

BEZYMIANNAIA STRANA. By *V. Weidlé*. Paris: YMCA Press, 1968. 166 pp.

There may be nothing more Russian than the quest to identify and savor one's Russianness, and this impulse, understandably, is all the stronger in expatriates like Weidlé. In this latest book he re-explores a favorite theme (Russia in terms of the West), but develops a special aspect of it—one based not solely on the wish "to identify and savor" but on the urge to apprise young Soviets of a rich cultural heritage only partially "remembered" in the USSR. In his essays, several of which appeared previously as separate articles, he writes of a "nameless country," treating (part 1) its cultural past and identity, and (part 2) cultural realities of the present century. "It is time Russia became Russia again," says the author in his final section, at once voicing the unifying theme of this book and explaining its title.

Weidlé speaks not only of language, literature, and art, but of the deeper ideas that underlie and nourish Russian culture: the general concepts of humanity and compassion, and the untranslatable combination of warmth, sincerity, and simplicity which in Russian is *zadushevnost'*. He shows convincingly how such Russian-Christian spiritual traits give us essential clues to the meaning of the culture which produced Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Blok, and many others. Soviet Russia has been turned away from these feelings, and from herself. "It is time to return home," says the author, addressing not his fellow exiles but Russians in the Soviet Union itself. Less subjective in substance are two outstanding essays on the sad erosion of the Hermitage Museum's wealth during Stalin's rule, and on the development of Russian art during this century.

This is an important book for those interested in Russian culture, and it is a pleasure to read, partly because Weidlé is such a master of the Russian language. Few writers these days remember the diverse demands that may be made of it and exercise it so fully. And his text bristles with the life and wisdom of Russian literature—a deeply internalized culture, as it were, peeking out.

It is just as unlikely that we will ever again see the Russia Weidlé recalls as a young man as it is that the Rembrandts sold abroad by Stalin will be returned, or that Leningrad will ever again bear Peter's name. But this book is not really a call for the re-establishment of the past. It is the offering of part of a cultural legacy long held in the memories and unique experience of people like Weidlé in hopes that one day Russian hands will stretch out from "over there" to receive it.

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RUSSKIE PISATELI: BIOBIBLIOGRAFICHESKII SLOVAR'. Editorial board: *D. S. Likhachev, S. I. Mashinsky, S. M. Petrov, and A. I. Reviakin*. Moscow: "Prosveshchenie," 1971. 728 pp. 3.01 rubles.

This dictionary, "the first publication of this kind, prepared by Soviet literary scholars," as the preface states, is intended as a reference book for teachers. It is divided into three sections: early Russian literature, literature of the eighteenth century, and literature of the nineteenth century. Each section contains in alphabetical order articles of varying length (about three hundred on the whole) on writers and poets, composed by different authors, among them distinguished scholars such as B. Ia. Bukhshtab, K. V. Pigarev, and Iu. M. Lotman. The prerevolutionary period of the twentieth century is represented by a few writers who began to publish