THE STRUCTURE
AND DEVELOPMENT OF
RUSSIAN
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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preface</th>
<th>page vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## PART I

### THE STRUCTURE OF RUSSIAN

| I | Introduction | 3 |
| II | Sounds | 18 |
| III | Words and Forms | 41 |
| IV | Sentences | 76 |
| V | Dialects | 86 |

## PART II

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN

| VI | Conjecture and Record | 109 |
| VII | The Kijev and Tartar Periods (eleventh to the fourteenth centuries) | 126 |
| VIII | The Moscow Period (fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries) | 138 |
| IX | The Eighteenth Century | 148 |
| X | The Nineteenth Century and After | 158 |
| XI | The Post-Revolutionary Period | 166 |

## PART III

### SPECIMENS

A Selection of Passages from Russian Literature with English Versions | 175 |

Classified Bibliography | 204 |

Index | 211 |
PREFACE

1

I have tried here, in limited space, to present the facts of Russian consecutively from two different points of view, the descriptive (synchronic), which neglects the time factor, and the historical (diachronic), which sees language in relation to time. The facts in their totality are the same; it is the point of view that varies, making its own selection of facts and seeing them in a different set of relations. One point of view, however, supplements the other, and the twofold analysis of the language which they enable us to make gives an insight not only into its present system of symbols and meanings, but into the changes this has undergone in course of time.

A true historical perspective can exist only when we have historical records to draw on. Where they are wanting, as in still unwritten or till lately illiterate languages, or where they cover only a ‘fraction’ of time, as in Lithuanian and Albanian, it can be attained only by projecting linguistic record into the unrecorded past. Here we are obviously treading on uncertain ground, for however plausible the findings of the comparative-historical method of linguistic investigation may appear, we are ultimately obliged to admit that they can at best offer no more than an unverifiable approximation of the truth. Russian, fortunately for us, has records going back to the eleventh century, and we are therefore in a position to see a segment of it in historical flux. Though relatively brief, the vision permits us nevertheless to give the ‘reality’ of growth to what would otherwise be only a structure and a scheme.

2

The structure and development of Russian are dealt with in the first two parts of this book, and the third (Specimens) introduces passages of original Russian literature covering a space of nine centuries and arranged in chronological order. This illustrative matter, which I have put into English, will make it
possible for us to follow the evolution not only of Russian literature in its personalities and influences, but of the language in its structural and stylistic changes. The passages with one exception (no. 14), are taken from Н. К. Гудзий, Хрестоматия по древней русской литературе XI—XVII веков (Москва, 1947). No. 14 comes from Ф. Буслаев, Русская хрестоматия (Москва, 1888). Gudzij prints all texts earlier than the sixteenth century in their original spelling, which reproduces the errors and inconsistencies of the MSS., and he uses the modern spelling for the later ones, though he takes care to preserve their ‘phonetic and morphological peculiarities’, as we do in reprinting sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English. Buslajev, on the other hand, ‘normalises’ his texts and naturally follows pre-Revolutionary practice in spelling. This has been modernised here to make the text of no. 14 uniform with Gudzij’s. Specimens later than 1700 are also given in the modern spelling to preserve uniformity and to lighten the reader’s burden.

Three scripts are used in the text to represent Russian sounds, viz. Cyrillic, which those who have studied Classical Greek will find familiar up to a point; italics to transliterate the Cyrillic; and boldface type, now often resorted to by the International Phonetic Association, for our phonetic transcriptions. The I.P.A. alphabet is fairly widely known, but I have not assumed that all my readers will be acquainted with it. The Russian values of the relevant symbols, interpreted approximately and for the most part in terms of the sounds of the better-known European languages, are as follows:

(1) Vowels

\begin{itemize}
\item[i] as in Fr. ‘mine’
\item[e] as in ‘sit’
\item[a] as in Fr. ‘été’
\item[æ] as in Fr. ‘sept’
\item[ä] as in ‘man’
\item[ö] as in Fr. ‘patte’
\item[œ] as in Norw. ‘hus’
\item[ø] as in ‘ago’
\item[ø] as in Swed. ‘dam’
\item[œ] as in Port. ‘dia’
\item[ɛ] like the first vowel in the Cockney pronunciation of ‘moon’
\item[u] as in Fr. ‘fur’
\item[o] as in ‘put’
\item[ʊ] as in Fr. ‘choose’
\item[ɛ] as in Ger. ‘Kest’
\item[ə] as in ‘cup’
\item[ɔ] as in Fr. ‘pas’
\end{itemize}
Preface

Normal Russian ø is intermediate between o and ø. Along with all other Russian vowels except e, it may form diphthongs (syllables of two vowels) with i, conventionally written j (as in ‘yet’), e.g. oi, ej, aj, ij, uj.

(2) Consonants

p as in Fr. ‘pomme’
s as in Fr. ‘table’
b as in Fr. ‘bon’
z as in Fr. ‘maison’
m as in ‘may’
ß as in Ger. ‘zehn’
t as in Fr. ‘temps’
f as in Fr. ‘chou’
d as in Fr. ‘dame’
ʒ as in Fr. ‘joli’
n as in Fr. ‘nappe’
ʧ as in ‘churn’
c as in Hung. ‘tyúk’t
j as in ‘jet’
j as in Hung. ‘nagy’t
x as in Ger. ‘noch’
k as in Fr. ‘corde’
y as in North Ger. ‘Wagen’
g as in Fr. ‘grand’
l as in Am. Eng. ‘look’
f as in ‘face’
r as in Ital. ‘caro’
v as in ‘very’

All the foregoing consonants, except c, š, j, and the ‘sibilants’ f, š, ʧ, ʤ, are frequently palatalised in Russian, i.e. pronounced with the middle of the tongue simultaneously raised. Palatalised consonants are indicated with a small ‘hook’, or comma, representing a miniature j (the symbol of palatalisation), attached to them (e.g. p, m, ɡ, ʃ). The sound b is never, and j and z are rarely, palatalised, except in the older Moscow pronunciation, whereas ʧ always is, and c, ř, and j are palatal by nature.

4

I owe a debt of gratitude to my friend and former teacher, Professor N. B. Jopson, Fellow of St John’s College, Cambridge, for reading my work in manuscript and for a great deal of constructive criticism and advice. I should also like to express here my grateful admiration of the Cambridge University Press for the care, patience, and efficiency expended on the production of this book.

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1 See my article ‘nouts on ő hangsarian sound-sistim’ (Le Mâitre Phonétique, no. 93; London, 1950).