RUSSIAN LITERARY ATTITUDES
FROM PUSHKIN TO SOLZHENITSYN

Also by Richard Freeborn

TURGENEV, A STUDY

A SHORT HISTORY OF MODERN RUSSIA

THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN NOVEL

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THE AGE OF REALISM (*contributor*)

Also by Georgette Donchin

THE INFLUENCE OF FRENCH SYMBOLISM ON RUSSIAN POETRY

Russian Literary Attitudes from Pushkin to Solzhenitsyn

by

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Preface

Much amplified and recast though the short studies in this book may be, they follow the general pattern of a series of lectures delivered under the aegis of the University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies between January and March 1975. Their purpose is to offer simple, compact evaluations of the literary attitudes of leading Russian literary figures over the last century and a half and to suggest the continuity of the role of literature in Russian life over that period. The description 'literary attitude' was chosen deliberately to indicate that we were concerned more with a writer's attitude of mind, his vision of life, than with the special characteristics of his craft, though always within the context of his literary achievement and his place in Russian literature as a whole. The choice of the six writers to which we have limited ourselves was governed by two principal considerations. Firstly, that we should treat individual literary figures rather than literary movements or periods. Secondly, that we should choose the most varied, but necessarily the firmest, stepping stones in the history of Russian literature from Pushkin to the present. The omission of Gogol, Lermontov, Turgenev, Goncharov and Chekhov from the nineteenth century or Blok, Mayakovsky, Sholokhov, Aleksey Tolstoy and Yevtushenko from this, not to mention so many others who might well qualify for inclusion, is due to the simple exigency of limited choice.

The aim of the lecture series, as of this book, was to appeal to all those people who might have encountered one or another Russian writer's work in English translation and might wish to know more of that writer's achievement and place in his own literature. It was assumed for the lectures that members of the audience would have read the major works. The same assumption has been made for this symposium, so that the retelling of novels or the defining of character roles has been kept to a minimum. It can of course never be avoided completely. In each writer's case biographical facts have been emphasised to explain a writer's evolution and sometimes this has meant using a psycho-historical approach. Chiefly the object has been to use biographical data as aids to literary evaluation and to set the evaluation very loosely in an historical frame.

Each contributor's approach and manner in dealing with each writer will show individual preference and no doubt some degree of bias. The same has to be said of such formal matters as notes and transliteration. Editorialising has not been strict, but the aim has been consistency in both approach and form (not always achieved and never enforced for its own sake). Latinised Cyrillic has been avoided wherever possible. All translations are the work of the individual contributors unless otherwise indicated.

The initiative for the series of lectures belongs to Winifred Bamforth of the University of London Department of Extra-Mural studies and for the short studies in this symposium to Mr T. M. Farmiloe of Macmillan. The contributors are deeply grateful to both.

Pushkin's 'The Prisoner' (pp. 20-1) and 'The Coach of Life' (pp. 21-2) are reprinted by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd from *Poems from the Russian*, chosen and translated by Frances Cornford and Esther Polianowsky Salaman (London, 1943). Pushkin's 'I thought my heart had lost the power' translated by V. de S. Pinto (p. 24) is taken from *A Book of Russian Verse*, edited by C. M. Bowra (Macmillan: London, 1943).