
THE JOURNALS

The Problems of Economic History as Propounded by the Magazines «Voprosy Istorii» and «Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya»** (1973)*

Yu. N. Rozaliev

Institute of Universal History, Moscow

In the Soviet Union economic history is a traditional research interest, but in recent years it has acquired even greater scope. A large number of studies have been published, each of which to some extent deals with socio-economic problems of the countries and peoples of either the ancient world, the Middle Ages, or of the modern and contemporary period.¹ The work that has been carried out not only helps to reveal new laws governing historical-economic processes in world history, but helps us to gain a comprehensive awareness of the content and of the methods of economic history which is clearly an area of major importance in historical science. There is no doubt that the successful development of the social sciences in the USSR in recent years has to a great extent been determined by the achievements in the study of economic history.

The work of Soviet scholars in the field of economic history has been so extensive that it would be impossible, at present, to make a comprehensive review of this literature. This paper has the more limited goal of describing the main lines of research in the work of Soviet economic historians for a single year. The works on which we shall concentrate were published by the

* The «Voprosy Istorii» (Questions of history), published monthly, is one of the leading magazines of Soviet historians. It is published jointly by the Department of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the USSR Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education. The magazine was first issued in January, 1926.

** The «Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya» (Modern and contemporary history) is the review of the Institute of General History under the USSR Academy of Sciences. It is a bimonthly magazine first established in 1957.

¹ The works on economic history published in the decade prior to 1970 are listed in the bibliographical index of «*Ekonomicheskaya Istoriya* (Ukazatel' sovietskoi literatury za 1960-1969)» [Economic history (Index of Soviet literature)], Moscow, 1970.

two leading historical journals. This paper may then succeed in conveying some notion, although not a complete one, of course, of economic history in the Soviet Union.

Soviet scholars hold that different economic aspects, phenomena, processes and events can only be successfully studied if these phenomena and events are seen as components of a specific economic and social system, and if the developments of these individual phenomena are seen as the manifestation of the general laws determining the development of a given society. This is why Soviet scientists relate economic problems primarily to questions of change in the social and class structure of society, and to the relations and struggles between classes.

Naturally the bulk of the work of Soviet economic historians in 1973 was devoted to the economic history of Soviet society. About ten long articles (not counting the surveys and reviews of books on Soviet national economy published in previous years) devoted to this were published in a single year in the two journals under review. Scholars concentrated on problems in the history of industrialization of the USSR, of the establishment of the collective-farm and of the role of the working class in the socialist transformation of agriculture. They also examined the changes in the social structure of Soviet society over a long period, the creation of the material and technical base of developed socialism, and the problems of socialist integration and scientific and technological progress.

Until recently Soviet economic historians were not agreed on the chronological limits of industrialization in the USSR. Some scholars held that the main goal of industrialization — the creation of heavy industry — had been achieved by the Soviet Union between 1926-1929. They claimed that a major role in consolidating the socialist economy in general and in developing heavy industry in particular, was played by the Soviet syndicates, the activities of which are described in Z. K. ZVYOZDIN's article *Soviet Syndicates and their Role in the National Economy of the USSR*.²

Other historians however considered that the country's industrialization was a phenomenon of much wider scope and that the process continued through the years of the first five-year plan. But now however scholars have established a common set of conclusions and agree that the industrialization of the USSR, which provided the material and technical base for socialism and for the economic independence of the country, began in the latter part of the twenties and ended, for the most part, towards the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. This is noted in the article of V. S. LELCHUK, *The Industrialisation of the USSR in the Years of the Second Five-Year Plan (1933-1937)*³ which refers to ranges of sources, documents and literature,

² «Voprosy Istorii», 1973, No. 12, pp. 35-49.

³ «Voprosy Istorii», 1973, No. 3, pp. 3-22.

published in the Soviet Union on problems of industrialization in the USSR.⁴

The problems of industrialization in the years of the second five-year plan (1933-1937) are of particular interest, because this period constituted the concluding stage in the transformation of the Soviet state into a developed industrial power. It is obvious that the successful accomplishment of such a complex and spectacular task in such a short period was possible only due to and through the socialist social system, which made it possible to mobilise all the resources of the country in achieving this main goal — that is of turning the USSR into a socialist industrial state, and ensuring its economic independence, while excluding any possibility of turning the country into an appendage of capitalist world economy. The second five-year plan had a number of specific features. In the period of the first five-year plan the main task had consisted in building the foundations of heavy industry in the USSR, whereas in the second five-year period the focus was the struggle for the technical reconstruction of national economy, the development of industry on the former periphery of tsarist Russia, the growth of labour productivity and provision for a substantial increase in the welfare of the people. The five-year plan was implemented in conditions of immense tension, of course, because the country faced innumerable difficulties; among these the main hardships derived from the lack of highly-skilled workers. But on the whole, the target figures of the second five-year plan were attained: labour productivity in industry increased by 12-25 per cent every year, and the average annual growth of industrial production amounted to 17.1 per cent. During the years of the second five-year plan coal production in the USSR doubled, the output of steel, rolled metal and of the chemical industry tripled, and so on. The successful fulfillment of the second five-year plan made it possible for the Soviet people to draw up and start tackling the still more spectacular objectives of the third five-year plan, which was disrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

The history of the development of Soviet agriculture is a traditional area of interest for economic historians. The article *The Labour Resources of Collective Farms in the Pre-war Years (1935-1940)*⁵ by M. A. VYLTSAN is prominent among the many studies published in 1973 in the Journals under review. It deals with the important problem of defining the conceptual meaning of labour reserves and the author contends that this is not only a

⁴ Among the monographs devoted to problems of industrialization there is a collective work edited by Academician P. N. POSPELOV entitled *The Leninist Plan for Socialist Industrialization and Its Implementation*, Moscow, 1969; and the books by A. F. KHAVIN, *A Short Review of the History of the Industrialization of the USSR*, Moscow, 1962; by P. B. ZHIBAREV, *The Industrialization of the USSR — a Great Exploit of the Soviet People*, Moscow, 1969; by V. I. KUZMIN, *The Historical Experience of Soviet Industrialization*, Moscow, 1969; and by V. I. KASYANENKO, *The Winning of Economic Independence by the USSR (1917-1940)*, Moscow, 1972.

⁵ «Voprosy Istorii», 1973, No. 2, pp. 21-31.

socio-economic, but also a historical, category. Basing his conclusions on a vast range of facts, the author shows that prior to the collectivisation of farming the size of the able-bodied rural population in Russia was quite considerable, but the backwardness of the socio-economic system which prevailed in the countryside led to the waste of productive forces. The socialist cooperation of farming does not simply equal the sum total of the old productive forces. Even on the basis of simple addition — of pooling their equipment, for example — the collective farmers showed themselves to be a new productive force, a force of collective labour. Collectivisation made it possible to accelerate the mechanisation of farming, which greatly boosted the productivity of farm labour. The complexities and difficulties that were encountered in the process of the socialist transformation of the countryside were overcome by increasing the interest of the working peasant in collective labour, and by the creation of conditions for the growth of production and assistance from the working class.⁶ The article cites data of the growth of labour productivity and production at collective farms during the pre-war years.

The article written by S. L. SENYAVSKY, *Changes in the Social Structure of Soviet Society (1938-1970)*,⁷ is interesting. The author attempts to analyse both the basic tendencies and some of the peculiarities of the changes taking place in the class and social structure of Soviet society⁸ in the period of the completion of socialist construction and the transition to communist construction from the end of the thirties up to 1970.

The author of the article points out that changes in the social structure of Soviet society are determined by objective laws governing economic and cultural development, and that the fundamental tendencies and the main orientation of these shifts determines the advance of society to ever greater social homogeneity. In the period of the transition from capitalism to socialism the changes in the social structure of Soviet society were related to the liquidation of antagonistic classes and class relations, the contrasts between town and country, or between workers of mental and physical labour, whereas in the period of the transition from socialism to communism the formation of a classless, socially homogeneous society, takes place mainly on the foundation created by the rapprochement of socialist classes, social groups and strata,

⁶ The problem of the role of the working class in the socialist transformation and development of farming in the USSR is treated in many books and articles published in the postwar years. A historiographical review of this literature is given in the article by S. S. IVASHKIN — *Recent Literature Devoted to the Role of the Working Class in the Socialist Transformation and Development of Agriculture in the USSR* (« Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 6, pp. 147-154).

⁷ « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 4, pp. 3-17.

⁸ This question was dealt with in general terms in the report delivered by Y. A. Polyakov at the XIII International Congress of Historical Sciences (Y. A. POLYAKOV, *Change in the Social Structure of the USSR*, Moscow, 1970).

which are, in their nature, of the same type. The author makes an attempt in this article to define the periods (stages) in the process of these changes in the social structure of Soviet society. He reveals and illustrates the distinctions between classes and different strata of the population, and emphasizes specific tendencies in the changes taking place in the structure of Soviet society. The size of the intelligentsia, in particular, has grown from 1.8 million (1.2 per cent of the total population of the country) in 1937 to 16.9 million people (6.9 per cent) in 1970. In the same period the number of specialists employed at scientific institutions and in scientific services increased 13.1 times.

In the article *Socialist Integration and Scientific and Technological Progress*⁹ by V. I. MOROZOV we are told that to-day every third scientist in the world is working in the countries of the socialist community, and every fourth scientist in the world works in the USSR. The author describes scientific and technological cooperation and the mutual assistance of the scientists of the member-countries of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. He proves on the basis of indisputable fact that the combination of the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with the advantages of the socialist system of economic management yields immeasurable benefits to the socialist countries.

The scientific and technological revolution constitutes one of the main prerequisites for creating the material and technical base of mature socialism, the foundations and first signs of which can be found in the economic history of the postwar socialist society. These problems are dealt with in V. I. KASYANENKO's article *The Material-Technical Base of Developed Socialism in the USSR*.¹⁰

The Soviet economic historians' analysis of the development of the material life of society forms the basis for investigating the laws of the historical process, for the understanding of the laws of the origin, inception, development, and change of one social formation into another which is both higher and more perfect.

V. M. MASSON's article *Exchange and Trade in the Primeval Epoch*¹¹ concentrates on the beginnings of trade. The author discusses the latest methods used in the study of archeological data, and the ways of disclosing objective laws in the development of exchange and trade through compiling correlational tables and charts, through use of structural or functional ethnographic or historical models and, primarily, of economic models. The article distinguishes clearly between exchange and trade, and describes how exchange develops into trade. It traces the origins of primitive money, describes the evolution of a special kind of social stratum consisting of merchants-blacksmiths, and the creation of traditional markets. The author describes the

⁹ « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1973, No. 4, pp. 25-40.

¹⁰ « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 10, pp. 3-20.

¹¹ « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 1, pp. 78-91.

laws by which exchange and barter were replaced by trade relations within the framework of primitive-communal society, and also the new social phenomena that were born from this process.

In a special work¹² M. A. Barg analyses the concept of the so-called « crisis of the 17th century », which Soviet scholars considers to be a transitional (interformational) epoch, a period of the collision of two consecutive socio-economic formations — feudalism and capitalism. The author regards the views of certain bourgeois scholars of the 17th century as the manifestation of a general metaphysical conception, for as V. I. Lenin pointed out the result of development is described and not the development itself. In the opinion of M. A. Barg, this type of analysis does not contain in itself the possibilities of development, for development is seen as the sum total of a chain of peaceful situations. M. A. Barg notes that both the structural-functional model of sociologists, and the theories of economic growth (J. Schumpeter, W. W. Rostow and others) have one flaw in common: the sources of development are to be found in internal contradictions, in elements of social structure antagonistic to it, not in subjective factors, such as the « psychological structures » of personality. In Barg's opinion the recent « cyclical » models are also erroneous at heart, because they reproduce the historical process only from the perspective of the economic situation which is analysed quite apart from the social context.

« 'Cyclical' models of development », Barg writes, « are a way of rejecting the teaching on socio-economic formations and, in essence, substitute the qualitative analysis of events by the factor analysis of quantitative growth ».

The article *On the Stadiol-Regional Research of Bourgeois Revolutions of the 16th-17th Centuries in Europe*¹³ by A. N. CHISTOZVONOS investigates the particular features of bourgeois revolutions of the 16th-17th centuries in Europe relating them to the stages in the evolution of capitalism and the levels of socio-economic development of the different countries.

The author considers that the « stadiol-regional » method comprises:

1. Description of the primary general content and form of the general historical process, phenomenon, system — in this case, the world capitalist system in its revolutionary formation and subsequent development;

2. Defining the extent of the mutations of the primary content and form resulting from:

- a) the laws governing the different stages of the formation and development of the given system in time and space;

- b) the complex internal factors affecting the development of the countries and regions in question;

¹² M. A. BARG, *Concerning one Groundless Conception Propounded by Western Historiography*, « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1973, No. 5, pp. 55-69.

¹³ « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1973, No. 2, pp. 86-99.

c) the external (in relation to the individual countries and regions) factors affecting the system, particularly those deriving from the existence of relatively more developed forms of bourgeois relations;

d) the interaction of the system with its components (countries, regions), or with those parts which are drawn into the sphere of its influence.

In the process of further development factors of a formational or « system » character determine the content of stadial-regional mutations more and more, whereas factors of a national-regional character determine their forms, peculiarities, the time and place of the beginning of revolutions, etc. The degree of stadial-regional mutation is directly connected with the duration of the stadial-chronological gap, with which this or that country or region embarks upon the road of bourgeois development and bourgeois revolutions. The degree of disintegration of pre-capitalist forms and the degree of their stability are taken into account as a constant factor.

By the term « stadial region » the author means a group of countries which are « geographically combined, or which are territorially disassociated, but share a common type of basic law of development for this or that historical process (in this case the origin and development of capitalism), or else which share a common type of process deformation or mutation deriving from the duration of the stadial-chronological gap, after which the given region becomes subject to this process and to the results of the development of the preceding period from which it stems. The stadial region is then a historical category variable in time and space ».¹⁴

A. N. Chistozyonov studies the main characteristics of the first bourgeois revolutions (the Reformation and Peasant War in Germany, and the Netherlands Revolution in the 16th century) following the same line of study, as well as the specific characteristics of the later revolutions of the industrial period (the bourgeois revolution in England in the 17th century and the French bourgeois revolution at the end of the 18th century).

Much interest was aroused among the academic public by N. N. BOLKHOVITINOV's article *Certain Problems in the Historiography of the American Revolution of the 18th Century*,¹⁵ in which the author gives, in particular, a critical analysis of several works written by representatives of the « new economic history ». This is not the first time that N. N. Bolkhovitinov has analysed the new tenets of the cliometrists and the methods of their research.¹⁶ With regard to the opinion of the cliometrists on the role of the Civil War in the industrialisation of the United States, he considers that the representatives of the « new economic history » stress too heavily the significance of purely « quantitative » statistical method and often overlook the basic

¹⁴ « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1973, No. 2, p. 89.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1973, No. 6, pp. 146-166.

¹⁶ « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1969, No. 6.

social aspects of historical development. From the point of view of pure statistics the Civil War 1861-1865 caused the American people much devastation and suffering, but the Civil War cannot be evaluated simply on a statistical basis. In this case decisive significance lies not in the quantitative, but in the qualitative aspect — the social results and consequences of the radical reforms brought about in the process of the revolution (the abolition of slavery, the adoption of the Homestead Act, etc.), which, as a whole, were of colossal importance for the further development of capitalism in the United States.¹⁷ N. N. Bolkhovitinov is justly sharply critical of the position taken by American cliometrists, and in particular of the opinions of Douglass North on problems of the American Revolution and the War of Independence. He incontrovertibly demonstrates the failure of the attempts to build a concept of revolutions on the basis of quantitative evaluations.

« The cliometrists », writes the author, « fail to take into consideration the principal element: the deep social and political factors which exerted a long-standing influence over the entire subsequent development of the country. The revolutionary war for independence not only disrupted ties with the mother country, but led to major socio-economic transformations within the United States; it not only destroyed, but is also created, and its principal merit was that it laid a solid foundation for building in the future. It would be difficult to measure this creativity statistically, but without taking it into account, the picture is distorted ».

In criticising the methodology of the cliometrists, the author of the article writes that he is far from doubting the possibilities of economic-mathematical analysis or the concrete conclusions arrived at by the historians-climetrists were they made one the basis of trustworthy statistical materials and perfected research techniques. He is of the opinion, however, that quantitative analysis calls for consummate skill. This form of analysis may yield good results when the problem has been properly set and related to other forms of socio-economic analysis.

A step forward in elaborating the typology of bourgeois revolutions and relating them to economic history was made in A. S. KAHN's article *Sweden in 1809-1810. A State Coup or Bourgeois Revolution*.¹⁸ The author shows the direct links existing between the strong and weak elements of the revolution in Sweden and the character of the social and economic evolution of the country, the degree to which feudalism had declined and the level of capitalist development in the country. The article states that towards the beginning

¹⁷ The problem of certain peculiarities in the development of capitalism in the United States and the critical analysis of several works written by American economists-historians are dealt with in an article by M. V. DEMIKHOVSKY — *Land Colonisation in the West and Peculiarities in the Development of Capitalism in the United States*, « *Voprosy Istorii* », 1973, No. 5, pp. 97-112.

¹⁸ « *Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya* », 1973, No. 1.

of the 19th century the structure of Swedish national economy was very clearly visible, and not only in the sense that a variety of economic structures existed — feudal, small-scale commodity and capitalist production — but in the sense that they were fairly evenly balanced. Manufacturing capitalism had long been known in the country; feudal relations, which had formerly been the dominant social formation, became an economic structure coexisting with others. All this determined the objectives, goals and the general character of the Swedish Revolution, which was typologically different from the great French Revolution and other bourgeois revolutions of the early 19th century, and came closer to the revolutions of 1830-1848.

The journals « Voprosy Istorii » and « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya » allot much space to problems of more contemporary economic history. Besides the works mentioned, a prominent place in Soviet economic historiography is given to problems of the development of the « third world ». In 1973 the journals published a series of articles that reviewed the literature on the history of colonialism and neocolonialism;¹⁹ these articles also describe imperialist colonial policy in the Arab countries in the first half of the 20th century,²⁰ clarify the peculiarities in the development of capitalism in Tropical Africa in the first half of the 20th century²¹ and define the problems facing the contemporary national-liberation revolutions in Asia and Africa²² as well as the development of the « third world » countries in connection with the scientific and technological revolution.²³ In all these works the problems dealt with are analysed on the basis of a vast quantity of historical and economic sources. It is our opinion that this literature merits special attention.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that problems of economic history are treated in the extensive critical and bibliographical sections of the journals under review. Thus, L. S. PERELOMOV's article *The Establishmnet of the Imperial System in China* was published in the review « Voprosy Istorii », No. 5 in 1973 in the section « History and Contemporary Times »; a critical review of M. I. OVCHINNIKOV's book *Soviet Peasantry in the Northern Caucasus (1921-1929)*, Rostov, 1972, was published in the section « Historical Science in the USSR, Reviews », as well as reviews of the monograph by A. P. NOVOSELTSEV, V. T. PASHUTO, L. V. CHEREPNIN entitled *The Ways*

¹⁹ N. A. KHALEIN, A. S. AVETYAN, *Problems In the History of Colonialism and Neocolonialism in Soviet Historiography (1967-1972)*, « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », 1973, No. 4, pp. 146-157.

²⁰ M. A. KHRESTALYOV, *The Colonial Policy of Imperialism in the Arab Countries in the First Half of the 20th Century*, « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 7, pp. 88-100.

²¹ Y. M. IVANOV, *The Peculiarities of Capitalist Development in Tropical Africa in the First Half of the 20th Century*, « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 10, pp. 47-63.

²² G. F. KIM, P. M. SHASTYKO, *Certain Problems of the Contemporary National-Liberation Revolutions in Asia and Africa*, « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 8, pp. 73-85.

²³ A. Y. SHVIRT, *The Scientific and Technological Revolution and the Problems of Development in the 'Third World' Countries*, « Voprosy Istorii », 1973, No. 7, pp. 57-72.

in the Development of Feudalism (the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, Ancient Russia, the Baltic States), Moscow, 1972; and of Y. N. SHCHAPOV's book *Princedom Regulations and the Church in Ancient Russia of the 11th-14th Centuries*, Moscow, 1972 and other works.

In the large « Criticism and Bibliography » section of the journal « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya », No. 2, 1973, for example, the following books are revised: N. N. INOZEMTSEV, *Modern Capitalism: New Phenomena and Contradictions*, Moscow, 1972; A. F. NOSKOV, *The Devastation of the Polish Economy by Hitler's Germany in 1939-1944*, Moscow, 1971; *American Studies in Transition*, ed. M. W. FISHWIC, Boston, 1970; L. K. YOUNG, *British Policy in China. 1895-1902*, Oxford, 1970; M. CROUZEL, *De la Deuxieme Guerre Mondiale a Nos Jours. La Renaissance de l'Europe*, Paris, 1970; S. JENSEN, *Levevilkar under Besaettelsen. Traek af denøkonomiske og Sociale Undvikling i Danmark under den Fyske Besaeffelse, 1940-1945*, København, Gyldenal, 1971, and other works. In the section « Scientific Life » the journal reports on the conference held on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, in November, 1972, in Moscow, on the first colloquium of Soviet and American historians held in October, 1972 in Moscow, on the International Conference on Historical Cartography (October, 1972, Budapest), on the publication of « The Journal of European Economic History », Roma, 1972, and so forth.

A brief review of these studies in economic history published in the journals « Voprosy Istorii » and « Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya » in 1973 shows that Soviet economic historians, leaning on the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, are investigating the socio-economic history of society, and exploring the connections between, and interconditionality of, social and economic factors. They hold that the analysis of various economic phenomena in history can be successful and fruitful only when these phenomena are examined as a component, as the manifestation of the principal features of a particular social and economic system, and the development of these phenomena is seen as the partial manifestation of the general laws governing the development of a given society.