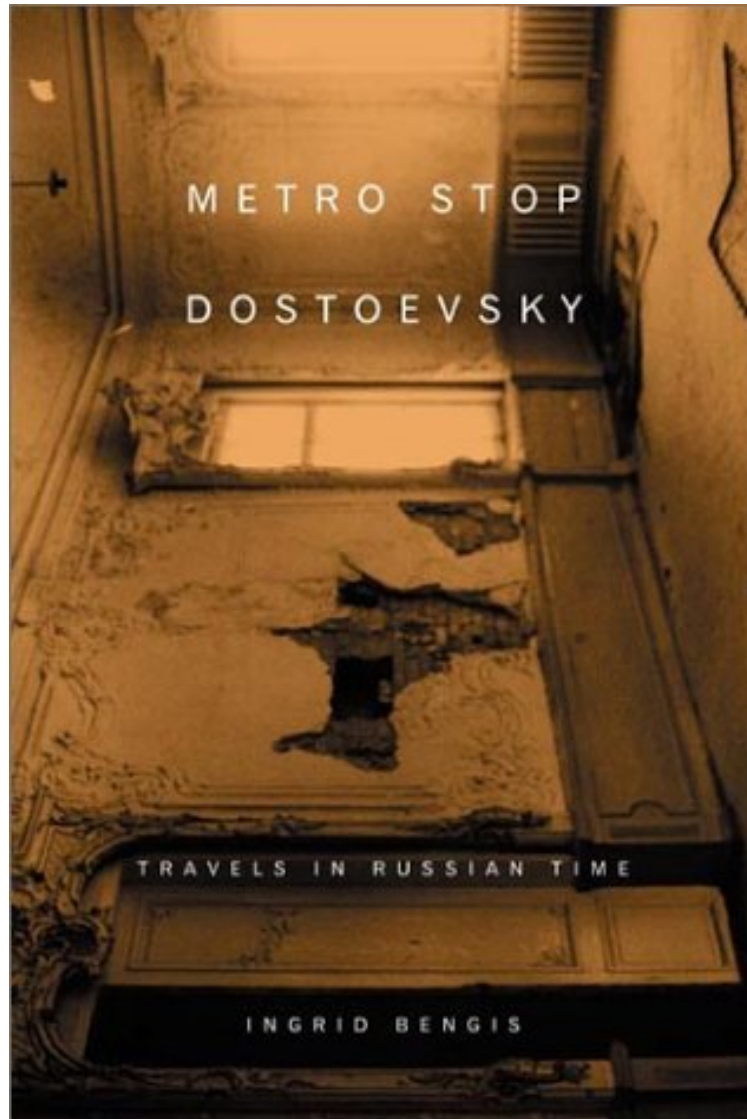


(Free) Metro Stop Dostoevsky: Travels in Russian Time

Metro Stop Dostoevsky: Travels in Russian Time

Ingrid Bengis

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Ingrid Bengis : Metro Stop Dostoevsky: Travels in Russian Time before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Metro Stop Dostoevsky: Travels in Russian Time:

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Metro Stop DostoevskyBy Dr. C. PodolskyA wonderful book! Captures relationships; explores in thoughtful and insightful ways,the way one's own struggles for identity are the same and different as those from another culture. Intimate and personal but placed in a broader context as well. A very soulful, moving memoir.5 of 10 people found the following review helpful. White NightsBy SonechkaA book about

Russia that makes your heart squawk like the sofa springs in Tolstoy's "Ivan Ilych" and sing like Mandelstam's "We shall meet again in St. Petersburg." For Ingrid Bengis as for Dostoevsky, Russia's beauty is a bright force and a dark well. For anyone who wishes to gaze upon it or into it, *Metro Stop Dostoevsky* is both invitation and warning, as it should be. 4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An intimate look at Bengis' rather exposed soul. By Pen Name What a lovely and interesting little book is "Metro Stop Dostoevsky: Travels in Russian Time." It is about the experiences of an American woman in Russia who not only wants to understand Russians, but who also wants to be accepted almost as a Russian herself. Ms. Bengis lays bare her soul in this book, and it's impossible not to have empathy and admiration for her resigned doggedness and her heroic demand to fit in to a culture that seems to reject her at every turn. All I could think of for much of the time when I was reading the book was: I hope she's all right. It's one thing to be psychologically diffident, or even masochistic, but quite another to take those traits to another, far different, country and culture. She is a truly a heroine. Alec Guinness once said that no book he ever bought prior to the 1960's ever had a typo in it, and no book bought since was ever without one. I'm afraid that this book does fall into the latter category when it comes to transliterated Russian. It's as if the occasional Russian word had been illegibly handwritten in Cyrillic and then set into type by someone who didn't know the language. Those typos are jarring, especially understanding how immersed Ms. Bengis was in the language, literature and culture of Russia. Also strange, for me at least, is the book's very first page - which you can read here on - in which the current Russian Karelian city of Vyborg is spelled Wiborg, apparently the spelling of the city's name while it was still part of Finland! Am I missing something here? Nothing in this book is especially political, so why the odd transliteration for Vyborg? What do I think? I think if you have any interest in, or love for, things Russian you must buy this book. You may come to love Ms. Bengis a little, too, but you will surely wish her a wonderful Russian journey.

A Russian American writer catapults herself into the maelstrom of Russian life at a time of seismic change for both. The daughter of Russian émigrés, Ingrid Bengis grew up wondering whether she was American or, deep down, "really Russian." In 1991, naïvely in love with Russia and Russian literature, she settled in St. Petersburg, where she was quickly immersed in "catastroika," a period of immense turmoil that mirrored her own increasingly complex and contradictory experience. Bengis's account of her involvement with Russia is heightened by her involvement with B, a Russian whose collapsing marriage, paralleling the collapse of the Soviet Union, produces a situation in which "anything could happen." Their relationship reflects the social tumult, as well as the sometimes dangerous consequences of American "good intentions." As Bengis takes part in Russian life—becoming a reluctant entrepreneur, undergoing surgery in a St. Petersburg hospital, descending into a coal mine—she becomes increasingly aware of its Dostoevskian duality, never more so than when she meets the impoverished, importuning great-great-granddaughter of the writer himself. Beneath the seismic shifting remains a centuries-old preoccupation with "the big questions": tradition and progress, destiny and activism, skepticism and faith. With its elaborate pattern of digression and its eye for the revealing detail, Bengis's account has the hypnotic intimacy of a late-night conversation in a Russian kitchen, where such questions are perpetually being asked.

From Publishers Weekly "What has socialism... killed in the Soviets, and what has it created?" wonders Bengis (*Combat in the Erogenous Zone*, 1972) at the opening of this episodic memoir about her life in Russia in the 1990s. Bengis, the American-born daughter of Russian emigres, searches for an answer during a series of trips she takes to St. Petersburg between 1991 and 1996. During her visits, which often last many months, Bengis shares an apartment with her Russian friend B, a seamstress recently separated from her husband. Bengis observes the shifting mood as the Soviet Union collapses and B's crowd encounters new freedoms and insecurities. A group of Bengis's Russian friends, well educated and in their late 30s and early 40s, find themselves working as unofficial taxi drivers and illegal smugglers, or not working at all. By the mid-1990s everyone has a half-baked money-making scheme, including B, who cajoles Bengis into bankrolling an operation to sell handmade silk and cashmere shawls in the West. B is a memorable figure—proud, elegant, alternately protective and cruel—and alongside the story of Russia's transformation, Bengis traces the deterioration of her relationship with B, who ends up effectively stealing thousands of dollars from her. This relationship is both the most fascinating and the most frustrating part of the memoir. Bengis doesn't fully examine her and B's friendship. She seems to take for granted B's sudden, intense currents of hostility, which come as a surprise to the reader, and her calm acceptance of B's attacks can be baffling. Still, Bengis is a fine portraitist who creates wonderfully vivid and intimate scenes pulsing with the suppressed frustration, passion and fragile hope of the people whose lives she chronicles. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist In the early 1990s, Bengis decided to go to Russia to teach literature. Idealistic and curious, she moved in with her friend, whom she calls B, and began to look for a university position. But neither her friendship with B nor her search for a job went as well as she'd hoped. The university she contacted was more interested in her teaching a course on American capitalism than a Russian literature course. And B's marriage to A was on the rocks, putting her living situation in jeopardy. When B lost the apartment they were living in, she and Bengis had to get a new one, but this is no easy task in Russia. But when Bengis was hospitalized with intestinal problems, she was amazed by the kindness of the doctors as well as the

low costs (compared to American health care) she had to pay. Bengis vividly calls up post-cold war Russia in this contemplative, striking memoir. Kristine Huntley Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

"Metro Stop Dostoevsky is to this old man the most sane and intelligent book anyone could possibly write about what it is like to be a human being at the start of this new millennium."--Kurt Vonnegut

"There is so much to say in praise of Metro Stop Dostoevsky that I will content myself with but one remark. I read it all in something approaching whole pleasure, and how often can we make such a claim?"--Norman Mailer

"We're in the company of a cockeyed optimist. And as with all optimists, there's a price to pay. Go with Ingrid Bengis as she pays it in Russia. This book is the story of her glorious redemption."--Nancy Milford