

# Reviews in Brief

## *Politics, Old and New*

DEREK J. R. SCOTT: *Russian Political Institutions* (3rd edition). New York, F. A. Praeger, 1966.

DEREK SCOTT'S study, originally published seven years ago, has been known to specialists on the Soviet Union as a relatively short but solid survey of Soviet institutions. Although the book never really fulfilled the author's express intention of conveying a sense of "what it feels like to be another person in other circumstances"—it devoted too little attention to the processes of government and the position of the individual in the system—it did fulfill the promise of its title in providing a quite useful and reliable description of the formal party and governmental institutions.

*Russian Political Institutions* has now been published in a third edition, but unfortunately this edition is not nearly as satisfactory as the earlier ones. Perhaps the basic problem is that the seven years between the writing of the first and third editions saw greater changes in the Soviet Union than in the book. According to the jacket of the new edition, "Derek Scott has completely revised his original text, interpreting the impact of the Khrushchev era and the developments since Khrushchev's fall," but this claim only creates expectations which are not met.

The third edition was completed too soon after Khrushchev's fall to permit substantial analysis of the post-Khrushchev period, but the reader is justifiably disappointed to find that there is not even a systematic effort to assess the meaning of the Khrushchev era itself. If one compares the first and third editions, one finds page after page which are completely identical or

nearly identical. Even in the concluding discussion of such general topics as the budgetary process, low-level decision-making, and the techniques used to secure performance, there are only two places in the last thirteen pages of the book where as much as a single word has been changed. One of these changes involved the addition of a phrase stating that the Ministry of Internal Affairs is now called the Ministry for the Preservation of Public Order, the other the addition of two sentences indicating that certain economic offenders may now be executed.

To be sure, the descriptive sections of the book have undergone more changes than the analytical sections, for many of the statistics have been updated and institutional changes have been noted. In the two chapters on the soviets and the conventional state machinery, this has been done very thoroughly and accurately. The chapter on the party is also quite reliable, although it is regrettable that the author did not choose to incorporate the information we have learned in the last decade about the central party secretariat. It is difficult to understand why five pages are devoted to describing elections to the soviets, two pages to the commissions of the soviets, and then only sixteen lines to the organization of the Central Committee secretariat since 1948.

The chapter on "the web of management" is the most unsatisfactory. The statistics in this chapter have not been updated, and institutional changes (particularly in the legal and agricultural realms) are not adequately described. Here, for example, mention is made of the change in the name of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and functions are ascribed to the Ministry which are really performed by the Committee for State Security (KGB).

*Russian Political Institutions* remains a useful reference work on the soviets and the central governmental structure, but the undergraduate to whom this book is directed would be better advised to seek a more comparative book along the lines of those written by Alfred Meyer or Zbigniew Brzezinski and Samuel Huntington.

**Jerry F. Hough**

E. PREOBRAZHENSKY: *The New Economics*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965.

AT THE TIME of the original publication of this book in 1926, the author, Yevgeni Preobrazhensky, shared honors with N. Bukha in as the leading Marxist scholar in the field of economics. He was thus a highly qualified contender for the right to enter the arena of national policy-making in the turbulent period following the October Revolution in Russia. This new translation of his work offers a clear presentation of the ideas which Preobrazhensky hoped to have accepted as a framework appropriate to the economic needs and ambitions of the new ruling elite. The work also portrays the intellectual excitement of a compulsively experimental decade in Soviet economic theory and practice.

Preobrazhensky's statement of economic principles and policy recommendations does not, however, ring with the self-confidence that one might have expected from an articulate member of the "inner circle." On the contrary, the tone is for the most part shrill and polemical, and it is clear that by this time the author had already been forced into a defensive position by his more

politically agile Marxist colleagues. His argument reflects the fact that by 1926 the party leadership was already split into "right" and "left" deviations. Preobrazhensky was the principal economic spokesman for the "left."

In two of the three long chapters that make up the main body of the book, the author devotes himself to the development of two ideas which he considers to be fundamental to a "correct analysis" (and, by implication, to a correct policy) of how the Soviet economy should be guided during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. The first of these ideas, formulated by the author as the "law of primitive socialist accumulation," aroused a violent reaction on the part of his critics in the party press. In his view, this economic "law" required that the "half-socialist" economy of Russia, established by Lenin as a result of the NEP compromise, be prevented from being in time "devoured" by capitalism by the undertaking of a forced expansion of the socialist half of the economy, namely the state industrial sector. Such rapid expansion could only be achieved at the expense of peasant agriculture—i.e., by means of a systematic accumulation of a large volume of savings in the hands of the Soviet government, and by the transfer of the saved resources from agriculture to industry in the form of new capital funds for use in the rapid buildup of plant and equipment.

To support his argument, Preobrazhensky demonstrated, with the aid of many long quotations from Marx, that the capital funds which helped to build up industry historically in the West were acquired through a long process of accumulation which extended over the entire early, primitive phase of capitalism. With total obliviousness to the fine moral irony that mocked his argument, he reasoned that this was precisely the way in which the process of accumulation had to be organized during the early phase of socialism.

The second leading idea developed at length by Preobrazhensky related to the "law of value" (i.e., the imperatives of cost, profit, and price). He argued that this law, which rules the entire production and exchange process under capitalism, must begin to atrophy during the period of transition to socialism. He saw this process of "liberation" from the dictates of the law of value as spreading outward from the state sector of the economy, where, he reported

approvingly, "money is dying out in its role as one of the instruments for achieving spontaneous equilibrium in production."

It is a fair guess that modern readers will be more interested in the practical policy issues that were being hotly disputed within the ruling elite than in Preobrazhensky's own prodigious skill in applying the Marxian catechism of political economy to Russian economic conditions during the 1920's. These readers may find it profitable to concentrate on the materials in the Appendix, where the author addressed himself to the issues of practical politics raised by his opponents. Here there are a series of vigorous statements of his basic position on the hard choices confronting the new Soviet regime in the economic realm, qualified by some second thoughts regarding the incautious terminology he had used on occasion in presenting his case for the "subordination of the pre-socialist economic forms to the socialist forms."

**Leon Herman**

DESMOND DONNELLY: *Struggle for the World—The Cold War: 1917-1965*. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1965.

DESMOND DONNELLY, a Labor Member of the British Parliament, is a staunch friend of the United States, and a supporter of its policy in world affairs. "In this age of 'Cops versus Robbers,'" he writes, "who is the hero? History's answer will be: the American people."

For an American reviewer, therefore, it is hardly pleasant to report that Mr. Donnelly's book is highly disappointing. Whether judged in terms of style, presentation or analysis, *Struggle for the World* must be rated as a rather shocking failure. Mr. Donnelly's attitude towards historic personages is a case in point: Lenin was "decidedly homely, if not ugly. . . . His broad face and thickish lips and unkempt beard gave him the appearance of a bulldog. . . . There was also the man's wide forehead, showing that he ought to be a thinker." Woodrow Wilson was a man who "liked to patronize little people." And more. Or take the author's evaluation of the 1917 Revolution in Russia. "Perhaps the most apt com-

ment," he writes, "was made by Philip Jordan, the Negro butler of David R. Francis, the American Ambassador. Writing home, he stated: 'On last Tuesday [he meant Wednesday] the Bolsheviks got the city in their hands and I want to tell you that it was something awful!'" Can Mr. Donnelly possibly be serious?

Despite its title, the book is not a history of Soviet-Western relations since 1917. It is, at best, a personalized commentary on people and events, particularly since World War II. (The period 1917-38 is cursorily dealt with in 49 pages.) The commentary, furthermore, tends to be exotic, playing up scandalous interpretations wherever possible. For example, the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) between Weimar Germany and Lenin's Russia is ominously referred to as "the first warning shot that could signify the opening of the Second World War." We are also informed that Stalin had "decided . . . to make common cause with Hitler" as early as 1936. (The Nazi-Soviet Pact itself is crudely labeled "Idiot's Delight.")

Mr. Donnelly's best chapters are devoted to the 1947-52 period, but only because in dealing with it he largely steers clear of analysis and interpretation, contenting himself with a detailed factual accounting of events. Wherever he does go beyond the facts, Mr. Donnelly yields to the unfortunate penchant for "fundamental" explanations. Thus his explanation of "the puzzling and indeed extraordinary" Soviet absence from the Security Council in June and July 1950 (which forestalled a possible veto of United Nations' action in Korea) "is simpler than many realize—it lies in the basic incompetence that stemmed from the overcentralization of major decisions in the Soviet Union, an inevitable consequence of the authoritarian regime." Simpler perhaps—but hardly more plausible than the fact that Stalin probably discounted the importance of the United Nations as a defender of the Republic of Korea, since, as Prof. Marshall Shulman has pointed out elsewhere, the organization "as a military power was as yet untried; nor were there any effective military preparations then in sight."

More examples could be cited, but as an American it might perhaps be best for this reviewer to rest his case right here.

**Morton Schwartz**