

Andrzej WALICKI, *Idea wolności u myślicieli rosyjskich. Studia z lat 1955–1959* [The Idea of Freedom amongst Russian Thinkers. Studies from the years 1955-1959], Kraków 2000, Wydawnictwo UJ, 324 p.

This book examines the earlier works of one of the most eminent authorities on Russian philosophy and social thought. The bulk of the volume is comprised of articles written in the years 1955-1959, i.e. during a period of undisputed importance in the history of post-war Poland. The majority of these articles have appeared in the book entitled *Osobowość a historia. Studia z dziejów literatury i myśli rosyjskiej* [Personality and History: Studies in the History of Russian Thought and Literature], PIW, Warsaw 1959. Their core content, thanks to solidity and discerning analysis (free of the ideological indoctrination influential at the time) have maintained their academic worth to this very day, and may serve as a model for researchers into Russian thought. The said work shows equally how the political and historical context of the Polish 'thaw' influenced the author's areas of interest and choice of subject. The problems associated with the history of Russian philosophical and social thought became for him a pretext and basis for research into the fundamental questions concerning man's freedom, the social ideal, the sense of history as well as the role of the individual in historical processes. The history of ideas became in this way a tool, providing answers for the gravest of questions being raised by intellectuals searching for their place in post-war communist Poland.

The first article deals with the question of the Russian reception afforded Hegelian historicism in the first half of the nineteenth century. This matter is fundamental for the book as a whole for it reveals the historical context of the problem of the role of the human personality in the historical process. A more detailed look at this matter is contained in the subsequent article devoted to Vissarion Belinskii's ideas and in particular his relation to Romanticism. The thinker's views serve here as a pretext for the conceptualization and penetrating analysis of the book's main theme: the question of the idea of freedom. 'Reconciliation with reality' and the revolt of the individual against historical necessity are the two poles of reflection upon the subject of the freedom of man in history, which are revealed from dwelling upon the Russian thinker's views. We also find here an attempt at a new reading of Russian romanticism and the explanation of the many misunderstandings that had arisen around it. The next article deals with Schopenhauer's trends as manifested in the writings of Ivan Turgenev. The author reveals the philosophical dimensions within the outlook and creativity of the author of *Fathers and Sons*, who had previously been overlooked in historical-

literary research. The subject for analysis in the subsequent part of the book is the ideas of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Ideas examined within the context of the problem of freedom. Walicki discovers original considerations upon the human condition together with the threats awaiting freedom within the contemporary world. The crux of which is the penetrating interpretation of the *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, where the author finds the fundamental reference system for a reconstruction of the dialectics of freedom and coercion, a masterly picture of which can be found within Dostoevsky's writings.

The subsequent part of the collection is an analysis of Nikolai Chernyshevsky's philosophical and political views. Even though this did not appear within the volume *Osobowość a historia* the problem it deals with are connected with it. Here equally Chernyshevsky's ideas are researched within the light of the fundamental questions of the essence of man and the sense of his existence in society.

The publication, for the first time, of *From Populism to Lenin* supplements the above articles. It was written in 1958 at the request of Professor Stanisław Ossowski, and subsequently discussed at his seminar held at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Walicki, here, is looking for an answer to the question of the character and source of the Russian Revolution, as well as the intellectual roots of Bolshevism. This is, in essence, the detailed conspectus of the book, which, due to its brave criticism of Lenin and the system he created, had no chance of publication in the Poland of the day.

As a supplement to the present volume we offer a short essay by Andrzej Walicki on Isaiah Berlin, illuminating the intricacies of the acquaintance and intellectual friendship enjoyed by these two exceptional experts on Russian thought. This is concluded with the first ever publication of a letter to the author from I. Berlin, which equally reinforces links between the aforementioned essay as with the other parts of the book.

The book is rounded off with an *Epilogue* by the author where he explains in detail the historical context within which the given works came into being. Thanks to this, it is not only easier to understand the standpoint taken, but it also constitutes an interesting tale of the fate of a Polish intellectual during the turbulent years of the 1950s.

This book also contains a list of the original publications it contains, together with a bibliography of Andrzej Walicki's works devoted to the wide problem area of research into Russia.

This book has been compiled by the editorial committee of 'Jagiellonian Studies into Russian Philosophy' to commemorate Professor Andrzej Walicki's seventieth birthday.