

SPRACHE UND GESELLSCHAFT IN DER SOWJETUNION: 31 DOKUMENTE AUS DEM RUSSISCHEN INS DEUTSCHE ÜBERSETZT UND KRITISCH EINGELEITET. Edited by *W. Girke* and *H. Jachnow*. Kritische Information, 23. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975. 381 pp. DM 36, paper.

This volume offers a translation of thirty-one "documents" (mostly articles, but also excerpts from books) concerning language and society. They are selected with the threefold purpose of illustrating: (1) contemporary Soviet sociolinguistics, (2) its development since 1917, and (3) its connections with Marxist ideology. It is the successful blending of these three purposes that makes this anthology particularly useful. For example, a programmatic declaration by Marr and a thunderous denunciation of the non-Marrists by Filin are followed by a condemnation of Marr by Stalin and some related Stalinist papers. The collection includes a group of articles from the 1920s and early 1930s (Vinokur, Shor, Polivanov), which show approaches later silenced by Marrism, as well as examples from a period when the best, exemplary language was found in—of course—the prose of Lenin, whereas the promoter of excessively dry, impersonal style and language was—of course—shown to be Stalin (Panov, 1962).

Considered from a purely linguistic standpoint, the most interesting papers are probably those dealing with the statistics of socially conditioned linguistic variation (Graudina, Badmaev, Krysin, Felinger, and others). The chapter on language planning, on the other hand, seems to be deficient. It starts with excerpts from Lenin and ends with a paper on Lenin's principles (Avrorin). What Lenin said pertains to broad strategies of the day and vast conceptions of the future; however, the political status of the languages of the Soviet Union is ultimately governed by Stalin's work on the "national problem," from which no excerpt is given.

The remaining papers are primarily concerned with conceptual problems (for example, Iakubinskii's polemics with de Saussure), reports from other countries (the fiasco of language planning in Norway, written by Steblin-Kamenskii), and various approaches (Dzhumusov-Isaev), rather than with factual data from the Soviet Union. (A notable exception is Skorik's essay on the minor languages of the north.)

Space does not allow discussion of all the papers. It may suffice to say that the sensitive reader will get a good idea of the development of Soviet (socio-)linguistics, and of its spiritual atmosphere, in this excellent anthology.

The translations are good. The original texts are laudably shortened; but the original titles, promised on page 16, have been omitted.

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KHUDOZHESTVENNAIA ZHIZN' ROSSII NA RUBEZHE XIX-XX VEKOV.

By *G. Iu. Sternin*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Iskusstvo," 1970. 293 pp.

KHUDOZHESTVENNAIA ZHIZN' ROSSII NACHALA XX VEKA. By *G. Iu.*

Sternin. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Iskusstvo," 1976. 221 pp.

G. Iu. Sternin's two small volumes on artistic life in Russia at the turn of the century are important and highly interesting publications on several accounts. Based on extensive perusal of often untapped contemporary sources—diaries and correspondence—in addition to journals, the books survey a crucial period in the history of Russian art. The years between 1890 and 1907 marked a transition from collective programs to the artist's individual quest, from public responsibility to social nihilism, from

critical realism to subjective aesthetics. The result was an unprecedented creative outburst.

In a series of essays Sternin surveys the following topics: the changing relationships of artists, critics, and public taste; the reaction of the Academy of Arts and of the Association of Traveling Art Exhibits to growing pluralism; the place of Western art in the evolution of the public's and the painters' interest; the innovative role of painters in Moscow; the formation and the aims of the *Mir iskusstva* group; the interrelationship of the new departures in literature, theater, and the plastic arts in the evolution of a "modern" style; the formation of the Union of Russian Artists; the influence of the 1905 revolution on artistic expression; and the *modus vivendi* reached by the public and the rebels of the 1890s.

In addition, each volume includes a detailed chronicle of important cultural events—openings of art exhibits, the formation of art groups, the publication of controversial reviews, essays or books, the appearance of new journals, theater premieres, and so forth. The chronicle is a convenient and extensive index to major events and pronouncements not only in art but also in literature and the theater. In its accuracy and range of information it can serve as a model of scrupulous attention to detail.

But Sternin's books are much more than convenient compendiums of facts. He offers a many-sided and objective discussion of topics that have seldom been treated with scholarly detachment either in tsarist or in Soviet Russia. The character of the new departures in art around 1890, the penetration of Western art, the activities and aims of *Mir iskusstva* have all too often been treated in terms of irreconcilable polarities—that is, either as providing salvation for Russian art or as causing its regrettable decline. In Sternin's dispassionate presentation many of the hitherto emotionally or politically charged issues emerge in a new light or take on a new life. For example, he shows that many stylistic innovations originated in Moscow and were not imported, thus contradicting the self-appointed defenders of the "purity" of Russian art who have held and are still maintaining that the "degeneration" came from abroad. His discussion of the artistic scene during the 1905 revolution departs from the practice of dealing with that subject by enumerating all the work that depicted revolutionary events. Instead, Sternin concentrates on the emergence of a new plastic language in response to revolutionary events—the expressive graphics or the contemporaneous discussion of Maliavin's primordial peasant women as symbolic of the popular revolt.

Sternin's work marks an important step in the slow but sure progress of de-Stalinization of scholarship. Since the 1960s, there has been a gradually expanding rehabilitation of trends and painters who had departed from the canons of critical realism and did not fit into the category of precursors of Socialist Realism. For the most part, this rehabilitation has taken the form of publishing source materials and factual monographs. A few articles have called for methodological revisions and innovations to provide a secure underpinning to the new scholarship, but as yet few substantial reinterpretations have appeared. Sternin's two volumes are a methodological departure. A student of Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov (1900–1969) who headed the sociological school in the late 1920s, Sternin seeks to revive and develop the best traditions of that school. Despite many oversimplifications, Fedorov-Davydov and other associates of Vladimir Friche (1870–1929)—like their counterparts in history proper around Pokrovskii and Rozhkov—enriched art history with many new insights through their analyses of class structure, patronage, and prices.

Sternin has a much less reductionist view of the connection between art and society than his predecessors had, for he takes into account the influence of literature, the general mental climate, and, especially, the uniqueness of the creative act. (Social factors alone, he warns, do not explain everything about the history of art.) Consequently, he offers no simple generalizations, no capsule solutions. Instead, he provides

an intricate and provocative discussion of the process whereby new trends gain public acceptance, of the numerous and complex links between artists and society—a process that encompasses the frequently unresolvable problem of creativity and popularity. Much of Sternin's inquiry into the nature of change in styles and popular tastes is more in the form of a hypothesis. But the thrust of his argument in the text, and even more in the copious notes that puncture various oversimplifications, is that a historian is obliged not only to delineate the predominant traits of general development, but also to recognize the uniqueness of some phenomena. This is not a revision of the Marxist, sociological approach but a demonstration of its refinement and an application of the approach at its best.

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SOVIET CINEMA: DIRECTORS AND FILMS. Compiled by *Alexander S. Birkos*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, Shoe String Press, 1976. x, 344 pp. Photographs. \$17.50.

This book leaves the reader with a feeling of sadness over a lost opportunity. A great deal of work has been done, and a not insignificant amount of money has been spent. The project was useful in itself. The result, however, not only fails to meet our expectations, but raises some elementary questions concerning the writing—or compiling, as in the present case—and the publishing of books.

The book consists of two incomplete lists, one of film makers, another of films—sometimes annotated, sometimes not—which are of little value to the “general movie goer” at whom the volume claims to be aimed. Instead of a condensed lively description, based on a much larger amount of knowledge of which he is being offered just the cream, the reader seems to be offered practically all the author himself knows. This might be acceptable for a thorough compilation of data on a limited and clearly defined period, but it is insufficient for any attempt at popularization of such a vast and—with the exception of the Jay Leyda classic, *Kino*—uncharted area.

How did this book come into being? Who were the readers of the manuscript, who was the editor, and what was the role of the publisher? Why did no one explain to the dedicated author of this undertaking—which “started as an avocational interest,” stemming “from a life-long interest in Soviet films”—that there are certain rules by which he should abide? He obviously did not realize that he had an obligation to explain how he selected the films listed; why he chose certain directors and not others—Basov, Dzigan, A. Ivanov, Legoshin, Lotianu, Motyl, Okeev, Osyka, Panfilov, and many others are not listed; why he did not use the fairly reliable catalog “Sovetskie khudozhestvennyye fil'my” (Moscow, 1961–68)—or if he did use this catalog, why is it not listed in his bibliography; and, finally, why films are listed without their original titles, an omission inconceivable in publications of a more serious character.

The purpose of the volume is not clear. The book does not enrich our understanding of Soviet film history, and it relies almost entirely upon official Soviet sources. The author, obviously a dedicated moviegoer, has failed in his attempt to publish a guide to Soviet films and directors, mainly because he has not raised his interest to a professional level. Nor was he pushed by his publisher and his editor to compile, at the very least, a reliable, comprehensive, and consistent reference work. Everything seems to have been abandoned at midpoint.

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