



PREFACE

The opening of the formerly secret Soviet state and party archives in the early 1990s was an event of profound significance. Western scholars, who previously used Kremlinology to penetrate the official wall of secrecy, could now use the same documents as had Soviet leaders in earlier periods. The Soviet state and party archives have already permitted historians to rewrite the political history of the USSR. Few deep secrets remain, especially concerning the 1920s and 1930s. Economists—relative latecomers to the use of these archives—can now use them to study the still poorly understood workings of the Stalinist command economy. Although the Soviet command economy is supposedly a thing of the past, it continues to plague Russia's transition to a market economy, and, more important, it continues to have considerable emotional appeal as a substitute for a market economy. Voices are already being raised claiming that the Soviet command economy was sound but it was run by the wrong people, who made wrong decisions. The archives give us a real opportunity to examine such propositions.

This book summarizes economic research based on the Soviet state and party archives. It brings together prominent scholars from Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, many of whom have worked with these archives since they were opened. Topics are discussed in this collection—the economics of the

Gulag, the management of military innovation, the specifics of defense budgets, Stalin's handwritten marginal comments on planning documents, internal Politburo discussions—the coverage of which could not have been imagined twenty years ago. Each chapter focuses on what we have learned from the archives, on what has surprised us and what has simply confirmed what we already knew. These essays cover the period from the early 1930s through Stalin's death in 1953, namely, the period of creating the Stalinist system. Since for the postwar era Soviet state and party archives remain basically closed, archive-based research on the “mature” Soviet economy will have to be done by future researchers.

This publication had its origins in discussions with John Raisian, director of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, and with Charles Palm, deputy director, in the summer of 1998 concerning the need to bring to the attention of general readers the results of ongoing archive-based research on the Soviet command system. As the result of a series of agreements with the State Archival Service of Russia beginning in 1992, the Hoover Institution has acquired almost ten thousand microfilm reels of the files of the Soviet Communist Party and state. Because of the deteriorating physical condition of these archives in Russia and the uncertainty of future access, the presence of these archives in Hoover ensures that scholars can mine this treasure of information over many decades.

I am particularly grateful for the support of the Hoover Institution of this project, one product of which is the publication of this book. The chapters by myself, Eugenia Belova, and Aleksei Tikhonov are the products of research conducted in the Hoover Archives and, together with the other chapters of the book, were supported financially by the Hoover Institution through a generous gift of the Lakeside Foundation. I would particularly like to thank John Raisian and Charles Palm for their appreciation of and support of this work. We would also like to thank the dedicated staff of the Hoover archives as a whole but would wish to

single out Charles Palm, Elena Danielson, and Lora Soroka, without whose assistance this project could not have been carried out. A final word of thanks goes to Patricia Baker, executive editor of the Hoover Press, who sure-handedly navigated this volume to completion in spite of the difficulties of dealing with authors widely dispersed across the globe.

PAUL R. GREGORY

References to archival material are given using original notations—fond (f.), opis (op.), delo (d.), and list (l.)—accepted in Russian archives.