

Children," in which he depicts Ivan Turgenev as the embodiment of the tragic, yet noble, predicament of the civilized, liberal, and humane person confronted by the extremism of a radicalized younger generation and the authoritarianism of an ossified establishment. The predicament has not been the unique fate of Ivan Turgenev; true liberals in the West are experiencing it again today; and most surely Soviet Russian *intelligenty* will face it some day again too.

Isaiah Berlin's collection of essays on Russia's intellectual past offers many a lesson for the thoughtful reader in the so-called Western world. But it is of even more urgent relevance to the Soviet intelligentsia, especially to its dissident and critical members. Isaiah Berlin's reading and interpretation of Herzen, Belinskii, Tolstoy, and Turgenev should remind them that the fathers and greatest glories of the Russian intelligentsia, committed though they were to moral truth and individual freedom, rejected a preordained or teleological view of history. They were aware of life's moral and spiritual antinomies and paradoxes and, for this reason, they refused to sacrifice the present for an unforeseeable future.

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DIE STRUKTUR DER RUSSISCHEN POSADGEMEINDEN UND DER KATALOG DER BESCHWERDEN UND FORDERUNGEN DER KAUFMANNSCHAFT (1762-1767). By *Bernd Knabe*. Forschungen der Osteuropäischen Geschichte, vol. 22. Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin, Historische Veröffentlichungen. Berlin and Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz in Kommission, 1975. 396 pp.

This is a highly specialized monograph, which gives a comprehensive geographical, social, and economic description of Great Russian and Siberian towns in the first years of the reign of Catherine II. The work is based upon three groups of sources. The author has read and digested the secondary literature by Soviet and prerevolutionary Russian authors (but he gives no indication of having consulted English-language sources). A useful critical analysis of this historiographical tradition introduces the book and suggests major interpretive weaknesses which require correction. Knabe also has subjected to minute analysis the materials published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society on the Commission of 1767-68, including the Instructions to the deputies, the *nakazy* or petitions from the town, as well as the 1830 edition of the Law Code of the Russian Empire. Beyond this and most important, he has examined the appropriate funds of the Town Magistrate and the Commercial Commission found in TsGADA, which has enabled him to give as complete a quantitative portrayal of mid-eighteenth-century town life as we are ever likely to have.

After identifying the salient physical characteristics of the town according to four major geographical zones, he proceeds to give for each region a detailed description of the administrative, legal, and financial structure, of population growth, and of the burden of obligations. This is followed by an occupational analysis of the *posad* community in over one hundred major towns where commerce and manufacturing prevailed, and an analysis of the relations between these towns and the surrounding countryside. The author does not neglect to investigate those social elements within the towns which stand outside the commercial and manufacturing networks, devoting a separate chapter to fourteen social groups of this type. Finally, he has compiled a complex classification of towns according to wealth and occupational profile and discusses the *nakazy* in relationship to each category. Here, as elsewhere in the book, the text is supplemented by extensive tables which, though often unnecessarily difficult to read, provide an immense amount of data which can be used in subsequent research.

What emerges most strikingly from the data is the persistence of a great variety of social groups and considerable internal social flux within the towns of Great Russia. Repeated attempts by the central government and local officials as well as by the self-administering agencies of the *posad* to stabilize, control, and homogenize the population must be considered a dismal failure. In addition, the author offers a clearer understanding of the social conflicts among these various groups and other estates outside the *posad* community than has heretofore been possible. His interpretation of the *nakazy* demonstrates that the aspirations of the merchants in particular were linked to their strict adherence to a system of closed estates in which their obligations were clearly defined, their privileges vigorously defended, and their status duly acknowledged. There is no evidence here of a desire to transform the administrative or economic life of the towns, but rather a deep concern over the need to preserve and strengthen the hierarchical corporate structure administered by self-regulating mechanisms which are orderly, regular, and predictable. Unfortunately, the author does not always take the opportunity to expand on these larger themes, even when it is both appropriate and desirable.

Knabe's style is heavy and convoluted. One is hardly aware that behind the formidable apparatus of schemata and tables there is a vigorous society struggling to survive under harsh natural conditions, and to build an urban environment which guarantees them a modicum of comfort and security. These caveats aside, Knabe has provided such abundant material that future historians of Russian society will be able to mine it extensively on a variety of topics. For this we can be grateful to him.

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CATHERINE, EMPRESS OF ALL THE RUSSIAS. By *Vincent Cronin*. New York: William Morrow, 1978. 349 pp. + 30 pp. photographs. \$12.95.

Despite the dust jacket's hyperbolic statement—"the most detailed, the most authoritative narrative of her life, public and private, to appear in *any* language"—this biography amounts to another facile popularization. It draws heavily and uncritically upon Catherine's so-called memoirs, devotes half of its treatment to the period before she became empress, and presents a superficial account of her long reign. Russian works are largely neglected and a number of recent English publications are ignored (for example, monographs by Alan Fisher, Robert Jones, and Isabel de Madariaga, Anthony Lentin's translations, and the anthologies by Anthony Cross and Marc Raeff). The book is apologetic in tone and surprisingly prudish in discussing Catherine's sexuality: "the sexual element in her character was not very pronounced" (p. 304). This dictum contradicts the usual reading of Catherine's autobiographical writings, explicated most recently in Joan Haslip's biography (New York, 1977). There is little discussion of Catherine's policies toward the nobility—a central, fiercely debated problem of her reign—and scant treatment of other social or economic policies. Yet Cronin constantly depicts Catherine as a determined foe of serfdom. The structure of the book is mainly chronological, but the reign is presented in an episodic manner that often obscures lines of development. No continuities with the reigns of Elizabeth and Peter III are mentioned. Enthralled by descriptions of clothes and physiognomy, the author also indulges a penchant for sudden transitions and odd digressions. Even the prose style stumbles from awkward and slangy usages. For serious students of Russian history this book delivers far less than it promises.

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