

argument. Furthermore, the book is a delight to read, never obscure or jargon-filled. Despite the rich detail and documentation, the argument is always clear and the forest never lost in the trees. It is a major contribution to the study of eighteenth-century Russia.

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CATHERINE THE GREAT: ART, SEX, POLITICS. By *Herbert T. Altenhoff*. New York: Vantage Press, 1975. xx, 114 pp. \$4.50.

The sole reason for reviewing this book is to warn scholars and librarians not to waste their money. The work was published, it would seem, mainly to purvey some miserably reproduced photographs of pornographically decorated furniture. The author, a *Wehrmacht* veteran of the Russian campaign, maintains that he took these pictures "in Catherine's Chambers" in the former *Tsarskoe Selo* during "a dangerous excursion into enemy territory." No substantiation is offered; the pictures might have been clipped from any porno pulp. The prose is unintentionally hilarious: awkward, ungrammatical, ponderous, naïve, and repetitive. One cannot begin to enumerate the hundreds of errors. The only conceivable scholarly use of this book might be as an object of psychoanalytic study: a twentieth-century example of the old salacious treatment of "naughty Catherine."

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A SIBERIAN JOURNEY: THE JOURNAL OF HANS JAKOB FRIES, 1774–1776. Edited and translated by *Walther Kirchner*. London: Frank Cass, 1974. xii, 183 pp. Illus. £5.50.

To understand Russia one must know its component parts, particularly Siberia. Information on this vast and varied region is often fragmentary and exceedingly rare, thus any new source is welcome. The account of Jakob Fries, a young Swiss surgeon in Russian service who accompanied a recruiting officer as far as *Kiakhta* in the 1770s, is lively reading and more informative about Siberian society than most works of its time. First published by Professor Kirchner in the original German in 1955, it has now been translated into English, with additional notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Professor Kirchner's introduction is of equal if not greater value. Beginning with Peter the Great's reign, he discusses the works of a pleiad of distinguished naturalists, including Messerschmidt, Müller, Gmelin, Krashennikov, Steller, the envoys Izmailov and Lange, the voyager Waxell, the Swedish war prisoner Strahlenberg, and many others. This was the great age of Siberian research. From 1775 to 1825 the reports, including that of Fries, are more touristic, lacking the purpose and much of the novelty of earlier ones. Each; however, contributes additional facts.

The scope of the introduction seems a bit contrived: purporting to be concerned with travel accounts, it includes scientific field studies; supposedly concerned mainly with foreigners, it includes Russians; and it excludes the seven-

teenth century, although several important accounts by foreigners are to be found in that period. A comprehensive survey of Siberian historiography is needed. This book does not provide it, but is an important step in that direction.

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VOICES IN EXILE: THE DECEMBRIST MEMOIRS. By *G. R. V. Barratt*.
Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974. xxii, 381 pp.
Plates. \$18.50.

Professor Barratt's book provides us with excerpts from fairly reliable memoirs of eight Decembrists, plus a few other contemporary commentaries on the revolt of December 14, 1825. Accounts of the Decembrists' encounters with Western ideas, their participation in the revolt, their arrest and imprisonment, their journey into exile, and their life in Siberia are included in the volume. The accounts do not tell us a great deal that the casual student of Russian history does not already know, but, because the tale is told by men of some literary talent, it has a particular dignity that provides a sensitive and sympathetic portrayal of the Decembrist movement.

Professor Barratt's introduction and the brief biographical/historical comments with which he introduces the writings of each Decembrist are hardly more than a repetition of very well-known information (and misinformation) that we have had in English since Professor Mazour published his survey of the Decembrists in 1937. Barratt's style is often unclear and is sometimes difficult to follow. His statement that "the first translated volume of memoirs to appear by one who actively participated in events of December 1825, and who paid the price of exile—Herzen's own reminiscences, *My Exile to Siberia* (London, 1855; 2 vols.) are obviously disqualified by their author's absence from the conspiratorial scene in that year" (p. 337) is only one obvious example among many.

The quality of Professor Barratt's prose carries over into his translations, which are sometimes ungrammatical or ambiguous. The footnotes (the major scholarly effort in the volume) are a curious combination of helpful commentary and trivial information. For example, in M. A. Bestuzhev's account of the revolt (for which we are not given page references), Bestuzhev notes that "I dressed myself up in my brother Nikolay's old naval half-coat" (p. 63). There is a footnote to this seemingly insignificant statement which, the curious reader will find, tells us that: "Serving at naval headquarters in St. Petersburg and later in Kronstadt, some three hours' sail away, Nikolay would have had a ready supply of naval coats on leaving port in 1823" (p. 350, n. 31). In all fairness, however, one should mention that the notes also include some useful references to Russian sources. But one is surprised to find more than thirty references to Professor Mazour's cursory treatment of the Decembrists, while the far more penetrating and scholarly work of V. I. Semevskii, *Politicheskie i obshchestvennye idei dekabristov*, or the more detailed, though admittedly encyclopedic, work of M. V. Nechkina, *Dvizhenie dekabristov*, appear not to be mentioned at all. It is equally curious that Professor Barratt does not refer to Professor Raeff's *The Decembrist Movement*, a work which provides very useful translations of important documents, as well as an introductory essay that is still probably the best summary statement on the Decembrists available in English.