

FAMINE IN RUSSIA 1891–1892. By *Richard G. Robbins, Jr.* New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. xiv, 262 pp. \$12.50.

This is a history and an assessment of the functioning of the various echelons of government of tsarist Russia in a period of crisis. The story centers upon the interrelationships of the departments of the imperial government, the role of *guberniia* institutions, and, at the local level, the efforts of the zemstvos, land captains, and charitable committees to confront the problem of famine as it became increasingly acute. The introductory chapters outline the general condition of Russian agriculture as it developed in the years following the emancipation and give the reader a background on the means that had been used historically to deal with famine.

The sixth chapter, "The Railroad Crisis," is an occasionally gripping account of the efforts to transport what was an apparently adequate supply of grain from food surplus areas to food deficit areas. It is here that the reader comes to understand the economic components of the problem and that it was an inefficient transportation system and the absence of a national system of storage elevators which were the most important elements in this tragic tale.

The efforts of the government receive favorable evaluation; it possessed both the resolve and the strength to mobilize resources to confront the crisis. The political and administrative problem the crisis revealed, however, was portentous: "the weakness of the Russian famine relief operations was directly related to the general inadequacy of local administration, especially the absence of firm institutional links with the peasant world" (p. 179).

The reader would do well to pay close heed to the fifty pages of footnotes contained at the end of the text, for they contain much that is informative. Those who are not familiar with Russian may experience some confusion and frustration, for Russian terms are used quite liberally without benefit of a glossary and sometimes without adequate explanation.

This is a well-written and thoroughly researched and documented piece of work. With the insights that Robbins provides on the functioning of the government and its relation to society, the events of the succeeding turbulent decades seem somehow less shocking.

FRANCIS M. WATTERS  
*California State University, Chico*

BUKHARIN AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY, 1888–1938. By *Stephen F. Cohen.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973. xl, 495 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$3.95, paper.

"World history is a world court of judgment" spoke Bukharin shortly before his execution by Stalin in March 1938. Stephen Cohen's superb book on the life, politics, and writings of Nikolai Bukharin will long be regarded as the outstanding contribution to the historical judgment of this Bolshevik's important place in the Party, the revolution, and the first decades of the Soviet Union. Bukharin's role has long been overshadowed by the calumnious cacophony of Leninism-Stalinism, the publicity accorded to Trotskyism, and the silence accorded to "unpersons" in Soviet historiography. This richly documented scholarly work—cited as one of the

“outstanding studies on the history of the Soviet Union of the past 25 years”—goes a long way toward righting our historical neglect.

Professor Cohen has brought together a wealth of information from Soviet and Western sources into a well-drawn portrait that shows Bukharin to be one of Lenin’s closest collaborators, a major figure in Moscow during the revolution, the outstanding Bolshevik-Marxist theoretician of his time, and the principal architect of Lenin’s plans for the NEP. In the mid-twenties he was more than just another economist debating industrialization strategy; he was a major political figure who shared with Stalin alone the spot of *primus inter pares* of the Party. Here then was a personality in Soviet life whose influence (Bukharinism) ran so deep that after almost a decade of repression the threat of his ideas to Stalin could only be ended by his execution. And even today in the Soviet Union, almost four decades later, open discussion of Bukharin is still prohibited.

This well-written political biography proceeds along several distinct but interrelated levels. On one level Cohen analyzes the development and impact of Bukharin’s economic and social theories. Chapters 1–4, in particular, offer a much appreciated introduction to his major works such as *Economic Theory of the Leisure Class*, *Historical Materialism*, and the popular *ABC’s of Communism*. Of particular note is the author’s analysis of Bukharin’s evolution from an enthusiastic supporter of administrative War Communism, heroic-revolutionary change, and confiscatory peasant policies into the leading advocate of the NEP and the *smychka* (alliance) between peasant and worker, Soviet law and order, and evolutionary socialism. Through this great shift, however, are found common threads of intellectual breadth, an un-Marxist sense of ethics, and a deep devotion to Marxism, the Party, and Russia.

At another level Bukharin’s political role is traced from his early student radical days in Moscow after the 1905 Revolution through his emergence as a leading political figure of the 1920s. Even after his downfall in 1929, his role as a symbol of moderation and his irrepressible popularity had political significance. Bukharinism, not Trotskyism, posed the challenge to Stalinism in the mid-1930s. At still a third level we are shown how his outgoing, warm personality, his wide intellectual interests, extending from natural history to painting, his personal distaste for repression, and his tolerance for diversity made him, in Lenin’s words, “the favorite of the whole Party”—a popular and widely respected Leninist leader.

Economists and historians will appreciate Cohen’s careful development of Bukharin’s economic theory and its roots, for Bukharin was a Marxist economist seeking a socialist path to the industrialization of a backward agrarian economy. Theory was important to him and often stood at the core of his policies, which in turn determined his political alliances. (In fact his stubborn confidence in his theories led him occasionally to oppose even Lenin.) When the awaited “international revolution” did not occur, Bukharin sought a new “Marxist” explanation for a socialist revolution in peasant Russia. He discovered that the peasantry also constituted a “revolutionary class” along with the proletariat. Bolshevism’s historical tasks, he believed, were to guide both classes along a peaceful evolutionary path to socialism and to industrialize Russia without capitalism’s exploitation of the peasantry. Building on Lenin’s last writings, Bukharin viewed the *smychka*, market exchange between industry and agriculture, and balanced growth to be the economic keystones of the NEP. Thus the Left’s policies, based on the “law of

primitive socialist accumulation" from the peasantry, on ambitious investment plans, and on greater state control, were seen as direct threats to the foundations of the NEP. This bitter programmatic disagreement with the Left eventually led Bukharin to side with the harshly ambitious Stalin, and then to participate in the expulsion of the Left under the banner of Party unity (Bukharin's "worst moment"). A strong case has been made that under other leadership (namely, Bukharin's) Russia might well have traveled toward a more open, creative, and pluralistic socialist society based on a centrally-guided but nevertheless market economy. Indeed, the NEP—often regarded as the golden age of Soviet arts, economic innovation, and scientific progress—was well on its way to becoming such a society.

The NEP perished with the defeat of the Right in 1928–30. The high drama of these momentous events has been captured well in this analysis. At the end of 1927 the political power of Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomskii appeared formidable—government, trade unions, press, popularity, and high Party positions—but ephemeral! Several factors appear to have been central to Bukharin's defeat. By adhering to the Party's ban on factionalism and by not taking the dispute to the Party and people, the Right passed over the weapon most feared by Stalin. They ended up being "strangled behind the back of the Party." Bukharin is shown as an inept politician, one who miscounted Politburo votes, fought too late and in the the wrong arena, and relied too much on his persuasiveness and the Party's conscience.

Bukharin's economic policies had their weaknesses too, and the economy had come to an apparent impasse. Stalin's own administrative solutions were presented as a bold continuation of the NEP and he denounced the existing Bukharinist policies as Right deviation. While Stalin's approach to the grain problem and industrialization raised the specter of mass peasant violence (as Bukharin often warned), its revolutionary-heroic nature, it is suggested, appealed to independent Party leaders more than Bukharin's evolutionary policies. Issues as well as intrigue defeated Bukharin.

For the period 1930–38 Cohen addresses the question of Bukharin's apparent cooperation with the Stalinist regime. The analysis, necessarily resting on sparser evidence, reveals a Bukharin not at all reconciled to the policies of Stalin's repressive dictatorship, which he regarded to be akin to fascism. Rather, here was a Bolshevik forced to choose between the complete silence surely attendant upon open opposition and an Aesopian advocacy conducted within the narrow freedoms offered by his apparent acquiescence. Much of his activity during the thirties must be interpreted in this vein. The high point of Bukharin's Aesopian opposition occurred at his show trial in 1938. Cohen effectively dismantles the Rubashov image (in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*) of a Bukharin who, convinced of its necessity for the Party, confesses to crimes he never committed. Instead we see a Bukharin who, by confessing to everything, admits nothing. With double talk and code words he pleaded for unity against Hitler's fascism and denounced Stalin's policies for the last time. Many, but not all, saw that Bukharin's testimony was his final act of opposition. Those who read Cohen's analysis will not come away unpersuaded.

In sum, this detailed study of one man—Bukharin—has yielded a greater understanding of Soviet history as a whole, and it provides invaluable new perspectives for future research. The book's minor shortcomings, such as in the

choice and sparseness of supporting economic data, are dwarfed by its many contributions. This exciting and important work is highly commended not only to scholars but to all interested in the origins of the Soviet system, in modern socialism, and in Bukharin's place in world history.

MICHAEL R. DOHAN  
*Queens College, CUNY*

HERBERT HOOVER AND FAMINE RELIEF TO SOVIET RUSSIA: 1921-1923. By *Benjamin M. Weissman*. Hoover Institution Publications, 134. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1974. xv, 247 pp. \$7.95.

Like the businessmen's détente of today, the Hoover relief during the Russian famine of 1921-23 was an initiative following a period of hostility in Soviet-American relations from which great consequences were anticipated. Thus Benjamin Weissman's well-researched case study of a neglected subject is particularly timely and interesting. The focus of the study is the American Relief Administration as an organization; its dealings with Bolshevik leaders; its role in American as well as Soviet politics; its motives, which were Hoover's; and its impact on the Soviet Union. The purpose of the study is to explain how it was that a limited, albeit significant, venture in cooperation did not (and perhaps can not) end Soviet-American hostility.

The author's thesis is that "initial agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States on the desirability of a goal has never meant the end of political contention but only its transfer to another level." The cause of this is mutually conflicting expectations grounded in ideology. Weissman argues that Lenin may have believed that Hoover, because he was a capitalist kingpin with the dual role of secretary of commerce and head of the ARA, was ultimately seeking markets and profit in Russia. Thus, allowing the ARA to alleviate famine in Russia would pave the way for recognition and trade. Hoover apparently believed that, because Bolshevism was utterly irrational as an economic system and therefore incapable of long-term stability, the presence of the ARA would hasten Bolshevism's demise by demonstrating capitalist efficiency and good will to the Russian people. Both perceptions were wrong. George Kennan's comment that "both sides got basically what they most wanted" does, as the author says, "leave much to be explored," but the explorations tend ultimately to support Kennan's summation. As Hoover wished, millions of Russians were fed efficiently by the ARA. As the Bolsheviks wished, averting even more drastic famine helped stabilize Bolshevik rule. But while limited cooperation proved workable, the hostility endured.

One paradoxical result of the relief mission, more suggested than discussed by the author, was the effect of the demonstration of capitalist efficiency on the Bolsheviks themselves. The ARA was the very model of democratic centralism, more unified and better organized than the Bolshevik leadership. The ARA demanded and successfully negotiated autonomy within prescribed nonpolitical limits. ARA men in Russia were both effective and loyal to "the Chief" in Washington, whose directives were binding on the organization. The impact of the ARA may help to explain the penultimate sentence of Stalin's *Foundations of Leninism* (1924): "the combination of Russian revolutionary sweep with American efficiency is the essence of Leninism in party and state work."