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of Russian Literature*

From Its Beginnings to 1900

D. S. Mirsky

*Edited by
Francis J. Whitfield*

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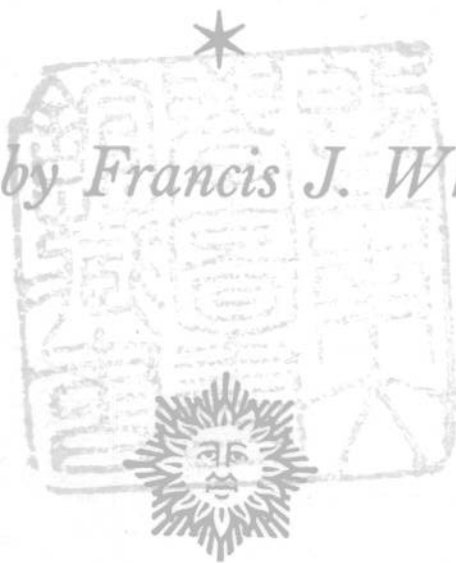
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A HISTORY OF
RUSSIAN
LITERATURE
FROM ITS BEGINNINGS
TO 1900

Edited by Francis J. Whitfield



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**A HISTORY OF
RUSSIAN
LITERATURE
FROM ITS BEGINNINGS
TO 1900**

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Editor's Note

This volume contains Mirsky's *A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times to the Death of Dostoyevsky (1881)* and the first two chapters of his *Contemporary Russian Literature, 1881-1925*, as edited by me for the one-volume *A History of Russian Literature* published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1949. The editors of Vintage Books have kindly given me the opportunity to correct the errors that have come to my notice since the original printing of that edition. I am indebted, for their advice and help, to my wife and to my colleagues Professors Gleb Struve and Lawrence L. Thomas.

Mirsky dedicated the original two books to JANE ELLEN HARRISON and to MAURICE BARING. This edition is respectfully offered to PAUL McGEORGE.

F. J. W.

Berkeley

January 1958

A Note on Transliteration

THERE is no universally accepted system of transliterating the Cyrillic alphabet. The following tables will permit the reader to compare the system used in this book with that used by the Library of Congress and most American libraries. The third table is representative of systems used by Continental European (and, increasingly, by American) scholars.

	USED IN THE PRESENT BOOK	USED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS	USED BY SPECIALISTS
а	a	a	a
б	b	b	b
в	v	v	v
г	g	g	g
д	d	d	d
е	e	e	e
ж	zh	zh	ž
з	z	z	z
и	i	i	i
й	y	ï	j
к	k	k	k
л	l	l	l
м	m	m	m
н	n	n	n
о	o	o	o
п	p	p	p
р	r	r	r
с	s	s	s
т	t	t	t
у	u	u	u
ф	f	f	f
х	kh	kh	ch, x
ц	ts	ts	c

	USED IN THE PRESENT BOOK	USED BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS	USED BY SPECIALISTS
Ч	ch	ch	č
Ш	sh	sh	š
Щ	sch	shch	šč
Ъ	omitted	"	"
Ы	y	y	y
Ь	omitted	'	'
Э	è	è	è
Ю	yu	iu	ju
Я	ya	ia	ja

Final unaccented "ий" and "ьий" have been transliterated as "y," and further exceptions from the general rules have been made for the following combinations:

ае	aye	ье	ie
ое	oye	ьи	yi
уе	uye	ью	iu
юе	yuye	ья	ia
яе	yaye	кс	x

The place of the accent in Russian words and names has been indicated throughout. When "e" falls under the accent, it is, in some words, pronounced (approximately) "yo." Where this occurs I have used the symbol "ë."

Many familiar Christian names are given in their English form (thus Peter for Pëtr, Michael for Mikhaíl, and so on).

PRINCE DMITRY SVYATOPOLK MIRSKY was born in Russia in 1890 and was educated at the University of St. Petersburg. After five years of military service he went to England, where he lectured at King's College, London University, from 1922 to 1932. He then returned to Russia, where he was a member of the Union of Soviet Writers, a contributor to various Russian papers, and the author of a number of published books of history and of literary criticism. Mirsky occupied a unique position as an interpreter of English literature to his own countrymen and of Russian literature to English readers. His best-known books are *A History of Russian Literature*, *Contemporary Russian Literature* (from which two books the Vintage Book is drawn), and *The Intelligentsia of Great Britain*. No official news has been published about Mirsky's fate, but there is evidence that he was exiled and died in Siberia in the late 1930's.

FRANCIS J. WHITFIELD was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1916. He has taught at Harvard and the University of Chicago, and, as a visitor, at Columbia and the University of Michigan. At present he is Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California at Berkeley.

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**A HISTORY OF
RUSSIAN
LITERATURE
FROM ITS BEGINNINGS
TO 1900**

1

The Literature of Old Russia (*Eleventh to Seventeenth Centuries*)

FROM its beginning in the eleventh century to the end of the seventeenth, Russian literature lived entirely out of touch with contemporary developments of Latin Christendom. Like Russian art it was a branch of the Greek trunk. Its germs were brought late in the tenth century from Constantinople, together with the Orthodox faith. But as it was the practice of the Eastern Church to favor the translation of the Scriptures and liturgies into the vernacular, the clergy of the converted nations had no need to learn Greek, and the absence of Greek scholarship in Russia had as its consequence the absence of all acquaintance with secular Greek literature and pre-Christian classical tradition.

THE LITERARY LANGUAGE

The literary language of Old Russia is known as Old Church Slavonic. It is based on some Bulgarian dialect from around Salonika, elevated to the rank of a liturgic and literary language in the ninth century by the apostles of Slavdom, SS. Cyril and Methodius. It was used by the South Slavs and Romanians as well as by the Russians. It