



## American Academy of Political and Social Science

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### Review

Reviewed Work(s): Capitalism with a Human Face: The Quest for a Middle Road in Russian Politics by William Gay and T. A. Alekseeva

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focus of Fuller and Lesser is upon Islam and the West, to the exclusion of civilizational complexes that are neither Muslim nor Western.

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GAY, WILLIAM and T. A. ALEKSEEVA.  
*Capitalism with a Human Face: The Quest for a Middle Road in Russian Politics*. Pp. xxix, 234. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996. \$58.00. Paperbound, \$22.95.

This book, written by two philosophers, an American and a Russian, ostensibly focuses, as the title indicates, on an economic system, but in fact it represents a plea for a change in Russia's political course. The juxtaposition of the title and the subtitle implies the equation of economics and politics; the characterizations, of capitalism in the title and of the political course in the subtitle, reveal the authors' reservations in regard to both Russia's socialist past and the westward orientation of its current leadership (or, at least, its leadership in 1995). The proposition that Russia should develop capitalism "with a human face" and follow a political "middle road" (between Russia's past and the West) suggests that the face of Western capitalism is inhuman and that the road to Western liberal democracy is too extreme for Russia. Indeed, the book is an apology for "centrism" in Russian politics cum economics, that is, for a position combining values of socialism and capitalism, of socialist and liberal democracy.

The central premise behind this apology is quite sensible. It is that the expectation that a Western-style democracy and capitalism would emerge in Russia is unreasonable because it is inconsistent with national traditions and that any at-

tempts at reform should take these traditions into account. Unfortunately, the confused manner in which the argument is presented ensures that it will be lost on most American students of Russian politics and economics. The justification for the publication of *Capitalism with a Human Face* in this country (as a part of a series in philosophy), in my opinion, is that it represents a specimen of what is defined as philosophical thought in Russia today. The book is Russian through and through—with its characteristic turns of phrase, translated verbatim and often incomprehensible in English; its broad-ranging free associations (from Pirandello, to extracts from recent surveys, to Aristotle and from Herzen, who is defined as a famous "revolutionary democrat" in a footnote, to Hegel) and the hodgepodge of disciplinary approaches on which it indiscriminately draws without making any distinction between normative statements and empirical generalizations, which reflects the nature of humanistic education in Russia; its appeal to the authority of science and tendency to characterize any political commentator as a "prominent social scientist"; and its naive and, for this reason, implicit acceptance of the sociological presuppositions of historical materialism. This, as well as the quality of the proofreading, might raise questions as to the contribution of the American coauthor but should make the book of interest to a student of contemporary Russian academic discourse.

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HODGES, DONALD C. *Mexican Anarchism After the Revolution*. Pp. xiv, 463. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. \$40.00. Paperbound, \$17.95.