

The only major shortcoming of this very readable book is its presentation. More careful checking of the text and of the picture captions would have prevented a number of needless mistakes.

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WITH TROTSKY IN EXILE: FROM PRINKIPO TO COYOACÁN. By *Jean van Heijenoort*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1978. xii, 164 pp. Photographs. \$12.50.

This slim, extremely modest addition to the literature on Trotsky is written by a person who, in the 1930s, served Trotsky for seven years as secretary, translator, and bodyguard. The book contains a brief foreword and afterword, sections on Prinkipo, France, Norway, and Coyoacán, and a ten-page "Appendix: Correction of Errors in Writings About Trotsky." The appendix attacks "errors" in works appearing between 1935 and 1977, which were written by such people as Isaac Deutscher, André Malraux, and Natalia Sedova (Trotsky). The best part of the book is the thirty-six photographs that are included.

The relative scholarly uselessness of the book is a by-product of the author's goals. Expressly avoiding "a critical examination of the personality of Leon Trotsky, of his ideas or his character," van Heijenoort aims instead "to recreate the atmosphere in which Trotsky lived and worked during his years of exile," to amass "bits of information" that may help a scholar "uncover a fact or identify a document," and "to correct errors in the writings about Trotsky over the years" (pp. v and vi).

Although the "atmosphere" that van Heijenoort re-creates is interesting, it does not add to our historical understanding of Trotsky. The errors which he notes are relatively insignificant and often petty: "in the photograph caption, change 'at Barbizon in November 1933' to 'in Saint-Palais in August 1933,'" or "in the caption for the picture on page 133, change '1933' to 'August 1933,'" and in a third, "[In Barbizon, Trotsky] shaved off his thick, grey goatee, so as to look like a middle-class French intellectual." Actually, Trotsky shaved his goatee in Saint-Palais, on October 9 . . ." (pp. 152 and 156). The appendix further weakens the book.

Consequently, *With Trotsky in Exile* can be recommended only to the most highly specialized research libraries.

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LEONID ILYICH BREZHNEV: A SHORT BIOGRAPHY. By the *Institute of Marxism-Leninism, CPSU Central Committee*. Leaders of the World Biographical Series. New York: Pergamon Press, 1977. xiv, 240 pp. Photographs. \$10.00.

LEONID I. BREZHNEV: PAGES FROM HIS LIFE. Written under the auspices of the *Academy of Sciences of the USSR*. Foreword by *Leonid I. Brezhnev*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978. 320 pp. + 40 pp. plates. \$11.95.

These two books represent the ascendancy of Brezhnev's personal status in the USSR and the popularity of détente. The outburst of media events connected with his seventieth birthday in 1976 included the preparation of an official biography for the Soviet populace, which now appears in English, not with the imprint of Progress Publishers in Moscow, but from the private sector in Great Britain, Pergamon Press. Somewhat earlier this publisher had announced the intended publication of a collection of the writings of Brezhnev, with a biographical introduction, but as far as I can determine, that project was cancelled, not a surprising decision in view of the audience appeal

of most of the General Secretary's speeches. The translation (not attributed to anyone in particular and quite likely the one that the Soviets would have issued in any case) is not much more attractive. The opening sentence sets the tone: "The Soviet people are giving effect to the plans outlined by the great Lenin and confidently advancing towards their highest goal—communism." Brezhnev himself is modestly submerged in a rehearsal of the progress of the country along this path. The main outlines of his career are presented (and a presumably complete listing of all his medals), but it is hard to find any new information about him. Since the work is pitched at a fairly elementary level, it is short, and the editor of the Pergamon biographical series (and company president) has added the new Soviet constitution to fill out the volume.

The Pergamon Press biography is, after all, a product of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and intended for a domestic audience. Its style, therefore, is not surprising. The Simon and Schuster book is a different matter. In the glow of Kissinger and détente, this publisher approached Brezhnev in early 1975 to see if he would write his memoirs. An agreement was reached but not precisely for memoirs. Instead, the product of the negotiations is a biography—somewhat vaguely attributed to the Academy of Sciences—which is scarcely more informative than the one intended for domestic consumption. True, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism version is less amiable in tone and more dutifully Marxist-Leninist when discussing relations with the capitalist world. But, in the main, the book is a rehash of Soviet history with references to Brezhnev's life and (in the later years) speeches. The limitations of the collective authorship are summarized in the following statement: "The people of Transcarpathia repaid Brezhnev with affection for his constant concern for them. Many of them remember his good deeds and tell their children and grandchildren about them."

If this seems a bit general, there are a few attempts at providing biographical detail. One learns, for example, that Brezhnev's son kept pigeons and that the leader once recounted for a comrade with whom he was traveling "some amusing episodes connected with his son's pigeons." But we are not permitted to read these anecdotes.

What is striking about the book by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism is the stark ignorance of the Western world that it implicitly attributes to Brezhnev and his staff. Here is a work that is not distributed at home. There is no need to adhere to the forms of Soviet agitprop. Perhaps there is some chance to reach a large American audience with a message that would really assist in the achievement of the Soviet goals for détente, if only it could be presented in an effective style. Surely the Soviet sophisticates of American studies could offer some advice on this problem. But whoever was responsible for producing the manuscript that was delivered to Simon and Schuster appears to be almost wholly unemancipated from the cultural isolation of Stalin's day. It is inconceivable to me that the American "capitalist" reader for whom the book is intended (much less the non-Communist Party Left) would be attracted even mildly by its leaden homilies. From the viewpoint of Soviet policy, it is an opportunity bungled and an unsettling reminder of the distance between the two cultures.

The final irony about these two attempts by Western publishing houses to get some kind of scoop on Brezhnev's life is that the General Secretary (no doubt with assistance) is actually producing a memoir of considerable substance and interest, which is appearing serially in *Novyi mir*. The three portions in print at this writing deal with the war, reconstruction, and the Virgin Lands development. Unlike the books under review, there is some real justification for bringing out this autobiographical writing.

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