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CENTER DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 129

SOME NOTES ON SOVIET ECONOMIC DEBATE IN THE 1920's

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SOME NOTES ON SOVIET ECONOMIC DEBATE IN THE 1920's

Marxian and non-Marxian political economists were for many years divided by a species of intellectual 'Iron Curtain'. Relatively few in either camp were sufficiently curious, or able to construct watchtowers to ascertain what was happening on the other side. In recent years, however, some fairly major breaches have been made. Indeed, in some important spheres of enquiry the problem of communication has been reduced largely to one of terminology.¹ In some cases this has occurred where the nature of a given problem was defined in similar fashion, the subsequent deployment of the processes of purely logical thought determining a measure of congruity in its further analysis.²

Insofar as concerned non-Marxian economics, its major precondition was a shift in emphasis from static to dynamic analysis, this in turn being powerfully stimulated by the post World War II interest in the growth problems of 'less-', 'under-', 'semi-' or 'mis-' developed economies. For development economists in general, and for students of growth problems in the less-developed socialist economies in particular, especial interest attaches to the work of Soviet economists in the 1920's. Marx had devoted the greater part of his energies to an examination of the modus operandi of capitalist economy, the distinctive economic product of which was, historically, the rapid accumulation of capital.³ However, he had declined to predict

the modus operandi of socialist economy⁴ - the distinctive economic product of which was to be the accelerated accumulation of capital - and the discussion of Soviet economists in the 1920's was devoted precisely to its mode of development in circumstances of weakly developed industry and dominant peasant agriculture.⁵ With the passage of time there has been an increasingly catholic appreciation of the intellectually distinguished character of this discussion and a more general, albeit still insufficient, recognition of the major contributions made therein both to the theory and practice of economic development.⁶

In retrospect, it can be seen that economic debate as such turned largely on one complex issue: the rate and type of short-medium term economic development that it was possible to plan given the marketed surplus of peasant agriculture to constitute the major source of investment funds.

This debate was in turn to be dominated by more or less well-defined political constraints. On the crucial question of the mode of, and limits to, extraction of the agricultural surplus - in Bukharin's words, of: "how much can we take away from the peasantry, to what extent and by what methods can we accomplish the pumping-over process, what are the limits of the pumping over?"⁷ - the most powerful political constraints were those implicit in Lenin's conception of the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance'.

Given the limited level of industrialisation - and, therefore, given the limited size of the proletariat - he had enunciated this conception repeatedly as a precondition for the very survival of the Soviet regime. The essential product, over the period 1923-28, of its official acceptance was the eschewal in Government practice of courses of political and economic action likely too radically to upset it.⁸

There have been frequent - and sometimes obscurantist - attempts to compartmentalise the major contributions to Soviet economic discussion in the 1920's into well-defined political camps. Such efforts have been further complicated by attempts to link particular economists with major political personalities of the period - for example with Stalin or Trotsky.⁹ In practice, however, the political tendencies imputed to contributors to the economic discussion at the time seem largely to have been derived from estimates (often made by Stalin) as to whether their views implied too gross an imbalance - political and/or economic - within the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance'.¹⁰ It is taken as axiomatic, of course, that the political implications of conflicts of development strategy and related conflicts as to the nature and scope of economic planning were of crucial importance for comprehending the Soviet growth strategy eventually to be planned in practice. For present purposes, however, emphasis will be placed on some conflicts that were centred fairly explicitly on chains of economic reasoning.

Conflicts of Economic Strategy: Shanin versus Preobrazhensky

It will be illuminating to compare and contrast just two of the many contributions to the strategy of economic growth discussed in the 1920's. Both advocated what might today be termed strategies of 'unbalanced' growth, and they shared certain basic assumptions.

Lev Shanin advanced the proposition that in the initial period of investment-planning, the prime objective should be to secure a rate of growth of agricultural output greater than that of industry. Evgeny Preobrazhensky, in contrast, advocated an initial concentration on industrial growth, with a particular emphasis on growth in the producer-goods sector.¹¹

Shanin in the first place identified the fundamental cause of the then-existing 'commodity-shortage' (later to be more popularly known as 'goods-famine') to have been the past concentration of investment within industry itself in the production of producer - rather than consumer-goods. He argued that an 'unbalanced' industrial investment pattern of this type had led to the inability of industry to satisfy adequately either peasant demand, or the consumer-goods demand generated by the development of industry itself. Accordingly, he proposed a re-allocation of industrial investment-funds so as to achieve a more 'balanced' development of heavy and light industry.¹²

From the longer-term point of view, Shanin was to note that:

"Our industry's growth in the period immediately ahead will have two sources: (1) its own accumulation and (2) the diversion of resources from other spheres of the economy (from agriculture). "Industrial accumulation financed by (1) he termed "Intra-industrial accumulation"; and that by (2) was termed "ulterior intra-industrial accumulation".¹³

Shanin agreed with Preobrazhensky's proposition that the limited level of industrialisation determined that the major source of investment funds was "ulterior" - i.e. primarily agricultural - in origin. He opposed, however, the relative concentration of such funds in industrial growth, recommending their relative diversion to agriculture itself.¹⁴

Making the common emphasis on the need for "painless" and "crisis-free" development, Shanin argued that "in our circumstances, investment of capital in agriculture is more profitable than investment in industry": the quantity of fixed capital required to set in motion a given quantity of labour being lower, and the level of consumption of that labour also being lower, in agriculture than in industry.¹⁵

In Shanin's view, the "biggest asset" of the economy was "the possibility of achieving a (national) upsurge...through agricultural exports."¹⁶ "To the extent that the world market for agricultural products in their original form becomes exhausted, a world market must be opened up by way of the industrial processing of agricultural

raw materials. After grain and animal husbandry have had their turn, sugar, alcohol, textiles, leather products, etc. must have theirs. To the extent that these possibilities, too, exhaust themselves, development must proceed thanks mainly to the industry which, though operating for the domestic market, uses agricultural raw materials or just agricultural foodstuffs. But at the same time we should also develop those industries which, though they do not operate on agricultural raw materials, are nevertheless highly important in the export field (petroleum, manganese, platinum, etc., and the rubber, match and lumber industries)." Allowing exceptions for industries with longer-term prospects for achieving economies of scale, and for defence-interests, the criteria for industrial investment of other kinds was whether or not the prices for domestic output would be competitive with the export prices of the capitalist economies for the same products.¹⁷

"It is clear that by cutting the relative share of the surplus product of agriculture to be diverted at this time from agriculture to industry, in the early years we also reduce the absolute magnitude of what we pour into industry. But later, thanks to the considerably greater fruitfulness of investment in agriculture, the reduction of the relative share of the transfusions can yield in absolute figures a greater mass for injection into industry." With this pattern of development, the "disproportion between industry and agriculture will be more noticeable" than with the existing relative concentration on

industrial investment: "the relative growth of industry...will be smaller...because...agriculture will develop faster still...What we lose in the rate of industrial development in the initial years will be made up with interest in the succeeding ones."¹⁸

Preobrazhensky attacked this concept of development with great vigour. In The New Economics he had stressed "the prodigiously important role" due to be played "in a backward peasant economy... (by) the accumulation of material resources in the hands of the state" from "sources lying outside the complex of the state economy." He defined this as 'primary socialist accumulation' and had argued that "the period of primary socialist accumulation is the most critical period in the life of the socialist state. In this period the socialist system is not yet in a position to develop all its organically inherent advantages, but at the same time it is bound to nullify a number of the economic advantages inherent in a well-developed capitalist system. It is a matter of life and death for the socialist state to traverse this period as quickly as possible" and where, in the context of their rising incomes, "it behoves the socialist state to take more, not less, from the small-scale producers than capitalism took."¹⁹

Addressing himself, in 1927, to "the foundations of dynamic equilibrium of the economic system of the USSR", ²⁰ he was to repeat his argument that given the superior productive efficiency of developed world capitalist industry vis à vis Soviet socialist industry ²¹, "economic equilibrium, which ensures expanded reproduction in the state

sector can exist only on the basis of non-equivalent exchange with the private sectors."²²

While attaching great political significance to rapid socialist industrial growth, Preobrazhensky was also to attack Shanin's development strategy on purely economic grounds.

Applying Marx's distinction between the production of producer- and consumer-goods (Departments I and II) to the 'State', 'Capitalist' and 'Small-Scale Producer' (or 'Simple Commodity Production') Sectors, he was firstly to object to Shanin's preoccupation with the level of demand for (particularly) industrial output. He argued that Department II of the State sector would consume the increased output of Department I; and the rising level of industrial employment would provide increasing demand for the output of Department II.

Secondly, he argued that an increase in agricultural production - especially of 'technical' or 'industrial' crops - was most effectively to be secured via the expansion of the producer-goods sector of peasant economy (i.e. of ploughs, seeds, fertilisers, tractors, etc.): "on the basis of increasing accumulation in that department of the peasant sector, it will be easier to achieve decisive successes with respect to improving land cultivation, advancing animal husbandry, and increasing labour productivity in general, which will increase the aggregate annual output of industrial crops."²³ However, such an expansion was itself, to an important degree, dependent upon the prior expansion of the producer-goods sector of industry.²⁴

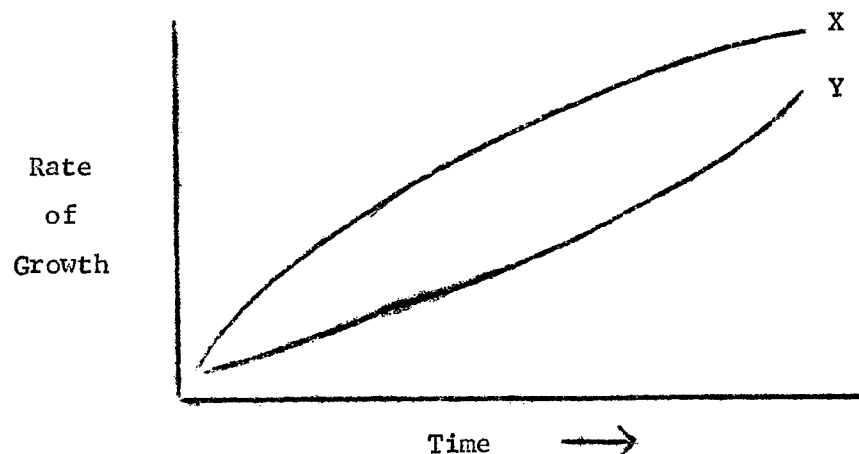
Shanin had drawn attention to the lengthy gestation period of certain industrial investments. Such investment yielded no short-period output but employment therein generated a rising demand for consumer-goods. He had argued that 'commodity reserves' of consumer-goods should precede such large-scale investments (i.e. light-industry or substantial imports must precede the large-scale development of heavy industry).

Preobrazhensky stood this argument on its head. He acknowledged the problem of the 'period of production',²⁵ but noted: "the process of accumulation in our peasant agriculture proceeds discontinuously in years of good harvests. Hundreds of thousands of peasant farms succeed in 'getting above water' in one year of good harvest, and increase their means of production to an extent that they may not be able to achieve again for perhaps another five years...However, since there is no good harvest of machines, metals, etc., in heavy industry, the demand for additional means of production which originates in peasant agriculture will not be satisfied unless accumulation in heavy industry runs systematically ahead of accumulation in the other branches of the economy as a whole, in particular if it does not ensure the existence of necessary commodity reserves."²⁶

He also emphasised, however, that "peasant agriculture in the USSR could, even with the existing means of production, increase considerably the gross output through increased outlay of physical labour, in particular by putting into effect a number of simple agronomical

improvements." He regarded "the struggle against fear of work in the village and traditional laziness" to be "one of the most important problems of industrialisation of the country,"²⁷ and spoke of "the absorption of both hidden and overt unemployment inherited by the Soviet system, in the main, from the agrarian relationships of the old regime."²⁸

Thus, it was possible to contrast quite neatly two strategies for economic growth with a common long-term product - a substantial increase of the relative share of industry in national economic activity - but with opposed short-to-medium term strategies whereby the long-term end was to be achieved.



Shanin, concentrating investment funds drawn primarily from agriculture in, firstly, agricultural production itself and, via a substantial foreign trade, in producer-goods only after a significant light industry had been developed; and Preobrazhensky, concentrating

the same investment-funds in, firstly, domestic producer-goods industries, with increased agricultural and light industrial development following upon it.

In the Diagram, the (rough) growth-pattern consequential upon their respective investment-priorities would be Shanin's, when 'X' equals agricultural production and 'Y' industrial output, and Preobrazhensky's with reversed definitions.²⁹

Shanin had acknowledged the "purely economic" character of his development strategy and had noted it to be presented "in isolation from the political aspects associated with the fact that we are carrying on our construction in capitalist encirclement."³⁰

Preobrazhensky, on the other hand, had concluded his analysis by noting the "aggregate of economic and social contradictions necessarily bared by our development towards socialism under the conditions of our isolation." They included:

"Accumulation at the expense of the surplus product of the workers - and the necessity of a systematic growth of wages."

"The necessity (in order to diminish the 'birth pains of industrialisation') for the utmost increase in association with the world division of labour" - i.e. foreign trade - "and the growing hostility toward the USSR of the entire capitalist world."

"Accumulation at the expense of the peasants producing industrial raw materials, and of the peasants in general - and the necessity of

utmost stimulation of expanded reproduction of these raw materials."

"The economic necessity of increasing marketable surpluses in peasant agriculture - and the social necessity of physical maintenance of those who provide the smallest marketable surplus, namely, the poor and middle-sized groups in the village."

All such contradictions showed, in his view, that: "not only for political but also for economic reasons, we must be aided in future by the material resources of other socialist countries."³¹

'Geneticists' and 'Teleologists' in Soviet Planning Theory:

One product of the penchant for constructing mutually-exclusive categories of economic thought was the distinction commonly made between 'geneticist' and 'teleological' planners in the Soviet economy of the 1920's.³²

The 'geneticists' were held to have placed emphasis on the constraints imposed upon planned economic development by the mode of production at the moment of plan-implementation. The 'teleologists', on the other hand, are held to have stressed the freedom conferred upon the planner by the very process of planned development itself. The discussion on the respective roles of prediction and pre-determination in planning has often been mis-interpreted.³³ One reason for this is that there was in reality no very coherent body of non-intuitive logical constructs to oppose the major 'geneticist' argument as to the area and degree in and to which the planner qua planner must operate

within limits that he himself could not determine.³⁴ The 'genetic' versus 'teleological' discussion contained within it, of course, the seeds of the ancient and infinitely wide debate as to the circumstances in which human will could or could not conquer 'objective' obstacles.³⁵ For present purposes, however, it will be helpful to fasten upon a 'genetic' constraint upon the freedom of the planner to plan that was strongly emphasised in the course of Soviet discussion.

Planning and the Peasant:

The identification of the marketed surplus of peasant agriculture as the major constraint upon the short-term rate of economic growth (and, thereby, for economists such as Shanin, Sokolnikov and Bukharin, as the logical determinant of the type of agro-industrial growth to be planned) simultaneously pointed to the crucial constraint upon the exercise of 'teleological' powers by the planner.

Bazarov was to argue that: "The basic task of perspective planning... entails the need to combine the genetic and teleological methods in the search for the optimum course of development." In his view "the state sector of the economy is a sphere of teleological constructs primarily" in which genetic enquiry yielded "only a quantitative inventory of the resources which can be utilised." However, "agriculture, parcelled into more than 20 million small independent units... is the sphere in which genetic enquiry plays the predominant role."³⁶

In more forceful terms, he referred to the "unapproachable fortress

in which, despite all the countercurrents in our planned economy, hides the peasant, like a snail in his shell, easily and simply escaping beyond all attempts of planning to reach him."³⁷

The implications of this were very clear. Given the social relations of agricultural production prevailing, planned socialist industrial growth could not but be fundamentally prognostic in character. The very basis of the socialist industrial plan - the quantity of food for labour, the quantity of certain major raw materials for essential consumer-goods, the wherewithal to obtain foreign capital - was not to be determined fundamentally by the decision-making of planners: it rested, rather, on the annual material product of marketing decisions taken by millions of individual peasant households traditionally skilled in the evasion of taxes and the burial of grain. The planners, fixed though their eyes might be upon socialist industrial construction, must wait upon peasants whose eyes had traditionally been fixed upon the weather, their stomachs, and the general main chance. The planner might determine, within limits, the allocation of resources derived from agricultural activity, but he must predict their volume. In brief, "Mr. Harvest, Comrade Harvest, Citizen Harvest - he is the master of the country."³⁸ And the peasant (principally the 'middle' and 'rich' one) was, subject to benevolent or malevolent climatic circumstances, the master of the harvest.

The Road to Collectivisation: Stalin "On the Grain Front":

The preponderance of agriculture in the national economy had in turn tended to dominate both the discussion of strategies of economic development and of the role of 'genetic' and 'teleological' elements in planning.

However, as had been noted with the publication of the Control Figures for 1926/27: "The most important question of our future - the character of social stratification in the village and its tempo - cannot be illuminated in our work for lack of data."³⁹ In such circumstances, it was possible to detect a common (and usually implicit) assumption that had tended to underpin the general politico-economic context within which the debate had hitherto largely been conducted. The assumption in question had been that insofar as concerned the generation of a surplus-product, the mode of agricultural production had, with respect to that of the pre-1914 period, not been fundamentally changed by the Soviet regime itself. Such an assumption, for example, underlay the assertion of 'geneticists' such as Groman to the effect that "pre-war relations in which the conditions of economic equilibrium were expressed, provide to a large extent regulative standards, in the objective sense, for present-day economic movements."⁴⁰ "Even...the greatest of all revolutions - the October revolution - cannot change economic forms over night."⁴¹

This assumption was to be overthrown by Stalin in a speech en-

titled "On the Grain Front" delivered to the Communist Academy and the Sverdlov University on 28th May, 1928.⁴²

The fundamental question to which Stalin addressed himself (in what must be regarded as the crucial politico-economic document of the period) was: "Why the increase in the production of grain for the market in our country is...in spite of the fact that our crop area and the gross production of grain have already reached the pre-war level...only one-half, and the amount we are exporting...only about one-twentieth, of what it was in pre-war times?"⁴³

The vital statistical basis of Stalin's subsequent analysis was in his view "quite adequate to enable us to understand the difference between the pre-war period and the post-October (1917) period in regard to the structure of grain production in general, and of the production of market grain in particular," though the calculations "do not claim to be exact."⁴⁴ In fact there is abundant evidence to indicate that the data (given in Table 1) was highly inexact but not in such a fashion as to refute the burden of Stalin's argument.⁴⁵

Stalin noted that while "at the first glance" it might appear that the grain problem was "the result merely of faulty planning, the result merely of a number of mistakes committed in the sphere of economic coordination...it would be an...error to exaggerate the part played by the planning principle in the belief that we have already reached a stage of development when it is possible to plan and regulate

TABLE 1

The Structure of Grain Production in Pre-War Russian, and
Post-Revolutionary (1926-27) Soviet
Agriculture (+)

Period	Gross Grain Production		Marketed Grain (i.e. not consumed in the Rural districts)		% of Market Grain
	Millions of Poods	%	Millions of Poods	%	
<u>Pre-War</u>					
1. Landlords....	600	12.0	281.6	21.6	47.0
2. Kulaks.....	1900	38.0	650.0	50.0	34.0
3. Middle & Poor Peasants.....	2500	50.0	369.0	28.4	14.7
TOTAL....	5000	100.0	1300.6	100.0	26.0
<u>1926-27</u>					
1. State & Collective Farms.	80	1.7	37.8	6.0	47.2
2. Kulaks.....	617	13.0	126.0	20.0	20.0
3. Middle & Poor Peasants.....	4052	85.3	466.2	74.0	11.2
TOTAL.....	4749	100.0	630.0	100.0	13.3

(+) Estimates of V.S. Nemchinov of the Collegium of the Central Statistical Board, published in Leninism, op. cit., p. 208.

everything." In addition "to elements in our national economy which lend themselves to planning there are elements in our national economy which do not as yet lend themselves to planning."⁴⁶

In the years immediately prior to 1925-26, the fact that both the volume and share in total production of the agricultural surplus marketed by the peasantry as a whole should have fallen substantially below pre-war levels had been explicable largely by reference to the fact that total agricultural production was itself substantially below that of 1913. Scarcities of industrial commodities and/or their higher prices relative to those of agricultural produce could be, and were, adduced as important exacerbating factors. A growing preoccupation with planning 'errors' was to accompany the re-expansion of the cultivated area, assisted in some regions by improvement in crop-rotation methods⁴⁷, which had, by 1925-26, restored total agricultural production to pre-war levels, with grain-harvests being consecutively good for the years 1925-27.⁴⁸

For Stalin, however, the prime cause of the grain difficulties was "the change in the structure of our agriculture brought about by the October Revolution, the change from large-scale landlord and large-scale kulak farming, which provided the largest proportion of marketed grain, to small and middle peasant farming, which provides the smallest proportion of marketed grain...the production of the overwhelming proportion of grain products has passed from the hands of landlords and

kulaks into the hands of small and middle peasants. This means that the small and middle peasants, having completely emancipated themselves from the yoke of the landlords, and having, in the main, broken the strength of the kulaks, have thereby obtained the opportunity of considerably improving their material conditions⁴⁹....The USSR has become, as a result of the October Revolution, a land of small peasant farming, and the middle peasant has become the 'central figure' in agriculture...the abolition of landlord (large-scale) farming, the reduction of kulak (large-scale) farming to less than one-third, and the change to small peasant farming with only 11 per cent of its output available for the market, under conditions of the absence in the sphere of grain growing of any more or less developed large-scale farming in common (collective farms and state farms), was bound to lead, and in fact has led, to a sharp reduction in the output of grain for the market as compared with pre-war times...That is the underlying cause of our difficulties on the grain front."⁵⁰

This statement of the radical post-revolutionary change in, fundamentally, the social relations of agricultural production brought about by the (largely spontaneous) Agrarian Reform of 1917 - namely of the reduction of large-scale farming for the urban and export markets and of the increase in small-scale farming for subsistence and rural markets - indicated the crucial limitations of the range of "market" solutions to the surplus-extraction problem that had hitherto been the subject of both discussion and experiment. Post-revolutionary problems

of trade between town and countryside might have contributed to the decline in the share of small-scale farm output placed on extra-rural markets reported (by no means reliably) to have occurred by 1926-27 in comparison with that prior to 1914. More plausibly, such problems contributed to the sharper fall reported to have occurred for kulak farms. The latter continued to attract most of the attention of 'Rightists' and 'Leftists' but they were not only, as Stalin had noted, reduced to about one-third of their previous number: those still in existence were of smaller average size.⁵¹ The fundamental problem, however, was that the restoration of the shares of output placed on extra-rural markets to pre-revolutionary proportions per farm-size group would not restore the total surplus to anything approaching that marketed prior to 1914. Agriculture was now dominated by small-scale peasant farmers who had traditionally consumed perhaps 85% or more of their production and who now produced more than 80% of the nation's grain.

In this context one could properly censure both 'Rightists' and some 'Leftists' for "over-reliance on the price-mechanism and fiscal measures in a country which was engaged in a tremendous bid for industrialisation; too much emphasis on the potentialities of the private sector in agriculture and not enough on the urgent need for fostering new organisational forms."⁵² In addition, while the 'geneticists' were undubitably right to stress the manner in which the agricultural mode of production determined the agricultural surplus to be available for

industrial or other investments, they were quite wrong to imagine that the mode of production prior to 1914 was still of decisive relevance.

Stalin's assessment of the manner in which the mode of agricultural production of 1926-27 determined the volume of investment-funds to be obtainable from agricultural activities at once contemporized the 'geneticist' case and effectively portrayed as insuperable the major obstacles to rapid short-term industrial growth that "pessimists" had stressed. The growth-accelerating virtues of socialist economic planning per se were generally deemed to permit an agricultural surplus roughly comparable with that of the pre-1914 period to finance a far higher rate of industrial growth than had been attained in Tzarist times. The entire perspective for growth was changed, however, if the surplus in the hands of the planners was to be but one-half, or little more than one-half, that of pre-Revolutionary times. And - in the context of an urban population growth of about 5% per annum⁵³ - neither trends in total agricultural production nor estimates as to rising yields to be expected in the immediate future indicated any radical short-term change in such a situation.⁵⁴

The solution to the problem flowed logically from the analysis that Stalin had deployed for its identification: while by 1926-27, State and collective farms were estimated to produce less than 2% of total grain production, their marketed surplus amounted to some 6% of the total surplus in the hands of the State's grain-collection

agencies. The 47% of their output estimated to be placed on extra-rural markets was virtually identical with the marketings of the estates prior to 1914.⁵⁵ Hence, for Stalin, "the way out...of our difficulties on the grain front...lies firstly, in the transition from individual peasant farming to collective, to common farming...secondly, in expanding and strengthening the old state farms and in organizing and developing new, large state farms...finally...in systematically increasing the yields of the small and middle individual-peasant farms."⁵⁶ He spoke of a period of "three or four years" to permit the state - "if all these tasks are fulfilled" - "a supply (of marketed grain) more or less sufficient to enable us to manoeuvre within the country as well as abroad."⁵⁷

If there was no doubt in Stalin's mind as to the economic desirability in terms of surplus-extraction of more or less rapid collectivisation⁵⁸, the problem of any drastic acceleration of the process within the politico-economic parameters implicit to the official conception of the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance' was acute.⁵⁹ The estimate that the long-term political and military survival of the Soviet regime (together with the progress towards 'higher forms' of socialism and communism)⁶⁰ depended on rapid industrial growth, based most particularly on that of heavy industry, was in the event to ensure that in some way (and at virtually any cost) the political and economic constraints upon the extraction of the agricultural surplus be smashed.⁶¹

The Collectivization Programme of 1929 and its Short-Term Product:

In 1928-29, there was an accelerated fall in the marketed surplus of grain, with collections falling by about one-third in comparison with their level of 1926-27.⁶² Notwithstanding, in the spring of 1929, the Government adopted the optimal variant of the First Five-Year Plan proposed by GOSPLAN. Under this variant, net investment over the period 1928-33 was to be of the order of one-quarter to one-third of annual national income, with three-quarters of all industrial investment to be located in heavy industry.⁶³ The first two assumptions on which this variant was based were: "(a) the absence of any even moderately serious crop failure during the five-years period; (b) a considerably greater scope of economic ties with the world economy by virtue of a considerably more rapid growth of long-term foreign credits in the initial year of the Five-Year Plan."

Both 'optimal' and lower ('Starting') variants of the plan had assumed a substantial increase of the collectivized sector in agriculture 'with the greatest possible forcing of this matter in view of its particular importance.'⁶⁴

The grain-supplies crisis of 1928-29 - some 250,000 tons of grain were imported in 1929⁶⁵ - induced the adoption of emergency measures reminiscent of the early period of 'War Communism' (requisitions, searches for buried grain, etc.) which preceded and probably hastened the massive drive for collectivization unleashed in late 1929.⁶⁶ Such

measures were, indeed, to constitute the immediate precedents for the employment of massive coercion⁶⁷ on the part of the political, administrative and military instruments of the Soviet State. Ostensibly directed in a "frontal attack" against the kulak farms, such coercion was also to embrace substantial sections of the middle-peasantry.⁶⁸ A large proportion of the poor peasantry showed a signal lack of enthusiasm for the speed and manner with which collectivization was carried out.⁶⁹

By the end of 1932 - and associated, from mid-1930, with the employment of more economic and less coercive incentives⁷⁰ - some 60% of the peasantry were organised in collective farms. Given the limited quantity of State investment in agriculture for the period, and its division between the collective and rapidly expanding State farm sector,⁷¹ the quantity of tractors available for collective farms did not offset, over the period 1929-32, the sharply-reduced sowing capacity on such farms induced by the massive slaughter of ploughing animals that accompanied forced collectivisation.⁷² The relative concentration of State investment in agriculture in the labour-saving forms of tractors and combine-harvesters in State farms yielded an eight-fold increase in their sown area as compared with 1928, but their marketed surplus was increased but four-fold.⁷³ For the period 1929-32 as a whole, there is abundant evidence to suggest that the average value of total agricultural production in collectivised farm-areas fell substantially below that of 1926-28, with local consumption falling yet

more sharply.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, the primary short-term objectives of the collectivization programme - which has been described as "probably the most significant, and certainly the most revolutionary, decision taken by the regime in the first fifty years of its existence"⁷⁵ - can fairly be said to have been achieved. By the end of 1932, State and collective farms combined produced over 80% of the national marketed surplus of grain and cotton.⁷⁶ Since the fundamental change of a short-term character in the mode of production brought about by collectivisation was that in the social relations of production facilitating collection, the planner rather than the peasant was enabled to determine within broad limits the shares of the bulk of total output to be devoted, respectively, to rural consumption and to urban, industrial and export markets. The absolute volume of the national marketed surplus by 1932-33 was estimated to be almost double that of 1926-27 in the case of grain and potatoes, and more than double for cotton, flax and wool. (Largely as a consequence of the livestock slaughter, meat surpluses were estimated to have fallen by more than 40 per cent in the same period.)⁷⁷ And Stalin was thus to secure rather more than double the increase in grain supplies that he had envisaged to be necessary in 1928.⁷⁸

This is as far as the story of Soviet economic discussion in the 1920's is here taken, and as far as we follow the terrible choices with which it concluded. The major decisions taken towards the end of the debate - for heavy industry and collectivization - closed the

debate itself, and ushered in a period of dogmatism in Soviet social science that reduced political economy in particular to the "rather arid repetition of accepted doctrines."⁷⁹ The intellectual casualties of the period were to include precisely those economists who had provided - intentionally or no - major justifications for the path of development actually selected.⁸⁰ It has often been held in some Marxian circles that such 'excesses' were the product of the immense political and economic difficulties of the period, compounded by the military threat implicit in 'hostile capitalist encirclement.' The hole in this argument is the fact that such difficulties were at least as extreme in the 1920's and to an important degree provided the political preconditions for the high calibre of the debate itself. Perhaps the best example of this is provided by the Preface to the Second Edition (1926) of Preobrazhensky's The New Economics. The Editorial Board of the Communist Academy Publishing House there observed that: "this work puts forward views which the editorial board does not share and which are being used as the theoretical foundation for their position by groups of comrades who are at variance with our party. However, the problems of the economy of the transition period, which are attracting very intense attention in both their practical and their theoretical aspects, call for an all-round analysis."⁸¹ This was not a spirit which long survived.

This account does not purport to proffer any full or original analysis of the political, economic and theoretical complexities of

the period . Disagreements with, or qualifications to, the arguments of historians upon whose accounts this writer has drawn heavily for quotations, commentary and empirical evidence have not for the most part been made explicit though they are in many instances substantial. Above all, it has been beyond the purpose of this essay to speculate as to the manner in which Soviet affairs might have evolved had things which were done not been done or been done in different manner. (Such speculation does not usually facilitate comprehension of an already sufficiently complex historical episode.)

What has been attempted is a survey of certain salient features of the period which will be intelligible to both Marxists and non-Marxists - a risky exercise since one thus commonly satisfies neither and, further, risks triggering two sets of conditioned reflexes rather than one. (See note 1). The awkward device of extensive footnotes has been adopted partly to avoid cluttering the text with unnecessary detail; partly to provide bibliographic references for those who would explore the matter more fully; and partly (and doubtless vainly) to avoid too grossly offending the specialists of the period whose subjects they might feel to have been treated in a fashion that is excessively simpliste if not tendentious.

FOOTNOTES

¹It remains true, of course, that purely terminological differences, for both Marxian and non-Marxian academics, often generate communication problems quite disproportionate to their nature. Usually originating in very real conflicts of political philosophy - some assumptions of which are commonly embodied in both 'scientific political economy' and 'value-free economics' - a powerful set of conditioned reflexes was developed. Partial paralysis of the analytical powers of the brain of masters of both 'dialectical' and other methodologies could and can often be triggered by perception of certain terms or names.

²Perhaps the most famous example is examined by Prof. J.V. Robinson in her essay on 'Kalecki and Keynes' in Collected Economic Papers, Vol. III, Blackwell, Oxford, 1965. (Reprinted from Essays in Honour of Michael Kalecki, 1964). She was concerned to explore the conditions in which "two thinkers, from completely different political and intellectual starting points, should come to the same conclusion." It emerges that in Cambridge, in 1931, no member of Keynes' famous 'circus' had ever read Marx. Richard Kahn, for example, made a seminal contribution to Keynesian theory at that time by imagining a cordon round the capital-goods industries and then studying the trade between them and the consumption-good industries. This, of course, was to re-invent Marx's Departments I and II of which the members of the 'circus' were quite unaware. (See pp. 95-6).

Mrs. Robinson also notes on affinity between the Harrod-Domar growth model and that of Rosa Luxemburg. (See her introduction to The Accumulation of Capital by Rosa Luxemburg, Routledge and Kegan, Paul, London, 1951). In fact, a closer relationship with this model is to be observed in the work of G.A. Feldman of 1928-29. (See M.H. Dobb's Soviet Economic Development since 1917, Sixth Edition, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966, pp. 360-61. Also see the same writer's 'The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism' in Estratto da Annali dell 'Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1967, pp. 165-6). An analysis of analogies between Marx's reproduction models and contemporary growth-models is given in M. Kalecki's 'The Marxian Equations of Reproduction and Modern Economics', Social Science Information, VII-6, International Social Science Council, Paris, Dec. 1968, pp. 73-9.

³In Marx's schema, the key to comprehending capitalist economy lay in the deployment of the concepts of the 'forces of production' on the one hand, and of the 'social relations of production' on the other. The capitalist 'mode of production' was itself to be seen

Footnote 3 continued: in essence as the dynamic product of the interaction of the 'forces' and 'social relations' of production. In non-Marxian parlance, the 'forces of production' correspond, broadly speaking, to the 'techniques' of production. If the 'level of development' of the productive forces were described as 'weak' or 'low', this could be taken broadly to mean, for a specific sector in a given moment of time, a low capital-intensity in the technique of production. Marx's 'social relations of production', on the other hand, embrace the social and institutional circumstances within which the factors of production are applied to the processes of production. In the case of agriculture, for example, the system/s of land-tenure can be regarded to comprise the gist of Marx's 'social relations' of production.

⁴His most explicit views on the subject are expressed in his Critique of the Gotha Programme.

⁵This, of course, was to be of momentous consequence for 'socialist society' as it emerged in practice. Marx in general envisaged socialist revolution as coming in developed capitalist countries (such as Germany) rather than in those with weakly developed productive forces. In the former circumstances, Marxian socialists would be free to devote their energies to such matters as the socially rational use of inherited developed resources, the more equitable distribution of income, the 'reduction of alienation', and so on and so forth. As it turned out, the overriding priority for Soviet revolutionaries after 1917 was the accelerated development of the productive forces to the level they should, in theory, have had at the time of the Bolshevik revolution.

⁶The attention of many non-Marxian economists was drawn to this discussion by Alexander Erlich, who described it as "a singularly exciting chapter in the history of economic doctrines; a chapter which is particularly worth exploring at a time when long-range growth has come again, after the lapse of nearly a century, to be one of the key concerns of economics, and when the presence of political elements in large economic decisions no longer causes apprehension." (See The Soviet Industrialisation Debate, 1924-28, Harvard, 1960, p. xix.) In addition, a more or less recent lowering of purely linguistic barriers has facilitated some first-hand appreciation of the pioneering character of the work of economists such as Popov, Litoshenko and Barenholz (in national income accounting and input-output analysis); and of Feldman, Bazarov and Preobrazhensky (theories of planning and growth). Notable instances of this have been provided by N. Spulber's edition of Soviet economic essays for the period 1924-30, translated in Foundations of

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Footnote 6 continued: Soviet Strategy for Economic Growth, Indiana University Press, 1964; with the publication of Preobrazhensky's The New Economics by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965; and with Thorner, Kerblay and Smith's edition of The Theory of Peasant Economy by A.V. Chayanov. (Homewood, Illinois, 1966).

Appreciation of this literature is by no means general, of course. Lionel Robbins, for example, believes that planned economic development - or "authoritarian collectivist growth" - has taken place largely in the absence of a theory of planned economic development. (See The Theory of Economic Development in the History of Economic Thought, MacMillan, London, 1968, p. 119). This view may follow from his removal of Marxian development theories from the history of economic thought since it is "a type of theory which clearly involves psychological and sociological assumptions not usually regarded as part and parcel of economics strictly so-called." (Ibid, p. 2.) It is instructive to compare this view with Lord Robbins' earlier dismissal of Marxian development theory as unworthy of consideration on the grounds that it was purely "technical" in character. (See The Nature and Significance of Economic Science, MacMillan, London, 1932, p. 42.) On the other hand, for Evsey Domar, the Marxists had "come closest to developing a substantial theory of economic growth." (Essays in the Theory of Economic Growth, O.U.P., New York, 1957, p. 17).

⁷Speech to Party functionaries in Leningrad, July 1926, quoted in Dobb, 'The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism,' op. cit., p. 149.

⁸The peasantry deemed to be 'allies' of the urban proletariat were the batraks and the 'poor' and 'middle' peasants. 'Poor' peasants and batraks were commonly identical: the 'poor' peasant was one having insufficient land or means of production to provide himself with year-round subsistence and he was thus compelled to hire out his labour; and the batrak was a hired agricultural worker - in most cases employed seasonally - who commonly also possessed a small land-plot. The 'middle' peasant neither sold his own labour nor (unlike the 'rich' peasant) hired that of others.

The position of the 'middle' peasant in the 'alliance' had long been recognised as an uneasy one. In Lenin's view it was "understood that the middle peasant cannot immediately accept socialism, because he firmly clings to what he is accustomed to, regards all innovations warily, first tests that to which he is invited in action, in practice, and does not make up his mind to change his mode of life until he is convinced that the change is necessary." (Speech of 1919, in Selected Works, Vol. 8, p. 188,

Footnote 8 continued: Lawrence and Wishart, London.) For Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, writing a little earlier, in fact the "petty-proprietor mentality of the middle peasants... inclines them to form an alliance with the rich peasants," not least because the rich peasant was "a successful farmer" and further because they disposed of agricultural surpluses in exchange for which the urban proletariat was unable to supply an adequate volume of industrial products. (See The ABC of Communism, Penguin Books, London 1969; pp. 371-2 and p. 374.)

⁹Such classifications commonly triggered the conditioned reflexes previously mentioned.

¹⁰Those (like Preobrazhensky) who advocated that the sum of values to be given to the peasantry be substantially smaller than those to be taken from them tended to be classified as 'Leftists.' Those (like Bukharin) who were to advocate that they (especially kulaks) be permitted to retain too high a proportion of the sum of values they produced became 'Rightists.' The 'correct' position, of course, was 'Leninist' and came increasingly to be associated with that of Stalin himself. From 1926/27 such a position tended to be that of advocating a high short-term rate of growth of heavy industry with a continued public (if diminishing private) lip-service to the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance.'

¹¹Shanin's views are given in Spulber (op.cit.) as 'The Economic Nature of Our Commodity Shortage,' pp. 205-211 (originally in Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie, Nov. 1925, pp. 25-39); and as 'Questions of the Economic Course', pp. 212-220 (originally in Bolshevik No. 2, 30th January, 1926, pp. 65-87). Spulber, in his Introductory Note on the subject, portrays Shanin to be an advocate (with Bazarov and Bukharin) of 'simultaneous' growth of industry and agriculture. In fact all Soviet economists argued for 'simultaneous' growth and it is more sensible to distinguish between advocates of 'balanced' industrial and agricultural growth, and those arguing for 'unbalanced' growth of either agriculture or industry. As will be seen, Shanin was clearly an 'agriculture first' man.

The collection of essays by Preobrazhensky published as The New Economics (op. cit.) is the more well-known work of this original writer. However, it is rewarding here to consider more fully his 'Economic Equilibrium in the System of the USSR,' translated in Spulber, pp. 124-173 (originally in Vestnik Kommunisticheskoi Akademii, No. 22, 1927, pp. 19-71). The later work is methodologically more refined and also takes into account some major objections by his critics to the earlier analysis.

Footnote 11 continued:

Neither writer explicitly attacks the other - although the major targets are clear enough - but it should be stressed that Preobrazhensky's analysis was designed to embrace more than Shanin's central arguments. Nevertheless, it is here quoted for the most part only where they obviously are assaulted.

(The translations and page references - including extracts from The New Economics - are given for Spulber's edition.)

¹²See "The Economic Nature of our Commodity Shortage," op. cit., pp. 205-207.

¹³"Questions of the Economic Course," op.cit., p. 217. Shanin appears to have inherited these distinctions from Preobrazhensky's The New Economics (op.cit.). Shanin's "intra-industrial accumulation" resembles what Preobrazhensky had termed "socialist accumulation"; and "ulterior intra-industrial accumulation" is akin to his "primary socialist accumulation." Shanin's somewhat convoluted nomenclature may have originated in his desire to avoid 'fall-out' from the acrimonious polemics attending Preobrazhensky's modification of Marx's 'primary accumulation' concept. See note 19 and Appendix A.

¹⁴Students of post-revolutionary Cuban political economy can find Shanin's general line of argument of particular interest. In salient features it was to constitute the basic rationale of Cuban development strategy from 1963. This was not known in Cuba at that time, for the Soviet economic debate of the 1920's began to be explored there only in 1967. It has subsequently been a topic of keen interest. Indeed, it is virtually certain that Cuban students of political economy are better informed about the debate than are most of their Soviet counterparts.

¹⁵"The organic structure of capital is considerably smaller in agriculture, and labour requirements are considerably greater. One and the same unit of capital brings into play masses of labour eight times as great in agriculture as in industry; and with the same rate of labour utilisation the same unit of capital yields a much larger accumulation in agriculture than in industry. Moreover, the level of consumption in agriculture is lower than in industry and this further enhances the accumulative effect of capital invested in agriculture." "Questions of the Economic Course," p. 219. The greater 'fruitfulness' of investment in agriculture in Cuba - with cane and animal husbandry rather than grain and animal husbandry as priorities - was explained primarily in terms of the productivity-increasing potential of 'advanced' techniques applied where traditionally 'primitive' technology coexisted with considerable productive experience.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 214.

¹⁷Ibid, pp. 215-216.

¹⁸Ibid, pp. 219-220.

¹⁹The New Economics (as translated in Spulber, pp. 234-236. Preobrazhensky had aroused considerable ire by his use (but not invention) of the term 'primary socialist accumulation.' The subject has an interesting, if somewhat tortuous, history. See Appendix A.

²⁰"Economic Equilibrium in the System of the USSR," op.cit., p. 172. (Dobb, in his 'Discussions of the 1920's,' has credited Bukharin with the early employment of the term "dynamic economic equilibrium" in his Notes of an Economist of 1928 but it may more properly belong to Preobrazhensky).

²¹Preobrazhensky had referred, earlier, to "our socialist industry, puny when it comes to capital and retarded when it comes to technology." (The New Economics, in Spulber, p. 248).

²²"Non-equivalent exchange" was to be effected by a variety of taxes and tariffs. Rail-transport tariffs, and credit-charges he described as "mighty levers" of economic regulation. However, the employment of the monopoly-power of State industry in the production of industrial consumer-goods, to be exercised via a substantial increase in the ratio of prices at which such products and agricultural produce exchanged was "of enormous consequence... for socialist accumulation." (See The New Economics.)

²³"Economic Equilibrium in the System of the USSR," op.cit., p. 169.

²⁴Since light industry required both tools of production and agricultural raw materials, it was thus in the "general interest of light state industry and of peasant production of technical crops that accumulation in heavy industry, which must always precede expanded reproduction of these branches, should be as rapid as possible." (Ibid, p. 153).

²⁵ "The fact that new plants will begin to turn out output three or four years after the start of their construction is the result of a technical rather than an economic necessity. First a delay, then a forward jump are inevitable. To even out this discontinuity would be possible only on the basis of larger exports and foreign loans. The reason why the latter is impossible is precisely the fact that in our country there is taking place not merely expanded production but expanded socialist production in industry, and world capitalism is not inclined to help it." (Ibid, p. 141.)

²⁶ Ibid, p. 153.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 169.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 171. (Inter alia, it has been the custom to credit Prof. J.V. Robinson with the distinction between 'open' and 'disguised' unemployment, transplanting - and modifying - the notion from the industrial context into which she introduced it in 1938 to peasant agriculture.)

²⁹ It should be emphasised that the growth-accelerating effect beyond the short-term of the relative concentration of investment-funds in Department I of industry is not depicted on the time-scale drawn in the Diagram. For a remarkable growth-model of the period of relevance to this theme see G.A. Feldman's "On the Theory of Growth Rates of National Income" I & II, of 1928-29, translated in Spulber. Also see Dobb's Soviet Economic Development since 1917, pp. 360-361; and "The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism" pp. 165-166.

³⁰ "Questions of the Economic Course," p. 214.

³¹ "Economic Equilibrium in the System of the USSR," pp. 172-173. This statement - with the list of "contradictions" that fore-ran it - provided a useful perspective of the costs involved in the Soviet situation of 'Socialism in One Country'. At the same time, it indicated - in association with a much lower endowment of industrial raw materials - the essential political preconditions permitting Cuba the relative luxury of pursuing Shanin's development path. Generally speaking, Preobrazhensky's analysis can be viewed as providing the economic heavy artillery that supported the political positions associated with Trotsky.

³²The employment of this terminology in the context of Soviet political economy is primarily associated, in the 1920's, with V.G. Groman (see "On Certain Regularities Empirically Observable in Our Economy," Planovoe khoziaistvo, No. 1, 1925; in Spulber, pp. 361-364) and V. Bazarov (see "On the Methodology for Drafting Perspective Plans," *Ibid*, No. 7, 1926; in Spulber, pp. 365-377).

³³Prior to 1956, Soviet historiography tended to claim "victory" for the 'teleologists' and "defeat" for the 'geneticists'. Equally erroneously, some writers have claimed that variation in the time-horizon of the plan achieved a complete synthesis between the two "schools." (For a recent sketch of the debate cast in the latter terms, see J. Goldmann's "Karl Marx, the Soviet Economists of the Twenties and Contemporary 'Konjunkturforschung' in a Socialist Country" in Czechoslovak Economic Papers No. 11, Academia Publishing House, Prague, 1969.)

³⁴Strumilin made the important point that the extension of the time-horizon of the plan multiplied the choice of targets open to the planner, although he conceded 'genetic' constraints to be dominant both in a plan of short-term conception and in the initial period of a long-term plan. As Dobb expressed the argument: "To each time-horizon of given radius there corresponds its given range of possibilities; the existing pattern of productive resources and its degree of tractability being the determinants of this range. As the radius of the time-horizon extends, the range of possibilities increases - the number of alternative routes rises by which, when the day arrives, that horizon can be crossed." (Soviet Economic Development since 1917, op.cit., p. 7). This major modification of the 'geneticist' case can be seen to be largely 'technical' in character: it did not deal directly with constraints identified by the 'geneticists' to originate in the social relations rather than the forces of production.

³⁵See Dobb, 'The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism,' op.cit., pp. 161-163. Some conflicts between 'geneticists' and 'teleologists' are commonly spoken of as between 'pessimists' and 'optimists,' or 'determinists' and 'voluntarists.' Further, explanations of policies emerging from such conflicts are sometimes couched in class terms. For example, Charles Bettelheim speaks of certain post-revolutionary policies in Cuba as "related to political domination by a 'radicalized' section of the petty bourgeoisie." (See 'The Transition between Socialism and Capitalism' in The Monthly Review Vol. 20, March 1969, New York, p. 3). Sweezy (*Ibid*, p. 18)

Footnote 35 continued: rightly observes that: "This is a formula, not an explanation" and is thus not helpful. In fact, it is not merely an unhelpful view but an obscurantist one, not least because such policies commonly change with no corresponding change in the class composition of the political leadership, and also because such formulas are so often deployed pejoratively by members of the 'radicalized' petty bourgeoisie.

³⁶"On the Methodology for Drafting Perspective Plans," op.cit., (pp. 365-366 in Spulber). Bazarov could here have drawn on Lenin's own practical expression of the implications of this point. He had, in 1921, identified food supplies as the basic factor upon which a general economic plan for the period was to be built. He recommended, accordingly, that three variants of the plan be prepared, the practical implementation of one of them to be determined by whether food supplies turned out to be below, equal to, or above the current estimate. (See Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, pp. 341-342.)

³⁷Quoted in Dobb, p. 352. A. Gerschenkron has described salient features of the 'unapproachable fortress' of which Bazarov spoke: "...the peasant economy can reduce the extent of its connections with outside markets by diverting cereals into converted products for its own consumption, and by assigning a larger portion of the land to fibrous crops for home spinning and weaving. For the Russian peasantry with its weak marketing tradition the escape into greater self-sufficiency suggested itself as an easy and natural response to the economic conditions which prevailed in the second half of the 1920's." (See 'Russia: Patterns and Problems of Economic Development, 1861-1958' in Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, Harvard, 1962, p. 144.) The nature of the 'fortress' similarly suggests the limitations both of Preobrazhensky's fiscal 'mighty levers' and of the power imputed by him to the State's ability to control the prices of industrial consumer-goods. (See note 22 above.)

³⁸N.P. Oganovsky, in 1927, quoted by Dobb, Ibid, p. 233.

³⁹Kontrolnie Tsifri na 1926-7, g. 9; quoted by Dobb, Ibid, p. 346.

⁴⁰Quoted by Dobb, Ibid, p. 353.

⁴¹"On Certain Regularities Empirically Observable in our Economy," in Spulber, p. 361.

⁴²Published in Leninism by J.V. Stalin (English Edition: Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1940, pp. 205-216).

⁴³Leninism, pp. 206-7.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 207.

⁴⁵A considerable controversy concerning the accuracy of Nemchinov's data has been partially fueled by the fact that the memorandum accompanying it was not published by Stalin.

On the one hand, stress has been placed (notably by M. Lewin) on the difficulties inherent in classifying the peasantry in neat class-divisions. (See, for example, Lewin's 'Who was the Soviet Kulak?' in Soviet Studies No. 2, Oct. 1966, especially pp. 189-206.)

The other major arena of debate has concerned the statistics of 'marketed' grain. J.F. Karcz has argued that Nemchinov's 1913 figures of 'marketed grain' in fact portrayed 'gross' marketings (i.e. included local village scales) and that the 1926/27 figures represent only 'net' marketings (i.e. extra-village sales). (See 'Thoughts on the Grain Problem' in Soviet Studies No. 4, April 1967.) R.W. Davies has examined this suggestion and rejects it convincingly. (See 'A Note on Grain Statistics' in Soviet Studies No. 3, 1970.) After assessing the available data for the two periods he finds that: "Any conclusions about the 1926/27: prewar 'gross marketings' ratio must in the present state of our knowledge be extremely tentative." (Ibid, p. 323.) He stresses that "the total figure for marketed grain depended on an intricate balancing of different types of information of varying reliability," the "estimates of peasant purchases... and of sales on the private market... (being)... particularly hazardous." (P. 317.) However, the data for 'net marketings' - which was Stalin's prime concern - seems sufficiently strong for Davies to assert that: "'Net marketings' of grain in 1926/27 were between 50.0% and 56.9% of the prewar level, amounting to 9.7-10.4 million tons against 18.1-19.3 million tons." (P. 328.) In E.H. Carr's view, the "multiplication of the number, and the reduction of size, of the units of production makes it certain that a substantially lower proportion of the grain harvest was brought to the market. But the statistical material available does not justify any precise estimate of the extent of the decline." (See Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929, Vol. 1, MacMillan, London, 1969, p. 918.)

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 205.

⁴⁷ See Dobb, *Ibid*, pp. 211-212.

⁴⁸ E. H. Carr in "Revolution from Above: Some Notes on the Decision to Collectivize Soviet Agriculture," in The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse, Boston, 1967, p. 319. (Reprinted in 1917: Before and After, MacMillan, London, 1969, pp. 95-109.)

⁴⁹ D. Mitrany, commenting in 1951 on the effects of agrarian reform in Eastern Europe as a whole after 1917, observed that: "What distinguished the eastern peasant from the western large farmer or peasant farmer, was that to him his land was first and foremost a means of raising food for his family and his animals... A freer use of their crops or even a larger yield meant first of all a higher consumption among the peasants themselves, who formerly had gone short of food or had been living on poor food." (Marx Against the Peasant, London, 1951, p. 118.)

⁵⁰ Leninism, pp. 207-209.

⁵¹ Dobb, 'The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism,' p. 157. It is possible that the conversion of wage-labourers into peasants and of sub-sistence farmers into self-sufficient farmers encroached upon the sources of pre-revolutionary labour - particularly harvest labour - available to the kulaks in some areas.

⁵² M. Lewin thus criticises the "Right-wing position" but as we have seen, the cap also fitted 'Leftists' such as Preobrazhensky. (See "The Immediate Background of Soviet Collectivization" in Soviet Studies, Oct. 1965, No. 2, p. 178.)

⁵³ E. H. Carr, in "Reflections on Soviet Industrialisation," in 1917: Before and After, op.cit., p. 121.

⁵⁴ Total agricultural production between 1926-28 is estimated to have increased at an annual rate of 2.5%. (Carr, "Revolution from Above," op.cit., p. 317.) Oganovsky and Weinstein offered (conservative) estimates of a 2% per annum increase in agricultural yields per acre for the period following 1927/28. (Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, p. 212.)

55

See Table 1. Stalin was to invest the 0.2% increase over landlord farming given by Nemchinov with sufficient precision to permit him to use the word "larger" in its context. See Leninism, p. 207.

56

Ibid, pp. 210-212. Later in the year Stalin was to restate these three propositions succinctly in his speech on 'Industrialization of the Country and the Right Deviation.' (See Spulber, p. 273.)

57

Ibid, p. 213. In concrete terms, Stalin mentioned such grain-supplies to be from 32-40% greater than those he reported for 1926-27.

58

There is evidence to suggest that Stalin's appreciation of the problem was not shared at the time by the majority of the political leaders of the Party. The growing crisis in grain supplies and the measures adopted to deal with it in the spring of 1929 (see p. 23) appear to have had been decisive in swaying the majority towards Stalin's views. See Appendix B.

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"In encouraging associations of every kind, and also agricultural communes, of middle peasants, the representatives of Soviet power should not permit the slightest compulsion in founding such bodies...Those representatives of the Soviet power who allow themselves to apply not merely direct, but even indirect, compulsion in order to attach peasants to communes, should be held strictly accountable and removed from work in the countryside." (Lenin's draft to the 8th Party Congress of 1919, cited by Carr, "Revolution from Above," p. 314.) Molotov (quoted by Carr, Ibid, p. 315) was to state in 1927: "The affair can proceed only by way of the gradual development of large collective farms...We can permit of no illusions, no coercion in regard to the peasantry in the transition to large-scale farming."

Stalin himself, one month after his "Grain Front" speech was to publish in Pravda a quotation from the 8th Party Congress (1919) resolution on "The Attitude to the Middle Peasantry": "To confuse the middle peasants with the kulaks, to extend to them, to any degree, the measures that are directed against the kulaks, means to grossly violate, not only all the decrees of the Soviet government and its whole policy, but also all the fundamental principles of Communism." ("Lenin and the Question of Alliance with the Middle Peasant," in Leninism, op. cit., p. 224.)

⁶⁰This writer does not ascribe any decisive importance, insofar as concerns Government motivation at the time, to the purely ideological 'advances' implicit to this conception. See Appendix B.

⁶¹E. H. Carr has noted that the general sense of urgency on this subject from 1927 was heightened by "the international crisis and the war scare of the spring and summer of 1927 (disaster in China, breaking-off of relations by Great Britain), which focused attention on the need for rapid industrialisation and for emphasis on the heavy capital industries which were the basis of military strength." ("Revolution from Above," pp. 316-317.)

⁶²Dobb, "The Discussions of the 1920's about Building Socialism," p. 158.

⁶³Magnitudes cited by Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, p. 234.

⁶⁴Introduction to the First Five-Year Economic Plan of the USSR, 1929; translated in Spulber, op.cit., pp. 476-477.

⁶⁵Carr, Ibid, p. 322.

⁶⁶Directed essentially against the wealthier peasants with hoarded grain, the measures were in practice to encourage them to cut back the area sown to this crop. (See Carr, Ibid, p. 321.)

⁶⁷And thus the abandonment of key tenets of the 'Worker-Peasant Alliance' within the politico-economic parameters of which the discussion had been conducted.

⁶⁸Given Stalin's identification of the middle, rather than the kulak, peasant as the 'central figure' in agriculture there is no reason to suppose this to have been unintentional. The limited scale of collectivization prior to 1928-29 (despite its ideological attractions for the Soviet Government from its earliest days) reflected both peasant indifference to this mode of production and its relative neglect as regards the allocation of investment funds.

⁶⁹ Stalin, having personally initiated the removal of clauses emphasising the voluntary principle in 1929 (see Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, p. 247, note 2) disassociated himself from coercive measures against non-kulak peasants in March 1930. (See his "Dizzy with Success," Pravda, March, 1930, in Leninism, op.cit., pp. 333-338.) Following this re-assertion of the voluntary principle, collective farm membership fell from 14 million peasant households to 5 million by May, 1930. (Dobb, Ibid, p. 248.) This outflow of peasant households was not spatially uniform. In the most important grain-surplus regions of the southern steppes, the outflow of peasants was smaller than elsewhere. This has been attributed in part to an unusually clear differentiation of agrarian classes in these areas: the average size of farms was relatively large as was the proportion of landless labourers and semi-proletarians working for their owners. Following Stalin's 'Grain Front' speech, the process of collectivization in these regions advanced considerably before the drastic drive in the winter of 1929-30. (See V.P. Timoshenko's Agricultural Russia and the Wheat Problem, Food Research Institute, Stanford, 1932; pp. 103-5, 118 and 245.)

⁷⁰ Such incentives included rights to private plots of land, sales to local markets, etc.

⁷¹ By the end of 1931, 16,000 tractors and 5,000 combine-harvesters (many imported from the U.S.A. and Germany) were reported for the State farm sector. By the end of 1932, though occupying only 10% of the national sown area, such farms held more than half of all the nation's tractors. (Dobb, Ibid, p. 250.)

⁷² The stock of horned cattle fell from 60.1 million in 1928 to 33.5 million in 1933, the proportion of cows in the respective totals rising from 49% in 1928 to 58% in 1933. (Official Soviet statistics cited by Mandel in his Marxist Economic Theory, Vol. 2, English Edition by Merlin Press, London, 1968, p. 554.) The number of horses over the same period fell by about one-quarter according to Dobb (Ibid, p. 246.)

⁷³ Speech to the 17th Party Congress, 1934, quoted by Dobb, Ibid, p. 251. (Stalin was to observe: "If we compare the enormous sums the State has invested in them with the actual results they have achieved to date, we shall find an enormous balance against the State farms.")

⁷⁴The livestock slaughter sharply reduced the value of total agricultural output. National grain-yields were lower for the period 1929-32 than for 1925-28. Widespread famine in predominantly rural areas has been extensively reported for the period 1932-34.

⁷⁵Carr, "Revolution from Above," p. 313.

⁷⁶Dobb, Ibid, p. 249.

⁷⁷Figures cited by A. Baykov in Development of the Soviet Economic System, Cambridge University Press, 1946 (reprinted 1970), pp. 325-326. Dr. Baykov also reported deliveries by collective farms to the State to average 32% of gross yields in 1931 and 1932, falling to 20.5% in 1933 and 1934. (Ibid, p. 203.)

⁷⁸See note 57. Also See Appendix B.

⁷⁹Dobb, Ibid, pp. 360-361.

⁸⁰Whether such casualties were to be permanent or temporary - for example, Preobrazhensky and Strumilin respectively - naturally depended on whether bullets did or did not accompany political criticism.

⁸¹The New Economics, Clarendon Press, 1965.

APPENDIX A

On 'Original' and 'Primary Socialist' Accumulation:

In his Introduction to Book II of The Wealth of Nations, Adam Smith had spoken of the accumulation of stock 'previous' to a more advanced division of labour as the latter's precondition. Marx objected to contemporary explanations of how this 'previous' accumulation had come into being. He suggested that for the 'vulgar' political economists of his time it played about the same part in political economy as did original sin in theology: "In times long by," he wrote, "there were two sorts of people: one, the diligent, intelligent, and above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living...Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth..." Marx attacked this notion (and it is important to appreciate that his alternative vision was a counter-attack on a prevailing orthodox rather than a detailed portrayal of an alternative model) and argued that the essence of Smith's 'previous' accumulation was actually "the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production," commonly by force. The "epoch-making" moments in the history of the pre-capitalist accumulation process were those when "great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled as free and 'unattached' proletarians on the labour-market." In the development of capitalist

economy, Marx suggested that the "expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process." (1)

Marx translated what had begun as Smith's 'previous' accumulation as 'ursprüngliche Akkumulation.' This is best rendered in English as 'original' or 'primary' accumulation but in the standard Moore-Aveling English edition of Capital it became 'primitive,' and few writing in English on the subject - Gerschenkron and Sweezy are two such - employ the better translations. (2) The Spanish translation, on the other hand, is 'originaria,' and the Russian 'pervonachal'nyi' is equivalent to 'primary.' Both the Russian and the Spanish translations lack the connotations present in 'primitive' of something rough, uncivilised, or even barbarous.

As we have seen, for Marx 'original' or 'primary' accumulation did not simply consist of the process of transferring surplus produce from pre-capitalist to emerging capitalist economic formations. It consisted also of the entire process of changing the social

(1) Capital, Vol. 1, Part VIII, Ch. xxvi. The liberty has here been taken of altering the punctuation slightly from that given in the Moore-Aveling translation.

(2) Roy's French edition of Capital preceded the English translation and translated 'ursprüngliche' as 'primitif.' It is possible that this influenced the subsequent English rendering of 'primitive' but the French possesses the 'crudity' connotations to a lesser degree.

relations of production. Preobrazhensky, in interpreting the nature of post-revolutionary Soviet development, modified Marx's conception. He distinguished between 'socialist' accumulation and 'primary' socialist accumulation. The former was accumulation within socialist industry on the basis of surplus produce generated within that industry itself; and the latter was accumulation within socialist industry on the basis of surplus produce, extracted via fiscal and monetary mechanisms, from the private sector and principally from peasant agriculture.⁽³⁾ This notion embraced aspects of Marx's conception, namely the transfer of material resources from a 'primary' - pre-capitalist - mode of production (peasant economy) to an historically more 'advanced' mode of production (socialist industry). However, absent from the concept of 'primary socialist accumulation' in Preobrazhensky's writings was the expropriation of the peasantry itself. As we have seen, this, and an associated use of coercion, was the central theme of Marx's writings on 'original' or 'primary' accumulation and this largely explained the furore that accompanied Preobrazhensky's deployment of the concept of 'primary socialist' accumulation. Given the enormous political importance of Lenin's 'Worker-Peasant Alliance' even such indirect connotations of expropriation and force were deemed to be more than unfortunate.

⁽³⁾ See The New Economics.

The process of forced collectivization in Soviet agriculture encouraged a resurrection of both Marx's and Preobrazhensky's terms to describe subsequent socialist economic development. Isaac Deutscher, for example, was accustomed to describe both the 1930's and the post-1945 phase of Soviet economic development as periods of 'primitive accumulation.'⁽⁴⁾ More recently, K.S. Karol has categorised contemporary Cuban economic development as 'primitive socialist accumulation.'⁽⁵⁾ Both usages seem to involve their debasement as concepts. It is arguable that the Soviet collectivization period can be described as one of 'original' or 'primary' accumulation. Perhaps preferable would be 'primary socialist accumulation' if one incorporated into Preobrazhensky's conception Marx's emphasis on the changing of social relations of production in agriculture and of the role of coercion in that process. (Thus some distinction would be drawn between capitalist and socialist economic formations.) Whether or not this would be illuminating, the post-1945 period of Soviet reconstruction and further growth corresponds neither to Marx's nor Preobrazhensky's conception of 'ursprüngliche' and 'primary socialist' accumulation, and it would appear that Deutscher's 'primitive accumulation' means in this con-

⁽⁴⁾As in his biography of Stalin, Oxford University Press, 2nd Edition, 1967.

⁽⁵⁾See The Guerrillas in Power, Hill and Wang, New York, 1970. Karol originally wrote in French. See note (2).

text little more than a high rate of investment with tightly restricted consumption. It is obvious that for Karol, Cuba's 'primitive socialist accumulation' means no more than this. Contemporary Cuban development is not principally characterised by the accumulation of material resources in the hands of the state from sources lying outside the complex of the state economy, primarily from peasant agriculture, and Karol's use of the concept bears no relations to Preobrazhensky's formulation. Alexander Gerschenkron once censured Soviet Marxists for using Marx's ideas on the process of 'original accumulation' "as symbols in a ritualistic ceremony rather than as tools in an independent analysis."⁽⁶⁾ As can be seen, both Marx and Preobrazhensky require protection from less 'orthodox' Marxists too.

It is difficult not to conclude that an important element in the abuse of Marx's or Preobrazhensky's concepts may lie precisely in the rough, uncivilised or barbarous connotations either of the word 'primitive' or of the Soviet collectivisation process. This is a fairly potent reason for insisting on the use of the more accurate terms 'original' or 'primary' despite their relative unfamiliarity.

⁽⁶⁾ See 'Rosario Romeo and Original Accumulation' in Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective, op.cit., p. 97.

APPENDIX B

Some Comparative Notes on Soviet Collectivization:

To understate the matter, the nature, causes and consequences of the collectivization process are a matter of controversy.

In some treatments, the drastic drive of the winter of 1929-30 emerges as an illogical, if not quite mad act explicable primarily in terms of 'ideology.' The focussing of attention on trends in the volume or value of total agricultural production rather than on marketed supplies over the period 1929-32 lends plausibility to this view.

Another, and rather more sophisticated version portrays events in terms of a 'leap in the dark.' The grain supplies crisis is recognised but its resolution via collectivization is seen as largely fortuitous. In this story, Stalin is commonly portrayed as a ditherer who did not really know where he was going.

As is clear from the emphasis placed in this text on certain selected themes, neither of these views is here accepted. It is argued that by May 1928, Stalin had accurately identified the principal causes of the decline in extra-rural grain marketings and had seen collectivisation and the expansion of state farms as crucial to their restoration to, if not increase above, pre-1914 levels. He had also then identified the 'middle' peasant, not the

kulak, as the 'central figure' in agriculture. Then, as later in the same year, his preoccupation with grain surpluses rather than with total agricultural production or even total grain production is quite clear. It is not this writer's opinion that Stalin subsequently forgot this analysis or substantially altered his ranking of priorities. The Soviet political leadership of 1928 does not appear, however, to have been in Stalin's pocket. It took the grain supplies crisis of 1928-29 - with its associated 'War Communism' solutions - to win the majority to Stalin's view and to accelerate the collectivization process itself.

That the subsequent collectivization process was itself vastly confused is beyond dispute. However, it seems inaccurate in this writer's opinion to argue that the confusion of the process mirrored some comparable confusion of Stalin's purpose.

Rather implausibly, perhaps, comparison and contrast with Cuba's Second Agrarian Reform of October 1963 illuminates certain of the more crucial factors contributing to the essential messiness of Soviet collectivization.

The Cuban reform, like Soviet collectivization, was intimately related to the new economic development strategy enunciated in the same year. It lowered the ceiling on private land-holdings from just over 400 hectares to 67.1 hectares, expanding the State sector from about 40% to near to 70% of the total farm area. When ex-

propriated, such farms were reckoned to embrace more than one-fifth of the national cultivable area, including more than one-quarter of the area then sown to cane. Their share of the national cattle-herd and of quality pasture-lands was reckoned to be 'decisive.'⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, such farms had traditionally supplied a significant proportion of nationally produced foodstuffs to the towns and their importance in this respect had been especially great in the province of Havana.⁽²⁾ For a complex of reasons, from 1961 the marketed surpluses of such farms had on average been declining sharply in almost all branches of production. The relationship between their expropriation and the new growth strategy, in which the expansion of cane cultivation and of meat and dairy farming were assigned key roles, was a singularly obvious one.⁽³⁾ Nonetheless,

(1) See Carlos Rafael Rodríguez' 'El Nuevo Camino de la Agricultura Cubana' in Cuba Socialista No. 27, Nov. 1963, Havana; pp. 73-4.

(2) See Memoria del Censo Agrícola Nacional de 1946 of the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture, Fernandez y Cia, Havana, 1951; Tables 12 and 47.

(3) "The crucial obstacle to any attempt to impose a set of centralised decisions upon a capitalist economy is the tendency of entrepreneurs, who still hold (or until recently held) rights of economic sovereignty, to obstruct any provisions of an economic plan which run counter to the aim of maximising profit to be earned upon their property. Quite apart from anything of a sufficiently political and conscious character to justify the name of 'economic sabotage,' a concerted passive resistance would probably develop from the play of conditioned entrepreneur-behaviour alone. In such circumstances an economic plan imposed upon the economy from above is likely to have a purely negative character, excluding certain courses of action from the agenda or setting limits within which the autonomous decisions of entrepreneur units can operate." M.H. Dobb, Soviet Economic Development since 1917, op. cit., p. 30.

if the purpose of the reform were to be interpreted by reference to the tone and emphases of most official edicts and speeches of the time, the conclusion (as with Soviet collectivization) could have been that 'ideology' had been the dominant motivation. This is not to say that there was no validity in the charges of 'counter-revolutionary activity' imputed to the 'bourgeois' owners of such farms. (These included fomenting, or aiding and abetting armed counter-revolution in the countryside and politically suborning peasants and wage-workers.) It is to say, however, that neither the purpose nor function of the reform would have been adequately comprehended were too much weight to be ascribed to such factors.

More illuminating were the contrasting modes of implementation of Cuba's Second Agrarian Reform and Soviet collectivization. In contrast to the Soviets' 'frontal attack' on the kulaks, the Cuban State's capture of the economic base of the most important surviving segment of the rural 'capitalist' class was swift, efficient and virtually bloodless.

At dawn on October 3rd 1963, 'interveners' of the Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), accompanied by members of the Rebel Army, simultaneously occupied all privately-owned farms larger than 67.1 hectares. This operation was obviously facilitated by the relatively small size of the country - with relatively good communications-systems within it - and by the fact that the farms to be occupied

numbered thousands, not millions.⁽⁴⁾ The number of military and administrative personnel required to implement the Reform was thus relatively small and it was comparatively easy to deploy them for simultaneous action.

At least as important was the extreme simplicity of the criterion employed for expropriation. As a guide to the 'class-enemy' in the countryside, the quantity of land held was very rough and ready, particularly at the margin. No allowance was made for variations in soil-fertility or other natural or unnatural advantages which farmers might or might not enjoy. In consequence, just as some relatively 'rich,' predominantly 'capitalist' farmers escaped the Reform, so some 'middle' peasants were expropriated. At the time these disadvantages seem to have been appreciated but were outweighed by the fact that the size of the vast majority of farms was actually known whereas the other variables, pertinent though they might be, were not. Knowledge of the size of farms permitted the central framing of concise and unambiguous directives for the army of cadres that was to implement the Reform and the latter was thus required to exercise no great political or other initiative at a local level.

The essentially peaceful character of the intervention was

⁽⁴⁾ The number of farms expropriated was estimated at about 10 thousand. (See C. Rafael Rodriguez, Ibid, p. 98.)

partly a product of its swiftness, for just as it gave no opportunity for the slaughter of livestock, etc., it gave none for the organization of resistance even had it been contemplated. Further, since as acts of class-war go the Reform was relatively humane both in conception and implementation⁽⁵⁾, it provoked but slight popular sympathy for its victims even in areas in which their personal influence had been strong.

While the ravages of Cyclone 'Flora' (which struck Cuba a matter of days after the implementation of the Reform) complicate an already difficult task of assessing and accounting for trends in agricultural production for the period, it is not disputed that the total value of agricultural production for 1964 was higher than that of 1963, and that of 1965 was higher than that of 1964. And in 1964, data was published comparing State purchases of a variety of privately produced agricultural produce over the first quarters of the years 1963 and 1964. The decline in deliveries of certain crops was far smaller than might have been supposed given

(5) Where farms greater than 67.1 hectares were found to have been operated by adult relatives whose individual shares did not exceed the statutory limit, they were more or less swiftly returned. In a few exceptional cases, farmers operating farms above the limit were allowed to retain them. Some compensation at a flat per-hectare rate, payable over ten years, was made to expropriated landowners. Those possessing urban as well as farm houses were required to move to the towns. Those without them were able to remain.

the substantial reduction in the size of the Private sector between the two periods. Deliveries of several products in fact increased. (6)

The contrast between much of this and the Soviet collectivization process could scarcely be more striking and was in most instances to be explained precisely by the absence in Soviet Russia of certain 'objective' conditions identified above in the Cuban experience.

The kind of lightning 'pre-emptive strike' that the Cuban State successfully launched against its 'rural bourgeoisie' on 3 October 1963 was quite impossible to realise against the kulak of rural Russia. This was not solely for reasons of sheer geographic mass or poor communications. More crucial was the fact that the collectivization 'cadres' that the Soviet State could amass were equal to their prodigious task in neither number nor quality. It was well-known that 'Party membership in the country-

(6) See A. Regalado, 'Las Funciones de la ANAP,' in Cuba Socialista No. 35, Havana, July 1964, p. 19. This tended, on the one hand, to support assertions that the marketed supplies of farms expropriated under the Second Agrarian Reform had declined very greatly by 1963. It suggests also that while farmers unaffected by the Reform may generally have given credence to emphatic official statements of its 'definitive' and 'final' character, some of them may also have taken out a little 'insurance' against any future selective expropriation by increasing their sales to State purchasing agencies.

side was chronically weak, both in number and quality."⁽⁷⁾ Reflecting this, during the winter of 1929-30 some 25,000 industrial workers - mostly communists - were despatched to the countryside to promote collectivization.⁽⁸⁾ That the proselytising powers of urban enthusiasts were less than overwhelming among the peasants had long been recognised.⁽⁹⁾ Further, a woefully weak 'cadre force' was obliged to mobilize its rural revolutionary 'allies' for class-struggle where classes themselves had become increasingly difficult to differentiate with clarity. On paper in Moscow there might be batraks and 'poor' peasants clearly distinguishable from 'middle' peasants; and 'middle' peasants in turn might be clearly distinguishable from 'rich' ones or kulaks. In the villages, even had Stalin intended that for operational purposes all such fine distinctions be observed, it was no easy matter to make them. In Cuba, by contrast, no mobilization of 'allies' - with all the profound implications of spontaneity and uncertainty associated with such a process - was required to implement the Second Agrarian

⁽⁷⁾ E. H. Carr, Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926-1929, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 143.

⁽⁸⁾ V. P. Timoshenko, Agricultural Russia and the Wheat Problem, op. cit., p. 122.

⁽⁹⁾ For Lenin's tart remarks on this subject, see 'Report on Work in the Rural Districts' of March 1919 in Selected Works, Vol. 8, op.cit., p. 179.

Reform. The centrally organised 'cadre force' was more than sufficient for the task and operationally, identification of the 'enemy' could be reduced in essence to: "Those with less than five caballerias of land are with us; those with more are against us." And who had more and who had less was in most cases already known.

Underlying all these factors was the contrasting nature and recent history of the agrarian class-structure itself. In Cuba prior to 1959 there had been a 'latifundist' class roughly corresponding to the landlords of Russia's prerevolutionary 'estates.' However, Cuba's First Agrarian Reform, largely implemented in the second half of 1960, had for the most part retained the large-scale landholdings of this class in large-scale units under State control. By contrast, with the Soviet agrarian reform of 1917, the large-scale estates were mostly devoured by batraks and 'poor' and 'middle' peasants (10) who in the years of Civil War also substantially depleted the holdings of the kulaks. In Cuba, then, comparatively few wage-labourers

(10) Bolshevik acquiescence at the time corresponded neither to political nor economic long-range aspirations but stemmed from the short-term political and military imperative to secure the rural masses as allies. The Bolsheviks had always believed that rapid increases in the productivity of both land and labour could be guaranteed only within a large-scale mode of agricultural production. They did not doubt that the agrarian reform that they had performed was not Marxian revolution but, rather, a popular historical regression.

became small-scale peasant farmers and comparatively few small-scale farmers increased their holdings at the expense of larger-scale farmers or landlords. In short, the agricultural proletariat and semi-proletariat - in any event far larger and more clearly delineated proportionately than its pre-1917 Russian counterpart - remained substantially intact. The Second Agrarian Reform did not thus enmesh an agrarian class well-laced with farmers who had until but recently been wage-workers or 'poor' peasants. The Cuban State in 1963 thus avoided the vast Soviet trauma of endeavouring to assume effective control over land which the peasantry (or at least a substantial section of it) had in the fairly recent past wrested from their old masters or 'betters.'⁽¹¹⁾

As is often the case, to establish the exception is to suggest the rule. In pre-revolutionary Russia as a whole a trend towards increasing class-polarization had been marked. In general, however, this process was not as advanced as in pre-revolutionary Cuba but there was one major exception in which there were some striking congruities.

⁽¹¹⁾As Lenin observed in 1919: "When we took over power we relied on the support of the peasantry as a whole. At that time the aim of all the peasants was identical - to fight the landlords. But their prejudice against large-scale farming has remained to this day. The peasant thinks: 'A large farm, that means I shall again be an agricultural labourer.'" ('Report on Work in the Rural Districts,' op.cit. p. 179.) It became clear a decade later that this sentiment had not disappeared.

In the southern and south-eastern steppes of Russia, population density had been relatively low and the average size of farms both before and after the agrarian reform of 1917 was relatively large. Generally speaking it was an area of specialised grain-farming and it provided major surpluses both for export via the southern ports and for urban consumption to the north. The owners of the pre-revolutionary estates planted grain, as did the peasants, but a higher proportion of their land was not cropped, being commonly used for the extensive grazing of cattle. The combination of a relatively low population density, a relatively large average farm-size and a relatively high degree of crop-specialisation ensured that local labour supplies were insufficient to meet the peak (principally harvesting) needs of both estates and larger peasant farms. The seasonal shortage of labour was met by a massive annual influx of migrant workers from the north who commonly earned daily wage-rates about 50 per cent higher than those prevailing for comparable tasks in the northern black-soil areas.⁽¹²⁾

⁽¹²⁾ For all this, see V. P. Timoshenko, *op.cit.*, pp. 200 and 241-2.

In essential features - given the substitution of 'cane' for 'grain' - the steppe regions thus described had much in common with major areas of Cuban agriculture prior to 1959, the resemblance being most conspicuous for the province of Camagüey. It was no coincidence that just as the Cuban expropriation of latifundia and large-scale 'capitalist' farms over the period 1959-63 met with the firmest 'support from below' in the regions of greatest class-differentiation,⁽¹³⁾ so the greatest voluntary progress in collectivisation was made in Russia's steppes. It was there that the proportion of peasant households without land, or with land but without work-stock or agricultural implements, was unusually high both before and after the agrarian reform of 1917. Collectivization proceeded most swiftly there prior to the coercive drive of 1929-30. And it was also in these regions that, with the restoration of the voluntary principle in March 1930, the outflow of peasant-

⁽¹³⁾ In most treatments of Cuba's First and Second Agrarian Reforms, no 'pressure from below' is reported. In fact, it was considerable, especially in the relatively brief period between the formal enactment of the First Agrarian Reform Law in May 1959 and its substantial implementation in the second half of 1960. (See, for example, Dr. Felipe Pazos in El Trimestre Económico, Bo. 113, Mexico 1962, pp. 8-9). Even after the expropriation of the 'rural bourgeoisie' in October 1963, murmurs could still be heard for a 'Third' reform what would eliminate surviving 'rich' or even 'middle' peasants who had survived the Second.

households from the collectives was far smaller than elsewhere. (14)

(14) "In the Moscow Industrial Region the percentage of peasant households in collectives on May 1, 1930, was 6.6 per cent, as against 73 per cent on March 1. In the Central Black-soil Region, which was a grain-surplus region, the figure dropped to 15.1 per cent as against 87 per cent on March 1." These figures could be contrasted with the steppe areas of the North Caucasus and of the Ukraine where the percentage of households in collectives in May 1930 was 55.2 and 45.4 respectively. (See V. P. Timoshenko, op.cit., pp. 117-18.) Timoshenko rightly stresses that the prevalence of a system of undiversified grain-farming, with animal husbandry being of secondary importance, greatly facilitated collectivization in the steppes. ("All experiments with collective farming in Soviet Russia have shown that animal husbandry is the most difficult...to collectivize and is the least successful under collectivization." Ibid, p. 105.) However, an extensive, undiversified farming system is commonly a reflection of a highly differentiated agrarian class-structure and in such cases its specific 'technical' characteristics are best not treated as independent variables.