

THREE RUSSIANS CONSIDER AMERICA: AMERICA IN THE WORKS OF MAKSIM GOR'KIJ, ALEKSANDR BLOK, AND VLADIMIR MAJAKOVSKIJ. By *Charles Rougle*. Stockholm Studies in Russian Literature, 8. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1976. 175 pp. Sw.kr. 53, paper.

"Whither Russia?" was a question that perplexed the Russian intelligentsia for many generations. The New World with its "free" institutions and rapid industrial development presented a fascinating alternative. With this in mind, Dr. Charles Rougle analyzes the attitudes of the writers Gorky, Blok, and Mayakovsky. Gorky and Mayakovsky visited the United States in 1906 and 1925, respectively; Blok never did.

Gorky's negative views have already been discussed by many commentators, including this reviewer, and not much can be added to what they have said. Gorky's American trip was punctuated by a personal scandal which strongly colored his impressions of this country. What he saw, above all, were the "evils" of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. His sketch, "The City of Mammon," was published in the August 1906 issue of the *Appleton Magazine* and evoked some twelve hundred irate responses from its readers. A somewhat different version, entitled "The City of the Yellow Devil" (together with several other similarly directed accounts), has become "a classic," used by the Soviets whenever their need for Cold-War polemics arises. Mayakovsky, though less hostile than Gorky, and, in such poems as "Broadway" and "The Brooklyn Bridge," even showing admiration for America's technological achievements, nevertheless shared the impressions the older writer had almost a quarter of a century before.

It was Alexander Blok who looked to America as an ideal to emulate and who prophesied that, by following the "American model," Russia would undergo both a material and spiritual regeneration and would become a "new America."

Three Russians Consider America is a doctoral dissertation, which, like many other dissertations, suffers from the inclusion of all material read, whether pertinent or not. Dr. Rougle would have done well to adopt a more uniform format in his use of Russian quotations. It is disconcerting indeed to read quotes in the original Russian, in transliteration, and in English translation. More thoughtful editing could have added considerably to this interesting study.

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A CAPTIVE OF TIME. By *Olga Ivinskaya*. Translated and with an introduction by *Max Hayward*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978. xlii, 462 pp. + 28 pp. photographs. \$12.50.

While it may be entertaining reading for many, for the serious reader (and certainly for Pasternak's biographer) *A Captive of Time* is a mine of vital, specific information. The facts are provided by Olga Ivinskaya, who, with much justification, claims to have been the poet's "right hand" and aware of his thoughts, deeds, and plans. She painstakingly collates information from every source available to her and also provides a narrative of key episodes in Pasternak's life.

Ivinskaya portrays Pasternak as a generous and unworldly figure, who has the courage of his convictions and who willingly delegates to her tasks too odious for his noble nature to bear. Such an overly idealistic portrayal is counterbalanced by the revelation of some of his flaws and weaknesses, such as his childish petulance and worldly vanity. In the eyes of his worshippers, the poet may emerge somewhat reduced, yet also more credible, because he is fallible.

Critics have pointed out that Ivinskaya was “profoundly and perversely uninterested in Pasternak’s relations not only with his wife Zinaida but also with his children” (see Christopher Ricks, “Pasternak: A Prince among Survivors,” *Sunday Times* [London], April 16, 1978), and that Ivinskaya’s vision of her rival as moved “only by the slyest attention to self-interest” smacks of “provincial vulgarity” (see Elizabeth Hardwick, “Wives and Mistresses,” *New York Review of Books*, May 18, 1978). While such views are not without foundation, Ivinskaya on occasion does grant that Zinaida Nikolaevna had constituted in the “big dacha” a nearly perfect haven for the poet’s creative work.

Ivinskaya’s book is a web of contradictions that has aptly been described (by Ricks) as “swirling, repetitive, artless, indignant, alive.” Often Ivinskaya’s florid style steers dangerously close to *poshlost’*—and she does talk “like a bad novel” (and Pasternak on occasion asked her not to do so). She idealizes her relationship with the poet, brushing aside the doubts and misgivings and guilt feelings which, according to her own indirect admission, he sometimes had in connection with his love for her. In her text this love appears to have been a privileged and predestined union. Ivinskaya, however, is capable of conveying some gray tones along with the rosy hues. Her justificatory stance now and then leaves room for regret, notably that the memories of his last few years were marred by the aftertaste of their quarrels (especially the one of February–March 1959).

In many places, the volume seethes with subjectivity, most of which is shaped by the author’s impassioned and overruling belief in her fated love. At the same time, from an existential perspective it would somehow be wrong to expect neat Cartesian formulations from the pen of someone who underwent the nightmarish turmoil which was Ivinskaya’s lot—imprisonment, life in a concentration camp, and living in the everyday cancer ward of Stalinist and post-Stalinist society. For one thing, those familiar with the Soviet scene know that minor flaws in the ability to date events accurately are not atypical of those who have spent many years in camps. (On the other hand, it could be claimed that someone like Nadezhda Mandelstam, who underwent no less turbulent a turmoil than Ivinskaya, has managed to achieve greater composure.) Ivinskaya’s overriding motivation in writing these memoirs seems to have been a craving for recognition for the great love in her life. But in this quest perhaps she has overlooked her strongest asset—“Her own apotheosis, so beautifully accomplished in Pasternak’s poems to her and in the novel, in the many hundreds of letters in her keeping, might better have been left to stand alone” (Hardwick). This, however, does not diminish our admiration for her accomplishment, the details of which have now been fully brought to light.

This English-language version has been edited by the late Max Hayward with the same meticulous care for which his other work is noted. His twenty-one-page introduction is a valuable asset, providing information complementary to that supplied by Hayward in his edition of Alexander Gladkov’s memoirs on Pasternak. Occasional brief footnotes combine with a substantial section of “Notes and Comments” and a full biographical guide to shed light on a number of obscure points and to supply helpful insights. The presence in the Doubleday edition of such critical apparatus and of thirty-two photographs supplied by the author makes it a better edition than the Russian-language version (*V plenu vremeni: Gody s Borisom Pasternakom* [Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1978]). On the other hand, the Russian edition contains unpublished variants of certain of Pasternak’s poems in a twenty-page appendix, omitted in the translation.

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