FOREWORD

This volume is intended to serve Western scholars as a basic reference on the ideological and historical sources of Soviet thought.

In our time the United States and the Soviet Union both look at important problems from the standpoint of the totality of national and worldwide interest. This implies that in an era of fundamental political instability every act of defense—intellectual as well as military—on the part of one nation is interpreted as a potential act of aggression by the other. To reduce misunderstanding, error and miscalculation, a knowledge of the history of ideas of both countries is clearly indispensable.

Since the Second World War, American scholars and statesmen have made increasing efforts to formulate and communicate the concepts underlying the relationships of American democracy to its world environment. This research has been enriched by the continued appearance of private memoirs, freer access to archives, and the excellent work of American scholarship in the study and analysis of these materials. Soviet scholars and statesmen have also made a concentrated effort to analyze and to present the fundamental relationships of Marxist-Leninist thought to its world environment. The present volume contains important contributions to this endeavor.

The essays were written by distinguished Soviet economists. Their exhaustive research has been based on voluminous primary and secondary sources. The history of Russian economic thought from the ninth to the eighteenth century has been thoroughly reappraised. Within the context and limitations of Soviet ideology, the quality of the work is of high order. The reader will discover much new information and interpretation, especially pertaining to the interdependence of early Russian history and economic thought.

The marshaling and treatment of the material indicate that this book was primarily intended for the use of Russian scholars. It reflects the conclusion reached by Soviet economists that previous interpretations of the history of Russian economic thought have seriously underrated the role of Russian conditions and ideas, and have grossly exaggerated the impact of Western ideas on Russian thought. I shall have occasion to appraise these and related issues elsewhere. It should
be noted here, however, that one of the major contributions of this volume to Western readers lies in the insights which it provides into Soviet beliefs regarding past and future world developments. Although a study of these views will not necessarily lead to a more sympathetic understanding of them, it reveals the wide gulf between Soviet and Western social thought. Scholarship can contribute to the bridging of this gulf if, as we assume, it is the responsibility of social scientists to provide the theoretical foundations for social action, rather than the other way round. Assessment of the mutual influence of theory and action is complicated by the awareness of scholars the world over that vested interests and established institutions have ways of generating ideas congenial to themselves. Nevertheless, in a period of serious mixed conflict and cooperation between two civilizations, a knowledge of which issues are at the time fundamentally in conflict and which lend themselves to further cooperation is a primary requisite for the endless process of resolution.

Modern pluralistic societies such as the United States and, to a developing extent, the Soviet Union allow the individual to have allegiances to a variety of interests, groups, and institutions. In this respect they contrast with traditional feudal social structures. With more and freer intellectual interchange and with greater access to the ideas and ideals of other nations, individuals in otherwise conflicting societies can share a growing proportion of these interests and pursuits. Wherever a genuine mutuality of interests exists, the further extension of such interests across national boundaries should promote the achievement of their goals. In this way, preservation of the accomplishments of the human race may be enhanced. It is hoped that the present volume can contribute in a small way to the realization of this objective and that it can serve as a basis for genuine problem-solving rather than mere debate.

In preparing this translation, my collaborators and I often had to choose between a concise style and an accurate rendering of the authors' nuances. We have endeavored to maintain the spirit of the original. Refinement of exposition would at times have called for greater conciseness, but fair representation of the authors' intended emphasis precluded severe economy of words.

As regards transliteration from Cyrillic to Roman characters, we have adhered, with minor exceptions, to the Library of Congress system. Russian terms not readily translatable have been defined in order of appearance and a glossary of unfamiliar expressions has been provided on pp. 637-640. An index (not present in the Russian original) has also been supplied.
Foreword

Although subsequent Russian volumes have appeared, it is not presently our intention to translate them. Our main objective has been to provide English-speaking readers with the flavor of Soviet economic thought and it is hoped that this aim has been achieved by the publication of this volume.

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