

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION IN RUSSIA 1905–1907: THE INCEPTION OF THE STOLYPIN REFORM. By *Richard Hennessy*. Osteuropastudien der Hochschulen des Landes Hessen, series 2, Marburger Abhandlungen zur Geschichte und Kultur Osteuropas, vol. 16. Giessen: Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag, 1977. x, 202 pp. DM 38, paper.

Hennessy's study offers some interesting considerations about the role of the peasant land bank in agrarian reform in Russia during 1905–6. I am not aware of any other work that gives as much space to the bank as Hennessy's, and this in itself is not without value. The presentation, however, suffers from a multitude of flaws. The author may be pardoned for not using Soviet archives, but he has missed a rather large quantity of material accessible in the West—Gurko's memoirs, for example, which he lists but apparently did not read. Hennessy has used some printed documents regarding government activities, but all too often he relies uncritically on newspapers for statements that cannot be taken at face value without some support from more reliable materials (for example, p. 119, n. 24).

Hennessy's main conclusion is that the landed gentry dominated the government's rural policy making in 1905–6. In my opinion, it is unfortunate that he tied his account to this old Soviet hymn, because in a number of places his own account transcends its limitations and offers fascinating glimpses of the complexity involved in legislating and implementing even the simplest agrarian reforms. Time and again, however, his insistence on viewing the gentry as a powerful force drags him down. He continually treats them as if they were a single, homogeneous group, though he must know they were not. Moreover, he ignores the contests that were going on within the government administration (plus all the work done by the ministry of internal affairs) in order to set up an absurdly oversimplified account, in which Witte, of all people, struggled against greedy speculators and gentry landholders on behalf of poor peasants.

One should compliment Hennessy for venturing into a study of the financing of land purchases. I myself have never dared to do it, and I hope that Hennessy will someday finish the job and spare the rest of us the pain, for it is certainly an important subject that is not well understood. When he does, however, he should take a closer look at details (without losing sight of the broad area one must cover when explaining rising and falling security prices). Loans to *peasants* were never made at a given interest rate, as he suggests on page 14; mortgage terms prescribed the amount of each payment, not the rate of interest being paid. Moreover, it should also be pointed out that peasants (or anyone) who received mortgage loans secured by land they were buying never even saw the money. Consequently, Hennessy does not need to worry as much as he does about whether the peasants received debentures or cash (p. 94): peasant land purchasers received nothing but land.

To sum up, Hennessy has managed to ask a few interesting questions, despite the constraints of his rigid class interpretation, but he has not yet studied them enough to warrant publishing the results.

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LEON TROTSKY. By *Robert D. Warth*. Twayne's World Leaders Series, 72. Boston: Twayne Publishers, G. K. Hall & Co., 1977. 215 pp. \$8.95.

A biography of so gifted, versatile, important, and controversial a person as L. D. Trotsky, in which the text occupies barely one hundred eighty brief pages, is bound to be sketchy and is likely not to please any scholar. This does not mean, however, that such books might not serve as useful introductions to the general reader, including undergraduate students.

Warth has tried, with considerable success, to cover the highlights. He has also sought to treat Trotsky with scholarly detachment. The latter is probably impossible for a study of a figure who has aroused such passions; and though Trotsky in this book is neither hero nor villain, what ought to be detachment at times reads more like irony. The author's emphasis on character and personality, his effort to bring out Trotsky's humanness, at times amounts to the trivialization of a major historical figure, although at times we are given glimpses of shrewd insight into the differences which personal traits make in revolutionary movements. The reader is left with an image of Trotsky as a brilliant and versatile leader who was totally inept as a party politician and who ultimately was betrayed by ideological blindness as well as fatal flaws in character.

By concentrating on Trotsky's ultimate failure, in my opinion, the author minimizes some of Trotsky's achievements. He slides over his successes as a military commander and plays down the contributions Trotsky seems to have made to Communist theory. He does not even mention the suggestion made some years ago by this reviewer that Trotsky should be seen as one of the principal pioneers of Stalinism.

Having suggested these inadequacies, I hasten to concede that, for its brevity, this must be considered a highly competent work. Since every scholar is likely to criticize it for neglecting his or her pet topics, the various inadequacies probably balance each other. Warth has done well in the amount of space at his disposal. He tells his story in a lively style; the book is easy and pleasant to read. I have discovered only one minor factual error.

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CLASS STRUGGLES IN THE USSR: FIRST PERIOD 1917–1923. By *Charles Bettelheim*. Translated by *Brian Pearce*. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1976 [Paris: Maspéro/Seuil, 1974]. 567 pp. \$18.95.

LES LUTTES DE CLASSES EN URSS: DEUXIÈME PÉRIODE 1923–1930. By *Charles Bettelheim*. Paris: Maspéro/Seuil, 1977. 605 pp. Paper.

In these volumes, Charles Bettelheim, a French Marxist scholar who has written extensively on socialist planning and has studied the Soviet Union since the 1930s, presents an overview and Marxist analysis of Soviet social development (to be continued in subsequent volumes), rather than results of original research. The first volume will contain few surprises for those familiar with Lenin's works and Marxist debate on the period of the Revolution and civil war, although it includes an interesting account of the author's own evolution from enthusiasm for the Soviet experiment, through a somewhat disillusioned phase of "economism," to renewed enthusiasm for the process of revolutionary transformation in Cuba and China.

The second volume, which contains more specific analysis of economic policies and their social and political implications, examines many of the same issues discussed by such Western historians as E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, Alec Nove, Alexander Erlich, Moshe Lewin, and Theodore Shanin. On the peasant question, Bettelheim sees significant class differentiation, but rejects the idea that the drastic policy changes of 1928–29 were made imperative either by a kulak threat or a major economic crisis related to problems of grain procurement. In regard to workers (treated as a relatively undifferentiated group), the author sees dissatisfaction with the increasingly managerial attitudes of industrial management and the party leadership, but concludes that the proletariat remained the party's chief source of social support during the NEP. His analysis of the emerging elite, which has much in common with that of Trotsky and Djilas, emphasizes "bureaucratization" and *embourgeoisement*. The