To the Western observer one of the most unusual features of Soviet criminology in the 1960's and the early 1970's was its marked practical orientation. More than in most other countries criminologists in the USSR directed their research toward such practical aims as making legal institutions more effective or reducing the frequency of particular types of crime. Even more striking was the degree of Soviet criminologists' personal involvement in extra-research activities which facilitated the utilization of criminology. These activities included: preparation of special internal reports on current research for interested government agencies; helping the law enforcement agencies through the preparation of methodological aids, through instruction of their staff, and through service on their advisory councils; and participation in decision-making on current penal policy, including membership in the ad hoc commissions of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet which recommended and prepared new legislation.\footnote{1}

The utilitarian cast of Soviet criminology in the post-Stalin period did not appear accidentally; it was the product of criminology's troubled and interrupted history in the USSR. After a vigorous period in the decade of the 1920's, Soviet criminological research was cut off entirely in the 1930's, to revive again only in the late 1950's. The outline of this story is already familiar to Western criminologists, but the details of these dramatic events, the reasons for criminology's demise and the circumstances of its revival, have yet to be fully explored.\footnote{2}

One must look at the details of the story of criminology's "fall and rise" to account for the practical bias in the criminology of the period which followed. For at each stage of criminology's development in the USSR after 1928, the perceptions of its utility on the part of politicians and of scholars played a significant role. How these perceptions changed and what impact these changes had upon criminology, form the subject of this article.

\section*{I}

Even in tsarist times Russian lawyers and doctors had begun studying crime, but it

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was after the Bolshevik Revolution that criminology in Russia experienced its major expansion. By the end of the 1920's there were more than a dozen institutes, centers, laboratories, and clinics studying crime and the criminal, most of which benefited from governmental support. Research spanned a wide range, from biopsychological studies of individual offenders to sociological-statistical analyses of crime as a whole.3

Political conditions in the 1920's contributed to this expansion of criminology. To begin with, the Soviet regime did not regard criminologists as subversive, as had the tsarist government in its last years.4 Secondly, the prevailing philosophy of criminal law, influenced by Italian Positivism and by Marxism, viewed crime as a social rather than a legal problem, thus encouraging criminology.5 Thirdly, the regime's approach to scholarship as a whole was primarily one of laissez-faire.6

The principal benefactor of these conditions was the largest criminology center, the State Institute for the Study of Crime and the Criminal, founded in 1925. Although it was a government institute, supported by state funds and under the joint patronage of four RSFSR commissariats (Internal Affairs, Justice, Health, and Education), its work was not politicized.7 Few of the Institute's staff were Communist Party members; and most did not bother to explore the political or the ideological implications of their work.8


4. With good reason, tsarist officials suspected the young criminologists. Not only did they write highly critical studies of the tsarist administration of justice, but some of them were also politically active. For example, M. N. Gernet, later a leading Soviet criminologist, had frequented Marxist circles with some of his colleagues. In 1911, Gernet strongly denounced capital punishment and in the same year resigned his post at Moscow University in protest against the restrictive measures imposed by the Minister of Education Kasso. See Ostroumov, Prestupnost'; pp. 321-336; and A. A. Gertsentson, "M. N. Gernet—ego zhizn', obschechestvennaya i nauchnaya deiatel'nost'," in vol. 1 of M. N. Gernet, Istoria tsarskoi tsjurny, 3rd ed., 5 vols. (Moscow, 1960).

5. An indication of the emphasis on the social nature of crime in the Soviet Union of the 1920's was the replacement of the term "punishment" by the words "measures of social defense" in the 1926 RSFSR Criminal Code. See Harold J. Berman, Justice in the USSR: An Interpretation of Soviet Law, Rev. ed., enlarged (New York, 1963), p. 35. This new concept derived from the work of the Italian Positivists in criminology who argued that social prophylaxis was the only justification for penal sanctions.

6. The leading center of natural science, the USSR Academy of Sciences, remained aloof from politics until 1928. Although the Communist Party did create a Marxist center for the social sciences, the Communist Academy, it allowed other social science institutes, such as the RANION group, to continue undisturbed until the late 1920's. See Loren R. Graham, The Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Communist Party, 1927-1932 (Princeton, 1967), pp. 28-31.

7. See Kasarkin, "Ocherk istorii," and B. S. Urevskii and B. Osherovich, Dvadtsat' let vososluennogo instituta iuridicheskikh nauk (Moscow, 1946).

8. "Disput k voprosu ob izuchenii prestupnosti v SSSR: v Sektsii prava i gosudarstva," Revolutstva prava, No. 3 (1929), p. 67. It was left to the leading Communist at the State Institute, its director E. G. Shirvindt, to square the Institute's work with Marxism. According to him, Marxists had been wrong to pay so little attention to crime, "just because it was going to disappear." He argued that the thorough study of crime was the only rational basis for Soviet criminal policy "in the transitional period." Moreover, this study had to embrace clinical as well as socio-economic analysis because "Marxists too need to understand the mechanisms of the influence of social factors...." E. G. Shirvindt, "O problemakh prestupnosti (tseli i zadachi Gosudarstvennogo instituta po izucheniiu prestupnosti i prestupnika)," Problemy prestupnosti: Sbornik, vyp. I (Moscow and Leningrad, 1926), pp. 3-13.