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Reflections on Further Thoughts

Messrs. Davies and Wheatcroft add useful perspective to the discussion in the June 1973 issue of the *Slavic Review*. I am particularly impressed with their description of how initial enthusiasm among some staff technicians led after a year or two to overoptimism at higher levels that alarmed even the initial enthusiasts. The sorcerer's apprentice in this case was not a junior underling but a determined major figure. Unfortunately, the sequential transmission of overoptimism upward in the political structure took place precisely during a period when the surrounding economic environment was becoming less favorable. By the time the first plan was issued, its overoptimism embodied high-level desperation in the face of technically informed skepticism.

With long range perspective one can now see that the USSR had its own Great Leap Forward with disastrous consequences, thirty years before China underwent a similar convulsive experience. Must other societies go through comparable travail in reorganizing their institutions? The building and testing of national macroeconomic models may perhaps permit advance simulation of alternative growth paths so that technical advisers can more effectively guide policymakers away from foreseeable disasters.

The criticisms that Davies and Wheatcroft make of my data specifications are correct but unimportant. We do not seriously disagree about the operational infeasibility of the first plan targets. Further tests can readily examine the results of introducing the variations they have in mind. Those interested in pursuing the subject may wish to examine my paper in Judith G. Thornton, ed., *Economic Analysis of the Soviet Type System* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975).