

AN AMBASSADOR'S MEMOIRS. 3 vols. By *Maurice Paléologue*. Translated by *F. A. Holt*. New York: Octagon Books, 1972 [1923, 1924, 1925]. Vol. 1: July, 1914–June 2, 1915. 350 pp. Vol. 2: June 3, 1915–August 18, 1916. 320 pp. Vol. 3: August 19, 1916–May 17, 1917. 346 pp. \$45.00, set.

Georges Maurice Paléologue (1859–1944) attended the lycée Louis-le-Grand together with Raymond Poincaré, the future president of the French Republic, earned a licentiate in law, and then (in 1880) entered the French diplomatic service. He spent the greater part of his diplomatic career in the central bureaucracy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but he also gained valuable experience abroad in such places as Tangier (1882–85), Rome (1885–86), Peking (ca. 1887), Sofia (1907–12), and Petrograd (1914–17). A well-educated, cultivated, and sensitive person, he wrote more than twenty books on such diverse subjects as the artistic genius of Dante, Alfred de Vigny, and Vauvenargues, Chinese and Roman art, the fatal heritage of Austrian Empress Elizabeth, the enigmatic life of Alexander I, the tragedy of Alexander II, the Dreyfus affair, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century European diplomacy and statecraft. In 1928 he was elected to the Académie Française.

Paléologue's account of his three years as French ambassador in Petrograd was first published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* between January 1921 and July 1922. Paléologue notes in his introduction of 1921 (which does not appear in subsequent editions in French, English, German, and other languages) that he allows the diary he wrote daily in Russia to speak for itself. However, the evidence of literary retouching in this work is unmistakable, for it tends to read like an epic tale of a noble and highly civilized French nation allied with unstable, primitive, and autocratic Russia in a heroic struggle against the intrigues, deceit, and double-dealing Machiavellianism of Wilhelmian Germany. Paléologue did not particularly approve of Russia's political system, but he believed that firm tsarist authority was needed to maintain order among a people whose "propensity to excess" was an "innate" national characteristic (3:303). Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Russian opera, and the history of Russian religion and society are repeatedly used by Paléologue to illustrate how dangerous the blind rage and the anarchical, destructive instincts of the Russian muzhik can be. These primitive feelings and emotions had to be held in check within the framework of traditional Russian society. But, according to Paléologue's account, even as early as 1914 and 1915 tsarist authority was being seriously weakened by the malign influence of Rasputin and by the German clique and the empress's camarilla at court. Paléologue's tale reached a dramatic climax with Rasputin's murder and the outbreak of revolution. At this point his main concern was the effect events in Russia might have on the further pursuit of the Entente's war with Germany.

Although Paléologue's interpretations of wartime and revolutionary Russia are not always to be taken seriously, his three volumes are still of interest and value to the historian. As French ambassador and as an urbane and polished Parisian, Paléologue had access not only to the Russian court but also to artistic and liberal intellectual circles. In his three volumes the attitudes and views of such figures as Nicholas II, P. N. Miliukov, V. A. Maklakov, V. N. Kokovtsov, A. I. Putilov, S. Iu. Witte, and many others are presented accurately and in considerable detail. They are often quoted at some length by Paléologue. Their words, though certainly not the exact ones they uttered, do ring true for the period and for the

men who ruled Russia or led Russian liberal *obshchestvo* at that time. Paléologue does not, however, provide much insight into the thoughts and concerns of Russians outside the narrow circle of the capital-city officialdom and intellectual elite. He obviously had read widely concerning Russian history, religion, and culture, but his knowledge tended to be superficial. Worse yet, he is sometimes patronizing and even supercilious in his comments about Russia and Russians. He did not understand the Russian Revolution or its proletarian politicians. It is not surprising that the French government asked him to return to Paris in the spring of 1917.

EDWARD C. THADEN

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

THE HISTORY OF MY CONTEMPORARY. By *V. G. Korolenko*. Translated and abridged by *Neil Parsons*. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972. xiv, 255 pp. \$12.00.

Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko (1853–1921) was a Russian writer and publicist who gained the respect and admiration of his contemporaries primarily because of his qualities as a man and individual—qualities that permeate all of his works and especially his *Istoriia moego sovremennika*, the crowning achievement of his literary career. The product of more than seventeen years of intermittent labor, and unfortunately left unfinished, this work, which was published *in toto* for the first time in 1922, is not only a uniquely important historical document covering virtually the entire reign of Alexander II and affording invaluable insights into this fascinating period of Russian history, it is also an outstanding literary achievement. Like Korolenko's life, it stands as an impressive and rare monument to the human spirit.

Korolenko's *Istoriia* contains an intriguing account of how his acceptance of the existing order during his childhood was gradually replaced by a growing critical awareness, which ultimately culminated in an acute consciousness of social injustice. Like most educated Russians of integrity during his time, he came to oppose the autocracy. But his opposition to the existing political order did not express itself in revolutionary activity—as was the common pattern during his time. Instead, his individuality and balanced personality, his compassion and sense of justice found reflection in a life of dedicated service to his fellow man. Throughout his adult life he fearlessly opposed the anti-Semitism of the Russian government and fought for a Russia in which all citizens, regardless of race, would be free and equal. During the great famine of 1891–92 he organized relief efforts; at the time of the Civil War he assisted the victims of both the Whites and the Bolsheviks. Twice subjected to extralegal arrest, imprisonment, and exile, he nevertheless did not bow to despair or yield to the fanaticism and alienation of the revolutionary, but throughout his life remained totally involved in and committed to the society in which he lived. Along with its extraordinary spirit of humaneness, its nonpartisan nature, and its literary quality, it is precisely this fact which makes the *Istoriia* such a uniquely important historical document. No wonder that some of his contemporaries regarded Korolenko as the "last embodiment of the conscience of the Russian people" and confessed that he made them feel ashamed of their own existence.

We are greatly indebted to Neil Parsons for his admirable translation—es-