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Economic and managerial ethics of Soviet enterprise managers in the 1930s-1940s. Based on sources of personal origin

## Abstract

This article, for the first time in domestic historiography, scrutinizes the ethical principles guiding the managerial activities of directors in Russian enterprises during the 1930s and 1940s. To address this issue, a selection was made from sources of personal origin, consisting of expressions concerning the principles of managerial ethics, followed by a structured description of these principles. The study employs historical-comparative and historical-genetic methods. The significance of the economic-ethical aspect of the soviet leaders mentality allows for a fresh understanding of the genesis of the soviet elite and its role in the transformation of the socio-economic structure of the country. Furthermore, the examination of the labor ethics of soviet leaders based on personal origin sources is undertaken by the author for the first time in historiography. Additionally, the article introduces a novel approach by applying a systematic structuring method to the managerial-ethical principles of enterprise leadership. The study of managerial ethics is conducted based on personal origin sources, such as memoirs and diaries of enterprise directors. The primary portion of the source complex is extracted from the archives of the Russian State Archive of Economics (memoirs of A. L. Kozlov, A. M. Kontorshchikov, Yu. N. Kozhevnikov, and the diary of M. V. Yasvoin), the majority of which remain unpublished and minimally incorporated into scholarly discourse. The methodological foundation for studying these sources is rooted in A. Rikh's works on the understanding of economic ethics, as well as contemporary Russian historians works on new property relations in the soviet economy of the 1930s to the early 1950s. The author concludes that the fundamental ethical principles adhered to by enterprise leaders in their managerial activities consisted of an «oath» to the fundamental postulates of soviet authority and the requirements formulated by the state. The leaders deemed the principles of centralized command and personal labor participation in enterprise affairs as correct. Regarding moral norms of management, the leaders considered personal gain, nepotism, and favoritism, among other practices, as unacceptable. However, the principles of economic-labor ethics identified through published sources do not encompass the latent stratum of the soviet economic model, where deviations from certain economic-ideological norms, disregard for subordinates, «everyday» norms of managerial material support, etc., were deemed acceptable. The article concludes that a significant portion of soviet enterprise leaders in the 1930s and 1940s adhered to the proposed soviet ideological system of ethical values, striving to uphold and cultivate «socialist» ethical parameters.

## Keywords

Economic-managerial ethics, Russian economy, enterprise leaders, Stalinist era, personal origin sources, management principles, centralized command.

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