The Slave Soul of Russia

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Acknowledgments

This book owes its title and chief inspiration to the Soviet Russian writer Vasilii Semenovich Grossman (1905–64). In his pessimistic novella Forever Flowing Grossman explains Russia’s uniqueness by its “slave soul.” Russia is a land of endless suffering, according to Grossman, because Russians typically cannot overcome their self-defeating slavishness.

If there was anything to what Grossman was saying, I thought when I first read him, then the psychoanalytic theory of moral masochism ought to apply to the Russians. Nearly one thousand footnotes later, I have become convinced that Grossman was correct, for I have been able to document the widespread occurrence of moral masochism in various spheres of Russian culture.

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All translations into English are mine unless otherwise noted. A Russian translation of this book is in preparation.
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