

Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Editors), *The Education of a Russian Statesman. The Memoirs of Nicholas Karlovich Giers*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962, IX+241 pp.

Professors Charles and Barbara Jelavich have done a great service in translating and publishing the unfinished memoirs of Giers, the original manuscript of which is in the possession of a grandson of Giers, Serge Giers, who lives in France. The *Memoirs*, covering the years 1820 to 1847, were written while Giers was minister at Stockholm between 1873 and 1875. In 1875 he returned to St. Petersburg to become head of the Asiatic Department in the Russian Foreign Office and eventually (1882) Russian foreign minister, which office he held until 1895. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete his *Memoirs*. Had he done so he would have bequeathed to posterity a documentary source of inestimable value. The unfinished *Memoirs* have only a limited value. All the same they are certainly worth the trouble which the Editors and Publishers have taken in presenting them: the publication indeed is excellent and the editing leaves nothing to be desired.

Giers, who was of Swedish and German extraction, was among those many officials of Tsarist Russia whose families originated outside Russia. Nevertheless he regarded himself as Russian. His education (at the Lyceum of Tsarkoe Selo) was Russian; he spoke Russian and chose to write his *Memoirs* in that language (although, as his Editors tell us, his style was more lucid and expressive when he wrote in French); and while he never abandoned his Lutheran faith he often frequented the Orthodox Church, the ritual of which, but not the music, appealed strongly to him. He certainly loved Russia and wished to be of service to his country. For all that, however, there was a very strong cosmopolitan streak in his character: he was anxious to serve abroad rather than in Russia: and when in 1841, after some three years of dull and routine employment in the Asiatic Department, he was sent to work in the office of K. E. Kotsebul, the Russian Consul General at Jassy in Moldavia, he found the cosmopolitan high society there much to his liking. This society he describes (despite his frequent digressions into genealogies) quite vividly; he relates the scandals (including the scandals of monastic life), passing upon them a merely formal censure; and, in the main, he succeeds in giving an amusing, if somewhat superficial, picture of the future Roumania. His closest links were with the Greeks and he eventually married into the Greek family of Cantacuzino.

In his description of Moldavian society he pauses now and then to pass formal censure upon the Phanariot Hospodars and their Phanariot minions who until 1827 (when Moldavia and Wallachia became virtually Russian protectorates) ruled the two Principalities upon behalf of the Turks. These Phanariots were largely responsible for the fashioning of that society which Giers found so much to his

liking. Whatever its shortcomings as a political system it was certainly more humane than direct Turkish rule and its cultural level was very high. Even when the Russians began to exercise protectorate powers, the Phanariot elements remained and for some time survived, adapting themselves to the new regime. This new regime, which was the work of General Kiselev, is praised by Giers, but not fully explained. Nor does Giers describe at all fully the activities of the Russian consular authorities in the Principalities, but is content merely to state in general terms that the Russian Consuls were more disinterested and more scrupulous than those of the other powers. Giers also tells us that he learned from his Greek friends a great deal about politics in the Principalities, but he never discloses the information. He is indeed a most tantalising memoir writer. No sooner has he introduced an interesting topic than he mentions a name and then sheers off into some family history, with lists of marriages, offspring and divorces.

Nevertheless the *Memoirs* are not tedious to read. They are on the contrary quite entertaining. Giers moves rapidly from family genealogies, to anecdote and topography, to odd scraps of political information, and then back to some family or other. One reads on always in the hope that he will develop some particular theme; but though his *Memoirs* touch on many subjects and many people, he never stops to deal with any item thoroughly. No doubt he wrote these *Memoirs* mainly for the amusement of his own family and acquaintances; he obviously had no intention of making an historical source or of setting out to glorify his own career. Hence these *Memoirs* have a certain objective value, for they were certainly not intended to deceive. Giers was primarily interested in the people he encountered: there is little sign that he was interested in causes, developments and ideas. No wonder then that in these *Memoirs* one gets hardly any inkling that the Principalities were to experience the Revolution of 1848. All the same, one has the impression that had he wished he could have said much more about political conditions in this part of Europe: he was certainly a most conscientious official and he must have amassed in his good memory a whole pile of information - information concerning not only the Danubian Principalities but the politics of Europe.

It is interesting to note however that for all his industry and conscientiousness, he made, during the period to which the *Memoirs* refer, little or no progress in the foreign service. It is therefore perhaps remarkable that eventually he rose to the highest rank. In all probability it was his great personal quality rather than his ability which finally brought him to the place of honour. In that place he worked rather as a secretary than as a minister of foreign affairs. All the same he must have exercised some influence on Alexander II and Alexander III or at least he helped to prevent the bolder spirits like Ignatiev, Suburov and Katkov from launching on a less conservative policy. As the Editors, who have studied Giers's private papers, state in their excellent introduction to the *Memoirs*: "A constant advocate of compromise

and moderation, a foe of adventures and adventurers, Giers sought always to preserve Russia from foreign conflicts. Like his predecessor Gorchakov, Giers supported the arguments of those who believed that Russia should avoid foreign entanglements—above all, any that might lead to war—and instead should concentrate on internal reform. He was thus a convinced proponent of the Three Emperors' Alliance (Dreikaiserbund) of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary because he believed that it offered the best hope of security and peace to Russia. In the 1890's he accepted the policy of alignment with France for the same objectives. As the advocate of the moderate course and an honest and straightforward policy, Giers was able to offer guidance and a restraining hand to the tsars he served."

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Notis Botzaris, *Visions Balkaniques dans la préparation de la Révolution Grecque (1789-1821)*. Libraire E. Droz, Genève and Libraire Minard, Paris, 1962, VIII+280 pp.

In this excellent and readable book Dr. Botzaris shows that, although pan-Balkan ideals played a notable part in the preparation of the Greek Revolution, the eventual struggle against the Turks was, for good or for ill, conducted by Greeks alone, with no assistance from the other Balkan Christians. The final result of this heroic and hard fought conflict was the establishment of a small national state with the Arta-Volos frontier in the north—a state excluding the majority of the Greek people. This solution was in part the recognition of the military situation that had developed and in part a compromise imposed by European diplomacy. It bore very little relation to the ideas that prepared the Greek Revolution except in so far as the new kingdom was a democratic society and (in theory at least) a democratic state, much as it might be lacking in democratic institutions. As Dr. Botzaris shows, the ideas of the French Revolution greatly inspired the Greeks, above all the Greek bourgeoisie which had developed both within Greece and in the Greek communities outside. It is, however, not so much with these ideas themselves as the means to carry them into effect that Dr. Botzaris is chiefly concerned: and he shows that in the preparation of the Greek revolt attempts were made to co-ordinate the military action of the different Christian peoples and at the same time to enlist the support of Moslems in conflict with the central power.

Owing to the common tyranny under which all suffered to some degree or other, there was a tendency to unite and to think of simultaneous revolution in all parts of the Empire. Military considerations and the intermingling of the separate peoples in certain areas reinforced this tendency. But concerted action was difficult to come by. The separate Christian peoples (who were at different stages in political, economic and cultural development and for the most part