 scientists and 50 writers. However, the implementation of this resolution and the formation of the list of persons to whom it applied, were entrusted to the representatives of the Commission of the People's Commissariat of Education, the Supreme Council of National Economy, Narkompros of the RSFSR⁵.

The draft resolution was formed by Deputy of the People's Commissariat of Education – M. Pokrovsky. By reading the draft resolution, it became clear to whom it applied: "To raise the productivity of the national economy and to meet the most appropriate needs of workers' and peasants' defense, the Council of People's Commissars decides: to provide with increased rations the most outstanding professionals of that branches of science which are crucial for performing the assigned above tasks" ⁶. The People's Commissariat of Education and the People's Commissariat of Food of the RSFSR were assigned to determine the ration scales.

The commission, mentioned in the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR on December 23, 1919, was soon reorganized into a permanent Special (All-Russian) Commission on Improving the Welfare of Scientists. The Commission included the Deputy of People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR – M. Pokrovsky, People's Commissar of the RSFSR Healthcare – M. Semashko, the writer and public figure – M. Gorky and others. To implement the government resolution on January 12, 1920, the Petrograd Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists (PetroCIWS) was established and

⁵ Borysov A.A. (1998), A.M. Horkyi – orhanyzator pervoho Doma uchenych [A.M. Gorky – a founder of the first House of Scientists]. Maksim Gorkiy na poroge XXI stolitsa. Gorkovskie chteniya: materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii. Moscow, vol. 2, pp. 322.

⁶ Ibidem.

headed by M. Gorky. Its main task was to support scientists, writers, artists, and their families, who had financial difficulties. As academician S. Oldenburg wrote at that time: "The need to create PetroCIWS was due to the extremely difficult situation faced by the representatives of science and culture in the environment of destruction that struck the country in the first years of the Bolshevik government. Then many famous researchers died of starvation or committed suicide, losing faith in life"⁷.

The Commission consisted of the People's Commissar of Food of the North-Western Region – O. Badaev, the head of the Petrograd Department of Scientific Institutions and Higher Educational Institutions – M. Christie, professors – I. Manukhin, O. Pinkevich, V. Shimkevych, V. Tonkov, actress M. Andreeva and others. The Academy of Sciences was represented by S. Oldenburg and O. Fersman. The information press organ of PetroCIWS became the magazine "Science and its workers", which was published in Petrograd during 1920–1922 under the editorship of M. Gorky, S. Oldenburg, O. Pinkevich and O. Fersman⁸. The journal had sections such as: "Activities of Petrograd and Moscow scientific institutions", "The House of Scientists", "From the scientific life of the province", "Scientific Chronicle and Bibliography" and others. Unfortunately, only 12 issues were published, due to the strict course taken by the Bolsheviks towards the "old intelligentsia", the magazine was closed in 1922. However, the materials published on its pages are still of great interest to modern scholars⁹.

PetroCIWS was administered and financed by the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR. Its main tasks were to arrange events and to prepare draft resolutions that would ensure the sustained work of scientific institutions and institutions of higher education, and also to guarantee good material and moral conditions which were necessary

⁷ Oldenburg S.F. (1921), *Rossiyskaya akademiya nauk v 1920 godu. Otdeleniya fizyko-matematicheskikh nauk i istoricheskikh nauk i filosofii* [Russian Academy of Sciences in 1920. Departments of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Historical Sciences], Ph. pp. 4.

⁸ *Yvestiya Petrosoveta* (1920) [The Petrograd Soviet News], 12 yanvaria, no. 7.

⁹ Nozdrachev, A.D. Petrytskyi V.A. (1995) *Pervyi v Rossii Dom uchenykh* [The first in Russia House of Scientists]. *Vestnyk Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk*, vol. 65, no. 10, pp. 922.

for the work of scientists. PetroCIWS had the right to establish relations with any governmental bodies on issues connected with the welfare of scientists, the work of scientific institutions and higher educational institutions. From the very beginning of its creation, PetroCIWS was given the task to review the lists given by scientific institutions and universities for receiving academic rations by scholars. The mode of rationing was established by the Central Commission of Workers Supply at the People's Commissariat of Food of the RSFSR. Then strictly rationed food was distributed by the Central Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists (CCIWS).

A variety of PetroCIWS heterogeneous activities required first and foremost a suitable building where all its numerous institutions could be located: a chancery, commissions, a dormitory, a canteen, warehouses, shops, workshops, etc. At the active request of M. Gorky before the central authorities, the Commission (PetroCIWS) managed to get at its disposal the former palace of Grand Duke Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Romanov, who was the uncle of the last Russian emperor. This palace situated on Dvortsova Embankment, 26 and was named "The House of Scientists"¹⁰.

The first meeting of the Petrograd Commission on Improving the Welfare of Scientists took place on January 14, 1920. Later, the meetings were convened every Tuesday and chaired by M. Gorky. In its practical work, PetroCIWS tried to bring the words of its leader to life: "It is necessary to understand that the work of a scientist is the heritage of all mankind and science is an international and selfless field. Scientists must be valued as the most productive and precious energy of the people, and therefore they must create conditions under which the growth of this energy would be easily facilitated. Early detection of disability or death of a scientist is a huge loss for the country"¹¹.

PetroCIWS held a meeting of representatives of 61 scientific institutions and 37 higher educational institutions of Petrograd, representing more than 5,700 scientists of the city. The first task of the Petrograd

¹⁰ Shylov F. (1959) *Zapiski staroho knyzhnyka* [Letters of an old scribe], Moscow. pp. 128–129.

¹¹ *Nauka y ee rabotniki* (1920) [Science and its workers], no 1, pp. 5.

Commission on Improving the Welfare of Scientists was the arrangement of the food supply. Among the ways of providing the food supply, the most important was the opening of a canteen at the House of Scientists, the creation of squads and their secondment to various parts of the country for purchasing scientists' foodstuffs. PetroCIWS could include some supplements to scientists' rations¹². It was a great challenge for the Commission to select the best candidates for receiving rations. The main reason for including on the list was scientific activity and efficiency, focused on the development of the national economy, strengthening the country's defensive capabilities.

A valuable asset in the work of PetroCIWS was the gradual increase in the number of such "scientific" rations. In 1919 the maximum number of scientific rations was 500 rations for all scientists in Petrograd, total amount of rations grew to 1800 in May 1920, the number of scientific rations rose to 3700 in 1921. The Commission approved a fixed daily rate of "scientific ration", which was developed by a Special Scientific Medical Committee headed by Professor H. Khlopin, and it consisted of¹³:

The Daily rate of ration

№ з/п	The assortment	Quantity of products
1.	Meat without bone	½ pound
2.	Bread	1 ½ pound
3.	Cereals	½ pound
4.	Potatoes	1 pound
5.	Butter	15 spoons
6.	Sugar	9 spoons
7.	Dried roots	4 spoons
8.	or fresh vegetables	60 spoons
9.	Salt	33 spoons
10.	Pepper	1/6 spoons
11.	Tea	0,24 gm.

¹² Mynts Z.H. (1968) A.M. Horkyi i KUBU [A.M. Gorky and Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists]. Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi fylologii: XIII Horkovskiy sbornyk, Tartu, pp. 173.

¹³ Borysov A.A. (1998) A.M. Horkyi – orhanyzator pervoho Doma uchenykh [A.M. Gorky – a founder of the first House of Scientists]. Maksim Gorkiy na poroge XXI stolitsa. Gorkovskie chteniya: materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii, Moscow, vol. 2, pp. 326–327.

12.	Tobacco	3 gm.
13.	Matches	5 boxes
14.	Soap	1 pound

Central Commission on the Improvement the Welfare of Scientists in the Sovnarkom, the USSR decided to add to the list of food supply: «The scientists of Moscow, as well as the scientists of Petrograd should be given one pair of shoes, one suit or fabric for making a suit, three pairs of underwear and six pairs of socks annually”¹⁴.

Scientific rations were distributed within the standard rate from the stock products which were available in warehouses. Because the fact those food shortages were permanent, components of food rations were minimal. In general, the situation with the supply of products to the city was catastrophic. This was a time when, according to the head of the Central Commission on the Improvement the Welfare of Scientists (CCI-WS) A. Khalatov: “...the value of one pound of brown bread wasn’t taken into account, because it was sometimes equal to the cost of life itself”¹⁵. Some Petrograd writers, composers, artists, painters and architects also received “scientific” rations. There were among them: P. Avenarius, P. Andreiev, B. Astafiv, A. Akhmatova, A. Hlazunov, A. Holovin, V. Davydov, V. Muizhel, F. Solohub, I. Fomyn¹⁶.

At that difficult time, young scientists also required special attention. The best graduates of higher education institutions, both residents of Petrograd and its incomers, that stayed to work at university chairs and prepared for scientific and research activity. Formally, this category of young scientists was not allowed to receive academic rations. Petro-CIWS authorities tried to find ways for giving them at least temporarily 100 rations (70 – for young scientists of Petrograd and 30 – for incomers), the content of which would meet the standards of academic rations.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 322.

¹⁵ Piat let raboty Tsentralnoi Komissyy po uluchshenyiu byta uchenykh pry Sovete Narodnykh Komysarov RSFSR (TsEKUBU). 1921–1926 hh. (1927) [Five years of work Central Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists at the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR. 1921–1926 years], Moscow: TsEKUBU, pp. 3.

¹⁶ Nozdrachev A.D. Petrytskyi V.A. (1995) Pervyi v Rossii Dom uchenykh [The first in Russia House of Scientists]. Vestnyk Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, vol. 65, no. 10, pp. 922.

An important issue that Petrograd scientists had to deal with was the problem of not having the security of tenure. The Neighborhood Committees in Petrograd at that time carried out the so-called “compacting of inhabitants”. Workers were relocated from the outskirts to the city center. Their families moved into the apartments of “the former bourgeois” to which the city’s scientific elite also belonged. Representatives of the Neighborhood Committees did not always understand the difference between a wealthy owner of a comfortable apartment and a scientist who had a large library and needed a separate office to work. The activity of the PetroCIWS members in resolving this problem was to explain to the representatives of the City Housing Committee this difference, to find a compromise, to defend the right of scientists to additional living space.

The question of providing scientists and their families with fuel had also required solution for a long time. Often in winter Petrograd, this was a matter of life and death for scientists. About 1,500 Red Army soldiers were mobilized to help with solving this problem¹⁷. In matters of Petrograd scientists’ social assistance PetroCIWS took care of their health protection, medical care, resolved issues of providing scientists personally and members of their families with clothing etc. In 1921, a Nursing Home for scientists and doctors was organized, and to be taken to which at such a hard time scientists considered a matter of luck¹⁸. The Petrograd Commission established outpatient clinics, pharmacies, sanatoriums, and rest homes, opened workshops on household services for scientists.

4. Petrograd House of Scientists

An important chapter in the history of PetroCIWS activity become the organization of the first House of Scientists in the post-imperial space, designed to promote the cultural interaction of scholars. Opened on January 31, 1920, Petrograd House of Scientists turned into a scien-

¹⁷ Mynts Z.H. (1968) A.M. Horkyi i KUBU [A.M. Gorky and Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists]. *Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi fylologii: XIII Horkovskiy sbornyk*, Tartu, pp. 175.

¹⁸ Ibidem. pp. 176.

tific club, a center of spiritual unity of the scientific elite and a way of its involvement in the dissemination of scientific knowledge among the city residents. At that hard time for the creative intelligentsia, Petrograd House of Scientists also became the center of their financial support. To organize the management of the Petrograd House of Scientists, a collegial body was established – the presidium of PetroCIWS, led by M. Gorky. It consisted of professors M.V. Novoruskyi, S.F. Oldenburg, A.P. Pinkevych, V.M. Tonkov, A.E. Fersman. Besides, on April 7, 1921, a self-governing body was created – the Council of Elders, which included well-known scholars and cultural figures: A.V. Vasyliiev, O.M. Gorky, M.V. Novoruskyi, S.F. Oldenburg, M.Ia. Perhament, V.P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskyi, A.E. Fersman, L.A. Chuhaiev, M.I. Altukhov, A.M. Valk-Rozenfeld, A.P. Herasymov, M.I. Dobrynina, M.Ie. Zhdanko, R.B. Zhukhovetskyi, A.N. Makarov, K.V. Melikov, K.F. Nestrukh, A.A. Petrovskyi, A.L. Rafalovych, D.D. Rudnev, M.M. Yakhontov. The Council of Elders also set up commissions – artistic, economic, personnel, audit¹⁹.

At the solemn inaugural meeting on the occasion of the House of Scientists opening, Professor F.Iu. Levinson-Lessinh gave a lecture on the importance of fantasy in the scientific community, and from February to September 1920, more than 30 reports on various scientific disciplines were given and discussed in the White Hall of the House of Scientists. Out of the 51 reports read in the first year of the House of Scientists existence, 14 reports were dedicated to the natural sciences, the rest of them – to the problems of the humanities²⁰. The House of Scientists became a place where scientists could come every day, meet with colleagues, conduct academic discussions, give lectures, and organize research conferences and other scientific events. Members of the House of Scientists were prepared to facilitate foreign business trips, to help with: purchasing instruments and scientific literature required for research work; discharging from community service; receiving pensions by widows and family members of the deceased scientists.

Based on the realities of that time, The House of Scientists had opened an outpatient clinic, workshops for repair and tailoring of cloth-

¹⁹ Nauka y ee rabotniki. (1921) [Science and its workers]. no. 1, pp. 36–38.

²⁰ Nauka y ee rabotniki. (1921) [Science and its workers]. no. 3, pp. 26.

ing and footwear, hairdresser, sauna, laundry to assist scientists in the satisfaction their daily living needs. Taking into account transportation problems and for the convenience of scientists who lived far from Dvortsovaya Embankment, in March 1920 a branch of the House of Scientists was opened in Petrograd on Potemkinskaya Street, in the house №7.

The normative act that regulated the activities of the House of Scientists was its Statute. According to this document, its members could be professors and teachers of higher education institutions, scientists, academics of research institutions. On January 1, 1921, the House of Scientists had about 700 members in its community²¹.

Science inherently should always be international. Its progress in any country is possible only under the condition of unimpeded communication with scientists from other countries. Wide and free access to scientific literature, scholars meetings, mutual visits of research centers, acquaintance with colleagues' achievements, scientific discussions, an opportunity to receive technical equipment from abroad for an undertaking of national scientific researches – all of mentioned above issues are necessary conditions required for scientific activity in a particular country. Over the years of military and revolutionary upheavals, the establishment of Soviet power, Russia found itself isolated in international diplomacy. Its scientists had lost touch with foreign scientific institutions, missed opportunities to carry out foreign scientific trips, to communicate with their colleagues, to receive foreign scientific publications.

The Commission on Improving the Welfare of Scientists, by the standards of that time, had become the body which was assigned with the task to restore relations with foreign scientific and educational institutions, to solve urgent problems of national science and higher education. These relations were seen in the organization of leading European research centers of several bureaus and agencies in various fields of science and specialties.

Owing to personal relationships with foreign colleagues, the PetroCIWS House of Scientists had managed to obtain a significant number of English, French, American, German and Finnish publications. At the beginning of

²¹ Nauka y ee rabotniki. (1922) [Science and its workers]. no. 1, pp. 36.

1921 at the House of Scientists began the creation of a research library, headed by M.M. Yakhontov. M. Gorky was personally involved in the formation of its funds. Earlier, on December 14, 1920, he announced at the PetroCIWS meeting that the British Royal Scientific Society had made allocations of 40,000 £ pounds to purchase scientific literature for Russia. In 1995, due to M. Gorky's personal scientific contacts, the Library-Reading Room of the House of Scientists had already contained about 3,000 copies of scientific books and journals in foreign languages²². The Library had also established a Bureau to assist the House of Scientists members and regular guests in buying the necessary literature.

However, this organizational euphoria did not last long. On October 16, 1921 M. Gorky was forced to go abroad. In 1922, many Russian scientists, philosophers, and cultural figures were expelled from the country. At the same time, PetroCIWS was liquidated. The House of Scientists was transferred to the Section of Researchers of Petrograd Provincial Department of Educational Workers' Union, and remained in it until 1931. The organization of the House of Scientists in Petrograd became a good example for scientists in other cities. In August 1921, the Moscow Commission on the Improvement the Welfare of Scientists was created, and on October 6, 1922, the House of Scientists was established, which successfully applied the gained experience of Petrograd House of Scientists work management²³. At the beginning of 1925, the Houses of Scientists were opened in Rostov-on-Don and Odessa. A year later, there had been already 13 Houses of Scientists in the USSR, including in Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Krasnodar, Tomsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv, and Dnipropetrovsk²⁴.

On the 1st of October 1931 after the adoption of "Regulation on the Establishment of the Commission on the Assistance of Scientists" by the Sovnerkom under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, the "The Regulation on the Houses of Scientists in the Sovnarkom of the USSR" was made. According to this document, the House of Scientists

²² Ibidem, pp. 37.

²³ Yzvestiya VTsYK. (1921) [News of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee], 14 avhusta, no. 179, pp. 2.

²⁴ Loboda N.Y. (1926) Pod znakom uhlublennoho vnymanya k proyzvodstvu [Marked by the emphasis on production], Nauchnyi rabotnyk, no. 5-6, pp. 81.

was put again at the disposal of the scientific intelligentsia of Leningrad. The resolution of the Commission on Scientists' Assistance adopted on the 8th of May 1932 approved the composition of the council of the Leningrad House of Scientists which included 28 people, headed by Academician M.I. Vavilov. Its members were well-known scientists: V.P. Volhin, M.S. Derzhavin, A.F. Ioffe, B.A. Keller, V.L. Komarov, N.Ia. Marr, A.M. Samoilovich, A.E. Fersman, as well as writers and artists: M.F. Monakhov, M.M. Nikitin, M.L. Slonimskyi.²⁵ By the end of 1934, the total number of members of the House of Scientists was 2,870. All categories of scientists were represented here, as well as several unions of creative intellectuals. Among them there were 38 (1.3%) active members of the Academy of Sciences, 1426 (49.7%) professors, 1110 (38.7%) associate professors and senior researchers, 57 (2.0%) graduate students and assistants, 17 (0.6%) writers, 99 (3.4%) artists creators, 124 (4.3%) heads of higher education institutions and research institutes²⁶.

The modernization processes, including industrialization in the USSR, had put on the agenda the issue of strengthening scientific research and implementing their achievements in production. In the 1930s, the management and the activist of Leningrad House of Scientists made every effort to create the first scientific sections here. At their meetings, scientific reports were discussed which had a deep theoretical and practical significance on the issues of genetics, physics, hydraulic engineering, heat engineering, and road construction. The work was carried out to provide patronage to industrial enterprises and transportation, the development of cinematography, the implementation of scientific inventions and breakthroughs.

In 1934, the USSR Academy of Sciences and other academic institutions were transferred from Leningrad to Moscow. Accordingly, there was an exodus of scientific staff. The repressions of the 1930s dealt a severe blow to the activity of scientists. These measures had negative effects on the status of science in Leningrad in general and the House

²⁵ Nozdachev A.D. Petrytskyi V.A. (1995) *Pervyi v Rossii Dom uchenykh* [The first in Russia House of Scientists]. *Vestnyk Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk*, vol. 65, no. 10, pp. 924–925.

²⁶ Nozdachev A.D. Petrytskyi V.A. (1995), *Pervyi v Rossii Dom uchenykh* [The first in Russia House of Scientists]. *Vestnyk Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk*, vol. 65, no. 10, pp. 926.

of Scientists in particular. With the liquidation in 1937 of the Commission on the Assistance of Scientists in the Sovnarkom of the USSR, the Leningrad House of Scientists was placed under the authority of the Academy of Sciences.

5. Conclusions

The political and socio-economic changes that took place in the early 1920s led to a rapidly deteriorating the quality of life of society and made the scientific intelligentsia, which was going through a difficult process of resocialization, struggle for survival. The creation of the Petrograd Commission on Scientists' Assistance as a special body to help the scientific intelligentsia in the extremely difficult socio-economic circumstances of that time was a forced step of the Soviet authorities and the first positive example to follow in establishing an effective body to protect scientists of that period. PetroCIWS became a liaison body between the government and scientists, and its activities reflect the process of these relations establishment. On the example of PetroCIWS activity, it was possible to follow the activity of a social institution created by the Soviet authorities to improve the social and living conditions of the scientific intelligentsia. In fact, the living conditions and financial situation of scientists were made directly proportional to scientists' loyalty to the Soviet government. PetroCIWS focused its work on several main directions: helping scientists to obtain academic rations, financial support, solving the housing problems, organizing the House of Scientists activity. These measures to some extent improved the social status of the scientific intelligentsia.

The practical absence of historiographical development of the outlined issue creates prospects for further research.

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Summary

The article shows the process of formation of Soviet scientists' social status and the relationship between the scientific intelligentsia and the authorities. It studies the creation and activity of the Petrograd Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists (PCIWS) in the 1920s, which has been subordinated and financed by the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR and has had its information press agency. It is established that the Soviet authorities, liquidating the bourgeoisie, have added to its number all the free professions of intellectual labor, including scientists. Petrograd Commission on the Improvement of the Welfare of Scientists (PetroCIWS) has served as a liaison between the authorities and the scientists, and its activities reflect the process of formation of these relations. The main task of PetroCIWS has been to support scientists, writers, artists, and their families who had financial difficulties. The commission has managed to provide scholars with academic rations and to assist in solving their *problems of material standards and living conditions*. It is proved that an important achievement of PetroCIWS has become the creation of the House of Scientists, its various forms of work have been analyzed. Owing to the organization and activities of the House of Scientists, Petrograd scientists have been able to implement interdisciplinary contacts and meet their cultural needs. Coverage of Petrograd House of Scientists activities has demonstrated the experience of cultural and civic self-organization of the scientific community.

Keywords: the Soviet authorities, scientific intelligentsia, Petrograd, PetroCIWS, financial assistance, academic ration, the House of Scientists