

Mme. Viardot apparently sought to preserve. The fact that she wished to hide the depth of Turgenev's feelings for her was, of course, consistent with her general policy of obscuring the truth about their intimacy. But it is the last group of omissions that arouse the most interest. In the original letters we see Turgenev closely linked to the familial life of his French friend, expressing his concerns about her children as if they were his own. The veil of privacy which Mme. Viardot maintained, for so long a time, over her relationship with Turgenev is raised a little.

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KONSTANTIN LEONT'EV: ZHIZN' I TVORCHESTVO. By *Iurii Ivask*.
Bern: H. Lang, 1974. 430 pp.

Konstantin Leontiev believed that Russia's cultural identity was threatened and that he understood the requirements for its survival. This messianism explains his shrill struggle to convince those who had not yet been contaminated by an alien culture. Alas, for many reasons, he died utterly frustrated, misunderstood, isolated, and ignored by the society he wished to preserve. His vision evoked widespread discussion in print only after his death in 1891, culminating with the publication of his collected works in 1912–14. Russian émigré, Western, and Soviet commentaries on Leontiev appeared after the Revolution, and Professor Ivask's contributions to both émigré and Western criticism combine to make him the leading contemporary authority on Leontiev. The volume under review is based on Ivask's study of Leontiev (published ten years ago in the journal *Vozrozhdenie*), and is supplemented by footnotes, an annotated bibliography, index, and five appendixes.

Ivask attempts to "reconstruct the image of the unified Leontiev, that is, the principal literary hero of Leontiev's tales and memoirs." The book is divided into four parts which trace the evolution of Leontiev from physician-beginning writer, diplomat-novelist, and publicist-philosopher to monk-epistolographer. The author examines Leontiev's creative works individually, drawing upon letters and memoirs as well as secondary sources for a depiction of the interaction between Leontiev's life and works. The result is a fascinating portrait of a narcissistic Leontiev, the aesthete whose original "poem of life"—even with its agonizing contradictions—commands both the reader's attention and envy. Leontiev and his super-heroes blend into a common identity in this book, a much more convincing view than Lukashovich's contention that Leontiev merely sublimated a pathetic real life in his works.

Writers have varied in their emphasis on Leontiev's aestheticism, religiosity, and philosophy of history. Ivask dismisses the latter, considers Leontiev's religion distorted, and concludes that the whole of Leontiev is contained in the words "nothing but beauty." Professor Ivask argues that because Leontiev ruthlessly applied an aesthetic criterion to his life, literature, criticism, society, and philosophy, he is entitled to a place in the nineteenth-century "counterrevolution" against the banality of bourgeois civilization, and, therefore, continued interest in him is justified. In literature this aesthetic sensibility stimulated a style, content, and criticism which alienated Leontiev from his contemporaries, but anticipated the symbolists and formalists of the twentieth century.

Ivask fails to maintain his clear focus when dealing with the nonliterary aspects of Leontiev's life. He discusses his politico-philosophical articles methodically but does not relate the articles to the historical context in which Leontiev wrote. Consequently, Leontiev the thinker remains an enigma, full of contradictions. The insights on the Russian bureaucracy, the Church, press, foreign policy, and intellectual circles which could be elicited from Leontiev's writings, emerge only in sporadic flashes. Although this is the best book available on Leontiev's personality and literary legacy, there is still much to be learned about Russian history by studying Leontiev's place in society.

Professor Ivask's bibliography of Leontiev's works and letters as well as publications about him incorporates and updates Konopliantsev's authoritative bibliographies, making the present list the most complete to date. However, chronological instead of alphabetical order makes it difficult to use. Ivask's remarks on Leontievan archival material are inaccurate and incomplete, but the fault for this lies with the fact that Soviet archives were inaccessible to him: actual research at TsGALI reveals that this archive's guides, the basis for Ivask's discussion, do not reliably reflect the contents of its Leontiev *fond*. In addition, Professor Ivask does not mention important archival sources on Leontiev at the Lenin Library, the Leningrad Public Library, Pushkinskii Dom, and most important of all, the large Leontiev *fond* at the State Literary Museum in Moscow. Despite these flaws, however, this is a valuable study and deserves to be translated.

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CHEKHOV: 1860–1904. By *Sophie Laffitte*. Translated by *Mowra Budberg* and *Gordon Latta*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975 [1971, 1973]. viii, 246 pp. + 8 pp. photographs. \$8.95.

Although Sophie Laffitte's short biography of Chekhov (recently translated from the 1963 French edition) reveals nothing new to the literary scholar, it does present a highly readable, accessible, and always fascinating picture of the writer she obviously adores. The author presupposes a minimal acquaintance with Chekhov's life and works, and, while essentially covering the same well-known facts available in scores of other biographies, she presents them in a fresh, concise way that makes this book a fine introduction to Chekhov.

In this biography, as in her shorter monograph on Chekhov, *Chekhov par lui-même*, Professor Laffitte skillfully interweaves Chekhov's most interesting letters with her own exposition, showing a distinct preference for letting Chekhov speak *par lui-même*. The book is divided thematically, rather than strictly chronologically, and several of the chapters stress areas of his life that are not usually emphasized in brief biographies. For example, the chapter on Levitan is interesting in its wealth of detail about Levitan the man (as opposed to simply Levitan the friend of Chekhov). A somewhat disproportionately long chapter is devoted to Sakhalin because, as Professor Laffitte admits, she rather eccentrically considers *The Island of Sakhalin* "generally underrated, . . . one of Chekhov's greatest claims to fame." Nevertheless, in this chapter she carefully selects the most chillingly fascinating sections of both Chekhov's book and his letters about Sakhalin, which concentrate particularly on the horrible condition of its children, and of the women who subsisted almost universally by prostitution. Perhaps the best chapter in the