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Mikhail A. Dmitriev. *Glavy iz vospominanii moei zhizni.* Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1998. 752 pp. \$28.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-5-86793-023-3.

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This book is a rare treat for a student of early nineteenth century Russia—a major memoir that has never been published before and is now available in a scholarly edition, with an excellent introduction (by K.G. Bolenko and E.E. Liamina) and 250 pages of explanatory endnotes. The author, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Dmitriev (whose much shorter *Melochi iz zapasa moei pamiati* appeared in 1869), was the nephew of the poet and justice minister Ivan I. Dmitriev and himself a literary critic and poet of some note who belonged to the social milieu where noble landownership, education, literature, journalism, and state service intersected. This stratum produced some of the best accounts of early nineteenth century Russia, including the memoirs and autobiographical writings of Petr A. Viazemskii, Nikolai I. Grech, Sergei N. Glinka, Filip F. Vigel', Sergei T. Aksakov, and Stepan P. Zhikharev. Dmitriev (1796-1866) should now be added to that list.

The book describes Dmitriev's life until shortly after his enforced retirement from state service in the late 1840s, particularly his childhood in the countryside near Simbirsk, his schooling in Moscow, his service in the foreign ministry archives and the law courts in Moscow, and his ties to the city's literary world, where he met Aksakov, Konstantin N. Batiushkov, Aleksandr F. Voeikov, Viazemskii, Aleksandr S. Griboedov, Vasilii A. Zhukovskii, Mikhail N. Zagoskin, Nikolai M. Karamzin, Nikolai A. Polevoi, Petr Ia. Chaadaev, and others. Like Vigel', Glinka, and other contemporary memoirists, Dmitriev peppers his narrative with sentimental personal introspection, thoughtful (though increasingly bitter) commentary on the wider society, and general reflections on life.

The result is a multifaceted, entertaining, highly per-

sonal view of Russian society. These are, in part, the nostalgic memories of an old man. Like Vigel' in his memoirs—though with less venom—Dmitriev also seeks to settle old personal, professional, or literary scores. Thus, the portrayal of his uncle I.I. Dmitriev and of Viazemskii, Aksakov, and Polevoi is vivid but none too friendly, and the depiction of his former boss at the foreign ministry archive (the writer Aleksandr F. Malinovskii) is filled with hostility. Lastly, the book is a conscious attempt to preserve the memory of a social and literary milieu that the author believed was rapidly disappearing.

Dmitriev's roots were in the aristocratic and literary world of Catherine II and Alexander I, of Derzhavin, Karamzin, and Pushkin. He saw the "enlightened" nobility—with its esthetic sophistication and moral refinement, its sense of personal dignity, loyalty to tsar and country, and paternalistic solicitude toward the peasants—as Russia's bastion against both the despotism of the state and the anarchic barbarism of the *narod*. That bastion, Dmitriev believed, came under relentless assault after the twin disasters of 1825, the Decembrist revolt and the accession to the throne of Nicholas I. Nicholas's corrupt and intrusive police exemplified his regime's hostility to the independent spirit of the educated elite, while the bureaucratization of society firmly established administrative rank (gained through spineless service to the regime) as *the* marker of social status. Literature similarly seemed to Dmitriev henceforth to be ruled by arrogant, unprincipled, uncultured, commercially-minded, mercenary upstarts, such as Polevoi and Senkovskii.

He had only contempt for the Slavophiles' idealization of the boorish *narod* as opposed to the enlightened culture that Russia had created in conjunction with Eu-

rope. The refinement and gentility that the Westernized nobility had imparted at least to some aspects of Russian life was being eroded by these forces. The culmination of this trend, in Dmitriev's judgment, was the emancipation of the serfs, which he regarded as an egregious violation of noble rights that would ultimately benefit neither the state nor the peasants themselves. The book is thus a nostalgic apologia for a decaying "old regime" and a cry of protest against the dawning age of capitalism, bureaucracy, social mobility, political dogmatism, and an intelligentsia that was distinct from the nobility.

The first part of the memoir deals with his education on his grandfather's estate as well as at the university boarding school (*universitetskii blagorodnyi pansion*) and the university in Moscow. While barely mentioning the peasants, he dwells at length on the patriarchal simplicity and gruffness of his grandfather's household (with ambivalent feelings that recall Aksakov's *A Russian Gentleman / Semeinaia khronika*), and also on his own growing love for the literature that reached his family through books and journals from the distant capitals. His memories of his early years in Moscow, on the other hand, have no such ambivalence. Here he found the cultivated, courteous, self-confident, enlightened aristocratic milieu with which he would identify for the remainder of his life and that he missed in later decades, when Russia seemed under the sway of plebeian upstarts and narrow-minded bureaucrats. Not surprisingly, he is full of admiration for the humanistic education provided by the university, for most of its professors, and for a school administration that maintained order without resorting to crude repression.

In his narration, he gives portrayals of leading literary, intellectual, and political figures, describes the university's curriculum and living conditions, comments on issues ranging from the causes of the fire of Moscow to the merits of various parties in current literary polemics, and goes into mundane details such as his budget. The result is a highly opinionated but varied and comprehensive picture of life in his social milieu. Periodic visits to his childhood home are the occasion for absorbing passages on elections to noble offices, provincial social and family life, and the culture shock awaiting him each time he arrives back in the country from Moscow. A harsh blow to Dmitriev was the death of his first wife and childhood sweetheart in 1822, after which he developed an interest in religious mysticism and befriended Aleksandr F. Labzin, one of the most prominent mystics of the era of Alexander I. This gives us a glimpse of another important aspect of that period's *Zeitgeist*, all the more so since

he defends the secretiveness of mystical associations like Labzin's on the grounds that only a select few are spiritually prepared to receive the higher truths of religion. In religion, as in culture and social matters, Dmitriev was always the aristocrat.

In 1825, after several frustrating years at the foreign ministry archive, he entered the service of Moscow's governor-general D.V. Golitsyn, where he found "the company of enlightened and well-bred people and a kind and noble chief"—precisely the sort of environment he craved. For the next twenty-two years, he would serve in various areas of the court system, both the criminal courts and the Senate. For students of the Russian judiciary, Dmitriev's extensive account offers fascinating insights into the workings of the legal system. He defends the pre-reform judiciary, arguing that the codification of the law contributed little to the quality of the courts and that the graduates of the newly established school of jurisprudence were disruptive nuisances in the court systems. He represented the best of the old system: he was an aristocratic amateur who worked hard to educate himself about the law and the courts and, in a spirit of noblesse oblige, did his best to protect the innocent and root out abuses. Accordingly, his bugbear was the sloth and corruption that pervaded the system, and he saw the solution in the appointment of officials who were more decent and enlightened—aristocrats with a humanistic education and a sense of honor, like himself—not in the creation of a professionalized court system with codified laws, trained lawyers and bureaucrats, and the other trappings of a "modern" judiciary.

His narrative turns increasingly angry and bitter over the course of the 1830s and 1840s. In government, the clumsy repressiveness of Nicholas I stifled the aristocratic spirit of benign paternalism. In literature, newcomers without taste became increasingly prominent, while a spirit of metaphysical speculation and political dissent overwhelmed the tradition of nonpolitical esthetic refinement with which Dmitriev identified. Lastly, the place of the *narod* in society became increasingly menacing; Dmitriev had a fairly low opinion of the populace to begin with on the basis of his experience as a landowner and in the judiciary, but now the irrational, benighted masses were being glorified by intellectuals and emancipated by bureaucrats. The outcome, he feared, would be a Russia dominated by the rabble and the bureaucracy, in which the cultivated, urbane, independent-minded citizen-aristocrat would no longer have a place.

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