
REVIEWS

BYZANTINE CHRISTIANITY: EMPEROR, CHURCH AND THE WEST.

By *Harry J. Magoulias*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970. x, 196 pp. Paper.

This book may be best described as a series of four essays with no central theme. Its purpose is quite obvious: to provide students with accessible material on Byzantine civilization. But whether the material offered will have the desired intellectual effect is a question open to doubt. The first essay, "Byzantine Christianity and the Imperial Cult," is clear enough. That the Byzantine emperor, whatever the mode of his election, was the representative of Christ on earth and responsible to him alone was an idea formulated very early after the triumph of Christianity, and it obtained down to the end of the empire. Not so clear, however, are the two essays that follow. The one, "Byzantine Christianity and the Heresies," consists to such an extent of definitions of heresies that it will bore most students. The other, "Byzantine Christianity and Mysticism," may be more interesting to students, but the language of mysticism will probably elude them, for it is difficult to understand without some knowledge of the problems of reality. The best essay and the one likely to prove most useful is the fourth and last, "Byzantine Christianity and the West." The narrative is clear, the problems are well elucidated, and translations from Greek texts that are not easily available are included. In writing this essay Magoulias, without ignoring Latin sources, drew so heavily on the Greek sources that his discussion of the antagonism between Byzantine and Western Christianity and its catastrophic effects on the former may appear biased, though it is not. If the book is to be used in any way connected with the classroom, it should be used for this essay.

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THE SLAVS: A CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE SLAVONIC PEOPLES.

By *Roger Portal*. Translated from the French by
Patrick Evans. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1970. xix, 508 pp.
\$15.00.

The present volume is an English translation of Professor Portal's *Les Slaves: Peuples et nations* published in 1965. Because it has not been brought up to date, the book is for the most part ten years old, although there are some references to the early 1960s. The approximately 450 pages of text are accompanied by 27 maps, 27 tables, 47 illustrations, and a special section of some 40 plates. The French original, it might be noted, had many more illustrations, including some in color. The text is followed by a brief bibliography, a glossary, chronological tables, and an index.

Portal undertakes the heroic task of presenting in a single volume the histories and cultures of all, or almost all, the Slavic peoples. He pays much more attention to the Russians than to the others, but he does issue regularly their allotments, be it only a pauper's allotment at times, to the rest. The undertaking is made much more difficult by the absence of a common theme and of fundamental interconnec-

tions in general in the histories of the peoples involved, an obstacle which the author readily acknowledges, although he believes that the recent coming of socialism to the area has finally provided the integrative element. The eclectic nature of the presentation is illustrated by such titles as that of Book Two: "The Balkans in Turkish Hands. Russia: A Continental Empire (16th and 17th Centuries)."

Even when they lack thesis and synthesis, general works such as *The Slavs* can be useful because of their specific interpretations, comparisons, and analyses, or simply because of the great amount of disparate material well presented. But on these grounds, too, the study proves disappointing. There is generally insufficient space for any sustained explanation or argument, and Portal's views on certain Russian historical developments can be best obtained from his earlier well-known works. In *The Slavs* the most striking single evaluation is the generally rhapsodic view of the Soviet system, which in places exceeds in its affirmation and optimism the declarations of the present Soviet leadership. One illustration must suffice: "The present-day cohesion of the Slav peoples depends primarily on their all having the same type of government and similar forms of social organization. Except in the case of Yugoslavia it depends also on a common external policy, which at present is highly flexible, much debated, and not so much imposed as suggested by the leading Slav power" (p. 20).

In terms of clear presentation of reliable information the book is a disaster, and Portal has every reason to complain about the manner in which his study was rendered to the English-reading public. To be sure, the French original had some mistakes and confusions, such as repeated references to the order of St. Gregory instead of St. George (pp. 181, 275 of the original; pp. 182, 275 of the English version), and the ascription of Martin Malia's book on Herzen to "Cambridge University (Mass.);" (p. 440 of the original, p. 456 of the English version). But it is in the English volume that Tsar Alexander Mikhailovitch appears (p. 121) and that Blok dies in 1932 and is grouped with a poet named Volonin (p. 398) (*demony glukhonemye* indeed!). These examples could be easily multiplied. Translation produces such remarkable results as the *Lay of the Massacre at Mamai* (p. 65; the French is *Dit du massacre de Mamai*, p. 64) and the reference to Theophanes the Greek as "her" (p. 64). Presumably because of typographical errors and deficient proofreading, repeatedly words are missing and impossible English forms and constructions appear. In general, typographical errors of every kind abound. Transliteration, difficult at best, runs riot. Some Russian proper nouns are transliterated into French forms, others into different English forms, still others into combinations of the French and the English, while the remainder defy easy explanation.

The Slavs: A Cultural and Historical Survey of the Slavonic Peoples cannot be recommended to anyone for any purpose.

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PREHISTORIC RUSSIA: AN OUTLINE. By *Tadeusz Sulimirski*. New York: Humanities Press, 1970. xxiii, 449 pp. \$22.50.

On a previous occasion in these pages the reviewer commented that for all too many American and West European historians the history of Russia begins with Kiev, with the implication either that Russia was uninhabited before that time or that the previous activities and cultural development of the population had no