

THE APOCALYPSE OF OUR TIME AND OTHER WRITINGS. By *Vasily Rozanov*. Edited by *Robert Payne*. Translated by *Robert Payne* and *Nikita Romanoff*. Afterword by *George Ivask*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977. 301 pp. \$10.95.

In 1911, Rozanov wrote that Konstantin Leontiev was an "unrecognized phenomenon." After years of fame and notoriety, that is exactly what Rozanov was to be for decades to come, especially in the West, but also in his homeland where his writings were strictly censored. When officially mentioned at all, Rozanov is abused as an unprincipled cynic and obscurantist, and his writings serve as an example of the disintegration of "bourgeois" culture. There is, however, some evidence that in the Soviet Russian literary and intellectual underground Rozanov is still (or again) regarded as a major figure worth studying and commenting upon. The commendable attempts made in France and England during the late 1920s and early 1930s to introduce him to the Western reader remained somewhat abortive. It was only during the 1950s that he gradually began to come into his own. During the last twenty years, translations of selected passages from his works have appeared in France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. New Russian editions of some of his major writings were published in America and in Germany. All of these translations and reprints were accompanied by substantial introductory essays and prefaces in various Western languages and in Russian. In addition, a number of dissertations and scholarly articles about the author appeared in literary and professional journals.

The present volume is a new manifestation of this trend of rediscovery. The well-written and sympathetic introduction by Robert Payne combines a useful biographical sketch with a sensitive presentation of the characteristics of this highly original writer's achievement. In this context especially, Payne's observations regarding the underlying structural design of Rozanov's aphoristic effusions are noteworthy. The interested reader, however, would be well advised to consult for further reference the excellent and even more detailed biographical essay attached to Jacques Michaut's French edition of *The Apocalypse of Our Time* (Lausanne, 1976). The highly subjective, witty, and, after all, not very sympathetic epilogue by George Ivask contains the valuable insights one naturally expects from this renowned scholar. But to set the record straight, the reader again is referred to Jacques Michaut's more balanced and judicious introduction to the *Apocalypse* and also to Angelo Ripellino's spirited essay accompanying Alberto Pescetto's Italian edition of Rozanov's selected writings (Milan, 1976).

The translation can be qualified as an effort, on the whole successful, to reproduce in English the immediacy, spontaneity, and raciness of the original. In many respects, it is an improvement over the older translations published by S. S. Koteliensky in London in 1927 and 1929. Occasional lapses occur, of course, but their number is insignificant, and they do not mar the favorable impression one gets from the whole. Thus, for example, it seems inappropriate to render Rozanov's "*au revoir*," inserted in French at the beginning of *Solitaria*, with "farewell." It must be assumed that Rozanov knew very well why he was using the French phrase in this instance. It would have been better, therefore, to retain it also in the English version.

This remark, however, is not meant to detract from the valuable achievement of the authors and editors of this volume. On the contrary, the reading public, scholarly and otherwise, is fortunate for having come into possession of this fine volume prepared with high standards of scholarship, meticulous care, and understanding.

HEINRICH A. STAMMLER
University of Kansas