

RUSSIA AND REFORM

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

TO

JAMES RICHMOND PATON

RUSSIA AND REFORM

BY

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PREFACE.

In this book I try to summarise the chief things which Englishmen ought to know, if they wish to form an intelligent judgment of what is now taking place in Russia. We have arrived at one of the most critical turning-points in Russian history, but present events are the crisis of a long and dramatic story. Without an acquaintance with the beginning of the chapter which is now in progress, we cannot hope to understand the end.

The chief political differences in Russia are themselves the result of a great moral conflict between the instincts of two schools. Of course there are many kinds of Slavophiles and also many kinds of Westernisers, and there is hardly any Russian of the one creed who has not in him the elements of the other; but the main difference is so important, that I have made it the foundation of the plan of this book. I have not tried to write a history of modern Russia; but I have sketched the chief features of her development as a people and as a State, and have tried to catch the significance of the main points at issue between the Government and the people. In the first part, I deal chiefly with the Slavophil tradition, which is summed up in the three words, "Tsar, Church, and People;" only I naturally put the people first, because they were there first. In the second part, I trace the origins and the gradual growth of what is called in Russia "the Intelligence," that is, the educated class. Next, I study those many changes in Russian life which resulted from the reforms of Alexander II., and which tended to show that the gap between the old instincts and the new intelligent consciousness was gradually being bridged over. Lastly, I give a sketch of the present movement for liberation, of many of the chief events of which I was an eye-witness. I carry the story up to the elections for the second Duma.

As yet no full statement of fact can be made on most of these

subjects; but, even if all the details are not accessible, it is essential for the understanding of Russia that we should try to form our power of judgment, by putting into what seems their proper proportion the different elements of the story. This process has to submit itself to a hard test. Our conclusions are constantly being confirmed or refuted by events themselves; and, in the course of several years, I, like my Russian friends, have had to modify my estimate time after time, before I could believe that the general statement which I should make would square with the details of fact, and would commend itself as consequent and reasonable to men of various views in Russia.

It is quite impossible for any one man to make an adequate study of all the chief aspects of Russian life. It has rather been my object to suggest to future students some of the many important and fascinating questions which demand special study. The history, the literature, the geography, the economy, of Russia might each absorb the interest of a number of genuine students. Russia has for a long time been almost the chief factor of our foreign policy; her Imperial importance challenges our attention; her industrial future cannot be a matter of indifference to us.

The difficulties of a political study of Russia are very great. The abnormal bias of the Government against all publicity has long made it very difficult for Russian writers to deal adequately and objectively even with some of the most innocent statistics. There also exists amongst the educated class a spirit of antagonism to the Government which often diminishes the value, not only of such publications as may have evaded the censorship, but even of the most simple statement of fact made in private conversation. I have therefore found it necessary to sometimes confine myself to that which I could see for myself or learn at first hand from those persons who were best qualified to inform me on a given point, checking their statements by what I was able to gather from others. This, of course, meant that I had to select certain typical districts for investigation. The answers to my questions were recorded as soon as possible after I received them. I also had many talks with the chief leaders of the different political parties, and it may be assumed that, in the latter part of the book, I am often summarising the statements made to me by the persons chiefly concerned. For the accuracy of my reports,

however, I must myself take all responsibility. I am aware that many errors of detail must have crept in; but I took the greatest pains to make sure that I was not misunderstanding my informants on any point of major importance.

The average English reader has had but few opportunities of gaining even an elementary knowledge of Russia. It is therefore a country in which the less scrupulous of journalists are peculiarly at home. There are correspondents, occupying highly responsible positions, who have confessed to me that they cannot speak or understand Russian. These men are at the mercy of their interpreters, who are in some cases revolutionary propagandists. One correspondent, according to his own account, wrote his Russian news in London, using a handbook of Russian telegraph stations in order to avoid dating a despatch from a place where no such station existed. Of course, by no means all of our correspondents are of this kind. For instance, Dr. E. J. Dillon, Mr. Maurice Baring, Mr. H. W. Williams, Mr. V. E. Marsden, and Mr. J. McGowan all know the country and the language well, and can speak with authority on political events; and this list of names is, of course, not exhaustive. But there has been enough bad work, and it has been widely enough circulated, to popularise the most wrong-headed conceptions of the country and people. For this reason, a writer on Russia has to begin by creating an atmosphere for his reader; and I have preferred to do this by making much of my book, especially in the two last parts, something like a transcript of selected statements of Russians themselves. This must be my excuse for the number of repetitions; it seemed that a statement already reported acquired a new value when applied to a fresh district or repeated by a person of a different class or of opposite political views. Much, too, of what I have quoted is meant to be illustrative rather of the speaker than of the subject about which he is talking.

I should fill several pages if I recorded the names of all the Russians who have helped me in my study. No Englishman who knows anything about Russia will need to be told that I received throughout and, almost without exception, from everyone far more active co-operation than I had any right to ask for; and the ideal of hospitality in Russia is broader and deeper than any that I have met with elsewhere. I am indebted to those officials

who secured for me the permission of the Government to see all that I wanted to see, to those Governors and local officials who everywhere facilitated my investigations, to the Heads of all those institutions which I had occasion to visit, and to the many private persons who gave me unstinted help. I am specially indebted for assistance and personal kindness to Mr. M. Alpheráki, Mr. A. Bashmakóff, Mr. S. Syromátnikoff, Professor P. Vinográdoff, Professor S. Múromtseff, Mr. I. Petrunkyévich, Professor P. Milyukóff, Mr. N. Astroff, Mr. M. Margulies, and Mr. A. Aládin; and I have also to acknowledge much help from Mr. V. Issáyeff, Mr. V. Yanchevetsky, and Mr. A. Fedoróvich, and also from my colleagues, Mr. H. W. Williams and Mr. S. N. Harper. Mr. E. A. Dixon most kindly assisted me in the reading of the proofs and offered many useful suggestions. He also undertook the compilation of the index.

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On page 87, margin, for "Nov. 16-19, 1904," read "Nov. 19-21, 1904."

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