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## REVIEWS

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LA RUSSIE ANCIENNE: IX<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLES. By *Michel Laran* and *Jean Saussey*. Preface by *Fernand Braudel*. Collection Documents pour l'Histoire des Civilisations. Paris: Masson et Cie, 1975. 335 pp. Illus. Maps. 70 F., paper.

This collection of texts represents a most distinguished performance in many respects. First, the documents themselves are well chosen. Documents concerned with events, in the strict sense of the word, that is, "political, diplomatic and narrowly personalized documents" (to quote the authors' foreword) have not been included in order to permit inclusion of those which present the history of civilization in terms of evolution of life conditions and mentalities. For this reason most of the selected texts are of Russian origin. Foreigners' testimonies have not been neglected, but they have been chosen with an eye primarily to emphasizing the perennial difficulty of appraising Russian culture as it really was. One must also stress that the authors have successfully resisted a tendency common to most anthologies, that is, to offer as many documents as possible at the cost of reducing some of them to a few not always meaningful sentences. Instead, they offer lengthy excerpts which adequately document the topics included.

The authors follow a transparent and logical plan of presentation of the ninety-two documents (official texts, chronicles, political and religious literature, folk-tales, and *byliny*) which comprise the book. The documents are divided into four sections: the Kievan period; the Mongolian period and the rise of Moscow; the sixteenth century, and finally, the seventeenth century (until 1682). Within each section the documents are grouped into chapters (four chapters for Kievan Rus', and three chapters for each of the remaining sections), with a chapter on economic and social history and a chapter on religious and cultural history included. Each section is preceded by a lucid introduction relating the texts to the main problems of the period.

Most of the documents chosen for this anthology have never been translated into French, or indeed any Western language. The translation now offered is of uniformly high literary quality and, on the whole, of considerable precision.

Finally, a meticulous scholarly apparatus accompanies the texts and greatly enhances the value of this anthology. Notes on historical and linguistic data—the result of thorough and elaborate research—augment the information provided by the documents themselves, while throwing much additional light on their meaning. Maps, plans, technical sketches, and annotated illustrations contribute to the pedagogical value of this book: they are exceptionally well chosen and most of them are of excellent quality. A detailed bibliography, both general and specific (this part of it is analytical), as well as an index-glossary conclude the anthology.

All in all, this anthology is a tribute to French *clarté* and the great French tradition of *explication de textes*. As such it is unique among existing anthologies. In his preface Fernand Braudel even calls this book "simply marvelous." While this may be somewhat of an overstatement, because the book does have short-

comings of translation and bibliographical quotation (none of them major), this volume must be hailed as remarkable in its kind. One must also add to this praise great regret for Michel Laran's untimely death in the same year in which this book appeared.

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THE RUSSIAN TRADITION. By *Tibor Szamuely*. Edited with an introduction by *Robert Conquest*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975. xii, 443 pp. \$12.50.

What the late Professor Szamuely offers in this compellingly narrated, incisively argued, and erudite book is an interpretation of the Russian political tradition. His presentation is original not so much for any particular theme, but for its elaboration and synthesis of a number of familiar theories that stress the continuity and uniqueness of Russia's historical development. The organization of the book follows the author's view that the Russian tradition had two mutually hostile but intimately related strands—the absolutist state brought to clear definition by Ivan IV in the sixteenth century, and the revolutionary movement created by the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. Accordingly, part 1 is entitled "The Russian State Tradition," and part 2, "The Russian Revolutionary Tradition." Neither section is based on research that goes beyond what is available in print, but the second part is much more detailed than the first, reflects a fresh and penetrating reading of the available primary materials, and is virtually a monograph in its own right.

The thesis is as follows: After a period of gestation during the Mongol conquest, the Russian state emerged as a synthesis of oriental despotism, Muscovite patrimonialism (bondage of all classes), and Byzantine caesaropapism. It "held every aspect of the nation's life within its grip. There was no room left for the autonomous activity of either individual, local community, or social class" (p. 36). Legitimacy was provided by a proto-ideology that exalted Russia and its political system as the embodiments of true faith, social justice, and a world redemptive mission. By the nineteenth century, the state had lost its legitimacy; the power base itself was obsolete and in need of modernization. The reforms begun in 1861 were Russia's first attempts at genuine Westernization, as far as political culture was concerned. By this time, however, the second indigenous tradition—both nemesis and perpetuator of the first—had made its appearance. Within the revolutionary movement, the essential development was the emergence of a Jacobin tendency, running from Chernyshevskii through Nechaev and Tkachev to *Narodnaia volia*, and ultimately to Lenin, who rejuvenated Jacobinism by infusing it with elements adapted from an all-too-suitable Marxism. Like the old autocratic state, Russian Jacobinism had no use for Western political culture and sought to achieve its social ideal by the unrestricted action of an omnipotent state. Jacobin analysis was precisely correct about the weakness of the old order during the painful transition to capitalism and constitutionalism, and the Bolshevik Party was uniquely suited to exploit the vulnerability of the state. Thus, Lenin's victory in 1917 nipped the tender shoots of genuine Westernization in the bud. The Revolution conquered the state, and the two Russian traditions (oriental despotism and the revolutionary ethos) coalesced to form the heart and backbone of the Soviet system.