

EKONOMICHESKAIA POLITIKA SOVETSKOGO GOSUDARSTVA V Pervye Gody Sovetskoi Vlasti. By I. B. Berkhin. Moscow: "Nauka," 1970. 238 pp. 37 kopeks.

Unfortunately, the intense interest of historians in the first years of Soviet power has not yielded a clear understanding of Communist economic policies. Some writers have argued that the policies of "war communism" were inspired by the writings of Karl Marx and introduced by Lenin and his supporters in order to fashion a socialist economy. Others have emphasized that these policies were merely stopgap measures taken to deal with problems such as disrupted transportation and production breakdowns, and had little in common with the thought of Marxists before the Revolution. I. B. Berkhin's recent study of the economic policies of "war communism" adds more confusion than substantive analysis to this historiography.

To some extent Berkhin's argument reminds one of the candid Soviet analyses of the 1920s which described both the ideological elements (clearly evident, for example, in the attempt to eliminate commodity production) and the practical concerns that combined to create "war communism." For example, L. N. Kritsman, writing in 1925, defined "war communism" as an "attempt to make the first steps of the transition to socialism," a step which came from the "immanent tendencies of the proletarian revolution" (*Geroicheskii period velikoi russkoi revoliutsii*, p. 94). And the discussion of "war communism" in the first edition of *Bolshaiia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* likewise included mention of socialist motivation. Berkhin illustrates the dual nature of the system by citing Lenin's view that "war communism" was not to be seen only as an extraordinary system of economic policies introduced because of war but was also a means of creating Communist distribution and production; thus certain policies were carried into 1920, after the Red Army had crushed its military opponents. Furthermore, the creation of food cooperatives to hasten and improve the exchange of goods between cities and villages simultaneously averted a crisis and qualified as a transitional step toward socialism (pp. 61–62). And the decree on the nationalization of industry which was passed in June 1918 described this measure as both a solution to industrial dislocation and a means of creating the proper consolidation (*uprochenie*) of the dictatorship of the urban and rural working classes (p. 106). In fact, Berkhin suggests, "only the deep economic and political crisis which the country faced at the beginning of 1921 made it clear to the party, to the state, that the plan for a direct transition to the organization of production and distribution along Communist lines was impractical" (pp. 180–81). In other words, it took a national crisis to force the Soviet government to alter radically its economic policies.

Berkhin also follows the line of more recent Soviet historiography in arguing that "war communism" was not a planned transition to a socialist economy, although he comes up with little if anything to indicate that during the Civil War Lenin declared "war communism" inconsistent with Marxist ideas on economic organization. In the last three chapters, which deal with economic policies between the summer of 1918 and March 1921, Berkhin emphasizes the importance of taking decisive steps to save the Russian economy from total ruin. However, he shows quite clearly that Lenin at all times considered the ideological implications of each policy and that by the summer of 1918 the government was already committed to the consolidation of a socialist economy. In fact, much of what he tells the reader would support the case that ideological considerations were most important. For

example, Berkhin discusses the importance of *State and Revolution* as representing Lenin's idealism during the first few months of Bolshevik power. Lenin was clearly sanguine about the ease with which a socialist economy might be built in Russia, and it seems reasonable to assume that when problems occurred, he looked to socialist remedies to solve them.

Furthermore, Berkhin uses Lenin's remarks as he needs them, failing to point out the contradictions in some of them. For example, he refers to Lenin's statements in March 1921, in which he claimed that "war communism" was both a hasty and unwise attempt to create a socialist economy without the necessary prerequisites and a system created out of need to save both the state and the economy. Unfortunately, Berkhin neither tells how such opposing comments can be reconciled nor shows how one deserves more attention than the other. And finally he dismisses Lenin's opposition with little comment, ignoring (except to condemn) the attitudes of leaders such as Bukharin and Preobrazhensky. This is no minor omission, because both men saw "war communism" as a socialist offensive.

In trying to re-evaluate this period and remain within the party line, Berkhin has left a questionable legacy. His efforts do not meet the period's basic historiographical need for an impartial work which will include a study of the attitudes of Lenin's colleagues toward the new socialist state, the policies on local and regional levels, the cultural milieu, and Lenin's role, and which will enable us to view "war communism" as the product of complex and often contradictory political, social, economic, and cultural processes.

ROBERT J. BURCH

*University of Maine at Farmington*

M. N. POKROVSKII I SOVETSKAIA ISTORICHESKAIA NAUKA. By  
O. D. Sokolov. Moscow: "Mysl'," 1970. 276 pp. 1.06 rubles.

Even those who know little else about him identify Pokrovsky as the author of the formula, "History is nothing but politics projected to the past." Dr. Sokolov demonstrated more than ten years ago that this quotation had been fabricated. Though in the Soviet Union Pokrovsky no longer is quoted in this manner, there are still writers in the West who continue to do so. The Stalinist propaganda was remarkably successful in spreading an image of Pokrovsky as a dogmatic and doctrinaire party ideologist, uninterested in scholarly history and possibly incapable of writing it. Perhaps the most interesting of the book's five chapters is chapter 2, a biographic sketch, based on a variety of manuscript sources, including Pokrovsky's autobiographic notes. This *dvorianin* in the third generation (son and grandson of state officials and a descendant of a line of Orthodox clergymen), far from being a politician ignorant of historical research, had done his advanced graduate work in Moscow specializing in medieval history. Two long chapters deal with Pokrovsky's writings and ideas on history in a generally reliable, informative, and sympathetic manner. However, one must question Sokolov's decision not to review Pokrovsky's works devoted to general European history. Pokrovsky's basic perspective was international. He compared Russian developments with analogous processes elsewhere; more important, he perceived the Russian historical process as one that was part of a larger whole transcending national boundaries.

As a genuine internationalist, Pokrovsky judged the policies of his own country by standards applied to others. He presented Russia's foreign policies, territorial expansion, and colonial rule in the Caucasus and Central Asia as detrimental to the