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THE SOVIET UNION PARTY AND SOCIETY

This collection is derived from the *Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies*, and provides an up-to-date and comprehensive survey of contemporary Soviet political and economic problems. It concentrates upon three major themes; the Soviet party *apparat*, socialization and political discourse, and social policy, all which have been the subject of considerable and at times confusing fluctuations during the past decade.

The first section focuses on party organization within the Soviet ministries, and examines the changes within the elite during the last years of Brezhnev's rule. In Part 2 the emphasis is upon processes of political socialization, and the nature of political language in the Soviet Union, whilst in the concluding part the contributors examine the mechanism and impact of social policy, and its ethnic and nationalist implications.

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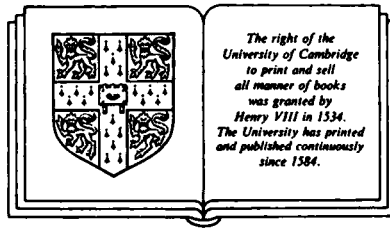
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Foreword

The articles selected for publication in this volume were chosen from among those presented at the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies held in Washington, DC, from 30 October to 4 November 1985. The Congress, which was sponsored by the International Committee for Soviet and East European Studies and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, attracted over 3,000 scholars from forty-one countries. This figure represents a two-fold increase over the number of delegates who attended either the First Congress in Banff, Canada, in 1974 or the Second Congress in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1980 and reflects the revival of Slavic studies throughout the world.

More than 600 papers were formally presented or distributed at the Washington Congress. From among the substantial number submitted for possible publication in this series, the Editorial Committee has selected one hundred and sixty to appear in fifteen volumes. Five volumes are being published in the social sciences: three by Cambridge University Press and two by Lynne Rienner Publishers. Five volumes devoted to history and literature are being published by Slavica Publishers while the remaining five in education, law, library science, linguistics and Slovene studies are appearing as part of established series or as special issues of scholarly journals. The titles of all these publications will be found at the end of this volume.

As general editor for the Third Congress I should like to express my sincere appreciation to Donald W. Treadgold, the program chairman, and Dorothy Atkinson, executive director of the AAASS, who were responsible for the efficient organization of the Washington Congress; to Oskar Anweiler and Alexander Dallin, the past and current presidents of the International Committee, for encouraging the publication of these proceedings; and to Roger Kanet, the general editor for the first two Congresses, whose advice has been invaluable to his successor.

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Thanks also are owing to the Congress participants who submitted their papers for consideration, to the Editorial Committee that selected those to be published, and to the editors of the various volumes.

R. C. Elwood
General Editor

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Preface

The essays presented here were originally prepared for delivery at the Third World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies in Washington, DC, in the fall of 1985. They touch on various aspects of Soviet domestic politics.

One of the most significant developments in the USSR in the early 1980s has been the extent to which the Soviet political and economic system had to adjust to the requirements and demands of the present-day world.

In Western literature the period after the death of Brezhnev is quite often referred to as the transition period or simply as the period of modernization, in which an attempt is made to adapt traditional principles, such as integrated economic and social planning and centralized political control, to drastically changing scientific-technical and socioeconomic conditions. This process of change is particularly marked in the political sphere, characterized by rejuvenation among the Soviet elite and political cadres. But by no means is it limited to the political elite.

Special interests are well entrenched in many party and state organizations in the center, as well as in the localities. These bureaucratic interests are engaged in competition and debate over the structure, operation and performance of the Soviet economy and society.

Some of the ongoing adjustments in the system are therefore preceded by an extensive discussion in various Soviet publications and involve not only the party and government officials but also, depending on circumstances, a varying and continuously growing number of specialists. This strongly felt need for a thorough review of, for example, the legal basis that regulates various areas of social and economic life is clearly documented by a number of essays in this book.

In order to highlight these concerns, the volume has been organized into three sections: the party apparatus; socialization and political

discourse; and the social policy. The essays, with some exceptions, tend to fall naturally into the above categories.

Ronald J. Hill in his article explores the role of the *apparatchiki* in the development of the Soviet system. He argues that the officials who were chosen to perform certain tasks at a particular stage of socio-economic development and trained in the use of a range of techniques deemed appropriate at the time, "became an obstacle to the development of the political system in the direction to which successive leaders have declared their commitment."

Stephen Fortescue is also concerned with the party. He is, however, primarily interested in the controls that the party exercises over the "sectional interests." The main focus of his study is on the role of the primary party organizations (PPOs) of branch ministries. It is the author's view that sectional interests continue to play an important role in the Soviet system and therefore, the local organs of the party have now, and will continue to play, a very important role.

Barbara A. Chotiner examines the new institutional arrangements that came into being as a result of the Food Program which was enacted by the CPSU Central Committee Plenum of May 1982. These new institutions, known as the Raion agro-industrial associations (*Raionnye agro-promyshlennye organizatii* – RAPOs) were given the task of harmonizing the activities of collective and state farms and of other enterprises involved in farm operations.

Her conclusion is that despite the avowed intentions the RAPOs did not develop, at least by 1984, into independent, effective organs of local administration, primarily as a result of over-zealous party supervision. She is, therefore, less than optimistic about the nature and efficacy of the economic reform in the USSR.

The next section of the book which deals with socialization and political discourse contains five essays.

Stephen White analyzes the shortcomings in ideological work, the attempts that have been made to modify them and the limited success that accompanied these measures in recent years. The persistence of such shortcomings in his view suggests that there are "limits to reform" in this as in other spheres of party activity. He concludes that "only when there have been significant changes for the better in Soviet daily life . . . will it be possible for significant changes to occur in the patterns of political belief and behavior."

Michael E. Urban and Alexandre Bourmeyster are primarily concerned with the political language and its relationship to political change. Employing the method of semiotics, both authors, in their own special way, focus on the analysis of the language itself and not on the policy statements contained therein. From this perspective the change

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would be understood as a change in the structure and, therefore, in the meaning of political language. As Urban puts it rather succinctly “if changes in Soviet political language reflect the result of a political struggle over language, they can also react back on the world of politics, influencing through language the results of other struggles about social life and the rules by which it is to be governed.”

Michael Bruchis also deals with language but from a different perspective. He examines the Soviet socio-political terminology from the point of view of the nationality policy of the CPSU. He concludes that while the Kremlin rulers do all they can to accelerate the denationalization of the country’s non-Russian population, “they have decided to maintain that the non-Russian peoples and their national statehood are flourishing.” Those specialists whose task it is to reconcile the Marxist–Leninist theory with the aims of contemporary Soviet leadership face a difficult problem because of the programmatic statements which are in clear contradiction with real life. There are those Soviet scholars, however, who are guided by the letter and not the spirit of party documents and continue to expound the views which are not acceptable to the party. The result is a terminological incongruity which is quite confusing to those Western scholars who are interested in the nationality question in the USSR.

The last author in this section, Jeffrey W. Hahn, surveys the evolution of local Soviets by discussing the elaborate theoretical and legal foundation and not unlike Michael Bruchis comes to the conclusion that there continues to exist a gap “between what the law permits and the party publicly encourages and what people do.” According to the author, this is not at all surprising because as the history of Russia teaches us “the legislative expressions of democratic principles have largely remained the registration of aspirations rather than an accomplished fact.” Moreover, this situation is apt to continue because “it takes a long time to change a culture.”

The last part of the volume contains five contributions, three of which deal with various aspects of social policy and the other two of which are devoted to Russian nationalism and the various approaches to the study of the Soviet nationality question.

J. L. Porket contends that since in the Soviet Union full employment is economically irrational, it has therefore a “pronounced social dimension which arises from the nature of command socialism, the regime’s policies, and the vested interests of individual role players,” as well as “adverse, economic, behavioral and attitudinal consequences.” This in turn raises the question of social deprivation and of official and unofficial response to it. The author argues that social deprivation (a perceived gap between expectations and reality) is a result in large

measure of “the official ideology, legal norms and the Party leadership promises” which emphasize the image of the state “as a universal provider,” and fix “the image of an entitlement society” as an important trait of popular culture. But the regime is unable to meet popular expectations and therefore must tolerate “non-political deviant behavior and the second economy,” the activities which “contribute significantly to the running and maintenance of the established political and economic system and alleviate social deprivation.” Any attempt by the regime to reduce popular expectations noticeably would have adverse consequences.

Bernice Madison analyzes the Soviet social security system in all its legal and administrative complexity. One of her more interesting findings is that there exist differing interpretations of the definition and scope of social security, some of which stem from the ideological or sectional interests that exist in society. Thus, for example, a “narrow” concept limits social security to pensions for the aged and unable-to-work, while the “broad” approach defines it as the regulation of a wide range of social relations of an obligatory, material character that include in addition to pensions also grants for mothers and children and free medical care for all. Thus, a broad definition is a more inclusive concept and not limited merely to social insurance.

Madison feels that the provisions of the 1977 Constitution, although based on the narrow concept of social security, nevertheless have “the potential for transferring the administration of social security into a more ‘democratic’ management environment by providing access to a court system which promises a more objective and legally correct review of appeals and disputes, and by holding officials at all levels responsible for breaking the law or overstepping their authority, thereby improving the rights of their clients”. But while potential for improvements seems to be at hand, its implementation will probably face many obstacles and delays.

Shalvia Ben-Barak in her essay advances various reasons for the high number of multiple abortions in the USSR and comes to the conclusion that “abortion is in fact regarded by many people . . . not as a *result* of failed contraception but as a major *means* of contraception.” She feels, therefore, that “sooner or later, the linear connection between the high rate of infant mortality and miscarriage . . . must oblige the Soviet authorities to invest seriously in producing or importing enough effective and safe modern contraceptive devices as an integral part of their pronatalist policy.” The high rate of abortion, in her view, is not only an indicator of policy or lack of it, but also of the status of Soviet women within the family and society at large.

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The last two papers in this section deal with some aspects of the nationality problem in the USSR.

Victor Zaslavsky is of the opinion that ethnic relations in Soviet society are quite stable and therefore he asks the question, what will perpetuate this condition of stability and what might actually disrupt it? Although he avoids answering this query he feels that the existing models for the analysis of Soviet multicultural society are inadequate because they do not recognize two basic characteristics of the system: "the decisive role of the state in the creation of the system of social stratification and the impact of the long program of de-ethnicization of the population through a process of 'sovietization'."

Peter J. S. Duncan, on the other hand, emphasizes the potential for instability of Soviet ethnic relations because of the increase in nationalist feeling and activity not only among the non-Russians but especially among the Russian half of the population of the USSR. Having surveyed the various legal manifestations of Russian nationalist feeling the author concludes that "Russian nationalism continues to be an important force in the USSR," but that "it is not, however, a united force." There are those who are proponents of a strong state and look back with nostalgia to the Stalin era, while others deplore the destruction of that period. "Some are sympathetic to Orthodoxy, others indifferent or hostile."

The author feels that Russian nationalism, although tolerated and even supported by party leaders, cannot be fully embraced by them. As the author points out, "even if the link between Russian nationalism and Orthodoxy could be severed, the link between Russian nationalism and non-Russian nationalism could not." On the other hand, since politicians do not always act in their own best interests, the intensity of support for Russian nationalism that already exists (as indicated by Michael Bruchis) and the lengthy process of "sovietization" (as emphasized by Zaslavsky) may allow "the Russian core of the political elite at some point in the future [to] succumb to Russian nationalist ideas."

Altogether, these essays offer some important insights into the basic issues of political change and development which confront the Soviet leadership today and will continue to do so in the years to come.

I would like to express my thanks to Liz Denesiuk, Mara Minini and Gail Jackson for help with often illegible texts, to McMaster University for its support, and to Carmen Mongillo and Sheila McEnergy of Cambridge University Press.

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