

that there is such a thing as certainty—which is precisely the illusion Shestov seeks to dispel—and second and perhaps still worse, that this (genuine) certainty should be sought independently of truth. Minor omissions, gratuitous additions, and simple slips are also a persistent problem; for example, “laws of human evolution” unaccountably become “laws of human thought” (p. 4), and so on.

None of this is to say that the “pilgrimages through souls” (as Shestov called them) which make up the book are in themselves anything short of spellbinding. The essays are vintage Shestov: the old irrationalist’s campaign against the logical intellect is at its most brilliant and compelling height, and the “souls” he traverses in waging this campaign—Spinoza, Pascal, Plotinus, and above all Dostoevsky and Tolstoy—are remarkably illuminated by the attendant spiritual commotion. Bernard Martin’s new introduction is competent and informative, as usual, and there is an added bonus for this edition in the form of a newly-translated letter from Shestov to his daughters, in which he comments further on Tolstoy.

Still, because the primary text of the present volume offers no improvement on a known, existing resource, its value is regrettably limited. Students of Russian thought will welcome it, but will reserve their enthusiasm for the announced next volume of the series, which promises not only additional unpublished letters and fragments but the first English translation of Herman Lowtzky’s biography of Shestov, as well as the first publication in any language of Shestov’s 1918–19 Kiev lectures on the history of Greek philosophy.

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CONFESSION OF A JEW. By *Leonid Grossman*. Translated with an introduction and notes by *Ranne Moab*. New York: Arno Press, A New York Times Company, 1975. viii, 189 pp. \$12.00.

Dostoevsky devoted half of the March 1877 issue of his *Diary of a Writer* to “the Jewish Question,” that is, the question of his own anti-Semitism, of which he was accused by a reader, Avraam Kovner. As a consequence, a correspondence developed between Kovner and Dostoevsky, and later between Kovner and V. V. Rozanov (another anti-Semite). Dostoevsky expressed the highest admiration for Kovner’s intelligence and Rozanov described him as “a righteous and pure soul.” Kovner was a former Talmudic student from Vilnius, later a progressive Petersburg journalist and writer of fiction. At the time of his first letters to Dostoevsky, Kovner, after a two-year imprisonment in Moscow, was about to be exiled to Siberia for embezzling 168,000 rubles from a bank where he had worked. He proudly wrote to Dostoevsky that he felt no guilt for his crime: he had been driven to it by poverty, by the need to support two families and to promote his own promising career; the bank, moreover, was socially useless, stealing from the public. In short, he had imitated quite consciously his hero, Raskolnikov. He argued that “mine was only a step taken against theoretical and social morality,” and he wanted Dostoevsky’s approval. (Dostoevsky replied that he saw the crime “as you yourself judge it” but censured Kovner for not feeling guilty.)

This exchange of letters led the noted Dostoevsky scholar Leonid Grossman to examine Kovner’s life and writings. Grossman’s book, entitled with perhaps intentional ambiguity *Confession of a Jew*, quietly appeared in Leningrad in 1924 and has never been reprinted in Russia. This is the first English translation.

Grossman emphasizes certain moments in Kovner's life: the colorful but stifling religious education in Lithuanian *shtetels*; and the idolization of the radical critic Pisarev, whose ideology and style Kovner adopted and applied to the Jewish situation—Kovner became an atheist, materialist, and socialist, and from this position rejected the Jewish religious tradition as futile and escapist. Kovner was naturally condemned by Jews for apostasy and betrayal. In breaking with his past, however, Kovner did not join a Russian radical group. In this period of bitter reaction and persecution he chose, instead, to propagandize for equal rights for Jews. Grossman makes the strong claim that the letters this "Pisarev of the Jews" wrote to Rozanov over the years are among "the most important publicistic statements on the Jewish question in all of world literature." If so, it is unfortunate that the letters are not reproduced fully in this volume.

The book also contains an article by Grossman on "Dostoevskii and Judaism." (The verdict is complicated.) As to the book itself, explanatory notes are full and useful, although there is hardly anything on Grossman himself. The book is poorly edited, with many misspellings, some clumsy literal translations, and a few factual errors. Grossman is not alive; he died in 1965. Tsar Nicholas I died in 1855, not 1856. But these are minor points in a work of such great interest to students of Dostoevsky and Jewish culture.

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THE INFLUENCE OF EAST EUROPE AND THE SOVIET WEST ON THE USSR. Edited by *Roman Ssporkuk*. Published in cooperation with the University of Michigan Center for Russian and East European Studies. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976. x, 260 pp. Tables. Figures. \$17.50.

The book consists of seven papers presented at a conference on the influence of Eastern European and Western areas of the USSR on Soviet society, held at the University of Michigan in 1970. The essays included are: "The Diffusion of Political Innovation: From East Europe to the Soviet Union" by Zvi Y. Gitelman, "East European Influence on Soviet Economic Thought and Reforms" by Leon Smolinski, "East Europe and Soviet Social Science: A Case Study in Stimulus Diffusion" by Zygmunt Bauman, "Czechoslovak and Polish Influences on Soviet Literature" by Deming Brown, "The Role of the Baltic Republics in Soviet Society" by V. Stanley Vardys, "The Incorporation of Western Ukraine and Its Impact on Politics and Society in Soviet Ukraine" by Yaroslav Bilinsky, and "The Moldavian Soviet Republic in Soviet Domestic and Foreign Policy" by Stephen Fischer-Galati.

The problems on which the authors focus are both interesting and important, but the title of the volume is misleading in relation to the information found in the essays. What the volume proves beyond any doubt is that, in many borderland areas and satellite countries, things are done and problems are solved in a different way than in the Soviet Union itself. The implied assumption of the organizers of this symposium (and not necessarily of the participants) seems to be that ideas of innovation and reform in the Soviet Union will come from other socialist countries rather than from some third source. Without faulting the individual scholars involved—for all of them in their respective essays exhibit full control and mastery of their subjects—this assumption does not seem to be fully warranted. Nor does the implication that the Soviet system is capable of gradual innovation, or that it is capable of any meaningful innovation at all. The Soviet dissidents have disabused many of us from these Western images of the Soviet Union, but, as this volume