

EDITED

BY

ALEXANDER DALLIN

AND

CONDOLEEZZA RICE

THE GORBACHEV ERA

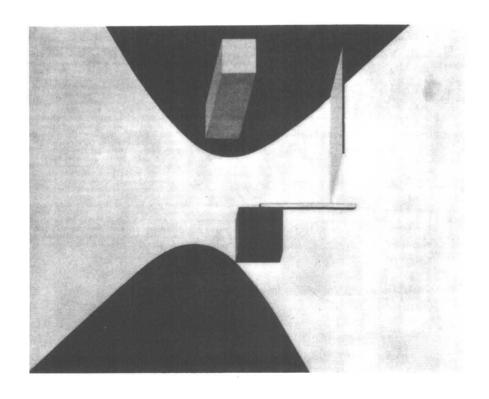
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PREFACE

hen the Stanford Alumni Association first asked us to develop a series of lectures on the Soviet Union, Konstantin Chernenko was General Secretary of the Communist Party, Dmitri Ustinov was Minister of Defense, and Andrei Gromyko was Foreign Minister. These were people who had occupied leadership positions in the Soviet Union for a generation or more. One of our first thoughts was how to handle the imminent succession and the problems and opportunities it was bound to create. The Kremlin leadership had changed hands twice in two years, and specialists on the Soviet Union were playing a waiting game in anticipation of Chernenko's demise.

By the time the lectures on which the essays in this book are based were presented, all three men were out of power: Chernenko and Ustinov were dead, and Gromyko had been "promoted" to a largely ceremonial post in the Soviet government. The long-awaited generational shift was finally well under way. Suffice it to note that Mikhail Gorbachev, the new General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had been a Party member for only four years when Gromyko became Foreign Minister. As of the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, the average age of the Politburo's members is almost fifteen years less than that of its predecessors.

This is therefore a propitious and an important time to take a look at the Soviet Union with fresh eyes. We have become accustomed to seeing in Moscow an overly bureaucratized and slow moving government run by elderly men. Those men are now gone. Whether this portends rapid or moderate change—significant or cosmetic—or a mere reshuffling to be followed by business as usual remains to be seen. Change, moreover, need not mean change for the better—either for the Soviet population or for us. A different Soviet Union will not necessarily be more humane at home or less troublesome abroad. But we know that the new Soviet leadership believes that change must come to the Soviet Union. Of course, this will be a change within the system and not a change of the Soviet system; this in itself, however, is no reason to dismiss it in advance as insignificant.

In first drawing up and now tackling the agenda for change, Gorbachev faces a formidable accumulation of problems that are bound to tax his and his associates' seemingly boundless energy and professed willingness to innovate. Economic stagnation, along with widespread inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption, and a lack of incentives to do better-all these threaten not only economic growth but perhaps also the Soviet Union's social and military well-being. There are simply not enough resources to allocate for investment, consumption, and defense at levels that would satisfy the experts, the politicians, and the diverse interests in Soviet politics and society. No doubt structural and operational reforms within an economic and administrative system whose origin was in the breakneck industrialization drive of the 1930s are needed to make better use of human. managerial, and natural resources, and to take advantage of the technological revolution that has already occurred in the West and in Japan. Yet inertia and the new leadership's fear of change and destabilization stand in the way of change, and there are difficult technical problems and political choices to be made. Chief among the trade-offs is the risk that greater initiative and flexibility in the system through decentralization might well come only at the expense of political control.

There have also been hints of a crisis of confidence in Soviet society. Youth, even when loyal, often lack enthusiasm and dedication; the creative artist once again tends to assume the role of a subtle critic; alcoholism and labor discipline are only two among many salient problems; and the Party appears to lack real answers—other than tired stereotypes—for the many questions it needs to face.

These domestic problems have come to the fore at a time when there are new challenges to Soviet power abroad. Thirty years ago the Soviet Union was a regional power; today, as one of two global superpowers, it is struggling to hang on to its central role in world affairs. It is faced with a renewed military and technological challenge from the United States at a time when economic stringency might dictate a course of less intensive devotion of resources to its weapons program.

Eastern Europe, the backbone of the Soviet security system, is a source of continual concern, with troubling—though very different—tensions in Poland and Czechoslovakia and increasingly independent regimes in Hungary and Romania. To a Soviet leadership presently bogged down in guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan the gains of "socialism," Soviet-style, in the Third World must also appear less solid, less worthwhile, and more costly than they did just ten years ago. And the superpower relationship—at least until the "summit" at Geneva—continues to be uncertain at best.

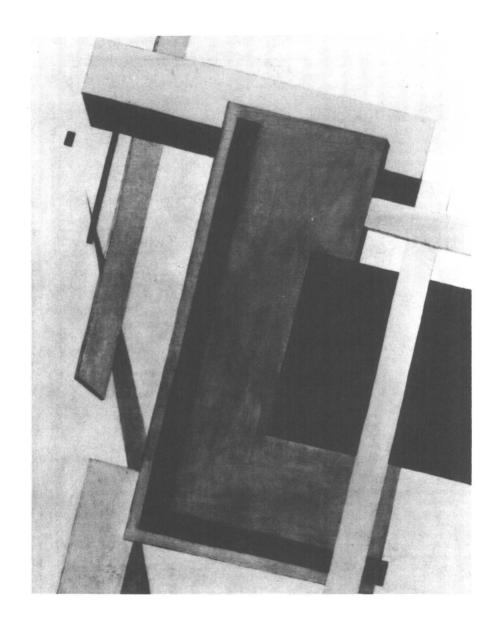
We have tried in this series of essays to discuss some of the key dimensions of the Soviet Union and the problems on its agenda. It is important that we neither brush off these problems as trivial nor assume that they are so severe that the system is on the verge of collapse. This book, based on a limited number of lectures, does not pretend to offer a comprehensive treatment. A number of topics—for instance, the role of religion, the place of important institutions such as the KGB (Secret Police), and Gosplan (State Planning Commission), and many aspects of foreign affairs—are not systematically discussed. But we believe that the issues covered here are central to an understanding of the Soviet Union today.

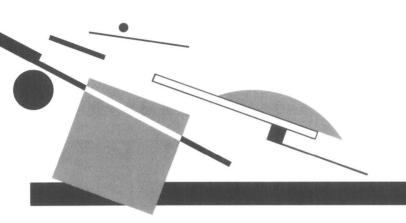
We do not attempt to predict but rather seek to describe, as clearly and simply as we can, the setting, the leadership, the economy, the society, the military, as well as such outstanding issues as arms control, the nationalities, and the Soviet alliance system. Taken together, these lectures should provide the background for a better understanding of the fascinating events that are likely to take place in the Soviet Union in the years to come. That was our intention when we planned the lectures that brought our authors together, in the summer of 1985, for the Stanford Summer College. We were fortunate in securing the participation of some of the most able and best informed specialists on the Soviet Union. The response to their lectures encouraged us to offer them in this form to a wider public. We have intentionally kept

them in the style in which they were delivered, without requiring scholarly documentation, cross-references, or cautionary reservations at every step.

The Editors

Stanford, California January 1986





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IALEXANDER DALLIN

nvironment and heredity: Each has played a part in shaping the present Soviet Union. And since all the essays that follow deal with the present environment, let us here take a brief look at the impact of heredity—the legacy of the past.

What we want to know, in effect, is (in the nonsensical

What we want to know, in effect, is (in the nonsensical words of a book title of some years ago), "Why they behave like Russians." We can make mercifully short shrift of some of the many "explanations" that have been proposed. Some writers have attributed all that is characteristically Russian to the climate and geography. But the simple fact is that North America has plains as vast, and Canada has long stretches as cold and forbidding, as Russia's. Yet neither has generated the same kind of political system or attitudes that we find in the USSR. Let's beware of simple answers.

There used to be another theory that, in their attitudes toward authority, Russians were perenially torn between submission and anarchy. At one time anthropologists like Geoffrey Gorer took this very seriously, attributing it all to the tight swaddling of Russian babies, and thus giving rise to a theory dismissed by its detractors as "diaperology." I recall that in the fifties one of our more prominent colleagues, then still a mere graduate student at Harvard, used to recite a little verse:

"Little Ivan, swaddled tight, Can't turn left and can't turn right. Hence the mighty Russian nation Tolerates no deviation."

This was not only terrible poetry but also poor social science. It turned out that other scholars had found the same tension between obedience and revolt in Ireland and Mexico, in Bengal India and in Spain, and in many other places where there is no swaddling.

There are plenty of other pet theories offered as master keys to Soviet belief and behavior. Among these, history is bound to have a central place: the image of the Soviet system as a product of Russia's past. What about it?

We are all captives of our past, real or imaginary; all peoples live by myths and collective memories, accurate or inaccurate. That is true of the Soviet Union too, but which past, in fact, are we talking about? One visitor came back from the Soviet Union with the astute observation that the country was living simultaneously in every century from the thirteenth to the twenty-first.

A friend tells of driving by the National Archives in Washington one day and asking the taxi driver what the inscription over its portals. "The past is prologue," meant. "Mister," the cabbie replied, "that means, 'You ain't seen nothin' yet." What then does the prologue say to us? Historians divide. There are those who will tell us of a thousand years of Muscovite autocracy, serfdom, poverty, brutality, and backwardness in Russia; the influence of the Byzantine tradition on the Russian church; and the impact of the Mongols and Tatars on the lives and institutions of the peoples of Russia when they ruled the Eurasian plain. They will stress the failure of Russia to experience the Renaissance and the Reformation; they'll recount the precedents that Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great ostensibly provided for Comrade Dzhugashvili, whom we know as Joseph Stalin; they'll recite the lack of individual freedoms and civil rights; they'll document the frequent hostility of Russians to foreigners; and they will stress the centuries of uncomprehending polarization between rulers and ruled. And most of this is quite true.

And then we ask ourselves what we know of the Soviet Union. We remember the beautiful pictures of the Russian countryside and the old churches and estates. We think of the Russian ballet and its tradition, from *Swan Lake* to *Spartacus*; we recall the powerful themes

of Russian music, now majestic, now haunting, from Tchaikovsky to Shostakovich; and we lose ourselves in the captivating, interminable novels of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, in the prose and poetry of Russian authors whose subtlety, complexity, sensitivity we had never fathomed—and we realize that there was, there must have been, another Russia than that of the Cossacks on horseback chasing the starving peasants, or of the idle gentry, an ignorant church, and a corrupt police; or a state used to dealing with others only by the use of force. We think of the many times Russia not only attacked but was invaded from abroad, and we wonder to what extent hostility to outsiders was not then a natural thing.

If there was (let us call it) a Slavophile tradition that stressed and cherished the distinctiveness of Russia, there were also the Westernizers who saw salvation in modernization. For every "tradition" we can find a counter-tradition; for every Dostoyevsky there was a Turgeney. And if an anti-Western, authoritarian animus runs like a red thread from Patriarch Nikon through Berdiaev to Solzhenitsyn, the opposite thread links (in fact or in myth and symbol) ancient Novgorod and its popular assembly; liberals like Pavel Miliukov, the Constituent Assembly of 1918, and the saintly Andrei Sakharov. Before the twentieth century, institutionalized pluralism in Russian political life was indeed hard to detect, but the emergence of political parties, partisan newspapers and journals, and the vigorous public life—along with the cultural elan and economic development—toward the end of the monarchy, before World War I, testify to the fact that the gap between Russia and the more developed countries had at last begun to shrink.

Let us remember then that there are strikingly different traditions, even contradictory ones, in the Russian past, which compete for a piece of the present.

other) history. They may be strongest in social and economic history, easiest to trace in regard to popular values and attitudes. Attitudes toward authority and the state are one likely candidate for significant continuity. The almost unquestioning acceptance by many Russians of a powerful centralized state, while far from unique, does contrast sharply with the characteristic American suspicion of regulation, government, and politicians. The role of the state as principal source and instrument of change, as well as its

paternalistic function as dispenser of welfare, almost universally accepted in the Soviet Union (and even by emigrés from the USSR), have their "objective" historical causes. The paucity of voluntary associations, organizations mediating between state and individual, has been remarked upon more than once.

Even if much of this had begun to change before the Revolution of 1917, it is another part of the legacy left to the Bolshevik era. The weakness of individualism, the frailty of representative institutions at the national level, the absence of the values and forms of the rule of law—here are but a few of the prerevolutionary trends that have indeed affected the Soviet era. Undoubtedly prejudices, stereotypes, and customs of all sorts have persisted as well. And there are memories and myths relating to the many foreign invasions and incursions that, in the past, exposed Russia to attack from abroad—and with them goes some popular determination not to let such experiences be repeated.

The question is what weight to attach to such items. The fear of foreign attack can readily be manipulated by unscrupulous leaders. Even if their attribution is valid, many of the traits cited above are by no means unique to Russia. The love/hate attitude toward the "advanced" West is none too different from the ambivalence toward the "First World" found in India, Nigeria, or Japan. Many aspects of the Soviet hostility to "bourgeois" norms and values seem to resemble those found both among the aristocracy and in slums the world over. The personalized attachment to the ruler is a common trait in less developed societies. Autocracy, bureaucracy, red tape, and military necessity have many analogs across time and space.

There are also the conditions under which Lenin & Co. had to function as virtual outlaws under the old regime. These made the acceptance of violence and secrecy second nature, and they reinforced the endemic suspicion of spontaneity, promoting instead the characteristic Bolshevik stress on discipline and organization. There are no doubt other habits and norms that have been perpetuated and internalized by the population. In fact, the Soviet regime in the 1930s and 1940s came to recognize the depth of such attachment to traditional symbols and heroes and worked to capitalize on them, as indeed it succeeded in doing most tellingly during the "Great Fatherland War" (a label Lenin would have scorned), when the victorious prerevolutionary past, from Alexander Nevsky to tsarist field marshals, was again glorified and extolled. Without a doubt, national

pride (along with national insecurity) is a strong and widespread sentiment in the Soviet Union today, and that includes a (selective) identification with the nation's past.

No less important, however, is the fact that many features of the Soviet experience had no prerevolutionary Russian analogs or precedents. Marxism, adapted to Russian conditions by Lenin, was for better or for worse, a product of Western European thought. The federal structure of the Soviet state, the emancipation of women, the destruction of the old propertied classes, the network of closely controlled communist parties abroad, and the renunciation of tsarist treaties and foreign debts were only a few of the many features wherein the Soviet regime differed fundamentally from its tsarist predecessors.

he point is simple: Let us not overdo the determinism of historical continuity. Russia's past need not predetermine its future. Here let me touch on one, somewhat extreme, school of historical and political interpretation which I believe needs to be challenged and set aside. Historians must know not only the uses of history but also its limits. The future can never be assumed to be a replica, or an extrapolation, of the past; if it were, history as a subject of study would indeed be as boring as some of our students allege. To the earlier saying that "history does not repeat itself; historians do," one might add the remark of Sidney Hook that "those who always remember the past often don't know when it's over." One could argue that there is no more validity in historical determinism than in economic or technological determinism; no more in regard to Russia than in respect to other countries.

Let us assume for the moment that the image of Russia as offered in the so-called "hard-line historiography" (the apt term is James Cracraft's) is substantially accurate—essentially, Russian history as the image of a brutal, boorish country, ruled by force and possessed by a relentless drive to expand abroad; combining cunning and suspicion, intolerance and xenophobia.

Whatever the particular traits of a given society, the process of socioeconomic modernization tends to lessen the specific weight and the saliency of traditional culture. "Development" is typically marked by the uprooting of large groups from their traditional environment in the course of wholesale urbanization, and accompanied by a change of occupations and of reference groups, by greater exposure

to mass communications and access to new sources of information, greater interaction with the world abroad, and an attenuation of traditional attachments. If this is so, then we might expect those traditional values and norms, that traditional culture, to have been substantially weakened precisely, and paradoxically, in the process of the transformation that the Soviet regime brought about at such a tremendous cost—one of the many unintended consequences of Soviet rule.

Do we need to invoke the Tatars, the Time of Troubles, Muscovite obscurantists of centuries past, or the "Black Hundred" to understand current Soviet behavior and attitudes? It is generally a sound rule to opt first of all for simplicity in explaining causality rather than for the more devious, remote, complex, or overdetermined alternatives. Indeed, in regard to other societies, this is normally done without much dispute. Who would refer to Savonarola, Cromwell, or Robespierre, to the War of the Roses, or to the Huguenots, if you sought to explain the contemporary behavior of the Italians, British, or French? And while there may well be a traditional component, say, in the Soviet inclination toward "excessive" secrecy, there are also perfectly rational explanations for why Stalin (or his successors) chose to conceal much of what was going on in the USSR from foreign eyes and ears.

All these injunctions together argue that, even if we were to accept the accuracy of the "hard-line" determinists' account of Russian history, we would be well advised to guard against a mindless extrapolation from the past into the future. With a similar deterministic bias, a Parisian in the 1780s—prior to the capture of the Bastille—would have argued that French political culture was absolutist and authoritarian and permitted no republican or democratic traits. Political scientists and journalists writing about Germany and Japan, prior to 1945, did indeed often—and erroneously—deny the possibility of any significant change in political behavior and institutions, given the dominant and presumably persistent political cultures in these two countries. It behooves us then to allow for some doubt and humility in our projections and to beware of erecting a mental wall against the possibility of future change.

ctually there is much to question concerning the factual and analytical accuracy of the version of Russian history propounded by the continuity school. Regrettably, we can touch on only a few relevant points here.