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SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY
1924-1927

A HISTORY OF SOVIET RUSSIA

SOCIALISM
IN ONE COUNTRY
1924-1926

BY
EDWARD HALLETT CARR
FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

*

VOLUME ONE

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PREFACE

THIS present volume, the first of three under the title *Socialism in One Country, 1924-1926*, brings me to the heart of my subject. As I said in the preface to the first volume of *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923*, my ambition was "to write the history, not of the revolution . . . but of the political, social and economic order which emerged from it." The volumes hitherto published have been, in a certain sense, preliminary to this main purpose. While history knows no hard-and-fast frontiers between periods, it is fair to say that the new order resulting from the revolution of 1917 began to take firm shape only in the middle nineteen-twenties. The years 1924-1926 were a critical testing-point, and gave to the revolutionary régime, for good and for evil, its decisive direction.

By way of introduction to this central section, four chapters have been grouped together under the general title "The Background". In the first, I have attempted to define the relation of the revolution to Russian history, which first became clearly apparent in this period (part of this chapter appeared in the volume of *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier* in 1959); in the second, to illustrate the moral and intellectual climate of the period by drawing on peripheral fields neglected in the earlier volumes; in the third, to investigate the obscure and crucial issue of the native forces of the new society; in the fourth, to portray the personal characteristics of some of the principal actors and to indicate the place which they occupy in the story. The remainder of the volume is devoted to the economic history of the period from the spring of 1924 to the spring of 1926. In the second volume, the sixth of the whole series, I shall describe the party struggle leading to the break-up of the triumvirate and to the first defeat of Zinoviev, and the political and constitutional developments of the period. The following volume will deal with external relations.

As always, the most difficult problem of presentation has been that of arrangement. Precedence has been given to the narrative of economic developments: for, though the rivalry between party leaders was the most conspicuous, and superficially the most dramatic, feature of these years, the issues which it took were dependent on basic economic issues. This arrangement, though necessary, has the disadvantage

tha. I have been obliged to touch in this volume on certain aspects of the party struggle and of relations between the party leaders, the main treatment of which is reserved for the next volume. Even within the economic chapters some overlapping could not be avoided. In order to make the material manageable, different sectors of the economy had to be treated separately; yet it was obvious that current problems and current decisions of policy, even if they ostensibly related to one sector, had repercussions on the other sectors. If the chapter on agriculture in this volume is by far the longest, this is no doubt in part a just tribute to the predominance of agriculture in the Soviet economy and in the preoccupations of Soviet politicians. But it is also due in part to the fact that, since this is the first of the economic chapters, issues that cut across all sectors of the economy arise here for the first time, and call for general treatment here rather than later. I must ask indulgence for some repetitions and for a perhaps tedious abundance of cross-references.

The progress of the work has produced, as generally happens, a growing sense of the complexity of the issues with which I am dealing. What I take to be the conventional view of Soviet history in the years after the revolution, i.e. that it was the work of determined men — enlightened pioneers on one view, hardened villains on another — who knew exactly what they wanted and where they were going, seems to me almost wholly misleading. The view commonly expressed that the Bolshevik leaders, or Stalin in particular, were inspired primarily by the desire to perpetuate their rule, is equally inadequate. No doubt every government seeks to retain its authority as long as possible. But the policies pursued were not by any means always those apparently most conducive to the undisturbed exercise of power by those in possession. The situation was so complex, and varied so much from place to place and from group to group of the population, that the task of unravelling the decisive factors in the process has been unusually baffling. This is a field where material is abundant, but often vague and sometimes contradictory, and where I have had few predecessors and few signposts to follow: few specialist studies have yet been written on particular points or aspects of the story. This must be my excuse for cluttering some parts of my narrative with, perhaps, an unnecessary profusion of detail. I have preferred to run the risk of including the superfluous rather than of omitting features which may prove significant when a more complete picture finally emerges.

A lengthy visit to the United States in the winter of 1956-1957 delayed the completion of this volume, but enabled me to obtain much

additional material both for it and for its successor. The Russian Research Center at Harvard offered me generous hospitality and assistance; and it gives me particular pleasure to record my warm appreciation of the help and kindness which I received from Professor William Langer, the director, Mr. Marshall Shulman, the deputy director, as well as from other members of the Center. The Widener Library and the Law Library at Harvard are both rich in Soviet material of the period, and I was privileged to work on the Trotsky archives preserved in the Houghton Library; Professor George Fischer is at present preparing a catalogue of the Trotsky archives, which will make them more readily accessible and facilitate systematic reference to them. In addition to the Harvard libraries I visited the unrivalled collections of the New York Public Library and the Hoover Library at Stanford. I was also able to borrow from the Library of Congress and from Columbia University Library; the Library of Brandeis University (where I lectured during the first semester of my stay) gave me invaluable help in locating books for me and borrowing them on my behalf. I should like to express my warm thanks to the librarians of all these institutions and their staffs. I am particularly indebted to Professor Herbert Marcuse of Brandeis University for stimulating discussions of theoretical problems; to Mrs. Olga Gankin of the Hoover Library for much detailed help and advice in the pursuit of rare sources; to Dr. S. Hertzman for the loan of his unpublished bibliography of Bukharin's writings; and to many other American friends who have given me in many different forms valued assistance and encouragement.

While, however, the final stages of research for this volume were carried out in the United States, the foundations were laid in this country, and it is here that most of the work has been done. Mr. J. C. W. Home and the staff of the Reading Room of the British Museum have once more been unfailingly helpful; and the resources of the Museum have been supplemented by those of the libraries of the London School of Economics, of the School of Slavonic Studies and of the Department of Soviet Institutions in the University of Glasgow. On my return home, Cambridge University Library has a most useful collection, recently supplemented by fresh acquisitions, of microfilms of Soviet documents and periodicals; and the Marshall Library of Economics possesses the copy presented to the late Lord Keynes in Moscow in September 1923 of the extremely rare first *Control Figures of Gosplan* - - the volume described on p. 201 below. The Librarian and Sub-Librarian of Trinity College have earned my special gratitude by the

kindness and patience with which they have met my extensive requests for borrowings from other libraries.

It would prolong this preface intolerably if I were to name all these friends who have in one way or another, by lending me pamphlets or books, by drawing my attention to sources which I had overlooked, or by discussing the problems of the period, provided me with fresh material or fresh stimulus. I hope they will forgive me for acknowledging their generous help in this general and anonymous expression of thanks, which is none the less sincere. I should, however, particularly mention Mr. R. W. Davies, author of a recently published book on *The Soviet Budgetary System*, who has given me help in the financial chapter. Mrs. Degras has once more put me in her debt by undertaking the laborious task of proof-reading; Dr. Rya Neustadt has again rendered indispensable assistance to the reader and to myself by compiling the index; and Miss J. E. Morris bore a major part of the burden of typing this and earlier volumes.

Since I have worked on this volume and its successor more or less simultaneously, the latter is now nearing completion, and should be published next year. The third volume, dealing with external relations, will, if my present hopes and intentions are fulfilled, be substantially briefer than the other two, and should not long be delayed. A bibliography will appear at the end of the third volume.

R. E. CARB

May 28, 1953

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PART I
THE BACKGROUND

THE LEGACY OF HISTORY

THE tension between the opposed principles of continuity and change is the groundwork of history. Nothing in history that seems continuous is exempt from the subtle erosion of inner change; no change, however violent and abrupt in appearance, wholly breaks the continuity between past and present. Great revolutions—the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the French revolution, the Bolshevik revolution—represent this tension in its most acute form. Dramatic turning-points in history, they reflect, and set in motion, new social forces which alter the destinies and the outlook of mankind. Tocqueville, in his classic study of the French revolution, drew attention to the two essential characteristics of revolutionary change—the sudden shock of its impact and its quasi-universal significance:

In the French revolution . . . the mind of man entirely lost its anchorage; it no longer knew what to hold on to or where to stop; revolutionaries of an unknown kind appeared who carried boldness to the point of usury, whom no novelty could surprise, no scruple restrain, and who never flinched before the execution of any purpose. Nor must it be thought that these new beings were the isolated and ephemeral creations of a moment, destined to pass away with it; they have since formed a race which has reproduced and spread itself in all the civilized parts of the world, and which has everywhere retained the same physiognomy, the same passions, the same character.¹

The Bolshevik revolution in no way fell behind its prototype in these respects. Never had the heritage of the past been more sharply, more sweepingly or more provocatively rejected; never had the claim to universality been more uncompromisingly

¹ A. de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution Française*, Book III, ch. II.

asserted; never in any previous revolution had the break in continuity seemed so absolute.

Revolutions do not, however, resolve the tension between change and continuity, but rather heighten it, since the dynamic of revolution stimulates all the forces in play. In the heat of the moment, the desire for change appears to triumph unreservedly over the inclination to conserve. But presently tradition begins to unfold its power as the antidote to change: indeed, tradition is something which remains dormant in eventful times, and of which we become conscious mainly as a force of resistance to change, through contact with some other "tradition" which challenges our own. Thus, in the development of the revolution, the elements of change and continuity fight side by side, now conflicting and now coalescing, until a new and stable synthesis is established. The process may be a matter of a few years or a few generations. But, broadly speaking, the greater the distance in time from the initial impact of the revolution, the more decisively does the principle of continuity reassert itself against the principle of change. This appears to happen in three ways.

In the first place, revolutions, however universal their pretensions and their significance, are made in a specific material environment and by men reared in a specific national tradition. The programme of the revolution must be empirically adapted to the facts of the environment and is limited by those facts; the ideas of the revolution are unconsciously seen and interpreted through the prism of preconceptions moulded both by that environment and by a historical past. The main theme of Tocqueville's study was to show how processes already at work, and measures already taken, under the French monarchy had paved the way for the French revolution, which thus not only interrupted, but continued, the orderly course of French historical development. The Bolshevik revolution of October 1917 was also a Russian revolution, and was made by Marxists who were also Russians. To say that it was a revolution inspired by Marxist doctrine, but realized in a country with a predominantly peasant population and still largely pre-capitalist economy, is merely to indicate the simplest and crudest of the antinomies that had to be resolved in the amalgam of "socialism in one country".

Secondly, the character of the revolution is altered, and

altered to the advantage of the principle of continuity, by the very victory which transforms it from a movement of insurrection into an established government. In certain technical aspects all governments are alike, and stand at the opposite pole of thought and action to revolution: once the revolution has attained its goal and entrenched itself in the seats of authority, a halt has to be called to further revolutionary change, and the principle of continuity automatically reappears. It is, however, a common experience of revolutions that hatred of a particular government tends, in the heat of destructive enthusiasm, to breed hatred of government in general, so that when the victorious revolutionaries face the necessary task of constructing their own government and of making it strong, they incur not only the enmity of the man in the street and the peasant on his farm, to whom all governments look alike, but the criticism of the more hot-headed or more consistent of their supporters, who accuse them of betraying their own ideals and principles and attribute the change of attitude to a process of degeneration or decay. This diagnosis has frequently been applied to the change which came over Christianity when it emerged from its primitive underground stage to assume a position of authority:

Every contact with the secular . . . reacts strongly on the religious. An inward decay is inevitably associated with the rise of its secular power, if only because quite other men come to the fore than at the time of the *ecclesia pressa*.¹

In the French revolution, "the last vices of the monarchy corrupted democracy at its birth";² the absolutism of kings was succeeded by the absolutism of the Jacobins and, later, of an emperor. The victorious leaders of the Russian revolution quickly incurred, from the Russian "Left communists" of March 1918, from Rosa Luxemburg in her German prison, and then from every opposition leader down to and including Trotsky, the charge of establishing a dictatorship in the likeness of the defunct autocracy of the Tsar. The mere act of transforming revolutionary theory and practice into the theory and practice of government involves a compromise which inevitably breaks old links with the revolutionary past and creates new links with a national

¹ J. Burckhardt, *Reflections on History* (Engl. transl. 1943), p. 120.

² A. Hovel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française* (1889), 2, 222-23.

tradition of governmental authority. The paradoxical phrase "revolutionary legality" aptly expressed this dilemma.

Thirdly, the victory of a revolutionary movement, by transforming it into the government of a state, places on it the practical obligation to conduct relations of some kind, whether friendly or hostile, with other states. In other words, it is forced to have a foreign policy; and, since every foreign policy is governed, in part by immutable geographical factors and in part by economic conditions which cannot be changed overnight, it is in this field that continuity with the policy of previous governments is most rapidly and conspicuously asserted. *Raison d'état* is tough enough to emerge unscathed from the revolutionary turmoil. One of the first tasks of the victorious revolution is to effect a working compromise between its professedly universal ideals and the empirically determined national interests of the territory over which it has established its authority. The way in which the French revolution achieved this end has been described by a French diplomatic historian in a famous passage:

The French republicans believe themselves cosmopolitan, but are cosmopolitan only in their speeches: they feel, think, act and interpret their universal ideas and abstract principles in conformity with the traditions of a conquering monarchy which for 800 years has been fashioning France in its image. They identify humanity with their fatherland, their national cause with the cause of all nations. Consequently and quite naturally, they confuse the propagation of the new doctrines with the extension of French power, the emancipation of humanity with the grandeur of the republic, the reign of reason with that of France, the liberation of the peoples with the conquest of states, the European revolution with the domination of the French revolution in Europe. In reality they follow the impulse of the whole of French history. . . . Humanity takes over the title-deeds of the monarchy and claims its rights.¹

The parallel of the Russian revolution is extraordinarily close. While Marxist doctrine pointed to the view that national interests

¹ See pp. 74-75 below.

² A. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française* (1888), 2, 231-232. It is significant that Tocqueville, who became Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1848, and Sorel, the diplomatic historian, are the two outstanding writers who have emphasized most strongly the continuity of the French revolution with previous régimes.

are no more than a cloak for class interests, and while the Bolshevik leaders, absorbed in the vision of a progressively expanding revolution, expected to have no need of a foreign policy, the Brest-Litovsk crisis led to the rapid evolution of a working compromise between the revolutionary programme and the interests of the Soviet state. In defiance of its intentions, the Soviet Government became the wielder and defender of Russian state power, the organizer of what was in all but name a national army, the spokesman of a national foreign policy. Both in the French and in the Russian revolutions, the stimulus of foreign intervention sufficed to revive popular nationalism. In France, masses of ordinary Frenchmen "identified love of France with love of the revolution as they had formerly identified it with love of the king".¹ In Soviet Russia the unenvied beginnings of a "national" foreign policy, and the equally unforeseen strength of the appeal to a tradition of "Russian" patriotism,² were the first and most potent factors which paved the way for a reconciliation with survivors of the old régime and laid the psychological foundations of "socialism in one country".

But, though the analogy of the Russian revolution with the French revolution holds thus far, the tension between the elements of change and continuity in the aftermath of the Russian revolution presented peculiar features. In the French revolution, as in the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the forces in play on either side had worn the same national colour. Though the French revolution quickly assumed an international rôle, the initial impetus, the dominant ideas of the revolution, had come from within the nation itself. The genesis of the Bolshevik revolution was infinitely more complex. While in one aspect it could be said to stem from a native revolutionary tradition which went back to Pugachev, and had been an obsessional theme in Russian politics, thought and literature throughout the nineteenth century, the irruption of Marxism into Russia, like the irruption of Christianity into the Roman empire, meant the acceptance of a creed, claiming indeed universal validity, but carrying the stigma of an alien origin. The direct inspiration of the Bolshevik

¹ *Ibid.* 1, 240.

² For example see *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-22*, Vol. 3, ch. 4 *passim*, and pp. 272-273.

revolution and the basis of its ideology came from western Europe; its principal leaders had spent long years there; their training and outlook were predominantly western. The revolution which they made in Russia was conceived by them not primarily as a Russian revolution, but as the first step in a European or world-wide revolution; as an exclusively Russian phenomenon, it had for them no meaning, no validity and no chance of survival. Hence the re-emergence of the features of the old order, after the revolutionary flood had receded, took the form not merely of the restoration of an earlier ideological and institutional framework, but of a national restoration. The defeated social forces which now re-emerged to make their compromise with the new revolutionary order, and insensibly to modify its course, were also national forces reasserting the validity of a native tradition against the influx of foreign influences. What happened in the aftermath of the revolution, and especially after Lenin's death, had a dual character. Seen in the perspective of the revolution, it represented the familiar reaction of the principle of continuity against the onset of revolutionary change. Seen in the perspective of Russian history, it represented an attempt of the Russian national tradition to reassert itself against the encroachments of the west.

The Bolshevik revolution followed in this respect a pattern firmly set in the process of Russian national development. The problem of Russia's backwardness, which haunted the Bolshevik leaders and was discussed by them in the Marxist terminology of successive bourgeois and socialist revolutions, had long overshadowed Russian policy and Russian thought. The episodes which marked the earlier stages of Russian history -- the rift between eastern and western Christendom, the fall of Constantinople, the Mongol invasion -- were probably less important influences than certain basic geographical and economic factors which maintained and widened the divergences between east and west, and caused Russia's material progress to lag behind that of western Europe. The vast expanse of territory, unbroken by any well-defined geographical features or ethnographical divisions, which went to make the Russian state, the inclement climatic conditions prevailing over the greater part of it, and the

unfavourable distribution of its mineral resources' were the real foundation of Russia's backwardness in comparison with the material development of western Europe. The great distances over which authority had to be organized made state-building in Russia an unusually slow and cumbersome process' and, in the unpropitious environment of the Russian steppe, forms of production and the social relations arising from them lagged far behind those of the more favoured west. And this time-lag, continuing throughout Russian history, created disparities which coloured and determined all Russian relations with the west. The first contacts of the rising Russian state with western Europe, which began on an extensive scale under Ivan the Terrible in the latter part of the sixteenth century, revealed all the disadvantages of Russia's backwardness in face of the west; and these disadvantages were still more conspicuously shown up in the ensuing "period of troubles" and of the Polish invasions. Henceforth the development of state power in Russia proceeded at a forced pace under the watchword of military necessity. The outstanding place occupied by Peter the Great in Russian history is due to his success in building in Russia a power capable of confronting western European countries on comparable, if not equal, terms.

This historical pattern of the development of the Russian state had three important consequences. In the first place, it produced that chronically ambivalent attitude to western Europe which ran through all subsequent Russian thought and policy. It was indispensable to imitate and "catch up with" the west as a means of self-defence against the west; the west was admired and envied as a model, as well as feared and hated as the potential enemy. Secondly, the pattern of development rested on the conception of "revolution from above".¹ Reform came, not through

¹ This point is persuasively argued by A. Bachov in *Evolutionary History Review*, vi, No. 2 (December 1962), pp. 227-230.

² The phrase appears to have been first used by the French liberal journalist Girardin, who, in *Les Piques* of June 15, thus distinguished between two types of revolution: "both these (par on bunt), which is revolution by mistake, by accident, by progress, by error; from above (par en haut), which is revolution by construction, by force, by design, by the decree". Girardin, quoting this passage in *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, remarked on "revolution from above" not only Louis-Napoléon, Napoleon and Charles X, but also King-Sultan, Emperor, Queen, Duke and Louis-Blanc, who favoured the organization of labour "by the state, by capital or by what ministers swear" (*Œuvres complètes de P. G. Girardin* (1836), ix, 21-22).

pressure from below, from an under-privileged class or from oppressed masses, expressing itself in demands for social justice or equality, but through pressure of external crisis, resulting in a belated demand within the ruling group for an efficient authority and for a strong leader to exercise it. Hence reform, which in the west normally led to a curbing and dispersal of state power, meant in Russia a strengthening and concentration of that power. Thirdly, the pattern imposed by these conditions was one, not of orderly progress, but of spasmodic advance by fits and starts — a pattern not of evolution but of intermittent revolution. The function of Peter the Great, succeeding to the unfinished work of Ivan the Terrible, was, within the space of a single lifetime, to transform a medieval into a modern society, and, using European models, to drive his backward and reluctant subjects by forced marches to new tasks in a new world. Progress in Russia thus acquired a spasmodic and episodic character.

In Europe, in most civilized countries [wrote Nicholas Turgenev], institutions have developed by stages; everything that exists there has its source and root in the past: the Middle Ages still serve, more or less, as the basis for everything that constitutes the social, civic and political life of the European States. Russia has had no Middle Ages; everything that is to prosper there must be borrowed from Europe; Russia cannot graft it on her own ancient institutions.⁴

And the same point was made by a western traveller:

Russia alone, belatedly civilized, has been deprived by the impatience of her leaders of the profound fermentation and the benefit of slow natural development. . . . Adolescence, that laborious age when the spirit of man assumes entire responsibility for his independence, has been lost to her. Her princes, especially Peter the Great, counting time for nothing, made her pass violently from childhood to manhood.⁵

Nor was such progress wholly maintained. Peter's death in 1725 was followed by a period of nearly forty years in which weak successors went as far as they dared to nullify his work by transforming it on traditional Russian lines. The stagnation of Yekater

⁴ N. Turgenev, *In Russia et in Europa* (1847), iii, 4.

⁵ Du Cordou, *La Russie en 1717* (Brussels, 1821), iv, 133-34.

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