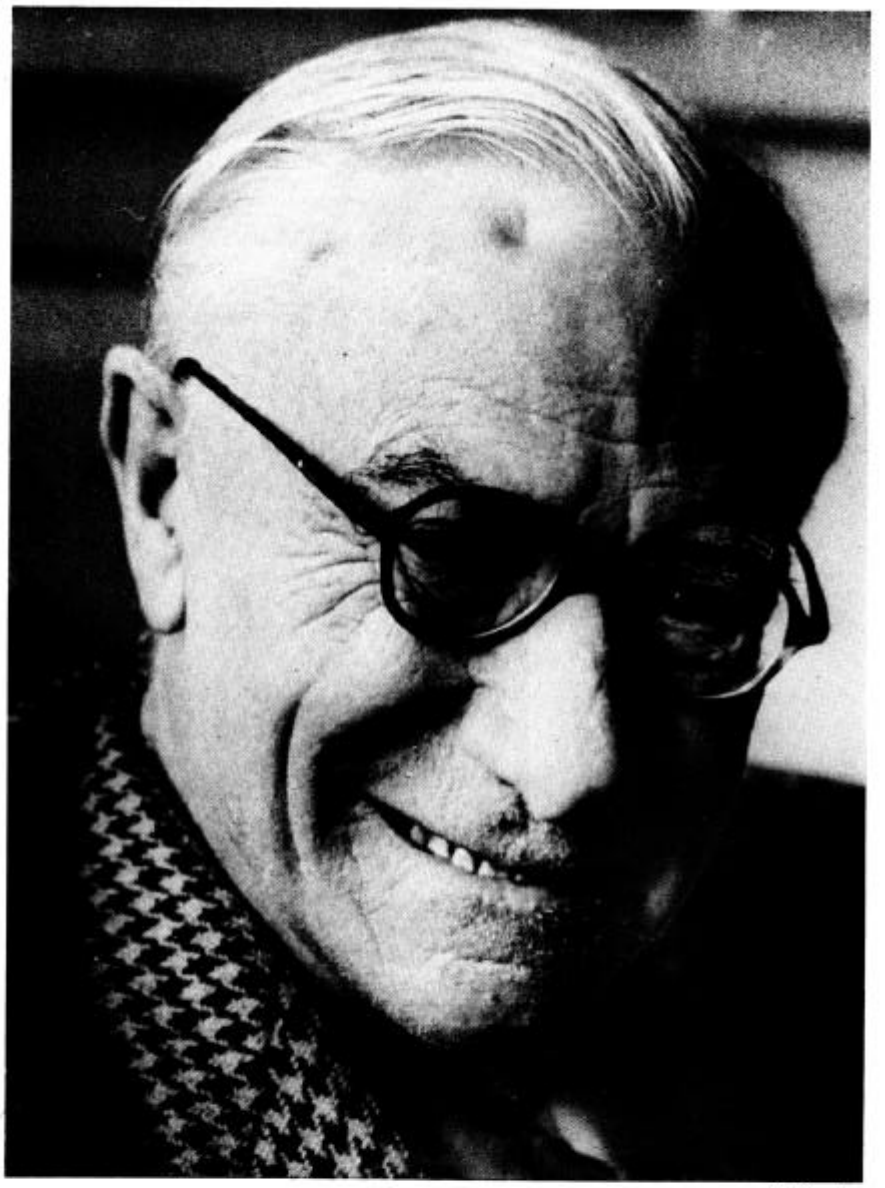
PLATE XIII



*The Guardian*

E. H. CARR

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# EDWARD HALLETT CARR

1892–1982

EDWARD HALLETT CARR achieved his towering eminence among twentieth-century intellectuals by virtue of several excellences. He was an original thinker, who in the course of more than forty years critically analysed the weaknesses of western society and pointed a way forward; as a reviewer once put it, he was 'the most unorthodox, radical and open-minded liberal of his generation'.[1] He was a profound scholar who sought to understand the past and the present, and grasp at the future, by combining his painstaking investigations of the past with a broad sweep of thought, illuminated by the experience of an active and varied life as intellectual and man of affairs. In a long lifetime he achieved distinction in no fewer than six vocations, normally pursuing a couple of them simultaneously: the civil servant who during twenty years' service in the Foreign Office became a master of public affairs; the deft biographer who delved into the intellectual life of nineteenth-century Russia and Europe; the essayist whose criticisms and sketches sparkled with wit and learning; the professor of international politics who founded the realistic tradition in the academic study of this subject; the journalist and publicist who was the influential assistant editor of *The Times* in a crucial period of our nation's history; and above all the great historian whose many volumes on the formation and consolidation of the Soviet state transformed our understanding of a major stage in world history.

The man whom A. J. P. Taylor described as 'an Olympian among historians, a Goethe in range and spirit', was not the easiest person to get to know. He had no doubt always had the slight aloofness and austerity of manner of the traditional upper-middle-class Englishman; and his own sense of a certain isolation from other people was reinforced by his intellectual development. He increasingly reacted against the prevailing ideology of the western world, but, as he himself realised, 'from a point somehow within it'. His quiet manner concealed passionate convictions, which he staunchly defended, not only when the going was good, but also in the more lengthy periods of adversity. For much of his life, he was

[1] *Times Literary Supplement*, 17 November 1961.

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not entirely at home either with the masters of society or with its rebels. His acute mind soon noticed muddleheadedness and cant, and he usually made it clear, with no respect for persons, that he did not suffer these defects gladly. He was fanatically devoted to his work, particularly in later years when he feared he might not live to complete his *History of Soviet Russia*; the social round was thrust to the bottom of his list of priorities. He always remained something of a remote, perhaps enigmatic, figure even to those closest to him.

At the same time he established long-standing friendships with many remarkable men and women, several of whom differed strongly from him on major issues of philosophy or politics: James Headlam-Morley, Lewis Namier, Harold Laski, Karl Mannheim, Stanley Morison, A. J. P. Taylor, Isaiah Berlin, Isaac and Tamara Deutscher, Peter Laslett, among others. When he found the time, he was a charming and stimulating companion. He got on well with younger scholars, and took great pains to help them in their work and in their life. One of them has described how Carr, though not his supervisor, read his work carefully, gave him generous advice, introduced him to other specialists, and helped him in many other ways, even though disagreeing with many of his conclusions.[1] Even in his seventies and eighties, long after he had formally retired from teaching, Carr still took on research students, returned their work quickly with detailed comments, and was readily available to discuss problems.[2] I knew him for over a quarter of a century, and collaborated closely with him for ten years; he was friendly and helpful, especially in times of personal anxiety. He was an exemplary host and unassuming guest, unfailingly courteous to my family and generous to me as his co-author. Soon after we began to work together in 1958 I discovered to my surprise and pleasure that he was free from the vanity and self-regard which mar the characters of many senior scholars. An unknown research fellow in my early thirties, I soon found that this famous historian twice my age welcomed and encouraged even my sharpest criticisms of his drafts, on matters small and large. Like Tamara Deutscher and others who have worked with Carr, I found our collaboration personally enjoyable as well as intellectually stimulating. So frictionless was our cooperation at a personal level, in spite of occasional lively exchanges of view in the course of the work, that I took it for granted that meticulous scrutiny and frank discussion of each

[1] See *London Review of Books*, no. 4 (1983) (letter by R. Morgan).

[2] Ibid., no. 3 (1983) (letter by J. Barber and J. Haslam).

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other's drafts was part of the normal working routine of historians engaged in a joint project, and only came to realize many years later that such close collaboration is rather rare.

Carr was born in London on 28 June 1892, eldest son of Francis Parker Carr and Jessie Carr (née Hallett). The earliest known Carr, George, was sheriff of Newcastle in 1450. His descendants moved south by way of York; and by Victorian times a vast and prosperous Carr family was located in Highgate. Francis Parker Carr was the eighth of nine children. He read mathematics at St Catherine's College, Cambridge, and then took charge of a successful but relatively small branch of the family firm, manufacturing such items as saddle-soap and Carr's Inks. Jessie Carr was not of robust health, and the two sons and daughter were brought up with the help of one of the many aunts. The younger son, Fred, eventually took over Carr's Inks. E. H. Carr in his autobiographical memoir looked back to a peaceful childhood spent in the comfortable and insular security of a middle-class home in the stable world of late-Victorian and Edwardian England. 'It never for one moment occurred to any of us that we should not have plenty to satisfy our fairly modest needs. The world was solid and stable. Prices did not change. Incomes, if they changed, went up—thanks to prudent management. The world at large was like that. It was a good place and was getting better. This country was leading it in the right direction. There were, no doubt, abuses but they were being, or would be, dealt with. Changes were needed, but change was automatically for the better. Decadence was a puzzling and paradoxical concept.'

Carr carried with him to the end of his life the optimistic confidence in the future which was a notable feature of that age, though in the inter-war years this confidence was transformed into a radical criticism of Western society. In his childhood his sense of security was undermined only in two minor but significant respects. He was a day-pupil at Merchant Taylors' School, where he was always top of the class except in what was then the rather minor subject of science; and as a clever boy at school he experienced what he described as 'a certain sense of "isolation" . . . I think I have never lost the sense of not fitting easily into my environment'. And this was reinforced when his father, who voted Conservative in 1895 and 1900, and was an impassioned free-trader, went over to the Liberals in the years of tariff reform and remained with them throughout the Lloyd George period of social and budgetary reform and of the clash with the House of Lords. Young Ted was impressed by his father's rational arguments

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about the absurd fallacies of the tariff reformers and enthusiastically supported his Liberal views. 'But at least 95% of my schoolfellows came from orthodox Conservative homes, and regarded Lloyd George as an incarnation of the devil. We liberals were a tiny despised minority.'

In 1911 Carr was awarded a Craven Scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge; he took a double first in classics in 1916, after losing a couple of years through illness. As an undergraduate he was not much interested in politics or history ('English history as taught at school was contemptible', he later wrote, 'and nobody took it seriously'). Perhaps the most considerable influence on him as a student was A. E. Housman, 'the most powerful intellectual machine I've ever seen in action, whose effortless handling of obscure classical texts I enormously admired and should have liked to imitate'. From Housman Carr acquired 'a rather pedantic addiction to the minutiae of accuracy and precision'; he acknowledged that 'I should like to think that I had learned something of his flair for cutting through a load of nonsense and getting straight to the point'. He also acquired at Cambridge his first understanding of what history was about, from a 'rather undistinguished' specialist in the Persian wars, who argued that Herodotus' account of them was 'shaped and moulded by his attitude to the Peleponnesian War, which was going on at the time he wrote'. This 'fascinating revelation' strongly influenced Carr's later view of history and historians.

After graduation, unfit for military service, he took a temporary post as a Foreign Office clerk; his first assignment was to the Contraband Department dealing with the economic blockade. After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 he became the junior member of a three-man team concerned with the Russian problem. In 1919—together with other future eminent historians including Namier, Sumner, Toynbee, and Webster—he joined the British delegation to the Paris peace conference. He remained in Paris until 1921; he was decorated CBE in 1920 at the early age of 28. He continued to serve in the Foreign Office between January 1925 and the summer of 1929 as second secretary in the British legation at Riga. In Riga, Russia was the constant topic of interest. He learned Russian in 1925; and visited Moscow for the first time in 1927.

Thus from the very beginning, partly by chance, he was concerned with the Russian revolution and its aftermath. He found much blandness and smugness among his fellow officials. In the first few days after the revolution he had several talks with the

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commercial attaché in the British Embassy in Petrograd, then visiting London, who believed the Bolsheviks could not last for more than a week or so. 'From the first, owing to some esprit de contradiction, I refused to believe this. I studied eagerly every bit of news, and the longer the Bolsheviks held out, the more convinced I became that they had come to stay.' At the peace conference, 'I warmly approved Lloyd George's resistance to Churchill's schemes, and was disappointed when he gave way (in part) on the Russian question'. In Riga, where the headquarters of British intelligence in Eastern Europe were located, he observed the 'narrowness and bigotry' of the two top people in intelligence, ex-residents in Russia who had lost their fortunes in the revolution.

But at this time Carr's dissent from conventional views was very limited. At the time of the revolution, 'I had some vague impression of the revolutionary views of Lenin and Trotsky, but knew nothing of Marxism: I'd probably never heard of Marx.' And at the peace conference 'my Liberal principles were still intact'. He was indignant when a War Office General asserted that the small Baltic states would inevitably be gobbled up by Russia or Germany. He was outraged at French intransigence, and at our unfairness to the Germans, who were 'cheated over the "Fourteen Points", and subjected to every petty humiliation'. This sense of outrage was not idiosyncratic or even notably unconventional: it was shared by many members of the British delegation. And his Riga years 'were probably the easiest and most carefree of my life; in Europe they were years of recovery, of increasing prosperity and stability'.

It was during his years at Riga, however, that he began to study Russian literature and culture. 'Riga was an intellectual desert'; and Carr found the continuous party-giving and party-going, and attendance at the opera, 'excessively boring'; he hated opera for the rest of his life. With time to spare, he read Dostoevsky and Herzen. 'I now perceived for the first time that the liberal moralistic ideology in which I had been brought up was not, as I had always assumed, an Absolute taken for granted by the modern world, but was sharply and convincingly attacked by very intelligent people living outside the charmed circle, who looked at the world through very different eyes. In other words, the first challenge to the bourgeois capitalist society came, so far as I was concerned, not from Marx or from the Bolsheviks, but from Russian 19th century intellectuals, who were not in any strict sense revolutionaries at all.'

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These insights launched Carr on his second vocation, that of biographer, which he pursued diligently while continuing to work in the Foreign Office. He published in quick succession his brilliant literary biographies *Dostoevsky (1821–1881): a New Biography* (1931) and *The Romantic Exiles: a Nineteenth Century Portrait Gallery* (1933), and these were soon followed by *Karl Marx: a Study in Fanaticism* (1934) and *Michael Bakunin* (1937). Though written by an 'amateur', all these books, with the exception of the biography of Marx, were major scholarly studies. The volume on Dostoevsky was described by D. S. Mirsky in his preface as 'the first Life of Dostoevsky, in any language, to be based on adequate material'. Mirsky gently reproved Carr for 'indulging in generalizations on the Russian mind and character', but praised his biography as pre-eminently sensible: 'there is no nonsense in Mr. Carr's book'. Carr rejected the prevalent western view of Dostoevsky as a moral anarchist, and showed the importance of his conviction of the necessity of faith in God. He recounted Dostoevsky's personal and intellectual development, portraying his relationships with his wife, his close relatives and his fellow-writers with a delicate touch and accurately delineating the social world in which he moved. Carr's careful weighing of different kinds of evidence displayed some of the qualities which were to mark the future historian. And, for its time, his dissection of the novels and their characters, and their relationship to Dostoevsky's philosophy and ethics, was unusually perceptive. Much of the book has been superseded in the succeeding fifty years by the vast amount of research on Dostoevsky which has appeared in both the Soviet Union and the West, often based on new material. But many of Carr's judgments are still accepted by scholars.

*The Romantic Exiles*, more popular in style, written in what Carr later described or deprecated as 'a frivolous mood', introduced more than one generation of readers to that strange mid-nineteenth-century world of the Russian intellectuals in exile in Western Europe. It has acquired lasting authority from Carr's interviews with Herzen's daughter, and his correspondence with Herwegh's son, and continues to have a wide readership.

*Karl Marx* was written at a publisher's suggestion at a time when Carr was unable to interest publishers in his proposed biography of Bakunin. Carr later recalled that 'I succumbed to the temptation, not reflecting that I knew nothing about what was really important in Marx . . . It was a foolish enterprise, and produced a foolish book: I have refused all offers to reprint it as a

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paperback.' This verdict was perhaps a little too harsh. Given the importance of the subject, this book was certainly much too light-hearted; it did not take Marxism at all seriously, summarily and rather arrogantly rejecting its 'odd self-contradictions, its obsolete economic assumptions'. But Carr presents a convincing account of some aspects of Marx the man in his time and place. Among the best passages are those contrasting the personality and outlook of the moderate socialist Lassalle, patriotic and amiable, living in comfort in Germany, and the revolutionary socialist Marx, the quarrelsome poverty-stricken emigré 'citizen of the world'.

Perhaps the most surprising of all Carr's books is the biography of the turbulent anarchist Bakunin. In his autobiographical memoir, Carr has described how, after writing about Dostoevsky and Herzen, he 'became fascinated by Bakunin, probably as the figure embodying the most total rejection of western society . . . I even wrote a novel of which the theme was the impact of an outrageous and flamboyant character modelled on Bakunin on a conventional English group. The idea was good, but the execution feeble; it never saw the light, and some years later I destroyed it.' After he had completed *Marx*, he managed to interest Macmillan's in his proposed biography of Bakunin; they published all but one of his many subsequent books.

While Carr exposed all the defects in Bakunin's character and ideas, he described his fundamental purposes not only with understanding but also with sympathy. Bakunin's career was 'barren of concrete result', but 'Bakunin is one of the completest embodiments in history of the spirit of liberty—the liberty which excludes neither licence nor caprice, which tolerates no human institution, which remains an unrealised and unrealisable ideal, but which is almost universally felt to be an indispensable part of the highest manifestations and aspirations of humanity.' Herzen's 'well-ordered talent' was 'dwarfed by this towering, undisciplined force'. Carr contrasted Marx and Bakunin: both wanted to tear down the existing order, but one was a statesman and constructive revolutionary who sought the rule of a new class, the other a visionary and prophet, who predicted and favoured a spontaneous revolt of the least civilized which would achieve the domination of the individual and destruction of the state, but was curiously permissive to dictatorship. Carr admired Bakunin because, like Marx, he continued to adhere to his principles while others faltered. For Carr, Marx and Bakunin represented the conflicting realistic and utopian elements in the movement

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against capitalism, and he would frequently return to the paradoxes of this conflict later in his life. Forty years later he still believed that Bakunin 'was a very interesting man. I'll always listen to anything about Bakunin.'[1]

While Carr had not yet assimilated all the technical apparatus of a professional historian, he now presented his characters against their background in European history and thought with confidence and a much greater maturity. Carr himself once remarked that 'I'd almost say it was the best book I ever wrote'.[1] It is still frequently cited by other scholars, and until 1982 it was the only major biography of Bakunin.

From 1929 onwards Carr also regularly reviewed books on Russian culture and Soviet affairs, and on a wide range of historical and contemporary political topics, for the *Spectator*, the *Fortnightly Review*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*. This activity developed into his third vocation as critic and essayist, which continued for the rest of his life. Some reviews were published over his own name; in his Foreign Office days others, particularly those on contemporary issues, over the pseudonym 'John Hallett'. His incisive reviews of most major and many minor books on Soviet affairs provide a comprehensive survey of the knowledge of the Soviet Union, patchy and varying in quality, available to the Western world in the 1930s. Notable reviews include those of the histories of the Russian revolution by Trotsky and W. H. Chamberlin, which were highly praised for their objectivity and their grasp of major issues.[2] The Webbs' *Soviet Communism*, on the other hand, though recommended as an exhaustive guide to Soviet institutions, was berated for the fundamental weakness that 'it attempts to fit the Soviet Union into a mould for which it was never intended and to judge it by standards which it has never accepted'; the Webbs 'go through a whole chapter of verbal contortions to explain exactly why and how the Soviet Union is a democracy'.[3]

Meanwhile Carr continued his career at the Foreign Office. He was an adviser on League of Nations Affairs in 1930–3, in which capacity he spent some time in Geneva; in 1933 he was appointed first secretary and continued to serve in London until 1936. Viscount Halifax wrote, while Foreign Secretary, that in the Foreign Office Carr had 'distinguished himself not only by sound

[1] Interview with Richard Gott, *Guardian*, 25 November 1978.
[2] *Spectator*, 13 January 1933; *Sunday Times*, 6 October 1935.
[3] *Fortnightly Review*, February 1936, pp. 243–4.

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learning and political understanding, but also in administrative ability'.[1]

These were the years of world capitalist crisis and mass unemployment; 1931 was characterized by Arnold Toynbee in the annual *Survey of International Affairs* as 'annus terribilis'. Carr recollected the early 1930s as a time of his progress, albeit 'haphazard', towards 'more sweeping criticism of western liberalism':

> At Geneva I followed some of the debates about the economic crisis, which seemed to spell the bankruptcy of capitalism. In particular I was struck by the fact that everyone professed to believe that tariff barriers were a major cause of aggravation of the crisis, but that practically every country was busy erecting them. I happened to hear a speech by some minor delegate (Yugoslav, I think) which for the first time in my experience put the issue clearly and urgently. Free trade was the doctrine of economically powerful states which flourished without protection, but would be fatal to weak states. This came as a revelation to me (like the revelation at Cambridge of the relativism of historiography), and was doubly significant because of the part played by free trade in my intellectual upbringing. If free trade went, the whole liberal outlook went with it.[2]

And, with his work on Marx's biography, Carr came to recognize him as the key figure in the revolt against capitalist society. He wrote in an article commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Marx's death that the concentration of capitalism into large units, the rise of working-class organization, and the victory of the proletariat in Russia 'give Marx a claim to be regarded as the most far-seeing genius of the nineteenth century and one of the most successful prophets in history'. He added that 'there are now few thinking men who will dismiss with confidence the Marxian assumption that capitalism, developed to its highest point, inevitably encompasses its own destruction'.[3]

But Carr was always 'more interested in marxism as a method of revealing the hidden springs of thought and action, and debunking the logical and moralistic façade generally erected round them, than in the Marxist analysis of the decline of capitalism'. And in the wide reading about society and the problems of mankind on which he embarked in the mid-1930s, he was particularly influenced by the sociologist Karl Mannheim, whose

[1] Preface to E. H. Carr, *Britain: a Study of Foreign Policy From the Versailles Treaty to the Outbreak of War* (1939), p.v.

[2] This persuasive speech, made by the Yugoslav Foreign Minister Marinkovich in January 1931, and criticizing the British Labour Foreign Minister's appeal for an all-round tariff reduction, is cited by Carr *in extenso* in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939), pp. 73–5.

[3] *Fortnightly Review*, March 1933, p. 319.

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quasi-Marxist *Ideology and Utopia* (1936) showed how the opinions of political and economic groups reflected their status and interests, and by the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, whose analysis of morality and society, while written by a man of profound religious conviction, was also sternly realistic. 'The synthesis of morality and reason, at any rate in the crude form in which it was achieved by nineteenth-century liberalism', wrote Carr, 'is untenable. . . . The present generation will have to rebuild from the foundations.'[1]

The early 1930s in the Soviet Union, with the emergence of Stalin to supreme power, saw the triumph of planned industrialization and the consolidation of the Soviet state. At this time, Carr recalled in his autobiographical memoir, he was 'thoroughly pro-Soviet (a dissident view at the time)'. In his reviews of Trotsky and Chamberlin he entirely accepted their unfashionable assessment of both the revolutions of 1917 as spontaneous upsurges of the mass of the people: 'it was the masses who drove their hesitating and temporizing leaders further and further down the path of revolution. The makers and heroes of the revolution were in fact, as the Bolshevik legend proclaims, the proletarian and the peasant.'[2] He was favourably impressed by Soviet industrialization, and soon concluded that 'the ambitious enterprise of "collectivising" the farm was both a political and an economic necessity for the Soviet government', 'the logical conclusion of the long and gradual offensive against private trade which began about 1924'.[3] In a review of a popular Soviet book on planning, Carr wrote of 'the Religion of the Kilowatt and the Machine, which may well be the creed for which modern civilisation is waiting', and contrasted Russia with contemporary Europe, which was 'aimlessly drifting, refusing to face unpalatable facts'.[4] 'The Five-Year Plan', Carr later recollected, 'seemed to me the answer to the anarchy of capitalism, so clearly demonstrated by the economic crisis.' And in international affairs 'I listened to Litvinov at Geneva, admired his exposure of western hypocrisy about disarmament, and deplored the campaign against "Soviet dumping"'.

But the triumphs of Soviet industrialization were accompanied by a rising tide of repression. According to Carr, the period of the

[1] *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939), p. 80.

[2] *Sunday Times*, 6 October 1935.

[3] *Fortnightly Review*, August 1931, p. 268 (review of M. Hindus, *Red Bread*); *Spectator*, 15 February 1935 (review of W. H. Chamberlin, *Russia's Iron Age*).

[4] *Fortnightly Review*, September 1931 (review of M. Ilin, *Moscow Has a Plan*).

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purges, from about 1935 onwards, was for him 'one of disillusionment and revulsion, the intensity of which was, I suppose, accounted for by my previous enthusiasm'. This retrospective assessment of his views is partly but not entirely borne out by his public and private writings at that time. Following a visit to the USSR several weeks in duration in the spring of 1937, he wrote three anonymous articles in *The Times* with the general title 'Lenin: Stalin'. He depicted the Soviet industrial revolution as on the whole successful. While it had meted out to the peasant, as of old, 'all the kicks and few of the halfpence', it had established a much larger working class which was better off than ever before. It had also brought to power 'a new social stratum, appropriately defined as a "middle class"'. This 'new *bourgeoisie*' was 'the backbone and the principal beneficiary' of the regime, but careers were open to the talents, and 'classes in the Soviet Union have not yet crystallised, and may never crystallise'. The recent terror, while not directed against any real conspiracy or popular movement, marked 'the consolidation of the Soviet power'.[1] But, on Carr's assessment, in spite of this economic and social development, the Soviet Union, far from being the hope of the world, was a totalitarian regime similar in principle to those of Germany and Italy.[2] He told a Chatham House audience that, although the restrictions on the liberty, freedom and welfare of the individual had been increasing much more rapidly in Germany than in Russia, nevertheless, because of the long German tradition of individual freedom, Germany under the Nazis, which he also visited in 1937, was 'almost a free country as compared with Russia'.[3]

Carr later admitted that 'one result of my preoccupation with the Russian horrors was a neglect of what was going on in Germany'. Fascism in Germany seemed to him 'deplorable, but somehow incidental and peripheral'. Strongly antagonistic to the Versailles Treaty, Carr sympathized with Hitler's revolt against it, refused to be indignant about the re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, and did not begin to think of Hitler as a serious danger until after the occupation of Austria in 1938. 'No doubt', he admitted later, 'I was very blind'. In his temporary blindness Carr in his last days at the Foreign Office in 1936 advocated the

[1] *The Times*, 5, 6, 7 July 1937.

[2] See 'Hitler's Gospel and Stalin's', *Spectator*, 16 September 1938.

[3] 'Impressions of a Visit to Russia and Germany', typescript of a talk given at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 12 October 1937, with Peter Fleming in the chair.

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abandonment of South Eastern Europe to German domination.[1] He asserted that France and Soviet Russia were aiming at 'not collective security, but a division of the Great Powers into two armed camps', praised King Leopold's declaration of Belgian isolation of 14 October 1936, and called both for non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War and for British neutrality between the fascist and Franco-Soviet groups of powers.[2] He supported the Munich Agreement, arguing even after the outbreak of war that 'the alternative was a policy of hostile words which could not be reinforced by military action'.[3] He even suggested that 'the tragedy of September [1938] might have been averted' if in the spring of 1938 Hodza's view that Czechoslovakia should come to terms with Germany had prevailed over that of Beneš.[4] For Carr, Colonel Beck, attempting to keep Poland neutral between Germany and France, was 'a realist who grasped the fundamentals of the European situation', and his foreign policy was 'from the Polish point of view . . . brilliantly successful'.[5] He placed the main blame for the breakdown of the Anglo-Soviet negotiations in the summer of 1939 firmly with the Soviet Union;[6] no mention sullied his pages of such matters as the disillusionment caused in Moscow by the British decision at a crucial stage in the negotiations to send a military mission by slow boat to Moscow, headed by the minor figure of Admiral the Hon. Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax. Carr's tragedy at this time was that he was a captive of the conventional cast of mind against which he had earlier revolted. Like many of his contemporaries, he utterly failed to recognize the aggressive and war-like nature of Nazi Germany. But by July 1939 he was rapidly shedding these illusions. He wrote of Churchill's campaign of the mid-1930s that 'he was deliberately alarmist, and on the whole justifiably so'.[7] In the same month he condemned 'the complete lack of any German readiness to make the smallest sacrifice for the sake of civilisation' at the time of Munich; 'very soon any prospect that the Munich settlement might inaugurate a happier period of international relations in which peaceful change by

[1] J. Haslam in *History Today*, August 1983, p. 37 (based on a study of Foreign Office archives).

[2] *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 December 1936; *Fortnightly Review*, January 1937, p. 341.

[3] *Britain* (1939), p. 176.

[4] *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 March 1939.

[5] Ibid., 10 June 1939; *Sunday Times*, 30 July 1939.

[6] *Britain* (1939), pp. 13, 186–8.

[7] *Times Literary Supplement*, 1 July 1939.

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negotiation would become an effective factor seemed to have disappeared'.[1]

In 1936 in the midst of these grim events Carr was appointed Woodrow Wilson Professor of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and embarked on his fourth vocation, as academic specialist in international relations. His appointment was accompanied by bitter controversy. The chair, the first on this subject in Britain, was established in 1919 on the initiative and with the financial support of the industrialist David Davies, close associate of Lloyd George, first a Liberal MP and then a peer, a fervent supporter of the League of Nations. Carr, a man of vast experience but with no academic qualifications in the field, was preferred by the electoral board to the historian C. A. Macartney and to the odd candidature of W. Arnold Forster, a professional painter who was a strong adherent of Lord Davies' views on the League. On Carr's appointment Lord Davies indignantly resigned from the presidency of the college.[2] Carr soon justified Lord Davies' doubts about his willingness to stand up for the League by publishing in quick succession an inaugural lecture and three books, all of which were directed against what Carr saw as the prevailing idealism and Utopianism in the study of international affairs.[3]

These books almost immediately established Carr's preeminence in his new profession. The most important was the pathbreaking and still widely-read *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, which Carr later described as 'not exactly a Marxist work, but strongly impregnated with Marxist ways of thinking, applied to international affairs'. Nearly forty years after its publication an American critic described it as 'the first "scientific" treatment of modern world politics'.[4] In his book, Carr set out to demolish the doctrine of the harmony of interests, so pervasive in thinking about international affairs between the wars, and advocated a realistic approach to politics in the tradition of Machiavelli,

[1] *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1939), p. 283; for the month in which the book was completed see ibid., p. ix.

[2] Appendix by the editor on the history of the Woodrow Wilson chair in *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919–1969*, ed. B. Porter (1972), pp. 365–6.

[3] 'Public Opinion as a Safeguard of Peace', in *International Affairs*, vol. 15, no. 6, 1936; *International Relations since the Peace Treaties* (1937, second edn. with additional chapters 1940, reprinted in 1947 as *International Relations between the Two World Wars*); *Britain: A Study of Foreign Policy from the Versailles Treaty to the Outbreak of War* (1939); and *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: an Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (1939).

[4] S. Hoffmann, in *Daedalus*, summer 1977, p. 43.

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Hobbes, and Marx. The doctrine of the harmony of interests was originally popularized by Adam Smith and the *laissez-faire* school of political economy, which held that the economic interests of the individual were identical with those of the community. But, as Carr pointed out, in this form even before 1914 it no longer appealed 'to any serious thinker': 'the doctrine of the harmony of interests was tenable only if you left out of account the interests of the weak who must be driven to the wall.' In the period after the first world war, however, largely through American inspiration, the doctrine was reintroduced in the special field of international affairs. In international political relations, the common assumption that every nation has an identical interest in peace masked the conflict of interests between nations desirous of maintaining the *status quo* and nations desirous of changing it. In international economic relations, while the doctrine of *laissez-faire* had been superseded, it was still assumed that harmony could be served by a judicious balancing of interests through general agreement. In reality, according to Carr, there is no general principle of economic policy whose application would be equally beneficial to the stronger and the weaker nations. These utopian approaches must be replaced by the realistic recognition that international relations are based on hard bargaining between conflicting interests, analogous to industrial bargaining between capital and labour. 'Power, used, threatened or silently held in reserve is an essential factor in international change; and change will, generally speaking, be effected only in the interests of those by whom, or on whose behalf, power can be invoked.' Carr recognized that this realistic approach could 'depreciate the role of purpose' and 'tend to emphasise the irresistible strength of existing forces'; it was a necessary corrective to the prevailing utopianism rather than an alternative to it. 'Mature thought combines purpose with observation and analysis. Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place.' But 'realism' overwhelmingly predominated over utopianism in all Carr's pre-war studies of international relations.

In retrospect Carr was modestly critical of his own role in the development of these studies. 'Whatever my share in starting this business', he wrote in a letter in 1977, 'I do not know that I am particularly proud of it. I suspect that we tried to conjure into existence an international society and a science of international relations. We failed. No international society exists, but an open

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club without substantive rules. No science of international relations exists. The study of international relations in English speaking countries is simply a study of the best way to run the world from positions of strength. The study of international relations in African and Asian Universities, if it ever got going, would be a study of the exploitation of the weaker by the stronger.'[1]

*The Twenty Years' Crisis* was in page proofs when war broke out on 3 September 1939. Carr later wrote that 'the war came as a shock which numbed the thinking process'. Soon after the outbreak of war, he was plunged into his fifth professional activity, as publicist and journalist. In the first winter of war he served in the Ministry of Information as its director of foreign publicity; he left this post in April 1940 after a clash with the new Minister, Sir John Reith. From May 1940 he regularly wrote leaders for *The Times*, and from the spring of 1941 was appointed its assistant editor, a few months before Barrington-Ward took over the editorship from Geoffrey Dawson. In this post, which he held throughout the war, Carr exercised great influence on the policy of *The Times*, and played a considerable role in moulding public opinion. Thomas Jones, Lloyd George's secretary and future president of the University College of Wales, even claimed that 'Professor Carr on *The Times* is worth several generals in the field'.[2]

Carr expressed his hopes and plans for the future of Britain and the world in a series of influential *Times* leaders and private memoranda. He insisted that the official war aim of 'destroying Hitlerism' was not enough. What was required was a 'definite picture of what we are fighting for, both to hearten our own people at home and to counteract German propaganda abroad'. A new European society should be established based on new social and economic foundations—equality of opportunity, and planning governed by the well-being of the community and not the price mechanism.[3] Perhaps his most famous leading article, 'The Two Scourges', argued that the scourge of unemployment must be removed if the world was not to be haunted in future by the scourge of war.[4] 'This is not altogether a national war', Carr claimed, 'it is to a certain extent a social war, a revolutionary war';

[1] EHC to Professor S. Hoffmann, 30 September 1977.

[2] Telegram of 3 March 1943, cited in *The Aberystwyth Papers*, p. 367.

[3] Memoranda of July and 5 August 1940; the former was prepared for Sir Orme Sargent in the Foreign Office; the latter, addressed to Barrington-Ward, was an expansion of Carr's *Times* leader of the same date, 'Planning for War and Peace'.

[4] *The Times*, 5 December 1940.

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'as a political revolution it is not simply confined to one country but is more or less world-wide.'[1]

In retrospect, Carr was clearly aware of the contrast between the realist of 1939 and the visionary of 1940. 'Like a lot of other people', he wrote in his autobiographical memoir, 'I took refuge in Utopian visions of a new world after the war; after all, it was on the basis of such visions that a lot of real constructive work was done, and Churchill lost sympathy by being openly impatient of them. I began to be a bit ashamed of the harsh "realism" of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* and in 1940–41 wrote the highly Utopian *Conditions of Peace* [1942]—a sort of liberal Utopia, mixed with a little socialism but very little Marxism. It was my most popular book to date, because it caught the current mood. But it was pretty feeble.'

Carr's criticisms of existing Western society, and his belief in the necessity for a new social and economic order, were greatly strengthened by the entry of Russia into the war in June 1941. 'In *The Times* I very quickly began to plug the Russian alliance; and, when this was vindicated by Russian endurance and the Russian victory, it revived my initial faith in the Russian revolution as a great achievement and a historical turning point.... I came to feel that my preoccupation with the purges and brutalities of Stalinism had distorted my perspective. The black spots were real enough, but looking exclusively at them destroyed one's vision of what was really happening.'

Carr regarded cooperation with the Soviet Union as a cardinal principle not only of victory but also of the peace which was to follow. Even before Russia's entry into the war, he had argued that Russia would be bound to claim after the war a large measure of control of Eastern Europe and that this claim could hardly be resisted.[1] In leading articles in *The Times* from 1942 onwards he condemned attempts to establish fully independent regimes in Poland and elsewhere as foolish and misguided; and he opposed the re-establishment of the old order of society in the parts of Europe which were under British and American control. Whereas his earlier call for a planned social order had been greeted sympathetically by influential politicians and civil servants as well as by the wider public, his views on the post-war international order met with hostility and indignation in government circles. When *The Times* criticized British suppression of the Communist-

[1] Texts of Chatham House Lectures, 'What are We Fighting For?' (14 August 1940), 'The Post-War World: Some Pointers Towards Reconstruction' (10 December 1940).

[2] Chatham House Lecture, 10 December 1940.

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dominated Greek resistance movement at the end of 1944, Churchill condemned this in the House of Commons as a 'melancholy exhibition'.[1] Even more bluntly Sir Alexander Cadogan, the principal civil servant in the Foreign Office, wrote in his diary: 'I hope someone will tie Barrington Ward and Ted Carr together and throw them into the Thames.'[2]

Carr did not, however, anticipate or favour Soviet predominance in Western or Central Europe. On his conception, Britain and the best British traditions had a vital role to play in the post-war world. In 1940 he envisaged that in establishing a new social order 'the British people must be prepared, even at the cost of some immediate sacrifice to themselves, to take their position as the leaders of Europe'.[3] In *Nationalism and After* (1945) he postulated a Western Europe including Britain, with common economic planning and a joint military organization, 'based on principles which diverge both from the Soviet ideology of state monopoly and from the American ideology of unrestricted competition'. Western Europe, while independent of Russia and Eastern Europe, would at the same time learn from the Soviet experience. During the war, Carr wrote, 'I became intensely interested in what the Russians had done, and how far this had any lessons for western society'. This had its outcome in a series of lectures delivered in Oxford in February and March 1946, shortly before Churchill's Fulton speech heralded the beginning of the cold war; these were published as *The Soviet Impact on the Western World* (1946). Soviet Russia was seen by Carr as presenting a comprehensive challenge to the West. Soviet democracy, resuming the traditions of French revolutionary democracy, challenged Western individualistic democracy as a formal and institutional sham, which permitted the continuing predominance of a ruling class and failed to provide for mass participation in administration. Soviet planning offered a successful alternative to *laissez-faire* and economic crisis. Soviet social policy offered positive social goals and rights, including the right to employment, while insisting that 'the positive incentive of social obligation' should replace 'the negative incentive of the fear of penury and hunger'. Soviet ideology challenged the moral authority of Western democratic principles by declaring them to be a reflection of

[1] *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963*, ed. R. R. James, vol. vii (1974), pp. 7085–6 (speech of 19 January 1945).

[2] *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945*, ed. D. Dilks (1971), p. 697; Cadogan was Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

[3] Chatham House lecture, 14 August 1940.

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the interests of a privileged class, and offered to the oppressed throughout the world a new set of ideas framed in response to the new conditions of mass civilization. In response to this challenge Carr looked forward to 'not an out-and-out victory either for the western or for the Soviet ideology', but 'a compromise, a half-way house, a synthesis between conflicting ways of life'. 'The fate of the western world will turn on its ability to meet the Soviet challenge by a successful search for new forms of social and economic action in which what is valid in individualist and democratic tradition can be applied to the problems of mass civilization.'

*Soviet Impact* bears clear marks of the time at which it was written. It underestimated the inhumanities, inequalities, and inefficiencies of Stalinist Russia, and the resilience of the profit-motive and market forces in western economies. The book, Carr wrote many years later, was 'hastily written, one-sided (it didn't profess to be anything else) and contained some exaggerations'. But, he added, 'it made a lot of valid points'; and the validity and profundity of some of his major arguments emerged much more clearly when, five years later, in May and June 1951, he delivered his broadcast lectures on *The New Society* (1951). This more mature analysis of the world condition in the middle of the twentieth century, free from the naivetés of *Soviet Impact*, is, in my opinion, the best of all his general works, and thirty years later still retains all its freshness and most of its validity. The titles of the lectures clearly convey the sweep of Carr's argument: The Historical Approach; From Competition to Planned Economy; From Economic Whip to Welfare State; From Individualism to Mass Democracy; The World Transformed; The Road to Freedom. 'We are committed', Carr boldly declared, 'to mass democracy, to egalitarian democracy, to the public control and planning of the economic process, and therefore to the strong state exercising remedial and constructive functions'; and this was a world-wide process in which the colonial revolution was 'advancing side by side with the social revolution and forming part of it'. A major weakness of this otherwise penetrating assessment was his assumption that the controllers and the machinery of the 'strong state' could be relied upon to act in the interests of society as a whole, and would seek to bring about a proper balance between the interests of democracy and of the state. The experience of Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Indira Gandhi, Idi Amin, and Ayatollah Khomeini as heads of strong states in very varied circumstances indicates that Carr's prescription for the future would have benefited from closer attention to the warnings of Bakunin. As

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Stanley Morison, Carr's friend and associate on *The Times*, once perceptively remarked in criticism of one of his essays, 'the organs of the State feel about as much personal responsibility, as the Directors of the Prudential feel for their clients', so that to allow the assent of the governed 'to be exploited without moral check by officials of the State, is a highly dangerous proceeding'.[1]

In 1946 Carr relinquished the Assistant Editorship of *The Times*. In 1947 he also resigned from the Chair of International Politics at Aberystwyth; this was, as Christopher Hill has put it, a time when 'it was thought, or pretended to be thought, that any irregularity in one's matrimonial position made it impossible for one to be a good scholar or teacher'.[2] It was also the time of Cold War, when scholars with radical, unconventional and 'Sovietophile' views, however distinguished, found advancement difficult. In 1945, he was not elected to the Chair of Russian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies of the University of London, vacant for a decade, even though, according to the then Director of the School, 'everything seemed to point' to him.[3] The University of Oxford failed to elect him to its Chair of International Relations;[4] St. Antony's College, Oxford, failed to elect him to a Fellowship. In 1955, after two years at Balliol as Lecturer in Politics, he again failed to be elected a Fellow (he was eventually elected Honorary Fellow in 1966). His lack of a permanent academic position caused financial and personal stress to Carr. But it was in the interests of learning, for it left him free to settle down to his masterpiece, *A History of Soviet Russia*, on which he had embarked in the last winter of the war. In 1955, he was elected a Fellow of his old college at Cambridge, Trinity, and remained there until his death; in 1956 he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy; many universities awarded him honorary degrees; and Aberystwyth has founded an annual E. H. Carr Memorial Lecture.

Carr's decision in 1944 at the age of 52 to write *A History of Soviet Russia* was a natural consequence of his life's experience and of his view of the contemporary world. He had acquired many of the

[1] Letter from Stanley Morison to EHC, 3 May 1944, commenting on the 1944 essay 'History in Our Time' (see p. 504 below): on Morison, see E. H. Carr, *From Napoleon to Stalin*, pp. 192–9.

[2] *Balliol College Annual Record 1983*, pp. 20–2.

[3] *Slavonic Review*, vol. xliv (1965–6), p. 15 (W. J. Rose).

[4] According to Christopher Hill (loc. cit.) who describes this as 'bizarre' and 'not an edifying story', 'the story told is that his name was considered (with others) by the electing board, which decided that none of them was worthy of election', and appointed one of its own number to the chair.

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qualities required for this daunting task. He had learned Russian and steeped himself in Russian culture; he had some knowledge of Marxism and had learned to appreciate its importance; he had become acquainted with Soviet affairs in the course of his duties at the Foreign Office, and above all in his spare-time activity as a reviewer of books on Soviet affairs. At the Foreign Office and as Assistant Editor of *The Times* he had mastered the facility of surveying a mass of official documents and reports and distinguishing the important and significant from the trivial; as a biographer he had acquired the art of handling the more uncertain evidence of diaries and reminiscences.

The views Carr had formed of the contemporary world, and of the march of world history, placed the Soviet experience at the centre of his attention, and it seized his imagination. He held that the Bolshevik revolution and the Soviet system were in some important senses the starting point and the initial stages of the establishment of a new society. But at the same time he was fully conscious of the limitations due to Russia's past. He firmly believed that the fundamental features of Soviet development, under Lenin as well as under Stalin, were imposed by the context that the first Marxist government was established in an autocratic and peasant country. Carr had been convinced from the outset that the industrialization drive and the collectivization of agriculture under Stalin were a logical consequence of these historical circumstances. The revolution had not been betrayed but changed by the circumstance that it had taken place in a peasant country, he declared in his Chatham House lecture in 1937. But his was a sternly realist assessment. His writings and lectures in the 1930s recorded the tragedies and the suffering as well as the achievements. In his 1937 Chatham House lecture he described the results of famine and the purges, and the scale of forced labour, and was scathing about starry-eyed reports from enthusiasts on their Intourist trips to Moscow. It was in a mood of realistic optimism about the Soviet experiment that Carr decided in 1944 to write a history 'not of the events of the revolution (these have already been chronicled by many hands) but of the political, social and economic order which emerged from it'. In training and outlook, he was perhaps uniquely equipped to undertake what he described as the 'dual task imposed on every serious historian: to combine an imaginative understanding of the outlook and purpose of his dramatis personae with an overriding appreciation of the universal significance of the action', and to do this without being tempted 'to measure the Russia of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin

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by any yardstick borrowed from the Britain of MacDonald, Baldwin and Churchill or the America of Wilson, Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt'.[1]

*A History of Soviet Russia* underwent many changes in the thirty-two years of its gestation. 'I am not sure exactly what I envisaged when I began to research and write', Carr admitted in 1977 in the Preface to the final fourteenth volume, 'but it was something far smaller and more restricted in scope than what has emerged'.[2] His original conception was that he would begin with 'a long introductory chapter in which I should have analysed the structure of Soviet society as it was established before Lenin's final withdrawal from the scene in the spring of 1923—a moment which approximately coincided with the foundation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics'.[3] This would be followed by a more detailed examination of the developments after Lenin's death, culminating in the industrialization drive. When he was three or four years into the project, he anticipated that 'later I hope to go as far as the Stalin constitution of [1936], or perhaps even to the beginning of the second world war, though that might mean more than one five-year plan for myself'.[4]

The scheme of writing an introductory chapter on the situation in 1923 'proved on examination almost ludicrously inadequate to the magnitude of Lenin's achievement and of its influence on the future'.[5] The introductory chapter was replanned as a whole volume, and it then grew into three large volumes covering the political and economic order and foreign relations, published between 1950 and 1953 as *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*. In subsequent years the work expanded still further. In 1950 he announced that he planned to publish a 'second instalment' entitled *The Struggle for Power, 1923–1928*. This scheme also broke down. A single volume about the year of Lenin's death appeared in 1954 as *The Interregnum, 1923–1924*, and on this occasion Carr announced that the title he had earlier proposed for the period 1923–8, *The Struggle for Power*, 'seemed too trivial, and inadequate to the fundamental issues involved in the struggle'.[6] Instead, a third instalment of four volumes, covering only two years of Soviet development, was published under the title *Socialism in One Country, 1924–1926*, in the course of 1958 to 1964; in the preface to the first volume of this instalment, volume 5 of the whole *History*, Carr wrote disarmingly that it 'brings me to the heart of my

[1] *A History of Soviet Russia*, vol. 1 (1950), p. v; numbers of individual volumes henceforth refer to this work. [2] Vol. 14 (1978), p. vii. [3] Vol. 1, p. v.
[4] *Listener*, 7 October 1948. [5] Vol. 1, p. v. [6] Vol. 4, p. v.

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subject'. This was because the new order 'began to take firm shape only in the middle nineteen-twenties': the years 1924–6 'gave to the revolutionary regime, for good and for evil, its decisive direction'.[1] A fourth and final instalment, entitled *Foundations of a Planned Economy, 1926–1929*, was published in a further six volumes between 1969 and 1978, the first two volumes in collaboration with the present author. Carr's short summary of the fourteen volumes of the *History* appeared in 1979 with the title *The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin (1917–1929)*.

Some important reasons for the enormous expansion of the *History* were set down by Carr in his Preface to the final volume: 'the work grew constantly on my hands, partly through my own increased consciousness of the complexities and ramifications of the subject, and partly through the publication of materials hitherto unknown or unavailable'. The range as well as the quantity of sources increased greatly in the course of writing. *Bolshevik Revolution* primarily used party and government decrees and documents, and reports of their proceedings, as was perhaps appropriate to an instalment of the work which even in its final form, according to Carr's own judgment, 'retains something of its character as the introductory stage of a larger enterprise'.[2] The later instalments made much more use of archives (especially the Trotsky archives), and of periodicals and above all newspapers published at the time; this greatly enriched their content.

The expansion of his work was also imposed on Carr by the state of the subject. It soon became apparent that while the revolution and its immediate aftermath had been adequately chronicled by a variety of writers, from Trotsky to W. H. Chamberlin, no adequate or accurate account of the shifts and transformations in policy in the 1920s, including economic policy, existed in any language; yet this was part of the indispensable ground work for the study of any aspect of Soviet history. From Volume four onwards, much space was therefore taken up by chronological accounts of political developments and of the evolution of major sectors of the economy. But the frequent assumption of casual readers that Carr's is primarily a 'narrative history' is erroneous. He never lost sight of his major objective of writing the history of the emergence of the Soviet political, social and economic order. The volumes dealing with internal developments are primarily concerned with examining different parts of the emerging edifice: the party, the soviets, the army, the law and the political police,

[1] Vol. 5, p. v. [2] Vol. 1, p. v.

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economic and planning institutions, and the changing place of religion and literature in the system.

The scope of the work expanded as his conception of what was entailed in writing a history of the emergence of the system grew more complex and profound. A passage in the Preface to his final volume reflects Carr's own development, and the development of history as a discipline in Britain, during the period when he was writing the *History*:

> The lapse of thirty years has brought more substantial changes. History does not stand still; nor does the historian. Writing today, I should shape my first volume very differently, giving less prominence to the formal constitutional arrangements of the new regime, and more to the geographical, social and economic environment in which it operated. Initial attempts at constitution-making, designed to convert the revolutionary Soviets of workers and peasants into permanent organs of government, were strongly influenced by Western models. The result was incongruous. An air of unreality clung to the earliest, as well as to more recent, Soviet constitutions. They made little impact on the society for which they were devised, and were moulded by it in ways far removed from the intentions and professions of those who drafted them. It is in the structure of society as a whole that the key to these developments must be sought.[1]

To this extent, then, Carr, in taking the Soviet constitution-makers seriously, had at first succumbed to the temptation of measuring Soviet Russia by an inappropriate Western yardstick. But these first volumes were not of course primarily concerned with the Soviet constitution. From the very first chapters social forces play their part in determining the structure of the Soviet regime. His treatment of the 1917 revolutions provides an instructive example. The February revolution was 'the spontaneous outbreak of a multitude exasperated by the privations of war and by manifest inequality in the distribution of burdens';[2] and in the revolution of October 1917, with the continued revolutionary temper of the proletariat and mounting disorders among the peasantry, power 'fell from the nerveless hands of the Provisional Government'.[3] Carr did not seek to demonstrate by footnotes and references the truth of this account of the spontaneous mass pressure which formed the essential background to the 1917 revolution. But his appreciation was derived from wide reading of accounts by participants, journalists and historians. A proper examination of the role of the 'crowd' in the Russian revolution had to await the painstaking research of a new

[1] Vol. 14, p. viii. [2] Vol. 1, p. 70. [3] Ibid., p. 99.

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generation of social historians a quarter of a century later; but in the meantime Carr presented a quite realistic interim hypothesis.

Against this social background Carr introduced Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He demonstrated with a wealth of careful detail how Lenin, unlike almost all other revolutionaries, came to comprehend the weakness of the Provisional Government established after February, and hence grasped the possibility of moulding the continuing revolutionary force: the Bolsheviks won the confidence of workers and soldiers, and thus 'succeeded to a vacant throne'.[1] This victory immediately posed the fundamental problem for the Bolshevik party. It had taken power in a backward peasant economy, yet with the goal of establishing an advanced socialist democracy:

> Politically, the programme involved an attempt to bridge the gap between autocracy and socialist democracy without the long experience and training in citizenship which bourgeois democracy, with all its faults, had afforded in the west. Economically, it meant the creation of a socialist economy in a country which had never possessed the resources in capital equipment and trained workers proper to a developed capitalist order. These grave handicaps the victorious October revolution had still to overcome. Its history is the record of its successes and failures in this enterprise.[2]

Carr's *History* thus from the outset placed the emergence of the Soviet state and the fate of its far-reaching objectives in the context of the social forces which at first determined and were themselves eventually transformed by the action of this state. But in *The Bolshevik Revolution*, while changes in the state and in its ideology were examined with the rigour of an historical craftsman, the social forces were presented briefly and impressionistically. As the author proceeded into the 1920s, crucial to his theme, but much less understood, he found it necessary to undertake his own original if preliminary research into the classes and strata which make up Soviet society. Many pages of his later volumes are devoted to the socio-economic development of peasants and industrial workers, and to the emergence of the ruling group or party. Two brilliant chapters—'Class and Party' in *Socialism in One Country* and 'The New Soviet Society' in *Foundations of a Planned Economy*—display the crucial relations between the Soviet regime and Soviet society as Carr understood them, and may be seen as the core of the whole work.[3]

[1] Vol. 1, p. 25. [2] Vol. 1, pp. 100–1.
[3] Vol. 4, ch. 3; vol. 11, ch. 56.

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Thus three major topics are interwoven in the eight volumes of the *History* dealing with internal developments in the years 1923 to 1929. Firstly, the emergence of new forms of state power and of social and economic institutions is discussed in depth, together with the gradual transformation of Marxist ideology to cope with the tasks of building a state rather than making a revolution. This all corresponds to Carr's original plan, though the treatment is far more elaborate than was originally intended. Secondly, a detailed narrative is provided of policy disputes and their outcome. This was not part of the original plan, but without it the historian and his reader would not have understood the complex stages by which Lenin's strategy of building socialism through cooperation with the peasantry gave way to Stalin's 'revolution from above'. Thirdly, social classes and groups and their changes over the period are described and dissected.

This provides the essential framework for the grand theme of the *History*: the emergence of a system in which every element—the state, the party, and their ideology; the social and economic institutions; and the whole of society—was increasingly subordinated to the overriding goal of transforming Soviet Russia from above. 'The repercussions of the transition from NEP to full-scale planning, and above all of the intense pressures of rapid industrialization, spread over the structure of party, government and society, and moulded them into new shapes not foreseen by those who made the revolution';[1] This 'new-style industrial revolution, though in some senses socialist, could not be labelled either bourgeois or proletarian', as it was 'an economic revolution directed by the political decisions and initiative of a ruling group'.[2]

Simultaneously, Carr investigated the adaptation of Soviet external relations to the needs of an emerging Great Power. His compelling account of the growing realism of Soviet foreign policy, and the subordination of the Communist International to Soviet needs, which runs through six volumes of the *History*, is based on a very wide range of publications and archives from a dozen countries. Sometimes this part of the story is told more elaborately than is required for the strict purposes of the *History*. Carr once wrote to me about his research into the Comintern: 'I confess to finding that curious world of intrigue, with its mixture of conviction and calculation, rather fascinating but I fully realise that it isn't very important, and I ought to get back to

[1] Ibid., vol. 11, p. ix. [2] Ibid., pp. 444–5.

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agriculture.' Fortunately his fascination with the Comintern is also conveyed to the reader . . .

In his lectures on 'What is History?' Carr advised his listeners to 'study the historian before you begin to study the facts', warning them that 'by and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants'.[1] The impish warning is rendered unimpeachable by those careful qualifications 'by and large' and 'kind of'. And in his own *History* Carr belied this warning by marrying his own well-established convictions about the general pattern of world and Soviet history with an open-minded willingness to revise his provisional judgements in the light of evidence. As a result the *History* is not a straightforward linear account of progress from mixed economy in the 1920s to state socialism in the 1930s, from the flexible one-party rule of Lenin to the monolithic dictatorship of Stalin. The political narrative gives full weight to local and personal factors that sometimes reduced the great debates of the 1920s to banal squabbles. The account of the adaptation of institutions to the necessities of planning reveals the complexities and the convolutions of the transition. A sign of Carr's honesty and strength as a historian is that others with quite different approaches to the major issues of the 1920s have drawn from Carr's own pages the evidence with which they seek to refute him.

But, as Carr remarked, a historian without bees buzzing in his bonnet is a 'dull dog'. His analysis of the establishment of a one-party state and the subsequent unification and centralization of that party under Stalin is certainly guided by the conviction that these developments were fundamentally a consequence of the international and internal environment of Bolshevik rule. The alternative trends in ideology and political organization appear in his pages, but they are given short shrift. In the volumes on the Civil War period, Lenin and the Bolshevik party stumble and stride toward party dictatorship with the inevitability of a Greek tragedy. According to Carr, the composition of the party and the 'turbulent conditions' of the time made the tightening of its organization inevitable;[2] the concentration of power in party and state was due to 'incessant crisis' and 'pressure of events';[3] the programme of the Workers' Opposition in 1920 was a 'hotch-potch of current discontents', and Lenin's hostile view of it proved justified when the Kronstadt revolt took place;[4] at the end of the Civil War, non-Bolshevik but pro-Soviet parties were

[1] *What is History?* (1961), pp. 17–18. [2] Vol. 1, p. 191.
[3] Ibid., p. 214. [4] Ibid., pp. 197–8.

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eliminated because there was 'no further basis for coalition or compromise'.[1]

All this takes a great deal for granted. But in the course of his account of the first few years of Soviet power Carr also offers pointers to alternative explanations. The political arrangements of 1918 lacked constitutional safeguards.[2] Later, 'party unity and party discipline developed hitherto unsuspected limitations'.[3] The suppression of opposition with the party, justified in the circumstances of 1920–1, proved 'capital for the future of the party'.[4] More than one bee is allowed to buzz about in Carr's pages. And when in the succeeding volumes he describes, with unparalleled detail and precision, the transformation of the party after Lenin's death into Stalin's monolith, the various oppositions are presented with due attention, and the dominant factor in his account is not the external environment or internal social circumstances but the relentless pressure of the centralized party machine which manipulates and dominates the membership. After a further generation of research this part of Carr's work may appear incomplete, not because, as is often claimed, he underplays the importance of the opposition movements in the party, but because he was unable, given the state of our knowledge, to place due weight on the influence of the active and orthodox party rank-and-file in shaping the attitudes and policies of Stalin and the party leadership.

The consolidation of the party dictatorship is subordinate in Carr's work on the 1920s to the grander theme of the use of that dictatorship to transform Soviet economy and society. His belief that Western capitalism must learn positive lessons from the challenge of the Soviet planned economy influenced and was in turn strengthened by his detailed research on the transition in the USSR from market economy to planned industrialization. For Carr, Lenin's New Economic Policy was a temporary retreat. 'NEP was designed primarily to benefit the peasant', he once wrote to me; 'from 1921 to 1927 people in Moscow tread softly for fear of antagonising the peasant', who was 'the spoilt child of NEP and the problem child of Planning'. Carr believed that state planning for comprehensive economic and social development would everywhere have to involve price-fixing and quality control by the state, and some form of direction of labour.[5] The mid-1920s in the Soviet Union, when the state attempted to plan a mixed

[1] *The Russian Revolution from Lenin to Stalin* (1979), p. 35.
[2] Vol. 1, p. 141. [3] Ibid., p. 187. [4] Ibid., p. 201.
[5] *The New Society* (1951), pp. 27, 60.

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economy through the market, therefore seemed to Carr a period of 'compromise, wishful thinking and evasion of the real issues'.[1] The triumph of planned industrialization required the replacement of the private small-scale peasant agriculture of NEP by large-scale socialist agriculture, and the subordination of the market to the plan.

In the economic chapters and volumes of the *History* Carr traced the relentless and continuous movement from NEP to planned economy, involving the transformation of every aspect of ideology and policy, and of every economic institution. He showed in detail the repercussions of this transformation in agriculture, industry, internal and foreign trade, finance and planning, and traced its profound effect on the relationship between the state and those who worked for it in factory and office. The decision to control prices after the scissors' crisis of 1923 had led during the succeeding five years 'by a gradual and inevitable process to the extension of control to other sectors of the economy, and finally to the adoption of an all-embracing plan'.[2] To those less convinced than Carr that the market economy is a relic of nineteenth-century *laissez-faire*, he appears to underestimate the strength of the conviction among Soviet politicians as well as economists that it was absolutely necessary to maintain the market relation with the peasants, and also to underestimate the success of policies inspired by that conviction in the mid-1920s. There is some truth in this criticism, though its proponents, with romantic nostalgia for the golden years of NEP, frequently exaggerate the importance of the market and its stability in those years. Although Carr's treatment of these developments is biassed in favour of comprehensive state planning, this did not prevent him from carefully reporting the views and endeavours of those who resisted; and his account of the triumph of the predominant trend towards central planning is unsurpassed.

In the course of his work Carr came to the conclusion that his original intention of continuing the *History* until some point in the later 1930s was unrealistic (this later became so obvious to him that he completely forgot his original intention![3]). As early as 1950 he expressed some scepticism about the paucity and unreliability of the sources for the period after 1928,[4] and in 1959 he announced that the work would be completed with the publication of the

[1] *Socialism, Capitalism and Economic Growth: Essays Presented to Maurice Dobb*, ed. C. H. Feinstein (1967), p. 278.

[2] Vol. 5, pp. 492–3.

[3] See vol. 9, p. xi.

[4] Vol. 1, p. vi.

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instalment covering the years 1926–9.[1] In the Preface to *Foundations*, vol. 1, he explained that from the autumn of 1929 onwards 'we know little of the discussions in the inner counsels of the party'; and 'later the fog becomes thicker still, and, in spite of a few piecemeal revelations, envelops all Soviet policy in the nineteen-thirties'.[2] For a history in which policy-making is a central feature, this was an insuperable obstacle. Carr later found that there was 'no shortage of materials' for his study of *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930–1935* (1982), and was also persuaded by our work at Birmingham that the study of Soviet economic history in the early 1930s could produce 'convincing results'. But he continued to stress that 'political history in the narrower sense is more or less a closed book'; 'I could not have continued my history beyond 1929 with the same confidence that I had some clue to what really happened.'[3] In any case, what he delicately called 'the considerations of age'[4] would have made it impossible to continue the gigantic scale and scope of the *History* (he was 85 years of age when he completed it). It is a measure of Carr's achievement that several hard-working scholars are now engaged in examining different aspects of the 1930s in the hope of covering part of the ground which Carr mastered almost unaided for the period covered by his *History*.

In the thirty years during which Carr was working on his *History*, Western attitudes to the Soviet Union went through several major shifts. In the Preface to his final volume, Carr describes the hopes for cooperation between East and West which predominated when he first planned his work immediately after the war, the reversal of attitudes during the cold war, the milder climate of the late 1950s, and the replacement of this at the time of writing (1977) by an 'atmosphere of mutual incomprehension and recrimination' which 'matches that of the cold war'.[5] Carr found these fluctuations of opinion inimical to the writing of history, and commented: 'I have tried my best to insulate myself from them, and to arrive at conclusions which would stand the test of a longer perspective'. His general verdict on the Russian revolution and its aftermath did not change fundamentally during his research.[5] But he revised his interpretation of significant features of Soviet development. In the middle volumes of the *History*, perhaps over-influenced by his close study of the political and social institutions of the 1920s, with their restoration of many features of the

[1] Vol. 6, p. ii. [2] Vol. 9, p. xii.
[3] *From Napoleon to Stalin* (1980), p. 263.
[4] See *A History of Soviet Russia*, vol. 9, p. xii. [5] Vol. 14, p. ix.

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pre-revolutionary order, he strongly emphasized the element of continuity in twentieth-century Russian history. By the time he had completed the *History*, he concluded that this emphasis on continuity, 'though not wrong, now seems to me somewhat overstated'.[1] He also substantially revised his assessment of the personal roles of Lenin and Stalin. In the early stages of writing the *History*, he had regarded this as a relatively insignificant matter. In 1958, in *Socialism in One Country*, while noting that Stalin was both 'emancipator and tyrant', and recording his paradoxical role as both a great Westerniser and as a brutal anti-intellectual Russian nationalist, Carr concluded that 'the key to these ambiguities cannot be found in the man himself'; 'Few great men have been so conspicuously as Stalin the product of the time and place in which they lived.'[2] As he worked on his *History* in the 1960s and 1970s, Carr continued to maintain, and to demonstrate convincingly, that the problems faced by the Soviet state in the 1920s, and the major solutions which were found to them, were not dependent on the accident of personality. If Lenin had lived, Carr said in 1978 after completing his *History*, he 'would have faced exactly the same problems', and would have embarked on rapid industrialization, the mechanization of agriculture, and the control and direction of labour—a 'revolution from above'. But Carr now argued that Lenin, in contrast to Stalin, would have been able to 'minimize and mitigate the element of coercion'.[3] 'Stalin's personality, combined with the primitive and cruel traditions of Russian bureaucracy, imparted to the revolution from above a particularly brutal quality.'[4]

Carr's fourteen volumes transformed the study of Soviet history in this country. In a critical review of the first four volumes, Isaac Deutscher in 1955 concluded that 'it is Mr. Carr's enduring and distinguished merit that he is the first genuine historian of the Soviet regime'.[5] After Carr had completed eight of his fourteen volumes, he achieved the distinction of being the only historian singled out as deserving a whole chapter to himself in a study of the historiography of post-revolutionary Russia.[6] Reviewing the whole *History* in 1983, four historians at American universities,

[1] Vol. 14, p. viii.
[2] Vol. 5, pp. 174–86.
[3] *From Napoleon to Stalin* (1980), pp. 262–3.
[4] *A History of Soviet Russia*, vol. 11, p. 448.
[5] *Soviet Studies*, vi (1955), 339.
[6] W. Laqueur, *The Fate of the Revolution: Interpretations of Soviet History* (1967), ch. 6.

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praising the 'grandeur' of Carr and his work, commented on its 'extraordinary pioneering quality':

> In the scope of his work Carr went where no one had gone before and where only a few have really gone since. He mapped the territory of Soviet history in the 1920s and delivered an agenda of questions which will be pursued for the rest of the 20th century . . . Carr's analysis is now an indispensable starting point for understanding the dynamics of Stalinism.[1]

When Carr began his work, the study and teaching of history in Britain were almost entirely confined to the history of Britain, Western Europe, and the British Empire. Even in 1960, candidates in the faculty of history in the University of Cambridge, to Carr's indignation, had to display their knowledge of Asia, Africa, or Latin America in a paper entitled 'The Expansion of Europe'.[2] And before Carr wrote his *History* serious research on Soviet history was considered by most historians to be impossible because Soviet archives were closed to Western scholars. Carr's work demonstrated that the scholarly study of Soviet history could be undertaken, and together with other pioneers Carr helped to extend the horizons of the British profession beyond the English-speaking world. Moreover, Carr's *History*, published by Penguin books in an unabridged paper-back edition, though a detailed and even formidable work some 2½ million words in length, has become widely known among teachers of history; and has entertained and instructed those who are simply curious about the greatest event in twentieth-century history. Thanks partly to Carr, Soviet history is advancing relentlessly into 'A'-level and even 'O'-level syllabuses.

During the thirty years in which he was writing the *History*, Carr continued to maintain his reputation as an essayist in the spirit of the great English tradition,[3] publishing a steady stream of reviews, articles, and lectures, the most important of which were reprinted in four collections, *German–Soviet Relations between the Two World Wars* (the Albert Shaw Lectures) (1952), *Studies in Revolution* (1950), *1917: Before and After* (1969), and *From Napoleon to Stalin, and other Essays* (1980). He also wrote substantial introductions to Chernyshevsky's *What is to be Done?* (1961), returning briefly to his pre-war interest in the nineteenth-century Russian dissidents, and to Bukharin and Preobrazhensky's *The A.B.C. of Communism*

[1] *London Review of Books*, no. 8 (1983), 5 (G. Eley, W. Rosenberg, M. Lewin, and R. Suny).

[2] *What is History?* (1961), pp. 145–7; this is still the case in 1984.

[3] J. Irving, in *International Journal*, vii (1952), 303.

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(1969). In an uncharacteristic lapse, he wrote a cautious but nevertheless misleading introduction to 'Litvinov's' *Notes for a Journal* (1955), which was soon shown to be a forgery.[1]

The most popular and perhaps the most controversial of all his post-war writings were the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures, delivered in the University of Cambridge in January–March 1961 and published as *What is History?* (1961). 'I have been looking for some time', he wrote to me, 'for an opportunity to deliver a broadside on history in general and on some of the nonsense which is talked about it by Popper and others.'[2] His papers include an unpublished essay, 'History in Our Time', prepared in April 1944 when he was beginning to think about writing a history of Soviet Russia, and dealing with several of the issues which later formed major themes of the Trevelyan lectures. With wit and erudition Carr sought to demonstrate that history was the product of the historian, and the historian the product of his society, and rejected the empiricist notion that historical facts 'impinge on the observer from outside, and are independent of his consciousness'. But he equally argued that history is not entirely relative or subjective: 'the historian is engaged on a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to his facts'; and the true historian in interpreting his facts tries to establish a hierarchy of significant causes.[3]

Two methodological problems troubled Carr, and subsequent to the Trevelyan lectures he returned to them again and again in his publications, his correspondence and his private jottings: the role of accident in history and the meaning of historical objectivity. In *What is History?* Carr accepted that accidents can modify the course of history, but argued that they do not enter into the historian's 'hierarchy of significant causes'; the accident of Lenin's premature death, even though it played a role in the history of the Soviet Union in the 1920s, was not a 'real' cause of what happened in the sense that it was a rational and historically significant explanation which could be applied to other historical situations.[4] 'History', he wrote in a letter, 'is in fact subject to sufficient regularities to make it a serious study, though these regularities are from time to time interrupted or upset by extraneous elements.'[5]

[1] See R. Schlesinger, 'Litvinov's Ghost', in *Soviet Studies*, vii (1955–6), 373–83.

[2] EHC to RWD, 9 December 1959.

[3] 'History in Our Time', typescript, April 1944; *What is History?* (1961), pp. 24, 83–4.

[4] Op. cit., pp. 94–100.

[5] EHC to Isaac Deutscher, 17 December 1963.

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But this distinction evidently did not entirely satisfy him, and the problem of accident proved particularly troublesome in that special case of accident, the role of the individual in history. In his file 'Individual in History', which awaited the preparation of a second edition of *What is History?*, a hand-written note commented: 'Individuals in History have "roles"; in some sense the role is more important than the individual.' Another note remarks that a book on Hitler 'begins by attributing everything to Hitler's personality, and ends by talking of the instability and incapacity of the Weimar regime'. 'I'm not really concerned', he wrote in 1978, 'to assess the political judgment of [Bernard] Levin or Chalfont or Mrs. Thatcher, but only to analyse the group interests and attitudes which mould their thinking'; 'Ramsay [Macdonald]'s wobbling was the result not so much of his personal character (significant only in so far as it fitted him for the leadership) as of the basic dilemma of the whole group represented by the Labour Party.'[1] But in his *History* the differing personalities of Lenin and Stalin had nevertheless found their places as significant if not decisive influences on the evolution of the Soviet state.

The other methodological issue which interested and troubled Carr was the objectivity of the historian. If the historian is the product of his time, can there be objective history? In 1944 he accepted that the historian's aims and purposes 'will indeed be derived from moral values which have their ultimate source outside history, for without these history itself must become meaningless'. The historian's function is 'to isolate and illuminate the fundamental changes at work in the society in which we live and the perhaps age-old processes which lie behind them'; and 'a historically minded generation is one which looks back, not indeed for solutions which cannot be found in the past, but for those critical insights which are necessary both to the understanding of its existing situation and to the application to the historical process of the moral values which it holds'.[2] By 1961, however, he had concluded that 'the abstract standard or value, divorced from society and divorced from history, is as much an illusion as the abstract individual', so that 'the serious historian is the one who recognises the historically conditioned character of all values, not the one who claims for his own values an objectivity beyond history'.[3] What, then, do we mean by an 'objective' historian? According to Carr, it is one 'with a capacity to rise above the

[1] EHC to C. Andrew, 4 August 1978.
[2] 'History in Our Time' (typescript, 1944), pp. 23–4.
[3] *What is History?* (1961), p. 78.

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limited vision of his own situation in society and in history', and also with 'the capacity to project his vision into the future in such a way as to give him a more profound and more lasting insight into the past'.[1] But he was evidently not quite satisfied with this either. In 1974 he wrote that 'history requires the selection and ordering of facts about the past in the light of some principle or norm of objectivity accepted by the historian, which necessarily includes elements of interpretation'.[2]

Carr's restricted and somewhat ambiguous view of the possibility of historical objectivity was coupled with his own unshakeable faith in progress, which he explained equally by his own origins in the optimistic late-Victorian and Edwardian age and by the influence of Marxism. Progress in history, though by no means in an unbroken line, was assured by 'the transmission of acquired assets' in the form of 'both material possessions and the capacity to master, transform and utilise one's environment'. In the present age 'the shifting balance of power between continents, nations and classes' has increased the strain on our capacity to organize society and on our moral qualities, but at the same time the present age is one of 'the increasing use of reason at all levels of society' in response to the technological and scientific revolution, and is also an age in which 'it has been possible for the first time to imagine a whole world consisting of people who have in the fullest sense entered into history'.[3] In the economically dynamic 1960s, Carr's optimism caught on. The final twelfth volume of *The New Cambridge Modern History*, which deals with the first half of the twentieth century, bore the title 'The Era of Violence' in the first edition published in 1960, but was renamed 'The Shifting Balance of World Forces', with explicit reference to Carr's *What is History?*, in the second edition published in 1968.

When Carr completed the preface to the summary volume of his great *History* on the sixtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, 7 November 1977, he was already eighty-five years of age, and only five years of life remained to him. He was acutely conscious that old age brought with it a declining capacity for work, and this irked him. But Carr had his own standards of what constituted a slow pace of work. 'So you've finished the next volume', I remarked to him in awe some time after we had completed our joint work on volumes 9 and 10 of the *History*. 'But it's *over two years* since we were working together', Carr replied in

[1] *What is History?*(1961), p. 117.
[2] Typescript answers to questions on history, June 1974, p. 1.
[3] *What is History?* (1961), pp. 112, 117, 141, 144.

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surprise. And by 1977 he had already started work on his last major project: a history of the last years of Comintern, from 1930 to its dissolution in 1943. 'I have to keep myself occupied', he told Tamara Deutscher, who worked with him in the last decade of his life. He completed a large volume, *The Twilight of Comintern, 1930–1935* (1982), in which he traced the dilemmas and misperceptions which lay behind the failure of the Comintern and German communism in their leftist phase to cope with the rise of Hitler, the subsequent emergence of the policy of the Popular Front against Fascism, and the triumph at the seventh congress in 1935 of 'the deep-seated trend . . . to identify the aims of Comintern with the policies of the USSR'. Carr assembled a lot of material for the further volume which would have traced the extinction of Comintern, but was unable to complete it before his death on 3 November 1982. One important section, *The Comintern and the Spanish Civil War* (1984), has been published under the editorship of Tamara Deutscher. In the 1930s Carr participated in international affairs as a civil servant and academic specialist who supported the apparent realism of Chamberlain's policies of appeasement. In these last works, written forty years later, Carr the master historian reconsidered the rise of fascism in Europe by critically assessing the role and outlook of the anti-fascist Communist-dominated Left. His cool and careful verdict exposed the folly and self-deception of those whom German fascism was to make its joint enemies, both of the Right and of the Left. He wrote of Nazism that 'the west was blinded to its peculiar and specific quality by addiction to the liberal principles of conciliation and compromise', while 'the vision of the Soviet leaders was distorted by the attempt to diagnose the rise of Hitler in the Marxist terms of class struggle'.[1] It was true that the Comintern and the Soviet leadership became fully conscious of the menace of fascism several years before most western politicians. But by this time western communist parties, in Spain and elsewhere, were closely subordinated to detailed Comintern guidance in the interests of the foreign policy of the USSR; and this destroyed the prestige of those parties and the reality of the Comintern as a revolutionary institution.

In this last period of Carr's life, the optimism about the future which was so vividly expressed in *What is History?* came to seem foolish and unfounded to many western intellectuals. 'The cold war has been resumed with redoubled intensity, bringing with it the threat of nuclear destruction', Carr wrote in a preface to the

[1] *The Twilight of Comintern*, pp. 51, 104–5.

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uncompleted second edition of *What is History?*; 'the delayed economic crisis has set in with a vengeance, ravaging the industrial countries and spreading the cancer of unemployment throughout Western society'. In these conditions, 'the prophets of woe have everything on their side'.[1] On another occasion he remarked that 'this is a profoundly counter-revolutionary period in the West'.[2] Carr firmly distanced himself from the predominant pessimism, declaring that 'in recent years I have increasingly come to see myself, and to be seen, as an intellectual dissident'.[3] He vigorously condemned the new cold war, with its accompanying 'obsessive hatred and fear of Russia': 'an outburst of national hysteria on this scale is surely the symptom of a sick society.'[4] In the permanent interplay and tension between realism and utopianism, he felt that this was the moment to come down on the side of Utopia. 'Perhaps the world is divided between cynics, who find no sense in anything', he wrote in his autobiographical memoir, 'and Utopians who make sense of things on the basis of some magnificent unverifiable assumption about the future. I prefer the latter. . . . I cannot indeed foresee for western society in anything like its present form any prospect but decline and decay, perhaps but not necessarily ending in dramatic collapse. But I believe that new forces and movements, whose shape we cannot yet guess, are germinating beneath the surface, here or elsewhere.' 'That is my unverifiable Utopia', he declared, and went on to add that 'I suppose I should call it "socialist" and am to this extent Marxist. But Marx did not define the content of socialism except in a few Utopian phrases; and nor can I.'

Carr the realistic Utopian could naturally not be satisfied with so vague a prospect. In an interview published in *The New Left Review* he argued at some length that in the west, in a development not anticipated by Marx, workers now had a large stake in the survival of capitalism; even the nationalized industries were steps in the integration of the workers into the capitalist system (this latter judgment was markedly at variance with his earlier approach, which treated nationalization in the west as a move towards the 'New Society'). The Western economy was 'crazy', and could not survive in the long run, but the western proletariat had ceased to be a revolutionary force; and this had deprived the Left in Britain and elsewhere of the core of its creed. The world

[1] *Guardian*, 7 February 1983.
[2] *New Left Review*, no. 111, September–October 1978, pp. 35–6.
[3] *Guardian*, 7 February 1983.
[4] *New Left Review*, loc. cit., p. 31.

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revolution had continued after 1917, but in China, Cuba, and other countries where the proletariat was weak or non-existent. 'We have to consider seriously the hypothesis that the world revolution . . . which will complete the downfall of capitalism will prove to be the revolt of the peoples against capitalism in the guise of imperialism.' In a striking modification of the assumptions with which he began writing his *History of Soviet Russia* over thirty years previously, Carr commented that 'I should now feel tempted to say that the Bolsheviks won their victory in 1917, not in spite of the backwardness of the Russian economy and society but because of it'.[1]

Quite what should be done in the meantime by the Left in the west, with which he now clearly identified himself, remained unclear to Carr. Should a member of the Left confine himself in this bleak time to analysis and propaganda, or should he go into politics and pursue the limited ends which could be achieved within the capitalist system? He did not choose between these alternatives, though he surprised some of his friends by the vehemence with which he insisted that 'Eurocommunism' provided no solution: 'the one solid plank of Eurocommunism is independence of, and opposition to, the Russian party . . . it jumps eagerly on to the anti-Soviet band-wagon. The rest of the platform is entirely amorphous, the kind of thing which we in this country used to call "Lib-Lab".'[2] It is clear from his private correspondence that he was anxious to find a way forward in which realistic political action was combined with firm adherence to 'Utopian' goals. 'Cannot the New Left go back to Nuclear Disarmament?' he asked on one occasion, 'Also perhaps a bit naive, but healthier?'[3] In a note written in 1980 he agreed that 'Socialism cannot be obtained through reformism, i.e. through the machinery of bourgeois democracy'. But he also insisted that a political thinker 'is bound to take account of the given empirical and political situation'; the Left must devise a strategy to deal with the present period, 'when the forces of socialism are in full retreat':

> What worries me is not only what is happening in this country today, but my preoccupation with what happened in the 30s. The hard-liners denied that Brüning was a lesser evil than Hitler, and refused to co-operate with the Social Democrats. I don't know that in the draft chapters [of *Twilight of Comintern*] I have specifically attacked this view,

[1] *New Left Review*, loc. cit., pp. 32–5.

[2] Ibid., pp. 31, 35–6.

[3] Letter to Tamara Deutscher, cited in *New Left Review*, No. 137, January–February 1983, p. 85.

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but that is certainly the slant of the whole narrative. Trotsky denounced this line from the start, and in the last forty years I cannot think of any writer who has defended it. Have we all been wrong? And should we really deny that Callaghan is a lesser evil than Thatcher?

Another thought. Lenin in 1920 wanted the Communists 'to help the Macdonalds and Snowdens to defeat the Lloyd Georges and the Churchills'. Are Callaghan and Healey so much worse than M[acdonald] and S[nowden]?[1]

This account of Carr's life and achievements has ended at a point where he linked up his work as a historian with his current political preoccupations and their relation to his vision of the future. This is entirely apt. For Carr, 'the understanding of the past, which is the purpose and function of history, carries with it an enhanced insight into the present and the future'.[2] The serious historian 'distils from the experience of the past... that part which he recognises as amenable to rational explanation and interpretation, and from it draws conclusions which may serve as a guide to action'.[3]

R. W. DAVIES

*Note.* In preparing this Memoir I have received valuable advice and assistance from many of Carr's friends and admirers, including Tamara Deutscher, who has published an informative memoir of working with Carr, Edward Acton, John Barber, Brian Porter, and Stephen Wheatcroft; Jonathan Haslam, who is preparing a full intellectual biography of Carr, has been particularly helpful. I have consulted with profit assessments of Carr's work by others, particularly Marco Palla's well-researched and thoughtful 'La Via alla Storia di Edward Hallett Carr', in *Passato e presente*, I (1982), 115–44, and two articles by A. M. Neiman, a Soviet historian, 'Nekotorye tendentsii razvitiya sovremennoi istoricheskoi mysli v Anglii i teoretiko-poznavatel'nye vozzreniya E. Kh. Karra', in *Istoricheskaya nauka i nekotorye problemy sovremennosti* (1969), pp. 177–91, and 'E. Kh. Karr: ot "politicheskogo realizma" k "novomy obshchestvu"', in *Istoriya i istoriki* (1981), pp. 96–112. Carr's personal papers are to be deposited in the Library of the University of Birmingham; I am grateful to his son John Hallett Carr and to Jonathan Haslam for the opportunity to consult and cite them. They include a 12-page typescript autobiographical memoir, prepared by Carr at the suggestion

[1] Typewritten note, dated 10 June 1980, on a book of Perry Anderson's; James Callaghan was then leader of the Labour Party, which had been defeated by the Conservative Party at the general election of May 1979.

[2] Typescript answers to questions on history, 1974, p. 2.

[3] *What is History?* (1961), p. 98.

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of Tamara Deutscher. I scrutinized and cross-checked this personal reminiscence written long after the events it described with the suspicion of such documents which Carr always urged upon me; but it proved to be remarkably accurate and candid, and I have cited it frequently.

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