Ukrainian Physical-Technical Institute (UFTI) in the 1930’s

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— UFTI (Ukrainian Physical-Technical Institute; now Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology, KhFTI), founded in 1928, was among the first national laboratories. In the 1930’s, L. Shubnikov, B. Podolsky, G. Placzek, L. Tisza, F. Houtermans, A. Weissberg, V. Weisskopf, and others worked there on important and interesting research in many areas (low-temperature, electronics, nuclear physics, theory). 2008 was the centenary of Lev Landau, who established his school of theoretical physics and began his Course of Theoretical Physics in Kharkiv. It is now ~70 years since the Great purge at UFTI (and, simultaneously, throughout the USSR). UFTI’s history, a stark reminder of politics in science, is less known than that of institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg. “Delo” UFTI 1935-1938 [The UFTI Affair, Yu. V. Pavlenko, Yu. N. Ranyuk, and Yu. A. Khramov, Kyiv, 1998] is a study, using documents available after 1990, of the lab’s early years and its near destruction in the Stalinist purges. Many scientists at UFTI were killed or imprisoned. Documents from this time will be shown. A timeline of the 1930’s at UFTI will be presented.

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