

## S. HARRISON THOMSON, 1895–1975

S. Harrison Thomson, professor emeritus of medieval history at the University of Colorado, died on November 19, 1975, in Boulder. He was eighty years old.

To readers of the *Slavic Review*, he is known primarily as the dean of native American authorities on Czech and Slovak history and as one of the founders of East European studies in the United States. His annotated editions of Jan Hus's *Tractatus Responsivus* (1927) and *Tractatus de Ecclesia* (1956) drew praise from hypercritical Czech reviewers, and his pioneering study, *Czechoslovakia in European History* (1943), was awarded the Czechoslovak State Prize in 1944. In 1941, he founded the *Journal of Central European Affairs*, editing it for a quarter-century, and throughout his life he gave his name and his talents generously to the many scholarly organizations and enterprises that established and shaped the East European field.

At the same time, Thomson also enjoyed a distinguished career as a European medievalist and Latin paleographer. From 1936, he edited *Progress of Medieval Studies in the United States and Canada*, and in 1943 he founded *Medievalia et Humanistica*. His *Latin Bookhands of the Later Middle Ages* (1969) won him the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America in 1971. Indeed, it was his interest in the intellectual and religious history of the later Middle Ages, especially in John Wyclif, that led him via Princeton and Oxford to Eastern Europe in the early twenties, where he studied with the renowned Hussite scholar at Charles University in Prague, Václav Novotný. He thus brought to the new field a wonderful breadth of training—in literature, philosophy, theology, history, and particularly in languages—from the old.

Thomson spent most of his long working life, from 1936 to 1964, industriously teaching, writing, and editing at Colorado. A bibliography of his publications in 1963 already listed 7 books, 126 articles, and 268 reviews. Prestigious fellowships, honorary memberships, and important offices flowed to him from American and foreign sources. What he prized most, however, was his own demanding and uncompromising code of personal and professional conduct. The man who would excoriate a piece of shoddy scholarship in print would also spend vast amounts of his precious time encouraging and helping (often anonymously) the young and the unfortunate who sought him out. The qualities he saw and publicly esteemed in Hus—his honesty, consuming devotion to truth, love for humanity, and courage and serenity in the face of adversity and death—were mirrored in himself. He was that combination of outstanding scholarship and unblemished integrity that one finds so rarely and never forgets.

JOSEPH FREDERICK ZACEK  
State University of New York at Albany

## MAURICE HERBERT DOBB, 1900–1976

Maurice Herbert Dobb, the most outstanding British Marxist economist of the present century, was the first economist of any persuasion in the English-speaking world to undertake a substantial investigation of the Soviet system. In 1927, when planning and even growth were topics well over the horizon of nearly all other Western economists, and the Soviet Union was widely believed to be merely a strange or dangerous oddity, Dobb completed his *Russian Economic Development since the Revolution* (published in 1928). He had not yet learned Russian, but relying on the evidently very competent services of H. C. Stevens as a translator, he mastered a variety of Soviet journals, books, and newspapers, which remained unused by other scholars for a quarter of a century. He visited the USSR at the same time as Keynes in 1925, and took part in extensive discussions in Narkomfin and Gosplan. (Dobb wrote to me

in 1954 that, at a meeting which he attended in Gosplan in 1925, chaired by Smilga, "K. took the side of N.K.F. in questions of planning in the departmental tussle between N.K.F. and Gosplan that was then at its height; N.K.F. having stuffed him up with their viewpoint all the previous week," and "proceeded to lecture Gosplan on the virtues of Treasury-control.")

His 1928 volume remains the best account in any language of Soviet economic development and policy in the first decade after the Revolution. Particularly valuable are his chapters on War Communism (which according to Dobb was "an extraordinary set of measures to meet an extraordinary situation of economic decline," and "sprang into life in the 'forcing house' of a mortal struggle of the new regime" [pp. 97 and 64]), and his discussion of the state of the economy in 1926–27, when, as a result of central planning, but within the framework of the market relation with the peasantry, Russian industry "has prospects of continuing a rate of growth which in pre-war times, with the aid of foreign capital, was hardly attained even in the strongest boom years" (p. 380). His account of the economic debates of the 1920s, which were completely neglected elsewhere in Western economic literature, was not surpassed until Erlich's and Spulber's books appeared thirty years later.

During the stormy years of Western economic crisis and Stalinist industrialization, Dobb published a number of booklets and articles about socialist economics and the Soviet economy, arguing that Soviet industrialization had been successful, and energetically defending central planning both against the Mises-Hayek school, which asserted that the problem of economic calculation could not be solved in a socialist economy, and against those, such as Lange, who held that major economic decisions should be taken by a price-mechanism in a socialist economy (his main studies in this debate were republished in his *On Economic Theory and Socialism* [1955], pp. 33–92). His work on the Soviet economy during the 1930s and 1940s was summed up and extended in *Soviet Economic Development since 1917* (1948). This book, the main text used by students of the subject until the publication of Alec Nove's economic history in 1969, incorporated, in briefer form but without fundamental modification, the material and the conclusions of his 1928 study. Three important new sections were added: a brilliant survey of the Russian economy in 1913, an account of Soviet economic development from 1928 to 1945, and a group of chapters on the Soviet planning system as it had evolved during the five-year plans. While he now argued that the difficulties of NEP had been more serious and deep-rooted than they had appeared when he wrote his 1928 volume, he did not present the economic developments of the 1930s as simply an inevitable successor to NEP; on the contrary, he asserted that during the First Five-Year Plan "the situation was conceived, as in 1917 Lenin had conceived it, in terms very similar to military strategy, with its single-minded concentration on a strategic objective, on a crucial timing and a crucial line of thrust" (p. 244). And while the volume was flawed by its underestimation of the economic and human costs of Soviet economic achievements, his perceptive analysis of Soviet planning remains a valuable contribution to our understanding.

Dobb modestly resisted any suggestion that he was a specialist on the Soviet economy; and he had neither the time nor the facilities to undertake the detailed examination of Soviet sources and Soviet statistics which have become the bread and butter of our profession since the 1950s. But he enthusiastically welcomed and closely followed the revival of theoretical discussion among Soviet economists on which he contributed a thoughtful survey article to *Science and Society* (24 [1960]: 289–311) and, in his own writings in the 1960s, he devoted a great deal of attention to problems of pricing in a socialist economy. In recent years, he returned on several occasions to a reconsideration of Soviet economic discussions and policies of the 1920s (notably in *Soviet Studies*, 17 [1965–66]: 198–208), and his more general contributions to de-

velopment economics were informed by his knowledge of Soviet experience. A popular pamphlet, *Socialist Planning: Some Problems* (1970), thoughtfully summed up his assessment of the past, present, and future of the Soviet economy.

Dobb was a patient, courteous, and helpful teacher and colleague. His numerous academic visitors from many countries always received a ready welcome; and he willingly answered queries and assisted younger scholars. His diffident but incisive comments on work submitted to him played an immeasurable but important part in the education of many students of the Soviet economy.

R. W. DAVIES

*Centre for Russian and East European Studies  
University of Birmingham, England*

### JOSEPH SCHIEBEL, 1930–1976

Joseph Schiebel died of coronary arteriosclerosis on October 9, 1976, following the AAASS convention in St. Louis. Born in Vorderburg/Allgau, Bavaria on December 15, 1930, Joseph survived the war, finished gymnasium in 1950, and directed curriculum for the U.S. Army Education Center. He settled in Seattle in 1954 and obtained a B.A. in political science (1959) and an M.A. in Russian Regional Studies (1961) at the University of Washington. He subsequently switched to history for advanced work. Working under Professor Donald Treadgold, Joe was also attracted to Karl Wittfogel's ideas and became his teaching and research assistant. Schiebel also became a member of the editorial board of Fr. Bochenski's *Studies in Soviet Thought* and contributed several articles to it.

Joining the Georgetown University History faculty in 1976, Professor Schiebel gave breadth, rigor, and relevance to the study of Soviet history. He took over the direction of a foundering Russian Area Studies Program and built it into one of the most successful of its kind in the United States. A favorite lecturer for numerous public and private organizations, which also often solicited his counseling, he became chairman of the Eastern Europe and USSR section of the Center for Area and Country Studies of the Foreign Service Institute, 1972–74, and a visiting professor at the Defense Intelligence School as well.

Professor Schiebel's scholarly achievements include his Ph.D. dissertation, "Aziatchina: The Controversy Concerning the Nature of Russian Society and the Organization of the Bolshevik Party" (Seattle, 1972), a pioneering and daring interpretation of the relationship between ideas and power; an original analysis of Soviet foreign policy, "The USSR in World Affairs: New Tactics, New Strategy" (in *The Soviet Union: The Seventies and Beyond*, B. W. Eissenstat, ed., Lexington, Mass., 1975); a detailed *Syllabus and Study Guide* (Washington, D.C., 1975) for his Foreign Service Institute students; and a dozen other articles.

Dr. Schiebel's most impressive legacy, though, is the hundreds whom he taught, counseled, encouraged, and inspired. "I want to become a teacher," he wrote in 1961, when he applied for Ph.D. study, "and have at least the resolve that what I contribute will be meaningful and needed and what I teach will be relevant and remembered." In the subsequent fifteen years he fulfilled his design, and we have all benefited.

DAVID M. GOLDFRANK  
*Georgetown University*