



The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture under Communism

Isaiah Berlin

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Isaiah Berlin's response to the Soviet Union was central to his identity, both personally and intellectually. Born a Russian subject in Riga in 1909, he spoke Russian as a child and witnessed both revolutions in St. Petersburg in 1917, emigrating to the West in 1921. He first returned to Russia in 1945, when he met the writers Anna Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak. These formative encounters helped shape his later work, especially his defense of political freedom and his studies of pre-Soviet Russian thinkers. Never before collected, Berlin's writings about the USSR include his accounts of his famous meetings with Russian writers shortly after the Second World War; the celebrated 1945 Foreign Office memorandum on the state of the arts under Stalin; his account of Stalin's manipulative 'artificial dialectic'; portraits of Osip Mandel'shtam and Boris Pasternak; his survey of Soviet Russian culture written after a visit in 1956; a postscript stimulated by the events of 1989; and more. This collection includes essays that have never been published before, as well as works that are not widely known because they were published under pseudonyms to protect relatives living in Russia. The contents of this book were discussed at a seminar in Oxford in 2003, held under the auspices of the Brookings Institution. Berlin's editor, Henry Hardy, had prepared the essays for collective publication and here recounts their history. In his foreword, Brookings president Strobe Talbott, an expert on the Soviet Union, relates the essays to Berlin's other work. The Soviet Mind will assume its rightful place among Berlin's works and will prove invaluable for policymakers, students, and those interested in Russian politics, past, present and future.

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