
The brevity of the individual essays (necessitated by the genre of oral presentation) makes the reader hope that fuller versions of many of these studies will appear in the near future. Given the rarity of publications in the field of Slavic drama and theater, however, this collection represents an important contribution, especially in its heralding of common cultural values amidst diverse national traditions.  

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The editors of the anthology of Peter Chaadaev's writings, Raymond McNally and Richard Tempest, have included sufficient work of Chaadaev to make his complex ideas comprehensible. Chaadaev (1794-1856) is best known for his first "Philosophical Letter" translated from the French and published in Russian in 1836. Like so many Russian aristocrats of his time, Chaadaev was more at home in French than in Russian of which he admitted he had "an indifferent command."

In his letter Chaadaev suggested Russian history, unlike that of Western Europe, showed no evidence of organic growth or continuity. It jumped from the barbarism of the early period to the foreign oppression of the Mongol Yoke to self-inflicted serfdom at a time when serfdom was dying in Western Europe. When Peter the Great attempted a reformation of Russia in the eighteenth century, he was forced to use West European models because there were no viable Russian historical models available for his purposes. His scathing evaluation of Russia's historical development was, as Alexander Herzen wrote, "a shot that rang out in the dark night. . . . Chaadaev's letter shook all thinking Russia." The editors refer to the ensuing division among the intelligentsia about Russia's future as the "Slavophile-Westernizer dichotomy." When McNally published in 1970 his study, Chaadaev and His Friends, he suggested however that the Westernizers themselves divided into two quite different groups: the first, called Westerners, believed that Russia's historical development was like that of Western Europe but
simply several centuries behind. It seemed to McNally that Russian liberals of the nineteenth century shared this belief as did the Menshevik faction of the Russian Marxists in the twentieth century. One might add that many advocates of Western-style capitalism in Russia today have the same belief.

For McNally, the second group, the Westernizers proper, believed that Russia's historical development made it unique and backward but also gave it advantages of backwardness. Russia could learn from the mistakes of Western Europe and borrow from Western secular culture only the best of its ideas which fitted Russian conditions. The result would be a superior Russian civilization which could help rejuvenate Western Europe itself. McNally found that the Russian Populists (Socialist Revolutionaries) took this point of view as did their later opponents, the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Marxists under the leadership of Lenin.

McNally's subtle distinction between Westerners and Westernizers in his earlier work made the Slavophile controversy more comprehensible, and it underlined the connection between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers as well as the dichotomy. McNally emphasized that while the Slavophiles agreed with the Westernizers that Russia's historical development was unique, they saw this not as the advantage of backwardness but as the advantage of having taken the true path laid out by the Russian Orthodox Church. Although the Slavophiles disagreed among themselves on many details, they believed that Russia was qualitatively different from Western Europe based not on race but on culture and religion. Much of the material from the last chapter of McNally's earlier work would have been helpful if added to the new anthology for the student or non-specialist encountering Chaadaev for the first time.

Chaadaev's deeply religious convictions and his reflections upon the significance of Roman Catholic influence on West European culture are two of the many points of discussion in the other seven "Philosophical Letters" which the editors have included here in their entirety. Those letters add a necessary perspective to Chaadaev's seemingly arbitrary evaluation of Russia's historical development in the first letter.

The editors also include Chaadaev's "Apology of a Madman," his ironic response to the tsarist government's declaration that he was "officially insane." The editors rightly emphasize that "Chaadaev did not retract the critical views which he had expressed in the 'Philosophical Letter'." He began to emphasize what the Westernizers would later call the advantages of backwardness. But Chaadaev did not have in mind using the West as a source of material development. Instead he wanted Russia to become the "new spiritual center of a rejuvenated Europe" which would lead to "the kingdom of God on earth, the intellectual, moral and cultural unification of all mankind."

Chaadaev elaborated on these ideas in his letters and various articles. Of the fortysome letters included in the anthology, nearly half are written to his close friend, A. I. Turgenev, his nephew, Michael Zhikharev, and his friend, Count Aldophe de Circourt, who became the major recipient of Chaadaev's