

The Economics and Politics of Mass Collectivization Reconsidered: A Review Article

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I

Mass collectivization of Soviet peasant agriculture emerged as official policy in the course of 1929 in response to the continuing state grain procurement crisis of 1928, and by 1934 the process was essentially complete. During these same years the first Five-Year Plan was adopted and the Soviet system of central planning and management acquired its distinctive bureaucratic form. The Soviet economy attained and sustained a relatively rapid rate of growth of industrial production, but agricultural production stagnated quantitatively and regressed qualitatively.

Stalin achieved and maintained political ascendancy over the Party and the other principal bureaucracies of the Soviet state during this period of violent change and turmoil. Viewed historically, the cult of personality (Stalin) represented the culmination of a process beginning in the early 1920's by which ultimate political power passed successively to smaller and smaller circles of Party leadership and was eventually vested in the name of Stalin alone. The forced pace and extent of collectivization, together with the stresses generated by rapid industrialization, narrowed also the base and foreclosed any immediate prospect for popular political rule by the Bolshevik regime. Viewed politically, then, the cult of personality served as a device to ensure minority rule both within and by the Party. Both aspects contributed to the process by which the Soviet Communist Party gradually transformed itself from a radical and diverse social movement into a conservative and narrowly-based establishment of loyal *apparatchiki*. The cult of personality eventually crippled the Party's moral authority, stunted its intellectual vigor, and indurated its Marxist-Leninist roots. Although mitigated somewhat in recent years, the cult of personality has evidently not entirely lost its virulence.

The period running roughly from 1928 through 1933 gave birth therefore to what have come to be regarded as the main defining characteristics of Soviet socialism: rapid but uneven industrialization, collectivized and backward agriculture, and the cult of personality. It is not surprising that, for students of the formation of Soviet political and economic institutions, this second revolution has come to overshadow the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, nor that the figure of Stalin tends to loom larger than that of Lenin. However, what we know about this second revolution, and of Stalin's personal role in it, is at present more the product of historical and theoretical inference than of empirical research. Further, since the facts are scarce and unreliable, ideological bias both within and without the USSR has helped to obfuscate description and appraisal. Fortunately these deficiencies are being remedied, and on the basis of early returns, there is good reason to anticipate substantial revisions in our understanding and evaluation of the "hows" and "whys" of this great upheaval in Soviet history.

Dr. Moshe Lewin's *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power*¹ represents a major contribution to an understanding of the emergence of the policy of mass collectivization during 1928-1929. The book constitutes Lewin's answer to the question: "How, and for what reasons, did the Soviet regime and its leader come to embark on this course [mass collectivization]?"² The explanation Lewin puts forward is persuasive both in its logic and documentation. He especially merits our gratitude for exploiting the results of the renaissance in Soviet contemporary historical research, which began about 1958.³ Lewin's explanation of the decision to collectivize commands attention because he has succeeded so well in collecting, sorting, and assimilating these new data.

¹Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, translated by Irene Nove with the assistance of John Biggart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

²*Ibid.*, p. 516.

³*Ibid.*, p. 11.

Soviet historians (and other scholars) gained increased access to the archives of the Soviet government and/or greater latitude in the publication of their findings. The constraints upon interpretation of what had become historical dogma were also loosened somewhat. Even so, the real "finds" remain frustratingly meager, tantalizingly fragmentary, and scattered over a vast wasteland of publications on collectivization and the Soviet peasantry. The renaissance seems to have been checked somewhat since 1965.

II

The Soviet experience with the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the so-called industrialization debates of the 1920's, together with Stalin's political ambitions and manoeuvring, provide the essential ingredients for an explanation of the evolution of the policy of mass collectivization. More particularly, a persuasive explanation must answer certain crucial questions. What were the basic economic and political issues raised by the NEP, and how were they conceived by Stalin and the other Bolshevik leaders? What links can be and were at the time established between the imperatives of a commitment to industrialize as rapidly as possible and the abandonment of the NEP in favor of collectivized agriculture? What was Stalin's intellectual and political role in bringing mass collectivization about, and how was it related to Stalin's struggle for political ascendancy? Finally, was forced collectivization a conscious policy decision, including an evaluation of its probable long-run consequences for Soviet development, or did it just happen as the concatenation of numerous decisions, indecisions, actions, and inactions of the leadership? And either way, how appropriate was mass collectivization as a policy solution? Dr. Lewin has many new and stimulating things to say about these issues, and we shall take them up in turn.

The New Economic Policy

The evidence today suggests that the NEP, which was inaugurated at the close of the Civil War at Lenin's insistence and continued in force until the grain crisis of 1928, was quite successful. By 1927, Soviet agriculture had recovered almost fully from the effects of World War I, the destruction of the landed estates during the Revolution of 1917, and the ravages of the Civil War. Given the elimination of the large-scale producer, the degree of recovery, whether measured by level, composition or marketed share of output, is impressive.⁴

Despite these indications of success in purely economic terms, the premises and the long-run implications of the NEP troubled Bolshevik leaders and intellectuals. The NEP premised: 1) private agriculture land tenure; 2) open markets for agricultural produce and for the rental hire of agricultural land and labor; and, therefore, 3) peasant discretion over the level, composition, and marketed share

⁴Jerzy F. Karcz, "Thoughts on the Grain Problem," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, April 1967, pp. 410-412.

of agricultural production. It follows that NEP could be nothing more than a short-term expedient from the Bolshevik stand-point. The first and second premises were ideological anathemas, since they fostered petty-bourgeois enterprise in agriculture and permitted the perpetuation, if not the strengthening, of capitalist relations in the countryside with all it was assumed that would entail in the way of exploitation and economic differentiation. The third premise troubled the Bolsheviks both because it seemed to contradict the goal of centralized control and because they were suspicious of the way peasants, particularly those who were better off, might choose to exercise the political power economic discretion implied.

The participants in the policy controversies of the middle and late 1920's shared as a common and generally implicit assumption the belief that a policy of encouraging the strong peasant producer would in fact be economically successful. Ethically and politically any such policy had to be rejected, since it presupposed exploitative economic relationships. It was also believed that the peasant producer would and could resist any attempt to deprive him of the benefits he was deriving from the NEP, thereby creating a dangerous political situation for the government.⁵ The NEP embodied, therefore, an inherent contradiction between the political and economic ends of Soviet power.

Consequently, a deep and prevailing ambiguity clouded Soviet agricultural policy during the course of the NEP. Given the premises of the NEP, central control had to be exercised through price, financial, and other indirect market instruments. The use of these instruments would necessarily require good information and sophisticated manipulation. On the other hand, since a natural outcome of economic success under NEP would be to foster the well-being and growth of a class enemy of the regime, the petty-bourgeois agricultural producer, it seemed desirable to discriminate against this group wherever possible and to do so to the advantage of the more politically trustworthy poor peasants (*bedniaki*) and lower stratum of the middle peasants (*seredniaki*).

For economic discrimination of this sort to work successfully, certain conditions are imperative. Two of the most important are: 1) favored and disfavored transactors must be segregated perfectly; and 2) transactors in the disfavored portion of the market must not have

⁵Lewin, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6, "The Party and the 'Accursed' Problem," especially pp. 132-35.

opportunities elsewhere allowing them to shift out of the market in question altogether. Soviet policies of economic and social discrimination met neither condition.

As Lewin shows, the categories *kulak*, *seredniak*, and *bedniaki* were never well-defined, with the result that discrimination among them became arbitrary, unjust, and self-defeating.⁶ Similarly, the looseness of the definition of an agricultural collective, plus the overwhelming task administrative verification would have required, meant that a policy of discrimination between individual and collective enterprises (particularly with respect to credit facilities) merely fostered the formation of false collectives.⁷ Apart from the fuzziness of the distinctions drawn, it is not obvious that discrimination among the peasantry would have worked as expected anyway, because of the doubtful nature of the assumption that an economic criterion, such as farm size, number of draft and other animals, rental-hire of land and labor, sufficed as a measure of political reliability.

Moreover, discrimination in state procurement prices was bound to fail as long as private trade was legal and as long as the peasant had discretion over the composition of his output. Discrimination against any particular crop tended either to enhance private trade and/or to induce the peasant to shift to other product lines.⁸

The attempt to neutralize the undesirable political implications of the NEP ultimately only helped to undermine it. The 1928 grain procurement crisis has been shown to have been largely the product of an irrational state procurement price structure and the ineptness of procurement practices in general.⁹ But at the time the grain crisis was widely interpreted as an indication that the NEP had come to the end of its usefulness, although there was some disagreement about whether this was because the economic potential of private, small-scale agriculture had been exhausted, or because the better-off peasants were deliberately seeking to sabotage the regime by hoarding available grain and restricting sowings. In any case, there had never been any question about the eventual liquidation of the NEP and the economic institutions is presupposed. Concrete eco-

⁶*Ibid.*, Chapters 2 & 3, "The Problem of Class Stratification Within the Peasantry," especially p. 49.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 191-192.

⁹Karcz, *op. cit.*, p. 432 and Lewin, *ibid.*, Chapter 9, "The Procurements Crisis of 1928."

conomic results had been the NEP's only justification, and the grain procurement crisis served merely to emphasize the "when" and "how" dramatically.

The Industrialization Debate

The "grain crisis" of 1928 also served to highlight the agricultural policy implications of the so-called industrialization debates. The participants were in complete agreement that the rate of economic growth should be as rapid as possible. The feasibility of any given growth rate seemed to depend on the economic and/or political reaction of the peasant sector to the costs it would impose. Disagreement centered, therefore, on the political desirability and the possibility of imposing these expected costs upon the peasant sector.

The fundamental economic issue can be stated simply. Other things equal, the greater the *rate* of industrialization, the greater the *rate of investment* would have to be. To the extent that the resulting greater *rate of growth* of national income would not offset (in absolute terms) the effect of the curtailment in the *share* of consumption in national income, the *absolute level* as well as the rate of consumption would necessarily be diminished. And in either case, an increase in the rate of investment would necessarily require a decrease in real consumption (but not necessarily real income) per unit of productive work.

Since the peasantry constituted 80 per cent of the population, and since the peasants who counted in this kind of calculation, the *kulaki* and *seredniaki*, were viewed respectively as class enemies and mere "allies," the principal issues in the controversy were whether and how the peasant sector could be induced to make the required sacrifices. The situation was further aggravated because certain participants in the controversy believed that it would be necessary to concentrate the increase in investment in the industrial sector. It was deemed necessary therefore to increase the rate of real peasant net saving as well.

In this context the Party had to anticipate the probable reaction of the peasantry to discrimination against the peasant economy as a whole in favor of the industrial sector, discrimination which would restrict and possibly diminish the sector's access to consumption and investment goods alike. All parties to the debate assumed that within the NEP framework peasant reaction would be both politically and economically negative. Their belief was based apparently on the

prevailing interpretation of the "scissors crisis" of 1923-24, and upon the assumed political unreliability of the peasantry.¹⁰

E. Preobrazhenskii, one of the more articulate and competent economists associated with the "super-industrializers," put forward a number of arguments designed to prove that successful industrialization would necessarily require an increase in the rate of investment (and thus of saving; or "accumulation"). He proposed to achieve this increase by using discriminatory state procurement price and fiscal policies, within the context of the NEP.¹¹

The opposition, as outlined by N. Bukharin, argued that the peasantry would withdraw from the market and that it would also become more receptive to counter-revolutionary activity. In this view, the super-industrialist program had three strikes against it. It was ethically unacceptable, since it predicated building socialism upon an exploitative relationship between the proletarian state and the peasantry. It was politically unsound because it would sever the comradesly *smychka* between the urban proletariat and the rural poor and semi-poor. And it would not attain its primary economic end, because the peasant producer would shrink into a primitive self-sufficient shell. Those who sided with Bukharin's views were obliged to content themselves with a more moderate rate of growth and a more uniform allocation of investment between industry and agri-

¹⁰Maurice Dobb, *Soviet Economic Development Since 1917*, Revised Edition (New York: International Publishers, 1966).

¹¹This proposal was based upon his formulation of the "law of primitive socialist accumulation," which refers to the extension of socialist relations of production to the private sector in order to preclude or minimize private accumulation in an economy in which both private and socialist sectors co-exist. These social relations comprehended both the fiscal powers and the superior market power of the socialist state in its dealings with the private sector. The establishment and utilization of these social relations of production would, therefore, permit socialist appropriation of surplus value created in the private sector and ensure the eventual socialization of all sectors of the economy. Preobrazhenskii's conception parallels Marx's formulation of the "law of primitive capitalist accumulation" in terms of the historical creation of those social relations of production necessary for capitalism to displace the feudal economy: restricted private ownership of the means of production and the wage contract, institutions which provided the capitalist access to the surplus value created by worker.

Lewin, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-151; E. Preobrazhenskii, *The New Economics*, translated by Brian Pearce (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 84, 103 & 146; Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), pp. 713-14, 761.

culture, if the peasant could not be convinced to accept the consequences of unbalanced growth voluntarily.¹²

Alexander Erlich argues that the debate served to illuminate a fundamental policy dilemma which neither faction could resolve satisfactorily, given the social, economic, and political constraints imposed by the NEP.¹³ Most other Western analysts have followed his lead. On the one hand, Erlich accepts Preobrazhenskii's arguments concerning the necessity for a substantial increase in the rate of investment in industry with its adverse implications for peasant consumption and investment. On the other hand, he accepts Bukharin's argument that the super-industrialist program was unworkable within the NEP framework. Either the NEP and the *smytchka* or rapid industrialization would therefore have to be sacrificed. On this interpretation, collectivization becomes a brilliant, if brutal, solution to an otherwise ineluctable contradiction. It relieved the peasantry of discretion over the level, composition and marketed share of agricultural production and thus ensured the necessary *rate of saving* without endangering the *level of national income* through adverse effects upon the level of agricultural production.¹⁴

Dr. Lewin apparently accepts this now standard interpretation of the economic issues of the debate, but somewhat reluctantly and at the expense of complete consistency. He explicitly accepts Preobrazhenskii's analysis while at the same time he implicitly gives approval to Bukharin's program. Lewin leaves the impression that he is skirting a confrontation on this important issue.¹⁵

Erlich's formulation of the economic issues and solutions to the great industrialization debates as a dilemma has become a standard paradigm in Western Soviet studies, but the theoretical and empirical foundations on which it rests are not particularly sound.

Erlich's dilemma is based upon two crucial assumptions: 1) the need for and ability of Soviet industry to use efficiently a substantial increase in the volume of investment; and 2) the likelihood that the peasant sector, aggravated by discriminatory price and fiscal policies,

¹²Lewin, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-141.

¹³Alexander Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924-1928* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 127, 165-175.

¹⁴Obviously, an increase in the *rate of saving* is meaningless if it is accompanied by an off-setting decrease in the *level of national income*. This formulation is an alternative way of stating the economics of the "dilemma."

¹⁵Lewin, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 141-142 & 159.

would and could restrict aggregate agricultural production and/or marketings *for more than one season*. If either assumption is false, there is no dilemma. The first is neither theoretically nor empirically compelling¹⁶ and the second is questionable on the basis of more recent analyses of the economic behavior of the Russian peasant producer.¹⁷

Even if the dilemma is assumed to exist, the efficiency, or appropriateness, of collectivization as a solution also lacks persuasive empirical substantiation. It must be shown that: 1) the absolute volume of real saving by the agricultural population was increased by collectivization and a predatory procurement policy; and 2) total net investment in agriculture, from all sources (state, collective and private) was (a) less than it otherwise would have been and (b) less than the volume of real saving in agriculture. Thus, it is not sufficient to show merely that the *rate of saving* of the rural sector was increased by mass collectivization, and it has been shown elsewhere that it is plausible to suppose that none of the propositions enumerated above is true.¹⁸

The great industrialization debate is of relevance to the collectivization decision in two respects. Justifiably or not, the debate raised serious doubts about the feasibility of rapid industrialization under the NEP. It also appears to have predisposed many in the

¹⁶Preobrazhenskii's main line of argument depends upon the "acceleration hypothesis" and the concept of the "big-push" or "take-off." The former assumes the absence of excess capacity. In reference to the early Soviet situation see: David Granik, *Soviet Metal-Fabrication and Economic Development: Practice versus Policy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p. 134. For a critique of the "take-off" theory see Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 353-364.

¹⁷James R. Millar, "A Reformulation of A. V. Chayanov's Theory of Peasant Economy," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, January 1970, pp. 218-229. Also Jerzy Karcz, "From Stalin to Brezhnev: Soviet Agricultural Policy in Historical Perspective," in *The Soviet Rural Community: A Symposium*, ed. James R. Millar (University of Illinois Press, 1970); and A. A. Barsov, "Sel'skoe khoziaistvo i istochniki sotsialisticheskogo nakopleniia v gody pervoi piatiletki (1928-1933)" *Istoriia SSSR*, 1968, #3, pp. 64-82.

¹⁸Z. M. Fallenbuchl, "Collectivization and Economic Development," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Volume 33, No. 1, February, 1967, especially p. 6. Also see James R. Millar, "Soviet Rapid Development and the Agricultural Surplus Hypothesis," *Soviet Studies*, (forthcoming).

Bolshevik leadership to interpret the grain procurement crisis of 1928 as a hostile political reaction of the peasantry, thereby shifting the main issues in contention economics to the sphere of urgent political action.

The Cult of Personality

Evaluation of Stalin's own role in the decision to collectivize has proven both treacherous and difficult. It is treacherous precisely because Stalin did attain and maintain political dominance for himself and the Party and because the goal of rapid industrialization was achieved. His success in these respects has fostered a teleological bias in the description of this period in Soviet history. There is an almost irresistible tendency to emphasize Stalin's cunning, treachery, foresight, and personal mastery over the forces of history to the neglect of serendipity, mistake, mischance, and oversight. The cult of personality has been created and maintained by more hands than Stalin's and those of his henchmen, for it is an organizational device used by many historians as well as a political technique.

We do know that Stalin sought political dominance and had no scruples about removing highly-revered political opponents from his path.¹⁹ But it is difficult, and perhaps futile, to attempt to determine Stalin's intellectual grasp of the economic and political issues arising out of the industrialization debates, the NEP, and the grain crisis, if only because of the judicious silence he maintained on some issues or the apparently deliberate obfuscation with which he screened his changing positions on others. Lewin argues that the grain crisis caught Stalin and other Party leaders by surprise. The hastiness and violence of the "emergency measures" Stalin introduced to cope with the crisis support this interpretation.²⁰ One must also consider the false, and possibly fraudulent, statistical comparisons Stalin offered between pre-revolutionary and NEP grain marketings in support of his interpretation of the crisis.²¹ Either Stalin himself was misled, or he deliberately falsified the situation, in which case his own interpretation remains a mystery.

Lewin suggests that mass collectivization represented the logical culmination of an escalation of bureaucratic violence initiated by the introduction of emergency measures to secure grain procurements in 1928. As Lewin points out, the 1928 emergency measures were pat-

¹⁹Lewin, *op. cit.*, p. 159 ff.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 214-220.

²¹Karcz, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

turned after the coercive measures that had proven successful in dealing with the 1925 procurement crisis. He interprets Stalin's role in this process as that of the bureaucrat who uses the instrument (the Party apparatus) he is most familiar with and considers the most reliable to remedy a pressing problem.²² This is an elegant hypothesis, since it is both simple and fully sufficient to explain what we know of Stalin's conduct. Collectivization was the form that sustained bureaucratic intervention assumed, and the form had two significant advantages. It appealed to Bolshevik ideological preferences, and it conformed to their preconceptions concerning the advantages of large-scale agricultural production. But, in content, mass collectivization contrasts darkly with the prevailing conception, as formulated for example in the first Five-Year Plan, which projected it as a voluntary, hence gradual and non-exploitative, progressive movement in the countryside. Collectivization had been viewed generally not as a solution to the problems of rapid industrialization,²³ but as a means to create socialist relations of production in the countryside. During the 1920's, for example, the limited and largely ineffectual attempts to encourage collective production²⁴ were instituted as an antidote to the toxic effects of private enterprise and open markets and as an eventual catholicon for the social, political, and economic backwardness of Soviet rural society.

As it unfolded, the collectivization drive acquired the character of a pre-emptive war on the peasantry. Ambiguities in the official delineations of *kulaki*, *seredniaki*, and *bedniaki* produced catastrophic political and human consequences as the rate of collectivization was accelerated by officially sanctioned dekulakization. The resulting political unrest in the countryside, although its regional isolation, lack of organization, and general ineffectiveness belied the popular view of the peasantry as a potent counter-revolutionary force, did provide an unexpected political advantage to Stalin. It caused the Party to close ranks and persuaded Stalin's principal opponents, notably Bukharin, Tomsy, and Rykov, to avoid open confrontation with him outside the Politburo which he controlled.²⁵ In Stalin's hands, then, mass collectivization provided the means for controlling the countryside and permitted him to consolidate his own political power.

²²Lewin, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 357.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 107-108 & 112-114.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 317-318.

It seems reasonable to suppose, with Lewin, that Stalin did not know fully what consequences his policies would entail.²⁶ The grain procurement crisis surprised the leadership just after it had committed itself to the first Five-Year Plan and at a time when state grain reserves were inexplicably depleted. The emergency measures Stalin instituted and the subsequent evolution of the policy of mass collectivization suggest nothing so much as hasty improvisation. Once under way, collectivization and dekulakization created their own momentum. To turn back after 1931 may have been impossible in any case, but it would certainly have involved serious political consequences for Stalin. Instead he plunged on, like a desperate and compulsive gambler, staking everything, his own power and reputation, the Party, and even the revolution. And he won, after a fashion.

Of course, an evaluation of the political and/or economic appropriateness of mass collectivization as an instrument in support of rapid industrialization and/or the maintenance of Bolshevik political rule does not depend in any way upon whether or not Stalin comprehended either the issues or the ultimate consequences of his policies. It is entirely possible to adopt the right policy for the wrong reasons.

III

The unavailability and unreliability of information on the actual course of events and their consequences pose a serious obstacle to an objective evaluation of collectivization. Fortunately Dr. Lewin and other scholars are gradually and systematically overcoming the information barrier. Evaluation of collectivization has also proven quite polemical because the problem of appraisal has somehow come to be confused and entangled with certain issues in historiography, specifically deterministic versus counterfactual conditional hypotheses.

Lewin is also troubled by the problem of evaluation, but his attempt to defend his own position is not particularly successful.²⁷ Clarification is possible, however, by distinguishing unambiguously two categories of questions that students of the Soviet experience have asked about alternatives to collectivization (and Stalin). The first category, and Lewin's approach, is to examine those alternatives to collectivization that were actually considered and/or pro-

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 264.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

posed in order to discover why they were not adopted and/or implemented.²⁸ This approach is conducive to speculation about the probable course of Soviet development had any of the alternatives actually been adopted. There are too many variables and too many complex interdependencies to make this more than a highly tentative and suggestive exercise even for a fairly short period. But it is certainly necessary for the historian to treat fully the policy alternatives considered, and Lewin's defense of the practice seems completely unnecessary.

The second kind of question is directed to an evaluation of the relationship between some given end and the alternative ways of attaining it. The objective in this method is to determine the most efficient means to gain a given end, not the historical likelihood or actuality of either the end or the alternative means. The question then becomes, for example, whether collectivization was optimal with respect to the maximization of the rate of growth of industrial production. Or we may inquire whether Bukharin's agricultural policies would have been as or more efficient than collectivization in securing rapid growth. A demonstration of the efficiency or inefficiency of collectivization implies nothing whatever about historical determinism.

Unfortunately, Alec Nove, author of the preface to Lewin's book, has unwittingly contributed to confusion on this very point. He has argued that, apart from certain excesses, collectivization was "objectively necessary."²⁹ It is extremely unlikely that Nove means to invoke historical determinism, but if not, his choice of words is surely unfortunate. On the most reasonable interpretation, what Nove is asserting is his belief that the observed rate of Soviet industrialization could not have been obtained by any means other than collectivization. Where no alternative exists, the terms "optimal" and "necessary" assume the same value in the argument.

Alexander Erlich's treatment of collectivization is similar to Nove's and it is perhaps noteworthy that this interpretation coincides in many important respects with the official Soviet interpretation.³⁰ But even if this popular evaluation of collectivization is

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁹Alec Nove, "Was Stalin Really Necessary?" in *Economic Rationality and Soviet Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 32.

³⁰Herbert J. Ellison, "The Decision to Collectivize Agriculture," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2, April, 1961, p. 189.

correct in its own terms, it cannot be utilized as an explanation of the decision to collectivize unless it can be shown that collectivization was in fact selected as a policy on these grounds. Lewin's account suggests otherwise.

Not long ago Professor Jerzy Karcz urged upon Soviet specialists the necessity for a thorough reappraisal of the entire question of forced collectivization. The new material Lewin makes available reinforces the case for reappraisal. Moreover, although Lewin himself maintains an ambiguously neutral position with respect to the appropriateness of collectivization, we have attempted to show that his presentation is not at all inconsistent with a quite different appraisal than that which is currently in vogue.