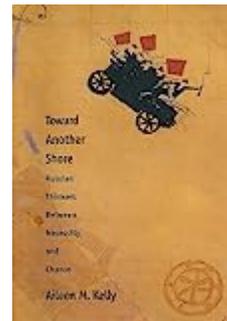




**Aileen M. Kelly.** *Toward Another Shore: Russian Thinkers Between Necessity and Chance.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. x + 400 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-07024-8.



**Reviewed by** Igor Yeykelis (Independent Scholar)

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## **Another Shore: the Torments and Dilemmas of Russian Intelligentsia**

Aileen Kelly has written a very important and timely work which is especially relevant in the context of post-Soviet political, intellectual and cultural realities, and reflects the resurgent debate and conflict between nationalist and liberal camps among post-Soviet political and intellectual elites. As such, the book will be of a tremendous interest for the scholars of intellectual, cultural, social and political history of Russia and the Soviet Union of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In her work, the author examines the complex and passionate debate between liberal (Westernizing), nationalist (Slavophile) and socialist camps within the Russian intelligentsia of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the consequences of this debate for Russia and the world in the closing years of the twentieth century.

The complexity of Russian intellectual history is reflected in the structure of the book itself. After a short introduction, the author begins with a short section on methods and approaches, in which she focuses on noted liberal intellectuals Isaiah Berlin and Leonard Shapiro. She then dedicates Parts Two, Three and Four to the three broad movements in the Russian intellectual tradition:

the Nihilists (both Slavophile and Westernizing) of the nineteenth century; the conservative and socialist dogmatists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and, as an alternative to the two groups, the radical humanists such as Alexander Herzen.

These parts in turn have their own complex internal structure. Some chapters examine Russian intellectuals themselves, their thoughts, debates and internal conflicts, while other chapters examine the chronological and physical context of these debates and conflicts: the intellectual scene of the 1860s, the populism and radical socialism of the 1870s and 1880s, and the development of Russian urban society within which the various movements and debates took place.

In many respects, *Toward Another Shore* is a strong and solid work. It provides new and thought-provoking views of such giants of the Russian intelligentsia as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev. The book explores important differences between criticism of all political movements in Russian society in Dostoevsky's literary work and his sympathy toward the Slavophile camp in his political pieces (Chapter Four, "Dostoevsky and the

Divided Conscience”). Similarly, the humanism of Tolstoy’s fiction is contrasted with the dogmatism of his philosophy and public views (Chapter Five “Tolstoy in Doubt”). The liberalism in Turgenev’s views and works coexisted, in seeming paradox, with his sympathies with the Nihilism in Russian society of the 1860s-1880s (Chapter Six, “The Nihilism of Ivan Turgenev”). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Kelly provides a thought-provoking view of Alexander Herzen (Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen) that goes beyond his often-emphasized role (both in the former Soviet Union and in the west) as the father of Russian Socialism. Kelley’s Herzen is more complex. His views included a utopian socialism based on Russian peasant commune. These views were, however, balanced by Herzen’s humanism and the lesser importance of dogmatism in his ideology.

The other strength of *Toward Another Shore* lies in its thoughtful examination of the context of the Russian intellectual debates of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Separate chapters devoted to the Russian intellectual milieu of the 1860s (Chapter Three), the crisis of liberalism (Chapters Seven and Eight), the *Signposts* debate of 1909 (Chapter Nine), as well as examinations of Russian urban society (Chapter 10) and democratic utopian totalitarianism (Chapters 13 and 14) provide the necessary physical contextual structure within which the above-mentioned intellectual debates and conflicts took place.

Like every historical analysis, *Toward Another Shore* has its weaknesses. The most crucial of those are in structure and presentation. In my opinion, the introduction does not provide sufficient discussion of the major interpretations, either western, Soviet, or post-Soviet, of the Russian intellectual debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The discussion of interpretations by Berlin and Shapiro in Part One does not compensate for this de-

ficiency, as it covers only one school of thought and its views on the question.

The absence of a bibliography and index is another crucial flaw in structure and presentation. In her work, Kelly uses a large number of primary and secondary sources. Some of these (such as literary and publicistic works by Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev) are well-known in the west. Other sources, like Nikitenko’s diaries (Chapter Seven) are less likely to be known beyond a narrow circle of specialists. Yet there is an implied assumption that every reader of the work knows every source, both primary and secondary. Such apparent assumption, reflected in the absence of bibliography and index, defeats one of the most important potential uses of this work, namely as a springboard to further study of this very interesting and important theme.

On the whole, though, *Toward Another Shore* is an important and timely book. In her analysis, the author avoids simplistic resolutions to complex questions of the social, political and cultural history of Russian intelligentsia. It is well-researched, well-argued and well-written. It presents important primary sources on the subject, some of them previously unseen and unavailable. This is a work for a specialist with good knowledge of primary and secondary sources on the history of Russian intelligentsia, and such a reader will be satisfied with it. A novice to the field will find the book to be thought-provoking, well-written, and, with the inclusion of a bibliography in subsequent editions, a good springboard for the study of the complex and difficult question of the history of Russian intelligentsia.

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