

Title: Ty chto za ptitsa? The English Translation and Reception of Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*, 1881-1915

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The events surrounding Dostoevsky's sensational 1881 Petersburg funeral aroused a good deal of curiosity throughout the English-speaking world. Just who was this unfamiliar foreign writer whose death had provoked such a fantastic, nation-wide outpouring of grief? English and American journalists eager to say something about this mysterious cultural icon naturally turned to the only book by Dostoevsky currently available in English: *Buried Alive: Ten Years of Penal Servitude in Siberia*, a mangled translation of *Notes from the House of the Dead* published earlier the same year. The fact that *House of the Dead* was first presented to English-speaking readers as Dostoevsky's "principal work" can thus be explained simply by its availability; what *cannot* be so easily explained, however, is why, despite the appearance of several other Dostoevsky novels in English (including *Crime and Punishment*), *House of the Dead* afterward maintained its elevated status in the minds of English and American readers for over thirty years.

What other factors contributed to the early Anglo-American centrality of *House of the Dead*, and what consequences did the book's popularity have for the future of Dostoevsky criticism? This presentation will attempt to answer these and other difficult questions by exploring the unlikely manner in which representatives of such disparate organizations as the British Bible Society, the Russian-American Telegraph Company, the French Embassy, and the Russian anarchist movement each employed Dostoevsky's fictionalized prison memoirs for their own purposes in the face of international controversy, thus ensuring the continued relevance of *House of the Dead* for the English-speaking reader as well as giving a certain direction to English Dostoevsky criticism which would persist well into the twentieth century.