

tries to present some fifteen hundred years of history of this picturesque region and Russia in just one hundred outline maps and thirty-eight pages of text.

Against a skillfully constructed mosaic of physical and human geography, the authors survey the political, cultural, and economic development of the region, focusing especially on four themes: the impact of the acceptance of Christianity, the thirteenth-century calamities and their consequences, the continuous absorption of influences from both the East and the West, and the development of a distinct type of sociopolitical culture in recent decades. Spatial patterns and the dynamics of specific historical events and processes are depicted on simple and in most cases quite legible maps.

Because the text is brief and the maps are minute in scale, there is of necessity a concentration on macropatterns and generalization to a degree that leaves little room for the nuances that often reveal the character of this diversified region. Even valid generalizations may become too broad, and valid patterns on a map may turn out to be only indicative rather than precise when the map is reduced considerably in size.

The small and selective bibliography will disappoint a studious reader. Though the book is of little value to a specialist in this area, the judicious selection of the main focuses and the competent presentation of the crucial historical trends make it a lucid, informative, and generally recommendable introduction to the history and historical geography of Eastern Europe. Considering the length of the volume, the authors could hardly strive for more.

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THE COMEDY OF ARTAXERXES. By *Johann Gottfried Gregorii*. Translated by *Yvette Louria*. *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, vol. 72, no. 3 (March 1968). 72 pp. 50 cents, paper.

With this translation *Artakserksovo deistvo*, the first play to be commissioned for the Russian secular theater, becomes available to the English-speaking student of Russian drama. The play was originally written in German, then translated into Old Russian. A comparison of the extant German and Russian copies shows considerable differences, some intentional, some caused by misunderstanding. The complete Russian text published by Kudriavtsev (*Artakserksovo deistvo: Pervoi p'esa russkogo teatra XVII v.*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1957) was collated from the two extant Russian copies, both of which contain gaps; but we do not have the actual copy of the original performance. Yvette Louria has translated Kudriavtsev's edition first into modern Russian and then into English. Thus the original has been modified by at least three translations. The Old Russian translation was done by several people, with a consequent variation in the style of the different acts; however, this variation in style is not found in the English version. Considering all this and the mistakes of the present translator, the literary value of the English translation is dubious to say the least.

Louria explains in a preface that, without imitating the verse of the play, she tried to preserve "the psychological, philosophical, and aesthetic nuances contained in the idiom of the Church Slavonic" (p. 142). From her lengthy explanation of Church Slavonic (p. 140, n. 4), one can see that she is not well acquainted with the differences between Church Slavonic and Old Russian, and even less between

the Old Russian literary language and vernacular. A statement that the text is "full of grammatical errors and badly constructed sentences" (p. 141) cannot be accepted. The text is not without mistakes, but too often the translator does not understand constructions characteristic of the seventeenth century and misinterprets them. Tenses are changed at will; cases do not seem to have a function. Louria has read the works on the play written by André Mazon and Frédéric Cocron, B. O. Unbegaun, and I. M. Kudriavtsev, but apparently without sufficient scholarly understanding. For instance, on page 142 we find the statement "Artaxerxes, though both Russian culture hero and Persian despot, addresses Esther in the precious tones of a seventeenth-century courtly lover." However, Russia did not have courtly love poetry nor even customs that would have created this specific style. Kudriavtsev says in his introduction: "Eto obrashchenie i po forme sootvetstvuet tomu vremeni. Vmeste s tem predislovie neset v sebe sledy i zapadnoi predvornoi preuvelichennoi galantnosti" (p. 42). Louria does not point out the German authors' influence. There was no need to reproduce the variant spellings of names, since this translation cannot serve for linguistic studies. The translator's stage directions are also unnecessary: the author gives some, and the action of the play is sufficiently clear.

Louria has translated the entire play in prose, which would be acceptable if the translation were not so utterly pedestrian. A slight archaization of the English would have given the right perspective. In the often unnecessarily clumsy English the language and content clash and all poetic imagery is lost, as are all nuances, which the translator wanted to preserve "sometimes at the expense of simple or graceful English idiom" (p. 142). A clumsy expression or structure will never render anything but clumsiness. There are mistakes in translation for various reasons. Some are vocabulary errors: *Tsaritsa stol imeet* is not "the queen is feasting" (p. 149) but "the queen is holding court"; *polonen byl* is not "was crowded" (p. 177) but "was taken prisoner." Mistakes originating from the disregard of the function of tenses, cases, and other grammatical forms consequently alter the expression (see pp. 149, 154, 164, 174). Other inaccuracies stem from an incomplete knowledge of Old Russian: structures, phrases, forms, and their functions are misunderstood. And finally, some of the translations are too free.

Unfortunately this translation does not live up to the promises expounded in the preface. Louria cannot free herself from the twentieth-century idiom either in Russian or in English and does not see the text in the perspective of the seventeenth century. Of this play particularly, only a very good translation would be of value; otherwise a description would be sufficient, and perhaps more meaningful.

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THE MAJOR COMEDIES OF ALEXANDER FREDRO. By *Alexander Fredro*. Translated, with an Introduction and Commentaries, by *Harold B. Segel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. xiv, 405 pp. \$12.00.

This book is a major event indeed. Considerably enriching a still rather poor stock of English translations from Polish literature, it presents in a competent way a great writer—the greatest Polish comic dramatist and perhaps one of the greatest on the extranational scale. It offers the largest existing choice of translations from Fredro's works, with the exception of the Russian edition (Moscow, 1956), which contains six items. Professor Segel's book, though one item smaller, surpasses the