

FAMINE IN RUSSIA 1891–1892. By *Richard G. Robbins, Jr.* New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975. xiv, 262 pp. \$12.50.

This is a history and an assessment of the functioning of the various echelons of government of tsarist Russia in a period of crisis. The story centers upon the interrelationships of the departments of the imperial government, the role of *guberniia* institutions, and, at the local level, the efforts of the zemstvos, land captains, and charitable committees to confront the problem of famine as it became increasingly acute. The introductory chapters outline the general condition of Russian agriculture as it developed in the years following the emancipation and give the reader a background on the means that had been used historically to deal with famine.

The sixth chapter, "The Railroad Crisis," is an occasionally gripping account of the efforts to transport what was an apparently adequate supply of grain from food surplus areas to food deficit areas. It is here that the reader comes to understand the economic components of the problem and that it was an inefficient transportation system and the absence of a national system of storage elevators which were the most important elements in this tragic tale.

The efforts of the government receive favorable evaluation; it possessed both the resolve and the strength to mobilize resources to confront the crisis. The political and administrative problem the crisis revealed, however, was portentous: "the weakness of the Russian famine relief operations was directly related to the general inadequacy of local administration, especially the absence of firm institutional links with the peasant world" (p. 179).

The reader would do well to pay close heed to the fifty pages of footnotes contained at the end of the text, for they contain much that is informative. Those who are not familiar with Russian may experience some confusion and frustration, for Russian terms are used quite liberally without benefit of a glossary and sometimes without adequate explanation.

This is a well-written and thoroughly researched and documented piece of work. With the insights that Robbins provides on the functioning of the government and its relation to society, the events of the succeeding turbulent decades seem somehow less shocking.

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BUKHARIN AND THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY, 1888–1938. By *Stephen F. Cohen.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973. xl, 495 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$3.95, paper.

"World history is a world court of judgment" spoke Bukharin shortly before his execution by Stalin in March 1938. Stephen Cohen's superb book on the life, politics, and writings of Nikolai Bukharin will long be regarded as the outstanding contribution to the historical judgment of this Bolshevik's important place in the Party, the revolution, and the first decades of the Soviet Union. Bukharin's role has long been overshadowed by the calumnious cacophony of Leninism-Stalinism, the publicity accorded to Trotskyism, and the silence accorded to "unpersons" in Soviet historiography. This richly documented scholarly work—cited as one of the