

THE RUSSIAN MIND. By *Ronald Hingley*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977. viii, 307 pp. \$12.50.

Ronald Hingley of Oxford University is a prolific author and an old Russia hand. His work on Chekhov is well known, and some of his other books have dealt with Russian topics ranging from linguistics to the secret police. This volume is an ambitious attempt to make use of all this to discover the "collective national mind." Just what a collective national mind is, and (with even minimal rigor) how one might go about identifying it—other than by hunches—is never made clear, even though the author is well aware of some of the problems. If the reader is prepared to skip over this (fairly basic) point, he will no doubt find himself amused, enlightened, entertained, at times charmed, and at other times annoyed. Some of the sections are elegant tours de force, replete with anecdotes and bons mots. At least one piece—about the difference between *lozh'* and *vran'e*—has previously been published and is illustrative of the author's ear for semantic niceties, which he also employs in his treatment of the use of diminutives in Russian, or the "very Russian" connotations of *razmakh*, *razdol'e*, and *razgul*.

There is a bit of everything here—Potemkin villages, swaddling, Oblomov, *The Lower Depths*, *shirokaia natura*, Pliushkin, *boi-baba*, and Nabokov. Depending on one's taste, the approach may be called either eclectic or indiscriminate. But just what is "typically Russian" remains less than clear. Repression and the attitude toward authority are perhaps the major thrust that comes across. To do "everything in excess," recklessness, an addiction to extreme sensations, a histrionic urge—these are other "insights" that verge on the stereotypical, not to say banal. Another characteristic, we are told, is the rejection of the intermediate: either complete equality or complete subordination.

At times the author tends to go well beyond the evidence, such as when he speaks of "slave mentality"; when he asks, "Did the Russians feel some irresistible inner drive to submit to absolute rule?"; when he dismisses the changes that have occurred in the Soviet Union since 1953 as "grossly exaggerated"; and when he throws in some obiter dicta on foreign policy that lead him rather far from his area of professional competence. In a weak concluding chapter entitled "Continuity and Change," the comparisons of tsarist and Soviet eras are rather unsystematic and unsatisfactory. In the end, he affirms: "While systems may come and systems may go, perennial Russia rolls on forever"—whatever that means.

But just as the reader may be tempted to throw up his hands, he will be disarmed by the author's own recognition that there is another side to every one of his assertions. After telling some good yarns, he adds, "Not one of these stories is fully authenticated." After listing violence as a characteristically Russian element, he opines sensibly, "Still, many other peoples have been no less violent than the Russians." Did the Russian mind mold the authoritarian state or was it the other way around? Hingley concludes that it is a chicken-and-egg situation. After describing the Soviet era as a projection of previous trends, he cautions, "I am suspicious of attempts to press too hard on the undoubtedly striking parallels between the pre-1917 and post-1917 Russian collective mind" (p. 266). But just how hard is too hard? Hingley is impressed with the simultaneity of opposites in foreign (and sometimes Russian) depictions of the Russian mind: "Broad, yet narrow; reckless, yet cautious; tolerant, yet censorious; freedom-loving, yet slavish; independent, docile, tough, malleable, kind, cruel, loving, hating, energetic, lazy, naive, cynical, polite, rude—they will be found veering in all these directions at some time or other; as what people will not?" (p. 34).

If I believed in a collective mind, I would say that this is a very British book. It is informative and informed, sophisticated and stimulating, much like a series of

"social" conversations—clever, interesting, and aimless. A very American reaction to it might be, "There is no bottom line."

Nevertheless, inconclusive stimulation is better than vastly misleading conclusions. And there is something to be said for an awareness of complexity and a feel for the Russian scene, even if it is at times debatable in argument and frustrating in its frequent equivocation.

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N. F. FEDOROV (1828–1903): A STUDY IN RUSSIAN EUPSYCHIAN AND UTOPIAN THOUGHT. By *Stephen Lukashovich*. Newark and London: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1977. ii, 316 pp. \$18.50.

To present Fedorov's thought, Stephen Lukashovich employs a "structural method" that consists of three successive steps: "the recognition that every ideology is essentially a psychological argument of its creator . . . the discovery and structuration of this psychological argument and the organization of the remainder of the ideology around the structure of this psychological argument" (p. 43). Inducing the structure from Fedorov's writings, Lukashovich divides his study into three parts, entitled "The Rise of Man," "The Fall of Man," and "The Redemption of Man." The author organizes Fedorov's psychological argument (actually a psychobiological argument, because it treats man's assumption of a vertical posture and his development of prehensile hands) into three interconnected "strands" (perception, analysis, action) of the development of man's humanity, consisting of twelve "stations" each, and into eight "developmental columns." Lukashovich demonstrates the culmination of this development in a twelfth or final "station": the resurrection of the dead fathers and the attainment of a universal utopia of immortality and happiness. This comprises two-thirds of the book. The remainder is devoted to presenting the "twelve capitalist interferences" (with man's attainment of immortality) and Fedorov's solutions to the "twelve paschal [resurrectional] problems."

Fedorov was a complex and daring thinker whose ideas and asceticism were admired by Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Solov'ev, Gorky, and Mayakovsky. A Promethean who believed in controlling nature for man's benefit and in the "self-creation" of man, he desired to transform the "will to procreation" into the "will to resurrection" and "our mortal irrational world into an immortal rational cosmos" by the "patrifaction" (father-creation, conquest, and colonization) of the entire universe. Preaching that all humanity should be organized for this "common task," Fedorov opposed capitalism, materialistic socialism, and all tendencies (that is, any approach which divides the world into rich and poor, city and countryside, learned and ignorant) that separate people from each other. He advocated the "gathering in" of the world's peoples by the autocrat of Russia, their conversion to Russian Orthodoxy (by force if necessary), psychogenetics (using genetics to create new psychological types), colonies in space, and a Central Learned Commission (similar to St. Simon's *savants*) to supervise all human activity, all art and science, until man achieved perfection. He also espoused encircling the globe with electric rings in order to solve the energy problem, control the weather, and thus ensure the food supply (p. 194); cosmic agriculture, that is, farming the cosmic dust, which, he believed, contained the scattered particles of man's dead ancestors—in order to reclaim and resurrect man's forefathers (pp. 197–99); and exchanging Siberian cold air for Indian hot air in order to give both nations temperate climates, to end India's miseries, and to precipitate a crisis in the British Empire that would end with England recognizing the "moral superiority of the Tsar" and