CHRISTIAN POWER IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE (1856-1905)

Vladimir Moss

Copyright © Vladimir Moss, 2008
INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................... 4
I. NATIONALISM AND MESSIANISM (1856-1881) ............................................. 6
   1. THE WEST: THE MASTER RACE ................................................................. 7
      Darwin’s Theory of Evolution ...................................................................... 8
      The Justifications of Imperialism .................................................................. 11
      China: The Taiping Rebellion ...................................................................... 16
      The American Civil War ............................................................................ 19
      The Rise of Germany .................................................................................. 26
      Wagner on Capitalism and Kingship ............................................................. 29
      The Austro-Hungarian Empire .................................................................... 36
      Japan: The Meiji Restoration ....................................................................... 39
      Marx and Bakunin ...................................................................................... 45
      The Risorgimento and the Fall of the Papacy ............................................. 53
      The Paris Commune ................................................................................... 61
      Dostoyevsky on Papism and Socialism ....................................................... 67
      The German Empire ................................................................................... 71
      Nietzsche: (1) The Will to Power ................................................................. 75
      Nietzsche: (2) The Attitude to Truth ........................................................... 82
      Nietzsche: (3) The Antichrist ...................................................................... 85
      The Faiths of the Nationalists ..................................................................... 89
      The Spirit of Nationalism .......................................................................... 97
      The Jewish Question .................................................................................. 103
      The Forerunners of Zionism ....................................................................... 108
   2. THE GOD-CHosen RACE (1856-1881) ....................................................... 118
      “The New Man” ......................................................................................... 118
      The Emancipation of the Serfs .................................................................. 122
      The Supporters of Emancipation ................................................................ 128
      The Critics of Emancipation ...................................................................... 130
      Russia in Asia ............................................................................................ 135
      Metropolitan Philaret and Church Reform .................................................. 140
      Two Kinds of Justice .................................................................................. 146
      Underground Man and Russian Society .................................................... 151
      The People’s Truth .................................................................................... 156
      The Devils .................................................................................................. 160
      Dostoyevskyan Justice .............................................................................. 164
      Portents of the Antichrist .......................................................................... 173
      L’Alliance Israélite Universelle ...................................................................... 179
      The Rise of Orthodox Nationalism .............................................................. 182
      Pan-Slavism: Danilevsky and Leontiev ....................................................... 190
      The Greco-Bulgarian Schism ..................................................................... 199
      At the Gates of Constantinople ................................................................... 206
      Dostoyevsky on Russia ............................................................................. 210
      The Pushkin Speech ................................................................................... 215
      Tsar, Church and People .......................................................................... 217
      The Jews under Alexander II ..................................................................... 226
      The Tsar and the Constitution .................................................................... 236
II. THE ZENITH OF IMPERIALISM (1881-1905) ............................................. 241
   3. THE WEST: MATERIALISM AND SPIRITUALISM ...................................... 242
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universal Evolutionism</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Imperialism and Darwinism</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Imperialism and the Crusades</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalism vs. Liberalism in America</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pobedonostsev on Democracy</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Welfare State</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum and Maximum Socialism</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism and Christianity</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masonry and Socialism</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masonry and Spiritualism</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Founding of Zionism</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State versus Church in France</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperialism: (1) The Political-Economic Aspect</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperialism: (2) The Cultural-Religious Aspect</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Nationalism</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freudian Psychology</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Psychoanalysis of Totalitarianism</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. THE EAST: PEACEMAKERS AND WARMONGERS</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Murder of Tsar Alexander II</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jewish Question</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soloviev on Russia</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pobedonostsev on Church-State Relations</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Conscience</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Reign of Tsar Alexander III</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Roots of the Revolution</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsar Nicholas II</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lure of the East</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Orthodox Churches and “Proto-Ecumenism”</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University Strike</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebellious Priests</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferment in the Russian Church</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John of Kronstadt and Lev Tolstoy</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monasticism and Ecumenism</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Theology</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nationalities Policy</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Liberation Movement</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kishinev, 1903</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regicide in the Balkans</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sarov Days</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant Russia</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrest in the Army</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Russo-Japanese War</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Nicholas of Japan</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the Press</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards the Reestablishment of Symphony</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Following on its predecessors, *The Mystery of Christian Power* (to 1453) and *Christian Power in the Age of Reason* (1453-1789), the last volume in this series, *Christian Power in the Age of Revolution* (1789-1856), covered the period from the French revolution to the Crimean War. Its main theme was the revolution in its liberal and nationalist variations, and the counter-revolution as led primarily by the Russian Orthodox Autocracy. The present volume continues the same theme into the age of empire insofar as empire became, as never before or since in modern history, the favoured form of international statehood. The volume ends just before the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05 and the abortive Russian revolution in 1905, when all the major empires are still in place, but several are beginning to question their imperial mission.

In this period we find all the empires, whatever their official religious affiliation – Orthodox (Russia), Catholic (France, Austro-Hungary), Protestant (England, Germany, the USA), Mohammedan (Turkey) and pagan (China and Japan) - contending with, but also coexisting with, a series of secular ideas deriving from the revolution: the nationalist, socialist and democratic ideas. Some, especially the nominally Catholic and Protestant powers, in fact believed in one or another of these secular ideas more than in any religion. Only Russia (and to a lesser extent Turkey and China), while making some concessions to these secular ideas, remained committed first of all to the incarnation of its religious idea. Interacting powerfully with these political ideas, and hardly less important than them, were the ideas of Darwin, the later Marx, Wagner, Nietzsche and Freud, which are also discussed in this volume. I shall study how these new intellectual and artistic currents interacted with political and religious life, giving it a denser, more complex texture, as, for example, the early, individualist and romantic form of socialism gave way to a more “scientific”, determinist and collectivist form.

As in the earlier volumes in this series, I have divided the book into pairs of chapters, one chapter in each pair describing developments in the West and the other - in the East. The chapters on the West, therefore, are devoted to the western kinds of empire: the nationalist, semi-monarchical empires of Germany and Japan; the multinational empire of Austro-Hungary; and the liberal-democratic empires of Great Britain and the United States. The chapters on the East, correspondingly, are devoted to the eastern kinds of empire: the Orthodox autocratic empire of Russia, and the absolutist empires of Ottoman Turkey and Manchu China. And then there is a further type of empire that straddles East and West and is therefore encountered throughout the book: the non-territorial empire of Jewry…

The left-wing historian E.H. Carr once wrote that history could either be “a study of human achievement” or “relapse into theology – that is to say, a study… of the divine purpose”¹. This book, like its predecessors, does not aim to “relapse” into theology; but it does seek to discern, however dimly and

incompletely, the Divine purpose in human history – especially in Russia, God’s chosen instrument in this period, but also in the other nations that interacted with Russia in the last generation before the great catastrophe that was to usher in the age of the Antichrist...

My debts are too many to list in full. But I should like to make special mention of those authors who first opened up my mind to the beauty and truth of the Christian idea of statehood, the idea of Christian Rome and Holy Russia – Archbishop Averky of Jordanville, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, St. John of Kronstadt, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov, Constantine Nikolaevich Leontiev, Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev and M.V. Zyzykin. Among historians writing from this, traditionally Orthodox point of view, I have been most helped by Archpriest Lev Lebedev in his great work, *Great Russia* (St. Petersburg, 1999). Among western historians I have been helped especially by Dominic Lieven, Richard Pipes, Geoffrey Hosking, Eric Hobsbawm, Oliver Figes and Niall Ferguson – although it goes without saying that I do not agree with all their judgements.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us!

*March 23 / April 5, 2008.*

*East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking. GU22 0SB.*
I. NATIONALISM AND MESSENIANISM (1856-1881)
1. THE WEST: THE MASTER RACE

When I consent to be a Republican, I do evil, knowing that’s what I do… I say Long live Revolution! As I would say Long live Destruction! Long live Expiation! Long live Punishment! Long live Death!
Charles Baudelaire (1866).

His undoing will not be the earthly sword which he possessed for so many years, but the fatal saying that ‘Freedom of conscience is a delirium’.
F.I. Tiutchev on Pope Pius IX.

The Jewish people has rejected Christ, the true Mediator and Messiah, and therefore has excluded itself from history. Instead the Germans have become God’s chosen people.
Constantin Frantz (1870s).

“If from the starting-point of 1815,” writes Norman Davies, “the [nineteenth] century evolved through three clear stages, those of reaction (1815-48), reform (1848-71), and rivalry (1871-1914). In the first stage, the conservative fortress held out with varying success until it collapsed amidst the general revolutionary outburst of 1848. In the second stage, the powers reluctantly conceded that controlled reform was preferable to endless resistance. Important concessions were made on all fronts. Constitutions were granted, the last serfs emancipated. Two of the three leading contenders for national independence were allowed to achieve it. In the third and final stage, Europe entered a period of intense rivalry, aggravated by diplomatic realignments, military rearmament, and colonial competition. Forty years of unequalled peace could not restrain the growing tensions which in August 1914 were permitted to pass into open conflict. Europe’s modern and modernizing societies, armed with modern weapons, recklessly entered a modern war whose slaughter made Napoleon’s battles look like skirmishes.”

If the first stage in this period was dominated by the ideas of the French revolution and, albeit at a distance, by the armies of “the Gendarme of Europe”, Russia; and the second - by English political ideas and economic performance; the third stage was dominated by Germany – her armies, her industrial might, her culture and, still more fateful, her contest with Jewry for the domination of the civilized world, for the title of “the master race”. Paradoxically, the false messianism which the Jews who rejected Christ had bestowed on the world was taken up, in inverted form, by the Germans…

Parallel with these developments and influencing them was the wider retreat of European thought from traditional religious ideas and customs. This anti-religious onslaught was carried out in tandem by two apparently opposing movements that actually converged in their final end: the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the irrationalism of the Counter-Enlightenment. The French revolution combined with the Romantic

---

movement had given a huge boost to the irrationalist reaction, while not stopping the march of rationalism. However, the defeat of the 1848 revolution, and the vast industrial boom of the 1850s, placed a temporary damper on these irrationalist tendencies. So this was the age of the realistic novel in art and positivism in philosophy, when Hegel’s definition: “the real is the rational” became the motto of all “progressive” spirits.

Darwin’s Theory of Evolution

The Bible of the new rationalism was Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859 but written considerably earlier. The year 1859, according to M.S. Anderson, “can be seen as the beginning of a new era in intellectual life”; for it “gave birth not merely to the Origin of Species but also to Marx’s *Critique of Political Economy* and Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*. If eighteenth-century Deism had banished God to the heavens, leaving for Him only the function of Creator, Darwinism deprived Him even of this function, ascribing all creativity to the blind will of nature working entirely through chance. Of course, this could be seen as the height of irrationalism - which it was, and a return to the crudest pagan nature-worship - which it also was. But Darwin succeeded in ascribing to his pagan mysticism the aura of *science* – and few there were, in the 1860s, who dared to question the authority of science.

The theory maintains that all life, even the most complex, has evolved from the simplest organisms over a period of hundreds of millions of years. This process is entirely random, being propelled forward by two mechanisms: *natural selection*, which “selects out” for survival those organisms with advantageous variations (this was Darwin’s preferred mechanism), and *genetic mutations*, which introduce variations into the genotypes of the organisms (this is the favoured mechanism of the “neo-Darwinists”).

“Therefore,” writes Bertrand Russell, “among chance variations those that are favourable will preponderate among adults in each generation. Thus from age to age deer run more swiftly, cats stalk their prey more silently, and giraffes’ necks become longer. Given enough time, this mechanism, so Darwin contended, could account for the whole long development from the protozoa to *homo sapiens.*”

---

3 Darwin may have waited many years before publishing his theory because, as David Quammen writes, he was anxious “about announcing a theory that seemed to challenge conventional religious beliefs – in particular, the Christian beliefs of his wife, Emma. Darwin himself quietly renounced Christianity during his middle age, and later described himself as an agnostic. He continued to believe in a distant, impersonal deity of some sort, a greater entity that had set the universe and its laws into motion, but not in a personal God who had chosen humanity as a specially favored species. Darwin avoided flaunting his lack of religious faith, at least partly in deference to Emma. And she prayed for his soul…” (*Was Darwin Wrong?*, *National Geographic*, November, 2004, p. 9)


“Given enough time...” Time – enormous amounts of it – was indeed a critical ingredient in Darwin’s theory; in fact it took the place of a satisfactory causal mechanism. But such a theory chimed in with the historicist temper of the times. It also chimed in with the idea, as Jacques Barzun writes, “that everything is alive and in motion – a dynamic universe”.\(^6\) Liberals believed in progress, socialists believed in revolution, everyone except for a few diehards like the Pope believed that things had to change, and that change was for the better. Above all, evolution appealed to man’s pride, in the belief that man was destined for greater and greater things. “You know,” says Lady Constance in Disraeli’s novel Tancred (1847), “all is development – the principle is perpetually going on. First, there was nothing; then – I forget the next – I think there were shells; then fishes; then we came – let me see – did we come next? Never mind, we came at last and the next change will be something very superior to us, something with wings...”\(^7\)

It will be noted that this was written twelve years before Darwin’s Origin of the Species, which shows that the “scientific” theory filled an emotional need already expressed by poets and novelists. Evidently not feeling this need himself, Disraeli said that as between the idea that man was an ape or an angel, he was “on the side of the angels”\(^8\); but he forgot that, as Lady Constance had opined in his novel, evolution was for many a way of attaining angelic status (“something with wings”) in the very long run. For those who did not believe in the deification of man through Christ, evolution provided another, secular and atheist form of deification.

This elicited the not unfounded derision of the conservatives. Thus Gobineau said that man was “not descended from the apes, but rapidly getting there”.\(^9\)

The strange thing about Darwin’s book was that it never actually discussed the origin of species – the very first and simplest step in evolution, the supposed transformation of inorganic matter into organic. This was perhaps because Darwin knew of Louis Pasteur’s contemporary discovery that spontaneous generation is impossible. But modern scientists have continued to try and prove the impossible to be possible in their laboratories, if not in nature – with no success whatsoever. Instead, they have discovered more and more theoretical barriers – especially in the fields of genetics (DNA) and molecular biology - to the creation of life out of non-life. The most recent of these is the discovery that even the simplest living cell is irreducibly complex – that is, it cannot be built up piece-meal from simpler ingredients, but every single ingredient has to be in its exactly assigned place in the extraordinarily complex structure of the cell from the beginning.

Darwin even came to despair of his own most important “discovery” – natural selection. “To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances

---

\(^7\) Barzun, op. cit., p. 502.
\(^8\) Barzun, op. cit., p. 571.
\(^9\) Barzun, op. cit., p. 571.
for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree."\(^{10}\) Instead he turned to the discredited theory of Lamarck, that acquired characteristics are inherited – a theory accepted, in modern times, only by Stalin’s scientists...

Many contemporary scientists and philosophers rejected the theory, including, perhaps surprisingly, the German philosopher Nietzsche. He pointed out, as Copleston writes, “that during most of the time taken up in the formation of a certain organ or quality, the inchoate organ is of no use to its possessor and cannot aid it in its struggle with external circumstances and forces. ‘The influence of “external circumstances” is absurdly overrated by Darwin. The essential factor in the vital process is precisely the tremendous power to shape and create forms from within, a power which uses and exploits the environment.’”\(^{11}\)

The idea that all things came into being out of nothing by chance is not new. St. Basil the Great expressed the judgement of the Church on this teaching as early as the fourth century: “Where did you get what you have? If you say that you received it by chance, you are an atheist, you do not know your Creator and are not grateful to your Benefactor.”\(^{12}\) And St. Nectarius of Aegina, writing in the 1880s, was withering in his rejection of the Darwinian version of the old heresy: “The followers of pithecogony [the derivation of man from the apes] are ignorant of man and of his lofty destiny, because they have denied him his soul and Divine revelation. They have rejected the Spirit, and the Spirit has abandoned them. They withdrew from God, and God withdrew from them; for, thinking they were wise, they became fools... If they had acted with knowledge, they would not have lowered themselves so much, nor would they have taken pride in tracing the origin of the human race to the most shameless of animals. Rightly did the Prophet say of them: ‘Man being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the dumb beasts, and is become like unto them.’”\(^{13}\)

A little later, St. Nectarius of Optina affirmed that the fossils, the only scientific evidence for evolution, were actually laid down by the Great Flood: "Once a man came to me who simply couldn't believe that there had been a flood. Then I told him that on very high mountains in the sand are found shells and other remains from the ocean floor, and how geology testifies to the flood, and he came to believe. You see how necessary learning is at times." And again the elder said: “God not only permits, but demands of man that he grow in knowledge. However, it is necessary to live and learn so that not only does knowledge not ruin morality, but that morality not ruin knowledge.”\(^{14}\)

\(^{12}\) St. Basil the Great, Sermon on Avarice.
\(^{13}\) St. Nectarios, Sketch concerning Man, Athens, 1885.
The ruination of morality by false theories such as Darwin’s was emphasised by St. Nectarius’ fellow-elder at Optina, St. Barsanuphius (+1912), who said: “The English philosopher Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle of the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction and the conquerors are triumphant. This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy…”

The Justifications of Imperialism

The generation after the Crimean War saw Britain reach the peak of her power and influence. Far outstripping her competitors in industrial production (it was still some time before America and Germany caught up with her), mistress of the seas and of an ever-expanding empire on which, as the saying went, the sun never set, Britain’s boast, paradoxically, was in something quite different: in being the world champion of freedom and liberalism in both political and economic life. But how was it possible to be both liberal and imperialist at the same time?

The clue lay in what has been called the doctrine of benign intervention: the teaching that Britain, alone among the empires of world history, had acquired her empire for the benefit, not of her own, but of her subject peoples, to whom she communicated the fruits of her liberal civilisation by her benign interventions in their lives – in other words, by her annexation of their territories and undertaking of their government. This teaching was expounded by Britain’s foremost liberal thinker, John Stuart Mill, in his essay, “A Few Words on Non-Intervention”, in which he asserted that England was “incomparably the most conscientious of all nations… the only one whom mere scruples of conscience… would deter” and “the power which of all in existence best understands liberty”. As Noam Chomsky writes, Mill “urged Britain to undertake the enterprise [of humanitarian intervention] vigorously – specifically, to conquer more of India. Britain must pursue this high-minded mission, Mill explained, even though it will be ‘held up to obloquy’ on the continent. Unmentioned was that by doing so, Britain was striking still further devastating blows at India and extending the near-monopoly of opium production that it needed both to force open Chinese markets by violence and to sustain the imperial system more broadly by means of its immense narco-trafficking enterprises, all well known in England at the time. But such matters could not be the source of the ‘obloquy’. Rather, Europeans are ‘exciting odium against us’, Mill wrote, because they are unable to comprehend that England is truly ‘a novelty in the world.’ A remarkable nation that acts only ‘in the service of others’. It is dedicated to peace, though if ‘the aggressions of barbarians force it to a successful war’, it selflessly bears the cost while ‘the fruits it shares in fraternal equality with the whole human

race’, including the barbarians it conquers and destroys for their own benefit. England is not only peerless but near perfect, in Mill’s view, with no ‘aggressive designs’, desiring ‘no benefit to itself at the expense of others’. Its policies are ‘blameless and laudable’. England was the nineteenth-century counterpart of the ‘idealistic new world bent on ending inhumanity’, motivated by pure altruism and uniquely dedicated to the highest ‘principles and values’, though also sadly misunderstood by the cynical or perhaps paranoid Europeans…”

There are indeed grounds for cynicism here: the main motive of Britain’s imperial expansion was undoubtedly commercial profit, a profit that was unquestionably immoral when gained at the expense of jobless Indian textile workers or Chinese opium addicts. But a balanced picture of British imperialism must recognise that there were other, nobler motivations, if not among the businessmen and entrepreneurs, at any rate among the Evangelical missionaries who poured into the new dominions.

For mission remains the only really defensible justification of one people’s dominion over another. It was at the root of the idea of Christian Rome, which brought Orthodoxy to the peoples of the Mediterranean basin and to the Slav nations to the north. The Russian Empire extended it still further into Asia and even America – and with much less damage to indigenous cultures than the Western missionaries. With their heretical ideas and disdain for both Byzantium and Russia, the Western nations could not be expected to follow this example - pagan Rome was their role model. Nevertheless, they did see religious mission as an important part of their duty, “the white man’s burden”, and as at least part of the justification of their colonialism. The French were even more missionary-minded than the British. Thus “when King Charles X came to the Chamber of Deputies formally to announce intervention in Algeria, he justified it as ‘for the benefit of Christianity’.”

“In one sense,” writes Dominic Lieven, “religion was a relatively unimportant factor in Britain’s empire. From the seventh and eighth centuries, for instance, Muslim conquerors converted the Near East and southern Mediterranean to Islam, in the process forever changing identities and geopolitics in a vast region. Religion was also very important in the Spanish conquest of the Americas, great effort being put into subsequent

---

18 Chomsky again: “India was a real competitor with England: as late as the 1820s, the British were learning advanced techniques of steel-making there, India was building ships for the British navy at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, they had a developed textiles industry, they were producing more iron than all of Europe combined - so the British just proceeded to de-industrialize the country by force and turn it into an impoverished rural society” (Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky, London: Vintage, 2003, p. 257).
19 “It is a remarkable fact,” writes Niall Ferguson, “that throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the amount the East India Company earned from its monopoly on the export of opium was roughly equal to the amount it had to remit to London to pay the interest on its huge debt. The opium trade was crucial to the Indian balance of payments.” (op. cit., p. 166, note).
conversion of the indigenous population. Though Elizabethan imperialists sometimes talked the language of religious mission, in reality little effort went into converting indigenous peoples to Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Until 1813 the East India Company strictly limited missionary activity in India. Only with the onset of the Evangelical Movement in the late eighteenth century did missionaries begin to play a role of any significance in the British Empire. Even subsequently, however, missionaries never converted large communities and when compared to the activities of the Islamic or Spanish empires, their impact was very small.”

Nevertheless, in his Considerations on Representative Government (1861), Mill had mentioned “the decay of usages or superstitions which interfere with the effective implementation of industry” as one of the main benefits of British imperialism. And after citing this phrase, Niall Ferguson writes: “Nowadays, the modern equivalents of the missionary societies campaign earnestly against ‘usages’ in far-flung countries that they regard as barbaric: child labour or female circumcision. The Victorian non-governmental organizations were not so different. In particular, three traditional Indian customs aroused the ire of British missionaries and modernizers alike. One was female infanticide, which was common in parts of north-western India. Another was thagi (then usually spelt ‘thuggee’), the cult of assassin-priests, who were said to strangle unwary travellers on the Indian roads. The third, the one the Victorians most abhorred, was sati (or ‘suttee’): the act of self-immolation when a Hindu widow was burned alive on her husband’s funeral pyre… Between 1813 and 1825 7,941 women died this way in Bengal alone…”

However, in 1857 the Indian Mutiny deeply impressed upon the British the limitations of their power in the reformation of Hindu “usages or superstitions”. The mutiny was sparked by the fact that the cockade on the new turban issued to Indian troops appeared to be made of cow or pig hide. This offended the troops’ religious sensibilities: “at root the Vellore mutiny was about religion; its principal victims were in fact native Christians”. “The year 1857 was the Evangelical movement’s annus horribilis. They had offered India Christian civilization, and the offer had been not merely declined but violently spurned. Now the Victorians revealed the other, harsher face of their missionary zeal. In churches all over the country, the theme of the Sunday sermon switched from redemption to revenge. Queen Victoria – whose previous indifference to the Empire was transformed by the Mutiny into a passionate interest – called the nation to a day of repentance and prayer: ‘A Day of Humiliation’, no less. In the Crystal Palace, that monument to Victorian self-confidence, a vast congregation of 25,000 heard the incandescent Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon issue what amount to a call for holy war:

---

22 Ferguson, op. cit, pp. 139, 141.  
23 Ferguson, op. cit, p. 145.
“‘My friends, what crimes they have committed... The Indian government never ought to have tolerated the religion of the Hindoos at all. If my religion consisted of bestiality, infanticide and murder, I should have no right to it unless I was prepared to be hanged. The religion of the Hindoos is no more than a mass of the rankest filth that imagination ever conceived. The gods they worship are not entitled to the least atom of respect. Their worship necessitates everything that is evil and morality must put it down. The sword must be taken out of its sheath, to cut off our fellow subjects by their thousands.’

“These words would be taken literally when the sections of the Indian army that remained loyal, the Gurkhas and Sikhs in particular, were deployed. In Cawnpore Brigadier-General Neill forced captured mutineers to lick the blood of their white victims before executing them. At Peshawar forty were strapped to the barrels of cannons and blown apart, the old Mughal punishment for mutiny. In Delhi, where the fighting was especially fierce, British troops gave no quarter. The fall of the city in September was an orgy of slaughter and plunder...”

In fact, the British response to the Mutiny was anything but liberal. “On 4 October 1857 the novelist Charles Dickens assured his readers in London that were he commander-in-chief in India, he would ‘do my utmost to exterminate the Race on whom the stain of the late cruelties rested... and with all convenient dispatch and merciful swiftness of execution, to blot out of mankind and raze it off the face of the earth.’ He meant Indians, of all ages, and, presumably, men, women and children alike...”

However, the Mutiny did result in a significant change in British imperial policy with regard to the conversion of the natives. From now on, the emphasis would be less on the saving of souls and more on the political and economic benefits of British rule. Thus “on 1 November 1858 Queen Victoria issued a proclamation that explicitly renounced ‘the right and the desire to impose Our convictions on any of Our subjects’. India was henceforth to be ruled not by the East India Company - it was to be wound up - but by the crown, represented by a Viceroy. And the government of India would never again lend its support to the Evangelical project of Christianization. On the contrary, the aim of British policy in India would henceforth be to govern with, rather than against, the grain of indigenous tradition.”

“From another angle,” continues Lieven, “Protestantism was vital to the whole English sense of imperial mission. From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, most Englishmen believed that the Protestant conscience was at the core of all progress. They were convinced that the Protestant had a sense of individual responsibility and a strong motivation to better himself and succeed in life. He was self-disciplined, purposeful and based his life on firm moral principles, which he derived for himself by reading the Bible and

---

24 Ferguson, op. cit., pp. 150-151.
25 Wheatcroft, op. cit., p. 259.
26 Ferguson, op. cit., p. 154.
struggling to define his own path to salvation. Eighteenth-century Enlightenment and nineteenth-century liberalism had no doubt of their descent from the Protestant tradition even if they had sometimes lost faith in a personal god. By contrast, Catholics were seen to be the slaves of sentiment, tradition, ritual and ignorance. Muslims were worse, and Hindus and Buddhists worst of all. Racial stereotypes of Africans in the late nineteenth century were very familiar from sixteenth-century Ireland: the natives were shifty, immoral and idle, and needed for their own good to be forced to work. Nor had English attitudes to Catholics in general or the Irish in particular necessarily changed much over the previous 300 years. In 1882 the Regius Professor of History at Oxford University commented that ‘the Celts of Ireland are as yet unfit for parliamentary government… Left to themselves, without what they call English misrule, they would almost certainly be… the willing slaves of some hereditary despot, the representative of their old coshering chiefs, with a priesthood as absolute and as obscurantist as the Druids.’

“Such views explain the English imperialist’s powerful sense of cultural superiority and civilizing mission among indigenous populations. They explain too the doctrine of terra nullius, first proclaimed in sixteenth-century Ireland, which justified the expropriation and exploitation by a more civilized invading people of human and natural resources which a backward native society was wasting. Armed with this doctrine, one could easily justify the expropriation of indigenous peoples’ land and the eradication of indigenous culture in the name of progress. One could even at a pinch justify turning the lazy African into a productive slave or forcing the Chinese government to allow the import of opium, since these were essential to the development of the British-led international economy and the latter was the driving wheel of progress.

“Whether Catholics, Muslims and pagans could actually be converted to English Protestant virtues and, if so, how quickly the task could be accomplished was a moot point. As one might expect, the Enlightenment and its early Victorian heirs were optimistic. Some Enlightened eighteenth-century observers expected the conversion of Irish Catholics to ‘rationality’, on other words to the culture of the Protestant elite but with God largely removed. In the 1830s it was widely believed that consistent government policy, particularly as regards education, would lead to Anglicization first of India’s elites and then of the whole population. In the reformers’ minds there was no doubt that this would be wholly to Indians’ advantage, their belief in mankind’s perfectibility being matched only by their utter contempt for non-European cultural and intellectual traditions. As Charles Trevelyan put matters, ‘trained by us to happiness and independence, and endowed with our learning and political institutions, India will remain the proudest monument of British benevolence.’ In these first pristine years of Victorian liberal optimism some Englishmen had a faith in rapid progress to rationality along unilinear paths foreordained by history which was subsequently equalled by Lenin’s.
“In the British imperial context this vision always had its doubters. They included pragmatists conscious of the social disruption and political danger liberal policy might create; financial officials aware that Westminster would insist on India living on its own revenues, and that the latter barely sufficed to pay for army, police and administration – let alone ‘luxuries’ like education. More ideological opposition to liberalism also existed. This encompassed an increasing tide of late Victorian racialism, which stressed the innate biological inferiority of non-Whites. It included too romantics and, later, anthropologists, who gloried in native culture and proclaimed the need to preserve its unique traditions.

“But the British Empire could never give up its basic, albeit stuttering commitment to progress and enlightenment, since these were essential to its British elite’s understanding of history, their perception of themselves and of the legitimacy of Britain’s empire. Clearly, British liberal values and ideology did convert growing sections of the indigenous elite, firstly in India and then elsewhere: it was precisely in the name of these values that self-government and independence from Britain were demanded. But in this as in so much else formal empire was only one element in a much broader process of change and Westernization…”

**China: The Taiping Rebellion**

In this period no land, not even world’s last and greatest pagan empire, that of China, was free from the influence of the West, both the Christian West and the anti-Christian West.

Thus western Christian influence was clearly discernible in the Taiping rebellion (1850-1866) started by Hung Hsiu-chuan, who proclaimed himself the younger brother of Jesus Christ. However, this Christian influence, however perverted, was mixed with other, anti-Christian but no less western ideas in the movement – the abolition of private property and the complete equality of the sexes. Such elements might lead one to think that this rebellion was undertaken under the direct influence of the West, being an eastern offshoot of the European Age of Revolution.

But, this would be a mistake, according to Jacques Gernet, insofar as Hung “was only following in the footsteps of other rebel leaders and usurpers who had been regarded as reincarnations of Maitreya, the saviour Buddha… This view fails to recognize the role played by heterodox religions in the big rebellions of Chinese history and the opposition – a basic factor in China – between the official cults, patronized by the legitimate authority, and the religious practices frowned on by the state (yan-ssu). Taoism, Buddhism, and Manicheism all provided popular risings with the messianic hope of a world at peace, harmony, and general prosperity; the Christianity of the T’ai P’ing comes into the same category.”

---

Be that is may, it is intriguing that this enormous rebellion, together with the later rebellions it gave rise to, resulting in no less than 20 million deaths, should have taken place at just the time when western ideas were beginning to enter into China. Some causal link seems highly probable.

Thus we may agree with the judgement of Eric Hobsbawm that “these convulsions were in important respects the direct product of the western impact on China.

“Perhaps alone among the great traditional empires of the world, China possessed a popular revolutionary tradition, both ideological and practical. Ideologically its scholars and its people took the permanence and centrality of their Empire for granted: it would always exist, under an emperor (except for occasional interludes of division), administered by the scholar-bureaucrats who had passed the great national civil service examinations introduced almost two thousand years before – and only abandoned when the Empire itself was about to die in 1916. Yet its history was that of a succession of dynasties each passing, it was believed, through a cycle of rise, crisis and supersession: gaining and eventually losing that ‘mandate of Heaven’ which legitimise their absolute authority. In the process of changing from one dynasty to the next, popular insurrection, growing from social banditry, peasant risings and the activities of popular secret societies to major rebellion, was known and expected to play a significant part. Indeed its success was itself an indication that the ‘mandate of Heaven’ was running out. The permanence of China, the centre of world civilisation, was achieved through the ever-repeated cycle of dynastic change, which included this revolutionary element.

“The Manchu dynasty, imposed by northern conquerors in the mid-seventeenth century, had thus replaced the Ming dynasty, which had in turn (through popular revolution) overthrown the Mongol dynasty in the fourteenth century. Though in the first half of the nineteenth century the Manchu regime still seemed to function intelligently and effectively – thought it was said with an unusual amount of corruption – there had been signs of crisis and rebellion since the 1790s. Whatever else they may have been due to, it seems clear that the extraordinary increase of the country’s population during the past century (whose reasons are still not fully elucidated) had begun to create acute economic pressures. The number of Chinese is claimed to have risen from around 140 million in 1741 to about 400 million in 1834. The dramatic new element in the situation of China was the western conquest, which had utterly defeated the Empire in the first Opium War (1839-42). The shock of this capitulation to a modest naval force of the British was enormous, for it revealed the fragility of the imperial system, and even parts of popular opinion outside the few areas immediately affected may have become conscious of it. At all events there was a marked and immediate increase in the activities of various forces of opposition, notably the powerful and deeply rooted secret societies such as the Triad of south China, dedicated to the overthrow of the foreign Manchurian dynasty and the restoration of the Ming. The imperial administration had set up militia forces against the
British, and thus helped to distribute arms among the civilian population. It only required a spark to produce an explosion.

“That spark was provided in the shape of an obsessed, perhaps psychopathic prophet and messianic leader, Hung Hsiu Chuan (1813-64), one of those failed candidates for the imperial Civil Service examination who were so readily given to political discontent. After his failure at the examination he evidently had a nervous breakdown, which turned into a religious conversion. Around 1847-8 he founded a ‘Society of those who venerate God’, in Kwangsi province, and was rapidly joined by peasants and miners, by men from the large Chinese population of pauperised vagrants, by members of various national minorities and by supporters of the older secret societies. Yet there was one significant novelty in his preaching. Hung had been influenced by Christian writings, had even spent some time with an American missionary in Canton, and thus embodied significant western elements in an otherwise familiar mixture of anti-Manchu, heretico-religious and social-revolutionary ideas. The rebellion broke out in 1850 in Kwangsi and spread so rapidly that a ‘Celestial Realm of Universal Peace’ could be proclaimed within a year with Hung as the supreme ‘Celestial King’. It was unquestionably a regime of social revolution, whose major support lay among the popular masses, and dominated by Taoist, Buddhist and Christian ideas of equality. Theocratically organised on the basis of a pyramid of family units, it abolished private property (land being distributed only for use, not ownership), established the equality of the sexes, prohibited tobacco, opium and alcohol, introduced a new calendar (including a seven-day week) and various other cultural reforms, and did not forget to lower taxes. By the end of 1853, the Taipings with at least a million active militants controlled most of south and east China and had capture Nanking, though failing - largely for want of cavalry - to push effectively into the north. China was divided, and even those parts not under Taiping rule were convulsed by major insurrections such as those of the Nien peasant rebels in the north, not suppressed until 1868, the Miao national minority in Kweichow, and other minorities in the south-west and north-west.

“The Taiping revolution did not maintain itself, and was in fact unlikely to. Its radical innovations alienated moderates, traditionalists and those with property to lose – by no means only the rich – the failure of its leaders to abide by their own puritanical standards weakened its popular appeal, and deep divisions within the leadership soon developed. After 1856 it was on the defensive, and in 1864 the Taiping capital of Nanking was recaptured. The imperial government recovered, but the price it paid for recovery was heavy and eventually proved fatal. It also illustrated the complexities of the western impact.

“Paradoxically the rulers of China had been rather less ready to adopt western innovations than the plebeian rebels, long used to living in an ideological world in which unofficial ideas drawn from foreign sources (such as Buddhism) were acceptable. To the Confucian scholar-bureaucrats who governed the empire what was not Chinese was barbarian. There was even
resistance to the technology which so obviously made the barbarians invincible. As late as 1867 Grand Secretary Wo Jen memorialised the throne warning that the establishment of a college for teaching astronomy and mathematics would ‘make the people proselytes of foreignism’ and result ‘in the collapse of uprightness and the spread of wickedness’, and resistance to the construction of railways and the like remained considerable. For obvious reasons a ‘modernising’ party developed, but one may guess that they would have preferred to keep the old China unchanged, merely adding to it the capacity to produce western armaments. (Their attempts to develop such production in the 1860s were not very successful for that reason.) The powerless imperial administration in any case saw itself with little but the choice between different degrees of concession to the west. Faced with a major social revolution, it was even reluctant to mobilise the enormous force of Chinese popular xenophobia against the invaders. Indeed, the overthrow of the Taiping seemed politically by far its most urgent problem, and for this purpose the help of the foreigners was, if not essential, then at any rate desirable; their good-will was indispensable. Thus imperial China found itself tumbling rapidly into complete dependence on the foreigners. An Anglo-French-American triumvirate had controlled the Shanghai customs since 1854, but after the second Opium War (1856-8) and the sack of Peking (1860) which ended with total capitulation, an Englishman actually had to be appointed ‘to assist’ in the administration of the entire Chinese customs revenue. In practice Robert Hart, who was Inspector General of Chinese Customs from 1863 until 1909, was the master of the Chinese economy and, though he came to be trusted by the Chinese governments and to identify himself with the country, in effect the arrangement implied the entire subordination of the imperial government to the interests of the westerners.”

**The American Civil War**

While the most ancient non-European empires, those of China and Turkey, were in decline, a new one was in the making - the United States. The first stages in its growth were undertaken through war – war against the native American Indians, who were almost wiped out, and war between the industrial north and the agrarian south.

The American Civil War was not unexpected. As early as 1787 Alexander Hamilton ‘had made a prediction: The newly created federal government would either ‘triumph altogether over the state governments and reduce them to an entire subordination,’ he surmised, or ‘in the course of a few years… the contests about the boundaries of power between the particular governments and the general government... will produce a dissolution of the Union.’”

“Each side,” writes J.M. Roberts, “accused the other of revolutionary designs and behaviour. It is very difficult not to agree with both of them. The heart of the Northern position, as Lincoln saw, was that democracy should prevail, a claim assuredly of potentially limitless revolutionary implication. In

---

the end, what the North achieved was indeed a social revolution in the South. On the other side, what the South was asserting in 1861 (and three more states joined the Confederacy after the first shots were fired) was that it had the same right to organize its life as had, say, revolutionary Poles or Italians in Europe.”

In 1924 the Scottish writer John Buchan wrote that for the South “the vital thing, the thing with which all its affections and sentiments were intertwined, was the State. The North, on the other hand, had for its main conception the larger civic organism, the Nation.” And yet what was “the Nation”? The 1848 revolution in Europe had shown how difficult it was to define a nation, and how people of the same nation theoretically speaking (that is, according to theories of language or blood) nevertheless preferred to remain citizens of States ruled by other nations rather than go to war for the sake of reuniting the “nation” in a single, ethnically homogeneous state.

In any case, had not the United States come into existence in the first place by rebelling against its own nation, the British? For states can create new nations, just as nations – states.

As Norman Davies writes, in the nineteenth century nationalism “came in two opposing variants. One of them, state or civil nationalism, was sponsored by the ruling establishments of existing states. The other, popular or ethnic nationalism, was driven by the demands of communities living within those states and against the policy of those governments…. There are as many theories on the essence of nations as there are theorists. But the essential qualities would seem to be spiritual in nature. ‘The nation is a soul,’ wrote Renan, ‘a spiritual principle. [It] consists of two things. One is the common legacy of rich memories from the past. The other is the present consensus, the will to live together…”

According to this criterion, the Southerners, who already belonged to a different state from the Northerners, could also count themselves to belong to a different nation. They had a common legacy of rich memories. And they had the will to live together – but separately from the Northerners, if the latter pressed them too far on issues such as slavery. To put it simply: since they felt themselves to be a different nation, they were a different nation. And so, if the revolution of 1776 had been justified in the name of the liberty of the new nation called America, although it had previously been one nation with Britain, then that of the Southerners in 1861 was no less justified – not least because, as they argued, the Constitution of the United States specifically permitted the secession of individual States.

---

33 Davies, op. cit, pp. 812, 813.
34 See James Ostrowski, “An Analysis of President Lincoln’s Legal Arguments against Secession”. Paper delivered at the first-ever academic conference on secession-- “Secession, State, and Economy”, sponsored by the Mises Institute, Auburn, Alabama, held at the College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina, April 7-9, 1995.
The other main justification for the war was the existence of slavery in the South. It was not Lincoln’s priority: in 1862 he said in a public letter: “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.”

However, the proclamation of emancipation on New Year’s Day 1863 changed the nature of the war, in Yankee eyes, into one of liberation...

But was the South, asks Eric Hobsbawm, a slave society at all, given that Negroes were always in a minority even in the Deep South, and considering that the majority of slaves worked not on the classical large plantation but in small numbers on white farms or as domestics? It can hardly be denied that slavery was the central institution of Southern society, or that it was the major cause of friction and rupture between the Northern and Southern states. The real question is why it should have led to secession and civil war, rather than to some sort of formula of coexistence. After all, though no doubt most people in the North detested slavery, militant abolitionism alone was never strong enough to determine the Union’s policy. And Northern capitalism, whatever the private views of businessmen, might well have found it as possible and convenient to come to terms with and exploit a slave South as international business has with the ‘apartheid’ of South Africa.

“Of course slave societies, including that of the South, were doomed. None of them survived the period from 1848 to 1890 – not even Cuba and Brazil... They were already isolated both physically, by the abolition of the African slave-trade, which was pretty effective by the 1850s, and, as it were, morally, by the overwhelming consensus of bourgeois liberalism which regarded them as contrary to history’s march, morally undesirable and economically inefficient. It is difficult to envisage the survival of the South as a slave society into the twentieth century, any more than the survival of serfdom in eastern Europe, even if (like some schools of historians) we consider both economically viable as systems of production. But what brought the South the point of crisis in the 1850s was a more specific problem: the difficulty of coexisting with a dynamic northern capitalism and a flood of migration into the West.

“In purely economic terms, the North was not much worried about the South, an agrarian region hardly involved in industrialisation. Time, population, resources and production were on its side. The main stumbling-blocks were political. The South, a virtual semi-colony of the British to whom it supplied the bulk of their raw cotton, found free trade advantageous, whereas the Northern industry had long been firmly and militantly committed to protective tariffs, which it was unable to impose sufficiently for its desires because of the political leverage of the Southern states (who represented, it must be recalled, almost half the total number of states in 1850). Northern industry was certainly more worried about a nation half-free trading and half-protectionist than about one half-slave and half-free. What
was equally to the point, the South did its best to offset the advantages of the
North by cutting it off from its hinterland, attempting to establish a trading
and communications area facing south and based on the Mississippi river
system rather than facing east to the Atlantic, and so far as possible pre-
empting the expansion to the West. This was natural enough since its poor
whites had long explored and opened the West.

“But the very economic superiority of the North meant that the South had
to insist with increasing stubbornness on its political force – to stake its claims
in the most formal terms (e.g. by insisting on the official acceptance of slavery
in new western territories), to stress the autonomy of states (‘states’ rights’)
against the national government, to exercise its veto over national policies, to
discourage northern economic developments, etc. In effect it had to be an
obstacle to the North while pursuing its expansionist policy in the West. Its
only assets were political. For (given that it could not or would not beat the
North at its own game of capitalist development) the currents of history ran
dead against it. Every improvement in transport strengthened the links of the
West with the Atlantic. Basically the railroad system ran from east to west
with hardly any long lines from north to south. Moreover, the men who
peopled the West, whether they came from North or South, were not slave-
owners but poor, white and free, attracted by free soil or gold or adventure.
The formal extension of slavery to new territories and states was therefore
crucial to the South, and the increasingly embittered conflicts of the two sides
during the 1850s turned mainly on this question. At the same time slavery
was irrelevant to the West, and indeed western expansion might actually
weaken the slave system. It provided no such reinforcement as that which
Southern leaders hoped for when envisaging the annexation of Cuba and the
creation of a Southern-Caribbean plantation empire. In brief, the North was in
a position to unify the continent and the South was not. Aggressive in
posture, its real recourse was to abandon the struggle and secede from the
Union, and this is what it did when the election of Abraham Lincoln from
Illinois in 1860 demonstrated that it had lost the ‘Middle West’.

“For four years civil war raged. In terms of casualties and destruction it
was by far the greatest war in which any ‘developed’ country was involved in
our period, though relatively it pales beside the more or less contemporary
Paraguayan War in South America, and absolutely beside the Taiping Wars in
China. The Northern states, though notably inferior in military performance,
eventually won because of their vast preponderance of manpower,
productive capacity and technology. After all, they contained over 70 per cent
of the total population of the United States, over 80 per cent of the men of
military age, and over 90 per cent of its industrial production. Their triumph
was also that of American capitalism and of the modern United States. But,
though slavery was abolished, it was not the triumph of the Negro, slave or
free. After a few years of ‘Reconstruction’ (i.e. forced democratisation) the
South reverted to the control of conservative white Southerners, i.e. racists.
Northern occupying troops were finally withdrawn in 1877. In one sense it
achieved its object: the Northern Republicans (who retained the presidency
for most of the time from 1860 to 1932) could not break into the solidly

22
Democratic South, which therefore retained substantial autonomy. The South, in turn, through its block vote, could exercise some national influence, since its support was essential for the success of the other great party, the Democrats. In fact, it remained agrarian, poor, backward and resentful; the whites resented the never-forgotten defeat, the blacks the disfranchisement and ruthless subordination re-imposed by the whites.”

“In a sense,” writes J.M. Roberts, “there had been no colour problem while slavery existed. Servile status was the barrier separating the overwhelming majority of blacks (there had always been a few free among them) from whites, and it was upheld by legal sanction. Emancipation swept away the framework of legal inferiority and replaced this with a framework, or myth, of democratic equality when very few Americans were ready to give this social reality. Millions of blacks in the South were suddenly free. They were also for the most part uneducated, largely untrained except for field labour, and virtually without leadership of their own race. For a little while in the Southern states they leant for support on the occupying armies of the Union; when this prop was removed blacks disappeared from legislatures and public offices of the Southern states to which they had briefly aspired. In some areas they disappeared from the polling-booths, too. Legal disabilities were replaced by a social and physical coercion which was sometimes harsher than the old regime of slavery. The slave at least had the value to his master of being an investment of capital; he was protected like other property and was usually ensured a minimum of security and maintenance. Competition in a free labour market at a moment when the economy of large areas of the South was in ruins, with impoverished whites struggling for subsistence, was disastrous for the black. By the end of the century he had been driven by a poor white population bitterly resentful of defeat and emancipation into social subordination and economic deprivation. From this was to stem emigration to the North in the twentieth century and racial problems in our own day.”

That the Northerners’ zeal to destroy the patriarchal, agrarian, slave-owning society of the South may have been misguided is indicated by the lives of some of the South’s best representatives.

For example, General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson was the South’s best general and, in the opinion of Lord Roberts, commander-in-chief of the British armies early in the twentieth century, “one of the greatest natural military geniuses the world ever saw”. As James I. Robertson Jr. writes, he was a profoundly religious man, who deeply loved his two wives. “He owned two

35 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital (1848-1875)*, London: Abacus, 1975, pp. 170-173. In fact, Robert Owen thought: “Bad and unwise as American slavery is and must continue to be, the white slavery in the manufactories of England was at this unrestricted period far worse than the house slaves which I afterwards saw in the West Indies and in the United States, and in many respects, especially as regards health, food and clothing, the latter were much better provided for than were those oppressed and degraded children and work-people in the home manufactories of Great Britain.” (in A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians*, London: Hutchinson, 2002, p. 89).

slaves, both of whom had asked him to purchase them after the deaths of their masters. Anna Morrison [his second wife] brought three slaves to the marriage. Jackson viewed human bondage with typical simplicity. God had established slavery for reasons man could not and should not challenge. A good Christian had the twin responsibilities of treating slaves with paternal affection and of introducing them to the promises of God as found in Holy Scriptures. To that end, Jackson taught a Sunday afternoon Bible class for all slaves and freedmen in Lexington.

“Jackson and the VMI [Virginia Military Institute] corps of cadets served as gallows guard in December 1859, when the abolitionist John Brown was executed for treason and murder having seized the government arsenal at Harpers Ferry. As war clouds thickened in the months thereafter, Jackson remained calm. The dissolution of the Union, he told a minister, ‘can come only by God’s permission, and will only be permitted if for His people’s good.’

“Civil war exploded in mid-April 1861, and Jackson promptly offered his sword to his native state. Virginia’s close ties with the South, and its opposition to the federal government using troops to coerce a state, were the leading issues behind Virginia’s secession. The state regarded as unacceptable the idea of federal troops marching through Virginia to wage war on other states. The nation was still so young that the rights of states remains strongly ingrained in political thinking. Jackson had been a strong believer in the union until Virginia left it. When this happened Jackson felt the same as thousands of his neighbours: Virginia, the Old Dominion, had been in existence for 180 years before a ‘United States’ was established. The roots of families like the Lees and Jacksons ran deep within Virginia’s soil. In 1861 an American’s birthright and heritage was his state, not a federation which, during the last fifteen of its seventy-four years, had been in turmoil over the slavery question...”

The cost of the civil war was horrific: 600,000 died on both sides, more than all the Americans who died in the two world wars of the twentieth century (520,000). Many thousands refused to join the Northern armies and draconian measures were applied to fill the draft. Brutalities were committed on both sides, but more on the side of the “liberators”. The slaves were “freed” to enjoy unemployment, continued poverty and the continued oppression of the whites.

Of course, by comparison with most States, the United States remained a land with a large measure of religious and political freedom. But the power of the State over the individual was vastly increased for all, in both North and South. States can liberate their subjects, as Tsar Alexander II did in contemporary Russia when he freed the serfs; but as often as not liberation by the State leads to greater subjection to the State...

---

As regards a Christian attitude to the war, Archbishop Averky of Jordanville writes: “The epistle [of the holy Apostle Paul] to Philemon vividly witnesses to the fact that the Church of Christ, in liberating man from sin, does not at the same time produce a forcible rupture in the established inter-relationships of people, and does not encroach on the civil and state order, waiting patiently for an improvement in the social order, under the influence of Christian ideas. Not only from this epistle, but also from others..., it is evident that the Church, while unable, of course, to sympathize with slavery, at the same time did not abolish it, and even told slaves to obey their masters. Therefore here the conversion of Onesimus to Christianity, which made him free from sin and a son of the Kingdom of God, did not, however, liberate him, as a slave, from the authority of his master. Onesimus had to return to [his master] Philemon, in spite of the fact that the Apostle loved him as a son, and needed his services, since he was in prison in Rome. The Apostle’s respect for civil rights tells also in the fact that he could order Philemon to forgive Onesimus [for fleeing from him], but, recognizing Philemon’s right as master, begs him to forgive his guilty and penitent slave. The words of the Apostle: ‘Without your agreement I want to do nothing’ clearly indicate that Christianity really leads mankind to personal perfection and the improvement of the social legal order on the basis of fraternity, equality and freedom, but not by way of violent actions and revolutions, but by the way of peaceful persuasion and moral influence.”

On April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Although Lincoln was not a fanatical abolitionist, and was motivated above all by a desire to preserve the Union intact, it is difficult not to see in his death retribution for the evil deed of the civil war, the successful attempt to overthrow the patriarchal society of the south and replace its slavery by the slavery of being at the bottom of the wage-labour industrial system.

On the day following the assassination, April 15, Nicholas Motovilov wrote to the Tsar informing him that he had received the following revelation from St. Seraphim of Sarov on April 1 about the death of Abraham Lincoln: “The Lord and the Mother of God not only do not like the terrible oppression, destruction and unrighteous humiliation that is being wrought everywhere with us in Russia by the Decembrists and raging abolitionists: the goodness of God is also thoroughly displeased by the offences caused by Lincoln and the North Americans to the slave-owners of the Southern States, and so Batiushka Father Seraphim has ordered that the image of the Mother of God the Joy of all who Sorrow should be sent to the President of the Southern – that is, precisely the slave-owning States. And he has ordered that the inscription be attached to it: TO THE COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF LINCOLN...”

---

The Rise of Germany

Napoleon’s victories over the German armies before 1813, and the continued dividedness of the German lands after 1815, fostered in the German people a powerful feeling of wounded pride, “some form of collective humiliation” in Sir Isaiah’s Berlin’s phrase. This feeling, which was felt especially in relation to France, but also in relation to other great powers, was to be one of the great driving forces of European history until the destruction of the Third Reich in 1945. German philosophers such as Fichte and Hegel, and German historians such as Leopold von Ranke, built on the writings of Herder in the eighteenth century to proclaim a mysterious essence of Germanness. Thus von Ranke wrote in 1836 “that the fatherland ‘is with us, in us’. And as ‘a mysterious something that informs the lowest among us’ the idea of the nation ‘precedes any form of government and animates and permeates all its forms’.”

“The liberalism of the first half of the century,” writes M.S. Anderson, “…had had a good deal of the bloom rubbed off it by events. Not merely the political defeats of 1848-49 but still more fundamentally the fact that for the first time the Industrial Revolution was beginning to affect the daily lives of many millions of people in continental Europe, creating new problems and new tensions, meant that the old elitist liberalism was in the long room doomed.” The result in Germany was that even German liberalism acquired a nationalist slant. Thus E.M. Arndt had declared that if a rule acts against human rights he must be disobeyed, even by soldiers. And yet, as George Mosse writes, Arndt redefined freedom as “the right to integrate one’s self with the tradition and customs of one’s own people. The innocent and just against whom no force must be used are those who desire to live in that way. In Arndt’s mind these were the Prussians opposed to Napoleon. What is rejected from the ‘religion’ of liberty is its cosmopolitanism based on the view of a natural law which makes the goal of freedom the same all over the world. This emphasis upon freedom as circumscribed by national customs and traditions contrasts with the liberal ideas of men like Cobden and Bright in England. For them liberty was the same in all nations, a moral imperative which transcended nationalism and was indeed hostile to it.

41 Another such nation was Russia. Thus in 1838, K.A. Aksakov, a fervent admirer of Germany, found something very different on his first visit to that country: “Now I do not immediately say that I am Russian after that displeasure I noticed towards us in the Prussians.” (in E.I. Annenkova, “‘Slaviano-Khristianskie’ idealy na fone zapadnoj tsivilizatsii. Russkie spory 1840-1850-x gg.” (‘Slavic-Christian’ ideals against a background of western civilization. Russian quarrels of the 1840-1850s), in V.A. Kotelnikov (ed.), Kristianstvo i Russkaia Literatura (Christianity and Russian Literature), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 129 (in Russian)).
“Arndt foreshadowed the future, the rise of what in Germany would be called ‘national liberalism’, the increasing stress upon the historic nation rather than upon the universality of freedom...

“The revolution of 1848 seemed to give liberalism another chance. But at the high tide of the revolution, the Frankfurt Parliament, the revolution’s nationalist impetus became as evident as its liberal framework. From Frankfurt’s Church of Saint Paul, where the Parliament sat, came a declaration of the rights of the German people which enumerated all the principles of the religion of liberty: individual freedom under the law, freedom of belief, the abolition of all entrenched privileges, the inviolability of private property and, finally, the call for a constitution. But what was missing from this declaration is equally significant. The principle that ‘he who governs best governs least’ was never apparent. Instead, the declaration insisted that military service was the paramount duty of the citizen; no citizen could be allowed exemption from duty to the state on the grounds of conscience.

“The fact that the revolutionaries of 1848 had to resolve the question of nationalism as well as that of freedom produced a change in liberal thought, a change which was foreshadowed by Arndt. The men of 1848 desired liberty – a liberty, however, that rested upon a national base. The revolution failed and a second chance was lost. Its manner of failure further influenced the construction of a national liberalism. The common explanation of this failure has been that the Parliament at Frankfurt talked too much and acted too little. By drawing out their proceedings, the explanation runs, the Parliament gave the territorial rulers ample time to gain back their lost power. But the story involved more than a simple delight in speechifying. There was in this Parliament a minority whose ideas on reform far exceeded those of the majority. They were Republicans, revolutionaries of the left. Encouraged by some local successes, especially in the state of Baden, these men were allied with the Socialists; Karl Marx looked to their successes with hope. In Parliament they filibustered. The Liberals were thus caught between the left and the reaction.

“It was the left they feared more than the right even from the beginning of the revolution. Like Liberals all over Europe, they believed that wealth was an open road to be trod by talent and morality in tandem – but they were equally keen to close that road to the challenge of popular democracy. The famous Frankfurt Parliament was not elected by a universal franchise but by restrictive electoral practices which excluded the lower classes from the vote, just as in England parliamentary reform had erected the barrier of a high property qualification for voting. In Germany as in England the lower classes protested. The Chartists and the radical Republicans, as they were called in Germany, tried to establish universal suffrage. Both failed. But where in England the Chartist agitation, though peaceful, accomplished nothing, in Germany the radicals did capture momentary control of some regions. In Baden, for example, their attempted reforms were later called by their adversaries the ‘red terror’.
“Though this radicalism was only a small factor in the revolution itself, it was to have a great effect on the future of German liberalism. The middle classes were driven still further into the arms of the state. They now feared a ‘red terror’ and sought, above all, stability, those national roots, which contemporaries had already held up as desirable goals. Within a few years after the event one leading Liberal could characterize 1848 as the ‘idiotic revolution’. German liberalism took on aspects which would have been unthinkable in England or France. A man like the writer Gustav Freytag, regarded as a leading Liberal by both contemporary and future generations of German Liberals, could combine ideas of constitutionalism with racial stereotypes. For him rootedness in the nation was an essential prerequisite for any kind of liberty. Those who preserved any custom or religion alien to the deep roots of the German past were enemies of the German people... National liberalism was unable to fight authoritarian encroachments on individual freedom, as did English and French liberalism. Nationalism swamped the religion of liberty in Germany.”

And yet, writes Richard Evans, “Germany did not embark upon a straight or undeviating ‘special path’ towards aggressive nationalism and political dictatorship after 1848. There were to be many avoidable twists and turns along the way. To begin with, the fortunes of the liberals had undergone a dramatic transformation once more by the beginning of the 1860s. Far from being a complete return to the old order, the post-revolutionary settlement had sought to appease many of the liberals’ demands while stopping short of granting either national unification or parliamentary sovereignty. Trial by jury in open court, equality before the law, freedom of business enterprise, abolition of the most objectionable forms of state censorship of literature and the press, the right of assembly and association, and much more, were in place almost everywhere in Germany by the end of the 1860s. And, crucially, many states had instituted representative assemblies in which elected deputies had freedom of debate and enjoyed at least some rights over legislation and the raising of state revenues.

“It was precisely the last right that the resurgent liberals used in Prussia in 1862 to block the raising of taxes until the army was brought under the control of the legislature, as it had, fatally, not been in 1848. This posed a serious threat to the funding of the Prussian military machine. In order to deal with the crisis, the Prussian King appointed the man who was to become the dominant figure in German politics for the next thirty years – [Count] Otto von Bismarck. By this time, the liberals had correctly decided that there was no chance of Germany uniting, as in 1848, in a nation-state that included German-speaking Austria. That would have meant the break-up of the Habsburg monarchy, which included huge swathes of territory, from Hungary to Northern Italy, that lay outside the boundaries of the German Confederation, and included many millions of people who spoke languages other than German. But the liberals also considered that following the unification of Italy in 1859-60, their time had come. If the Italians had...


28
managed to create their own nation-state, then surely the Germans would be able to do so as well.

“Bismarck belonged to a generation of European politicians, like Benjamin Disraeli in Britain, Napoleon III in France or Camillo Cavour in Italy, who were prepared to use radical, even revolutionary means to achieve fundamentally conservative ends. He recognized that the forces of nationalism were not to be gainsaid. But he also saw that after the frustrations of 1848, many liberals would be prepared to sacrifice at least some of their liberal principles on the altar of national unity to get what they wanted. In a series of swift and ruthless moves, Bismarck allied with the Austrians to seize the disputed duchies of Schleswig-Holstein from the Kingdom of Denmark, then engineered a war over their administration between Prussia and Austria which ended in complete victory for the Prussian forces. The German Confederation collapsed, to be followed by the creation of a successor institution without the Austrians or their south German allies, named by Bismarck for want of a more imaginative term the North German Confederation. Immediately, the majority of the Prussian liberals, sensing that the establishment of a nation-state was just around the corner, forgave Bismarck for his policy (pursued with sublime disdain for parliamentary rights over the previous four years\(^45\)) of collecting taxes and funding the army without parliamentary approval. They cheered him on as he engineered another war [in 1870], with the French, who rightly feared that the creation of a united Germany would spell the end of the predominance in European power-politics which they had enjoyed over the past decade and a half.”\(^46\)

Bismarck’s “blood and iron” politics had won over even the liberals. Only the socialists found themselves outside the national consensus. As the German socialist leader Wilhelm Liebknecht bitterly remarked: “The oppressors of yesterday are the saviours of today; right has become wrong and wrong right. Blood appears, indeed, to be a special elixir, for the angel of darkness has become the angel of light before whom the people lie in the dust and adore.”\(^47\)

**Wagner on Capitalism and Kingship**

The shift in German politics from the liberalism of 1848 to the conservatism of Bismarck’s era can be seen in the writing of the composer Richard Wagner. Wagner was one of those who manned the barricades in 1848; but he was far from being a typical liberal – or nationalist (most Germans, as we have seen, were “liberal nationalists” after 1848). In fact, his writings on politics and religion represent one of the best statements of a mildly conservative, anti-capitalist religious monarchism that are to be found in western philosophy.

---

\(^45\) As he said in January, 1862: “The Prussian monarchy has not yet completed its mission; it is not yet ready to become a purely ornamental decoration of your constitutional Parliament; not yet ready to be manipulated as a piece of lifeless machinery of parliamentary government…” (M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 674) (V.M.).


\(^47\) Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 674.
One of Wagner’s main themes, in his music as in his political writings, was the corrupting power of money as symbolised by the golden ring in his four-opera-set of that name, which, as his heroes discover to their cost, is incompatible with true love and happiness. In 1877 the Wagners visited London, the centre of contemporary Mammon-worship, and during a trip down the Thames by steamer, as A.N. Wilson writes, they found that “the industrial landscape made a tremendous impression’. Wagner said, ‘This is Alberich’s dream come true – Nibelheim, world dominion, activity, work, everywhere the oppressive feeling of steam and fog.’

“One of the most disturbing novels of the 1870s was Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now* – disturbing because genial, comic Anthony Trollope, who had so consistently amused his public with tales of country-house gossip and cathedral-feuds, chose to depict an England extremely vulgarised, sold to Mammon, dominated by money-worship…. Professor Polhemus, an American scholar quoted by Trollope’s biographer James Pope-Hennessy, makes the point that Trollope saw the same truth as Marx and Engels – ‘a world where there is no other bond between man and man but crude self-interest and callous cash-payment’, a world that ‘has degraded personal dignity to the level of exchange-value’, creating ‘exploitation that is open, unashamed, direct and brutal’. Professor Polhemus points out that, while Karl Marx was an optimist, Trollope’s later years were suffused with pessimism and gloom.

“The *Way we Live Now* was published the year before the opening of the Bayreuth Festival Playhouse and the first complete performance of Wagner’s *Ring*. As Bernard Shaw reminded ‘The Perfect Wagnerite’ in 1898, ‘the Ring, with all its gods and giants and dwarfs, its water-maidens and Valkyries, its wishing-cap, magic ring, enchanted sword, and miraculous treasure is a drama of today, and not of a remote and fabulous antiquity. It could not have been written before the second half of the nineteenth century, because it deals with events which were only then consummating themselves.’

“Shaw rightly saw Alberich the dwarf, amassing power through his possession of the ring, and forcing the Niebelungs to mine his gold, as the type of capitalism. ‘You can see the process for yourself in every civilized country today, where millions of people toil in want and disease to heap up more wealth for our Alberichs, laying up nothing for themselves, except sometimes agonizing disease and the certainty of premature death.’

“No allegory of any work is exhausted by drawing too punctilious a match between symbol and signified. The audience to Wagner’s musical drama is caught up in an experience which is profound in itself, and to say Alberich = the Big Capitalist or that the befriending of Alberich by Loki and Wotan = the Church and the Law embracing the power of capital is too narrow and too specific an account of what stands as a universal work of art. Shaw was right, however, to say that Wagner’s masterpiece was rooted in its time. What is suggested in the final opera of the cycle is a universal collapse – the Gods
themselves hurtling towards self-destruction. As the ‘storm-clouds of the nineteenth century’ – John Ruskin’s phrase – gather, we sense impending disaster in many of the great art-works of the period.”

Not that Wagner was a communist, even in his early years. On the contrary. In his celebrated “Fatherland Club Speech”, delivered on June 14, 1848 in Dresden, Wagner declared that his aim is that the “demonic idea of Money vanish from us, with all its loathsome retinue of open and secret usury, paper-juggling, percentage and bankers’ speculations. That will be the full emancipation of the human race; that will be the fulfilment of Christ’s pure teaching, which enviously they hide from us behind parading dogmas, invented to bind the simple world of raw barbarians, to prepare them for a development towards whose higher consummation we now must march in lucid consciousness. Or does this smack to you of Communism? Are ye foolish or ill-disposed enough to declare the necessary redemption of the human race from the flattest, most demoralising servitude to vilenest matter, synonymous with carrying out the most preposterous and senseless doctrine, that of Communism? Can ye not see that this doctrine of a mathematically equal division of property and earnings is simply an unreasoning attempt to solve that problem, at any rate dimly apprehended, and an attempt whose sheer impossibility itself proclaims it stillborn? But would ye denounce therewith the task itself [i.e. the removal of the power of money] for reprehensible and insane, as that doctrine of a surety [i.e. Communism] is? Have a care! The outcome of three-and-thirty years of unruffled peace shews you Human Society in such a state of dislocation and impoverishment, that, at end of all those years, ye have on every hand the awful spectacle of pallid Hunger! Look to it, or e’er it be too late! Give no alms, but acknowledge a right, a God-given right of Man, lest ye live to see the day when outraged Nature will gird herself for a battle of brute force, whose savage shout of victory were of a truth that Communism; and though the radical impossibility of its continuance should yield it but the briefest spell of reign, that short-lived reign would yet have sufficed to root up every trace, perchance for many an age to come, of the achievements of two thousand years of civilisation. Think ye, I threaten? Nay, I warn!”

It was a prophetic warning. And in his zeal that it should not be fulfilled, Wagner called for the preservation of the Monarchy in Saxony, only not as against the Republic, but in union with it. All he asked was for “the King to be the first and sterlingest Republican of all. And who is more called to be the truest, faithfiest Republican, than just the Prince? RESPUBLICA means: the affairs of the nation. What individual can be more destined that the Prince, to belong with all his feelings, all his thoughts and actions, entirely to the Folk’s affairs? Once persuaded of his glorious calling, what could move him to belittle himself, to cast in his lot with one exclusive smaller section of his Folk? However warmly each of us may respond to feelings for the good of all, so pure a Republican as the Prince can he never be, for his cares are undivided:

---

48 Wilson, op. cit., pp. 413-414, 415.
their eye is single to the One, the Whole; whilst each of us must needs divided and parcel out his cares, to meet the wants of everyday.”\textsuperscript{50}

Here Wagner is expressing one of the key ideas of Orthodox Christian monarchism: that only the king is able to transcend individual and party political factionalism and self-interest, and labour for the nation as a whole. In this sense the king is the guarantee of the freedom of his people rather than its destroyer; for only he can preserve the freedom of individuals and parties from encroachment from other individuals and parties. And so “if he is the genuine free Father of his Folk, then with a single high-hearted resolve he can plant peace where war was unavoidable.”\textsuperscript{51}

Wagner defends himself against the charge that he is not a Republican. No, he is a Republican. But the Republic he envisages will be proclaimed by – the King! “Not we, will proclaim the republic, no! this prince, the noblest, worthiest King, let him speak out: - “I declare Saxony a Free State.’

“And let the earliest law of this Free State, the edict giving it the fairest surety of endurance, be:- ‘The highest executive power rests in the Royal House of Wettin, and descends therein from generation to generation, by right of primogeniture.’

“The oath which we swear to this State and this edict, will never be broken: not because we have sworn it (how many an oath is sworn in the unthinking joy of taking office!) but because we have sworn it in full assurance that through this proclamation, through that law, a new era of undying happiness has dawned, of utmost benefit, of most determinant presage, not alone for Saxony, no! for Germany, for Europe. He who thus boldly has expressed his enthusiasm, believes with all his heart that never was he more loyal to the oath he, too, has sworn his King, than when he penned these lines today.”\textsuperscript{52}

All this may seem like the height of romantic fantasy – and Wagner was nothing if not a romantic. However, his idea of a “People’s Monarchy” as essential to the spiritual well-being of Germany did not leave him; and if he did not find it in Saxony, he appeared to have found it for a time in Ludwig II of Bavaria some 16 years later.

Moreover, already in 1848 he was quite clear that he did not mean by a “People’s Monarchy” a kind of compromise between Monarchy and Republicanism in the form of an English-style “constitutional monarchy”: “Now would this have brought about the downfall of the Monarchy? Ay! But it would have published the emancipation of the Kinghood. Dupe not yourselves, ye who want a ‘Constitutional Monarchy upon the broadest democratic basis.’ As regards the latter (the basis), ye either are dishonest, or, if in earnest, ye are slowly torturing your artificial Monarchy to death. Each step forward, upon that democratic basis, is a fresh encroachment on the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Wagner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 141.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Wagner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 142.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Wagner, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 142-143.
\end{itemize}
power of the Mon-arch, i.e. the sole ruler; the principle itself is the completest mockery of Monarchy, which is conceivable only as actual alone-ruling: each advance of Constitutionalism is a humiliation to the ruler, for it is a vote of want-of-confidence in the monarch. How shall love and confidence prevail, amid this constant, this often so unworthily manoeuvred contest twixt two opposing principles? The very existence of the monarch, as such, is embittered by shame and mortification. Let us therefore redeem him from this miserable half-life; let us have done altogether with Monarchism, since Sole-rule is made impossible by just the principle of Folk’s rule (Democracy): but let us, on the contrary, emancipate the Kinghood in its fullest, its own peculiar meaning! At head of the Free State (the republic) the hereditary King will be exactly what he should be, in the noblest meaning of his title [Fürst]: the First of the Folk, the Freeest of the Free! Would not this be alike the fairest commentary upon Christ’s saying: ‘And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall he be servant of all?’ Inasmuch as he serves the freedom of all, in his person he raises the concept of Freedom itself to the loftiest, to a God-implanted consciousness.

“...The farther back we search among Germanic nations for the Kinghood’s meaning, the more intimately will it fit this new-won meaning, and prove it strictly naught be re-established...”

Wagner returned to this subject in 1864, in an article entitled “On State and Religion” written at the request of King Ludwig II. If in 1848, the year of revolution, he had been concerned to show that kingship was compatible with freedom, here he links freedom with stability, which is the main aim of the State. “For it constitutes withal the unconscious aim in every higher human effort to get beyond the primal need: namely to reach a freer evolution of spiritual attributes, which is always cramped so long as hindrances forestall the satisfaction of that first root-need. Everyone thus strives by nature for stability, for maintenance of quiet: ensured can it only be, however, when the maintenance of existing conditions is not the preponderant interest of one party only. Hence it is in the truest interest of all parties, and thus of the State itself, that the interest in its abidingness should not be left to a single party. There must consequently be given a possibility of constantly relieving the suffering interests of less favoured parties...

“...The embodied voucher for this fundamental law is the Monarch. In no State is there a weightier law than that which centres on stability in the supreme hereditary power of one particular family, unconnected and un-commingling with any other lineage in that State. Never yet has there been a Constitution in which, after the downfall of such families and abrogation of the Kingly power, some substitution or periphrasis has not necessarily, and for the most part necessitously, reconstructed a power of similar kind. It therefore is established as the most essential principle of the State; and as in it resides the warrant of stability, so in the person of the King the State attains its true ideal.

53 Wagner, op. cit., p. 143.
“For, as the King on the one hand gives assurance of the State’s solidity, on the other his loftiest interest soars high beyond the State. Personally he has naught in common with the interests of parties, but his sole concern is that the conflict of these interests should be adjusted, precisely for the safety of the whole. His sphere is therefore equity, and where this is unattainable, the exercise of grace (Gnade). Thus, as against the party interests, he is the representative of purely-human interests, and in the eyes of the party-seeking citizen he therefore occupies in truth a position well-nigh superhuman. To him is consequently accorded a reverence such as the highest citizen would never dream of distantly demanding for himself…”

The subject relates to the King through the self-sacrificing emotion of patriotism. In a democracy, on the other hand, the position of the King is taken by public opinion, the veneration of which is far more problematic, leading as it does to “the most deplorable imbroglios, into acts the most injurious to Quiet”.

“The reason lies in the scarcely exaggerable weakness of the average human intellect, as also in the infinitely diverse shades and grades of perceptive-faculty in the units who, taken all together, create the so-called public opinion. Genuine respect for this ‘public opinion’ is founded on the sure and certain observation that no one is more accurately aware of the community’s true immediate life-needs, nor can better devise the means for their satisfaction, than the community itself: it would be strange indeed, were man more faultily organised in this respect than the dumb animal. Nevertheless we often are driven to the opposite view, if we remark how even for this, for the correct perception of its nearest, commonest needs, the ordinary human understanding does not suffice – not, at least, to the extent of jointly satisfying them in the spirit of true fellowship: the presence of beggars in our midst, and even at times of starving fellow-creatures, shews how weak the commonest human sense must be at bottom. So here already we have evidence of the great difficulty it must cost to bring true reason into the joint determinings of Man: though the cause may well reside in the boundless egoism of each single unit…”

Another problem with public opinion is that it has an extremely unreliable “pretended vice-regent” in the press. The press is made out to be “the sublimation of public spirit, of practical human intellect, the indubitable guarantee of manhood’s constant progress.” But in fact “it is at all times havable for gold or profit.” In fact, “there exists no form of injustice, of onesidedness and narrowness of heart, that does not find expression in the pronouncements of ‘public opinion’, and – what adds to the hatefulness of the thing – forever with a passionateness that masquerades as the warmth of genuine patriotism, but has its true and constant origin in the most self-seeking of all human motives. Whoso would learn this accurately, has but to

run counter to ‘public opinion’, or indeed to defy it: he will find himself brought face to face with the most implacable tyrant; and no one is more driven to suffer from its despotism, than the Monarch, for very reason that he is the representative of that selfsame Patriotism whose noxious counterfeit steps up to him, as ‘public opinion’, with the boast of being identical in kind.

“Matters strictly pertaining to the interest of the King, which in truth can only be that of purest patriotism, are cut and dried by his unworthy substitute, this Public Opinion, in the interest of the vulgar egoism of the mass; and the necessitation to yield to its requirements, notwithstanding, becomes the earliest source of that higher form of suffering which the King alone can personally experience as his own…”

Ordinary men pursue definite, practical aims associated with their particular, lowly station in life. But “the King desires the Ideal, he wishes justice and humanity; nay, wished he them not, wished he naught but what the simple burgher or party-leader wants, - the very claims made on him by his office, claims that allow him nothing but an ideal interest, by making a traitor to the idea he represents, would plunge him into those sufferings which have inspired tragic poets from all time to paint their pictures of the vanity of human life and strife. True justice and humanity are ideals irrealisable: to be bound to strive for them, nay, to recognise an unsilenceable summons to their carrying out, is to be condemned to misery. What the thoroughly noble, truly kingly individual directly feels of this, in time is given also to the individual unqualified for knowledge of his tragic task, and solely placed by Nature’s dispensation on the throne, to learn in some uncommon fashion reserved for kings alone... The highly fit, however, is summoned to drink the full, deep cup of life’s true tragedy in his exalted station. Should his construction of the Patriotic ideal be passionate and ambitious, he becomes a warrior-chief and conqueror, and thereby courts the portion of the violent, the faithlessness of Fortune; but should his nature be noble-minded, full of human pity, more deeply and more bitterly than every other is he called to see the futility of all endeavours for true, for perfect justice...”

“To him more deeply and more inwardly than is possible to the State-citizen, as such, is it therefore given to feel that in Man there dwells an infinitely deeper, more capacious need than the State and its ideal can ever satisfy. Wherefore as it was Patriotism that raised the burgher to the highest height by him attainable, it is Religion alone that can bear the King to the stricter dignity of manhood.”

---


Upon the king! Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children, and our sins lay on the king!
We must bear all. O hard condition!
Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
Of every fool, whose sense no more can feel
But his own wringing. What infinite heart’s ease
Must kings neglect that private men enjoy!...

Therefore just as Monarchy is more purely disinterested, more truly solicitous of the needs - the deepest as well as the more temporary needs - of all its citizens, than “Franco-Judaico-German Democracy”\textsuperscript{61}, so through this very necessity of having to rise above individual, partial, lower interests and needs, it ascends into the realm of religion. And, we should add, receives its strength and confirmation and sanctification from religion. In this Wagner, paradoxically, is not far from the Orthodox Christian conception of true kingship...

**The Austro-Hungarian Empire**

John Stuart Mill declared that it was “in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationalities.”\textsuperscript{62} This early statement of the principle of the self-determination of nations was not generally accepted in the age of empire, - or in any earlier age, for that matter - when it was expected that small nations would be absorbed into larger imperial structures. And the most striking defiance of the principle was to be found in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The balance between the 17 official nationalities in the empire was so fine that the Habsburg dynasty was forced to concede a very considerable degree of freedom to each of them. But all the nations of the empire were still discontented - and not least the Austrians themselves. The Germans had solved the question of their national unification only by rigorously excluding the Austrian Germans from their state. The situation of these Austrian Germans was now weaker than ever, for on the one hand, they could not stake out an independent state for themselves on the grounds of race since the State of Germany already existed, but on the other hand the other nations of the empire were demanding independence for themselves. As the Viennese dramatist Franz Grillparzer: “You believe that you have given birth to an empire, but you have only destroyed a people!”

Michael Biddis writes: “Bismarck himself had been reluctant to encourage Magyar or Slav nationalism by any additional encroachment on Hapsburg sovereignty. ‘Whatever,’ he asked, ‘can fill the place in Europe that has hitherto been filled by the Austrian state from Tyrol to Bukovina? Any rearrangement in this area could only be of a permanently revolutionary nature.’ Yet Bismarck’s refusal to risk international destabilization by further expansion of Germany within Europe was increasingly challenged. In essence, the critics were willing to applaud his version of unification, but not as a finalization of territorial fulfilment; rather as a milestone on a longer path to greater destinies. Those to whom the nation-state meant some form of Grossdeutschland could only be unsatisfied by the ‘little Germany’ or ‘great Prussia’ of 1870-1…”\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{61} Wagner, “What is German?”, in *Art and Politics, op. cit.*, p. 166.

\textsuperscript{62} Mill, *Representative Government*.

“In the famous Compromise of 1867,” writes Lieven, “[the Austrian Emperor] Francis Joseph divided his empire in two for most purposes. He handed over to the Magyar elite almost complete control over the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Hungary, more than half of whose population was not ethnic Hungarians. In return the emperor secured the – albeit equivocal – support of the Magyar elite for his empire, a considerable Hungarian contribution to sustain the imperial armed forces, and recognition that foreign and defence policy would remain the almost exclusive concern of the monarch and those officials to whom he chose to turn for advice. The 1867 Compromise was the decisive event in late Habsburg history. It determined much of the empire’s domestic policy and some of its foreign policy down to the Monarchy’s demise in 1918. Cold and, in the long run, dubious calculations of power drove the emperor to adopt the Compromise. As he wrote to his daughter, ‘I do not conceal from myself that the Slav peoples of the monarchy may look on the new policies with distrust, but the government will never be able to satisfy every national group. This is why we much rely on those which are the strongest… that is, the Germans and the Hungarians.’ Relying on ‘the strongest’ would bring domestic political stability, at least in the short run. Above all, it would allow the emperor the time and resources to renew his challenge to the Prussians, which would make it possible to reverse Austria’s humiliating defeat at Königgrätz in 1866 and to ensure that the independent South German States did not fall under Prussian rule. Only with Prussia’s defeat of France in 1870-71 and her absorption of the remaining German states did Austria’s hopes of revenge disappear.”

But, as the emperor had feared, the Czechs and Italians in the Austrian monarchy, and the Slovaks, Slovenes and Romanians in the Hungarian, still felt oppressed. “In practice, the three ‘master races’ – the Germans, the Magyars, and the Galician Poles – were encouraged to lord it over the others. The administrative structures were so tailored that the German minority in Bohemia could hold down the Czechs, the Magyars in Hungary could hold down the Slovaks, Romanians, and Croats, and the Poles in Galicia could hold down the Ruthenians (Ukrainians). So pressures mounted as each of the excluded nationalities fell prey to the charms of nationalism.”

The most important of these pressures was that of the Czechs on the Germans. The Czechs were enjoying a national revival, but the German community was doing badly in both halves of the empire. In Hungary, it was small (1.95 million in 1880) and oppressed. Lieven writes that “the German community in Hungary, abandoned to its fate by the imperial government, was one of the major victims of Magyarization, even if in some cases its assimilation of Hungarian language and culture was voluntary. By 1900-14 even the absolute number of Germans in Hungary was in decline owing to assimilation and emigration. Meanwhile, in the non-Hungarian half of the Monarchy (usually referred to by the shorthand name Cisleithenia) the Germans were also under pressure. They were still much the riches group in

---

64 Lieven, op. cit., pp. 160-161.
65 Davies, op. cit., p. 829.
the region. On the eve of the First World War they comprised 35.8 per cent of Cisleithenia’s population and paid 63 per cent of its direct taxes. But they were losing, or had lost, control over many towns and even whole crownlands which they had traditionally dominated. Prague was a good case in point. Traditionally a German town in language, appearance and culture, it was increasingly swamped by Czech immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1910 there was not a single German left on the city council. Not surprisingly, the German community’s politics, especially in mixed nationality crownlands, was often an unlovely combination of traditional cultural arrogance with hysteria about the threat to its identity and status offered by Slav numbers, migration and increasing self-confidence.

“Not at all surprisingly, many Austrian Germans were enthusiastic about the new German Reich. In 1871, noting this fact, Count Andrassy warned Francis Joseph that it would be fatal to pursue internal policies in Cisleithenia which further antagonized the Austrian Germans. If this were done, ‘the Austro-Germans would then turn to the forces of German democracy, which would tear the national banner out of the hands of Prince Bismarck and carry it forward until the whole German race was united.’ Andrassy’s comments were not those of a neutral observer. The Magyar elite, of which he was a leading representative, saw German domination of Cisleithenia as essential to keeping the Monarchy’s Slavs in their place. In particular, plans for ‘trialism’, in other words for giving the Crown of St. Wenceslas (i.e. Bohemia and Moravia) the same sort of autonomy as the Crown of St. Stephen, were anathema to the Hungarians since they would dilute their influence in Vienna (one out of three territories rather than one out of two) and would set very dangerous precedents for the Hungarian Kingdom’s Slav minority. Nevertheless, in the end Andrassy’s prediction, a logical one in a nationalist and increasingly democratic era, was to come true in Hitlerian form…”66

Dynasticism, writes Spellman, “was the only variable linking a host of peoples who shared no racial, linguistic, social or historical cohesion. Austria-Hungary was an empire consisting entirely of minorities, a holdover from the medieval imperial idea of allegiance to crown and dynasty, not to abstract nation. The only bond between the far-flung and varied provinces of the empire was the monarch himself, whose 68-year reign overlapped the decades when nationalism was becoming the strongest factor in the political life of Europe. Thus it should not surprise us that the principal powers enjoyed by the emperor, control over foreign affairs and the military, were constantly employed in the service of obstructing the realization of the nationalist agenda. In the view of one observer, ‘foreign policy was the justification of the monarchy; almost every important change within the Habsburg lands for a century or more had been the result of a need to meet a new crisis in foreign affairs.’

“And during the last 40 years of the monarchy’s existence, questions of national rivalry within Habsburg-controlled lands constituted the key challenge to the ruler and his ministers. The ageing emperor felt a deep

---

personal responsibility for the well-being and territorial integrity of his multi-
ethnic inheritance. Unfortunately, concessions made to one group invariably
spurred demands from another. What held the monarchical model intact into
the twentieth century was, more than anything else, the sense of continuity
represented by Europe’s oldest dynastic house. Thus the celebration of the
emperor’s eightieth birthday in 1910 was every bit as significant for the
empire as Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee had been for the British in 1897.
The Habsburgs were associated in the minds of their subjects with the
tradition of transnational Roman authority, the bold defence of Europe
against the incursions of the Turk, and an almost exceptional sense of
antiparochialism. The emperor was the heir of Charles V, apostolic king of
Hungary and successor of St. Stephen. Tradition still counted for something
in this polyglot empire.

“There were representative assemblies in both Austria and Hungary, and
by the 1880s Austrians enjoyed freedom of religion, equality before the law
and the protection of civil rights. In 1907 the parliament was elected on the
basis of universal manhood suffrage, and a multi-party system was put in
place. But government ministers were servants of the crown and not
responsible to parliamentary control. Supported by an expanding civil
service, army and Church, Francis Joseph was not a man predisposed to
initiate change conducive to either a nationalist or constitutionalist agenda.
The emperor did encourage state investment in certain infrastructure sectors
like the railroad, and economic growth was led by industrial centres like
Vienna and Prague. But raised in the intellectual climate of Metternich’s
Europe, and chastened as a young emperor by the memory of the 1848 liberal
revolutions, the monarch placed the survival of the transnational dynasty
above all other personal or political considerations. On the eve of the First
World War few of the king-emperor’s subjects would have proposed the
dissolution of the monarchy…”67

Japan: The Meiji Restoration

In this period the great Far Eastern empires of China and Japan were
coming in closer contact with both the Catholic-Protestant West and the
Orthodox East. Japan responded by adopting a westernization programme
which soon shot her into the ranks of the major powers. The key to this almost
unique success lay in the fact that Japan did not have westernization imposed
upon her by a colonial power, but was able to absorb it within her own
cultural and political framework.

Roberts writes: “The keys to the continuity and toughness of Japanese
society have been the family and the traditional religion. The clan was an
enlarged family, and the nation the most enlarged family of all. In patriarchal
style, the emperor presided over the national family as did a clan leader over
his clan or, even, the small farmer over his family. The focus of family and
clan life was participation in the traditional rites, the religion known as

67 Spellmann, op. cit., pp. 219-221.
Shinto, whose essence was the worship at the proper times of certain local or personal deities.”

In 645, according to the Taika Reform Edict, the emperor, who was from the ruling Yamato elite and claimed to be descended through the first emperor Jinmu from the sun goddess, acquired absolute power and claimed ownership of all land in the kingdom. “He also reaffirmed his status as Shinto high priest, thereby combining supreme religious authority with new-found political primacy” on the classic pagan god-king model… In reality, however, the Taika Reform Edict did little to alter the status of powerful and semi-autonomous aristocrats in the countryside”, of whom the most important were the Fujiwara.

“During the Kamakura period (1192-1333) when the Minamoto clan dominated the scene from their military base on the Kanto plain, the Japanese emperor was no more than a symbolic figurehead performing ceremonial and religious functions while banditry and general lawlessness became the norm throughout the islands; even Buddhist monasteries employed armed bands for protection in a strife-torn society. By the eleventh century, private rights had clearly superseded public obligations and localism usurped the prerogatives of central authority. For the next 800 years, Japanese monarchs reigned but did not rule. The fact that outright usurpation of the throne did not occur, however, is testimony to the strength of the royal claim to hereditary priestly leadership within the island kingdom. Indeed unlike the Chinese model, where usurpation was interpreted as the legitimate transfer of the Mandate of Heaven to a more worthy leader, in Japan belief in the divine descent of the emperor [from the sun goddess] and the importance of unbroken succession guaranteed the survival of the monarchy throughout the difficult medieval centuries.”

In the seventeenth century the Tokugawa Shotunate (1603-1867) began to centralise power in the country, expelled the European Christian missionaries and restricted trade with the West to Dutch merchants in Nagasaki. “Tokugawa military rule, referred to as the bakafu (tent government), brought about the pacification of the country and laid the groundwork for 250 years of population growth, modest domestic economic expansion, and the introduction of a money economy. Between 1700 and 1850 Japan ‘was more peaceful, more equitably fed, and more secure than any other society in the world’. The social values stressed by this military rule included discipline, loyalty, endurance and respect for one’s natural superiors. Hideyoshi claimed to be of Fujiwara descent and sought legitimation from the powerless emperor Ogimachi (1516-1593). The imperial court had fallen into its worst condition during the era of civil war, but the Tokugawa were careful to revive the imperial finances and buttress imperial prestige. Although the emperor remained secluded in Kyoto during the centuries of Tokugawa rule, the shogun recognized the ultimate source of his legitimacy in the person of the

---

68 Roberts, op. cit., p. 371.
69 Spellman, op. cit., pp. 57, 58.
70 Spellman, op. cit., p. 59.
monarch. By seeking imperial approval for political power won on the battlefield, Hideyoshi reaffirmed the centrality of the emperor to Japan’s political order and prepared the way for the restoration of royal power which occurred three centuries later.

“With peace restored throughout the country, the traditional military services of the samurai elite were no longer needed, and the Tokugawa shoguns insisted that all important feudal lords spend a portion of the year in Edo [Tokyo], where they and their families would be under the watchful eye of the rulers. The Japanese did not abandon the belief that the emperor, now living in seclusion in Kyoto, was in theory the supreme political and religious authority, but the Tokugawa family successfully portrayed itself as the vice-regal administrative and military instrument of the god-emperor. No feudal lords were permitted to approach the imperial court or the person of the emperor without the permission of the shogun. By the opening of the nineteenth century, class lines in Japan were beginning to blur as prosperous merchants view with the increasingly idle warrior class for prestige and influence. Social tensions, brought about by fundamental economic change and fuelled by resentment at Tokugawa unwillingness to engage the outside world, prepared the way for a remarkable transformation in the role of the monarch during the second half of the nineteenth century.

“In 1853 the American naval commander Matthew Perry arrived with a powerful fleet near Tokyo and threatened to bombard the city unless the Japanese opened up trade with America. American penetration of the Japanese main islands, begun the following years, was quickly followed by Dutch, Russian and British encroachment. Anti-Tokugawa clan leaders, awakened to the fact of their technological, and especially naval, inferiority and finding the only solution to be in the creation of a strong central government, turned to the traditional monarchy as the rallying point for modernization, an alternative and ancient source of political legitimacy. Between 1858 and 1865 attacks on foreigners escalated. Ironically the emperor Konmei counselled the shogunate to strengthen defences in an effort to maintain Japan’s isolation; at this moment the monarchy took the side of defending the status quo against the corrupting influence of the outside barbarians.

“Against the considerable opposition of the Tokugawa shogun and the emperor, then, economic, military and political modernization became the rallying cry of those samurai elites and urban commercial leaders who were determined not to allow Western domination of the country to proceed unchecked. Turning from the shogunate to the imperial office for support, a new monarchical regime called ‘Meiji’ or ‘Enlightened Rule’ was inaugurated after the death of the emperor Komei in January 1867. Leaders of the four most important feudal families turned over their estates to the new 15-year-old emperor Mutsuhito (1852-1912) in a gesture of insurgent nationalism. In a memorial addressed to the emperor, the clan leaders maintained that they were returning to the Son of Heaven what had originally been his ‘so that a uniform rule may prevail throughout the empire. Thus the country will be
able to rank equally with the other nations of the world.’ In July 1869 an imperial decree ordered all other landed elites to make the same submission. In return these aristocrats would become provincial governors under the crown; private political authority in the countryside, the norm for over a millennium, was now defined as usurpation and effectively brought to a close.

“Under Mutushito, the 122nd monarch in a line from Jinmu, calls for the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate intensified. Seeing the scale of the opposition to his family’s rule and unwilling to plunge the country into civil war, Tokugawa Yoshinobu abolished the family office – and eight centuries of military government – in November 1867. Establishing a new capital in Tokyo (formerly Edo), the emperor enjoyed enough support from disgruntled samurai warriors, clan leaders and urban commercial interests to defeat the hold-out troops of the now-defunct shogunate. There ensued three decades of unprecedented reform, catapulting feudal Japan into the industrial age. Feudalism was officially abolished in 1871, a national conscript army based on the German model was created, and Western military advisors were recruited in order to assist with the building of a modern navy. State-sponsored and mandatory elementary education was adopted, the Gregorian calendar was introduced, a representative system of local government was created, and a robust commercial and industrial revolution began, the first of its kind in the non-western world. No other non-European nation responded as quickly and as effectively as Japan to the threat of Western imperialism.

“The ideological components of the revolution which occurred in Japan in 1868 centred on two key elements: nationalism and tenno-ism. The historic uniqueness of Japanese civilization was stressed while the monarchy was held up as the embodiment of the nation’s highest ideals, its closest bond with earlier times. There was no establishment of direct imperial rule in 1868, but instead the emperor’s authority was gradually enhanced as anti-Tokugawa reformers claimed a mandate from the divine ruler. By linking the ancient institution of monarchy with the innovative programme of economic modernization and social change, reformers hoped to make change more palatable in traditionalist circles. Not the least of these changes involved the new national political institutions. After a series of delegations sent to Europe and the United States during the 1870s and 1880s returned with their suggestions for constitutional reform, in 1889 a new framework of government, reflecting the German imperial model, established a bicameral parliamentary structure with cabinet responsibility for national policy. The lower house or diet, elected on a restricted franchise which excluded 95 per cent of the adult male population, served as an advisory body to the government, but the emperor retained control over the military and named his chief ministers, all of whom served at the pleasure of the monarch. An upper house composed of former nobles and Meiji leaders rounded out the parliamentary system.

“The first article of the new German-style constitution emphasized the centrality of the sacred monarch’s role in the new government. Here it was
stated plainly that ‘The empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of emperors unbroken for ages eternal.’ Ito Hirobumi, one of the principal authors of the new constitution, provided a commentary on the document which encapsulates the thinking of the Meiji reformers. The emperor, according to Hirobumi, ‘is Heaven-descended, divine and sacred; he is pre-eminent above all his subjects. He must be reverenced and is inviolable. He is indeed to pay due respect to the law, but the law no power to hold Him accountable to it.’

“Unlike his predecessors, the Meiji emperor undertook a new public role designed to link the monarchy with the actions of the state. Reviewing troops, giving audiences to foreign envoys, presiding at various public awards ceremonies, placing his name on a large list of policy decrees, the emperor became the exclusive focus of national loyalty. At court, traditional dress was abandoned in favour of mandatory Western styles, and young Japanese eagerly embraced the idea of modernization in the service of the monarchy.

“It is in this last idea – service to the tenno (lord of heaven) - that the uniqueness of Japan’s drive towards modernization must be assessed. The revolution of 1868 was not a middle-class, bourgeois-inspired call for an individualistic and capitalist state along Western lines. Instead the reforming oligarchs who were responsible for the end of the shogunate continued to emphasize the virtues of obedience, loyalty and acquiescence in the service of one’s superiors. In an imperial rescript on education issued by the emperor in 1890 – a document to be memorized by generations of schoolchildren down to 1948 – young Japanese were exhorted to ‘offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.’ These values, it was hoped would combine to shape a nationalist ideology unique in its association with the institution of monarchy.”

The absence in Meiji Japan of a loyal but independent religious institution laid the foundations of the tragedy of 1945. As the historian Ienaga Saburo writes: “The vast majority of the people were educated from youth into a frame of mind in which they could not criticise state policies independently and had to follow them, mistaken though they were. Education since 1868 carries heavy responsibility for bringing on that tragedy.”

---

71 Prince Ito, the effective creator of modern Imperial Japan, wrote in his Commentary on the Constitution: ‘The Sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated’ (in Harold Nicolson, Monarchy, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, p. 38). However, he goes on to say that “the Emperor is heaven descended, divine and sacred”, which implies that while the empire is a product of the fall, its purpose is also to overcome the fall, at least in part. It is possible that Prince Ito was here betraying the influencing of Christian ideas which he picked up during his education in Europe. (V.M.)

72 Spellman, op. cit., pp. 60-64.

Nevertheless, the Japanese monarchy was not of the typically pagan, despotic kind. As Dominic Lieven writes: “Japanese tradition was totally opposed to the Emperor actually attempting to act as the chief executive officer of his government. For centuries the Emperor’s role had been purely ceremonial and priestly, actual power being exercised by the Shogun. In the last decades of the Tokugawa era even the Shogun did not rule personally, his powers being used by subordinates in his name. Although in theory the Meiji restoration returned power to the monarchy’s hands, it was never the intention of the restoration’s key statesmen that the monarch should literally run his own government like a Russian or German emperor. On the contrary, the monarchy’s role was to provide legitimacy for the Meiji era’s reformist oligarchy and to act as a symbol around which the Japanese nation could rally. As in Europe, however, one key reason for the oligarchy’s determination to locate sovereignty in the Emperor was their opposition to accepting the only alternative principle, namely the sovereignty of the people exercised through elected institutions.

“In a way that was not true even in Prussia, let alone Russia, court and government were always sharply separated in Meiji Japan. The court was the world of priestly rites and Confucian moral virtues, never of actual political rule. Though in theory the Emperor chose prime ministers, in fact they were selected by the genro, in other words the tiny group of elder statesmen who constituted a sort of supreme privy council and presented the monarch with a candidate whom he never rejected. Recommendations on policy were submitted to the crown in the unanimous name of the government. The Emperor was never asked to adjudicate personally between conflicting choices or groups, still less to devise his own policies and find minister to support them. The traditions of the imperial house meant that the monarchs did not revolt against this passive role. The Emperor Meiji, for instance, is said to have rebuffed efforts to draw him more directly into government by commenting that ‘when one views [our] long history one sees that it is a mistake for those next to the throne to conduct politics’. In any case since no modern Japanese emperor, Meiji included, had ever possessed real political power there was never any question of the need to surrender it into the oligarchy’s hands. When the Emperor Hirohito contemplated intervening personally to tilt the balance against military extremists in 1937 he was warned by the sole remaining genro, Prince Saioniji, that the monarchy must not endanger itself by active political engagement. Only in the apocalyptic circumstances of 1945 did the monarch decisively enter the political arena and even then this happened because the government was split down the middle on the issue of peace or war and requested his intervention.”

This strange position of the Japanese emperor meant that ordinary Japanese could sincerely venerate, even worship him, while despising the idea of one-man-rule. Thus “during the Second World War the Japanese Communist Nosaka Sanzo told a Chinese Communist party conference that ‘the Japanese people may hold the Emperor… in religious awe, but they do not worship the system of despotic rule. We must abolish the Emperor system

---

immediately and establish a democratic system... However, we must be very
careful in defining our attitude to... his [the Emperor's] semi-religious
influence... Many soldiers captured by the [Communist] Eighth Route Army
said they could agree with the [Communist] ideology, but if they sought to
destroy the emperor, they would be opposed. This can be seen as a general
pattern of thought held by the majority of the Japanese people.”

“Modernizing the Japanese economy required strong governmental
initiatives and harsh fiscal policies. There had been for a time a grave danger
of opposition and disorder. Centuries before, the imperial power had gone
into eclipse, unable to control over-mighty subjects; its restored authority
faced new dangers in a new age. Not all conservatives could be reconciled to
the new model Japan. Discontented ronin or retainers – rootless and
masterless samurai, the traditional fighting class – had been one source of
trouble. Another was peasant misery; in the first decade of the Meiji era
there had been scores of agrarian revolts, but reform had created unconditional
private ownership in land and many tenant farmers were to benefit from it.
There had also been a last feudal rebellion, but the energies of the
discontented samurai were gradually siphoned off into the service of the new
state; building their interests into it, though, only intensified an assertive
nationalism in certain key sectors of the national life. It was soon expressed
not only in continuing resentment of western powers but also in support of
imperial ambitions directed towards the nearby Asian mainland…”

Marx and Bakunin

By the second half of the nineteenth century, it was becoming clear to all
unprejudiced minds that the abolition of slavery in the first half of the century
had only made way for another form of slavery – that of industrial workers at
the hands of corporate capitalists. The same vast discrepancies in wealth, the

75 Lieven, Nicholas II, op. cit., pp. 140-141.
77 Chomsky has argued that in her colonies Britain abolished the one form of slavery in order
to introduce the other form – because the other was likely to be more profitable in the long
run. This paralleled, but in a shorter time-frame, the transformation of English peasants into
industrial workers through enclosing their land by force: “In 1831 there was a big slave revolt
in Jamaica – which was one of the things that led the British to give up slavery in their
coonies: after some slave revolts, they basically said, ‘It’s not paying anymore.’ So within a
couple years the British wanted to move from a slave economy to a so-called ‘free’ economy,
but they still wanted the basic structure to remain exactly the same – and if you take a look
back at the parliamentary debates in England at the time, they were talking very consciously
about all this. They were saying: look, we’ve got to keep it the way it is, the masters have to
become the owners, the slaves have to become the happy workers – somehow we’ve got to
work it all out.

“Well, there was a little problem in Jamaica: since there was a lot of open land there, when
the British let the slaves go free they just wanted to move out onto the land and be perfectly
happy, they didn’t want to work for the British sugar plantations anymore. So what everyone
was asking in Parliament in London was, ‘How can we force them to keep working for us,
even when they’re no longer enslaved into it?’ Alright, two things were decided upon: first,
they would use state force to close off the open land and prevent people from going and
surviving on their own. And secondly, they realized that since all these workers didn’t really
want a lot of thing – they just wanted to satisfy their basic needs, which they could easily do

45
same terrible (or rather: almost certainly more terrible) material conditions of
the slaves, the same impossibility of running away to start a better existence.
The question was: who was to lead the new abolitionist movement?

In essence three possible strategies presented themselves. First, peaceful
persuasion of governments to adopt policies that moderated the cruelty of the
factory owners and provided at least a minimum social safety net for the
workers. Secondly, the creation of voluntary associations of workers to
organize strikes to wring concessions from the factory owners, but without
overthrowing the basic structure of employer-worker relations. And thirdly,
the violent overthrow of the existing economic structure of society together
with the governments that supported it.

This third, revolutionary strategy can in turn be divided into two: the
anarchist revolution favoured above all by the Russian nobleman Michael
Bakunin, and the socialist revolution led by the “vanguard of the proletariat”
favoured by Marx and Engels.

Marxism’s main aims, as declared in The Communist Manifesto of 1848, were
the destruction of private property, the destruction of the family and the
destruction of religion. However, the revolution of 1848 had been a failure
from the socialist point of view. And after that failure a mild conservative
reaction set in throughout Europe as some of the wealth generated by a
period of rapid growth in the world economy had trickled down to the
workers and dulled their zeal for revolution. But as their numbers increased
in direct proportion to the increase in factory production, so did their power.
And it only took another downturn in the economy to bring them out on the
streets.

Thus in England by the beginning of the 1860s, as Edmund Wilson writes,
“the Trade Union movement was taking the place of the Chartists. The
growth of the industrial cities had caused a boom in the building and
furnishing trades; and the workers in these trades had been left flat by the
slump of the later fifties. Much the same thing had been happening in France,
where Napoleon III had been rebuilding Paris, and where the followers of
Proudhon and Blanqui were organizing the unemployed workers. We have
seen how the movement of the Prussian workers had grown up under the
leadership of Lassalle [who in 1863 founded the General Union of German

in that tropical climate – the British capitalists would have to start creating a whole set of
wants for them, and make them start desiring things they didn’t then desire, so then the only
way they’d be able to satisfy their new material desires would be by working for wages in the
British sugar plantations.

“There was very conscious discussion of the need to create wants – and in fact, extensive
efforts were then undertaken to do exactly what they do on T.V. today: to create wants, to
make you want the latest pair of sneakers you don’t really need, so then people will be driven
into a wage-labor society. And that pattern has been repeated over and over again through
the whole entire history of capitalism. In fact, what the whole history of capitalism shows is
that people have had to be driven into situations which are then claimed to be their nature.
But if the history of capitalism shows anything, it shows it’s not their nature, that they’ve had
to be forced into it, and that that effort has had to be maintained right until this day”
(Understanding Power, op.cit., p. 204).
Workers, later the Social Democratic Party]. Wilhelm Liebknecht, who had returned from exile in 1862, had converted to Marxist socialism a young turner named August Bebel and, after having been expelled from Prussia in 1865, had been organizing in South Germany a League of German Workers’ Unions. The American Civil War of 1860–65, by shutting off the supply of cotton, had caused a crisis in the textile industry; and the American emancipation of the slaves in 1863, the abolition of serfdom in Russia in 1861, and the Polish uprising of 1863 had been giving a general impetus to liberal and revolutionary ideas. By the July of 1863 an international workers’ movement was beginning to crystallize out. The English trade unions, whose action was being blocked by the importation of labor from Germany, France and Belgium, appealed to the workers of France for a common understanding against the employers, and the French, after delaying nearly a year, due to the uncertainty of the working-class leaders as to whether they should make the final break with the bourgeois political parties, accepted the proposal of the English. The International Working Men’s Association was founded in St. Martin’s Hall, London, on September 28, 1864. Thus, four weeks after the death of Lassalle, Marx was invited to attend the first meeting of the new working-class organization of which he was to become the directing mind, with his two sons-in-law among his lieutenants...

“The inaugural address which Marx drafted for the International Working Men’s Association had to steer... between shoals on every side: it had to satisfy English trade unionists, who were interested exclusively in winning strikes and cared nothing about their ‘historical role’; French Proudhonists, who were opposed to strikes and to the collectivisation of the means of production, and who believed in cooperative societies and cheap credit; followers of the patriot Mazzini, who was chiefly interested in liberating Italy and who wanted to keep the class struggle out of it. Marx regretted, as he explained to Engels, that he had been obliged to put in some phrases about such abstractions as ‘duty’ and ‘right’ and a declaration that it was the aim of the International ‘to vindicate the simple laws of morality and justice, which ought to govern the relations of private individuals, as the rules paramount of the intercourse of nations.’ But he did get into it a blasting review of the results of industrial progress in England, which tied up with his own work on Das Kapital [whose first part came out in 1867]. He showed that while the imports and exports of England had trebled in twenty years, it nevertheless now appeared that, so far from pauperism’s having been eliminated, as the middle-class apologists had said it would be, the industrial and agricultural populations were more debased and undernourished than ever. ‘In all countries of Europe it has now become a truth demonstrable to every unprejudiced mind, and only denied by those whose interest is to hedge other people in a fool’s paradise, that no improvement of machinery, no appliance of science to production, no contrivances of communication, no new colonies, no emigration, no opening of markets, no free trade, nor all these things put together, will do away with the miseries of the industrious masses; but that, on the present false base, every fresh development of the productive powers of labor must tend to deepen social contrasts and point social antagonisms. Death of starvation rose [the English is Marx’s own] almost to the rank of an
institution, during this intoxicating epoch of economical progress, in the metropolis of the British empire. That epoch is marked in the annals of the world by the quickened return, the widening compass, and the deadlier effects of the social pest called a commercial and industrial crisis.’

“Marx continued to guide the International with surprising toleration and prudence through the Bâle Congress of 1869, at which the advocates of collectivization definitely defeated its opponents. He did not attend these annual congresses but controlled them through his lieutenants…

“But again… the authority of the sedentary Marx came into conflict with an active politician, and the Marxist point of view, so rationalistic and prudent, lost its grip on a labor movement which had now reached European proportions. It was at the Congress of Bâle that the Workers’ International was first captivated by Michael Bakunin…”

Bakunin, a Russian nobleman, was no less of a socialist than Marx, and much more of a democrat. The basic difference between them was in their attitude to the State.

While Marx called for the overthrow of the old regimes, he was not against the State as such, at any rate before the advent of the communist paradise, and believed that the State could be used to free the workers. And the important of the State in his thinking, combined with a less liberal and romantic, more “scientific” and collectivist approach, became more pronounced with time, especially after the publication of Das Kapital in 1867. “It meant a fundamental change of emphasis in his thinking. The fulfilment and true freedom of the individual still remained the objective of revolution and the end of the historical process. As far as the making of revolutions was concerned, however, his ‘alienation’ and his revolutionary consciousness, so important in the early works of the 1840s and still important in those of the 1850s, were now threatened with submersion in a vast and impersonal process of social evolution governed by laws analogous to those of the physical world and quite impossible to divert or restrain.”

Bakunin, however, believed that the State was simply another form of oppression and had to be destroyed. “I am not a Communist,” he said, “because Communism, by concentrating all property in the State, necessarily leads to the concentration of all the power of society in the State. I want to abolish the State…”

Like the French philosopher-anarchist Proudhon, Bakunin believed that all property was theft, and that included State property. Like Proudhon again, he believed that States would be replaced by local workers’ organizations.

---

In 1917, this basic idea of Bakunin’s anarchism, or “revolutionary socialism”, was described by William Paul, one of the founders of the British Communist Party as follows: “The revolutionary Socialist denies that State ownership can end in anything other than a bureaucratic despotism. We have seen why the State cannot democratically control industry. Industry can only be democratically owned and controlled by the workers electing directly from their own ranks industrial administrative committees. Socialism will be fundamentally an industrial system; its constituencies will be of an industrial character. Thus those carrying on the social activities and industries of society will be directly represented in the local and central industrial councils of social administration. In this way the powers of such delegates will flow upwards from those carrying on the work and conversant with the needs of the community. When the central administrative industrial committee meets it will represent every phase of social activity. Hence the capitalist political or geographical state will be replaced by the industrial administrative committee of Socialism. The transition from the one social system to the other will be the social revolution. The political State throughout history has meant the government of men by ruling classes; the Republic of Socialism will be government of industry administered on behalf of the whole community. The former meant the economic and political subjection of the many; the latter will mean the economic freedom of all – it will be, therefore, a true democracy.”

Bakunin’s most famous remark was: “The desire to destroy is also a creative desire.” “He had visions of ecstatic conflagration: ‘the whole of Europe, with St. Petersburg, Paris and London, transformed into an enormous rubbish-heap.’” In 1883 Engels criticised Bakunin’s anarchism as follows: “The anarchists put the thing upside down. They declare that the proletarian revolution must begin by doing away with the political organisation of the state... But to destroy it at such a moment would be to destroy the only organism by means of which the victorious proletariat can assert its newly-conquered power, hold down its capitalist adversaries and carry out that economic revolution of society without which the whole victory must end in a new defeat and in a mass slaughter of the workers similar to those after the Paris Commune.”

True; and yet “Bakuninist” anarchism corresponded more closely to the spirit of the revolution than all the treatises of Marx, whose only purpose was to give a pseudo-scientific justification to an essentially destructive, satanic force. Thus the victory of Bakunin over Marx at the meeting of the First Internationale in Bâle was no accident – the delegates recognised in Bakunin the true incarnation of the spirit of the revolution. As Baron Wrangel said of his speech: “I no longer remember what Bakunin said, and it would in any case scarcely be possible to reproduce it. His speech had neither logical sequence nor richness in ideas, but consisted of thrilling phrases and rousing

82 Wilson, op. cit, p. 263.
83 Engels, in Chomsky, op. cit, pp. 31-32.
appeals. It was something elemental and incandescent – a raging storm with lightning flashes and thunderclaps, and a roaring as of lions. The man was a born speaker, made for the revolution. The revolution was his natural being. His speech made a tremendous impression. If he had asked his hearers to cut each other’s throats, they would have cheerfully obeyed him.”

One of those present at Bakunin’s speech was the famous Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky. He said that the whole speech had been “without the slightest proof, all this learned by rote twenty years ago and not changed one bit. Fire and sword! And when all has been destroyed, then, in their opinion, there will be peace…” He had no time for Bakunin’s atheist slogans: “As long as God exists, man is a slave” and: “Man is rational, just, free, therefore there is no God.” Already in Notes from the Underground (1864) he had demonstrated that man in his fallen state was quite irrational, and would never be happy with rationalist schemes for his happiness. “I would not be at all surprised, for instance, if suddenly and without the slightest possible reason a gentleman of ignoble or rather reactionary and sardonic countenance were to arise amid all that coming reign of universal common sense and, gripping his sides firmly with his hands, were to say to us all: ‘Well, gentlemen, what about giving all this common sense a great kick and letting it shiver in the dust before our feet simply to send all these logarithms to the devil so that we again live according to our silly will?’”

And yet Bakunin’s anarchism was not just thunder and lightning. For him “the withering away of the State” was not, as in Marx and Engels, an essentially utopian idea that ill accorded with his central idea of class struggle: it was the heart of the matter. Being a more consistent libertarian than any of the Marxists, he perceived that even the socialist State would be an instrument of oppression.

In fact, he warned that the “red bureaucracy” would be “the vilest and most dangerous lie of the century”. And in 1870 accurately predicted what actually took place in 1917: “Take the most radical of revolutionaries and place him on the throne of all the Russias or give him dictatorial powers… and before the year is out he will be worse than the Tsar himself…”

According to Richard Pipes, Bakunin was the first to “insist that behind the intellectuals’ yearning for socialism lay ordinary class interests. He opposed Marx’s vision of the socialist state on the grounds that it would result in Communist domination of the masses: ‘According to Mr. Marx, the people should not only not abolish [the state], but, on the contrary, fortify and strengthen it, and in this form turn it over to the full disposal of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers, the chiefs of the Communist Party – in

84 Wrangel, in Wilson, op. cit., p. 269.
87 Bakunin, quoted in Chomsky, op. cit., p. 33.
other words, to Mr. Marx and his friends, who will then proceed to liberate [them] in their own fashion. They will concentrate the reins of government in a strong hand, because the ignorant people are in need of strong guardianship. They will create a central state bank, which will concentrate in its hands all commercial-industrial, agricultural, and even scientific production. They will divide the mass of the people into two armies, the industrial and the agricultural, under the direct command of state engineers, who will form the new privileged political-scientific class. Another anarchist, the Pole Jan Machajski, depicted socialism as an ideology formulated in the interest of the intelligentsia, ‘an emergent privileged class’, whose capital consisted of higher education. In a socialist state they would achieve dominance by replacing the old class of capitalists as administrators and experts. ‘Scientific socialism’ promises the ‘slaves of bourgeois society happiness after they are dead: it guarantees the socialist paradise to their descendants.’

“This was not a message likely to appeal to intellectuals. And so it was no accident that Marx defeated Bakunin and had him expelled from the First International, and that in the modern world anarchism is but a faint shadow of socialism. Historical experience indicates that any movement that questions the ideology and interests of intellectuals dooms itself to defeat, and that any intellectual who challenges his class condemns himself to obscurity…”

Bakunin’s vision of socialism looked more likely than Marx’s to triumph in the years 1869-1871, between the Bâle Congress and the Paris Commune. However, as we shall see in more detail later, Marx was able to pluck victory out of defeat by claiming that the Paris Commune was the beginning of the new proletarian revolution. This opportunism was as characteristic of him as his intellectual dogmatism, and enabled him to ride out the challenge presented by Bakuninist anarchism.

Thus Barzun wrote: “Marx, with the continual help of Engels, worked on two planes. On the political, theory and consistency gave way to opportunism… On the theoretical he wrote elaborate treatises arguing points of history, philosophy, and economics against all previous and current authorities. Shortly before his pamphlet on the Commune, he had finished the first part of a central treatise, Das Kapital… Its style and organization are demanding; the Russian censor in the 1860s decided to let it into the country because very few could work their way through it. When Marxism became a subject of research and of college courses to be taught, more academics mastered the contents than socialist politicians and militants had ever done.

88 A. Volskii (Machajski), Umstvennyi rabochii (New York-Baltimoe, 1968), 328 (originally published in 1904-05). In the preface (p. 14), Albert Parry notes that this work aroused the ‘fierce opposition’ of virtually all revolutionary intellectuals of the time: ‘They at once mobilized the entire corps of their theoretical publicists, orators, and agitators. The whole propaganda apparatus of the Socialist movement, be it Bolshevik, Menshevik, or Socialist-Revolutionary, went into action against its common enemy. The virulence of their attack was unprecedented.’ Machajski’es writings have been placed on the Soviet Index Librorum Prohibitorum.” (Pipes’ footnote).

“Capital professed to show scientifically how the worker was exploited. His labor adds value to the material he works on and this addition is worth more than the value of his wages. (Sismondi had said the same.) This ‘surplus value’ is taken by the capitalist. Since Marx, the ‘labor theory of value’ has been discarded by the economists and the reasoning is no longer valid, but the error, when restated for propaganda, is a simple and powerful argument. About history, Marx’s thesis is (in his words) ‘Hegel turned on his head.’ Instead of a battle between ideas – thesis and antithesis – out of which comes a synthesis, the clash is between purely material forces: ‘dialectical materialism’. Marx’s view here is that of the Realist, for whom only tangibles exist. The rest – art, thought, law, religion – constitute only a superstructure of no effect by itself. History moves forward by the shifting relation of things, and in its present phase will bring about proletarian Communism inevitably. Its final stage, after the dictatorship of proletariat, will be the ‘withering away of the state’, a happy anarchy. It is curious to note this hope or expectation, characteristic of the 19th century: Herbert Spencer predicted it as confidently as Marx.

“Yet although for Marx thought is ineffectual, he kept on having thoughts and putting them to work. He saw the revolution as taking place in Germany, the most advanced industrial nation, having the most numerous proletariat. The prediction was logical, because in the Marxist system it is not from the individual’s will to gain economic power that one class replaces another, but from ‘its relation to the means of production’. And what the revolution aims at is not the destruction of the state but possessing it for Communist ends…”

For Marx, therefore, the Commune was the beginning of the proletarian (as opposed to bourgeois) revolution, which would spread from France to Germany to all Europe. It did spread, but not in the way he predicted: its first major success was in peasant Russia, not proletarian Germany – as Bakunin, not Marx, had predicted. For Bakunin was able to foresee, as Berlin writes, “that they were liable to develop not in the most industrialised societies, on a rising curve of economic progress, but in countries in which the majority of the population was near subsistence level and had least to lose by an upheaval – primitive peasants in conditions of desperate poverty in backward rural economies where capitalism was weakest, such as Spain and Russia.”

However, both Marx and Engels had this in common with Bakunin that they saw clearly that the enemy that had to be destroyed for the revolution to succeed was Russia. As Engels said: “Not one revolution in Europe and in the whole world can attain final victory while the present Russian state exists.”

---

92 Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx and the Revolutionary Movement in Russia.
Mikhail Nazarov writes that “the Marxist ‘anticapitalist’ parties developed their activity not in the most capitalist countries of the USA, France or England (where the monarchy had long been merely decorative), but in the conservative monarchies of Austro-Hungary, Germany and especially in the Orthodox Russian empire. The reasons for this are completely obvious.

“Already Suvorov’s campaign in Europe against the armies of revolutionary France in 1799 (‘God save the kings!’ said Paul I to the commander as he left), the victory of Russia over the ‘usurper’ Napoleon and the creation of the monarchist Sacred Union in 1815, the crushing of the bourgeois-democratic rebellion in Poland in 1831, the interference into the European bourgeois revolution of 1848-1849, when the Russian army gave help to the Austrian monarchy in Hungary – also demonstrated before the eyes of the powers behind the scenes that Russia was the withholding power of the old Christian world-order in Europe (in the sense of the Apostle Paul’s words, cf. II Thessalonians 2.7)…”

The Risorgimento and the Fall of the Papacy

The country closest to revolution in this period was Italy. This fact was due, at any rate partially, to the presence in Italy of the Papacy - in Italians’ eyes, the most intransigent of despotisms. For, as Baigent and Leigh write: “Writing in the 1850s, an historian and Catholic apologist described the Papal States of the immediate post-Napoleonic period as ‘a benevolent autocracy’. Between 1823 and 1846, some 200,000 people in this ‘benevolent autocracy’ were consigned to the galleys, banished into exile, sentenced to life imprisonment or to death. Torture by the Inquisitors of the Holy Office was routinely practised. Every community, whether small rural village or major city, maintained a permanent gallows in its central square. Repression was rampant and surveillance constant, with Papal spies lurking everywhere. Meetings of more than three people were officially banned. Railways were banned because Pope Gregory XVI believed they might ‘work harm to religion’. Newspapers were also banned. According to a decree of Pope Pius VIII, anyone possessing a book written by a heretic was to be considered a heretic himself. Anyone overhearing criticism of the Holy Office and not reporting it to the authorities was deemed as guilty as the critic. For reading a book on the Index, or for eating meat on Friday, one could be imprisoned.”

However, when a still more absolutist Pope, Pius IX, came to the throne in 1846, the forces of nationalism and revolution were to prove more than a match for him... “Strangely enough, given his subsequent career, Pius IX began his reign with the reputation of a reformer. He was sympathetic to at least some form of Italian unification and nationalism. He envisioned himself, in his capacity of pontiff, serving as a divinely ordained conduit and

instrument for Italy’s rebirth. He dreamed of presiding over a confederation of Italian states. He even elicited hopeful appeals for support from Mazzini and Garibaldi, who in their naivety fancied they might find a new ally in the Church.

“Whatever illusions Pius may initially have fostered, they quickly evaporated, along with his popularity. It soon became apparent that the Italy the Pope had in mind bore little relation to any constitutional state. In 1848, he doggedly refused to lend his support to a rebellious military campaign against Austrian domination of the north. His studied neutrality was perceived as a craven betrayal, and the resulting violent backlash obliged him to flee Rome in ignominious disguise, as a priest in the carriage of the Bavarian ambassador. In 1850, Papal rule was restored by the arrival of French troops [sent by Louis Napoleon, the future emperor] and Pius returned to his throne. His political position, however, now made no concessions of any kind to liberalism or reform; and the regime he established in his own domains was to become increasingly hated.”

In December, 1851 Louis Napoleon staged a coup d’état in Paris, and, somewhat surprisingly, the leadership of the Grand Orient (in spite of resistance by some radical Freemasons, such as Ledru-Rollin) decided to support him in the plebiscite that elected him President of the Republic. Napoleon was now indebted to the Masons, and therefore, bowing to their pressure, began to turn against the Pope. In particular, he began to support King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia-Piedmont, a Freemason, in his struggle to expel the Austrians from Italy and unify the peninsula – a movement that eventually led to the stripping of the Papacy of all its secular dominions with the exception of the Vatican City itself.

The Franco-Sardinian alliance was successful: after the victories of Magenta and Solferino in 1859-60, the Austrians retained only Venetia (the Italians acquired that in 1866). Meanwhile, Garibaldi’s red-shirts had conquered Sicily and Naples. Only the Papal States in the centre of Italy withstood the Masonic-led onslaught. They, paradoxically, were protected by a French garrison – Napoleon was not yet ready to throw the Papacy to the nationalist wolves. But for how long?…

As his political power crumbled during the course of the revolution, Pius IX sought to compensate for it by asserting his spiritual power in a shriller and more maniacal manner than ever, by increased repression within his kingdom, and by inventing new dogmas that the Catholics were now compelled to believe.

The process had begun in 1854, when, with the support of five hundred Italian, Spanish and Portuguese bishops, many of whom he had appointed to newly created dioceses, he proclaimed the doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Virgin – that is, her freedom from original sin - while in

95 Baigent and Leigh, op. cit., p. 197.
exile in Gaeta. His personal secretary, Monsignor Talbot, said at that time: “You see, the most important thing is not the new dogma but the way it is proclaimed.” In other words, the important thing was not whether the dogma was true or not, but the fact that the Pope was asserting his power.

In 1864 Pius issued *Quanta Cura*, which condemned a whole “Syllabus” of Errors, including modern heresies such as liberalism and socialism\(^\text{97}\), and reasserted the papacy’s supremacy over all secular powers. Then, in December, 1869 he convened the First Vatican Council. Two and a half months into the Council, the question of papal infallibility was raised. In his constitution *Pastor Aeternus*, the Pope declared his own infallibility on matters of faith and morals when speaking *ex cathedra* thus:-

“1. If anyone will say that the blessed Apostle Peter was not placed by Christ the Lord as prince of all the apostles and the visible head of the whole of the Church militant, or that he did not receive, directly and without mediation, from our same Lord Jesus Christ only the pre-eminence of honour, and not the true and genuine pre-eminence of power, let him be anathema.”

“2. If anyone will say… that the blessed Peter in his pre-eminence over the whole Church does not have an unbroken line of successors, or that the Roman high priest is not the successor of the blessed Peter in this pre-eminence, let him be anathema.

“3. If anyone will say that the Roman high priest has only the privilege of supervising or directing, and not complete or supreme jurisdiction in the Universal Church not only in matters that relate to faith and morals, but even also in those which relate to discipline and the administration of the Church, which is spread throughout the world; or that he has only the most important parts, but not the whole fullness of this supreme power; or that this power is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and every church, and over each and every pastor and member of the faithful, let him be anathema.

“4. Faithfully following the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, we teach and define that the following dogma belongs to the truths of Divine revelation. The Pope of Rome, when he speaks from his see (*ex cathedra*), that is when, while fulfilling his duties as teacher and pastor of all Christians, who defines, by dint of his supreme apostolic power, that a certain teaching on questions of the faith and morals must be accepted by the Church, he enjoys the Divine help promised to him in the person of St. Peter, that infallibility which the Divine Redeemer desiged to

\(^{97}\) Some of these condemned propositions were: “Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true… In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be the only religion of the state, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship… The Roman pontiff can and should reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization” (Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam books, 1988, pp. 146, 245, 246)
bestow on His Church, when it defines teaching on questions of faith and morality. Consequently, these definitions of the Pope of Rome are indisputable in and of themselves, and not because of the agreement of the Church. If anyone were to have the self-opinion, which is not pleasing to God, to condemn this, he must be consigned to anathema.”

It is interesting to note that in this last sentence the Pope admits the possibility that in his definitions of the faith he might be right and the Church wrong. In other words, he denied St. Paul’s words that it is precisely the Church, and not any individual man, that is “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (I Timothy 3.15).

This was a complete surprise and shock to all the assembled bishops except those belonging to the Inquisition; and at first only a small minority – 50 out of 1,084 bishops eligible to attend and vote - was in favour of it. However, Pius now proceeded to apply threats and intimidation. And so “by the time it came to a vote, the Papacy’s strong-arm tactics had tipped the balance decisively. In the first vote, on 13 July 1870, 451 declared themselves in favour and eighty-four opposed. Four days later, on 17 July, fifty-five bishops officially stated their opposition but declared that, out of reverence for the Pope, they would abstain from the vote scheduled for the following day. All of them then left Rome, as a good many others had already done. The second and final vote occurred on 18 July. The number of those supporting the Papacy’s position increased to 535. Only two voted against, one of them Bishop Edward Fitzgerald of Little Rock, Arkansas. Of the 1,084 bishops eligible to vote on the issue of Papal infallibility, a total of 535 had finally endorsed it – a ‘majority’ of just over 49 per cent. By virtue of this ‘majority’, the Pope, on 18 July 1870, was formally declared infallible in his own right and ‘not as a result of the consent of the Church’. As one commentator has observed, ‘this removed all conciliarist interpretations of the role of the Papacy’. And so the Council finally consented to the false dogma, declaring: "The Pope is a divine man and a human god... The Pope is the light of faith and reflection of truth."

Bishop Joseph Georg Strossmayer of Diakovar, in Croatia, was one of the few bishops who opposed the dogma of infallibility. "In 1871," writes Fr. Alexey Young, "he wrote to a friend that he would rather die than accept this false teaching, adding: ‘Better to be exposed to every humiliation than to bend my knee to Baal, to arrogance incarnate.’ But apparently the humiliations and threats imposed on him by Rome proved, after ten long years, too much to oppose. He finally submitted to the new teaching in 1881…”

For a time Pastor Aeternus looked destined to create a schism as devastating as that of the Protestants. As Peter de Rosa writes: “Absolute power had fashioned an absolute ‘truth’; and other Christians found one more sky-high

---

98 Baigent and Leigh, op. cit., p. 205.
barrier between themselves and the Roman church.”

Prejudice against the Church seemed to have acquired a new justification; and anti-Catholic sentiment erupted across the whole of Europe and North America.

In Holland, there was virtual schism. In the Habsburg imperium of Austria-Hungary, a concordat previously concluded [in 1855] with the Papacy was abrogated by the government. The Papal Nuncio in Vienna reported to the Vatican’s Secretary of State that ‘almost all the bishops of Austria-Hungary now returned from Rome are furious over the definition of infallibility’; and two of them publicly demanded that a debate be opened to reverse the decision of the Council. For more than a year, the bishops of Hungary refused to accept the Council’s ruling.

“The Bishop of Rottenburg openly branded the Pope the ‘disturber of the Church’. In Braunsberg, a distinguished professor published a manifesto castigating the pontiff as ‘heretic and devastator of the Church’; and the local cardinal and the local bishop both tacitly concurred in this condemnation. In Prussia, Bismarck introduced laws that radically altered the Church’s status and relationship with the state. Jesuits were effectively banned from the kingdom. Legal proceedings were instituted for the appointment of clergy. Civil marriage ceremonies were made obligatory. All schools were place under state supervision.

“In the face of such reactions, the Papacy simply became more aggressive. All bishops were ordered to submit in writing to the new dogma; and those who refused were penalised or removed from their posts. So, too, were rebellious teachers and professors of theology. Papal nuncios were instructed to denounce defiant ecclesiastics and scholars as heretics. All books and articles challenging, or even questioning, the dogma of Papal infallibility were automatically placed on the Index. On at least one occasion, attempts were made to suppress a hostile book through bribery. Many records of the Council itself were confiscated, sequestered, censored or destroyed. One opponent of

100 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 243.

101 De Rosa writes: “The English-speaking world, too, was far from unanimous in accepting papal infallibility. In 1822, Bishop Barnes, the English Vicar Apostolic, said: ‘Bellarmine and other divines, chiefly Italian, have believed the pope infallible when proposing ex cathedra an article of faith. But in England and Ireland I do not believe any Catholic maintains the infallibility of the pope.’ Later still, Cardinal Wiseman, who in 1850 headed the restored hierarchy of England and Wales, said: ‘The Catholic church holds a dogma often proclaimed that, in defining matters of faith, she (that is, the church, not the pope) is infallible.’ He went on: ‘All agree that infallibility resides in the unanimous suffrage of the church.’ John Henry Newman, a convert and the greatest theologian of the nineteenth century, said two years before Vatican I: ‘I hold the pope’s infallibility, but as a theological opinion; that is, not as a certainty but as a probability.’

“In the United States, prior to Vatican I, there was in print the Reverend Stephen Keenan’s very popular Controversial Catechism. It bore the Imprimatur of Archbishop Hughes of New York. Here is one extract. ‘Question: Must not Catholics believe the pope himself to be infallible? Answer: This is a Protestant invention, it is no article of the Catholic faith; no decision of his can bind on pain of heresy, unless it be received and enforced by the teaching body, that is, the bishops of the church.’ It was somewhat embarrassing when, in 1870, a ‘Protestant invention’ became defined Catholic faith. The next edition of the Catechism withdrew this question and answer without a word of explanation.” (op. cit., pp. 242-243) (V.M.)
the new dogma, for example, Archbishop Vicenzo Tizzani, Professor of Church History at the Papal University of Rome, wrote a detailed account of the proceedings. Immediately after his death, his manuscript was purchased by the Vatican and has been kept locked away ever since…”

As Archimandrite Justin (Popovich) writes: “Through the dogma of infallibility the pope usurped for himself, that is for man, the entire jurisdiction and all the prerogatives which belong only to the Lord God-man. He effectively proclaimed himself as the Church, the papal church, and he has become in her the be-all and end-all, the self-proclaimed ruler of everything. In this way the dogma of the infallibility of the pope has been elevated to the central dogma (vseodogmat) of the papacy. And the pope cannot deny this in any way as long as he remains pope of a humanistic papacy. In the history of the human race there have been three principal falls: that of Adam, that of Judas, and that of the pope.”

Again, Archimandrite Charalampos Vasilopoulos writes, “Papism substituted the God-man Christ with the man Pope! And whereas Christ was incarnate, the Pope deincarnated him and expelled Him to heaven. He turned the Church into a worldly kingdom. He made it like an earthly state… He turned the Kingdom of God into the kingdom of this world.” Indeed, although the Pope calls himself “the vicar of Christ”, we should rather say, writes Nikolaos Vasileiades, “that the Pope is Christ’s representative on earth and Christ… the Pope’s representative in heaven”.

European individualism since Gregory VII has been of three distinct types: papist individualism which decrees the maximum rights – and knowledge – for one person, the Pope; liberal individualism, which decrees the maximum rights for every person; nationalist individualism, which decrees the maximum rights for one nation. Papist individualism had tended to recede into the background as first liberal individualism, and then nationalist individualism caught the imagination of the European and American continents. But now, having already anathematised the main propositions of liberalism in his Syllabus of Errors of 1864, and having stubbornly resisted the triumph of nationalism in his native Italy, the Papacy reiterated with extra force and fanaticism its own variant of the fundamental European heresy – the original variant, and the maddest of them all. For is it not madness to regard oneself, a mortal and sinner and as in need of redemption as any other man, as the sole depository and arbiter of absolute truth?!

104 Vasilopoulos, O Oikoumenismos khoris maska (Ecumenism unmasked), Athens, 1988, p. 34 (in Greek).
105 Vasileiades, Orthodoxia kai Papismos en dialogo (Orthodoxy and Papism in Dialogue), Athens, 1981, p. 23 (in Greek).
106 "In 1867, with Garibaldi’s small force in premature action only fifteen miles from the Vatican, the pope, still defiant, said: 'Yes, I hear them coming.' Pointing to the Crucifix: 'This will be my artillery’” (De Rosa, op. cit., p. 148).
However, Divine retribution was swift for this act of pagan man-worship in the midst of Europe’s ancient religious and political capital. On the very next day after the decree on Papal infallibility, July 19, Emperor Napoleon III, declared war on Prussia and withdrew his troops from Rome. In September he was defeated at Sedan and forced to abdicate, in spite of the fact that he had won a resounding victory in a plebiscite only four months before.  

Napoleon’s sudden fall from grace was caused by a sudden withdrawal of support by the Freemasons. Thus Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes: “H.K. Gris, who has at that time Russian consul in Berne (Switzerland), and later minister of foreign affairs (chancellor) of Alexander III, in accordance with the duties of his office observed and carefully studied the activity of the Masonic centre in Berne. To it came encoded despatches from French Masons with exact date about the movements, deployment and military plans of the French armies. These were immediately transferred through Masonic channels to the Prussian command. The information came from Masonic officers of the French army… And so France was doomed! No strategy and tactics, not military heroism could save her. It turned out that international Masonry had ‘sentenced’ France to defeat beforehand, and that the French ‘brother-stone-masons’ had obediently carried out the sentence on their own country (fatherland!). Here is a vivid example of Masonic cooperation with the defeat of their own government with the aim of overthrowing it and establishing an authority pleasing to the Masons. But when this republican parliamentary power was established, it was forced to take account of the national feeling of the French people, deeply wounded by the defeat and the seizing by Germany of Alsace and Lorraine…”

Sedan was an historic milestone in more ways than one. Not only did it reverse the decision and the result of the French victory over the Prussians at Valmy in 1792, when the Masons had supported the French against the Prussians. The protector-client relationship between France and the Roman papacy, which had begun when Pope Stephen had crossed the Alps to seek to anoint the Frankish King Pippin in the eighth century, was also now about to end. For, with the French no longer able to support the Papacy, as Christopher Duggan writes, “there was little to stop the Italian government seizing the historic capital. On 20 September, less than three weeks after the Battle of Sedan, Italian troops blew a hole in Leonine walls at Porta Pia and marched into the city. Pius IX was left with the small enclave of the Vatican. A

---

107 Roger Price writes: “7,350,000 voters registered their approval, 1,538,000 voted ‘no’, and a further 1,900,000 abstained. To one senior official it represented ‘a new baptism of the Napoleonic dynasty’. It had escaped from the threat of political isolation. The liberal empire offered greater political liberty but also order and renewed prosperity. It had considerable appeal. The centres of opposition remained the cities, with 59 per cent of the votes in Paris negative and this rising to over 70 per cent in the predominantly workers arrondissements of the north-east. In comparison with the 1869 elections, however, opposition appeared to be waning. Republicans were bitterly disappointed. Even Gambetta felt bound to admit that ‘the empire is stronger than ever’. The only viable prospect seemed to be a long campaign to persuade the middle classes and peasants that the republic did not mean revolution…” (A Concise History of France, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 188-189).

law was passed in May 1871 that guaranteed the safety of the pope, provided him with an annual grant, and gave him the full dignities and privileges of a sovereign; but Pius IX rejected it out of hand. The rift between the liberal state and the Church was now broader and deeper than ever."

The new constitution was, like Louis Philippe’s of 1830 and Napoleon III’s of 1862, a strange mixture of old and new, Christian and antichristian. W.M. Spellmann writes: “Under the terms of the first constitution (one actually issued in 1848 by Victor Emmanuel’s father Charles Albert to his subjects in Piedmont-Sardinia) the monarch ruled ‘by the grace of God’ as well as ‘by the will of the people’. A bicameral assembly was established with members of the upper house chosen by the king and the lower house elected on the basis of a very restricted franchise…”

Some bewailed the fact that the national consciousness of Italians lagged behind the State of the new united Italy. Thus Massimo d’Azeglio remarked in the opening session of the new parliament in 1861: “Now that we have created Italy, we must start creating Italians.”

The nationalists were disgusted, writes Adam Zamoyski, that “the process… hailed as the Risorgimento, the national resurgence,… was nothing of the sort: a handful of patriots had been manipulated by a jackal monarchy and its pragmatic ministers. And the last act of 1870 had been the most opportunistic of all.” Thus “it was a different Italy that I had dreamed of all my life,” said Garibaldi a couple of years before his death. “I had hoped to evoke the soul of Italy,” wrote Mazzini from exile, “and instead find merely her inanimate corpse.”

And yet they had gained not only the unification of Italy but also the humiliation of the Papacy, of which Machiavelli had said: “The nearer people are to the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, the less religious are they… Her ruin and chastisement is near at hand… We Italians owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt, and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely that the Church has kept and still keeps our country divided.”

To others, however, and not only Papists, the “ruin and chastisement” of the Church of Rome was no cause of rejoicing. Thus the Russian diplomat, Constantine Nikolaevich Leontiev, lamented: The Pope a prisoner! The first man of France [President Carnot] not baptised!” The reason for his alarm was not

---

110 “Napoleon, by the grace of God and the national will Emperor of the French”.
111 Spellmann, op. cit., p. 214.
112 Davies, Europe, op. cit., p. 814.
114 Zamoyski, op. cit., p. 444. As was written on his tombstone: O Italia, Quanta Gloria e Quanta Bassezza!
115 Machiavelli, in Russell, op. cit., p. 528,
116 Leontiev, “Natsional’naia politika kak orudie vsemirnoj revoljutsii” (National politics as a weapon of universal revolution), op. cit., p. 526. Leontiev also wrote: If I were in Rome, I
far to find: for all its vices, and its newest heresies, the papacy was still one of the main forces in the West restraining the liberal-socialist revolution as it descended ever more rapidly down the slippery slope towards atheism. Previous papal maniac had at least had the support of their people; but when Pius IX died in 1878, he died in self-imposed exile, having refused to set foot on Italian soil. And in 1881, as he was being carried to his burial-place, mobs gathered and yelled: “Long Live Italy! Death to the Pope!”…

The Paris Commune

The fall of the Second French Empire was completely unexpected. France faced no great dangers abroad at the time. Indeed, “that June, the newly appointed British Foreign Secretary Lord Granville gazed out with satisfaction on the world scene and claimed – with reason – that he could not discern ‘a cloud in the sky’. In all his experience he had never known ‘so great a lull in foreign affairs’. In Paris, Emperor Napoleon III’s Prime Minister, Emile Ollivier, echoed Granville by declaring that ‘at no period has the maintenance of peace seemed better assured’.” But at this point national vanity reignited the still-smouldering revolution to destroy the empire…

“The Prussian triumph over Austria in 1866,” writes Price, “had altered the European balance of power, and ever since, French public opinion had believed in the likelihood of a war by means of which France could re-assert its authority. When war came in 1870 it was however due to a series of errors by a government operating under pressure from conservative opinion. The hysterical response of the right-wing press to the news of a Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish throne was a major factor in creating an atmosphere favourable to war. Although both the emperor and Ollivier might have been willing to accept a simple withdrawal of this candidature, conservative deputies demanded guarantees which Bismarck [the Prussian Chancellor], in the infamous Ems telegram, refused in insulting terms. To have accepted this would have meant another humiliating foreign policy reversal and risked parliamentary disapproval which could have thrown into doubt the bases of the recently revised constitution and particularly the emperor’s personal power. In this situation Napoleon, although aware that the military preparations were seriously defective, succumbed to pressure from the empress, from the foreign minister the Duc de Gramont, and from should not hesitate to kiss not only the hand but also the slipper of Leo XIII… Roman Catholicism suits my unabashed taste for despotism, my tendency to spiritual authority, and attracts my heart and mind for many other reasons’ (op. cit., p. 529). “An interesting ecumenical remark for an Orthodox,” comments Wil van den Bercken (Holy Russia and Christian Europe, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 213), “but it is not meant that way.” That is, he admired the papacy for its authoritarianism without sharing its religious errors.

117 Baigent and Leigh, op. cit., p. 208.
119 Victor Hugo appealed: “It is in Paris that the beating of Europe’s heart is felt. Paris is the city of cities. Paris is the city of men. There has been an Athens, there has been a Rome, and now there is Paris… Is the nineteenth century to witness this frightful phenomenon? A nation fallen from polity, to barbarism, abolishing the city of nations; Germans extinguishing Paris… Can you give this spectacle to the world” (Horne, op. cit., p. 287).
the more authoritarian Bonapartists and hoped that victory would further consolidate the regime.

“The initial public response was indeed overwhelmingly positive. With the exception of a very small minority of revolutionary militants even republicans felt bound to rally to the national cause. Huge crowds singing patriotic songs gathered in the streets to see the troops off. The first defeats brought panic. The emperor’s response to the developing military crisis was to replace the Ollivier government with one made up of authoritarian Bonapartists under General Cousin-Montauban. This could not alter the fact that the army was better prepared in terms of organisation, training and material for dealing with internal security problems than waging a major European war...

“News of the defeat at Sedan and the capitulation of the emperor and one major army was received in Paris on the evening of 2 September and became public knowledge the following day. This failure utterly discredited the regime. The small group of twenty-seven republican deputies were supported by large crowds in demanding its replacement. On 4 September these invaded the Palais Bourbon and drove out the imperial Corps legislative. In such an uncertain political situation the troops and police responsible for the assembly’s security were unwilling to use force against the crowds. Inspired as much by the desire to prevent a take-over by revolutionaries as by the need to replace the imperial administration a group of moderate Parisian deputies proclaimed the republic and established a Provisional Government of National Defence presided over by the military governor of Paris, General Trochu, to continue the war. In the provinces the news of defeat and revolution usually came as a great surprise but there appeared to be no immediate alternative to acceptance of the Parisian initiative. The Empire in its various manifestations had attracted widespread support. Liberalisation, together with its clear commitment to law and order had seemed likely to reinforce this. Military defeat however represented governmental failure on a scale sufficient to destroy its legitimacy.”

Mark Almond writes: “The Third Republic, proclaimed on 4 September, tried to rally the defence of France, looking back to the example of the First Republic, eighty years earlier: ‘The Republic was victorious over the invasion of 1793. The Republic is declared.’ But the dearth of trained soldiers and equipment made resistance to the Germans very difficult, and by 19 September the German army had surrounded and laid siege to Paris.

“The siege was the essential ingredient in the radicalisation of the city’s population. The famine and other burdens reduced many of the recently prosperous to penury, even prostitution...

“Some 350,000 men formed a National Guard to defend the city’ most of them depended on their soldier’s pay for their livelihood because the economy had collapsed during the siege. Attempts to break out of the city failed on 27 October 1870 and 19 January 1871, and provoked demonstrations

120 Price, op. cit., pp. 189-191.
at the Hôtel de Ville. Already the suspicion was spreading that politicians outside Paris were less devoted to resistance than the people of the capital…

“Despite the efforts of the Parisians to hold out against the besieging army, the French government felt it was futile to continue the war and signed an armistice with Germany on 28 January 1871. This treaty brought an end to the siege but imposed humiliating terms on France, including the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine and a crippling war indemnity of 5 million francs.

“France went to the polls on 8 February to vote for a new government that would (in accordance with the armistice) take responsibility for accepting or rejecting Germany’s terms for peace. The results revealed how different Paris was from the rest of France. Paris elected a group of radicals to the Assembly, while monarchists dominated the elections elsewhere. The monarchist majority wanted peace with the Germans, whatever the humiliation.

“To achieve this peace, the Prime Minister, Thiers, had to disarm the National Guard in Paris. He ordered the Guard to hand over its artillery to the regular army on 18 March 1871. But he had already antagonised the Guard by cutting its pay, which hit the poor much as the abolition of national workshops had done in 1848. The poor had also been hit when the new National Assembly voted to end the wartime moratorium on debts and rents. Thus the people of Montmartre, especially the women, rallied to stop their cannons being hauled away. Bloody clashes occurred between the army and the people. The mayor of Montmartre, Georges Clemenceau, was shocked by the violence of the outburst: ‘The mob which filled the courtyard burst into the street in the grip of some kind of frenzy. Amongst them were chasseurs, soldiers of the line, National Guards, women and children. All were shrieking like wild beasts without realizing what they were doing. I observed then that pathological phenomenon which might be called blood lust. A breath of madness seemed to have passed over this mob…’

“Several hours of fighting and rioting followed, at the end of which the government troops appeared to be no nearer to capturing the guns of Montmartre. Thiers decided to withdraw his forces and remove the Government from the capital city to Versailles. The rebels in Paris, meanwhile, voted to revive the Commune (on the model of 1792) in defiance of the government.

“Only four members of the Commune represented the recently founded Marxist Workingman’s International. Twenty-five out of the Commune’s ninety members worked with their hands, but mainly as skilled artisans. They were outnumbered by professionals, such as journalists, radical doctors and teachers. But two-thirds or more of the Commune’s members would have described themselves as the heirs of the Jacobins of 1793. Karl Marx himself did not at first recognise the Communards as the proletarian revolutionaries of his future Communist society, but his sympathy with their struggle against the French bourgeoisie encouraged the romanticization of the Communard as a premature Communist revolutionary…
“Nationalism and popular local government rather than social revolution were the rallying cries of the Commune, but the flight from Paris of Thiers’ government and most of the wealthy members of society created a new social situation. In the absence of many of the bourgeois elite, Paris fell into the hands of members of the lower orders, who had little experience of administration. Marx noted that the Communards lacked effective leadership. ‘They should at once have marched on Versailles,’ he wrote, before Thiers had time to complete amassing his army. But the Communards’ revolutionary hostility to rank meant that their forces lacked an effective commander-in-chief who might have seized the moment. Spontaneity without strategy was bound to fail.

“From March 1871, two rival authorities existed in France, the national government at Versailles and the Commune in Paris, each with its own armed force and each jockeying for political power. Half-hearted negotiations between the two authorities did take place, but when these broke down Thiers decided to attempt once more to retake the capital. He brought up an army of provincial Frenchmen, suspicious and resentful of what they saw as arrogant Parisians trying to dictate politics to France as so often before. Naturally the Germans looked favourably on any blood-letting among the French that would weaken them further.

“On 2 April, government troops seized Courbevoie, a suburb of Paris, and began a new siege of Paris. For several weeks Government troops bombarded the fortresses protecting the capital, taking them one by one, and by 21 May the army was able to force its way into Paris through an undefended point to the south-west of the city. Over the next seven days, known as the ‘bloody week’, the army methodically re-conquered the capital from west to east. Each quartier defended itself, giving the army the opportunity to pick off district after district. In the course of the struggle, the Communards set fire to ancient buildings like the Tuileries and the Hôtel de Ville. They also shot their hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris, Georges Darboy. Given the anti-clerical tradition of revolution in France he might have seemed an ideal reactionary scapegoat, but Darboy himself was disliked by French conservatives: he had voted against Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council two years earlier and was something of a liberal. The Communards ensured that Paris would not have another liberal archbishop for almost a century…

“As many as 20,000 Communards – including women and children – were killed as the army fought its way forward through the streets of Paris, while another 40,000 insurgents were taken prisoner. About half of these were released soon enough, but 10,000 were transported to the colonies, including the remote New Caledonia in the South Pacific.”

“The lead in the revolt,” writes E.P. Thompson, “with its echoes of 1793 and 1848, was taken by the few thousand followers of the veteran revolutionary, Auguste Blanqui, idol of the Paris underworld of

---

conspirators... But it was neither a mainly communist and Marxist movement, nor even closely connected with the recently formed First International. It was a peculiarly French and Parisian revolt, the apotheosis of the long French revolutionary tradition and an outburst of local pride and distress, fiercely patriotic and anti-German.”

As such the Paris Commune represented the end, not only of the specifically French revolution that had begun in 1789, but of a long development going back many hundreds of years. For, as Proudhon wrote: “The revolution of the 19th century was not born out of the depths of this or that political sect, it is not the development of any one abstract principle, it is not the triumph of the interests of one or another corporation of class. The revolution is the inevitable synthesis of all the preceding movements in religion, philosophy, politics, social economics...”

These thoughts were echoed by the poet and diplomat Fyodor Tiutchev: “The revolution is an illness devouring the West... The revolution is the purest product, the last word and the highest expression of that which we have been accustomed to call, already for three centuries now, the civilization of the West. It is contemporary thought, in all its integrity, from the time of its break with the Church. The thought is as follows: man, in the final analysis, depends only on himself both in the government of his reason and in the government of his will. Every authority comes from man; everything that proclaims itself to be higher than man is either an illusion or deception. In a word, it is the apotheosis of the human I in the most literal meaning of the word... We are quite possibly present at the bankruptcy of the whole civilization... The revolution is not simply an opponent clothed in flesh and blood. It is more than a Principle. It is Spirit, reason, in order to gain victory over it, we must know how to drive it out...

“The revolution is the logical consequence and final end of contemporary civilization, which antichristian rationalism has won from the Roman church. The revolution has in fact become convinced of its complete inability to act as a unifying principle, and has to the same degree become convinced, on the contrary, that it possesses a disintegrating power. On the other hand, the elements of the old society which have been preserved in Europe are still sufficiently alive that, in case of necessity, they can throw everything that has been done by the Revolution back to its point of origin. But they have also been so penetrated by the revolutionary principle, so distorted by it, that they are almost incapable of creating anything that could be accepted by European society as a lawful authority. That is the dilemma which rears its head with all its exceptional importance at the present time... The European West is only half of a great organic whole, but the difficulties undergone by it, difficulties that are from an external point of view insoluble, will acquire their resolution only in its other half,” that is, in the Russian Empire.

---

123 Proudhon, in Leontiev, “natsional’naia politika kak orudie vsemirnoj politiki” (National Politics as a Weapon of Global Politics), op. cit., p. 551.
“These startling events,” writes Thompson, “which brought an oriental barbarism into the most civilized and cosmopolitan capital of Europe, had decisive consequences for nascent socialism. Marx wrote his pamphlet on *The Civil War in France*, which hailed the Commune as the dawn of a new era of direct proletarian revolutionary action and a triumph for his own followers and for the International. Frightened property-owning classes everywhere in Europe took him at his word, and saw in the Commune the beginning of a fresh revolutionary menace. Even a confusion of words contributed to this widespread misinterpretation of the Commune. *Communards* were assumed to be *communists*. *Capitulards* (as the rebels called Thiers and his ministers who ‘capitulated’ and made peace with Germany) were confused with *capitalists*. The Marxist analysis of the event as a landmark in the class war was made to fit only by a distortion of both facts and words. It can be regarded more accurately as the last dying flicker of an old tradition, the tradition of the barricades of 1789 and 1848, rather than as the beginning of a new. Never again was Paris to impose her will upon the rest of France, as she had done before 1871. The aftermath of the Commune and of its repression was the exile or imprisonment of all the more revolutionary elements in France; and the new parliamentary republic was erected during their elimination from the scene. It was only after 1879, when the republican parties gained full control of the Republic, that amnesties were granted and more active socialist movements could again operate freely in France…”

“All Europe,” writes Barzun, “including many liberals and socialists disavowed the Commune, which was the name chosen by the insurgents to show their organic bond as citizens of the municipality. But Karl Marx in London, seeing the chance for a political stroke, and perhaps also the value of that name, issued a pamphlet that represented the insurgents as a foretaste of the class war to come – the proletariat aroused and about to establish Communism. This was a piece of big-lie propaganda. The *Communards* were neither proletariat nor *Communists*. The ‘municipal republics’ they wanted to set up in the rest of France were the opposite of the central dictatorship of Marx’s program. But Marx had rightly judged that the event had given worldwide notoriety to workingmen in arms. The image could be a vivid myth for the Idea of the next revolution.”

In view of the strong influence exerted by Freemasonry on the Franco-Prussian war, it may be asked whether it exerted a similar influence on the struggle between the Third Republic and the Paris Commune that followed it. The evidence is ambiguous.

According to Jasper Ridley, “several of the leaders of the Paris Commune were Freemasons. Benoit Halon, who was a member of Marx’s International Working Men’s Association (later known as the First International); Felix Pyat; the songwriter Jean Baptiste Clément, who wrote the song ‘Le Temps des Cerises’ (Cherry Time) about the Commune; Zéphian Camélinat, who

---

125 Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 395-396.
survived to become a member of the Communist Party in 1920; and another songwriter, Eugène Pottier, who wrote, among other poems and songs, the words of *L’Internationale*. But there were Freemasons on the other side. Louis Blanc condemned the Paris Commune, and remained in the National Assembly at Versailles; and from Italy Mazzini strongly condemned the Commune, though Garibaldi supported it.

“On 29 April 1871 some Paris Freemasons set out from Paris to go to Versailles to discuss with [the non-masonic] Thiers ways of ending the civil war between the government and the Commune. They carried their Masonic banners as they walked through the Porte Maillot. On this section of the battlefront the government army was commanded by General Montaudon, who was a Freemason. He ordered a ceasefire to allow the Freemasons from Paris to pass through his lines. They went on to Versailles, where their Masonic brother, Jules Simon, took them to see Thiers; but Thiers insisted that Paris must submit unconditionally to the government at Versailles.”

In general, while Masonic ideas undoubtedly inspired the Commune, Masonry was divided on the Commune itself. This is a phenomenon that we find in most revolutions: while the Masons may in favour of the idea of revolution as such, when it comes to the actual bloody reality, in which they are likely to lose property if not their own lives, many of them hang back…

And yet it is precisely at this time that we find the leading Masons of the world trying to create a unifying centre. Thus on January 22, 1870 Mazzini wrote to the famous American Mason Albert Pike: “We have to found a Super-Circle which must remain in complete secrecy and to which we will summon the Masons of the higher degrees at our own choice. Regarding our brothers, we have to bind these people by oath in the strictest secrecy. By means of this highest circle, we shall control all the movements of the Freemasons: it will become an international centre which will be the more powerful the fewer people know who rules it.” For Mazzini, in fact, the unification of Italy had never been his main aim, “but only the means to attaining world power”. In reply, on September 20, 1870 Pike signed an agreement with Mazzini, according to which the Supreme Masonic cult, uniting all the Masons of the world, between thirty and forty million throughout the world, would be established in Rome.

**Dostoyevsky on Papism and Socialism**

The simultaneous defeat in 1870-71 of both the most reactionary and the most revolutionary regimes in Europe (the Papacy and the Paris Commune) raised the question: might there be a connection between these seeming opposites?

---

Following the suggestion of some French socialist thinkers, Dostoyevsky saw a link between the two antichristian systems of Papism and Socialism. "Present-day French Socialism," he wrote, "is nothing but the truest and most direct continuation of the Catholic idea, its fullest, most final consequence which has been evolved through centuries... French Socialism is nothing else than the compulsory union of mankind – an idea which dates back to ancient Rome and which was fully expressed in Catholicism."  

Papism, according to Dostoyevsky, was the beginning of western atheism. As Prince Myshkin says in The Idiot (1868): "Roman Catholicism believes that the Church cannot exist on earth without universal temporal power, and cries: Non possumus! In my opinion, Roman Catholicism isn’t even a religion, but most decidedly a continuation of the Holy Roman Empire, and everything in it is subordinated to that idea, beginning with faith. The Pope seized the earth, an earthly throne and took up the sword; and since then everything has gone on in the same way, except that they’ve added lies, fraud, deceit, fanaticism, superstition wickedness. They have triled with the most sacred, truthful, innocent, ardent feelings of the people, have bartered it all for money, for base temporal power. And isn’t this the teaching of Antichrist? Isn’t it clear from Roman Catholicism itself! Atheism originated first of all with them: how could they believe in themselves? It gained ground because of abhorrence of them; it is the child of their lies and their spiritual impotence! Atheism! In our country it is only the upper classes who do not believe, as Mr. Radomsky so splendidly put it the other day, for they have lost their roots. But in Europe vast numbers of the common people are beginning to lose their faith – at first from darkness and lies, and now from fanaticism, hatred of the Church and Christianity!"  

And since Socialism is “above all an atheistic question, the question of the modern integration of atheism”, Papism is its parent, too. “Socialism, too, is the child of Catholicism and the intrinsic Catholic nature! It, too, like its brother atheism, was begotten of despair, in opposition to Catholicism as a moral force, in order to replace the lost moral power of religion, to quench the spiritual thirst of parched humanity, and save it not by Christ, but also by violence! This, too, is freedom by violence. This, too, is union through the sword and blood. ‘Don’t dare to believe in God! Don’t dare to have property! Don’t dare to have a personality of your own! Fraternité ou la mort! Two million heads!’" So akin is Socialism to Papism that Papism “will tell the people that Christ also preached everything that the Socialists are preaching to them. Again it will pervert and sell them Christ as it has sold Him so many times in the past.”  

Peter Verkhovensky in The Devils (1871) even envisages the possibility of the Pope becoming the leader of the Socialists: "Do you know, I was thinking of delivering the world up to the Pope. Let him go barefoot and show himself
to the mob, saying, ‘See what they have brought me to!’ and they will all follow him, even the army. The Pope on top, we all round him, and below us – the Shigalev order. All we need is that the Internationale should come to an agreement with the Pope; this will come about. The old boy will agree at once. He can’t do anything else. Mark my words...”

“The Western Church,” wrote Dostoyevsky, “has distorted the image of Christ, having been transformed from a Church into a Roman state and incarnated it again in the form of the papacy. Yes, in the West there is in truth no longer Christianity and the Church, although there are still many Christians – yes, and they will never disappear. Catholicism is truly no longer Christianity, and is passing into idol-worship, while Protestantism with giant steps is passing into atheism and a slippery, shifting, inconstant (and not age-old) teaching on morality. The Empire accepted Christianity, and the Church – the Roman law and state. A small part of the Church departed into the desert and began to continue its former work: Christian communities appeared again, then monasteries.... But then the remaining, huge part of the Church divided, as we know, into two halves. In the western half the state finally overcame the Church completely. The Church was annihilated and was reincarnated finally into a state. There appeared the papacy – a continuation of the ancient Roman Empire in a new incarnation.”

Dostoyevsky saw in Germany’s victory over France at Sedan an attempt to crush Socialism, and thereby Papism, and foresaw the time when the madness of Papist individualism would seek to unite itself with the madness of socialist collectivism: “By depriving France of her political existence, Prince Bismarck hopes to deliver a blow at socialism. Socialism, as a heritage of Catholicism, and France are most hateful to a genuine German. It is excusable that Germany’s representatives believe that it is so easy to master socialism by merely destroying Catholicism – as its source and beginning.

“However, this is what is most probably going to happen should France fall politically [which it did not]: Catholicism will lose its sword, and for the first time will appeal to the people whom it has been despising for so many centuries, ingratiating itself with worldly kings and emperors. Now, however, it will appeal to the people, since there is nowhere else to go; specifically, it will appeal to the leaders of the most worldly and rebellious element of the people – the socialists. Catholicism will tell the people that Christ also preached everything the socialists are preaching to them. Once more it will pervert and sell them Christ as it has Him so many times in the past for earthly possessions, defending the rights of the Inquisition which, in the name of loving Christ, tortured men for freedom of conscience – in the name of Christ to Whom only that disciple was dear who came to Him of his free accord and not the one who had been bought or frightened.

---

133 Dostoyevsky, The Devils, Penguin Magarshack translation, p. 419.
134 Dostoyevsky, The Diary of a Writer, August, 1880; Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij (Complete Works), Moscow, 1984, vol. 26, pp. 151, 169 ©. Cf. Thomas Hobbes: “Then papacy is not other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof” (Leviathan).
“Catholicism sold Christ when it blessed the Jesuits and sanctioned the righteousness of ‘every means for Christ’s cause’. However, since time immemorial, it has converted Christ’s cause into a mere concern for its earthly possessions and its future political domination over the whole world. When Catholic mankind turned away from the monstrous image in which, at length, Christ had been revealed to them, - after many protests, reformations, etc., at the beginning of this century – endeavours arose to organize life without God, without Christ. Devoid of the instinct of a bee or an ant, unmistakably and with utmost precision constructing their hive and ant-hill, men sought to create something on the order of an unmistakable ant-hill. They rejected the unique formula of mankind’s salvation, derived from God and announced through revelation to man: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’, and substituted for it practical inferences, such as ‘Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour tous’ (‘Each one for himself and God for all’), or scientific axioms, such as ‘the struggle for existence’.

“Bereft of the instinct which guides animals and enables them to organize their life faultlessly, men haughtily sought to rely upon science, forgetting that for such a task as the creation of society, science is still, so to speak, in swaddles. Dreams ensued. The future tower of Babylon became the ideal but also the dread of humanity. But after these dreams there soon appeared other simple doctrines, intelligible to everybody, for instance: ‘to rob the rich, to stain the world with blood, after which somehow everything will again be settled of its own accord.’

“Finally, even these teachers were outstripped: there appeared the doctrine of anarchy, after which – if it could be put into effect – there would again ensue a period of cannibalism, and people would be compelled to start all over again as they started some ten thousand years ago. Catholicism fully understands all this, and it will manage to seduce the leaders of the underground war. It will say to them: ‘You have no centre, no order in the conduct of the work; you are a force scattered all over the world, and now, after the downfall of France [Dostoyevsky is referring to the fall of the Commune in 1871] – also an oppressed force. I shall be your rallying center, and I shall attract to you all those who still believe in me.

“One way or another, the alliance will be formed. Catholicism does not wish to die, whereas social revolution and the new social period in Europe are indubitable: two forces, unquestionably, will have to come to understanding, to unite. It stands to reason that slaughter, blood, plunder, even cannibalism would be advantageous to Catholicism. Precisely then it may hope to catch once more its fish in troubled waters, foreseeing the moment when, finally, mankind, exhausted by chaos and lawlessness, will fall into its arms. Then, once more, it will become in reality the sole and absolute ‘earthly ruler and universal authority’, sharing its power with no one. Thereby it will attain its ultimate goal.”

135 Dostoyevsky, The Diary of a Writer, November, 1877, pp. 910-912. Although this prophecy has not been fulfilled precisely, the general trend was unerringly discerned by Dostoyevsky.
In *The Brothers Karamazov* (1881), Dostoyevsky further underlined the link between Papism and Socialism by making the leading proponent of Socialism a Papist Inquisitor. After his disillusionment with the papal system, Western man could not be satisfied with the atomic individualism of the societies that replaced it, but still yearned for the brotherhood of all men in obedience to one Omniscient Father that Papism provided, albeit in a perverted form. As Thierry said: “I, an exhausted rationalist, feel the need for an infallible authority; my tortured spirit needs rest.”

“For the chief concern of these miserable creatures,” says the Inquisitor, “is not only to find something that I or someone else can worship, but to find something that all believe in and worship, and the absolutely essential thing is that they should do so all together. It is this need for universal worship that is the chief torment of every man individually and of mankind as a whole from the beginning of time. For the sake of the universal worship they have put each other to the sword…”

**The German Empire**

After the North German Confederation had defeated France at the battle of Sedan, the new German empire was born on January 18, 1871 in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles. There the 23 German princes offered the title of emperor to the most powerful amongst them, King William I of Prussia. Richard Evans writes: “Built by Louis XIV, the ‘Sun King’, at the height of his power nearly two hundred years before, the palace was now turned into a humiliating symbol of French impotence and defeat. This was a key moment in modern German and indeed European history. To liberals, it seemed the fulfilment of their dreams. But there was a heavy price to pay. Several features of Bismarck’s creation had ominous consequences for the future. First of all, the decision to call the new state ‘the German Reich’ inevitably conjured up memories of its thousand-year predecessor, the dominant power in Europe for so many centuries. Some, indeed, referred to Bismarck’s creation as the ‘Second Reich’. The use of the word implied, too, that where the First Reich had failed, in the face of French aggression, the Second had succeeded. Among the many aspects of his creation that survived the fall of Bismarck’s German Reich in 1918, the continued use of the term ‘German Empire’, *Deutsches Reich*, by the Weimar Republic and all its institutions was far from being the least significant. The word ‘Reich’ conjured up an image among educated Germans that resonated far beyond the institutional structures Bismarck created: the successor to the Roman Empire; the vision of God’s Empire here on earth; the universality of its claim to suzerainty; in a more prosaic but no less powerful sense, the concept of a German state that would include all German speakers in Central Europe – ‘one People, one Reich, one

For in the twentieth century there was an increasing tendency for the papacy, if not to identify with the democratic and social revolutions (although its “liberation theologians” did precisely that in Central and South America in the 1980s), at any rate to accept many of their premises and strive to work with them rather than against them. Thus the papacy has fitted easily into the modern liberal-socialist structure of the European Union...
Leader’, as the Nazi slogan was to put it. There always remained those in Germany who thought Bismarck’s creation only a partial realization of the idea of a true German Reich. Initially, their voices were drowned by the euphoria of victory. But with time, their number was to grow.

“The constitution which Bismarck devised for the new German Reich in 1871 in many ways fell short of the ideals dreamed of by the liberals in 1848. Alone of all modern German constitutions, it lacked any declaration of principle about human rights and civic freedoms. Formally speaking, the new Reich was a loose confederation of independent states, much like its predecessor had been. Its titular head was the Emperor or Kaiser, the title taken over from the old head of the Holy Roman Reich and ultimately deriving from the Latin name ‘Caesar’. He had wide-ranging powers including the declaration of war and peace. The Reich’s institutions were stronger than those of the old, with a nationally elected parliament, the Reichstag – the name, deriving from the Holy Roman Reich, was another survival across the revolutionary divide of 1918 – and a number of central administrative institutions, most notably the Foreign Office, to which more were added as time went on. But the constitution did not accord to the national parliament the power to elect or dismiss governments and their ministers, and key aspects of political decision-making, above all on matters of war and peace, and on the administration of the army, were reserved to the monarch and his immediate entourage. Government ministers, including the head of the civilian administration, the Reich Chancellor – an office created by Bismarck and held by him for some twenty years – were civil servants, not party politicians, and they were beholden to the Kaiser, and not to the people or to their parliamentary representatives. With time, the influence of the Reichstag grew, though not by very much. With only mild exaggeration, the great revolutionary thinker Karl Marx described the Bismarckian Reich, in a convoluted phrase that captured many of its internal contradictions, as a ‘bureaucratically constructed military despotism, dressed up with parliamentary forms, mixed in with an element of feudalism yet at the same time already influenced by the bourgeoisie’."

The new Reich soon had more than military prowess. Michael Stürmer writes: “Within the lifetime of one generation Germany was able to become the foremost industrial and trading power in Europe. Bismarck’s revolution from above unleashed vast energies through the nation state, not entirely unlike events in France eighty years before. Industrial performance was second to none and was accomplished by the birth of the welfare state and democratic institutions and aspirations; of a socialist subculture and an ambitious liberal bourgeoisie unsure of itself but driven by nervous energy and creative unrest. At the turn of the century the language of the sciences was, in many parts of the world, German. A vast number of Nobel prizes went to German scholars, many of them Jews. German big business and banks were probably organised more efficiently than most competitors except for the United States. German universities became the model for many establishments of higher education from Turkey to North America. If the

136 Evans, op. cit., pp. 6-8.
French Impressionists dominated the art world in the nineteenth century, after the turn of the century German art movements became equally important. In literature it was probably the Germany of Gerhard Hauptmann, Thomas Mann or Theodor Mommsen, all of them Nobel-prize winners, that most sensitively expressed the drama and contradictions of industrial society. A letter which appeared in The Times in August, 1914 under the heading ‘Scholars’ Protest Against War’ summed up a widely held view: ‘We regard Germany as a nation leading the way in the arts and sciences, and we have all learnt and are learning from German scholars.’"\textsuperscript{137}

And yet the Second Reich, unlike the First, had come into being as a result of a victorious war, a fact that laid a fatal imprint on the state and ultimately determined the bloody fate of it and its successor, the Third Reich of Adolf Hitler. For as the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli rightly pointed out, the Franco-German war amounted to “a German revolution”, and “a greater political event than the French revolution of the last century. I don’t say a greater, or as great a social event... The balance of power has been entirely destroyed?”\textsuperscript{138} That is, the balance of forces in Europe was now quite different; in that sense a “revolution” had indeed taken place. But from the point of ideas the German revolution contributed nothing new, certainly nothing comparable to those let loose in the world by the French revolution. Germany’s development continued to be influenced by some of those ideas, but no more than any of the other great powers.\textsuperscript{139} Thus while the constitutional ideas of 1789 led to the formation of parliamentary institutions and universal suffrage, the monarchy and the Prussian aristocracy remained in control of the army and the state machine.

A second strand of the French revolution was socialism, and Germany had in Bebel a communist revolutionary in the mould of the French Babeuf. And yet “Bebel did not press that point and when two assassination attempts were made on the old Emperor in 1878 and 1879, and in both cases the culprits confessed to some sympathy for the socialist cause, it was Bebel who preached the sermon of evolution and the belief in the metaphorical ‘wheel of history’. He thus put clear ground between the German socialists and the practices of anarchism and revolutionary terror such as were displayed in Russia and elsewhere. Most German social democrats were in fact petty bourgeois and pragmatic, wearing black suits and bowler hats when demonstrating. They carried with them the legacy of many centuries of guild life: journeymen had always aspired to becoming part of good society and now they were moving closer to that promised land.”\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{137} Stürmer, The German Empire 1871-1919, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000, pp. 3-4. Stürmer omits to mention the glories of German music in this period: Brahms and Wagner, Bruckner and Bruch, Wolf and Richard Strauss...

\textsuperscript{138} Disraeli, in Stürmer, op. cit., p. 2.


\textsuperscript{140} Stürmer, op. cit., p. 27.
The reason for this comparative lack of radicalism in German socialism was that, as Thompson writes, “the establishment of the German Empire, with its Reichstag elected on a wide popular franchise, transformed the conditions of political action in Germany. It made the division of German socialism into rival parties an obvious barrier to electoral success. The party which Ferdinand Lassalle had formed in northern Germany in 1863 (the General German Workingmen’s Association) rested on Lassalle’s un-Marxist doctrine that universal suffrage and proletarian interests were not incompatible. It was designed from the first to be a political and electoral movement aimed at gaining parliamentary power. The party which Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel formed in southern Germany adopted, as early as 1869, its Eisenach programme, which was distinctly Marxist.

“In 1875 these two parties combined to form the German Social Democratic Party based on a new programme. This so-called Gotha Programme accepted Marx’s doctrines of the class struggle and his materialist interpretation of history, but it abandoned his view of the state in favour of Lassalle’s, and regarded revolutionary Marxism as rendered out-of-date by the existence of universal suffrage. The new party set out to capture the state by parliamentary methods, not to overthrow it in favour of a proletarian state. It was attacked by Marx (in his Critique of the Gotha Programme), but his attack was not published until many years later. The issue was anyhow smothered until 1890 by Bismarck’s antisocialist laws, which closed the socialist ranks and forced them back into underground activities; but meanwhile social democratic movements on the Gotha model grew up in other countries, and after 1890 the German Social Democratic party resumed its original aims more explicitly. It soon became the largest of all the parliamentary socialist parties in Europe.”

Another ideological strand of the French revolution was nationalism. In view of later events, and of the rise of nationalist tendencies that we have already traced, it may be thought that it must be here that the centre of gravity of Germany’s “revolution” must be placed. And yet insofar as German nationalism was the result of a “collective humiliation” suffered at the hands of Napoleon, the victory over the French at Sedan served to calm this passion, soothing the nation’s resentment and pouring balm on her wounded soul: it was the French who now burned with the desire for revenge...

Renan, writing in 1871, had an interesting thought about how that revenge would take place: “She [conquered France] will be more and more penetrated by materialism and the commonplace republican strivings with which, as it would seem, all contemporary states are infected, with the exception of Prussia and Russia. Does it follow from this that she will never live to see the possibility of revenge [against the Germans]? On the contrary, it is precisely in this way that she will take revenge for herself. And her revenge will consist in the fact that she will go in front of Europe on the path which leads to the destruction of all nobility and every virtue…”

141 Thompson, op. cit., pp. 396-397.
142 Renan, in Leontiev, op. cit., p. 708.
Nietzsche: (1) The Will to Power

One of the acutest critics of the new Germany was Friedrich Nietzsche, who spoke of “the bad and dangerous consequences” of the German victory in 1871, and feared “the defeat – yes, the extirpation of the German spirit in favour of the ‘German Reich’.” He broke with his former idol, Wagner, because the latter rejected his former cosmopolitanism, made peace with the new Reich, and even, in his last opera Parsifal affected a return to Christianity.

But Nietzsche was no revolutionary in the mould of Marx or Bakunin, and professed no political programme. As Golo Mann writes: “Prophesying war and glorifying power as he did, he should have been a supporter of the new Germany; this he was not at all. He loved the old Germany, the Germany of Goethe, not of Bismarck. He thought that the German nation was becoming politically conscious at the expense of its old virtues. ‘The price of coming to power is even greater; power makes people stupid… the Germans – once they were called the nation of thinkers – do they think at all today?’ The Germans are bored by intellect, politics swallow up all their interest in really intellectual matters. Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles, I fear, was the end of German philosophy… “Are there any German philosophers, are there any German poets, are there any good German books?” – I am asked abroad. I blush, but with the bravado which is mine even in desperate circumstances I reply: “Yes, Bismarck.” Elsewhere he says: ‘This is the age of the masses, they kowtow to everything “mass”. This happens also in politics. A statesman who raises them a new tower of Babel, some monstrosity of an empire and of power is ‘great’ to them. What does it matter that those of us who are more careful and reticent for the time being cling to the old belief that it is only a great idea which lends greatness to an action or a cause. Assuming a statesman were to put his nation in a position where it becomes involved in a grand political game for which it is by nature neither fitted nor prepared, so that it must sacrifice its old and more tested qualities for a new and questionable mediocrity; assuming that a statesman condemned his nation to become politically minded generally, though this nation has so far had better things to do and in its heart of hearts cannot rid itself of a cautious distaste for the restlessness, emptiness and noisy petulance of politically minded peoples; assuming that such a statesman whips up the dormant passions and lusts of his people, blames it for its former timidity and wish not to get involved, accuses it of hankering after foreign things and of a secret desire for the infinite, that he makes light of its dearest fancies, warps its conscience and makes it narrow-minded and nationalistic in its tastes – how can a statesman who did all these things, and whom his nation would have to do penance for all eternity, if it has a future at all, how can such a statesman be called great?’”

144 What Nietzsche prized above all in German culture was “an elevation and divinatory subtlety of the historical sense” (Beyond Good and Evil, in Basic Writings, p. 312). (V.M.)
145 Mann, op. cit., pp. 239-240.
So Nietzsche would presumably have rejected Hitler as he rejected Bismarck and Kaiser William II. And he rejected antisemitism: “How much mendacity and squalor are needed to raise race questions in today’s hotch-potch Europe.” “Maxim: no social intercourse with anybody involved in the lie of racialism.”\footnote{Mann, op. cit, p. 240.}

And yet it is not difficult to see why the founders of Nazism seized upon Nietzsche’s philosophy as confirming their own...

Nietzsche’s political philosophy owed much to Hegel’s critique of Anglo-Saxon liberal democracy. In his early years, Hegel had regarded democracy as the best political system, but for reasons that were subtly and importantly different from those of the Anglo-Saxon theorists. These differences, according to the Harvard political scientist Francis Fukuyama, can be seen more clearly in the context of the psychological bases of the two models.

The Anglo-Saxon model is based on Plato’s distinction between three basic elements of human nature: reason, desire and thymos (anger or “spirit”). Reason is the handmaid of desire and thymos; it is that element which distinguishes us from the animals and enables the irrational forces of desire and thymos to be satisfied in the real world. Desire includes the basic needs for food, sleep, shelter and sex. Thymos is usually translated as "anger" or "courage"; but Fukuyama defines it as that desire which "desires the desire of other men, that is, to be wanted by others or to be recognized".\footnote{Fukuyama, \textit{The End of History and the Last Man}, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 146.}

Most liberal theorists in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, such as Hobbes and Locke, focused on desire as the fundamental force in human nature because on its satisfaction depends the survival of the human race itself. They saw thymos, or the need for recognition, as an ambiguous force which should rather be suppressed than expressed; for it is thymos that leads to tyrannies, wars and all those conflicts which endanger "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". The American Constitution with its system of checks and balances was designed above all to prevent the emergence of tyranny, which is the clearest expression of what we may call "megalothymia".

Now the early Hegel valued democracy, not simply because it attained the satisfaction of desire better than any other system, but also, \textit{and primarily}, because it gave expression to thymos in the form of isothymia - that is, it allowed each citizen to express his thymos to an equal degree. For whereas in pre-democratic societies the satisfaction of thymos in one person led to the frustration of thymos for many more, thereby dividing the whole of society into one or a few masters and a great many slaves, as a result of the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century the slaves overthrew their masters and achieved equal recognition in each other's eyes. Thus \textit{through the winning of universal human rights everyone, in effect, became a master}.\footnote{Fukuyama, \textit{The End of History and the Last Man}, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 146.}
Hegel's philosophy was an explicit challenge to the Christian view of freedom and slavery, which regarded the latter as a secondary evil that could be turned into a great good if used for spiritual ends. "For he that is called in the Lord," said St. Paul, "being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant" (I Corinthians 7.22). So "live as free men," said St. Peter, "yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (I Peter 2.16). But since this doctrine offended Hegel's pride, his thymos, he rejected it as unworthy of the dignity of man. And he rejected Anglo-Saxon liberalism for similar reasons, insofar as he saw liberalism's placing self-preservation as the main aim of life and society as effete and degrading. In fact, towards the end of his life he transferred his political allegiance from democracy to Prussian autocracy...

Nietzsche took Hegel's concept of thymos and gave it a much broader meaning, encompassing all the desiring faculty of man. Combining it with the desiring faculty, he called it the will to power, recalling Schopenhauer's very similar concept: "A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength - life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results."148 This will to power encompassed "pride, joy, health, sexual love, enmity and war."

By subordinating everything to the full expression of this will to power Nietzsche completed a revolution in German philosophy. For Kant had emphasised the “disinterestedness” of the moral and aesthetic ideal, its basis in knowledge and independence from desire. Schopenhauer in The World as Will and Idea had then restored desire (will) to its rightful place in philosophy, and in fact gave precedence to it over knowledge. But his moral ideal was still the ascetic one of abstention from desire and its illusory pleasures. Nietzsche, who admired Schopenhauer but could not accept his attempt to renounce will through asceticism, completed the revolution in German idealism by rejecting asceticism and the whole system of values involved in it.149

He did this by distinguishing between the morality of the master and the morality of the slave. The morality of the master is the morality of the superman, whose superiority consists in the greater uninhibitedness of his will to power, which impresses itself upon others and forces them to acknowledge it, making them thereby his slaves. He is the aristocrat par excellence, who embraces life in its fullness, and fears neither suffering nor death. Historically

148 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part I, 13; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 211.
149 Nietzsche admired both Hegel and Schopenhauer, and despised the English philosophers for their absence of a historical sense. As he wrote in Beyond Good and Evil: "They are no philosophical race, these Englishmen: Bacon signifies an attack on the philosophical spirit; Hobbes, Hume, and Locke a debasement and lowering of the value of the concept of 'philosophy' for more than a century. It was against Hume that Kant arose, and rose; it was Locke of whom Schelling said, understandably, 'je méprise Locke'; in their fight against the English-mechanistic doltification of the world, Hegel and Schopenhauer were of one mind (with Goethe) - these two hostile brother geniuses in philosophy who strove apart toward opposite poles of the German spirit and in the process wronged each other as only brothers can wrong each other." (Part VIII, 252; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 379).
speaking, he belongs to the master races that have conquered others – the Romans, the Vikings, the Aryans. “One cannot fail to see at the bottom of all these noble races the beast of prey, the splendid blond beast prowling about avidly in search of spoil and victory…”\textsuperscript{150}

The morality of the slave is a kind of defence mechanism against the morality of the master. Based on ressentiment, that is, vengefulness against his master, the morality of the slave justifies his subservience and allows him to live with it by repressing his will to power or by sublimating it into other channels – Christian good works, for example, or a philosophy of human rights that protects the slave against his master and his fellow-slave. Thus “in every ascetic morality man adores part of himself as God [the inversion or sublimation of the will to power] and to that end needs to diabolicize the rest [the will to power itself].”\textsuperscript{151}

And so “‘love of the neighbor’ is always something secondary, partly conventional and arbitrary-illusory in relation to fear of the neighbor. After the structure of society is fixed on the whole and seems secure against external dangers, it is this fear of the neighbor that again creates new perspectives of moral valuation. Certain strong and dangerous drives, like an enterprising spirit, foolhardiness, vengefulness, craftiness, rapacity, and the lust to rule, which had so far not merely been honoured insofar as they were socially useful – under different names, to be sure, from those chosen here – but had to be trained and cultivated to make them great (because one constantly needed them in view of the dangers to the whole community, against the enemies of the community), are now experienced as doubly dangerous, since the channels to divert them are lacking, and, step by step, they are branded as immoral and abandoned to slander.

“And now the opposite drives and inclinations receive moral honors; step by step, the herd instinct draws its conclusions. How much or how little is dangerous to the community, dangerous to equality, in an opinion, in a state or affect, in a will, in a talent – that now constitutes the moral perspective: here, too, fear is again the mother of morals.”\textsuperscript{152}

Historically, the leader in this revanche of the slave against his master was the priest, who “alters the direction of ressentiment”. The first priestly people was the Jews.\textsuperscript{153} The Christians followed the Jews and refined the morality of the slave still further, adding to it a whole metaphysics of salvation.

“All that has been done on earth against ‘the noble’, ‘the powerful’, ‘the masters’, ‘the rulers’, fades into nothing compared with what the Jews have done against them; the Jews, that priestly people, who in opposing their enemies and conquerors were ultimately satisfied with nothing less than a radical revaluation of their enemies’ values, that is to say, an act of the most

\textsuperscript{150} Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, First Essay, 11; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, pp. 476-477.
\textsuperscript{151} Nietzsche, Human, All-too Human, 141; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{152} Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part V, 201; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 303.
\textsuperscript{153} Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Third Essay, 15; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 563.
spiritual revenge. For this alone was appropriate to a priestly people, the people embodying the most deeply repressed priestly vengefulness. It was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation (good=noble=powerful=beautiful=happy=God-beloved) and to hang on to this inversion with their teeth, the teeth of the most abysmal hatred (the hatred of impotence), saying ‘the wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious, alone are blessed by God, blessedness is for them alone – and you, the powerful and noble, are on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity; and you shall be in all eternity the unblessed, accursed and damned’… One knows who inherited this Jewish revaluation… In connection with the tremendous and most fundamental of all declarations of war, I recall the proposition I arrived at on a previous occasion (Beyond Good and Evil, section 195) – that with the Jews there begins the slave revolt in morality: that revolt which has a history of two thousand years behind it and which we no longer see because it – has been victorious…

“[As for] this Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate gospel of love, this ‘Redeemer’ who brought blessedness and victory to the poor, the sick, and the sinners – was he not this seduction in its most uncanny and irresistible form, a seduction and bypath to precisely those Jewish values and new ideals? Did Israel not attain the ultimate goal of its sublime vengefulness precisely through the bypath of this ‘Redeemer’, this ostensible opponent and dis integrator of Israel? Was it not part of the secret black art of truly grand politics of revenge, of a farseeing, subterranean, slowly advancing, and premeditated revenge, that Israel must itself deny the real instrument of its revenge before all the world as a mortal enemy and nail it to the cross, so that ‘all the world’, namely all the opponents of Israel, could unhesitatingly swallow just this bait? And could spiritual subtlety imagine any more dangerous bait than this? Anything to equal the enticing, intoxicating, overwhelming, and undermining power of that symbol of the ‘holy cross’, that ghastly paradox of a ‘God on the cross’, that mystery of an unimaginable ultimate cruelty and self-crucifixion of God for the salvation of man?

“What is certain, at least is that sub hoc signo [under the sign of the Cross] Israel, with its vengefulness and revaluation of all values, has hitherto triumphed again and again over all other ideals, over all nobler ideals…”

For this reason, Nietzsche was scornful of the Christian position of his contemporary Dostoyevsky, with whom he is often compared – although he is much closer to one of Dostoyevsky’s more manic characters than the writer himself. He “held Dostoyevsky in contempt for his ‘morbid moral tortures’, his rejection of ‘proper pride’. He accused him of ‘sinning to enjoy the luxury of confession’, which Nietzsche considered a ‘degrading prostration’. Dostoyevsky was, in Nietzsche’s words, one of the victims of the ‘conscience-vivisection and self-crucifixion of two thousand years’ of Christianity.”

The most common form of slave-morality in modern times has been democracy-socialism with its anti-aristocratic, herd-animal ethos: “The democratic movement is the heir of the Christian movement.”  

“I add immediately,” writes Nietzsche, “that in all the higher and more mixed [i.e. racially mixed] cultures there also appear attempts at mediation between these two moralities, and yet more often the interpretation and mutual misunderstanding of both, and at times they occur directly alongside each other – even in the same human being, within a single soul. The moral discrimination of values has originated either among a ruling group whose consciousness of its difference from the ruled group was accompanied by delight – or among the ruled, the slave and dependents of every degree.

“In the first case, when the ruling group determines what is ‘good’, the exalted, proud states of the soul are experienced as conferring distinction and determining the order of rank. The noble human being separates from himself those in whom the opposite of such exalted, proud states finds expression: he despises them. It should be noted immediately that in this first type of morality the opposition of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ means approximately the same as ‘noble’ and ‘contemptible’. (The opposition of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ has a different origin.) One feels contempt for the cowardly, the anxious, the petty, those intent on narrow utility; also for the suspicious with their unfree glances, those who humble themselves, the doglike people who allow themselves to be maltreated, the begging flatterers, above all the liars: it is part of the fundamental faith of all aristocrats that the common people lie. ‘We truthful ones’ – thus the nobility of ancient Greece referred to itself.

“It is obvious that moral designations were everywhere first applied to human beings and only later, derivatively, to actions. Therefore it is a gross mistake when historians of morality start from such questions as: why was the compassionate act praised? The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, ‘what is harmful to me is harmful in itself’; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating. Everything it knows as part of itself it honors: such a morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give and bestow: the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power. The noble human being honors himself as one who is powerful, also as one who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and be silent, who delights in being severe and hard with himself and respects all severity and hardness. ‘A hard heart Wotan put in my breast,’ says an old Scandinavian saga: a fitting poetic expression, seeing that it comes from the soul of a proud Viking. Such a type of man is actually proud of the fact that he is not made for pity, and the hero of the saga therefore adds as a warning: ‘If the heart is not hard in youth it will never harden.’ Noble and courageous human beings who think that way are

156 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part V, 202; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 306.
furthest removed from that morality which finds the distinction of morality precisely in pity, or in acting for others, or in désintéressement; faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a fundamental hostility and irony against ‘selflessness’ belong just as definitely to noble morality as does a slight disdain and caution regarding compassionate feelings and a ‘warm heart.’  

However, “the slave’s eye is not favourable to the virtues of the powerful: he is sceptical and suspicious, subtly suspicious, of all the ‘good’ that is honoured there – he would like to persuade himself that even their happiness is not genuine. Conversely, those qualities are brought out and flooded with light which serve to ease existence for those who suffer: here pity, the complaisant and obliging hand, the warm heart, patience, industry, humility, and friendliness are honoured – for here these are the most useful qualities and almost the only means for enduring the pressure of existence. Slave morality is essentially a morality of utility…

“One last fundamental difference: the longing for freedom, the instinct for happiness and the subtleties of the feeling of freedom belong as necessarily to slave morality and morals as artful and enthusiastic reverence and devotion are the regular symptom of an aristocratic way of thinking and evaluating.”

However, this pagan aristocratic type which is clearly Nietzsche’s ideal has been gradually worn down into the plebeian democratic and socialist type, partly (since strength or weakness of the will to power is transmitted genetically as well as culturally) by intermarriage between the master and slave races - “the slowly arising democratic order of things (and its cause, the intermarriage of masters and slaves)” - and partly by the overcoming of the masters by the slaves.

This mixing of masters and slaves, those of strong will with those of weak will, has resulted in a sickness of the will which “is spread unevenly over Europe: it appears strongest and most manifold where culture has been at home longest [France]; it disappears to the extent to which the ‘barbarian’ still – or again – claims is rights under the loose garments of Western culture.”

Intriguingly, Nietzsche found the greatest strength of will in Russia, whose triumph would stimulate Europe’s regeneration and political unification…

---

157 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part IX, 60, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, pp. 394-395, 397.
158 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part IX, 261; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, pp. 397-398.
159 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part IX, 261; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 399.
160 “The suppressed race has gradually recovered the upper hand again, in coloring, in shortness of skull, perhaps even in the intellectual and social instincts: who can say whether modern democracy, even more modern anarchism and especially that inclination for ‘commune’, for the most primitive form of society, which is now shared by all the socialists of Europe, does not signify in the main a tremendous counterattack – and that the conqueror and master race, the Aryan, is not succumbing physiologically, too?” (The Genealogy of Morals, First Essay, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, pp. 466-467).
161 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part VI, 208; Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 320.
162 “The strength of will, and to will something for a long time, is a little greater in Germany, and more so in the German north than in the center of Germany; but much stronger yet in England, Spain, and Corsica, here in association with indolence, there with hard heads – not
Nietzsche: (2) The Attitude to Truth

Three further aspects of Nietzsche’s thought should be pointed out here. The first is his elevation of the psychological method of argumentation to the front rank in philosophy.

Now Nietzsche’s psychological approach to philosophy had both successes and failures. But if we are inclined to dismiss it because of the grossness of its failures (especially in relation to Christianity), we must nevertheless admit that he anticipated many of the psychoanalytical ideas, such as repression, sublimation and the unconscious, that became part of the furniture of the mind of twentieth-century man. And insofar as the Nietzschean method of psychological reductionism became the stock-in-trade of the twentieth century’s attempts to reduce God and religion to unconscious impulses and fantasies, we may accept that he was right in calling psychology the coming “queen of the sciences”,163, taking the place of the former queen, theology, in the same way that the Antichrist takes the place of Christ...

A second important aspect of his thought is his extreme individualism and disgust with mass culture. The morality of the master was the value-system of the proud individual, and that of the slave – of the masses. In essence, therefore, “Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality”.164

“From the sociological point of view,” writes Davies, “Nietzsche’s views may be seen as an intellectual’s revulsion against the rise of mass literacy, and of mass culture in general. They were espoused by an international coterie of

---

163 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part I, 237, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 222.
164 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part V, 202, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 305. Cf. Part VI, 212, pp. 328-329: “Today..., when only the herd animal receives and dispenses honors in Europe, when ‘equality of rights’ could all too easily be changed into equality in violating rights [a prophetic word!] – I mean into a common war on all that is rare, strange, privileged, the higher man, the higher soul, the higher duty, the higher responsibility, and the abundance of creative power and masterfulness – today the concept of greatness entails being noble, wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and having to live independently.”
artists and writers, which wished to strengthen the barriers between so-called ‘high culture’ and ‘low culture’, and hence to preserve the role of the self-appointed aristocracy of ideas. In this, they formed a suitable partner for modernism in the arts, one of whose chief attractions lay in the fact that it was unintelligible to the person in the street. ‘Mass culture generated Nietzsche in opposition to itself,’ writes a recent critic, ‘as its antagonist. The immense popularity of his ideas among early twentieth-century intellectuals suggests the panic that the threat of the masses aroused.’

“In retrospect, it is the virulence with which Nietzsche and his admirers poured contempt on ‘the masses’ that appears most shocking. ‘Many, too many, are born,’ spake Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, ‘and they hand on their branches much too long.’ In The Will to Power, Nietzsche called for ‘a declaration of war by higher men on the masses... The great majority of men have no right to existence.’

Nietzsche’s extreme individualism is linked to the Nazis’ herd-morality by the fact that the universality of the herd-morality generates an overwhelming need for the heroic individual, the Führer-master, who stands out against the crowd and dominates it. “The appearance of one who commands unconditionally strikes these herd-animal Europeans as an immense comfort and salvation from a gradually intolerable pressure, as was last attested in a major way by the effect of Napoleon’s appearance...”

And if this attitude to the majority is considered cruel, so be it: “Almost everything we call ‘higher culture’ is based on the spiritualization of cruelty, on its becoming more profound: this is my proposition. That ‘savage animal’ has not really been ‘mortified’; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become – divine.

“What constitutes the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty; what seems agreeable in so-called tragic pity, and at bottom in everything sublime, up to the highest and most delicate shudders of metaphysics, receives its sweetness solely from the admixture of cruelty. What the Roman in the arena, the Christian in the ecstasies of the cross, the Spaniard at an auto-da-fe or bullfight, the Japanese of today when he flocks to tragedies, the laborer in a Parisian suburb who feels a nostalgia for bloody revolutions, the Wagnerienne who ‘submits to’ Tristan and Isolde, her will suspended – what all of them enjoy and seek to drink with mysterious ardour are the spicy potions of the great Circe, ‘cruelty’.”

165 In a private letter written in 1908, D.H. Lawrence, who had just discovered Nietzsche in Croydon Public Library, actually imagined a gas chamber for the painless disposal of superfluous people: ‘If I had my way, I would build a lethal chamber as big as the Crystal Palace with a military band playing softly, and a cinematograph working brightly; then I’d go out in the back streets and main streets and bring them in, all the sick, the halt, the maimed; I would lead them gently, and they would smile a weary thanks; and the band would softly bubble out the Hallelujah Chorus.” (Davies, op. cit, pp. 859-860).
166 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part V, 199, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 301.
167 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part VII, 229, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, pp. 348-349.
But the most radical aspect of Nietzsche’s thought is his pragmatic and relativistic attitude to truth. This was a consequence of the proud individualism we have discussed. For if the master creates his own morality, he must necessarily create his own truth, which is not necessarily truth for anybody else. And certainly not for the slaves, who derive their morality from the herd or their priestly hierarchy. That is why the philosophers of the future, according to Nietzsche, “will certainly not be dogmatists. It must offend their pride, also their taste, if their truth is supposed to be a truth for everyman – which has so far been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations. ‘My judgement is my judgement’: no one else is easily entitled to it – that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself.

“One must shed the bad taste of wanting to agree with many. ‘Good’ is no longer good when one’s neighbour mouths it. And how should there be a ‘common good’! The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value. In the end it must be as it is and always has been: great things remain for the great, abysses for the profound, nuances and shudders for the refined, and, in brief, all that is rare for rare.”

There are no certainties, only probabilities. “In place of fundamental truths I put fundamental possibilities – provisionally assumed guides by which one lives and thinks.” “The falseness of an opinion is not for us any objection to it... The question is, how far an opinion is life-furthering, life-preserving.”

“There is, according to Nietzsche, no absolute truth. The concept of absolute truth is an invention of philosophers who are dissatisfied with the world of Becoming and seek an abiding world of Being. ‘Truth is that sort of error without which a particular type of living being could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive.’” It follows that knowledge can never be completely objective, being the servant of irrationality.

This special Nietzschean attitude to truth has become dominant in recent politics. Thus Peter Osborne writes: “In the summer of 2002 the New York Times writer, Ron Suskind, met a senior adviser at the Bush White House. He was surprised to find that the aide dismissed his remarks: ‘The aide said that guys like me were “in what we call the reality-based community”, which he defined as people who “believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality”. I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. “That’s not the way the world really works any more,” he continued. “We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality – judiciously as you will – we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out.’

---

168 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part II, 43, Basic Writings of Nietzsche, p. 243.
170 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 4; in Rose, op. cit, p. 50.
“Hostility to a ‘reality-based’ analysis of events can be traced back to postmodernism, which has become a fashionable orthodoxy among teachers of philosophy, and indeed other academic disciplines. Postmodernism is one modern manifestation of extreme philosophical scepticism, a tradition which can be traced back to the beginnings of thought and the ancient Greek school of Pyrrho. This school despaired of the notion that truth was accessible and deduced that no ultimately stable distinction could be drawn between truth and falsehood.

“Postmodernism denies that the truth can ever be known. It holds that words like falsehood, accuracy and deception, at any rate as used in ordinary speech, have no validity. That is because it concerns itself with the competing claims of rival truths. The idea of verifiable reality, so important to the Anglo-American school of empirical philosophy, is dismissed as an absurdity.

“Postmodern thinking grew up in the astonishingly influential school of French philosophy which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s and is perhaps associated in particular with the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault and the philosopher Jacques Derrida. Truth was, for Foucault, no more than an effect of the rules of discourse, itself a highly problematic concept, and for Foucault all discourses were equally valid. Perception and truth were there to be created. Though he was famous for historical studies of sex, madness and prisons, Foucault declared, ‘I am well aware that I have not written anything but fictions.’ Foucault sometimes argued that truth was the effect of power relations, the expression of dominance, whether political, economic or sexual.

“The influential American philosopher Richard Rorty helped take the work of Foucault and Derrida across the Atlantic. Rorty shared the view of the French school that truth claims could never be incontestably grounded, and argued that an alternative way of giving weight to words was to ‘construct’ what he called a ‘narrative’. This has the effect of shifting the emphasis of argument from truths which can be verified to ‘narratives’ that can be manufactured…”

**Nietzsche: (3) The Antichrist**

It follows from this attitude to truth that Nietzsche was an atheist and a nihilist. “The greatest event of recent times – that ‘God is dead’, that belief in the Christian God has become unworthy of belief – already begins to cast its first shadows over Europe… At last the horizon lies free before us, even granted that it is not bright; at least the sea, our sea, lies open before us. Perhaps there has never been so open a sea.”

He admitted that he was a nihilist when he asserted with gusto “that there no truth; that there is no absolute state of affairs – no ‘thing-in-itself’. This alone is Nihilism and of the most extreme kind.”

---

Fr. Seraphim Rose has described nihilism as the fundamental philosophy, not only of Nietzsche, but of the modern world as a whole. The history of nihilism, according to Rose, has three main historical stages: liberalism, realism and vitalism, which are completed by a final stage: the nihilism of destruction. Liberalism is an attitude rather than a belief, an attitude of indifference to questions of absolute truth, or a desire to believe that the answers to such questions, if they exist, are less important than living a pleasant, “civilised” life in this world. Realism is the belief that absolute truth does not exist, and that truth is to be found in science alone without any deeper metaphysical basis. Vitalism is the belief that it is not truth, whether scientific or metaphysical, that matters, but vitality, life, creativity, dynamism. The Nihilism of Destruction is not simply atheist, but antitheist; it is not content with denying absolute truth, or finding a substitute for it in a vaguely restless dynamism, but seeks to destroy that truth and everything associated with it.

“Vitalism,” writes Rose, “in the forms of Symbolism, occultism, artistic Expressionism, and various evolutionary and ‘mystical’ philosophies [including some forms of nationalism], is the most significant intellectual undercurrent throughout the half century after about 1875; and the Nihilism of Destruction, though its intellectual roots lie deep in the preceding century, brings to a grand conclusion, in the public order as well as in many private spheres, the whole century and a quarter of Nihilist development with the concentrated era of destruction of 1914-45.”

Rose continues: “Father John of Kronstadt, that holy man of God, has likened the soul of man to an eye, diseased through sin and thus incapable of seeing the spiritual sun. The same likeness can serve to trace the progress of the disease of Nihilism, which is no more than an elaborate mask of sin. The spiritual eye in fallen human nature is not sound, as every Orthodox Christian knows; we see in this life only dimly and require faith and the Grace of God to effect a healing that will enable us, in the future life, to see clearly once more. The first stage of Nihilism, which is Liberalism, is born of the errors of taking out diseased eye for a sound one, of mistaking its impaired vision for a view of the true world, and thus of discharging the physician of the soul, the Church, whose ministrations are not needed by a ‘healthy’ man. In the second stage, Realism, the disease, no longer attended by the necessary physician, begins to grow; vision is narrowed; distant objects, already obscure enough in the ‘natural’ state of impaired vision, become invisible; only the nearest objects are seen distinctly, and the patient becomes convinced no others exist. In the third stage, Vitalism, infection leads to inflammation; even the nearest objects become dim and distorted and there are hallucinations. In the fourth stage, the Nihilism of Destruction, blindness ensues and the disease spreads to the rest of the body, effecting agony, convulsions, and death…”

Nietzsche despises Liberalism, and has already gone beyond Realism. He is in essence a particularly clear prophet of Vitalism, the “positive” content of

175 Rose, *Nihilism*, op. cit., p. 22.
nihilism. But we also see in him the totally negative, destructive nihilism that found practical contemporary expression in the anarchist revolutionary activity of Bakunin and the Paris Communards.

Nietzsche argues that if God exists, and his commandments are accepted, then it is necessary to reject the world – or at any rate attach only a conditional value to it. “‘The concept of God’, he says in The Twilight of the Idols, ‘was up to now the greatest objection against existence.’ And in The Antichrist we read that ‘with God war is declared on life, Nature and the will to live! God is the formula for every calumny against this world and for every lie concerning a beyond!’”

But Nietzsche wants to embrace the world – in itself, for itself, and with absolutely no reference to any exterior cause, purpose or criterion of its existence, in its “ugliness” as well as its “beauty”, its “evil” as well as its “good”. That is why, in answer to the question: “What does Nihilism mean?” he replies: “That the highest values are losing their value. There is no goal. There is no answer to the question: ‘why?’” For the question “why?” has no answer within the bounds of this world. It points to Him Who exists independently of the world and gives it meaning, whereas in fact there is no thing, nihil beyond this world.

Fortunately, in Nietzsche’s view, for the majority of his contemporaries “God is dead” – that is, they have lost their faith in God. “We have killed him (God), you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it move now? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we now stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker?”

Since men have lost faith in God, they have become, to use Fr. Seraphim Rose’s term, passive nihilists. This is “the Nihilism of the Liberal, the humanist, the agnostic who, agreeing that ‘there is no truth’, no longer ask the ultimate questions.” But passive nihilism, though useful in Nietzsche’s eyes, also disgusts him because of its lack of vitality. He is looking for a “stronger age” than “this decaying, self-doubting present” – an age of active Nihilism. And this active Nihilism is expressed first of all in destruction: “He who wishes to be creative must first destroy and smash accepted values.”

177 Copleston, op. cit., p. 178.
178 Nietzsche, The Will to Power; in Rose, op. cit., pp. 31, 68.
180 Rose, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
181 Nietzsche, in Rose, op. cit., p. 55.
182 Nietzsche, The Will to Power; in Rose, op. cit., p. 31.
But human nature abhors a vacuum; while creating darkness, it longs for the light. And that neither passive nor active Nihilism is the final goal for Nietzsche. Nihilism only clears the ground, as it were, for “anti-nihilism”, a “transvaluation of values”, “a counter-movement” that in some remote future will supersede this perfect Nihilism; but which nevertheless regards it as a necessary step, both logically and psychologically, towards its own advent, and which positively cannot come, except on top of and out of it.”  

For, as Rose writes, “the corollary of the Nihilist annihilation of the Old Order is the conception of a ‘new age’ – ‘new’ in an absolute, and not in a relative, sense. The age about to begin is not to be merely the latest, or even the greatest, of a series of ages, but the inauguration of a whole new time; it is set up against all that has hitherto been. ‘It may be,’ said Nietzsche in a letter of 1884, ‘that I am the first’ to light upon an idea which will divide the history of mankind into two: as the consequence of this idea, ‘all who are born after us belong to a higher history than any history hitherto’.”

The master of this new age will be a man who nurtures in himself to the greatest possible extent the proud, sensual, egoistic, cruel, supremely passionate will to power. This is the true man, the superman. “Dead are all the gods,” says Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “now do we desire the superman to live.” The superman must live because he is the fittest to live in an almost Darwinian sense (although, as we have seen, Nietzsche did not believe in Darwinism). Contrary, therefore, to Tertullian’s belief that the human soul is by nature Christian, according to Nietzsche it can only be antichristian. For “I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct for revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, petty – I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind...”

The appearance of the Antichrist requires, as Nietzsche writes, “a different kind of spirit from that likely to appear in this present age: spirits strengthened by war and victory, for whom conquest, adventure, danger, and even pain have become needs; it would require habituation to the keen air of the heights, to winter journeys, to ice and mountains in every sense; it would require even a kind of sublime wickedness, an ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge that goes with great health; it would require, in brief and alas, precisely this great health!

“Is this possible even today? – But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, the redeeming man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond, whose isolation is

183 Nietzsche, The Will to Power; in Rose, op.cit., p. 91.
184 Rose, op.cit., p. 92.
185 Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra; in Rose, op.cit., p. 92.
misunderstood by the people as if it were flight from reality – while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration into reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the redemption of this reality: its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it. This man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and anti-nihilist; this victor over God and nothingness – he must come one day…”  

Thus Nietzsche was in a real sense a prophet of the Antichrist – not only of the final Antichrist of Christian prophecy, but also of those forerunners of the Antichrist that were to bedevil the twentieth century. And his own descent into madness witnessed to the terrible folly of his ideal...

The Faiths of the Nationalists

Nietzsche largely ignored the growth of nationalism in Germany and Europe, where it was the most striking and universal feature of nineteenth-century social and political life.

His underestimation of nationalism was shared by many intellectuals of his time. Berlin writes that “most social and political observers of that time, whether or not they were themselves nationalists, tended in general to anticipate the decline of this sentiment. Nationalism was, by and large, regarded in Europe as a passing phase. The desire on the part of most men to be citizens of a State coterminous with the nation which they regarded as their own was considered to be natural or, at any rate, brought about by a historico-political development of which the growth of national consciousness was at once the cause and the effect, at any rate in the West. Nationalism as a sentiment and an ideology was not (in my opinion, rightly) equated with national consciousness.

“The need to belong to an easily identifiable group had been regarded, at any rate since Aristotle, as a natural requirement on the part of human beings: families, clans, tribes, estates, social orders, classes, religious organisations, political parties, and finally nations and States, were historical forms of the fulfilment of this basic human need. No one particular form was, perhaps, as necessary to human existence as the need for food and shelter or security or procreation, but some form of it was indispensable, and various theories were offered to account for the historical progression of these forms, from Plato and Polybius to Machiavelli, Bossuet, Vico, Turgot, Herder, Saint-Simon, Hegel, Comte, Marx and their modern successors. Common ancestry, common language, customs, traditions, memories, continuous occupancy of the same territory for a long period of time were held to constitute a society. This kind of homogeneity emphasised the differences between one group and its neighbours, the existence of tribal, cultural or national solidarity and, with it,
a sense of difference from, often accompanied by active dislike or contempt for, groups with different customs and different real or mythical origins; and so was accepted as both accounting for and justifying national statehood. The British, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Scandinavian peoples had achieved this well before the nineteenth century; the German, Italian, Polish, Balkan and Baltic peoples had not. The Swiss had achieved a unique solution of their own. The coincidence of the territory of the State and nation was regarded as, on the whole, desirable, save by the supporters of the dynastic, multinational empires of Russia, Austria, Turkey, or by imperialists, socialist internationalists, anarchists, and perhaps some ultramontane Catholics. The majority of political thinkers, whether they approved of it or not, accepted this as an inevitable phase of social organisations. Some hoped or feared that it would be succeeded by other forms of political structure; some seemed to regard it as ‘natural’ and permanent. Nationalism – the elevation of the interests of the unity and self-determination of the nation to the status of the supreme value before which all other considerations must, if need be, yield at all times, an ideology to which German and Italian thinkers seemed particularly prone – was looked on by observers of a more liberal type as a passing phase due to the exacerbation of national consciousness held down and forcibly repressed by despotic rulers aided by subservient Churches.

“By the middle of the nineteenth century the aspirations for political unity and self-rule of the Germans and Italians seemed well on the way to realisation. Soon this dominant trend would liberate the oppressed peoples of the multinational empires too. After this, so it was believed, nationalism, which was a pathological inflammation of wounded national consciousness, would abate: it was caused by oppression and would vanish with it. This seemed to be taking longer than the optimists anticipated, but by 1919 the basic principle of the right to national self-government seemed universally accepted. The Treaty of Versailles, recognising the right to national independence, whatever else it might fail to achieve, would at any rate solve the so-called national question. There was, of course, the question of the rights of various national minorities in the new national States, but these could be guaranteed by the new League of Nations – surely if there was anything these States could be expected to understand, if only from their own historical experience, it was the need to satisfy the craving for autonomy on the part of ethnic or cultural groups within their borders. Other problems might still rack mankind – colonial exploitation, social and political inequality, ignorance, poverty, injustice, hunger, disease, corruption, privilege; but most enlightened liberals, and, indeed, socialists, assumed that nationalism would decline, since the deepest wounds inflicted upon nations were on the way to being healed…”

But they did not; and nationalism failed to “wither away”, as expected. Why? Berlin writes: “It may be true that nationalism, as distinct from mere national consciousness – the sense of belonging to a nation – is in the first place a response to a patronising or disparaging attitude towards the traditional values of a society, the result of wounded pride and a sense of

---

humiliation in its most socially conscious members, which in due course produce anger and self-assertion. This appears to be supported by the career of the paradigm of modern nationalism in the German reaction – from the conscious defence of German culture in the relatively mild literary patriotism of Thomasius and Lessing, and their seventeenth-century forerunners, to Herder’s assertion of cultural autonomy, until it leads to an outburst of aggressive chauvinism in Andt, Jahn, Körner, Görres, during and after the Napoleonic invasion. But the story is plainly not so simple. Continuity of language, customs, occupation of a territory have existed since time immemorial. External aggression, not merely against tribes or peoples but against large societies unified by religion, or obedience to a single constituted authority, has, after all, occurred often enough in all parts of the globe. Yet neither in Europe, nor in Asia, neither in ancient times nor medieval, has this led to a specifically nationalist reaction: such has not been the response to defeat inflicted on Persians by Greeks, or on Greeks by Romans, or on Buddhism by Muslims, or on Graeco-Roman civilisation when it was overrun by Huns or Ottoman Turks, quite apart from all the innumerable smaller wars and destruction of native institutions by conquerors in either continent.

“It seems clear, even to me who am not a historian or a sociologist, that while the infliction of a wound on the collective feeling of a society, or at least of its spiritual leaders, may be a necessary condition for the birth of nationalism, it is not a sufficient one; the society must, at least potentially, contain within itself a group or class of persons who are in search of a focus for loyalty or self-identification, or perhaps a base for power, no longer supplied by earlier forces for cohesion – tribal, or religious, or feudal, or dynastic, or military – such as was provided by the centralising policies of the monarchies of France or Spain, and was not provided by the rulers of German lands. In some cases these conditions are created by the emergence of new social classes seeking control of a society against older rulers, secular or clerical. If to this is added the wound of conquest, or even cultural disparagement from without, of a society which has at any rate the beginnings of a national culture, the soil for the rise of nationalism may be prepared.

“Yet one more condition for it seems necessary: for nationalism to develop in it, a society must, in the minds of at least some of its most sensitive members, carry an image of itself as a nation, at least in embryo, in virtue of some general unifying factor or factors – language, ethnic origin, a common history (real or imaginary) – ideas and sentiments which are relatively articulate in the minds of the better educated and more socially and historically minded, and a good deal less articulate in, even absent from, the consciousness of the bulk of the population. This national image, which seems to make those in whom it is found capable of resentment if it is ignored or insulted, also unites some among them into a conscious ideological group or movement, particularly if they are faced by some common enemy, whether within the State or outside it – a Church or a government or foreign detractors. These are the men who speak or write to the people, and seek to make them conscious of their wrongs as a people – poets and novelists,
historians and critics, theologians, philosophers and the like. Thus resistance
to French hegemony in all spheres of life began in the apparently remote
region of aesthetics and criticism... In the German lands it became a social
and political force, a breeding-ground of nationalism. Among the Germans it
took the form of a deliberate effort by writers to liberate themselves – and
others – from what they felt to be asphyxiating conditions – at first from the
despotic dogmas of the French aesthetic legislators, which cramped the free
development of the spirit.

“But besides the arrogant French, there were domestic tyrants, social and
not merely aesthetic. The great outburst of individual indignation against the
rules and regulations of an oppressive and philistine society, which goes by
the name of ‘Storm and Stress’, had as its direct objective the knocking down
of all the walls and barriers of social life, obsequiousness and servility below
and brutality, arbitrariness, arrogance and oppression above, lies and ‘the
cant and gibberish of hypocrisy’, as Burke calls it, at every level. What began
to be questioned was the validity of any laws – the rules, supposedly enjoined
by God or by nature or by the prince, that conferred authority and required
universal obedience. The demand was for freedom of self-expression, the free
expression of the creative will, at its purest and strongest in artists, but
present in all men. For Herder this vital energy was incarnated in the
creations of the collective genius of peoples: legends, heroic poetry, myths,
laws, customs, song, dance, religious and secular symbolism, temples,
cathedrals, ritual acts – all were forms of expression and communication
created by no individual authors or identifiable groups, but by the collective
and impersonal imagination and will of the entire community, acting at
various levels of consciousness; thus, he believed, were generated those
intimate and impalpable bonds in virtue of which a society develops as a
single organic whole.

“The notion of a creative faculty, working in individuals and entire
societies alike, replaced the notion of timeless objective truths, or unalterable
models of rules, by following which alone men attain to happiness or virtue
or justice or any proper fulfilment of their natures. From this sprang a new
view of men and society, which stressed vitality, movement, change, respects
in which individuals or groups differed rather than resembled each other, the
charm and value of diversity, uniqueness, individuality, a view which
conceived of the world as a garden where each tree, each flower, grows in its
own peculiar fashion and incorporates those aspirations which circumstances
and its own individual nature have generated, and is not, therefore, to be
judged by the patterns and goals of other organisms. This cut athwart the
dominant philosophia perennis, the belief in the generality, uniformity,
universality, timeless validity of objective and eternal laws and rules that
apply everywhere, at all times, to all men and things, the secular or
naturalistic version of which was advocated by the leaders of the French
Enlightenment, inspired by the triumph of the natural and mathematical
sciences, in terms of which German culture, religious, literary, inward-
looking, liable to mysticism, narrowly provincial, at best feebly imitative of
the West, made such a poor showing.
“... This outlook is one of the well-springs of the romantic movement, which in Germany, at any rate, celebrated the collective will, untrammelled by rules which men could discover by rational methods, the spiritual life of the people in whose activity – or impersonal will – creative individuals could participate, but which they could not observe or describe. The conception of the political life of the nation as the expression of this collective will is the essence of political romanticism – that is, nationalism...

“The first true nationalists – the Germans – are an example of the combination of wounded cultural pride and a philosophico-historical vision to stanch the wound and create an inner focus of resistance. First a small group of educated, discontented Francophobes, then, under the impact of the disasters at the hands of the French armies and Napoleon’s Gleichschaltung, a vast popular movement, the first great upsurge of nationalist passion, with its wild student chauvinism and book-burnings and secret trials of traitors, a sorcerer’s apprentice who got out of hand and excited the disgust of calm thinkers like Goethe and Hegel. Other nations followed, partly under the influence of German rhetoric, partly because their circumstances were sufficiently similar to create a similar malaise and generate the same dangerous remedy...”189

These factors are sufficient, perhaps, to explain the rise of nationalism in Germany until 1870. But then came the Battle of Sedan, when wounded pride vis-à-vis the French was soothed, followed by the unification of Germany and great increase in the power and self-confidence of the new German Reich. According to the theory, nationalist passion should then have abated. But it did not, but rather increased, evolving into a new and more aggressive nationalism that led to the two world wars and the nemesis of German nationalism in 1945.

Berlin offers an explanation for this, too, in terms of Durkheim’s concept of anomie and the industrialisation of modern society: “Only, perhaps, Durkheim perceived clearly... that the destruction of traditional hierarchies and orders of social life, in which men’s loyalties were deeply involved, by the centralisation and bureaucratic ‘rationalisation’ which industrial progress required and generated, deprived great numbers of men of social and emotional security, produced the notorious phenomena of alienation, spiritual homelessness and growing anomie, and needed the creation, by deliberate social policy, of psychological equivalents for the lost cultural, political, religious bonds which served to maintain the older order. The socialists believed that class solidarity, the fraternity of the exploited, and the prospect of a just and rational society which the revolution would bring to birth, would provide the indispensable social cement; and, indeed, to a degree it did so. Moreover, some among the poor, the displaced, the deprived emigrated to the New World. But for the majority the vacuum was filled neither by professional associations, nor by political parties, nor by the revolutionary myths which Sorel sought to provide, but by the old, traditional

bonds – language, the soil, historical memories real and imaginary – and by institutions or leaders functioning as incarnations of men’s conceptions of themselves as a community, a Gemeinschaft – symbols and agencies which proved far more powerful than either socialists or enlightened liberals wished to believe. The idea, sometimes invested with a mystical or messianic fervour, of the nation as supreme authority, replacing the Church or the prince or the rule of law or other sources of ultimate values, relieved the pain of the wound to group consciousness, whoever may have inflicted it – a foreign enemy or native capitalists or imperial exploiters or an artificially imposed, heartless bureaucracy.

“This sentiment was, no doubt, deliberately exploited by parties and politicians, but it was there to be exploited, it was not invented by those who used it for ulterior purposes of their own. It was there, and possessed an independent force of its own, which could be combined with other forces, most effectively with the power of a State bent on modernisation, as a defence against other powers conceived of as alien or hostile, or with particular groups and classes and movements within the State, religious, political and economic, with which the bulk of the society did not instinctively identify itself. It developed, and could be used, in many different directions, as a weapon of secularism, industrialisation, modernisation, the rational use of resources, or in an appeal to a real or imaginary past, some lost, pagan or neo-medieval paradise, a vision of a braver, simpler, purer life, or as the call of the blood or of some ancient faith, against foreigners or cosmopolitans, or ‘sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators’, who did not understand the true soul of the people or the roots from which it sprang, and robbed it of its heritage.”

This is useful as far as it goes. But more needs to be said about the transition from the more romantic, religious and universalist nationalism of the early nineteenth century to the hard-nosed, anti-religious and particularist nationalism of the later decades.

Zamowski writes about the earlier generations: “Lafayette and his peers... were natural believers. Most of them left the Christian Church at some stage, but they never eradicated God from their minds. They sought Him in nature, in art, in everything but religion. Some found Him in humanity, as represented by the nation. Robespierre described this faith as a ‘tender, imperious, irresistible passion, the torment and delight of magnanimous souls’, just as the great ecstatic saints had described their love of God. For him, ‘this sacred love of the Patrie, this most sublime and holy love of humanity,’ would one day find its spiritual consummation in the contemplation of ‘the ravishing spectacle of universal happiness’. For Michelet, faith in the nation meant ‘the salvation of all by all’. He hated Catholicism because it saved people individually, thereby undermining the love of the nation. ‘No more individual salvation; God in all and all Messiahs!’ he preached. In other words, salvation could only be achieved by, with and through the nation. ‘We shall bring about the freedom of nations all

over the world,’ wrote Słowacki in November of the terrible year 1848, ‘our blood and our body is the property of the world and will be its nourishment, strengthening those who have grown weak under oppression.’

“These were no mere rebels; they aspired to emulate Christ by immolating themselves for the sake of humanity. And they offered hope, not political solutions. The wars and revolutions they started or embraced were acts of faith. They were for the most part born of vague longing not specific grievance, and that was why they lingered on in the memory as glorious acts however dismal their outcome: grievances can fail to be righted, but hope can never be defeated.

“Devotion to the cause became the only and all-embracing purpose of their lives, more important than the achievement of its end. They sublimated the mission itself. They accepted its purpose without question, because to question it would have made nonsense of their sacrifices and their whole lives. This made them fear and denounce everything that smacked of lukewarm belief or heresy. In order to fortify themselves in the faith, they leaned on ritual, invoked exemplars and martyrs, and venerated relics. They had, in fact, created a faith and a church of their own, with all the trappings of the Christian one they affected to despise. And, as with all faiths, the ultimate longing, because it provided escape into another, and necessarily better, world, was death in the service of the cause. They were certainly all a little mad, but theirs was a devoted and holy madness…”

Probably the most characteristic example of this early form of nationalism was Giuseppe Mazzini. “To him,” writes Anderson, “nationality was truly a religion; national unity must be based upon religious belief and be itself a form of religious belief. The fundamental truths he thought of as known intuitively, leaving to reason only a subordinate function. The duties of men were more important than their rights; for individuals existed to fulfil a mission in the service of humanity, and liberty was no more than the ability to choose between different ways of doing this. Nations could be constituted only by the will of the individuals composing them, by those individuals recognizing a common duty and its consequences and affirming a common purpose. Each had its own specific moral mission to perform. ‘Every nation has a mission, a special office in the collective work, a special aptitude with which to fulfil it: this is its sign, its legitimacy.’ A world of sovereign nation-states, each fulfilling its God-given task, would therefore be one of peace and happiness. Mazzini was much more than a selfish or parochial nationalist. His ideas were always at bottom universalist. To him the idea that the nations of Europe as soon as they had gained their freedom would spontaneously unite in some form of association was fundamental; and his last significant work, the Politica Internazionale (1871) was a vision of a Europe of free peoples thus voluntarily associated. The national state was to him the norm towards which all political life and action should tend, not merely a panacea for specific

grievances. ‘The nation,’ he wrote, ‘is the God-appointed instrument for the welfare of the human race.’”

It was possible to be deceived into believing that this early species of nationalism was holy because it invoked the name of God and because it was universalist; that is, it believed in the nationalist cause in every nation. Thus Mazzini declared: “I believe in the immense voice of God which the centuries transmit to me through the universal tradition of Humanity; and it tells me that the Family, the Nation and Humanity are the three spheres within which the human individual has to labour for a common end, for the moral perfecting of himself and of others, or rather of himself through others and for others.”

Such universalism was still possible in the first half of the 19th century, when nationalism was still closely integrated with the romantic reaction against the destructive, anti-traditional Enlightenment programme, when thinkers were trying to combine universalism with local traditions and the sacredness of the individual. “In practice, however,” writes Anderson, “it was inevitable that the idea of national mission should normally be put forward in support of the demands and grievances of some specific national group.”

And as the century progressed, and as the nationalism of one country became opposed to that of another, universalism became rarer. Religious idealism gave way to anti-theistic cynicism. Even among the nationalists in a single nation we find this transition. Thus there is a marked contrast between the idealism of Mazzini and the cynicism of Garibaldi. Zamoyski writes of a decorative poster produced by the garibaldini in 1864 headed “The Doctrine of Giuseppe Garibaldi”: “This opens with the words: ‘In the name of the Father of the Nation’, shamelessly substituting Garibaldi for God, and the service of Italy for Catholic practice. The catechetical question of how many Garibaldis there are elicits the answer that there is only one Garibaldi, but that there are three distinct persons in him: ‘The Father of the Nation, the Son of the People, and the Spirit of Liberty’. Garibaldi was, of course, made man in order to save Italy, and to remind her sons of the ten commandments, which are:

“1. I am Giuseppe Garibaldi, your General.
“2. Thou shalt not be a soldier of the General’s in vain.
“3. Thou shalt remember to keep the National Feast-days.
“4. Thou shalt honour thy Motherland.
“5. Thou shalt not kill, except those who bear arms against Italy.
“6. Thou shalt not fornicate, unless it be to harm the enemies of Italy.
“7. Thou shalt not steal, other than St. Peter’s pence in order to use it for the redemption of Rome and Venice.
“8. Thou shalt not bear false witness like the priests do in order to sustain their temporal power.
“9. Thou shalt not wish to invade the motherland of others.
“10. Thou shalt not dishonour thy Motherland.

---

192 Anderson, op. cit., pp. 210-211.
193 Mazzini, in Biddiss, op. cit., p. 412.
194 Anderson, op. cit., p. 211.
“The poster contains an ‘Act of Faith’ to be recited daily, as well as an act of contrition for those who have transgressed the commandments and offended the Father. There is also a travesty of the Lord’s Prayer which contains such gems as ‘Give us today our daily cartridges’…”

**The Spirit of Nationalism**

Berlin’s psychological explanation of the origins of early German nationalism in “some kind of collective humiliation” has some validity, as we have seen. But nationalism in its modern form does not begin in Germany, but in France – in the violently aggressive and blasphemous French revolution of 1789. And the French Revolution was much more than a political event with normal – or abnormal – psychological motives, but rather a spiritual phenomenon – that is, the product of an inhuman spirit, a literally satanic phenomenon. This will become clearer if we examine a semi-psychological, semi-religious hypothesis on the origins of nationalism put forward by Denis de Rougemont.

Modern nationalism, according to de Rougemont, involves the transfer to the Nation of a passion that he sometimes calls Eros but which is not sexual, nor a “sublimation” of sexuality, since its real object is not a woman nor anything in the created world. This passion he traced, in western history, to the emergence of the heresy of Catharism (or Manichaeism or Albigensianism) in Southern France in the early twelfth century. The Catharist heretics deliberately cultivated this passion, but not for sexual or political ends – on the contrary, both sexual intercourse and war were considered to be evil, insofar as the whole created world was considered to be the work of the evil demiurge, - but in order to escape this world entirely and unite with the Light beyond the grave (which is why this passion could as well be called Thanatos). This love of passionate Love received a symbolic expression in the poetry of the Troubadors and a “myth” expressed in such early romances as Tristan and Lancelot, in which, under the guise of an adulterous passion for an unattainable married lady, with whom union was not possible, and not even desired in this life, but only after death, the Catharist’s striving for union with the uncreated Light was represented.

The “sacred” symbolic poetry of the troubadors soon degenerated, in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, into profane love poetry and tragic dramas (Romeo and Juliet, Phèdre) and the first romantic novels, which instead of symbolizing an essentially religious and other-worldly ideal in the form of courtly love, represented unmistakably profane love under the guise of an irresistible, “divine” passion and with no taboo on sexual consummation. This was, of course, a complete reversal of the original intent of the myth. By the eighteenth century in France, even the “divinity” of this passion had been discarded, and in figures such as Don Juan or the Marquis de Sade only its supposed irresistibility and incompatibility with conventional Christian morality remained.

---

However, towards the end of the eighteenth century two events served to resurrect the original myth: the rise of German romanticism and the French revolution. German romanticism once again represented eros as a divine passion that could not be fulfilled in this life, but only in and through death. And German romanticism reached its climax in Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde*, in which the original myth is represented in something like its original religious force - and in music of an originality and power that transformed the later history of opera and music in general.

According to De Rougemont, “Tristan is far more profoundly and indisputably Manichaean than the *Divine Comedy* is Thomist…

“The drama opens with a monumental evocation of the powers that rule the world of day – the hate and pride, and the barbarous and sometimes even criminal violence, of feudal honour. Isolde wishes to avenge the affront she has suffered. The potion she gives to Tristan is intended to bring about his death, but a death disallowed by Love, a death in accordance with the laws of day and of revenge – brutal, accidental, and devoid of mystical significance. The highest Minne, however, causes Brengain to make a mistake that can preserve Love. For the death-potion she substitutes the drink of initiation. Hence the one embrace which conjoins Tristan and Isolde as soon as they have drunk is the solitary kiss of the Catharist sacrament, the consolamentum of the Pure! From that moment the laws of day, hate, honour, and revenge, lose all power over their hearts. The initiated pair enter the nocturnal world of ecstatic release. And day, coming back with the royal procession and its discordant flourish of trumpets, is unable to recapture them. At the end of the ordeal which it compels them to undergo – this is their passion [“passion” derives from passio, meaning “suffering] – they have already foreseen the other death, the death that will alone fulfil their love.

“The second act is the passion song of souls imprisoned in material forms. When every obstacle has been overcome, and the lovers are alone together in the dark, carnal desire still stands between them. They are together, and yet they are two. The ‘und’ of *Tristan und Isolde* is there to indicate their duality as creatures. Here music alone can convey the certitude and substance of their twin nostalgia for one-ness; music alone can harmonize the plaint of the two voices, and make of it a single plaint in which there is already being sounded the reality of an ineffable other world of expectation. This is why the leitmotif of the love duet is already that of death.

---

196 As Constantine the Serbian poet says in Rebecca West’s *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, p. 385): “The French make love for the sake of life; and so, like living, it often falls to something less than itself, to a little trivial round. The Germans make love for the sake of death; as they like to put off their civilian clothes and put on uniform, because there is more chance of being killed, so they like to step out of the safe casual relations of society and let loose the destructive forces of sex. So it was with *Werther* and *Elective Affinities*, and so it was in the years after the [First World] war, when they were so promiscuous that sex meant nothing at all…”
“Once again day returns. The treacherous Melot wounds Tristan. But by now passion has triumphed. It wrests away the apparent victory of day. The wound through which life flows out is passion’s pledge of a supreme recovery – that recovery of which the dying Isolde sings once she has cast herself upon Tristan’s corpse in an ecstasy of the ‘highest bliss of being’.

“Initiation, passion, fatal fulfilment – the three mystic moments to which Wagner, with a genius for simplification, saw that he could reduce the three acts of the drama, express the profound significance of the myth, a significance kept out of sight even in the medieval legends by a host of epic and picturesque detail. Nevertheless, the art form adopted by Wagner renews the possibility of ‘misunderstanding’. The story of Tristan had now to be in the form of an opera... Even as the transgression of the rules of chaste love by the legendary lovers turned the poetic lay of the troubadours into the novel – so the powers of day, when brought forward in the first act, introduce struggle and duration, the elements of drama. But a play does not allow everything to be stated, for the religion of passion is ‘in essence lyrical’. Hence music alone is equal to conveying the transcendental interaction, the wildly contradictory and contrapuntal character of the passion of Darkness, which is the summons to uncreated Light.”

It will be immediately apparent that the love of death is related to the revolutionary passion, even if for the revolutionaries the accent is on “death” rather than “love”, and even if there is no literal belief in a life beyond the grave. And in the French revolution, according to de Rougemont, there took place a transference of the myth into the realm of war, with the Nation in the place of the woman who can be united with only in death. “At the end of the eighteenth century, there occurred the magnification of all that the Tristan myth, and later its literary substitutes, had been intended to contain. The middle-class nineteenth century witnessed the spread into the profane mind of a ‘death instinct’ which had long been repressed in the unconscious, or else directed at its source into the channels of an aristocratic art. And when the framework of society burst – under a pressure exerted from quite another quarter – the content of the myth poured out over everyday life. We were unable to understand this diluted elevation of love. We supposed it to be a new springtime of instinct, a revival of dionysiac forces which a so-called Christianity had persecuted...

“... The present breakdown of middle-class marriage is a delayed triumph – perverted, if you like, but nevertheless a triumph – for a profaned passion. But far outside marriage and the realm of sex properly so called, the content of the myth together with its phantoms have now invaded other spheres. Politics, the class war, national feeling – everything nowadays is an excuse for ‘passion’ and is already being magnified into this or that ‘mystic doctrine’. The reason for this is that we have grown incapable of regulating our desires,

of understanding their character and object, and of keeping their vagaries within bounds.”

“From a strictly military standpoint, what novelty was contributed by the Revolution? ‘An outburst of passion never before equalled’, is the answer given by Foch. According to him, the heresy of the old school had been to seek to make war into an exact science when it is really a terrible and passionate drama. Everybody knows, of course, that an explosion of sentimentality preceded and accompanied the Revolution, an event passionate far more than - in the strict sense of the word - political. With the murder of the king - a deed which in a primitive society would have had a sacred and ritualistic significance - the violence that had long been pinned down by the classical formality of warfare became once again something at once horrifying and alluring. It was the cult and blood-spilling mystery that gave rise to a new form of community – the Nation. And a Nation requires that passion shall be transferred to the level of the people as a whole. Actually, it is easier to feel that this happened then than to give an account of it. Every passion, it may be objected, presupposes the existence of two beings, and it is therefore difficult to see, if passion was taken over by a Nation, to whom the Nation then addressed itself. Let us remember, however, that the passion of love is at bottom narcissism, the lover’s self-magnification, far more than it is a relation with the beloved. Tristan wanted the branding of love more than he wanted the possession of Iseult. For he believed that the intense and devouring flame of passion would make him divine; and, as Wagner grasped, the equal of the world.

Eyes with joy are blinded…
I myself am the world.

Passion requires that the self shall become greater than all things, as solitary and powerful as God. Without knowing it, passion also requires that beyond its apotheosis death shall indeed be the end of all things.

198 De Rougemont, op. cit., pp. 247-249.
199 That Wagner considered the “true religion” to be a form of Manichaeism or Catharism is revealed in the following: “Religion, of its very essence, is radically divergent from the State. The religions that have come into the world have been high and pure in direct ratio as they seceded from the State, and in themselves entirely upheaved it. We find State and Religion in complete alliance only where each still stands upon its lowest step of evolution and significance. The primitive Nature-religion subserves no ends but those which Patriotism provides for in the adult State: hence with the full development of patriotic spirit the ancient Nature-religion has always lost its meaning for the State. So long as it flourishes, however, so long do men subsume by their gods their highest practical interest of State; the tribal god is the representative of the tribesman’s solidarity; the remaining Nature-gods become Penates, protectors of the home, the town, the fields and flocks. Only in the wholly adult State, where these religions have paled before the full-fledged patriotic duty, and are sinking into inessential forms and ceremonies; only where ‘Fate’ has shown itself to be Political Necessity - could true Religion step into the world. Its basis is a feeling of the unblessedness of human being, of the State’s profound inadequacy to still the purely-human need. Its inmost kernel is denial of the world - i.e. recognition of the world as a fleeting and dreamlike state reposing merely on illusion - and struggle for Redemption from it, prepared for by renunciation, attained by Faith.” (“On State and Religion”, in Art and Politics, op. cit., p. 24). (V.M.)
“And nationalist ardour too is a self-elevation, a narcissistic love on the part of the collective Self... And what does the national passion require? The elevation of collective might can only lead to the following dilemma: either the triumph of imperialism – of the ambition to become the equal of the whole world – or the people next door strongly object, and there ensues war. Now it is to be noticed that a nation undergoing the early surges of its passion seldom recoils from war, even if that war must be hopeless. A nation thus unconsciously expresses a readiness to court the risk of death, and even to meet death, rather than surrender its passion. ‘Liberty or death’, the Jacobins yelled, at a time when the forces of the enemy seemed to be twenty times as strong as their own, and when therefore ‘liberty’ and ‘death’ were words very near to having one and the same meaning.

“Thus Nation and War are connected as Love and Death are connected. And from this point onwards nationalism has been the predominant factor in war. ‘Whoever writes upon strategy and tactics should confine himself to expounding a national strategy and tactics, for these alone can be of use to the nation for whom he writes.’ Thus General von der Goltz, a follower of Clausewitz. And Clausewitz constantly asserted that the Prussian theology of war must be based on the experience gained in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic campaigns. The Battle of Valmy was a victory of passion over ‘exact science’. It was to the cry of ‘Long live the Nation!’ that the sans-culottes repulsed an allied army still bent on consolidating operations on ‘classic’ lines. It will be recalled that Goethe, after witnessing the battle, said: ‘On this field and on this day a new era begins in the history of the world.’ To this famous pronouncement Foch adds: ‘Truly enough a new era had begun, the era of national wars that are fought under no restraints whatever, because a nation throws all its resources into the struggle, because the aim of these wars is not to safeguard some dynastic claim, but to defeat or propagate philosophical ideas and intangible advantages, because these wars are staked upon feelings and passions, elemental forces never enlisted before.’”

Of course, the readiness to die in battle for one’s nation did not begin only with the French Revolution. But the sheer ferocity of French revolutionary nationalism needs explanation. Whether de Rougemont’s explanation in terms of a revival of the passion propelling the Catharist heresy that had lain latent in western civilization since its suppression in the thirteenth century is convincing cannot be determined here. What we can say, however, is that insofar as this passion is directed as much against fellow-countrymen as against citizens of other nations, it cannot be said to be purely nationalistic. It would be more accurate to say that aggressive nationalism is a phase or aspect of the revolutionary passion as such, that aspect which it presents in relation to other nations. Thus the revolution first presents itself to the people of its own nation in an internationalist form – the slogans of the “freedom, equality and brotherhood” of all people, the principles of universal human rights, etc. Then, having captured the collective of the nation by destroying or neutralizing those members of it that refuse to be possessed by its revolutionary spirit, it proceeds to the nationalist phase of its expression. The

200 De Rougemont, op. cit., pp. 270-272.
revolution is now the work of la grande nation and all nations that do not want to submit to this Nation must be conquered or destroyed. For, as Metropolitan Anastasy writes: “The nation, this collective organism, is just as inclined to deify itself as the individual man. The madness of pride grows in this case in the same progression, as every passion becomes inflamed in society, being refracted in thousands and millions of souls.”

The word “possessed” indicates the true nature of this passion – a demonic force that possesses men, which uses human passions but is different from them. De Rougemont is right to emphasize the boundlessness of the passion, its egoism and its orientation, ultimately, to self-annihilation and death. But this mystical, religious nature of the passion, combined with its blasphemy, reveals its non-human, satanic origin – and the inadequacy of purely psychological explanations such as Berlin’s “collective humiliation”.

It follows that nationalist passion cannot be assuaged by political or military success, as hunger is assuaged by food or thirst by drink. For satanic egoism and self-deification knows no bounds, and only grows with success. Nationalism can only be tamed by the instilling of the true faith into the national organism. Then national consciousness, instead of being distorted and inflamed in the passion of nationalism, will be transformed into the pure flame of patriotism, which loves the nation, not for its own sake, not as an idol, but as being the bearer of a higher principle, the principle of true theocracy…

The classical phase of the revolution in its nationalist phase is the whole period from the rise of Napoleon I to the fall of Napoleon III. But the French revolutionary spirit was defeated, as we have seen, in 1870, and a new, less religious, more materialist era began in which, as de Rougemont writes, “national passions were provisionally appeased, and for forty years they gave place to capitalistic and commercial enterprise. Violence was still resorted to in the name of the Nation, but material advantages were undoubtedly what ruled…. War… had become a compound into which entered, on the one hand, the working up of popular opinion – what was the Revanche for 1870-71 but a piece of national sentimentality? – on the other hand, the ambitions of businessmen and financiers. The true warlike element had to provide for itself surreptitiously. War was growing middle-class. Blood was getting commercialized. Army men already seemed anomalous to the realists, and to women and idle gapers a kind of thrilling survival. Yet it was being generally supposed that the tremendous potential of frenzy and slaughter which had been piled up in Europe as a result of the cultivation of passion for centuries could be disposed of without incurring havoc. The war of 1914 was a most impressive consequence of this disregard for the myth.”

More accurately, the evil spirit of the revolution entered upon a second internationalist phase, as Marxism spread on the fertile ground of capitalist avarice. But the internationalist phase ran into obstacles as governments made

---

201 Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), Besedy s sobstvennym serdtsem (Conversations with my own heart), Jordanville, 1998, p. 33 (in Russian).
concessions to workers and living standards in general were raised. So the evil spirit had to call in the assistance of nationalism again, in 1914, to destroy the monarchical structures that withheld the triumph of the revolution. By this time, while nationalism was flourishing everywhere, its main breeding-ground had migrated across the Rhine, making use of those elements in German psychology and culture that suited it. And so the “myth” that had found such powerful artistic expression in *Tristan und Isolde* found its real-life *Siegfried* in Ludendorff, Hindenburg and Hitler, and its real-life *Götterdämmerung* in the ruins of Berlin in 1945…

**The Jewish Question**

One form of nationalism does not fit easily into the picture drawn above. Jewish nationalism is anomalous because, on the one hand, it is very old, much older than European nationalism, and on the other, because most Western Jews until the later nineteenth century were vigorously trying to deny its existence, and were trying instead to assimilate themselves to Gentile culture. It is anomalous also because it is so linked with the *religion* of the Jews that for many the idea of a Jewish *secular* nationalism distinct from, and not based upon, the Jewish faith was both inconceivable and anathema…

Berlin writes: “Perpetual discussions went on, during the nineteenth century – the most historically conscious of all ages – about whether the Jews were a race, or solely a religion; a people, a community, or merely an economic category. Books, pamphlets, debates increased in volume if not in quality. But there was one persistent fact about this problem, which was in some respects more clearly perceived by the Gentiles than by the Jews themselves: namely, that if they were only a religion, this would not have needed quite so much argument and insistence; while if they were nothing but a race, this would not have been denied quite so vehemently as it has been by persons who nevertheless professed to denote a unique group of human beings by the term ‘Jew’.

“It gradually became clear, both to Jews and to those who took an interest in their affairs, that in fact they constituted an anomaly, which could not be defined in terms of the ordinary definition of nations, as applied at any rate to European nations; and that any attempt to classify them in such terms would lead to unnatural, artificial and Procrustean consequences… Despite passionate denials of this proposition from many sides, it became increasingly clear to almost everyone who approached the problem from outside that the Jews were a unique combination of religion, race and people; that they could not be classified in normal terms, but demanded an extraordinary description, and their problem an extraordinary solution…”

The already highly complex problem was made more complex by the fact that there were large differences between the often highly sophisticated Sephardic Jews of the West, who were not particularly numerous and were in

---

general striving for assimilation, and the much more numerous, poorer and more religious Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe, whose attitude to the Gentiles among whom they lived was disdainful and hostile.

Correspondingly, governments in East and West took very different views of “the Jewish problem”. In the West, the Jews were disliked, not so much for their religious beliefs, of which most Westerners were profoundly ignorant, as for their racial characteristics, whether real or imaginary. In the East, however, the Jews were discriminated against, not on racial but on religious grounds, as is proved by the fact that the Karaite Jews, who rejected the Talmud, were freed of all restrictions by the Russian government. The question that all governments had to answer was: what were the real intentions of the Jews? Just a place under the sun like every other nation? Or world domination? That there was real room for doubt is shown by the examples of prominent Jews who believed that members of their own race were striving precisely for world domination. Thus Benjamin Disraeli, the Christianised Jew and British Prime Minister, “made sensational statements about Jewish and secret society conspiracies’ running Europe’s public affairs. In Coningsby, a novel published in 1844, he had one character declare that ‘The first Jesuits were Jews... that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany,... and of which so little is yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews.’ Two pages further, a character makes an even more ominous statement, one quoted time and again by conspiracy theorists: ‘So you see, my dear Coningsby, that the world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.’ Nor did Disraeli confine himself to making such statements in fictional works. In a biographical work of 1852, he asserted that Jews ‘wish to destroy that ungrateful Christendom.’ He even took his conspiracism to the floor of Parliament, announcing in 1856 that ‘a British Minister has boasted – and a very unwise boast it was – that he had only to hold up his hand and he could raise a revolution in Italy to-morrow. It was an indiscreet boast, but I believe it not impossible, with the means at his disposal, that he might succeed. What would happen? You would have a republic formed on extreme principles.’”

Again, Adolphe Crémieux, one of the most westernised and successful Jews of the time, and at one time the minister of justice in the French government, wrote: “The Messianism of the new era must arise and develop; the Jerusalem of the New World Order, which is established in holiness between the East and Asia, must occupy the place of two forces: the kings and the popes... Nationality must disappear. Religion must cease to exist. Only Israel will not cease to exist, since this little people is chosen by God.”

---

204 “Even in Switzerland,” writes Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “as late as the middle of the nineteenth century they were not able to get freedom of settlement in the cantons, freedom of trade and of occupation in crafts.” (Двести лет вместе (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2002, p. 315 ®).


206 Crémieux, Archives Israelites (Israelite Archives), 1861, No 25 (F).
Did the Jews have a secret government? Tikhomirov wrote: “The main defender of this thesis is Copen Albancelli. His argumentation is based not so much on any factual data, of which, in essence, there are none, as on logic.

“‘The question,’ he writes, ‘can be summarised in very few words. In order that the descendants of the ancient nation of the Jews should preserve the ideal of this nation, it is necessary that their generations should be bound amongst themselves in space and time by one organisation, one government. This is necessary for the simple reason that the Jewish race is ruled by the same laws of nature as all other races. This government, it is true, has not manifested itself since the 9th century (the end of the Resh Golut), but the conditions of existence ruling over the Jewish people from the time of its dispersal have been such that its government could not exist, if it were well-known. Since it had to exist, it had to become secret.’ Perhaps, he says, the majority even of the Jews know nothing about it, but this does not prove its non-existence.

“But where are these ruling circles directing their nation? Since the matter is secret, of course, we can only make guesses, the more so in that no powerful organisation and no government has set itself the task of making any kind of investigation into the question whether the Jews have any world plans and how these are to be achieved. In this area we have only the surmises of the anti-Semites, and in particular Copen Albancelli, which we cannot fail to mention for lack of any more positive material. Copen Albancelli’s assertions come down to the following. But first we must note that Albancelli was a Freemason for quite a long time (eight years) and attained in it the degree of Rosicrucian, which is quite high in the degrees of classification - the 18th degree. True, Copen Albancelli considers that after the 33 degrees of capitularies a new layer of the organisation of Masonry begins - an ‘invisible’ layer, and on top of that yet another layer of the now [purely] Jewish administration of Masonry. But although, in this way, Copen Albancelli was still far from the highest degrees, nevertheless with great skill he was able to notice and listen into a lot. However they may be, these are his presuppositions.

“First of all, he considers that the secret Jewish government has as its weapon of influence in the extra-Jewish world - precisely the Masonic organisation, which subconsciously carries out the aims of the Jewish government. But the aim of the latter is the universal dominion of the Jews.

“‘The aim of the Masonic machinations,’ says Copen, ‘is not the destruction but the submission of the Christian world. The Jewish Secret Government (Pouvoir Occulte) wishes to destroy the Christian spirit because the Christian spirit constitutes the true defence of the world born from it. In exactly the same way if this secret government destroyed the French monarchy, it was only because this monarchy was the best defence of France.’ ‘The dream [of universal mastery] is supported in the heart of the Jewish people by its religion... The Jews at first thought that mastery would come about sometime, would be given to their race by a triumphant Messiah. But now the
idea has spread amongst them that the word ‘Messiah’ must be applied not to a certain son of the Israelite race, but to the race itself, and that the conquest of the world can be carried out without the use of weapons. They are now convinced that the future victor will be the Jewish people itself, and that the Messianic times are those in which this people will succeed in subduing to itself the world begotten by the Christian Messiah, who has for so long taken the place appointed for the true messiah, that is, the Jews themselves.”

As Baruch Levy wrote to Marx: “The Jewish people as a whole will be its own Messiah. It will attain world dominion by the dissolution of other races, by the abolition of frontiers, the annihilation of monarchy, and by the establishment of a world republic in which the Jews will everywhere exercise the privilege of citizenship. In this ‘new world order’ the children of Israel will furnish all the leaders without encountering opposition. The Governments of the different peoples forming the world republic will fall without difficulty into the hands of the Jews. It will then be possible for the Jewish rulers to abolish private property, and everywhere to make use of the resources of the state. Thus will the promise of the Talmud be fulfilled, in which it is said that when the Messianic time is come, the Jews will have all the property of the whole world in their hands.”

“The dream of universal dominion, continues Copen, is not new to humanity. Other peoples also dreamed of universal dominion. ‘Perhaps this idea was not always the ruling one for Israel to the extent that it is now.’ It developed gradually. But to the degree that they seized the most powerful weapon – gold – this dream matured. The successes of Masonry strengthened it. ‘Jewry has begun to see the growth of its might in every corner of the globe in proportion as the power of the solidarity, and consequently resistance of the Christian races has declined as the result of the loss of tradition. Its government sees everything while not being seen by anyone. For that reason it probably bursts out when nobody is even thinking of defending himself against it, since nobody knows of its existence. In such conditions it would be complete senselessness on the part of the Jewish government if it did not come to the idea of conquering the world which nothing or almost nothing is defending... Having accomplished a miracle – the keeping of the race that had wandered over the world in fidelity to its ancient national ideal – and seeing that the other races senselessly consider progress to be the abandonment of their ideals the Jewish government must have recognised itself capable of giving its own people rule over the whole world.’

“But in order to secure dominion a new organisation of the subject races is needed. Every ruler over the peoples strives to give them an organisation adapted to the possibility of administering them. For the Jews in this respect it was necessary to destroy nationality. This is now taking place under the banner of progress. But in the place of an organisation growing on the soil of

nationality, another one is needed: it is being prepared in the form of socialism.

"'We,' says Copen Albancelli, 'are going towards a universal republic because only under it can the financial, industrial and commercial kingdom of the Jews be realised. But under the mask of a republic this kingdom will be infinitely more despotic than any other. This will be absolutely the same mastery as that which man organises over the animals. The Jewish race will hold us by means of our needs. It will lean on a well chosen police force, well organised and richly rewarded. Besides this police force, in this new society there will be only administrators, directors and engineers, on the one hand, and workers on the other. The workers will all be non-Jews, while the administrators and engineers will be Jews... The peoples themselves will facilitate the destruction in their midst of every power besides the State, while it will be insinuated to them that the State possessing everything is they themselves. They will not cease to work on their own enslavement until the Jews will tell them: "Excuse us, you have not understood us in the right way. The all-possessing State is not you, but we." Then the peoples will try to rebel, but it will be too late, for their moral and material springs that are necessary for action will already have disappeared. Flocks cannot resist dogs trained to watch over them. The only thing that the working world will be able to do is refuse to work. But the Jews will not be so stupid as not to foresee this. They will lay up enough stores for themselves and their guard dogs, while they will starve the resisters to death. If necessary, they will hurl onto the rebels their police force, which will be invincible and provided with the most advanced means of destruction.'

"'That is the plan of the Secret Government,' says Copen Albancelli, 'the establishment of the universal dominion of the Jews by means of the organisation of collectivism under the form of a universal republic. Masonry will lead us to the realisation of this.'"209

Nesta Webster confirmed this: "The formula of the 'United States of Europe' and of the 'Universal Republic' [was] first proclaimed by the Illuminatus Anacharsis Clootz", whose La République universelle was published in 1793. "It has long been the slogan of the French lodges..."210 "In 1867," writes Lebedev, "the Masons created the 'International League of Peace and Freedom' with Garibaldi at its head. In it for the first time the idea of the United States of Europe under Masonic leadership was put forward."211

"But of course," notes Tikhomirov, "the very forms of collectivism... can give way to a single Jewish national organisation..."212
In other words, the Jewish leaders of Masonry might wish to destroy the various nationalisms of Europe in order to create a single socialist republic, but only as a stepping-stone to the realisation of their own nationalist dreams. Which leads us to the interesting and important question: to what extent did the wave of nationalist feeling passing through Europe engender in the Jews an analogous nationalist feeling - not the old nationalism of religious, rabbinic Jewry, but the new, secular kind of nationalism begotten by the French Revolution?

**The Forerunners of Zionism**

The beginning of a new form of Jewish nationalism can be seen in the writings of the German Jew Moses Hess, a friend and collaborator of Marx and Engels, who, however, turned away from radical assimilationism in reaction to the rising tide of German anti-Semitism in the early 1860s. In 1862, under the influence of the Italian Risorgimento, Hess wrote *Rome and Jerusalem: the Last National Question*, which explores the possibility of the Jews becoming a nation in the way that the Italians were becoming one.\(^{213}\)

In his first paragraph he stated his most important conclusion: that the Jews could *never* become fully assimilated into western culture: “After an estrangement of twenty years, I am back with my people. I have come to be one of them again, to participate in the celebration of the holy days, to share the memories and hopes of the nation, to take part in the spiritual and intellectual warfare going on within the House of Israel, on the one hand, and between our people and the surrounding civilized nations, on the other; for though the Jews have lived among the nations for almost two thousand years, they cannot, after all, become a mere part of the organic whole.” (First Letter).

Not that Hess was renouncing his assimilated western humanist ideals. On the contrary: “When I labour for the regeneration of my own nation, I do not thereby renounce my humanistic aspiration. The national movement of the present day is only another step on the road of progress which began with the French Revolution. The French nation has, since the great Revolution, been calling to the other nations for help. But the nations have turned a deaf ear to the voice from the distance and have lent a not unwilling ear to the tumult of reaction in their own midst. Today, this roar deafens not only the people in certain parts of Germany, those who, by dint of political trickery, are aroused to the pitch of enthusiasm for the kings and war lords. But the other nations hear and follow the call of France. The call has reached also our ancient nation, and I would unite my voice with that of France, that I may at least warn my racial brothers in Germany against listening to the loud noise of the reactionaries.” (Third Letter).

Hess considered assimilation into German culture a vain dream: “The endeavours are vain. Even conversion itself [to Christianity] does not relieve the Jews from the enormous pressure of German Anti-Semitism. The German

---

hates the Jewish religion less than the race; he objects less to the Jews’ peculiar beliefs than to their peculiar noses…” (Fourth Letter)

“The real Teutomaniacs of the Arndt and Jahn type will always be honest, reactionary conservatives. The Teutomaniac, in his love of the Fatherland, loves not the State but the race dominance. How, then, can he conceive the granting of equal rights to other races than the dominant one, when equality is still a utopia for the large masses of Germany? The sympathetic Frenchman assimilates with irresistible attraction every foreign race element. Even the Jew is here a Frenchman. Jefferson said long ago, at the time of the American Revolution, that every man has two fatherlands, first his own and then France. The German, on the other hand, is not at all anxious to assimilate any foreign elements, and would be perfectly happy if he could possess all fatherlands and dominions for himself. He lacks the primary condition of every chemical assimilative process, namely, warmth.” (Fifth Letter).

Hess’s words were prophetic; for shortly after German anti-semitism began in earnest with Richard Wagner. “Wagner,” writes Paul Johnson, “advocated the Untergang (downfall) of the Jews. ‘I regard the Jewish race as the born enemy of pure humanity and everything that is noble in it; it is certain that we Germans will go under before them, and perhaps I am the last German who knows how to stand up as an art-loving man against the Judaism that is already getting control of everything.’ He wrote this in Religion and Art (1881), published the year the great Russian pogroms were driving a new wave of Ostjuden refugees into central Europe. Wagner was particularly influential in intensifying anti-Semitism, especially among the middle and upper classes, not only because of his personal standing but because he repeatedly advanced the argument – with innumerable examples – that the Jews were progressively ‘taking over’ the citadel of German culture, especially its music. Even their so-called ‘geniuses’, he insisted – men like Giacomo Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn or Heine himself – were not truly creative, and meanwhile a host of Jewish middlemen were taking over the critical press, publishing, theatres and operas, art galleries and agencies. It was Wagner’s writings which provoked the furious outpourings of Eugen Dühring, who throughout the 1880s published a succession of widely read racial attacks on the Jew: the ‘Jewish question’, he declared, should be ‘solved’ by ‘killing and extirpation’….”

214 Johnson, A History of the Jews, London: Phoenix, 1995, p. 394. According to Solzhenitsyn, German antisemitism began in 1869 with Richard Wagner. Then “in the 70s [it came] from conservative and clerical circles, who demanded that German Jews be restricted in their rights and their further immigration be forbidden. From the end of the 70s this movement ‘also took hold of the intellectual circles of society’. It was expressed and brought to its most generalized formulations by the prominent Prussian historian Henrich von Trietschke: ‘The present agitation has correctly caught the mood of society, which considers the Jews to be our national misfortune’, ‘the Jews can never be fused with the West European peoples’ and express their hatred for Germanism. After him came Eugen Dühring (who is so well known for his quarrel with Marx and Engels): ‘The Jewish question is simple a racial question, and the Jews are not only foreign to us, they are innately and unalterably a corrupt race’. Then came the philosopher Eduard Hartmann. – In the political sphere this movement led in 1882 to the First International Anti-Jewish Congress (in Dresden), which accepted a ‘Manifesto to the governments and peoples of the Christian states, who are perishing from Jewry’, and
Even the term “Antisemitism” was coined at this time in Germany. Thus Daniel Pipes writes: “Antisemitism, a term coined in 1879 with the founding in Berlin of the Antisemitenliga (Antisemitic League), is a form of anti-Jewish hatred that differs in several ways from what came before: (1) it changes the emphasis from religion to race, (2) it transforms dislike into fear, (3) it turns a bias into an all-encompassing ideology, even way of life, and (4) it replaces the episodic persecution of Jews with a permanent one. Antisemitism moved Jew hatred from the realm of emotions to that of political activism, from defensive to offensive, and from life’s sidelines to its core. It also changed the depiction of Jews from heretics into malevolently powerful figures.”

But Hess considered that not only the Germans, but all the European nations, with the exception of France (Hess was wrong here, as the Dreyfus case was to show), were antisemitic: “… The European nations have always considered the existence of the Jews in their midst as an anomaly. We shall always remain strangers among the nations. They may tolerate us and even grant us emancipation, but they will never respect us as long as we place the principle ubi bene ibi patria [where it is good, there is our fatherland] above our own great national memories. Though religious fanaticism may cease to operate as a factor in the hatred against the Jews in civilized countries, yet in spite of enlightenment and emancipation, the Jew in exile who denies his nationality will never earn the respect of the nations among whom he dwells. He may become a naturalized citizen, but he will never be able to convince the Gentiles of his total separation from his own nationality. It is not the old-type, pious Jew, who would rather suffer than deny his nationality, that is most despised, but the modern Jew who, like the German outcasts in foreign countries, denies his nationality, while the hand of fate presses heavily upon his own people…” (Fifth Letter).

The Jews are good at assimilating foreign cultures, but they have gone too far: “Just as it is impossible for me to entertain any prejudice against my own race, which has played such an important role in universal history and which is destined for a still greater one in the future, so it is impossible for me to show against the holy language of our fathers the antipathy of those who endeavour to eliminate Hebrew from Jewish life, and even supersede it by German inscriptions in the cemetery. I was always exalted by Hebrew prayers. I seem to hear in them an echo of fervent pleadings and passionate entreaties, issuing from suffering hearts of a thousand generations. Seldom do these heart-stirring prayers fail to impress those who are able to understand their meaning. The most touching point about these Hebrew prayers is, that they are really an expression of the collective Jewish spirit; they do not plead for the individual, but for the entire Jewish race. The pious Jew is above all a Jewish patriot. The ‘new’ Jew, who denies the existence of the Jewish nationality, is not only a deserter in the religious sense, but is also a traitor to his people, his race and even to his family. If it were true that Jewish

demanding the expulsion of the Jews from Germany. – But by the 90s the anti-Jewish parties had weakened and suffered a series of political defeats.” (op. cit., pp. 315-316)

emancipation in exile is incompatible with Jewish nationality, then it were the duty of the Jews to sacrifice the former for the sake of the latter…” (Fourth Letter).

Jewish patriotism, for Hess, humanist though he is, is inseparable from Jewish religion; the former is the root of the latter: “All feast and fast days of the Jews, their deep piety and reverence for tradition, which almost apotheosises everything Hebraic, nay even the entire Jewish cult, all have their origin in the patriotism of the Jewish nation.” (Fourth Letter)

For Judaism is “nothing else but a national historical cult developed out of family traditions” (Sixth Letter).

Reform Judaism, therefore, is anathema to Hess: “The threatening danger to Judaism comes only from the religious reformers who, with their newly-invented ceremonies and empty eloquence have sucked the marrow out of Judaism and left only its skeleton... Their reforms have only a negative purpose – if they have any aim at all – to firmly establish unbelief in the national foundation of the Jewish religion. No wonder that these reforms only fostered indifference to Judaism and conversions to Christianity. Judaism, like Christianity, would have to disappear as a result of the general state of enlightenment and progress, if it were not more than a mere dogmatic religion, namely a national cult. The Jewish reformers, however, those who are still present in some German communities, and maintain, to the best of their ability, the theatrical show of religious reform, know so little of the value of national Judaism, that they are at great pains to erase carefully from their creed and worship all traces of Jewish nationalism. They fancy that a recently manufactured prayer or hymn book, wherein a philosophical theism is put into rhyme and accompanied by music, is more elevating and soul-stirring than the fervent Hebrew prayers which express the pain and sorrow of a nation at the loss of its fatherland. They forget that these prayers, which not only created, but preserved for millennia, the unity of Jewish worship, are even today the tie which binds into one people all the Jews scattered around the world.” (Seventh Letter)

Moreover, there is this difference between Judaism and other religions: it is forever tied to an ethnic Jew, implanted in his genes as it were: “In reality, Judaism as a nationality has a natural basis which cannot be set aside by mere conversion to another faith, as is the case in other religions. A Jew belongs to his race and consequently also to Judaism, in spite of the fact that he or his ancestors have become apostates. It may appear paradoxical, according to our modern religious opinions, but in life, at least, I have observed this view to be true. The converted Jew remains a Jew no matter how much he objects to it.” (Seventh Letter).

“The Jewish religion, thought Heine, and with him all the enlightened Jews, is more of a misfortune than a religion. But in vain do the progressive Jews persuade themselves that they can escape this misfortune through enlightenment or conversion. Every Jew is, whether he wishes it or not,
solidly united with the entire nation; and only when the Jewish people will be freed from the burden which it has borne so heroically for thousands of years, will the burden of Judaism be removed from the shoulders of these progressive Jews, who will ultimately form only a small minority. We will all then carry the yoke of the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ until the end… The levelling tendencies of the assimilationists have remained and will always remain without influence on those Jews who constitute the great Jewish masses (Eleventh Letter).

The Jewish religion, according to Hess, is far superior to Christianity: “Christianity is, after all, a religion of death, the function of which ceased the moment the nations reawakened to life…” (Fifth Letter) The new, life-giving religion is the religion of freedom – individual freedom and national freedom - that the French Revolution has given to the world.216

The Jewish religion, paradoxically, can come to life within the new context of this new religion bequeathed by the French: “The rigid forms of orthodoxy, the existence of which was justified before the century of rebirth, will naturally, through the power of the national idea and the historical cult, relax and become fertile. It is only with the national rebirth that the religious genius of the Jews… will be endowed with new strength again be reinspired with the prophetic spirit.” (Fifth Letter)

“This ‘religion of the future’ of which the eighteenth-century philosophers, as well as their recent followers, dreamed, will neither be an imitation of the ancient pagan Nature cult, nor a reflection of the neo-Christian or the neo-Judaism skeleton, the spectre of which haunts the minds of our religious reformers. Each nation will have to create its own historical cult; each people must become like the Jewish people, a people of God.” (Seventh Letter)

“As long as no other people possessed such a national, humanitarian cult, the Jews alone were the people of God. Since the French Revolution, the French, as well as the other peoples that followed them, have become our noble rivals and faithful allies” (Ninth Letter).

All this is leading to “the Messianic era”, when “the Jewish nation and all other historical nations will arise again to new life, the time of the ‘resurrection of the dead’, of ‘the coming of Lord’, of the ‘New Jerusalem’, and of all the other symbolic expressions, the meaning of which is no longer misunderstood. The Messianic era is the present age, which began to germinate with the teachings of Spinoza, and finally came into historical existence with the great French Revolution. With the French Revolution, there

---

216 Cf. Heine: “Freedom is the new religion, the religion of our time. If Christ is not the god of this new religion, he is nevertheless a high priest of it, and his name gleams beatifically into the hearts of the apostles. But the French are the chosen people of the new religion, their language records the first gospels and dogmas. Paris is the New Jerusalem, the Rhine is the Jordan that separates the consecrated land of freedom from the land of the Philistines” (in Johnson, op. cit., p. 346).
began the regeneration of those nations which had acquired their national historical religion only through the influence of Judaism” (Tenth Letter)

But how can the nation be resurrected if it has no land? And so Hess is led by the logic of is argument to a kind of proto-Zionism. “You,” he addresses the Jews, “are an elemental force and we bow our heads before you. You were powerful in the early period of your history, strong even after the destruction of Jerusalem, and mighty during the Middle Ages, when there were only two dominant powers – the Inquisition and its Cross, and Piracy with its Crescent. You have escaped destruction in your long dispersion, in spite of the terrible tax you have paid during eighteen centuries of persecution. But what is left of your nation is mighty enough to rebuild the gates of Jerusalem. This is your mission. Providence would not have prolonged your existence until today, had it not reserved for you the holiest of all missions. The hour has struck for the resettlement of the banks of the Jordan…” (Eleventh Letter)

Not only is the return to Palestine a worthy aim: it is absolutely necessary for the regeneration of Jewry. “In exile, the Jewish people cannot be regenerated. Reform or philanthropy can only bring it to apostasy and to nothing else, but in this no reformer, not even a tyrant will ever succeed. The Jewish people will participate in the great historical movement of present-day humanity only when it will have its own fatherland… No Jew, whether orthodox or not, can conscientiously refrain from cooperating with the rest for the elevation of the entire Jewry. Every Jew, even the converted should cling to the cause and labour for the regeneration of Israel.” (Eleventh Letter)

But the return to the fatherland can take place only after the revolution, which will shake out Western Jewry: “The rigid crust of orthodox Jewry will melt when the spark of Jewish patriotism, now smoldering under it, is kindles into a sacred fire which will herald the coming of the spring and the resurrection of our nation to a new life. On the other hand, Western Judaism is surrounded by an almost indissoluble crust, composed of the dead residue of the first manifestation of the modern spirit, from the inorganic chalk deposit of an extinct rationalistic enlightenment. This crust will not be melted by the fire of Jewish patriotism; it can only be broken by an external pressure under the weight of which everything which has no future must give up its existence. In contradistinction to orthodoxy, which cannot be destroyed by an external force without at the same time endangering the embryo of Jewish Nationalism that slumbers within it, the had covering that surrounds the hearts of our cultured Jews will be Shattered only by a blow from without, one that world events are already preparing; and which will probably fall in the near future. The old framework of European Society, battered so often by the storms of revolution, is cracking and groaning on all sides. It can no longer stand a storm. Those who stand between revolution and reaction, the mediators, who have an appointed purpose to push modern Society on its path of progress, will, after society becomes strong and progressive, be swallowed up by it. The nurses of progress, who would undertake to teach the Creator himself wisdom, prudence and economy; those carriers of culture, the saviours of Society, the speculators in politics, philosophy and religion,
will not survive the last storm. And along with the other nurses of progress our Jewish reformers will also close their ephemeral existence. On the other hand, the Jewish people, along with other historical nations, will, after this last catastrophe, the approach of which is attested by unmistakable signs of the times, receive its full rights as a people... Just as after the last catastrophe of organic life, when the historical races came into the world’s arena, there came their division into tribes, and the position and role of the latter was determined, so after the last catastrophe of social life, when the spirit of humanity shall have reached its maturity, will our people, with the other historical peoples, find its legitimate place in universal history…” (Eleventh Letter)

Hess concludes with a warning against German nationalism: “the cause of national regeneration of oppressed peoples can expect no help and sympathy from Germany. The problem of regeneration, which dates not from the second restoration of the kingdom in France, but goes back to the French Revolution, the war, was received in Germany with mockery and derision; and in spite of the fact that the question is an urgent one and is uppermost almost everywhere, even in Germany itself, the Germans have name it the ‘Nationality trick’. Our Jewish democrats, also, display their patriotism in accusing the French and the people sympathising with them, of conquering designs. The French, say the German politicians, as well as their allies, will only be exploited by the second Monarchy, for purposes of restraining liberty rather than promoting it. It is, therefore, according to the deep logic of these politicians, the duty of the German to be obedient to the Kaiser and the kings, in order that they should be able to defeat the conquering desires of the French. These politicians and patriots forget that if Germany were to conquer France and Italy today, it would only result in placing the entire German people under police law; and in depriving the Jews of their civil rights, in a worse manner than after the Way of Liberation, when the only reward granted by the Germans to their Jewish brethren in arms was exclusion from civil life. And, truly, the German people and the German Jews do not deserve any better lot when they allow themselves, in spite of the examples of history, to be entrapped by medieval reaction.” (Appendix V. The Last Race Rule)

“The age of race dominance is at an end. Even the smallest people, whether it belongs to the Germanic or Romance, Slavic or Finnic, Celtic or Semitic races, as soon as it advances its claim to a place among the historical nations, will find sympathetic supporters in the powerful civilised Western nations. Like the patriots of other unfortunate nations, the German patriots can attain their aim only by means of a friendly alliance with the progressive and powerful nations of the world. But if they continue to conjure themselves, as well as the German people, with the might and glory of the ‘German Sword’, they will only add to the old unpardonable mistakes, grave new ones; they will only play into the hands of the reaction, and drag all Germany along with them.” (Appendix VI. A Chapter of History)

Hess was notable for the way in which he combined different strands of nineteenth-century Jewish and Gentile thinking: the universalist nationalism
of the French Revolution, the revolutionary socialism of Marx and Engels, and traditional Talmudic Judaism. He rejected only the extremes of assimilationism, which would destroy Judaism and therefore Jewry, and the particularist nationalism of the German type. And yet, paradoxically, his assertion that “once a Jew, always a Jew”, even after conversion to Christianity, appeared to confirm one of the principal theses of German anti-Semitism. And so he looked forward both to Zionism and to the Holocaust...

But was Hess’s Messianic vision of the creation of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine in fact compatible with traditional Judaism? This question, which has so troubled the modern state of Israel, was obliquely addressed in 1836 by Samuel Raphael Hirsch in his Nineteen Letters on Judaism. This work, as Dan-Sherbok writes, was “a defence of Orthodox in the form of essays by a young rabbi to a friend who questioned the importance of remaining a Jew. The work began with a critique of Judaism of this period: ‘While the best of mankind climbed to the summit of culture, prosperity, and wealth, the Jewish people remained poor in everything that makes human beings great and noble and that beautifies and dignifies our lives.’

“**In response Hirsch maintained that the purpose of human life is not to attain personal happiness and perfection. Instead human beings should strive to serve God by doing his will. As an example of such devotion, the Jewish people was formed so that through its way of life all nations would come to know that true happiness lies in obeying God. Thus, Hirsch maintained, the people of Israel were given the Promised Land so that they would be able to keep the Covenant. When the nation was exiled, they fulfilled this mission by remaining loyal to God and the Torah despite continual persecution and suffering. According to Hirsch, the purpose of the divine commandments is not to repress physical gratification of material prosperity; rather the goal of following God’s law is to lead a religious life and thereby bear witness to the messianic ideal of universal brotherhood. Given this vision of God’s plan, Reform Judaism was denounced for abandoning this sacred duty. For Hirsch citizenship rights are of little importance, since Jews are united by a bond of obedience to God’s laws until the time when the ‘Almighty shall see fit in his inscrutable wisdom to unite again his scattered servants in one land, and the Torah shall be the guiding principle of a state, a model of the meaning of Divine revelation and the mission of humanity’.”**

217 The question was posed again by two rabbis who came to be known as “the Forerunner of Zionism” – the Serbian Rabbi Alkalai and the Polish Rabbi Kalischer. Alain Dieckhoff writes: “Giving some role to the collective organisation of the Jews to promote their return [as was done by the two rabbis] was already in itself a major innovation. It implied a reinterpretation of Jewish Messianism which had adopted an increasingly quietist approach. As the political effacement of the Jewish nation in Palestine steadily progressed, sealed by the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and the crushing defeat of Bar Kochba (135), belief in the coming of the Messiah who would deliver Israel from its exile and restore it to its past glory was

---

consolidated, as a form of compensation. This Messianic hope adopted an
apocalyptic content, both restoration oriented (a return to the original golden
age) and utopian (establishment of an essentially different and better age);
this made it easier to adopt an attitude of distance from, even indifference
towards the contemporary world. Although the deliverance of Israel was
certainly located in the domain of the visible since it assumed the physical
restoration of the Jewish nation in its land, it was also placed at the end of
time (be-aharit ha-yamim), i.e. at the end of the course of human history.
Therefore the enormous change to be inaugurated by the Messianic era could
only be the miraculous work of God, from whom man could only hope, by a
life of prayer and holiness, that the final redemption would not be too long
delayed.

“This spiritualization considerably weakened the political dimension of
Messianism, which had been very present in the Biblical period – as
illustrated by the Maccabees’ struggle in the second century BCE – but was
continuously eroded by rabbinical Judaism, which feared its destructive force.
The epic story of Shabtai Zvi, who aroused a wave of enthusiasm across the
Jewish world in 1665-7, further discredited Messianic activism. The abolition
of fasting days, the proclamation of new festivals and transformations of the
liturgy – all breaches of religious law – in any case somewhat undermined the
Messianic legitimacy of Shabtai Zvi, who finally discredited himself by his
sudden conversion to Islam. The antinomian and heretical aspect of Shataism,
which was cultivated by his disciples and especially by Jacob Frank, led to a
‘dogmatic’ hardening in official Judaism and the condemnation of all human
efforts to hasten the end of time (dehikat ha-ketz). So for reassessment of the
human factor in the process of redemption it was necessary to reassert
voluntarism, which had been discredited by Shabtaism, and to modify the
‘Messianic code’ at three levels. First of all, without denying God’s
supernatural intervention, Rabbis Alkalai and Kalischer considered that it
would only be carried out after an initial phase where man would play an
active and propitiatory role. This separation of two Messianic periods, one for
which man would strive while the other would be decided by God, was
explicitly proposed by Kalischer.

““The redemption of Israel, for which we continue to long, should not be
imagined as a sudden miracle. The Holy One – may His name be blessed –
will not come down suddenly from his heights to give His people their
marching orders. Nor will He send the Messiah from the clouds in the
twinkling of an eye to sound the great trumpets of the dispersed children of
Israel and gather them together in Jerusalem. He will not surround the Holy
City with a wall of fire and will not make the Holy Temple come down from
the highest heaven.

““The bliss and the miracles promised by His servants the Prophets will
certainly take place, for all will be accomplished, but we shall not flee in
affliction and terror, for the redemption of Israel will come in successive
stages, and rays of the deliverance will shine gradually.’ [Derishat Tzion, 1862]
“Because redemption is gradual, two distinct and successive moments can be distinguished – the first natural, the second miraculous. This idea was particularly daring because it made the saving power of God depend on prior action by man. It directly challenged apocalyptic Messianism, which was defended by the majority of the rabbis of the time who expected the deliverance of Israel to come only by a cataclysmic entry of the Messiah.

“For what purpose was this human energy thus liberated to be used? Here again an original distinction made it possible for the Forerunners of Zion to justify an active role for man. In Jewish tradition there was only one true remedy for sin: repentance (teshuvah), i.e. explicit renunciation of evil and adoption of behaviour in accordance with the Law. The idea of inner repentance was so essential that it was supposed to have coexisted with the Law before the proclamation on Mount Sinai, and even to have existed before the creation of the world. This was above all of an individual nature in Talmudic literature, but took on a collective dimension from the sixteenth century, under the impetus of the Kabbala of Isaac Luria. After that the return to a life of holiness ensured not only the salvation of the individual soul, but also restored the original fullness of the world. Teshuvah was no longer limited solely to the existential level, within the narrow confines of the individual; it also concerned the historic level of the national group, and beyond that the cosmic level of mankind. Alkalai went so far as to consider, differing from the classical idea, that collective repentance must necessarily precede individual repentance. There remained the final question: what did this general teshuvah involve?

“It involved physical re-establishment of the Jews in the Land of Israel to recreate the national community. Playing on the double meaning of the word teshuvah, which strictly means return, Kalischer stated that collective repentance meant a geographical return to Zion and not, at least not directly, a spiritual return. So Jews who returned to Palestine were not breaking the religious Law, since in the first instance their return was a purely material one. It was only later, when they were gathered in Zion, that by the grace of God the truly supernatural redemption would start, bringing with it the individual repentance of every Jew and union with God. This bold idea, based on exegesis of religious texts, was a powerful call to action. It meant that Jews could legitimately cooperate and meet together to prepare for and organise their settlement in the Holy Land. By turning to the traditional scholarly interpretation based on the Talmud and Midrash literature, the Forerunners of Zionism encouraged the adoption of an unconventional way ahead, in which the Jewish man had a direct responsibility for the way the world was to develop. Even if it was in a confused way and probably unconsciously, they started a Copernican revolution which Herzl’s Zionism was to bring to full flower, placing man, not God, at the centre of Jewish destiny...”

2. THE GOD-CHOSEN RACE (1856-1881)

*I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord.*

*Jeremiah 13.14.*

*In the whole of Europe the purely national, that is, ethnic principle, once released from its religious fetters, will at its triumph give fruits that are by no means national, but, on the contrary, in the highest degree cosmopolitan, or, more precisely, revolutionary.*


*I am speaking of the unquenchable, inherent thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ.*


The ending of the Crimean War and the accession to the throne of a new Tsar, Alexander II, heralded major changes in both the internal and external policies of Russia. These changes, while aiming to restore Russia’s position vis-à-vis the West and her own westernising intelligentsia, in fact revealed the increased influence of the West and an increased subservience to Western modes of thought and action. They would therefore lay the foundations for the reaction against Western influence that we see in the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II.

*“The New Man”*

Even before the Peace of Paris was signed in March, 1856 Tsar Alexander had lifted some of the restrictions placed by his father, such as the ban on travel abroad and the limitations placed on the numbers of university students. Censorship on the press was also eased. These changes were to have major and long-term effects on Russian history...

The generation that came of age after the Crimean War was characterised by a sharp and categorical rejection of the values of their fathers, who, whether they were Slavophiles or Westernisers, were generally believers in God and lovers of their country. But the sons were almost invariably Westernisers – and of the most extreme kind: not believers but positivists and atheists, not liberals but revolutionary socialists.

Perhaps the most typical representative of this new generation was Dmitri Pisarev. “‘Allow us, youths,’ he wrote in May, 1861, ‘to speak, write and publish, allow us to shake off through our natural scepticism those things which have become stale, that clapped-out junk, which you call general authorities.’ ‘Here is the concluding word of our youth camp: what can be broken should be broken; that which withstands a blow can stay, but that which will fly off into fragments is rubbish; in any case beat to the right and to the left, no harm will come of it nor can come of it…’ ‘Literature in all its

---

varieties must strike at one point; it must with all its powers emancipate the human person from those various restrictions which make him ashamed of his own thought, caste prejudices, the authority of tradition, the striving for a common ideal and all that outdated rubbish which hinders the living man from breathing and developing freely.’

“In his striving to free the human mind from the influence of feeling Pisarev nurtured in himself a hatred for all aesthetics and denied art on principle. He completely denied any significance for portraiture, sculpture, the plastic arts and music. He gave almost the same secondary role to poetry…”

In 1862 there appeared two novels that portrayed the “new man”: Chernyshevsky’ What is to be Done? and Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons.

Chernyshevsky gave a positive portrayal of the new man in the figure of Rakhmetev. “This monolithic titan,” writes Orlando Figes, “who was to serve as a model for a whole generation of revolutionaries (including Lenin), renounces all the pleasures of life in order to harden his superhuman will and make himself insensible to the human suffering which the coming revolution is bound to create. He is a puritan and an ascetic: on one occasion he even sleeps on a bed of nails in order to stifle his sexual urges. He trains his body by gymnastics and lifting weights. He eats nothing but raw steak. He trains mind in a similar way, reading ‘only the essential’ (politics and science) for days and nights on end until he has absorbed the wisdom of humankind. Only then does the revolutionary hero set out on his mission to ‘work for the benefit of the people’. Nothing diverts him from the cause, not even the amorous attentions of a young and beautiful widow, whom he rejects. The life he leads is rigorous and disciplined: it proceeds like clockwork, with so much time for reading every day, so much time for exercise and so on. Yet (and here is the message of the story) it is only through such selfless dedication that the New Man is able to transcend the alienated existence of the old ‘superfluous man’. He finds salvation through politics.

“Allowing the publication of Chernyshevsky’s novel was one of the biggest mistakes the tsarist censor ever made: for it converted more people to the cause of the revolution that all the works of Marx and Engels put together (Marx himself learned Russian in order to read it). Plekhanov, the ‘founder of Russian Marxism’, said that from that novel ‘we have all drawn moral strength and faith in a better future’. The revolutionary theorist Tkachev called it the ‘gospel’ of the movement; Kropotkin the ‘banner of Russian youth’. One young revolutionary of the 1860s claimed that there only three great men in history: Jesus Christ, St. Paul and Chernyshevsky. Lenin, whose own ascetic lifestyle bore a disturbing resemblance to Rakhmetev’s, read the novel five times in one summer. He later acknowledged that it had been crucial in converting him to the revolutionary movement. ‘It completely reshaped me,’ he told Valentinov in 1904. ‘This is a book which changes one

---

220 Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, pp. 338-340 ©.
for a whole lifetime.’ Chernyshevsky’s importance, in Lenin’s view, was that he had ‘not only showed that every right-thinking and really honest man must be a revolutionary, but also – and this is his greatest merit – what a revolutionary must be like’. Rakhmetev, with his superhuman will and selfless dedication to the cause, was the perfect model of the Bolshevik.

“Chernyshevsky’s hero was also an inspiration to the nihilistic students of the 1860s. His asceticism, his belief in science, and his rejection of the old moral order appealed to them. Their ‘nihilism’ entailed a youthful rebellion against the artistic dabbling of their father’s generation (the ‘men of the forties’); a militant utilitarianism, materialism and belief in progress through the application of scientific methods to society; and a general questioning of all authority, moral and religious, which was manifested in a revolutionary passion to destroy. Dmitry Pisarev, one of the student idols of the 1860s, urged his followers to hit out right and left at all institutions, on the grounds that whatever collapsed from their blows was not worth preserving. As Bakunin put it, since the old Russia was rotten to the core, it was ‘a creative urge’ to destroy it. These were the angry young men of their day. Many of them came from relatively humble backgrounds – the sons of priests, such as Chernyshevsky, for example, or of mixed social origins (raznochintsy) – so their sense of Russia’s worthlessness was reinforced by their own feelings of underprivilege. Chernyshevsky, for example, often expressed a deep hatred and feeling of shame for the backwardness of Saratov province where he had grown up. ‘It would be better’, he once wrote, ‘not to be born at all than to be born a Russian.’ There was a long tradition of national self-hatred among the Russian intelligentsia, stemming from the fact that they were so cut off from the ordinary people and had always modelled themselves on the West.”

In Fathers and Sons Turgenev portrayed the new man in the figure of Bazarov, calling him a “nihilist”, that is, “a person who does not take any principle for granted, however much that principle may be revered”. Being a “man of the forties” himself, Turgenev “had intended him as a monstrous caricature of the nihilists, whom he regarded as narrowly materialist, morally slippery and artistically philistine, although later he would pretend otherwise. There was a striking resemblance between Bazarov and the student idol Pisarev. Yet such was the gulf of misunderstanding between the fathers and sons of real life that the young radicals took his faults as virtues and acclaimed Bazarov as their ideal man.

---

222 The term “nihilism” was first introduced, according to B.P. Kosmin (Russkaia Filosofia: Malij Entsiklopedicheskij Slovar’ (Russian Philosophy: Small Encyclopaedic Dictionary), Moscow: Nauka, 1995, p. 253), by Michael Katkov, editor of the conservative Russkij Vestnik (Russian Herald), who diagnosed Bazarov’s spiritual illness as proceeding from his lack of rootedness in the national soil: “Man taken separately does not exist. He is everywhere part of some living connection, or some social organization… Man extracted from the environment is a fiction or an abstraction. His moral and intellectual organization, or, more broadly, his ideas are only then operative in him when he has discovered them first as the organizational forces of the environment in which he happens to live and think.” (Richard Pipes, Russia under the Old Regime, London: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 276).
“The figure of Bazarov in that novel,” writes Fr. Seraphim Rose, “is the type of the ‘new men’ of the ‘sixties’ in Russia, simple-minded materialists and determinists, who seriously thought (like D. Pisarev) to find the salvation of mankind in the dissection of the frog, or thought they had proved the non-existence of the human soul by failing to find it in the course of an autopsy. (One is reminded of the Soviet Nihilists, the ‘new men’ of our own ‘sixties’, who fail to find God in outer space.) This ‘Nihilist’ is the man who respects nothing, bows before no authority, accepts (so he thinks) nothing on faith, judges all in the light of a science taken as absolute and exclusive truth, rejects all idealism and abstraction in favor of the concrete and factual. He is the believer, in a word, in the ‘nothing-but’, in the rejection of everything men have considered ‘higher’, the things of the mind and spirit, to the lower or ‘basic’: matter, sensation, the physical.

“As opposed to Liberal vagueness, the Realist world-view seems perfectly clear and straightforward. In place of agnosticism or an evasive deism, there is open atheism; in place of vague ‘higher values’, naked materialism and self-interest. All is clarity in the Realist universe – except what is most important and most requires clarity: its beginning and end. Where the Liberal is vague about ultimate things, the Realist is childishly naïve: they simply do not exist for him; nothing exists but what is most obvious.

“Such Realism, of course, is a self-contradiction, whether it takes the form of a ‘naturalism’ that tries to establish an absolute materialism and determinism, or a ‘positivism’ that purports to deny the absolute altogether, or the doctrinaire ‘agnosticism’ that so readily discourses on the ‘unknowability’ of ultimate reality…”

“Psychologically,” writes Richard Pipes, “the outstanding quality of the new generation of radicals was a tendency to oversimplify by reducing all experience to some single principle. They had no patience at all with complexities, refinements, qualifications. To deny the simple truth or to try to complicate it by introducing caveats was taken by them as an excuse for inaction: it was a symptom of ‘Oblomovitis’, as extreme sloth came to be known after the hero of Goncharov’s novel. Each radical of this era had a formula, the adoption of which was certainly radically to alter the entire human condition. Chernyshevskii’s vision of a terrestrial paradise was a kind of oleograph of the prophetic writings he must have read in his seminary days; all was simple provided people would only see the truth, and the truth was that only matter existed nought else. Perfectly reasonable objections to the philosophy of materialism Chernyshevskii and his allies shrugged off as undeserving of any attention…

“The radicals of the 1860s wished to create a new man. He was to be totally practical, free of religious and philosophical preconceptions, a ‘rational egotist’, and yet, at the same time, an absolutely dedicated servant of society and fighter for a juster life. The obvious contradiction between empiricism, which insisted that all knowledge derives from observation, and ethical

223 Rose, Nihilism, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1994, pp. 34-35.
idealism which has no equivalent in the material world was never faced by
the radical intellectuals. The religious philosopher, Vladimir Solovëv, once
stated their predicament in a pseudo-syllogism: ‘Man is descended from the
ape, and therefore he must sacrifice himself for the common good.’… But it is a
vacuous religiousness, all zeal and no charity. Solovëv, annoyed by claims of
an alleged identity of ideals of Christianity and socialism once reminded his
readers that whereas Christianity told man to give away his own wealth,
socialism exhorted him to expropriate the wealth of others.

“The radicals were fully conscious how impotent was their small band
confronting the full might of the autocratic state. However, they were not out
to challenge the system politically. They were anarchists who had no interest
in the state as such, regarding it as merely one of the many by-products of
certain ways of thinking and of human relations based on them. Their assault
against the status quo was directed in the first place against opinions, and
their weapons were ideas, where they felt they enjoyed clear superiority over
the establishment. In so far as (according to Comte) the progress of humanity
expressed itself in the gradual widening of man’s intellectual horizons – from
the religious-magical through the philosophical-metaphysical to the
positivist-empirical – the spread of the highest, positivist-material way of
thinking was of itself a most powerful agent of change. Nothing could stand
up to it because it sapped the very foundations of the system. The force of
ideas would bring down states, churches, economies, and social institutions.
Paradoxically, the triumph of materialism would be brought about by the
action of ideas.

“Hence, the crucial role of the intelligentsia. Defined by left publicists in
the narrow sense to mean only that segment of society espousing the
positivist-materialist outlook, the intelligentsia was the thin end of the historic
wedge: behind, followed the masses. It was a fundamental tenet of faith of all
the radical movements of the time that the intelligentsia was the prime mover
of human progress. The Social Democrats, who became popular only in the
1890s, first abandoned this belief and shifted the emphasis to impersonal
economic forces. But it is significant that the one offshoot of Russian Social
Democracy which in the end attained success, Bolshevism, found it necessary
to abandon reliance on impersonal economic forces, and revert to the
traditional stress on the intelligentsia. Lenin’s basic theory held that socialism
could only be brought about by a cadre of professional revolutionaries, since
few workers or peasants could dedicate themselves to full-time revolutionary
activity…”


The Emancipation of the Serfs

Paradoxically, the rise of nihilism and revolutionary sentiment in Russia
coincided with a series of liberal reforms unparalleled in any country on
earth, and undertaken by Tsar Alexander himself, for which he earned the
title of “Tsar-Liberator”. 

These were elicited by the fact that the Crimean war exposed various inadequacies in Russia’s internal life. The first, according to both Slavophiles and Westernisers, was serfdom. The second, according to the Westernisers alone, was the autocracy. “The unsuccessful conclusion of the Crimean war was connected by the Westernisers with God’s punishment striking Russia for all her vices and absurdities, by which they understood the existence in the country of serfdom and the despotic character of the State administration. Despotism and serfdom, as the Westernisers noted, hindered the normal development of the country, preserving its economic, political and military backwardness.”

Geoffrey Hosking writes: “As the Westerner and close friend of Granovskii, B.N. Chicherin put it, ‘Someone bound hand and foot cannot compete with someone free to use all his limbs. Serfdom is a shackle which we drag around with us, and which holds us back just when other peoples are racing ahead unimpeded. Without the abolition of serfdom none of our problems, political, administrative or social, can be solved.’ He gave as an example the way in which the Tsar had had to revoke the decree creating a militia because it aroused among serfs the false hope that they would be freed...

“The existence of serfdom obstructed modernization of the army and thereby burdened the treasury with huge and unproductive military expenditure.” As the military reformer R.A. Fadeyev pointed out, ‘Under serfdom, anyone becoming a soldier is freed; hence one cannot, without shaking the whole social order, admit many people to military service. Therefore we have to maintain on the army establishment in peacetime all the soldiers we need in war.’

“[The Slavophile] Iurii Samarin summed up serfdom as a moral and legal split running right down the middle of Russian society. ‘Why should twenty-two million subjects who pay poll tax to the state be place outside the law and outside any direct relationship with the supreme power, appearing on official lists merely as the lifeless chattels of another social estate?’

“Altogether, it was clear that the political, economic and military system which had enabled Russia to build and defend a huge empire, and to become and remain a European great power, was now not only inadequate to sustain that status but an actual threat to it. The Crimean War had made that manifest and thereby removed the taboos on the discussion of radical change which

---

225 A.I. Sheparneva, “Krymskaia vojna v osveschenii zapadnikov” (The Crimean war as interpreted by the westernisers), Voprosy Istorii (Questions of History), 2005 (9), p. 37.®.
226 This applied also to the production of armaments. The Crimean war had revealed Russian rifles to be very inefficient. Therefore priority had to be given to new armaments technologies and factories. But that required a free labour force instead of the system of forced labour of serfs that was then in operation... For “in the words of a report on the Tula Armory in 1861: ‘It would seem to be generally indisputable that only free men are capable of honest work. He who from childhood has been forced to work is incapable of assuming responsibility as long as his social condition remains unchanged.’” (David Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations, London: Abacus, 1999, p. 241). (V.M.)
had for several decades inhibited statesmen who could see the fragility of the existing order. For the first time since the early eighteenth century, radical reform seemed less dangerous than doing nothing.

“There were two alternative strategies which the regime might adopt in order to bridge the gap between itself and the people... The first was a civic strategy: to create institutions which would enable the various social and ethnic groups to articulate and defend their interests and to participate in the political process. With reservations and backslidings, that was the policy pursued for most of his reign by Alexander II. The second strategy was ethnic: to try to bring people and empire closer together by making Russians more conscious of their national identity and non-Russians more like Russians. That was the policy pursued intermittently by Alexander II and more consciously by his two successors, Alexander III and Nicholas II.

“Proponents of both strategies could be found in the kruzhki and salons. In the late 1850s and early 1860s most supported the civic strategy, but many of them, when its difficulties and drawbacks revealed themselves, transferred their allegiance to the other approach...”

There was also a third, religious strategy: to convert the Westernized classes to a living faith in their native Orthodoxy. But such a strategy could not be presented too openly, and tended to come “packaged”, as it were, in the ethnic strategy. The works of the Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky may be seen as attempts to convert the intelligentsia in this indirect way by promoting the virtues of Russianness as against the corrupting influences of the West. More explicit in their message were such holy men as the Optina elder St. Ambrose, who counselled both Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev and Leontiev, and the great wonderworking priest St. John of Kronstadt.

The question of the emancipation of the serfs tended to cut across these ideological discussions. Supporters of emancipation could be found in all camps; but among the more Slavophile and Orthodox thinkers could also be found anxieties about its possible effects on the ethnic and religious cohesion of the country. In order to understand these concerns, we need to look at the origins of the institutions of serfdom and the peasant commune.

“The commune,” writes Professor Richard Pipes, “was an association of peasants holding communal land allotments. This land, divided into strips, it periodically redistributed among members. Redistribution (peredely), which took place at regular intervals - ten, twelve, fifteen years or so, according to local custom - were carried out to allow for changes in the size of household brought about by deaths, births, and departures. They were a main function of the commune and its distinguishing characteristic. The commune divided its land into strips in order to assure each member of allotments of equal quality and distance from the village. By 1900, approximately one-third of communes, mostly in the western and southern borderlands, had ceased the practice of repartitioning even though formally they were still treated as

‘repartitional communes’. In the Great Russian provinces, the practice of repartition was virtually universal.

“Through the village assembly, the commune resolved issues of concern to its members, including the calendar of field work, the distribution of taxes and other fiscal obligations (for which its members were held collectively responsible), and disputes among households. It could expel troublesome members and have them exiled to Siberia; it had the power to authorize passports, without which peasants could not leave the village, and even to compel an entire community to change its religious allegiance from the official church to one of the sects. The assembly reached its decisions by acclamation: it did not tolerate dissent from the will of the majority, viewing it as antisocial behaviour.”

Now, as we have seen, for both Slavophiles and Westernizers the institution of the commune was the essence of Russianness. For Slavophiles, it was a patriarchal institution of pre-Petrine Russia, while for the Westernizers it was “Russian socialism”. However, Fr. Lev Lebedev points out that the commune was by no means as anciently Russian as was then thought: “In ancient Rus’ (Russia) the peasants possessed or used plots of land completely independently, according to the right of personal inheritance or acquisition, and the commune (mir) had no influence on this possession. A certain communal order obtained only in relation to the matter of taxes and obligations… To this ancient ‘commune’ there corresponds to a certain degree only the rule of ‘collective responsibility’ envisaged by the Statute of 1861 in relation to taxes and obligations. But in Rus’ there was never any ‘commune’ as an organization of communal land-use with the right of the mir to distribute and redistribute plots among members of the ‘commune’…”

Again, according to Pipes, “the origins of the Russian commune are obscure and a subject of controversy. Some see in it the spontaneous expression of an alleged Russian sense of social justice, while others view it as the product of state pressures to ensure collective responsibility for the fulfilment of obligations to the Crown and landlord. Recent studies indicate that the repartitional commune first appeared toward the end of the fifteenth century, became common in the sixteenth, and prevalent in the seventeenth. It served a variety of functions, as useful to officials and landlords as to peasants. The former it guaranteed, through the institution of collective responsibility, the payment of taxes and delivery of recruits; the latter it enabled to present a united front in dealings with external authority. The principle of periodic redistribution of land ensured (at any rate, in theory) that every peasant had enough to provide for his family and, at the same time, to meet his obligations to the landlord and state.”

Turning now to the institution of serfdom: this came into being in the first place as a result of military needs in the sixteenth century. “Before then,”

---

229 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 341-342 ©.
230 Pipes, op. cit., p. 98.
writes Max Hayward, peasants “had been free to leave their masters every year, by tradition, on St. George’s day in November [3/16]. The introduction of serfdom meant that the peasants were bound to the land in the same way and for the same reasons as their masters were bound to the czar’s service. During the eighteenth century, however, just as the privileges of the landowners were made absolute, so were the rights of their serfs whittled away until they became virtually slaves who could – and, notoriously, often were – bought and sold, even if meant separating them from their families. Perhaps the worst aspect of a serf’s life was that – from the time of Peter the Great – he could be sent into the army for twenty-five years…”

Bishop Ignatius wrote: “Russia from the very beginning of her existence until the most recent times has been an extensive military camp. Her history has been one of unceasing war. Russia has sometimes attacked neighbouring peoples, and sometimes repulsed their attacks. For two centuries [during the Kievan period] she was occupied in incessant civil war, while not ceasing to fight her neighbours. Then she fought to overthrow the Tatar yoke, to restore the autocracy, and to re-establish the frontiers of the time of the Equal-to-the-Apostles Vladimir. She fought to open for herself communications with Europe, so as to occupy a place in the number of its states. Finally, she fought against the whole of Europe for the liberation of Europe.

“With the military character of the state, it was impossible for the military class not to occupy the first place in the state. In particular in ancient and middle-period Russia the military element absorbed and overshadowed all other elements...

“The necessity of muzzling the self-will of the simple people and the impossibility of having a police force in an unorganised state forced Tsar Boris Godunov to tie the peasants to the lands. Then all the Russian peasants were turned into unfree peasants [by Catherine II]...

“From the time of Alexander I views on the subject changed: the state finally became organized, a police force consisting of officials was established everywhere, the people began to emerge from their condition of childhood, received new ideas, felt new needs. The nobility began to chafe at being guardians of the peasants, the peasants began to chafe at the restrictions on their liberty, at their patriarchal way of life. All this began to appear and express itself strongly in the second half of the reign of Emperor Nicholas I.

“Now the prosperously reigning Emperor Alexander II has found the matter already prepared and has found it necessary to change the form of administration of landowners’ peasants. What is the essential significance of the improvement in the peasants’ way of life? It is the change in the form of their administration. They are being given freedom, but not self-will. They are coming out from under the jurisdiction of the landowners as if from under the

---

supervisions of educators and guardians, into a relationship of personal service to the state..."\(^{232}\)

Nicholas I had long planned to emancipate the serfs, and was able to improve their lot considerably.\(^{233}\) But it was not enough. Violence was building up in the countryside. This was not caused by poverty alone – as English observers noted, the Russian peasants were on the whole richer than their British or Irish counterparts.\(^{234}\) More important was a feeling of injustice. For the peasants’ understanding of their relationship with their noble masters was: “we are yours, but the land is ours”, or even: “we are yours, and you are ours”.\(^{235}\) And so in 1857 Alexander II declared: “It is better to abolish serfdom from above than wait for it to abolish itself from below.”

Oliver Figes writes: “The soldiers who had fought in the Crimean War had been led to expect their freedom, and in the first years of Alexander’s reign, before the emancipation was decreed, there were 500 peasant uprisings against the gentry on the land.\(^{236}\) Like [the Decembrist Prince Sergius] Volkonsky, Alexander was convinced that emancipation was, in Volkonsky’s words, a ‘question of justice… a moral and a Christian obligation, for every citizen that loves his Fatherland.’ As the Decembrist explained in a letter to Pushkin, the abolition of serfdom was ‘the least the state could do to recognize the sacrifice the peasantry has made in the last two wars: it is time to recognize that the Russian peasant is a citizen as well’.”\(^{237}\)


\(^{233}\) L.A. Tikhomirov writes: “Under Emperor Nicholas I the government undertook a restructuring [of the situation] of the State peasants. The Emperor made a very good choice for the executor of his thought in Count Kiselev, one of the greatest statesmen that Russia has ever given birth to. Lands the size of the whole of Europe were united in the hands of the State, the peasants were abundantly endowed [with them], and the system of repatriations gave an exit to new generations of the farming class. A remarkable system of national provision for the struggle against poor harvests was created. The improvement of the farming culture of 20 million peasants became the object of obligatory and conscious work on the part of the ministry. Moreover, the peasants were personally free, and their communities were ruled by men chosen by themselves. After two decades of effort this extensive organisation was finally put on its feet” (in “Pochemy ia perestal byt’ revoliutsionerom” (Why I ceased to be a revolutionary), Kritika Demokratii (A Critique of Democracy), Moscow, 1997, p. 26 ®).


\(^{236}\) Eric Hobsbawm writes: “There were 148 outbreaks of peasant unrest in 1826-34, 216 in 1835-44, 348 in 1844-54, culminating in the 474 outbreaks of the last years preceding the emancipation of 1861.” (The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848, London: Abacus, 1962, p. 362)

“The peasants,” wrote the senator, Ya. A. Soloviev, “either were disturbed in whole regions by false rumours about freedom, or were running away from cruel landlords, or resisted the decrees of unjust landowners. The landlords feared both the government and the peasants. In a word, serfdom was beginning to shake and with each day became more and more unsuitable: both for the peasants, and for the landlords, and for the government.”

And so, whatever the merits of the previous system, it could not continue to exist unaltered. Not only the westernizing intellectuals clamoured for its removal, but also the Orthodox peasantry. In any case, there were major benefits to be gained from emancipation from a purely material, economic point of view. Emancipation would pave the way for more efficient agriculture and the provision of labour for the industrialization of Russia, so sorely needed in view of the relative failure of the Crimean War, by freeing the peasants from the commune as soon as they had paid their redemption payments. These would then be free to seek work in the towns and factories.

Moreover, it would save the poorer nobles from bankruptcy. For “by 1859, one-third of the estates and two-thirds of the serfs owned by the landed nobles had been mortgaged to the state and noble banks. Many of the smaller landowners could barely afford to feed their serfs. The economic argument for emancipation was becoming irrefutable, and many landowners were shifting willy-nilly to the free labour system by contracting other people’s serfs. Since the peasantry’s redemption payments would cancel out the gentry’s debts, the economic rationale was becoming equally irresistible.”

Nor would they have to wait for the peasants to pay them: the government would immediately pay them 80% of the value of the land by wiping out their debts, while the peasants, having been given their freedom gratis would be given a 49-year period within which to pay for the land at a cheap rate of interest. The remaining 20% would be paid by the peasants directly to the landowners in cash payments or labour. Moreover, they would be helped by generous loans from the government.

The Supporters of Emancipation

The reform, which was announced in a manifesto written by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow on February 19, 1861, was welcomed by many, including highly conservative churchmen such as Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, who saw it as “a most happy initiative, a majestic order amazing Europe”.

---

239 Figes, Natasha’s Dream, op. cit., p. 144. “More than 80% of the small and middle nobility were in debt to the state on the security of their own estates, and this debt would have been unrepayable if it had not been for the reform. The value of the payments for the land cleared many debts.” (Krivosheev and Krivosheev, Istoria Rossiskoj Imperii 1861-1894 (History of the Russian Empire), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 20 ®).
He argued: “1. That both the Word of God and the Church – both the Universal Church and the Russian Church – in the persons of the Holy Fathers, has never said anything at all about the abolition of civil slavery, that there is nothing in common between spiritual and civil freedom, that both slaves and masters were constantly taught by the Church the most exact and conscientious fulfilment of their obligations, that the violators of Christ’s commandment on love were subject to rebukes and exhortations.

“2. That the emancipation of slaves has always been recognized by the Church as a good deed, a deed of mercy, a deed of brotherly Christian love.

“... The most pious Russian Autocrat has indicated to the class of the nobility the accomplishing of a great Christian work, a work of love. The Church invokes the blessing of God upon the great work of the fatherland with her warmest prayers. Her pastors invite the nobility to noble self-renunciation, to sacrifice, to the immediate sacrifice of material goods for the sake of moral goods, while they instruct the peasants to accept this gift of the Tsar with due veneration and humility – the true indications that the gift will be used wisely and usefully.

“But one must not think that civil liberty morally exalts only the peasants: the class of the nobility must unfailingly enter onto a higher level of moral achievement in renouncing the ownership of slaves. That is the characteristic of self-sacrifice and the offering of material goods as a sacrifice for spiritual goods: it exalts, changes and perfects man.”

According to Dostoyevsky, far from undermining the traditional bonds of society, emancipation in fact strengthened the bond between the Tsar and the people, the union in faith and love which was at the very heart of Holy Russia. For the peasants had always looked to the Tsar as their father and protector against the greed of the landowners and officials. They had been expecting the Tsar to liberate them, and their expectations had been fulfilled. For Dostoyevsky, as Igor Volgin writes, “the reform of 1861 created a historical precedent of exceptional importance. It presented an example of voluntary renunciation of an age-old [100-year-old] historical injustice, a peaceful resolution of a social conflict that threatened to have terrible consequences. In this sense the emancipation of the peasants was as it were the first step to ‘the Russian resolution of the question’: the action taken from above hinted at the possibility of the creation of a world-order that would be founded on justice – and only on justice.”

“Is the saying that ‘the Tsar is their father’ a mere phrase, an empty sound in Russia? He who so believes understands nothing about Russia! Nay, this is a profound and most original idea, - a live and mighty organism of the people merging with the Tsar. This idea is a force which has been moulding itself in the course of centuries, especially the last two centuries, which were so dreadful to the people, but which we so ardently eulogize for European

240 Polnoe Zhizneopisanie Sviatitelia Ignatia, pp. 335-336.
241 Volgin, Poslednij God Dostoevskogo (Dostoyevsky’s Last Year), Moscow, 1986, pp. 32-33 ©.
enlightenment, forgetting the fact that this enlightenment was bought two centuries ago at the expense of serfdom and a Calvary of the Russian people serving us. The people waited for their liberator, and he came. Why, then, shouldn’t they be his own, true children? The Tsar to the people is not an extrinsic force such as that of some conqueror (as were, for instance, the dynasties of the former Kings of France), but a national, all-unifying force, which the people themselves desired, which they nurtured in their hearts, which they came to love, for which they suffered because from it alone they hoped for their exodus from Egypt. To the people, the Tsar is the incarnation of themselves, their whole ideology, their hopes and beliefs.

“So recently these hopes have been completely realized. Would the people renounce their further hopes? Wouldn’t the latter, on the contrary, be strengthened and reinforced, since after the peasants’ reform the Tsar became the people’s father not merely in hope but in reality. This attitude of the people toward the Tsar is the genuine, adamant foundation of every reform in Russia. If you wish, there is in Russia no creative, protective and leading force other than this live organic bond of the people with their Tsar, from which everything is derived. For instance, who would have ventured to dream about the peasants’ reform without knowing and believing in advance that the Tsar was a father to the people, and that precisely this faith of the people in the Tsar as their father would save and protect everything and stave off the calamity?…”

The Critics of Emancipation

Inevitably, however, many were disappointed. Many of the peasants had not expected to pay for the land, and found the payments greater than the rents they had been paying earlier. Moreover, once liberated they lost access to timber and firewood in landowners’ forests.

Again, “the Law allowed landowners considerable leeway in choosing the bits of land for transfer to the peasantry – and in setting the price for them. Overall, perhaps half the farming land in European Russia was transferred from the gentry’s ownership to the communal tenure of the peasantry, although the precise proportion depended largely on the landowner’s will. Owing to the growth of the population it was still far from enough to liberate the peasantry from poverty.”

Again, for those peasants who did not take advantage of their freedom to leave the land, and until they had paid their redemption payments, the authority of the commune over them would actually increase now that the authority of the landlord was removed. If one member of the commune could not contribute payments or labour, he fell into debt, as it were, to the commune.

---

Moreover, "during the conservative reign of Alexander III legislation was passed which made it virtually impossible for peasants to withdraw. This policy was inspired by the belief that the commune was a stabilizing force which strengthened the authority of the bol'shak [head of the individual peasant household], curbed peasant anarchism, and inhibited the formation of a volatile landless proletariat." So while the government genuinely wanted to free the peasant, both as a good deed in itself, and in order to exploit his economic potential, its desire to strengthen the bonds of the commune tended to work in the opposite direction...

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow thought "that Russia was not sufficiently prepared for emancipation, that there was no unity even among those who had been called to put it into effect, and that, finally, the nobility were not acquainted with the subject presented to them.

"We can clearly see in what form the holy hierarch wanted to see a resolution of the peasant question from his letter to Archimandrite Anthony [Bochkov] dated 3 January, 1858: ‘‘In Austria,’ he wrote to his deputy, ‘the new organization of the peasants, which ours wishes to resemble, has not turned out successfully. Some lands, which used to be worked when they were under the authority of the landowners, remain unworked after the liberation of the peasants. The estates appropriated by the peasants are being sold off at auctions because dues are not being paid, with the result that poverty is on the increase.

“But with us, it seems, things could be better if the good landowners correctly interpreted the matter to the peasants and established some well-thought-out agreements with them. One landowner summoned the elders among his peasants, and gave them to read through what the government proposed; and although their first word was: it was better the old way, still, seeing the necessity of it, they began to discuss an agreement. The landowner offered them estates, not through redemption payments, but as a gift; then he said how much land he was giving them for agriculture, with what payment per dessiatina [2.7 acres], while he offered that his own landowner’s arable land could be hired for ploughing; and they, agreeing to all the rest, said about the last article: “No, governor, you’ll destroy yourself; hiring free labourers will be expensive; say that we work this portion for you as before; it’s not difficult for us.” Continuing the agreement in this way, they drew up rules in which they took precautions also against disorders arising from self-will. If that’s how best to set about the task, the matter could be worked out also with the worse with less fear of harm. But will many understand and make the effort?’

“In essence, of course, the holy hierarch was not an opponent of the emancipation of the serfs, he only wanted it to take place in a better way than that marked out by the government. ‘We must pray,’ wrote Philaret to Archimandrite Anthony, ‘that the Lord will instruct them [the reformers] in that which is true and useful.’

“However, all this was only the thoughts of the holy hierarch with his spiritual father: in society he preferred to be silent.

“‘The peasant question is dark, contentious, unresolved,’ wrote Philaret to Bishop Alexis of Tula, ‘it does not yet allow us to foresee how it will be resolved, so that we can talk about it only through necessity and obligation, and that with great caution... and it may happen that we are not discerning the thought of the government, which is as yet not completely revealed; and in such a situation it is vain for us to depart from the ecclesiastical way in order to fall into a pit on the political way.’

“The fear of falling into a pit forced Philaret to watch the development of events with regard to the peasant question in silence. But when the matter was coming to a conclusion, a manifesto on the liberation had to be composed. And at this point, willy-nilly, the hierarch was, so to speak, forcibly dragged into the political whirlpool, from he had tried so hard to keep away, as from something that did not concern him. The hierarch was asked to compose the project of a manifesto. True, the original composition of this document was entrusted to Yu. Samarin under the editorship of N. Miliutin and with the participation in the composition of Great Prince Constantine Nikolaevich and Bludov. But the project composed by Samarin, both because of its excess of details not understandable to the people, and because of the weightiness of its style, did not satisfy expectations. It was then decided that this work should be placed on the metropolitan of Moscow.

“Philaret refused, referring to the fact that ‘the subject of the task was difficult for him, being far from his circle of understanding and occupation’, but agreed to compose the project of the manifesto after long discussions with the secret counsellor Topilsky, and that not for the sake of his consciousness of satisfying a demand, but for the sake of obedience to the Tsar.

“In the opinion of various contemporaries, the manifesto turned out to be heavy, without sufficient uplift of spirit, without the spark from God in it. And this is completely understandable. The hierarch wrote it without inner fire, simply as a duty, as a necessity, with many doubts about the successful outcome of the reform itself.

“Philaret feared the ‘great affair’, he feared its consequences. The transformation of the life of the landowners’ peasants was not a matter of joy for him; and he deliberately made no mention of joy in the project of the manifesto. ‘People who believe in theoretical progress delight in the broad transformation that is being undertaken,’ he wrote on February 19, 1861, ‘but many well-intentioned people with experience are waiting for it with perplexity, foreseeing difficulties.’

“In intimation of some disturbances, three days before the signing of the manifesto, the hierarch wrote with sincerity: ‘O Lord, save the Tsar and have mercy on all of us. It has been noted that the expectations of the people are
strongly trained on the 19th; but it will hardly produce what they are expecting... Now they are writing from Petersburg about their anxieties, including that the first blow will fall on the higher clergy, the monasteries, the churches.

“The great matter was carried out, it became ‘great’ also in the eyes of Philaret. And only now did the hierarch express himself in defence of the reform and castigate all those who said that an inadequate freedom had been granted.”

It was the radicals who talked about “inadequate freedom” and the “scandal” of serfdom. Thus Herzen “sounded his outrageous bell [his journal entitled The Bell] and called on the peasants to take up their axes”, as Bishop Ignatius put it. Again, Dobroliubov wrote to Slavutinsky: “We must call on readers to pay heed to what surrounds them, we must prick their eyes with all kinds of horrors, persecute them, torment them, give them no rest – so that the whole of this kingdom of dirt may become repulsive to the reader, so that, cut to the quick, he may jump up and cry out ardently: what kind of slave labour is this! It would be better to die, I do not want to live any longer in this maelstrom.”

However, the real problem was not so much “inadequate freedom” as the fact that emancipation introduced “the wrong kind of freedom”. True freedom, according to Metropolitan Philaret, “is Christian freedom – internal, not external freedom, - moral and spiritual, not carnal, - always doing good and never rebellious, which can live in a hut just as comfortably as in an aristocrat’s or tsar’s house, - which a subject can enjoy as much as the master without ceasing to be a subject, - which is unshakeable in bonds and prison, as we can see in the Christian martyrs.” This freedom was not lost under serfdom. Rather, it was emancipation that threatened this true Christian freedom by introducing the demand for another, non-Christian kind.

In fact, as we have seen, the old order, though harsh, was never really one of traditional slavery. It had been dictated by the military situation of the time, in which Russia had vast extended borders with no natural defences. A quasi-monastic way of life was developed in which everyone from the Tsar to the humblest peasant had his “obedience”. The Tsar had to obey his calling; the nobles had to obey the Tsar (by providing military service or service in the bureaucracy); and the peasants had to obey the landowners. It was a common effort for a common cause – the preservation of Orthodox Russia. Nobody literally “owned” anybody else. But there were relations of obedience enforced by law that were carried out in the Spirit of Orthodoxy. For, as St. John of Kronstadt said, “the varied forms of service... to the tsar and the fatherland are an image of the main service to our heavenly King, which must

245 Snychev, op. cit., pp. 342-344.
246 Polnoe Zhizneopisanie, p. 357. And yet even Herzen admitted that “it is impossible to free men in their external life more than they have been freed inwardly” (To an old friend).
continue forever. Him first of all are we obliged to serve, as fervent slaves of His by creation, redemption and providence... Earthly service is a test, a preparatory service for service in the heavens”.

Emancipation changed the relationship both between the state and the landowners, and between the landowners and the peasants. As the nobles began to lose their feeling of duty and obedience to the state, the peasants, correspondingly, began to see their obedience to the nobles as a burden that was not justified, as in the past, by the defence of the land. As such, the formal structure probably had to change in view of the change in its spiritual content. But the change in formal structure from patriarchal to civil meant that the sanctifying bonds of obedience broke down still faster than they would have done otherwise. To that extent, the reform, though rational from a politico-economic point of view, was harmful. As Schema-Monk Boris of Optina said: “The old order was better, even though I would really catch it from the nobleman... Now it’s gotten bad, because there’s no authority; anyone can live however he wants.”

“Moreover,” write Krivoshein and Krivoshein, “the large peasant family began to break up, which also did not profit the peasant economy in the first post-reform years. Immediately the landowner and the official lost their power over the persons of the peasants, the latter tried to divide up their common property and live in separate households. From the point of view of agricultural productivity, this step must be considered to be retrogressive. The peasants in no way wanted to live under one roof with their parents and relatives and work with them. The power of the bolshak (head of the family) was reduced to nothing, and with it one of the important stabilising factors in village life was weakened.”

Again, the Populist Gleb Uspensky: “Under serfdom our peasantry was placed in a more correct relationship to the land than today; the landowner had to support everything that made agriculturalists out of his peasants. Even military service was more just: they first took those who belonged to large families; they had been preceded by all those who were incapable and the drunkards, so that there were no workers in the village who prevented the mouzhik from being an agriculturalist. ‘Our ancestors knew their people, they wanted the best for them and gave them Christianity, the best that mankind has come to in centuries of suffering. While now we rummage around in every kind of national and European bric-a-brac, in rubbish dumps.’ In the same way, ‘the parish school, the school of the people, was founded on the principle: transform the egoistical heart into a heart open to all suffering.’

---

249 St. John of Kronstadt, Moia Zhizn’ o Khriste (My Life in Christ), Moscow, 1894 ®.
250 Victor Afanasyev, Elder Barsanuphius of Optina, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 2000, pp. 216, 217. The old family retainer in Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard also believed that the rot set in with “Freedom” (Hayward, in Obolensky, op. cit., p. 13).
Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: “Later critics of the reform also justly point out that it suffered from an excessive ‘slant’ in one direction, being inspired most of all by the idea of the immediate emancipation of the serfs from the landowners, but without paying due attention to the question how and with what to substitute the guiding, restraining and, finally, educating function of ‘the lords’ (the landowners) for the peasants. Indeed, delivered as it were in one moment to themselves, to their own self-administration (after 100 years of the habit of being guided by the lord), could the Russian peasants immediately undertake their self-administration wisely and truly, to their own good and that of the Fatherland? That is the question nobody wanted to think about at the beginning, being sometimes ruled by the illusion of the ‘innateness’ of the people’s wisdom!… They began to think about this, as often happens with us, ‘in hindsight’, after they had encountered disturbances and ferment among the peasantry. All the indicated mistakes in the reform of 1861 led to the peasantry as a whole being dissatisfied in various respects. Rumours spread among them that ‘the lords’ had again deceived them, that the Tsar had given them not that kind of freedom, that the real ‘will of the Tsar’ had been hidden from them, while a false one had been imposed upon them. This was immediately used by the ‘enlighteners’ and revolutionaries of all kinds. The peasants gradually began to listen not to the state official and the former lord, but to the student, who promised ‘real’ freedom and abundant land, attracting the peasant with the idea of ‘the axe’, by which they themselves would win all this from the deceiver-lords… In such a situation only the Church remained in her capacity of educator and instructor of the people, which task she immediately began to fulfil, although it was very difficult because of the restricted and poor condition of the Church herself. Therefore there soon arose the question of the broadening and strengthening of the rights and opportunities of the Russian Church. The most powerful and influential person who completely understood this was Pobedonostsev, who did a great deal in this respect, thereby eliciting the hatred of all ‘democrats’.

“But in spite of inadequacies and major mistakes, the reform of 1861, of course, exploded and transfigured the life of Great Russia. A huge mass of the population (about 22 million people) found themselves a free and self-governing estate (class), juridically equal to the other estates. This immediately elicited the need to build its life and activity on new foundations…”

Russia in Asia

In foreign policy, far from retreating into a lair to lick her wounds from the Crimean war, the Russian bear was soon showing a remarkable resilience, especially in Asia. Thus in 1859, following the victory of Britain over China in the Second Opium War in 1856, and as a British and French force was approaching Peking to enforce the terms that had been agreed, Count Nicholas Ignatiev managed to secure the weakened Emperor’s formal ceding of Manchuria to Russia. Then, when the foreign troops had left Peking after securing the agreement they wanted, Ignatiev signed the Treaty of Peking with the Chinese.

Peter Hopkirk writes: “It had been a Machiavellian performance of the highest order by the young Ignatiev, then still in his late twenties, and a remarkable diplomatic triumph for the Russians. First, they had formally added a vast tract of territory, the size of France and Germany together, to their already huge northern Asiatic empire. Second, they had got the Chinese to agree to their opening consulates at Kashgar, in Eastern Turkestan, and at Urga, the capital of Mongolia, then both under Peking’s rule. They had thereby stolen a march on their rivals, the British, who had obtained no such facility, for the establishment of consulates meant that Russian merchants and goods would have exclusive access to these important new markets. It was with considerable satisfaction, therefore, that Ignatiev left Peking on November 22 and rode hard for St. Petersburg. ‘Not since 1815,’ one British historian has written, ‘had Russia concluded such an advantageous treaty, and probably never before had such a feat been carried off by so young a Russian diplomat. The successes of 1860 went far to obliterate the bitter memories of the Crimean defeat, the more especially as they had been achieved in good measure by hoodwinking the English.’”

Machiavellianism? Hoodwinking? From the Russian Tsars? Such an idea would have been considered outrageously unjust in relation to Alexander I or Nicolas I, both of whom conducted their foreign policy on the basis of high principle: Alexander (from 1815, at any rate) – on the basis of the Sacred Union of Christian powers against the revolution, and Nicholas on the basis of the interests of the Orthodox Christian commonwealth as a whole. But in the new reign a group of senior army officers and diplomats, determined to take revenge for their country’s defeat in the Crimean War, took advantage of the inexperience of the young tsar to push through a foreign policy that was often Machiavellian, sometimes outrightly deceitful and imperialist in the western sense – that is, designed, not for any higher spiritual purpose, such as the spreading of the Orthodox Christian Faith among the pagans, but simply in order to increase the political and economic power of Russia and steal a march on the scheming British.

This was particularly clear in Central Asia, where from 1864 the Russians gradually acquired huge territories by a series of sudden coups and advances, each time declaring that they had no intention of acquiring more territory. The first such disavowal came in December, 1864, when just after the Russians had seized the oasis towns of Chimkent and Turkestan from the Khan of Khokand, the Russian Foreign Minister Prince Gorchakov issued a memorandum to the European Powers: “‘The position of Russia in Central Asia,’ declared this celebrated document, ‘is that of all civilized States which are brought into contact with half-savage nomad populations possessing no fixed social organisation. In such cases it always happens that the more civilized State is forced, in the interests of the security of its frontiers and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whose turbulent and unsettled character make them undesirable neighbours.’ In their turn these newly pacified regions had to be protected from the

depredations of the lawless tribes beyond them, and so on. The Russian government therefore had to choose between bringing civilisation to those suffering under barbarian rule and abandoning its frontiers to anarchy and bloodshed. ‘Such has been the fate,’ Gorchakov wrote, ‘of every country which has found itself in a similar position.’ Britain and the other colonial powers had been ‘irresistibly forced, less by ambition than by imperious necessity, into this onward march’. The greatest difficulty, he concluded, lay in deciding where to stop. Nonetheless, having consolidated its frontier with Khokand, Russia was intending to advance no further.

“‘We find ourselves,’ he assured the other powers, ‘in the presence of a more solid, less unsettled and better organised State, fixing for us with geographical precision that point at which we must halt.’ Whether he himself really believed this, or whether he was merely playing for time on behalf of a government already bent on subjugating the khanates, is a question which still exercises scholars. Certainly N.A. Khalfin, the Soviet historian of this era, believes that it was a deliberate smokescreen aimed at deceiving the British. Needless to say, the Russian advance did not stop there as Gorchakov had promised. Within a few months they were driving south once more. The great Russian push into Central Asia was about to begin...”

Essentially the Russians were playing the same “great game” of colonial conquest as the British had been playing. For that reason, the British could not protest with too much conviction, and preferred the policy of “masterful inactivity”. And so by 1881, the Russians had consolidated their border along the northern frontier of Afghanistan, while that country stood as the neutral buffer State between Russian Central Asia and British India.

The reaction at home was mixed. “In 1874,” writes Figes, “the Ministry of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg hosted an extraordinary exhibition by the artist Vasily Vereshchagin, whose enormous battle scenes of the Turkestan campaign had recently returned with high acclaim from a European tour. Huge crowds came to see the exhibition (30,000 copies of the catalogue were sold in the first week) and the building of the Ministry became so cramped that several fights broke out as people jostled for a better view. Vereshchagin’s pictures were the public’s first real view of the Imperial war which the Russians had been fighting for the past ten years against the Muslim tribes as the Tsar’s troops conquered Turkestan. The Russian public took great pride in the army’s capture of the khanates of Kokand, Bukhara and Khiva, followed by its conquest of Tashkent and the arid steppe of Central Asia right up to the borders with Afghanistan and British India. After its defeat in the Crimean War, the campaign showed the world that Russia was a power to be reckoned with. But Vereshchagin’s almost photographic battle images revealed a savagery which had not been seen by civilians before. It was not clear who was more ‘savage’ in his pictures of the war: the Russian troops or their Asiatic opponents. There was ‘something fascinating,

---

255 Hopkirk, op. cit, pp. 304-305.

256 Even the great Dostoyevsky could not resist a little “Great Russian jingoism”: “In Europe we were hangers-on, whereas in Asia we shall go as masters”
something truly horrifying, in the wild energy of these canvases’, concluded one reviewer in the press. ‘We see a violence that could not be French or even from the Balkans: it is half-barbarian and semi-Asiatic – it is a Russian violence.’

“It had not originally been the painter’s aim to draw this parallel. Vereshchagin started out as an official war artist, and it was not part of his remit to criticize the conduct of the Russian military… But his experience of the war in Turkestan had given rise to doubts about the ‘civilizing mission’ of the Russian Empire in the East. On one occasion, after the Russian troops had massacred the people of a Turkmen village, Vereshchagin dug their graves himself. None of his compatriots would touch the dead. Vereshchagin came to see the war as a senseless massacre… The message of Vereshchagin’s epic canvases was clearly understood. He portrayed the Asian tribesmen, not as savages, but as simply human beings who were driven to defend their native land. ‘What the public saw,’ Stasov later wrote, ‘was both sides of the war – the military conquest and the human suffering. His paintings were the first to sound a loud protest against the barbarians of the Imperial war.’

“There was a huge storm of controversy. Liberals praised the artists for his stance against all war. Conservatives denounced him as a ‘traitor to Russia’, and mounted a campaign to strip him of his Order of St. George. General Kaufman became so enraged when he saw the artist’s pictures that he began to shout and swear at Vereshchagin and physically attacked him in the presence of his fellow officers. The General Staff condemned his paintings as a ‘slander against the Imperial army’, and called for them to be destroyed; but the Tsar, ironically, was on the liberals’ side…

“In Russia’s educated circles the military conquest of the Central Asian steppe produced two opposing reactions. The first was the sort of imperialist attitude which Vereshchagin’s paintings had done so much to offend. It was based on a sense of racial superiority to the Asiatic tribes, and at the same time a fear of those same tribes, a fear of being swamped by the ‘yellow peril’ which reached fever pitch in the war against Japan. The second reaction was no less imperialist but it justified the empire’s eastern mission on the questionable grounds that Russia’s cultural homeland was on the Eurasian steppe. By marching into Asia, the Russians were returning to their ancient home. This rationale was first advanced in 1840 by the orientalist Grigoriev. ‘Who is closer to Asia than we are?’ Grigoriev had asked. ‘Which of the European races retained more of the Asian element than the Slavic races did, the last of the great European peoples to leave their ancient homeland in Asia?’ It was ‘Providence that had called upon the Russians to reclaim the Asian steppe’; and because of ‘our close relations with the Asiatic world’, this was to be a peaceful process of ‘reunion with our primeval brothers’, rather than the subjugation of a foreign race. During the campaign in Central Asia the same thesis was advanced. The Slavs were returning to their ‘prehistoric home’, argued Colonel Vieniukov, a geographer in Kaufman’s army, for ‘our ancestors had lived by the Indus and the Oxus before they were displaced by the Mongol hordes’. Vieniukov maintained that Central Asia should be settled
by the Russians. The Russian settlers should be encouraged to intermarry
with the Muslim tribes to regenerate the ‘Turanian’ race that had once lived
on the Eurasian steppe. In this way the empire would expand on the ‘Russian
principle’ of ‘peaceful evolution and assimilation’ rather than by conquest
and by racial segregation, as in the empires of the European states.

“The idea that Russia had a cultural and historic claim in Asia became a
founding myth of the empire. During the construction of the Trans-Siberian
Railway in the 1890s, Prince Ukhtomsky, the press baron and adviser to the
young Tsar Nicholas II, advocated the expansion of the empire across the
whole of the Asian continent, reasoning that Russia was a sort of ‘older
brother’ to the Chinese and the Indians. ‘We have always belonged to Asia,’
Ukhtomsky told the Tsar. ‘We have lived its life and felt its interests. We have
nothing to conquer.’

“Inspired by the conquest of Central Asia, Dostoyevsky, too, advanced the
notion that Russia’s destiny was not in Europe, as had so long been supposed,
but rather in the East. In 1881 he told the readers of his Diary of a Writer:
‘Russia is not only in Europe but in Asia as well… We must cast aside our
servile fear that Europe will call us Asiatic barbarians and say that we are
more Asian than European… This mistaken view of ourselves as exclusively
Europeans and not Asians (and we have never ceased to be the latter)… has
cost us very dearly over these two centuries, and we have paid for it by the
loss of our spiritual independence… It is hard for us to turn away from our
window on Europe; but it is a matter of our destiny… When we turn to Asia,
with our new view of her, something of the same sort may happen to us as
happened to Europe when America was discovered. For, in truth, Asia for us
is that same America which we still have not discovered. With our push
towards Asia we will have a renewed upsurge of spirit and strength… In our
Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, while in Asia we shall be the masters.
In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we can be Europeans. Our mission,
our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit and draw us on; the
movement needs only to be started.’”

Russia certainly did have a civilizing mission in Asia: to bring Orthodoxy
to its peoples. Unfortunately, this mission was sometimes forgotten in the
ardour of nationalist passion. But in the wake of Russia’s conquering armies,
Orthodoxy did make gains – but more among the pagans than among the
Muslims, and even more in Russian America beyond Asia – Alaska - than in
Asia proper. However, in 1867 the Tsar sold Alaska and the Aleutian islands
to the United States for $7.2 million. Could the need to pay for the armies in
Central Asia have motivated this unexpected decision? If so, then it was a
mistake - there were gold deposits under the Alaskan soil.258 But more
importantly, Alaska, in contrast to Central Asia, had proved to be fertile

258 See M.V. Krivosheev, Yu. V. Krivosheev, op. cit., 2000, pp. 130-137. It could also be argued
that only 10,000 Russians lived in Alaska as opposed to 40,000 Indians, and that the defence
of the vast and distant territory against the expected influx of American explorers and settlers
was not practical.
territory for Russian missionaries, and the Indians were therefore not merely colonial subjects but brothers in Christ. What could justify the abandonment of thousands of brothers in Christ to a heretical government (even if the church buildings remained in the hands of the Orthodox, and permission was granted to the Russian Spiritual Mission to continue its work in Alaska)? Was not the Third Rome obliged to protect the interests of her converts in the New World? As it turned out, Divine Providence protected the Orthodox Indians where the Russian tsar did not: in 1917 Russia herself came under the yoke of the atheists, so from that point of view it was just as well that the Orthodox Alaskans found themselves within the borders of another State...

Metropolitan Philaret and Church Reform

We have noticed the important role played by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow in the emancipation manifesto. It is not surprising, therefore, that his advice should have been solicited in other reforms, too, including, of course, Church reform.

And yet, as Gregory Frazee writes, “from the very onset of the Great Reforms, Philaret expressed deep reservations about ambitious plans for a radical reconstruction of Russian state and society. In a sermon delivered at Chudovo Monastery in 1856 (and ostensibly directed at more radical perspectives, but implicitly applicable to those with excessive ambitions for reform), Philaret upbraided those who ‘work on the creation and establishment of better principles (in their opinion) for the formation and transformation of human cities. For more than half a century, the most educated part of mankind, in places and times, see their transformation efforts in action, but as yet, never and nowhere, have they created a “calm and tranquil life”. They know how to disturb the ancient buildings of states, but not how to create something solid. According to their blueprints, new governments are suddenly built – and just as quickly collapse. They feel burdened by the paternal, reasonable authority of the tsar; they introduce the blind and harsh authority of the popular crowd and endless fights among those seeking power. They seduce people by assuring that they will lead them to freedom, but in reality they lead them away from lawful liberty to wilfulness, and then subject them to oppression.’

“Philaret was still more candid in his private correspondence. The same year, 1856, after receiving a far-reaching proposal to restore the Church’s prerogatives, Philaret warned that ‘it is easy to discern what should be improved, but not so easy to show the means to attain that improvement.’ His experience over the next few years only intensified his abiding scepticism. In February 1862, he wrote a close confidante that ‘now is not the time to seek new inventions for Church authority. May God help us to preserve that which has not been plundered or destroyed’.”

---

Appeals were even made, writes Fr. Alexis Nikolin, “for the summoning of a Local Council of the Russian Church. However, conditions for that had not yet ripened. The Russian Church, in the opinion of the holy hierarch Philaret (Drozdov), was not yet ready for it at that time. His words are well-known: ‘The misfortune of our time is that the quantity of sins and carelessnesses that have piled up in the course of more than one century almost exceed the strength and means of correction.’ The holy hierarch Philaret considered that a change in the situation could take place as a result of a Church initiative, but not from State supervision…”

Why should Philaret, the churchman par excellence, turn down the opportunity to increase the Church’s independence in relation to the State? Partly because “the Great Reforms... entailed a relaxation of the oppressive censorship of the Nikolaevan era, primarily to stimulate public involvement in the reform process and to complement and correct the activities of officialdom. But glasnost’ – as it was then termed – also entailed an unprecedented discussion of the Church and its problems. Philaret, understandably, found this critical comment in the press deeply disturbing, partly because it revealed the transparent animus of the educated and privileged toward the Church, but also because the government – ostensibly duty bound to defend the Church – allowed such publications to circulate. Even a conservative newspaper like Moskovskie Vedomosti elicited sharp complaints from Philaret, but far worse was to appear in the moderate and liberal press. The flow of antireligious publications made Philaret increasingly suspicious: ‘Is there not a conspiracy striving to bring everything honourable into contempt and to undermine the convictions of faith and morality so that it will be easier to turn everything into democratic chaos?’”

Philaret’s archconservatism was especially manifested in his reaction to the proposals for Church reform put forward by the minister of the interior, P.A. Valuev.

“In the summer of 1861,... Valuev wrote the emperor that he would like to prepare a memorandum on the matter, but because this sphere lay outside his jurisdiction, first asked permission to undertake the task. The issue had long been of concern to Valuev; while still a provincial governor, he had criticized the Church for its weaknesses and its tendency to resort to state coercion to shield believers from other confessions. Permission granted, Valuev then prepared a comprehensive memorandum that essentially became the blueprint for ecclesiastical reform in the 1860s.

“Entitled ‘On the Present Condition of the Orthodox Church and Orthodox Clergy’, his report argued that earlier proposals for Church reform in the Western provinces were doomed to failure, for the fundamental problems were structural, not regional. In Valuev’s opinion, the Orthodox Church had fallen into such an abject condition that it could not combat apostasy without relying on the coercive apparatus of the state – a practice

260 Nikolin, Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, p. 124 ®.
261 Frazee, op. cit., pp. 157-158.
that was ineffective for the Church and troublesome for the state officials charged with prosecuting religious dissenters. Like many in the government, Valuev wanted the Church to provide support for the state, but now found the relationship one-sided: although the Church relies upon state power, ‘the government cannot enjoy reciprocal assistance from ecclesiastical authorities, because their influence is too insignificant.’ In Valuev’s opinion, not only the Church as an institution, but its servitors (above all, the rank-and-file parish clergy) were in dire straits: ‘One cannot help feeling profound sorrow when seeing the conditions which the Orthodox clergy, the closest representatives and the pastors of the Church, occupy among other classes of the population. Everywhere one notices a lack of feeling of respect and trust toward [the clergy], and a feeling of profound, bitter denigration is apparent among them.’ Much of the problem, he contended, derived from the deep animus between the black and white clergy. In Valuev’s view, all this resulted from the social isolation of the bishops: ‘The diocesan bishops for the most part lead the life of involuntary recluses, avoiding the secular world around them, neither understanding nor knowing its needs.’ Valuev further asserted that the bishops ‘are primarily concerned not with the flock entrusted to them, but with the lower pastors subordinated to them,’ and that they reign over the latter ‘like the most brutal despots’. He stressed that this despotism is all the more onerous, since it unleashes ‘the avarice of the diocesan chancelleries and consistories’, who subject the parish clergy to merciless abuse: ‘The priests are obliged to pay them tribute. If the tribute is deemed insufficient, they are punished by endless, ruinous relocations from one parish to another. Not a single priest is secure against such relations by the most zealous performance of his duties, the most impeccable life.’ While not denying that the bishops were ‘in general worthy of every respect in terms of their personal qualities,’ Valuev complained that the prelates often fell under the sway of their chancelleries. The result is ‘a certain hardening of feelings’ and inaccessibility compounded by ‘advanced age and illness’, which left them unfit for ‘intensified independent work’. These problems, warned Valuev, caused parish clergy not only to despise their superiors but to exhibit an attraction to radical, even Protestant ideas: ‘The white clergy hates the black clergy, and with the assistance of this hatred there is already beginning to spread not only democratic, but even socialist strivings, but also a certain inclination toward Protestantism, which with time could lead to a convulsion within the bosom of the Church. The white clergy is poor, helpless, and lacking with respect to its own means of existence and the fate of their families. For the most part it stands at a low level of education and lives under conditions that efface the traces of that inadequate education which they acquired in the ecclesiastical seminaries and academies; it does not constitute and organized soslovie (estate) in the state, but a caste of Levites; it sees no hope for an improvement in its material existence, because it understands that, given its very large numbers, it cannot count on significant generosity on the part of the government. That explains why part of the parish priests live at the expense of the schism, which they pander to, and the other resorts to extortion from parishioners, or languishes in need that often extinguishes its mental and moral powers.
“Not surprisingly, he concluded, the Church had proven incapable of combating the steady inroads by the schism, sects, and other confessions.

“To address these problems, Valuev proposed systematic, fundamental reform. One was to dismantle the hereditary clerical estate (dukhovnoe soslovie), at a minimum by permitting the clergy’s sons – who normally remained within the hereditary clerical estate – to choose their own career path, but perhaps by excluding them from inclusion in the estate altogether. Valuev also urged a ‘radical transformation’ of the seminary curriculum in order to provide an education that would facilitate mobility into secular careers. No less important was the problem of material support for the clergy: a combination of gratuities (a source of humiliation and endless conflict) and agriculture (a distraction from the clergy’s spiritual duties). Since the state was in position to provide salaries, Valuev could only suggest a traditional remedy (set reasonable fees to preclude haggling over rites), surplus state land (where available), and the merger of parishes (to form larger, more economically viable units). More attractive to the clergy, no doubt, was Valuev’s proposal ‘to give the parish clergy an honorable, active, and independent participation in public education’, a measure that would simultaneously provide them with additional income and help draw them ‘closer to the other educated classes’. No less important, in Valuev’s view, was the need to involve the bishops in worldly matters: ‘This improvement [in relations between prelates and priests], in turn, is hardly possible so long as the prelates of our church will remain alien to all everyday relations, all the civil needs of their flock. It is desirable to draw them [the bishops] closer to the latter; for this rapprochement, it is almost necessary to give them the opportunity, even if in some cases, to participate in the civil affairs of their fatherland, to show them the path along which they can acquire the right to this participation. The summoning of several members of the Holy Synod to the State Council, with the right to participate in discussions of all the matters brought before it (except criminal cases), would open this opportunity and indicate this path to the upper members of our clergy.’

“Fully aware of the sensitive nature of these proposals, Valuev proposed that he first hold private discussions with the venerable metropolitan of Moscow, Philaret, and seek to gain his approval – a critical step in securing the Church’s approval and cooperation… His principal concern was to secure Philaret’s support for a joint Church-state committee, an intrusion into the ecclesiastical domain likely to raise the hackles of this determined tserkovnik. In part, Valuev hoped that the emperor’s special solicitude toward Philaret would carry the day; he later reported to Alexander that ‘the attention and trust shown by Your Majesty to the opinion of His Grace Philaret was obviously pleasant and flattering for him.’

“Valuev did in fact win Philaret’s general assent, but met with resistance on several issues. First, although Valuev tactfully avoided ‘using the phrases “closed estate” (zamknutoe soslovie) and “break up the estate” (razomknut’ soslovie), Philaret understood perfectly what the minister had in mind. He denied that the clergy constituted a caste and cited his own vicar – born into
the nobility – to demonstrate the point. Second, Philaret showed little enthusiasm for allotting the clergy additional land, but appeared to withdraw his objection in view of the state’s inability to provide salaries. Third, Philaret categorically opposed permitting a joint Church-state committee reform ecclesiastical schools, a matter falling exclusively within the Church’s competence. Finally, Philaret rejected the idea of including Synod members in the State Council. He feared that the latter might treat the prelates with condescension and attempt to raise issues about Church finances (an allusion to the issue of the Church budget, an issue still unresolved at this point). In cases where the State Council needed the Synod’s view, declared Philaret, it could simply invite them to special sessions – as had been done in the past...

“Although the government did not further consult Philaret, it did pare back the original vision. Thus Valuev jettisoned his scheme for Synodal membership in the State Council, but still tried to give the new committee a broad range of authority, even over spheres that Philaret had explicitly precluded. Thus, a Valuev draft proposal of January 1862 still gave the committee the power to deal not only with the ‘clerical question’, but also with the reform of ecclesiastical schools. More important still, Valuev wanted the committee determine ‘the degree and means for the participation of parishioners in the economic governance of the affairs of the parish church’. That was a highly sensitive issue, given the laity’s strong aversion to the diversion of local resources to finance general Church needs. In the teeth of clerical opposition, however, Valuev eventually trimmed back the original charge to the matters condoned by Metropolitan Philaret.

“Thus, while Philaret acceded to the inclusion of several ranking state officials in the mixed commission (eventually re-titled ‘Special Commission on the Needs of the Clergy’, he had greatly reduced the broad mandate that Valuev originally sought. He defended the Church’s authority (in the issue of ecclesiastical schools) and defeated the scheme to include Synodal members in the State Council. While Philaret could hardly deny the need for reform, he was adamant about preserving the Church’s institutional integrity and privileges.”

In the last years of Philaret’s life, his influence waned and the secular principles he feared began increasingly to penetrate Church life. Thus “from 1865,” writes Nikolin, “the over-procurator of the Holy Synod became Count Demetrius A. Tolstoy, who combined this post with the post of minister of popular enlightenment, as if renewing the experiment of the ‘double ministry’ of Prince Golitsyn. However, in contrast to the supra-confessional mysticism of the latter, Count Tolstoy demonstrated an idiosyncratic supra-confessional indifferentism. A man of conservative views and well-versed in matters of common and internal politics, Count Tolstoy showed himself to be a radical and an innovator in ecclesiastical matters, but

---

262 Frazee, op. cit., pp. 172-178.
263 He did achieve one major victory, however. His project of translating the Bible into Russian, which had been successfully resisted, as we have seen, under Alexander I, was finally approved under Alexander II, even if it was not realized in Philaret’s lifetime.
an innovator who was far from an understanding of Church life. He worked out a series of liberal reforms in various spheres of the ecclesiastical order. Thus, immediately after the publication of the Court Statutes, the over-procurator raised the question of the suitability of reforming the Church courts on the same principles on which the civil courts had been reformed. This and other projects of Count Tolstoy suggested the reconstruction of Church life in accordance with the rules of secular consciousness, and not on the basis of the canonical self-consciousness of the Church.”264

Again, “despite earlier promises of including the parish clergy into the new system of elementary public education, the central government ultimately abdicated a primary role and left the responsibility with the community, zemstvo, or Ministry of Education - not the Church. As Philaret acidly complained to a close confidante: ‘But then came the new minister of education. And they say that it is already decided that rural schools will be secular, and that millions of rubles have been allotted for them. A single act of grace was given to us: the priests are not forbidden to keep their schools, without any assistance for them.’ As a result, the parish schools that clergy had so fervently opened in the 1950s came upon hard times, their number sharply dropping, until the government renewed its support – and financing – in the 1880s.”265

After the death of Philaret, measures were introduced to break down the closed character of the clerical estate, as Valuev had proposed. “During the reign of Alexander II decrees were issued in 1867 and 1868 by which the inheritance of Church posts was removed. And in 1869 a decree established new regulations for parish churches. Finally, on May 26, 1869 a decree destroyed the isolation of the clergy. By this decree all children of the clerical estate were classified in secular callings. Moreover, the children of clergy were put on the same level as the children of nobility, and the children of church servers on the same level as honoured citizens, while the children of the lower clergy were ascribed to town or village society while retaining their previous exemption from taxes and military service.

“Help to the monasteries after the emancipation of the peasants consisted of giving them each year 168,200 rubles for the payment of hired labourers. By 1890 this sum had grown to 425,000 rubles.

“During the reign of Alexander II the State power often returned to the questions relating to the schism [of the Old Ritualists]… On ascending the throne Emperor Alexander II liquidated the secret department [on the affairs of the Old Ritualists]. The remaining directives [of Nicholas I] remained in force, but their application was softened. The marriages of schismatics were allowed. However, these had to be registered in special metrical books.”266

264 Nikolin, op. cit., p. 124.
265 Frazee, op. cit., pp. 184-185.
266 Nikolin, op. cit., pp. 124-125.
The objections of Metropolitan Philaret to Church reform, like those of Pobedonostsev in a later generation, were not to be sneezed at. But neither could these archconservatives deny the main problem: the Church was not free to order her internal life in accordance with her own laws. And this truly weakened her in a way that was to prove to be disastrous in the long term; for only a Church able to act in the spirit of the Holy Gospel and in accordance with the Sacred Canons without the often harmful support of the State could hope to halt the processes of apostasy that were now deeply ingrained in society.

As Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov wrote: “We are helpless to arrest this apostasy. Impotent hands will have no power against it and nothing more will be required than the attempt to withhold it. The spirit of the age will reveal the apostasy. Study it, if you wish to avoid it, if you wish to escape this age and the temptation of its spirits. One can suppose, too, that the institution of the Church which has been tottering for so long will fall terribly and suddenly. Indeed, no-one is able to stop or prevent it. The present means to sustain the institutional Church are borrowed from the elements of the world, things inimical to the Church, and the consequence will be only to accelerate its fall. Nevertheless, the Lord protects the elect and their limited number will be filled.”

**Two Kinds of Justice**

In 1864 another major reform was instituted, of the law courts. Lebedev writes that this “came down to making Russian jurisprudence on all levels and in all regions maximally just, incorruptible, based not on the whim of judges, but on the law and (which is very important!) on the public understanding of the law and its application in every individual case! For the resolution of civil suits, property and other quarrels, and also small criminal cases there were created special ‘volost’ courts’ for the peasants. For all the other classes there were created two systems – ‘secular courts’ (for civil matters and petty criminal ones) that were elected by uyezd and city assembly, and ‘circuit courts’, the members of which were appointed by the State. In the latter particularly important matters and major criminal cases were examined. In criminal cases in the circuit courts ‘jurors’ too part; they had been chosen by lot from the population. All this, that is, the investigation in court, took place publicly, in the presence of the people. The final decision belonged, not to the judge, but to the jurors, who pronounced a ‘verdict’ after a secret consultation amongst themselves. On the basis of the verdict the judges formulated the sentence. The court did not depend on any institutions of the authorities. Thus was created the most perfect juridical system in the world (!) of that time, which quickly taught all the feelings of legality and a good consciousness of one’s rights. In this connection humiliating corporal punishments were abolished, and the system of punishments was in general made softer.”

---

267 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 344.
Surprisingly, Lebedev does not seem to be aware that this “most perfect juridical system in the world” was Anglo-Saxon in inspiration\textsuperscript{268}, and that the introduction of the jury system did not prevent some extraordinary miscarriages of justice, notably the acquittal of Zasulich in 1878 (see below). Moreover, “consciousness of one’s rights” was a quintessentially western trait in the eyes of Slavophiles, something that derived from feudalism and which the Orthodox East was fortunate to have escaped. Perhaps there were indeed good things deriving from the juridical reforms. But there is no question that they introduced a new spirit into Russian jurisprudence.

“In the 1870s,” writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, “cases with any political element were withdrawn from the investigating magistrates and handed back to the police. This did not prevent a remarkable case in 1878, involving the attempted murder of the Governor of St. Petersburg, General Trepov, in retribution for his ordering the flogging of a political prisoner. The law stated that corporal punishment could only be applied to members of the lower, tax-paging estates. Bogoliubov was a meschanin by origin, so that Trepov was legally justified in ordering the punishment. But in the eyes of the radicals, Bogoliubov had by his membership of their movement promoted himself to a kind of aristocracy of the spirit, so that Trepov’s act was an unforgivable breach of elementary decency.

“On 24 January 1878, a young radical, Vera Zasulich, requested an audience with Trepov. Waiting till she was summoned, she went into his office, took a revolver out of her muff and, in the sight of several witnesses, shot at him, wounding him. The government sought to make an example of Zasulich, as it had of Nechayev [see below], by trying her before a normal jury and having her case reported in the newspapers. Minister of Justice Count Palen asked the presiding judge, A.F. Koni, whether he could guarantee a verdict of ‘guilty’ in such a clear-cut case: ‘In this damned case the government has the right to expect special services from the court’. Koni replied, ‘Your Excellency, the court gives verdicts, not services’. These were two concepts of justice which it was difficult to reconcile. The press supported Koni’s view and backed it up with human-interest stories about Zasulich; even the staunch monarchist Dostoevskii wrote that ‘to punish this young woman would be inappropriate and superfluous’.

“In the event, the defence counsel, falling in with this mood, did not argue about the evidence of the crime, but evoked Zasulich’s unhappy youth in exile under police supervision, and praised her as a ‘woman who had no personal interest in her crime, a woman who bound up her crime with the

\textsuperscript{268} Max Hayward writes that it was “a workable compromise between the French and the English systems”. And she goes on: “The main criticism of the post-Reform legal system was, in fact, that the juries tended to be far too lenient, and that it was therefore difficult to obtain convictions in criminal cases, whether or not they had a political aspect. This was probably indicative as much of traditional Russian sympathy for the unfortunate as of automatic opposition to the authorities, or of indifference to the law as such. Even so, service on juries undoubtedly gave many Russians of all classes (including peasants) a taste for ‘due process’ which in time was bound to lead to a more widespread understanding that legal formality is not incompatible with justice and mercy” (in Obolensky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15).
fight for an idea’, and appealed to the jury as a ‘court of the people’s conscience’. They duly acquitted her, to the deafening applause of the public. The outcome of this case was a remarkable revelation of the rift between the government and public opinion, and moved the government to transfer all further cases involving violence against officials to military courts.

“All the same, the reformed law courts created a whole new profession which was to prove very important to Russia’s future: among its future members were Kerenskii and Lenin. This was the advokatura, the corporation of defence counsels, or sworn attorneys.”

That Kerensky and Lenin were among the members of this new class of lawyers tells us something about the moral quality of the judicial reforms, and the injustice they ultimately created…

However, besides the westernised justice introduced by the reforms of 1864, there was another, peasant concept of justice in Russia. “The Emancipation,” writes Figes, “had liberated the serfs from the judicial tyranny of their landlords but it had not incorporated them in the world ruled by law, which included the rest of society. Excluded from the written law administered through the civil courts, the newly liberated peasants were kept in a sort of legal apartheid after 1861. The tsarist regime looked upon them as a cross between savages and children, and subjected them to magistrates appointed from the gentry. Their legal rights were confined to the peasant-class [volost’] courts, which operated on the basis of local custom.”

This customary law of the peasants contained a distinctive world-view that had affinities both with Orthodoxy and with the revolution, - hence its potential for both good and evil - with its own set of moral precepts. “True,” writes Figes, who emphasizes the potential for evil, “these were not always applied uniformly. The peasant-class courts often functioned in a random manner, deciding cases on the basis of the litigants’ reputations and connections, or on the basis of which side was prepared to bribe the elected judges with the most vodka. Yet, amidst all this chaos, there could be discerned some pragmatic concepts of justice, arising from the peasants’ daily lives, which had crystallized into more-or-less universal legal norms, albeit with minor regional variations.

“Three legal ideas, in particular, shape the peasant revolutionary mind. The first was the concept of family ownership. The assets of the peasant household (the livestock, the tools, the crops, the buildings and their contents, but not the land beneath them) were regarded as the common property of the family. Every member of the household was deemed to have an equal right to use these assets, including those not yet born. The patriarch of the household, the bol’shak, it is true, had an authoritarian influence over the running of the farm and the disposal of its assets. But customary law made it clear that he was expected to act with the consent of the other adult members of the family.

270 Figes, A People’s Tragedy, op. cit., p. 97.
and that, on his death, he could not bequeath any part of the household property, which was to remain in the common ownership of the family under a new bol’shak (usually the eldest son). If the bol’shak mismanaged the family farm, or was too often drunk and violent, the commune could replace him under customary law with another household member. The only way the family property could be divided was through the partition of an extended household into smaller units, according to the methods set out by local customary law. In all regions of Russia this stipulated that the property was to be divided on an equal basis between all the adult males, with provision being made for the elderly and unmarried women. The principles of family ownership and egalitarian partition were deeply ingrained in Russian peasant culture. This helps to explain the failure of the Stolypin land reforms (1906-17), which, as part of their programme to create a stratum of well-to-do capitalist farmers, attempted to convert the family property of the peasant household into the private property of the bol’shak, thus enabling him to bequeath it to one or more of his sons. The peasant revolution of 1917 made a clean sweep of these reforms, returning to the traditional legal principles of family ownership.

“The peasant family farm was organized and defined according to the labour principle, the second major peasant legal concept. Membership of the household was defined by active participation in the life of the farm (or, as the peasants put it, ‘eating from the common pot’) rather than by blood or kinship ties. An outsider adopted by the family who lived and worked on the farm was usually viewed as a full member of the household with equal rights to those of the blood relatives, whereas a son of the family who left the village to earn his living elsewhere eventually ceased to be seen as a household member. This same attachment of rights to labour could be seen on the land as well. The peasants believed in a sacred link between land and labour. The land belonged to no one but God, and could not be bought or sold. But every family had the right to support itself from the land on the basis of its own labour, and the commune was there to ensure its equal distribution between them. On this basis – that the land should be in the hands of those who tilled it – the squires did not hold their land rightfully and the hungry peasants were justified in their struggle to take it from them. A constant battle was fought between the written law of the state, framed to defend the property rights of the landowners, and the customary law of the peasants, used by them to defend their own transgressions of these property rights. Under customary law, for example, no one thought it wrong when a peasant stole wood from the landlord’s forest, since the landlord had more wood than he could personally use and, as the proverb said, ‘God grew the forest for everyone’. The state categorized as ‘crimes’ a whole range of activities which peasant custom did not: poaching and grazing livestock on the squire’s land; gathering mushrooms and berries from his forest; picking fruit from his orchards; fishing in his ponds, and so on. Customary law was a tool which the peasants used to subvert a legal order that in their view maintained the unjust domination of the landowners and the biggest landowner of all: the state. It is no coincidence that the revolutionary land legislation of 1917-18 based itself on the labour principles found in customary law.
“The subjective approach to the law - judging the merits of a case according to the social and economic position of the parties concerned - was the third specific aspect of the peasantry’s legal thinking which had an affinity with the revolution. It was echoed in the Bolshevik concept of ‘revolutionary justice’, the guiding principle of the People’s Courts of 1917-18, according to which a man’s social class was taken as the decisive factor in determining his guilt or innocence. The peasants considered stealing from a rich man, especially by the poor, a much less serious offence than stealing from a man who could barely feed himself and his family. In the peasants’ view it was even justified, as we have seen, to kill someone guilty of a serious offence against the community. And to murder a stranger from outside the village was clearly not as bad as killing a fellow villager. Similarly, whereas deceiving a neighbour was seen by the peasants as obviously immoral, cheating on a landlord or a government official was not subject to any moral censure; such ‘cunning’ was just one of the many everyday forms of passive resistance used by peasants to subvert an unjust established order. Within the context of peasant society this subjective approach was not without its own logic, since the peasants viewed justice in terms of its direct practical effects on their own communities rather than in general or abstract terms. But it could often result in the sort of muddled thinking that made people call the peasants ‘dark’. In The Criminal, for example, Chekhov tells the true story of a peasant who was brought to court for stealing a bolt from the railway tracks to use as a weight on his fishing tackle. He fails to understand his guilt and in trying to justify himself repeatedly talks of ‘we’ (the peasants of his village): ‘Bah! Look how many years we have been removing bolts, and God preserves us, and here you are talking about a crash, people killed. We do not remove all of them - we always leave some. We do not act without thinking. We do understand.’

“Here, in this moral subjectivity, was the root of the peasant’s instinctive anarchism. He lived outside the realm of the state’s laws – and that is where he chose to stay. Centuries of serfdom had bred within the peasant a profound mistrust of all authority outside his own village. What he wanted was volia, the ancient peasant concept of freedom and autonomy without restraints from the powers that be. ‘For hundreds of years,’ wrote Gorky, ‘the Russian peasant has dreamt of a state with no right to influence the will of the individual and his freedom of action, a state without power over man.’ That peasant dream was kept alive by subversive tales of Stenka Razin and Emelian Pugachev, those peasant revolutionaries of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose mythical images continued as late as the 1900s to be seen by the peasants flying as ravens across the Volga announcing the advent of utopia. And there were equally fabulous tales of a ‘Kingdom of Opona’, somewhere on the edge of the flat earth, where the peasants lived happily, undisturbed by gentry or state. Groups of peasants even set out on expeditions in the far north in the hope of finding this arcadia.

“As the state attempted to extend its bureaucratic control into the countryside during the late nineteenth century, the peasants sought to defend
their autonomy by developing ever more subtle forms of passive resistance to it. What they did, in effect, was to set up a dual structure of administration in the villages: a formal one, with its face to the state, which remained inactive and inefficient; and an informal one, with its face to the peasants, which was quite the opposite. The village elders and tax collectors elected to serve in the organs of state administration in the villages (obshchestva) and the volost townships (upravy) were, in the words of one frustrated official, ‘highly unreliable and unsatisfactory’, many of them having been deliberately chosen for their incompetence in order to sabotage government work. There were even cases where the peasants elected the village idiot as their elder. Meanwhile, the real centre of power remained in the mir, in the old village assembly dominated by the patriarchs. The power of the tsarist state never really penetrated the village, and this remained its fundamental weakness until 1917, when the power of the state was removed altogether and the village gained its volia.”

**Underground Man and Russian Society**

In the eighteenth century the Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that “reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will”, and reason “can never oppose passion in the direction of the will”. For “‘tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.” As is well known, this challenge to the rationalist, Enlightenment view of life roused Kant from his dogmatic slumbers, stimulating him to shore up the continent of reason and science against the dark sea of unreason that Hume had pointed to. In his famous categorical imperative he tried to build a bridge between pure reason and practical reason, and to justify both. His argumentation did reveal a tiny chink of the “noumenal” that could not be subsumed under the “phenomenal”, that is, the laws of reason and science. Those who followed him, the idealist German philosophers, turned the argument on its head by defining the ideal and the “noumenal” as the real and the rational. In this way Hegel could claim that “the real is the rational, and the rational is the real”.

A hundred years after Hume, when the most extreme rationalism and positivism was all the rage among the Russian intelligentsia, Dostoyevsky (independently from the philosophers) again drew the attention of his readers to the sea of the irrational that surrounds the small island of our rational minds and that threatens, by its dark power, to overwhelm reason altogether.

---

273 He tried to justify them, while calling his works “The Critique of Pure Reason” and “The Critique of Practical Reason”. But, as Lev Shestov writes, “what Kant gave us under this title is not a critique, but an apology of pure reason. Kant did not dare to criticise reason, in spite of the fact that, as it seemed to him, thanks to Hume he had awoken from his dogmatic slumbers. How did he pose the question? There is mathematical science, and there are the natural sciences – is metaphysical science possible, the logical construction of which would be the same as the logical construction of the positive sciences that have already justified themselves. And this he considered a critique! And an awakening!” (Na Vesakh lova (On the Scales of Job), Paris: YMCA Press, 1975, p. 41 ®).
In *Notes from Underground* (1864), his anti-hero challenges all the premises of nineteenth-century society, not on rational grounds, but simply because he sees no reason to be reasonable. “I’d sell the world for a kopeck just to be left in peace. Let the world perish, or let me drink my tea? I tell you, I’d let the world perish, just so long as I could always drink my tea. Did you know that or not? Well, I know that I’m no good, perverse, selfish and lazy.”

And why shouldn’t he be? What reason can possibly persuade a no good to be good? “Trust them [the rationalist moralists] to prove to you that a single drop of your own fat is bound to be dearer to you, when it comes down to it, than a hundred thousand human lives and that this conclusion is an answer to all this talk about virtue and duty, and other ravings and superstitions.”

So much for Kant’s categorical imperative and Bentham’s utilitarian ethics! For it is no good “proving” to someone that a certain course of action is in his own best interests, or in the best interests of mankind as a whole, if he simply doesn’t want to do it. For “one’s own free, unrestrained choice, one’s own whim, be it the wildest, one’s own fancy, sometimes worked up to a frenzy – that is the most advantageous advantage that cannot be fitted into any table or scale and that causes every system and every theory to crumble into dust on contact. And where did these sages pick up the notion that man must have something that they feel is a normal and virtuous set of wishes; what makes them think that man’s will must be reasonable and in accordance with his own interests? All man actually needs is independent will, at all costs and whatever the consequences.

“Speaking of will, I’m damned if I – …

“I will admit that reason is a good thing. No argument about that. But reason is only reason, and it only satisfies man’s rational requirements. Desire, on the other hand, encompasses everything from reason down to scratching oneself. And although, when we’re guided by our desires, life may often turn into a messy affair, it’s still life and not a series of extractions of square roots.

“I, for instance, instinctively want to live, to exercise all the aspects of life in me and not only reason, which amounts to perhaps one-twentieth of the whole.

“And what does reason know? It knows only what it has had time to learn. Many things will always remain unknown to it. That must be said even if there’s nothing encouraging in it.

“Now human nature is just the opposite. It acts as an entity, using everything it has, conscious and unconscious, and even if it deceives us, it lives. I suspect, ladies and gentlemen, that you’re looking at me with pity, wondering how I can fail to understand that an enlightened, cultured man,
such as the man of the future, could not deliberately wish to harm himself. It’s sheer mathematics to you. I agree, it is mathematics. But let me repeat to you for the hundredth time that there is one instance when a man can wish upon himself, in full awareness, something harmful, stupid and even completely idiotic. He will do it in order to establish his right to wish for the most idiotic things and not to be obliged to have only sensible wishes. But what if a quite absurd whim, my friends, turns out to be the most advantageous thing on earth for us, as sometimes happens? Specifically, it may be more advantageous to us than any other advantages, even when it most obviously harms us and goes against all the sensible conclusions of our reason about our interest – because, whatever else, it leaves us our most important, most treasured possession: our individuality…”

In Notes from Underground we see the first in a long line of anti-heroes – terrorists, murderers, suicides – who crowd the pages of Dostoyevsky’s later novels, and for whom, since God did not exist, everything was permitted. As Shestov writes, all his later novels are, as it were, footnotes to Notes from Underground. Common to them all is a solipsistic view of the world according to which nothing matters outside their own pride and their own will.

Thus in another “fantastical story” of his later years, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man (1878), Dostoyevsky’s anti-hero says: “The conviction… dawned upon me quite independently of my will that nothing made any difference in this world. I had suspected this for a very long time, but I only became fully aware of it during this past year. I suddenly felt that it really made no difference to me whether or not the world existed. I began to feel with my whole being that nothing had happened while I’d been alive. At first I felt that, to make up for it, many things had happened before. Later, however, I realized that this was an illusion – nothing had happened before either. Little by little, I discovered that nothing will ever happen. Then I stopped getting angry at people and almost stopped noticing them. This change manifested itself even in the smallest things. When I walked along the street, for instance, I would bump into people, I was certainly not absorbed in thought, for what did I have to think of by that time? I just didn’t care about anything any more. If only I could’ve answered some of the many questions that tormented me, but I hadn’t found a single answer. Then I became indifferent to everything, and all the questions faded away.

“It was only later that I learned the truth…”

“The truth” is not the common-sense, rationally ordered world-view of civilised man, of the “anti-hill” and the “crystal palace”, in which two plus two always equals four, everything is planned in a rational way to satisfy man’s rationally understood needs, and miracles do not exist. This suprarational truth is revealed to the ridiculous man just as he is about to shoot himself. It is the world before the fall, but which is still accessible to the heart.

---

of man, in which there reign perfect love and joy and a supra-rational kind of knowledge, a world in which, contrary to the thoughts of the underground and ridiculous men, everything matters, everything is interconnected with everything else, and man is responsible for everything and everyone.

Dostoyevsky was planning to write about this in the second half of Notes from Underground. However, it proved difficult for him to create the positive, Christ-like character that could incarnate the supra-rational truth. His first such hero, Prince Myshkin in The Idiot, was a relative failure; and only in his last novel, The Brothers Karamazov, in the characters of the Elder Zossima and Alyosha, do we find successful images of heavenly good to place against the hellish evil in the hearts of his other characters.

For Dostoyevsky, unlike other “explorers of the unconscious” such as Nietzsche and Freud, saw two, opposing spheres of what we may provisionally call “unreason”, that is, that which is incomprehensible and unattainable to the rational mind: the “unreason” or “anti-reason” of the underground man, enclosed and entombed in his pride and hatred, and the “unreason” or, better, “supra-reason” of the saint, open to all and everything, judging no-one and loving everyone. Paradoxically, in Dostoyevsky’s view, the underground man, having plumbed the one abyss, that of his own solipsistic hell, could more easily “convert” to an understanding of, and participation in, the other abyss, the abyss of infinite, all-embracing love, than the “civilised” rationalists. Hence the Raskolnikovs and Shatovs and Dmitri Karamazovs, who, while keeping their minds in hell, do not despair - and catch a glimpse of Paradise.

It is instructive to compare Dostoyevsky with Nietzsche and Freud. Nietzsche was a true underground man, who wittily and unerringly cut through the pretences of civilised society. But he ended in the madhouse because he failed to see that there was another world, the suprarational world of love that Dostoyevsky saw. As for Freud, his vision was more superficial than either because his determinism blinded him to the fact that that man freely chooses to live in the abyss, the abyss of sin...

Russian educated society comprehended neither abyss. Being hardly less fallen than the underground men, it, too, simply followed its own desires. And if these desires were not so obviously perverted as those of the underground men, they were no less selfish for all that. The difference was that society had invented, with the help of the philosophers, quite “reasonable”, even “Christian” reasons for following its selfish desires, reasons that were perfectly compatible with the love of God and man, in its view, and yet based on “science” and therefore progressive.

Science had indeed become the god of the age, worshipped both by scientists and by non-scientists, both in the Orthodox East and the democratic West, being not only the engine of material prosperity but also the calculator

---

of happiness and foundation of freedom. This cult of science – which he called “half-science” since the object of worship was not true knowledge - was described in dark, almost apocalyptic colours by Dostoyevsky: "Half-science," says one of his characters, "is that most terrible scourge of mankind, worse than pestilence, famine, or war, and quite unknown till our present century. Half-science is a despot such as has never been known before, a despot that has its own priests and slaves, a despot before whom everybody prostrates himself with love and superstitious dread, such as has been inconceivable till now, before whom science trembles and surrenders in a shameful way."277

And science, according to Elder Zossima, studies “only that which is subject to the senses. The spiritual world, on the other hand, the loftier half of man’s being, is rejected altogether, cast out with a certain triumph, hatred even. The world has proclaimed freedom, particularly of late, and yet what do we see in this freedom of theirs: nothing but servitude and suicide! For the world says: ‘You have needs, so satisfy them, for you have the same rights as the wealthiest and most highly placed of men. Do not be afraid to satisfy them, but even multiply them’ – that is the present-day teaching of the world. In that, too, they see freedom. And what is the result of this right to the multiplication of needs? Among the rich solitariness and spiritual suicide, and among the poor - envy and murder, for while they have been given rights, they have not yet been afforded the means with which to satisfy their needs. Assurance is offered that as time goes by the world will become more united, that it will form itself into a brotherly communion by shortening distance and transmitting thoughts through the air. Alas, do not believe in such a unification of men. In construing freedom as the multiplication and speedy satisfaction of needs, they distort their own nature, for they engender within themselves many senseless and stupid desires, habits and most absurd inventions. They live solely for envy, for love of the flesh and for self-conceit. To have dinners, horses and carriages, rank, and attendants who are slaves is already considered such a necessity that they will even sacrifice their lives, their honour and philanthropy in order to do so. Among those who are not rich we see the same thing, and among the poor envy and the frustration of needs are at present dulled by drunkenness. But soon in place of alcohol it will be blood upon which they grow intoxicated - to that they are being led. I ask you: is such a man free? I know one ‘fighter for the cause’ who himself told me that when in prison he was deprived of tobacco so tormented was he by this deprivation that he almost went and betrayed his ‘cause’ in order that he should be given some tobacco. And after all, it is a man such as this who says: ‘I am going to fight for mankind.’ Well, where can such a man go and of what is he capable? Of a quick action perhaps, but he will not endure long. And it is small wonder that in place of freedom they have found slavery, and in place of service to brotherly love and the unity of mankind they have found isolation and solitariness, as my mysterious visitor and teacher told me in my youth. And so it is that in the world the idea of service to mankind, of the brotherhood and inclusiveness of men, is fading more and more, and in truth this thought is now encountered with mockery, for how can he desist from his habits, this slave, where can he go, if he is so accustomed to satisfying his

countless needs, which he himself has invented? Solitary is he, and what
care can he have for the whole? And they have reached a point where the
quantity of objects they amass is ever greater, and their joy is ever
smaller…”278

The People’s Truth

The emancipation of the peasants put them into the spotlight of intellectual
inquiry, as Figes explains: “‘The study of the people is the science of our
times,’ declared Fedor Bulsaev in 1868. Ethnographic museums were set up in
Moscow and St. Petersburg – their aim being, in the words of one of their
founders, Ivan Beliaev, ‘to acquaint the Russians with their own nation’. The
public was astounded by the peasant costumes and utensils on display, the
photographs and mock-ups of their living quarters in the various regions of
the countryside. They seemed to have come from some exotic colony. In
almost every field of serious enquiry – geography, philosophy, theology,
philology, mythology and archaeology – the question of the peasant was the
question of the day.”279

The writers were also deeply involved. Turgenev’s *Sketches from a Hunter’s
Album* (1852) had started the realistic depiction of peasant life in literature.
Tolstoy not only depicted it realistically: he made a religion of it...

“The question of the peasant may have been the question of the day. But
every answer was a myth. As Dostoyevsky wrote: ‘The question of the people
and our view of them... is our most important question, a question on which
our whole future rests... But the people are still a theory for us and they still
stand before us as a riddle. We, the lovers of the people, regard them as part
of a theory, and it seems not one of us loves them as they really are but only
as each of us imagines them to be And should the Russian people turn out not
as we imagined them, then we, despite our love of them, would at once
renounce them without regret.’

“Each theory ascribed certain virtues to the peasant which it then took as
the essence of the national character. For the Populists, the peasant was a
natural socialist, the embodiment of the collective spirit that distinguished
Russia from the bourgeois West. Democrats like Herzen saw the peasant as a
champion of liberty – his wildness embodying the spirit of the Russia that
was free. The Slavophiles regarded him as a Russian patriot, suffering and
patient, a humble follower of truth and justice, like the folk hero Ilia
Muromets. They argued that the peasant commune was living proof that
Russia need not look beyond its national borders for guiding moral
principles. ‘A commune,’ declared one of the movement’s founding members,
Konstantin Aksakov, ‘is a union of the people who have renounced their
egoism, their individuality, and who express their common accord; this is an
act of love, a noble Christian act.’ Dostoyevsky, too, saw the peasant as a
moral animal, the embodiment of the ‘Russian soul’; once he even claimed, in

a famous argument, that the simple ‘kitchen muzhik’ was morally superior to any bourgeois European gentleman. The peasants, he maintained, ‘will show us a new path’, and, far from having something to teach them, ‘it is we who must bow down before the people’s truth’.”

The State, too, was involved. “With the peasant’s liberation from the gentry’s jurisdiction, there was a recognition that he had become the state’s responsibility: he had become a citizen.

“After 1861 the government set up a whole range of institutions to improve the welfare of its peasant citizens and integrate them into national life. Most of these initiatives were carried out by the new assemblies of local government, the zemstvos, established at the district and provincial level in 1864.281 The zemstvos were run by paternal squires of the sort who fill the pages of Tolstoy and Chekhov – liberal, well-meaning men who dreamed of bringing civilization to the backward countryside. With limited resources, they founded schools and hospitals; provided veterinary and agronomic services for the peasantry; built new roads and bridges; invested in local trades and industries; financed insurance schemes and rural credit; and carried out ambitious statistical surveys to prepare for more reforms at a future date. The optimistic expectations of the zemstvo liberals were widely shared by the upper classes of society. There was a general attitude of

280 Figes, Natasha’s Dream, op. cit., p. 224.
281 “In 1864,” writes Lebedev, “the ‘Statute on the provincial and uyezd zemstvos’ was issued. Instead of the former institutions of estate self-administration there were now created institutions applying to all estates. From now on elected delegates from all estates of the population, including the peasant communes, were called to regulate economic and social matters in each province. The zemstvo assemblies at the uyezd level decided common affairs under the presidency of a leader of the uyezd nobility. The zemstvo assemblies at the provincial level were correspondingly directed by the provincial leader of the nobility. For routine matters the meetings elected uyezd and provincial ustavy that were constantly in session. All this was under the supervision of the provincial governors and the Ministry of internal affairs. In controversial cases the zemstva could refer to the Senate. Within the administration of the zemstva there came popular education (schools), health (hospitals), charity (‘social security and defence’), food provision, the upkeep of roads and bridges, insurance, etc. To secure these matters the zemstva received the right to collect a special local ‘zemstvo tax’ and to acquire property. The priest, the zemstvo teacher, the zemstvo doctor (or medical orderly), the local policeman and the excise officer (the inspection of taxes (excise) on wine, sugar, tobacco and salt) now constituted the village intelligentsia and became key figures in the village, no less, and perhaps more authoritative and influential than the landowner. But at the level of the uyezd the leader was the representative of the landowners, the nobility. The same at the level of the province. The ‘City Statute’ of 1870 established an omni-estate self-administration similar to that of the zemstvo. Representatives of the merchants, industrialists, craftsmen and shopkeepers – all those who had a certain amount of property and capital – were elected to the city dumas (assemblies) and upravas. Here the influence of the nobility was significantly less. The city leader was, as a rule, a rich merchant or industrialist. But the ‘provincial office for city affairs’ was under the authority of the provincial governor, a nobleman. Moreover, the uyezd and provincial assemblies of the nobility continued to operate like the former narrowly estate-based representations. Thus the nobility, having ceased to be the ruling estate, and becoming the, as it were, first among equals of the other estates, nevertheless kept a definite leading position. The city dumas and upravas were in charge of the same matters as the zemstva. These and other very nearby and closely related zemstva constantly tried bring their actions into unity and agreement. The city and zemstvo self-administrations livened up local economic, social and cultural life to an exceptional degree.” (op. cit., p. 343) (V.M.)
paternal populism – a sympathy for the people and their cause which induced the high-born from all walks of life to support the student radicals.”

In what did the more radical populism (narodnichestvo) of the younger generation consist? “Its main concern,” writes Seth, “was for the material welfare of the masses, but it had in reality a much deeper significance. By some the People were considered a potential or actual historical force which could not be resisted; while others regarded it as the one and only source of spiritual energy, and as the one hope for the world. It projected a vision of the poor rising up against their oppressors and eventually possessing the earth, based on a sincere belief that, of all peoples, the Russians were ideally fitted by temperament, history and folkways to bring into actuality the Socialist ideals.

“The peasant, so the thinkers held, did not understand or appreciate the splendid role which he had to play whether he liked it or not, and had to have it explained to him by those who did understand it. In the motivation of the intelligentsia there was, however, not merely the working of a desire to raise the peasant from the depth of material and spiritual squalor into which centuries of suppression had [supposedly] ground him, but a deep sense of guilt, for the most part subconscious, but nonetheless effectual for that. This, too, must be understood if there is to be a proper apprehension of Populism.

“It was this reaction of conscience which moved those who worked for The Cause to humble themselves before the people. But this humility carried with it also a sense of pride; those devoted to The Cause came to look upon themselves as The Chosen, elected by Providence to lead The People out of their bondage. The absolute consecration of self to The Cause, the willingness to sacrifice all, even life itself, can only be explained by these reactions of guilty conscience and pride in the role of the liberator. Understanding of this makes it much easier to understand the rashness, which at times seems foolish to the point of unadorned stupidity, that is only too apparent in the acts and deeds of many of those whose stories illuminate revolutionary history.”

“Between 1860 and 1880,” writes Richard Pipes, “the radical or, as it was then known, ‘socialist-revolutionary’ movement underwent constant evolution as a result of a frustrating inability to realize any of its goals. The changes concerned tactics only. The goal itself remained constant – the abolition of the state and all institutions tied to it – and so did the faith in positivist-materialist principles. But every few years, as fresh classes entered the university, new battle tactics were devised. In the early 1860s, it was believed that the mere act of breaking with the dying world was enough; the rest would take care of itself. Pisarev urged his followers to drop all other occupations and interests and concentrated on the study of natural science. Chernyshevskii exhorted them to cut ties with their families and unite in working communes. But these methods did not seem to lead anywhere, and

around 1870 radical youths became increasingly interested in the newly emancipated peasant. The leading theoretical lights of this period, Michael Bakunin and Peter Lavrov, called on young people to abandon universities and go to the village. Bakunin wished them to carry the message of immediate rebellion. He believed that the muzhik was a born anarchist, and only a spark was needed to set the countryside on fire. That spark was to be carried by the intelligentsia in the form of revolutionary ‘agitation’. Lavrov adopted a more gradual approach. Before he would turn into a revolutionary, the Russian peasant needed exposure to ‘propaganda’ which would enlighten him about the injustices of the Emancipation Edict, about the causes of his economic predicament, and about the collusion between the propertied classes, the state and the church. Inspired by these ideas, in the spring of 1874 several thousand youths quit school and went ‘to the people’. Here disappointment awaited them. The muzhik, known to them largely from literary descriptions and polemical tracts, would have nothing to do with idealistic students come to save him. Suspecting ulterior motives... he either ignored them or turned them over to the rural constabulary. But even more disappointing than the peasants’ hostility, which could be explained away by his ignorance, were his ethics. Some radical youths scorned property because they came from propertied backgrounds: they associated concern for wealth with their parents, whom they rejected. Hence they idealized the rural commune and the artel. The muzhik, living from hand to mouth, looked at the matter quite differently. He desperately wanted to acquire property... The intellectuals could indulge in talk of selfless brotherhood because, being supported by their families or the government (by means of stipends), they were not required to compete with one another. The muzhik, however, was always competing for scarce resources...

“In response to these disappointments, the radical movement broke up into warring factions. One group, called narodniki from their unbounded faith in the narod or people, decided that it was improper for intellectuals to foist their ideas upon the masses. The toiling man was always right. Intellectuals should settle in the village and learn from the peasant instead of trying to teach him. Another group, convinced that this method would end in renunciation of revolution, began to veer towards terrorism. A third developed an interest in western Social Democracy and, having concluded that no social revolution in Russia was possible until capitalism had done its work, braced themselves for a long and patient wait.”

Figes writes: “Most of the students were met by a cautious suspicion or hostility on the part of the peasants, who listened humbly to their revolutionary sermons without really understanding anything they said. The peasants were wary of the students’ learning and their urban ways, and in many places they reported them to the authorities. Ekaterina Breshkovskaya, later one of Russia’s leading socialists, found herself in jail after the peasant woman with whom she was staying in the Kiev region ‘took fright at the sight of all my books and denounced me to the constable’. The socialist ideals of the Populists were strange and foreign to the peasantry, or at least they could not

---

284 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 273-274.
understand them in the terms in which they were explained to them. One
propagandist gave the peasants a beautiful account of the future socialist
society in which all the land would belong to the toilers and nobody would
exploit anybody else. Suddenly a peasant triumphantly exclaimed: 'Won’t it
be just lovely when we divide up the land? I’ll hire two labourers and what a
life I’ll have!’ As for the idea of turning out the Tsar, this met with complete
incomprehension and even angry cries from the villagers, who looked upon
the Tsar as a human god. ‘How can we live without the Tsar?’ they said.

“Rounded up by the police, forced into exile or underground, the Populists
returned from their defeat in deep despair. They had invested so much of
their own personalities in their idealized conception of the peasantry, they
had hung so much of their personal salvation on the ‘people’s cause’, that to
see them both collapse was a catastrophic blow to their identity. The writer
Gleb Uspensky, to cite an extreme and tragic example, eventually became
insane after many years of trying to reconcile himself to the stark reality of
peasant life; and many of the Populists were driven to the bottle by this rude
awakening. It was suddenly made clear that the idea of the peasantry they
had in their minds did not in fact exist – it was no more than a theory and a
myth – and that they were cut off from the actual peasants by a cultural, social
and intellectual abyss that they could not hope to bridge. Like an unsolved
riddle, the peasant remained unknown and perhaps unknowable…”285

However, the peasant was knowable – by those who took the trouble to
study, and adopt, their faith, the faith of Orthodox Christianity. But that is
what none of the narodniki, to whichever tendency they belonged, were
interested in. And that is why they remained not only outside the peasantry,
and unable to help them in any meaningful way, but in fact their enemies to a
much greater degree than any oppressive landowner or government official...

The Devils

The “going to the people” movement petered out by 1875. It was replaced,
on the one hand, by Socialist Revolutionary movements such as Land and
Liberty and The People’s Will, and on the other by the Marxist Social
Democratic movement. Both kinds of movement wanted to create a
revolution; but since the Marxists, led by George Plekhanov, did not believe
that the revolution could come to Russia before it had become an industrial
country, and that it was the workers, not the peasants, who would spearhead
the revolution, attention focussed on the Socialist Revolutionary terrorists
who wanted apocalypse now.

We have already met perhaps the first “pure” terrorist, Bakunin, who
believed “that the Russian people would ignite the flame of revolution which
would devour Russia and in its bloody glow illumine the whole of Europe.
“‘The miracles of the revolution,’ he said, ‘will come out of the depths of this
fiery ocean. Russia is the aim of the revolution, its greatest forces will be
unleashed there, and there it will attain its perfection.’ ‘The constellation of

the revolution will rise high and beautiful in Moscow out of the sea of blood and will become the guiding star for the good of the whole of liberated humanity...’’’286

However, Bakunin was of the older generation, and lived abroad. More typical of the young devils who came to dominate the revolutionary underground inside Russia was Nicholas Ishutin. Ronald Seth writes: “He was the son of a merchant and of a mother who came of a noble family. When he was two both his parents died, and he was brought up until he was eleven by relatives of his father. In 1863 he entered Moscow university, where he quickly gathered round him a group of young men upon whom he was soon exerting a quite extraordinary influence.

“Ishutin was not an intellectual, and though his scorn of learning might have been a pose, he had not been long at the university when he decided to give up his studies in order to devote all his time to The Cause. Many of his followers imitated their leader in this.

“The group quickly became strong and active, and determined, as they phrased it, ‘to go to the people’, they sacrificed not only careers but all personal belongings. As a practical step in making contact with the people they set up co-operative and friendly societies for the workmen, artisans and students.”

However, this romantic Populist phase did not last long. For in fact “all Ishutin’s efforts and multifarious schemes were directed to one sole end – the creation of a revolutionary force. To achieve this he tossed all scruples out of the window, and introduced a new approach to the means by which the end might be attained – naked terrorism.

“The group believed that a peasant revolution would take place within five years. Their conception of this revolution differed from any previous conception of popular revolt; it was to be radical and ‘economic’ and nothing must be allowed to prevent its happening.

“The ruthless extremist policy preached by Ishuting did not appeal to all the members of the group, and as a result, between 1865 and 1866, there came into being a smaller group-within-the-group who were prepared to transmute into activity the extreme ideas of their leader. Named by Ishutin The Organization, this smaller group consisted mostly of extremely poor young men, many of whom were the sons of country priests whose modus vivendi differed little from that of the peasants. A few came from peasant families.

“Even this small and select band, however, did not entirely respond to all the aims of its founder. Extremist propaganda and agitation, yes – but not out and out terrorism, and this last was dear to Ishutin’s heart. So within The Organization there also developed another group, a secret cell, even more

select, composed of students who lived together ‘in common’. They gave themselves the name Hell…

“The existence of Hell was to be kept secret even from the members of The Organisation…”287

It was an appropriate name for a truly demonic organization, whose layers within layers recall Weishaupt’s Illuminati. However, it was not Ishutin’s Hell that was destined to create the spark of revolution. After another member of the organization, Demetries Karakozov, made a failed attempt to assassinate the Tsar, he and Ishutin were tried and sentenced to death. Karakozov was hanged, but Ishutin’s sentence was commuted to hard labour in Siberia. There he died of tuberculosis, having spent the last eleven years of his life insane…288

The next terrorist leader was Sergius Nechayev, a teacher of Holy Scripture who from his student years devoted himself to political activity. (The combination of seminary training and revolutionary activity was not uncommon. Dobroliubov was the son of a priest. Stalin was a seminarian…)

In 1869 Nechayev went abroad with a false passport to Geneva, where he joined Bakunin and Ogarev, a friend of Herzen’s. Like Bakunin, he was an anarchist: “We are destroyers,” he declared, “others will create”.

Together with Bakunin Nechayev wrote The Revolutionary’s Catechism, which declared:

“1. The revolutionary is a doomed person. He has neither his own interests, nor affairs, nor feelings, nor attractions, nor even name. Everything in him is swallowed up by a single exclusive interest, a single thought, a single passion – the revolution.

“2. In the depth of his essence he has broken – not in words only, but also in fact – every bond linking him with the civil order and with the whole civilized world, with all the laws, decencies, social conditions and morality of this world. He is its pitiless enemy, and if he were to continue to live in it, then it would only be in order to destroy it more reliably.

“3. The revolutionary despises all doctrinaire attitudes and has rejected secular science, presenting everything to future generations. He knows only one science – the science of destruction. For this and only for this has he studied mechanics, physics, chemistry and, perhaps, medicine.

“4. He despises and hates contemporary social morality in all its manifestations. Morality for him is that which aids the triumph of the revolution. Immorality and crime is everything that hinders it…”

“7. The nature of the genuine revolutionary excludes all romanticism, all sensitivity, exaltation or amusement. It excludes even personal hatred and revenge. Revolutionary passion, having become in him an everyday, every-minute phenomenon, must be united with cold calculation...

“25. In coming closer to the people, we must first of all be united those elements of the people’s life which since the time of the foundation of the Muscovite State power have not ceased to protest, not in words, but in deeds, against everything that is directly or indirectly linked with the State: against the nobles, against the officials, against the popes, against the world of Guilds and against the rich peasant, the devourer of the mir. We shall unite with the savage world of the thieves, this true and only revolutionary in Russia…”

Karakazov’s attempt to assassinate the Tsar was “in Nechayev’s eyes was only the prologue [of the ‘great work’]. Complete destruction would follow after a general uprising. Until then Nechayev suggested beginning ‘to remove obstacles’ in the persons: 1) of those who occupy high posts and especially ardently carry out their duties; 2) those who have capital and do not want voluntarily to give their resources to the common work; 3) those who reason and write for hire, and expect various gifts from the government. In the latter category were numbered not only such publicists as Katkov and Skaryatin, but also Lamansky and Pogodin and Kraevsky, and even A.D. Gradovsky. Only Alexander II himself, according to Nechayev’s plan, was not to be killed, because he wanted to prepare for him a more tormenting execution in view of all the people. “We shall preserve him,” wrote Nechayev in his savage proclamation, “for a tormenting, triumphant execution, before the face of the whole of the liberated black people, on the ruins of the State”.”

After the great work of destruction, according to Nechayev, all power would necessarily be concentrated in the hands of a Central Committee. (In this centralism, he differed from the more democratic Bakunin.) Everybody was to undertake physical work. Dissidents were to be executed...

In August, 1869, writes David Magarshack, “[Nechayev] returned to Russia... as the self-styled representative of the World Revolutionary Movement at Geneva and organized a ‘Society of National Retribution’ in Moscow. Dostoyevsky embodied all the facts relating to this society (the groups of five, etc.) in his novel [The Devils, published in 1871]. On 21 November Nechayev (who was only twenty-two at the time) and four members of the Moscow ‘group of five’ murdered the fifth member of the group, a young student of the Moscow Agricultural College called Ivanov, for allegedly refusing to carry out the instructions of the Geneva committee. ‘Ivanov’, the official act of indictment of Ivanov’s murderers stated, ‘was enticed to the grotto in the grounds of the Moscow Agricultural College on the pretext of handing over an illegal printing press. There they at first tried to strangle him, but afterwards Nechayev seized the pistol brought by Nicolyayev’ (another young accomplice) ‘and shot Ivanov in the head, after which Ivanov’s body was weighted with stones and thrown into the pond.’

289 Ivanov, op. cit. pp. 342-343.
Dostoyevsky’s description of Shatov’s murder follows closely the description of Ivanov’s murder. After the murder, Nechayev, like Peter Verkhovensky in the novel, escaped first to Petersburg and then abroad. He went back to Geneva, where he rejoined Bakunin and Ogaryov and assisted them in their abortive attempt to revive Herzen’s London journal *The Bell*. His ruthlessness in carrying out Bakunin’s own principle that the end justifies the means appalled even Bakunin, who soon broke with him. Nechayev then went to London, where he began publishing his terrorist journal *Village Commune*, which was sharply condemned by Engels... He later returned to Switzerland, where he was arrested by the Swiss police on an extradition order as a criminal and not a political offender and handed over to the Russian police. On 8 January 1873 he was tried for murder by the Moscow District Court and sentenced to twenty years’ penal servitude. He was not sent to Siberia, however, but incarcerated in the Peter and Paul fortress in Petersburg, where he died one year and ten months after Dostoyevsky, in November 1882.”

**Dostoyevskyan Justice**

The deeds of terrorists like Nechayev, and the reactions to them of the government, on the one hand, and educated society, on the other, led Dostoyevsky to some profound meditations on the nature of justice.

We have seen that there were two kinds of Russian justice – the individualist-objective westernised justice of the gentry, and the collectivist-subjective justice of the peasantry. The contrast between the two was rooted in the schism in the Russian nation that went back to Peter the Great. An initial act of gross injustice – the tearing away of the people from their roots in the Orthodox way of life, the entrenchment of the system of serfdom, and the building of the new city of Peter on the rotting bones of the serfs – had both divided the people within itself and created two conflicting concepts of justice: the gentry’s concept, which sought to entrench the gains they had made in law, a law based primarily on western ideas of the rights of the individual citizen, and the peasants’ concept, which rejected the “justice” of that settlement and sought their own justice, a justice based primarily on the rights of the majority community, in its place. After 1861, the situation, and the inter-relationship between the two nations and two concepts of justice, began to develop in a very complex and confusing way.

On the one hand, through the reforms of the period 1861-64, gentry justice began to extend its influence, as we have seen, into the countryside. It was sincerely argued by proponents of the reforms that this influence would ultimately be to the benefit of the peasants themselves, and of the country as a whole. But the peasants did not see it that way: centuries of not-unmerited distrust had done their work, and they chose to cling onto their own justice, and nurture their former grievances.

---

On the other hand, as the divisions between classes and social estates began to weaken and social mobility, both upwards and downwards, became more common, peasant justice began to extend its influence upwards, especially into the younger generation of the nobility and raznochintsy. Of course, the “Russian socialism” of the peasants” was very different in its psychological and religious base from the western socialism that attracted the radical youth, as the youth discovered when they tried to introduce their ideas into the countryside in the 1870s. Nevertheless, there was enough in common between the collectivism and anarchism of the two world-views to make their eventual union in the explosion of 1917 feasible – and especially after a new generation of peasants had grown up that was both more literate than their fathers and more prepared to challenge their authority...

But was there no third concept of justice that could unite the classes as they had been united before Peter’s reforms? Did not the Orthodox Church, which was still the Church of both gentry and peasants, have her own position?

In her best representatives, the Church did indeed have her own position, and was able to preach it convincingly to both gentry and peasants. Thus the Optina elders, of whom St. Ambrose was the most famous, both gave advice to the peasants that poured to them in great numbers and to intellectuals such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Soloviev. However, it was not the Church’s task to create new laws, but rather to exhort obedience to the laws issued by the powers that be; for “all the powers that be are from God” (Romans 13.1). In practice, this satisfied neither the peasants, who venerated the tsar but rejected his officials, nor the radical intelligentsia, who rejected the tsar also. In any case, the Church’s own “paralysed” position in relation to the state and the gentry diminished her authority and influence at just the moment when her voice was so necessary.

It remained to the believing intelligentsia whose Orthodoxy was not nominal but real to work out an Orthodox concept of justice that could unite a divided society. One of the few who attempted this was Dostoyevsky.

Dostoyevsky adhered neither to the gentry’s nor to the peasants’ concept of justice. It might be thought that he would be more inclined towards the latter; for he wrote in The Diary of a Writer that the peasants would “show us a new road, a new way out of all our apparently insoluble difficulties. For it will not be St. Petersburg that finally settles the Russian destiny… Light and salvation will come from below.” But he was aware that there were dark elements in the peasant world-view. “We, the lovers of ‘the people’, regard them as part of a theory, and yet it seems that none of us really likes them as they actually are but only as each of us has imagined them.” 291

Nevertheless, he was clearer in his rejection of gentry justice, and in particular of the idea that became popular after the juridical reforms of 1864, - and which led to the acquittal of Vera Zasulich and other terrorists, - that a

291 Dostoyevsky, in Figes, A People’s Tragedy, op. cit., p. 87.
Dostoyevsky did not directly attack the judicial reforms of 1864, but he sensed that something was deeply wrong with the spirit in which they were applied. As he wrote in 1873: “For several years in succession, I have been living abroad. When I left Russia, the new courts were merely beginning to function. How avidly I used to read there in our newspapers everything concerning the Russian courts… I would be reading: a wife, who murdered her husband, was acquitted. The crime was an obvious and proved one; she confessed to it. And yet: ‘No, not guilty.’ Then, again, a young man breaks open a strong box and steals the cash: ‘He was very much in love, you see; he had to get money to please his sweetheart. – No, not guilty.’ And if at least all these cases could be explained by compassion or pity! But the thing I could not understand was the reason for the acquittals – and I got confused…”

The problem, as so often, was that while the westernising reform might be formally superior to the existing Russian practice, its spirit was profoundly subversive of, and inferior to, the traditional ideas of the Russian people, rooted as they were in the Orthodox Faith. For what was the use of importing the best western model of juridical practice in the form of prosecution and defence counsels and a twelve-man jury, while at the same time importing the worst western theory of morality – that is, Benthamite utilitarianism, according to which the criterion of morality is “the greatest happiness of the greatest number”? And what was the use of the most incorruptible judges if they worked on the assumption that man is not free, and that his actions are exclusively the result of his upbringing and environment? It was ironic that the West, whose god was individual freedom, had come to believe, by the logic of its own ideology, to deny that freedom. And still more ironic that the freedom and responsibility of the individual was upheld precisely in “despotic” Russia, the so-called “prison of the peoples”, and by such champions of traditional Russian values as Dostoyevsky.

Speaking from his experience as a former convict, he knew that he had sinned freely, and had been punished justly. And yet belief in crime and punishment has to be tempered, he believed, with genuine compassion for the criminal and the knowledge that we ourselves are no better than he. And this was the traditional point of view of the Russian people.

“In fact,” he wrote, “if we believe that, at times, we ourselves are worse than the criminal, we thereby also admit that we are half-guilty of his crime. If he broke the law which the country prescribed for him, we ourselves are at fault that he stands now before us. For if we all were better, he, too, would be better, and he would not be standing facing us…”

“So, then, we should be acquitting at this juncture?”

“No, on the contrary, at this juncture it is necessary to state the truth, and to call evil – evil. As against this, however, we should assume half the burden of the verdict. This distress of the heart which nowadays everybody fears so much, and with which we shall leave the courtroom, will be our punishment. If the pain is genuine and sharp, it will purify us and make us better. In fact, having ourselves become better, we will improve our environment and will make it better. This alone can rectify it. Because escapism from one’s own compassion for the sake of evading personal suffering and wholesale acquittals is easy. In this way, by-and-by, we may reach the conclusion that there are no crimes at all, and that ‘environment is guilty’ of everything. We will come to the point, following the thread of a ball, that crime is even a duty, a noble protest against ‘environment’. ‘Since society is wickedly organized, it is impossible to struggle out of it without a knife in hand.’

“Indeed, this is what the doctrine of the environment contends in opposition to Christianity which, fully recognizing the pressure of the milieu, and which, having proclaimed mercy for him who has sinned, nevertheless makes it a moral duty for man to struggle against environment, and draws a line of demarcation between where environment ends and duty begins. Making man responsible, Christianity eo ipso also recognizes his freedom. However, making man dependent on any error in social organization, the environmental doctrine reduces man to absolute impersonality, to a total emancipation from all personal moral duty, from all independence; reduces him to a state of the most miserable slavery that can be conceived.”

These ideas were explored especially in his novel *Crime and Punishment* (1865). The hero of the novel is called Raskolnikov, which comes from the Russian raskolnik, meaning “schismatic”; for he is in schism from the real springs of life, from God, the Church and Holy Russia. That is what enables him to murder an old woman moneylender and convince himself, by the most rational of arguments - arguments derived from utilitarianism. He argues that he has done no real wrong but actually benefited mankind, in that an avaricious and worthless woman has been disposed of, and her money, which was going to a monastery, can now be used not only to help the impoverished student Raskolnikov (who might, after all, turn out to be a genius, an immense benefactor of mankind), but also, more altruistically, to rescue Raskolnikov’s sister Dunya from a dishonourable marriage and the prostitute Sonya Marmeladov from death, both spiritual and physical. So from the utilitarian point of view his crime was no crime, and merited no punishment.

Who was to gainsay such reasoning? Conscience? But what was conscience if not a learned product of one’s environment? And if the environment was as bad as the liberals considered contemporary Russia to be, what blame was to be attached to crimes determined by it? Was it not the system that was to be blamed, and especially the apex of it, the autocracy, rather than those victims of the system who were conventionally called criminals?

---

However, by a series of extraordinary coincidences that mimic the workings of Divine Providence, Raskolnikov is brought to repentance. As the novelist wrote to Katkov: “The truth of God and the law of the earth take their toll and in the end he has an inner compulsion to go and confess. He is compelled to do this, for even if he is to perish in prison, he will be in touch with the people again; the feeling of being isolated and separated from mankind, which he began to experience immediately after he had committed the crime, had tortured him beyond endurance. The law of truth and human nature has won out. The criminal himself resolves to accept suffering and thereby atone for his deed.”

Dostoyevsky believed firmly in the need of the criminal to atone for his deed through suffering; so just as crime was really crime, and not merely the result of ignorance or environmental determinism, so punishment had to be real punishment – the soul of the criminal, or at any rate the Russian criminal, in whom Orthodoxy was not completely extinguished, thirsted for it.

But what if the criminal felt no remorse? And what if he had ventured on the greatest crime – killing the Tsar himself? Was execution of the criminal the answer?

Dostoyevsky never disputed the guilt of the terrorists, nor the right of the Tsar to punish them. But he had serious doubts whether the terrorist sons were that much more guilty than their liberal fathers, a theme he explored in *The Devils* (1871) in the relationship between Stepan and Peter Verkhovensky. And if, in the end, the son Peter ultimately turns out to be the real criminal of the story, his father Stepan also has to do some profound repentance... So when the police chief General Mezentsov was assassinated in 1878, and the liberal press rose up in indignation, Dostoyevsky commented: “All these are articles of liberal fathers in disagreement with the diversions of their nihilist children, who went further than them” – further, that is, on essentially the same path of apostasy from God and Holy Russia. “If you’re going to write about the nihilist Russians, then for God’s sake don’t abuse them more than their fathers. Introduce this thought, for the root of nihilism is not only in the fathers, but it is the fathers who are still more nihilist than their children. Our underground evil-doers at any rate have a certain disgusting ardour, but in the fathers there are the same feelings, but [also] cynicism and indifferentism, which are still worse.”

Igor Volgin writes: “One of the characters of *The Devils* cites the Apocalypse: ‘And to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea write: thus says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot; Oh if only you were cold or hot! But since you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of My mouth’.

---

“... Ardour, albeit ‘disgusting’, witnesses to sincerity and faith: ‘lukewarmness’ is a property of the fathers; ‘to the Angel of the Church of Laodicea...’ does not extend to the children. If guilt is not removed completely from the revolutionaries of the ’70s, then to a significant degree it is transferred onto the shoulders of the people of the ’40s.

“... Not in one declaration of Dostoyevsky in the years 1878-81 – neither in his letters, nor in The Diary of a Writer, nor in utterances recorded by memoirists – do we meet any indication that the author of The Brothers Karamazov considered it possible to solve the problem by purely administrative means [the execution of terrorists]. A supporter of the monarchy, he found not a single word of approval for the repressions to which the monarchical authority resorted in order to preserve itself.

“In the duel between the revolution and the autocratic state he saw not so much a struggle between the existing political forces (‘who conquers whom’), as a profound historical drama. For the rift with the people was characteristic, in his opinion, not only of the revolutionary underground, but also of that which resisted this underground: the whole system of Russian statehood. The authorities were just as guilty of the rift with the people as those who were trying to destroy this authority. The sources of the drama were one.

“The thought of universal guilt (the guilt of the whole of educated society) did not leave Dostoyevsky to his last day. In his ‘before-death’ notebook he wrote: ‘Nihilism has appeared among us because we are all nihilists. We have only been frightened by a new form of its manifestation...’

“The Russian revolution, therefore, was not the cause, but the consequence: it was only an ‘original form’ of a very old national disease. This disease... would not submit to healing ‘by blood and iron’.296

So what was the disease? According to Dostoyevsky, the disease was the striving of the limited creature to attain the status of the Creator, the striving for mangodhood. In Crime and Punishment this striving was apparent in Raskolnikov’s conviction that he had the right to kill. In The Devils this analysis is taken a step further: into Kirillov’s conviction that he had the right to kill himself – and thereby become a god. For “if there is no God, then I am a god... If there is a God, then it is always His will, and I can do nothing against His will. If there isn’t, then it is my will, and I am bound to express my self-will....

“I am still only a god against my own will, and I am unhappy because I am bound to express my self-will. All are unhappy, because all are afraid to express their self-will. The reason why man has hitherto been unhappy and poor is because he was afraid to express the main point of his self-will, but has expressed it only in little things, like a schoolboy. I am terribly unhappy because I’m terribly afraid. Fear is the curse of mankind. But I shall proclaim my self-will. I am bound to believe that I do not believe. I shall begin and end, and open the door. And I shall save. Only this will save mankind and will

transform it physically in the next generation. For in his present physical condition man cannot – as far as I can see – get along without his former God. For three years I’ve been searching for the attribute of my divinity, and I’ve found it: the attribute of my divinity is – Self-Will! That’s all I can do to prove in the main point my defiance and to show my defiance and my new terrible freedom.”

Kirillov’s suicide is exploited by Peter Verkhovensky in his plan to destroy society and place himself at its head. This shows that revolutionary terrorism, while preaching absolute freedom or self-will, and expressing it in murder and suicide, actually brings forward the reign of universal terror and absolute despotism. As Shigalev says in The Devils: “Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrived at unlimited despotism…” “He proposes as a final solution of the problem to divide humanity into two unequal parts. One-tenth is to be granted absolute freedom and unrestricted powers over the remaining nine-tenths. Those must give up their individuality and be turned into something like a herd, and by their boundless obedience will by a series of regenerations attain a state of primeval innocence, something like the original paradise. They will have to work, however…”

“A modified and noble version of Shigalev’s system,” writes Andrzej Walicki, “is presented in the ‘Legend of the Grand Inquisitor’ in book five of The Brothers Karamazov. This is preceded by the rebellion of Ivan Karamazov – a rebellion against alleged divine or historical justice, a refusal to accept a harmony for which too high a price must be paid. Ivan rejects not God but the world He has created – because it is a world of injustice, because divine Providence does nothing to prevent the suffering of innocent children, and because no future ‘harmony’ can make up for the tears of a tormented child. His revolt suggests that men ought to take their fate into their own hands, reject the revealed truths of the Gospels, and build the Kingdom of God on earth – but without God. This… was Dostoyevsky’s explanation of the origins of revolutionary socialism…”

So what was the cure? Certainly not simple repression. Thus in the case of Vera Zasulich Dostoyevsky wrote that “to punish this young woman would be inappropriate and superfluous”... Dostoyevsky’s reservations about capital punishment for terrorists proceeded not from liberal considerations of their supposed innocence, but from his belief that in a Christian country in which the great majority of people were baptised Orthodox Christians the only true criminal tribunal was the tribunal of the criminal’s own conscience, and that the only true punishment was the torments of that conscience. The punishments distributed by the State did little, in his opinion, to elicit those inner torments in most people (they had done so in his personal case, but he was an exception). On the other hand, the spiritual punishment administered by the Church was another matter: it had the power to bring the criminal to true repentance, and then absolution and renewal of life.

This idea, together with the still more idealistic and radical idea that the Church might one day supplant the State, was developed in most detail in The Brothers Karamazov, published in the same year, 1878, as Zasulich’s trial: “’If everything were to become the Church, the Church would excommunicate from itself from itself those elements that were criminal and recalcitrant, and would then abstain from cutting off heads,’ Ivan Fyodorovich continued. ‘Where would an excommunicant go, I ask you? After all, then he would have to forsake not only his fellows, but Christ as well. You see, by his crime he would have risen in rebellion not only against his fellows, but against the Church of Christ. This is, of course, in the strict sense true even now, except that it is not publicly stated, and the conscience of the present-day criminal very often, exceedingly so, in fact, enters into bargains with itself, as if to say: “I may have committed theft, but I have no quarrel with the Church, I am no enemy of Christ.” That is what the present-day criminal quite frequently says to himself; well, and when the Church will have supplanted the State, then it will be difficult for him to say this without going against the whole of the Church over all the earth, as though he were to declare: “Everyone is wrong, and I alone, the murderer and thief, am the true Christian Church.” And, well, this is something that is very hard to say to oneself, it demands an enormous mass of preconditions, of circumstances that do not often occur. Now take, on the other hand, the view of the Church itself regarding crime: does it not have a duty to change in the face of the present almost pagan view of the matter, and move from being a mechanical amputation of infected limbs, such as takes place at present as a safeguard to society, towards transforming itself, completely this time and without falsehood, into an idea concerning the rebirth of man, his resurrection and salvation…”

“... ‘You know, if truth be told, it is thus even now,’ the Elder said suddenly, and they all turned towards him at once. ‘After all, if Christ’s Church did not exist at present there would be nothing to restrain the criminal from his wrongdoing, nor even any punishment to follow it – genuine punishment, that is, not the mechanical sort of which you were speaking just now and which merely sours the heart in the majority of instances, genuine punishment, the only effective kind, that deters and pacifies, and is contained in an awareness of one’s own conscience.’

“’But how can that be, may one be permitted to know?’ Miusov asked with the most animated curiosity.

”’Like this,’ the Elder began. ‘All these deportations to forced labour, which were earlier accompanied by floggings, reform no one, and more importantly have no deterrent effect, either, and not only does the number of capital crimes fail to diminish, but the more time passes, the greater does it become. After all, you must surely agree that this is so. And it transpires that, consequently, society is not safeguarded at all, for though one unhealthy limb is mechanically amputated and deported far away, out of sight, in his place there at once appears another criminal, and possibly even two. If there is anything that will safeguard society even in a time such as ours and will
reform the criminal, making him evolve into a new person, it is again solely
the law of Christ, manifesting itself in an awareness of one’s own conscience.
Only in perceiving his guilt as a son of Christian society – the Church, in other
words – will he also perceive his guilt before society itself, before the Church,
that is to say. Consequently the present-day criminal is capable of perceiving
his guilt only before the Church, and not before the State. Now if justice were
to be invested in a society-as-Church, society would know whom to bring
back from excommunication and join to itself once more in communion. At
present, however, the Church, possessing no legal authority, but only the
opportunity of making a certain moral condemnation, itself retreats from an
active punishment of the criminal. It does not excommunicate him from itself,
but makes do with issuing to him a fatherly admonishment. Not only that, it
even tries to preserve with the criminal all the details of the Christian
ecclesiastic communion: admits him to church services, to the holy gifts, gives
him alms and treats him more as one in thrall than as a guilty person. But
what would happen to the criminal – oh merciful Lord! – if Christian society,
too, the Church, that is to say, were to reject him in the way the civil law
rejects and amputates him? What would happen if, instantly following the
punishment meted out to him by the civil law, the Church were to punish him
with excommunication? There would be no more desperate plight, at least for
the Russian criminal, for Russian criminals retain their religious faith. Yet
who can tell: a loss of faith within the criminal’s despairing heart, and then
what might take place? But the Church, like a tender and loving mother,
withholds herself from active punishment, as the guilty one has already been
punished all too severely by the justice of the State without her intervention,
and after all there must be someone to take pity on him. The Church does this
principally because the justice of the Church is the only form of justice that
accommodates within itself the truth and is consequently unable to join
forces, morally or materially, with any other form of justice, even in a
temporary compromise. Here no bargains may be struck. It is said that in
Europe the criminal seldom repents, as the most recent theories confirm him
in the notion that his crime is not a crime at all, but merely an act of revolt
against an unjustly oppressive power. Society amputates him from itself by
means of a power that triumphs over him quite mechanically, and
accompanies this excommunication with hatred (such at least are the stories
that they tell about themselves in Europe) – with hatred and the most
complete indifference and neglect concerning his subsequent fate as a brother
to the rest. Thus it all takes place without the slightest ecclesiastical
compassion, for in many instances there are no longer any Churches there at
all, and all that remain are churchmen and fine ecclesiastical buildings, as the
Churches there have themselves long striven to evolve from the lower form of
life – the Church – to the higher form – the State – in order to vanish in it
completely. That, at any rate, appears to be the situation in the Lutheran
lands. In Rome, however, a State has been proclaimed in place of a Church for
a thousand years now. The result is that the criminal no longer perceives
himself as a limb of the Church and, excommunicated, falls into despair. And
if he does return to society, he does it not infrequently with such hatred that
society excommunicates him, as it were, from itself. What the end of this is
you may judge for yourselves. In many instances it would appear that the
same thing takes place among us here in Russia; but the fact of the matter is that, in addition to the established courts, there is in our land also the Church, which never breaks off its communion with the criminal as one of its dear and beloved sons, and there exists, moreover, and is preserved, though only in thought, the justice of the Church which though it is no longer active is still alive for the future, even if only in a dream, and is unfailingly perceived as such by the criminal himself, by the instinct of his soul. What was said here just now is also true: to the effect that if the Church really were to be granted legal authority, in all its power, that is to say if the whole of society were simply to be converted into a Church, not only would the legal authority of the Church have an influence upon the reform of the criminal of a kind it never has at present, but the incidence of crime itself might start to diminish at a surprising rate. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the Church would view the criminal of the future and the crime of the future in many respects quite differently than it does at present and would be able to return the excommunicant, anticipate the schemer and regenerate the fallen. It is true, the Elder smiled thinly, ‘that Christian society is not yet ready for this and merely stands upon the shoulders of the seven men of honest report; but as they never grow scarce, so it still firmly abides in the expectancy of its complete transformation from a society that is as yet little more than a pagan body into one Oecumenical and Sovereign Church…”

Portents of the Antichrist

Dostoyevsky, as we have seen, identified the sickness of the terrorists as the striving for mangodhood. However, not only the terrorists, but the whole of society was infected with the same sickness. Only in others it manifested itself in seemingly less virulent and destructive but more widespread and ultimately no less fatal forms.

Among those who still considered themselves Orthodox, one of the earliest signs of this spiritual sickness was indifferentism, what we would now call ecumenism, that is, an increased tolerance for Christian heresies to the extent of placing them on a par with Orthodoxy.

Thus in the 1850s St. Ambrose of Optina wrote: “Was any benefit gained by religious tolerance in Russia in relation to foreign nations: the French and others, not to speak of the Jew, who, as a people rejected by God, is despised by all, and nowhere has any significance? Religious tolerance of the indicated nations could have no influence on the simple people, because the way of life of our simple people is completely different from the condition and situation of these nations: but in the circle of Russian educated people this religious tolerance had a great influence on morality and on their domestic way of life. Now many educated people bear only the name of Orthodox, but in actual fact completely adhere to the morals and customs of foreign lands and foreign beliefs. Without any torment of conscience they violate the regulations of the Orthodox Church concerning fasts and gather together at balls and dances on the eves of great Feasts of the Lord, when Orthodox Christians should be in

300 Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, Magashack Penguin Translation, pp. 86-90.
church in prayerful vigil. This would be excusable if such gatherings took place on the eves of ordinary days, but not on the eves of Feasts, and especially great Feasts. Are not such acts and deeds clearly inspired by our enemy, the destroyer of souls, contrary to the commandment of the Lord which says: carry out your ordinary affairs for six days, but the seventh (festal) day must be devoted to God in pious service? How have Orthodox Christians come to such acts hated by God? It is not for no other reason than indiscriminate communion with believers of other faiths...”

This danger was especially noted by Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov (+1867): ‘You say, ‘heretics are Christians just the same.’ Where did you take that from? Perhaps someone or other calling himself a Christian while knowing nothing of Christ, may in his extreme ignorance decide to acknowledge himself as the same kind of Christian as heretics, and fail to distinguish the holy Christian faith from those offspring of the curse, blasphemous heresies. Quite otherwise, however, do true Christians reason about this. A whole multitude of saints has received a martyr’s crown, has preferred the most cruel and prolonged tortures, prison, exile, rather than agree to take part with heretics in their blasphemous teaching.

“The Ecumenical Church has always recognised heresy as a mortal sin; she has always recognised that the man infected with the terrible malady of heresy is spiritually dead, a stranger to grace and salvation, in communion with the devil and the devil’s damnation. Heresy is a sin of the mind; it is more a diabolic than a human sin. It is the devil’s offspring, his invention; it is an impiety that is near idol-worship. Every heresy contains in itself blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whether against the dogma or the action of the Holy Spirit...”301

Bishop Ignatius was pessimistic about the future of Russia: “It is evident that the apostasy from the Orthodox faith is general among the people. One is an open atheist, another is a deist, another a Protestant, another an indifferentist, another a schismatic. There is no healing or cure for this plague.” “What has been foretold in the Scriptures is being fulfilled: a cooling towards the faith has engulfed both our people and all the countries in which Orthodoxy was maintained up to now.” “Religion is falling in the people in general. Nihilism is penetrating into the merchant class, from where it has not far to go to the peasants. In most peasants a decisive indifference to the Church has appeared, and a terrible moral disorder.”302 “The people is being corrupted, and the monasteries are also being corrupted,” said the same holy bishop to the future Tsar Alexander III in 1866, one year before his own death.303

---

Another pessimist was Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, who feared “storm-clouds coming from the West”, and advised that rizas should not be made for icons, because “the time is approaching when ill-intentioned people will remove the rizas from the icons.”

In 1871 the Over-Procurator of the Russian Holy Synod, Count Alexander Petrovich Tolstoy, had a vision which he recounted to Elder Ambrose of Optina: “It was as if I were in my own house standing in the entrance-hall. Beyond was a room in which on the ledge between the windows there was a large icon of the God of Sabaoth that gave out such blinding light that from the other room (the entrance-hall) it was impossible to look at it. Still further in was a room in which there were Protopriest Matthew Alexandrovich Konstantinovsky and the reposed Metropolitan Philaret. And this room was full of books; along the walls from ceiling to floor there were books; on the long tables there were piles of books; and while I certainly had to go into this room, I was held back by fear, and in terror, covering my face with my hand, I passed through the first room and, on entering the next room, I saw Protopriest Matthew Alexandrovich dressed in a simple black cassock; on his head was a skull-cap; in his hands was an unbent book, and he motioned me with his head to find a similar book and open it. At the same time the metropolitan, turning the pages of this book said: 'Rome, Troy, Egypt, Russia, the Bible.' I saw that in my book 'Bible' was written in very heavy lettering. Suddenly there was a noise and I woke up in great fear. I thought a lot about what it could all mean. My dream seemed terrible to me - it would have been better to have seen nothing. Could I not ask those experienced in the spiritual life concerning the meaning of this vision in sleep? But an inner voice explained the dream even to me myself. However, the explanation was so terrible that I did not want to agree with it."

St. Ambrose gave the following interpretation of this vision: "He who was shown this remarkable vision in sleep, and who then heard the very significant words, very probably received the explanation of what he had seen and heard through his guardian angel, since he himself recognized that an inner voice explained the meaning of the dream to him. However, since we have been asked, we also shall give our opinion...

"...The words 'Rome, Troy, Egypt' may have the following signification. Rome at the time of the Nativity of Christ was the capital of the world, and, from the beginning of the patriarchate, had the primacy of honour; but because of love of power and deviation from the truth she was later rejected and humiliated. Ancient Troy and Egypt were notable for the fact that they were punished for their pride and impiety - the first by destruction, and the second by various punishments and the drowning of Pharaoh with his army in the Red Sea. But in Christian times, in the countries where Troy was located there were founded the Christian patriarchates of Antioch and Constantinople, which flourished for a long time, embellishing the Orthodox Church with their piety and right dogmas; but later, according to the inscrutable destinies of God, they were conquered by barbarians - the

Muslims, and up to now have borne this heavy slavery, which restricts the freedom of Christian piety and right belief. And in Egypt, together with the ancient impiety, there was from the first times of Christianity such a flowering of piety that the deserts were populated by tens of thousands of monastics, not to speak of the great numbers of pious laity from whom they came. But then, by reason of moral licentiousness, there followed such an impoverishment of Christian piety in that country that at a certain time in Alexandria the patriarch remained with only one priest.

"... After the three portentous names 'Rome, Troy, Egypt', the name of 'Russia' was also mentioned - Russia, which at the present time is counted as an independent Orthodox state, but where the elements of foreign heterodoxy and impiety have already penetrated and taken root among us and threaten us with the same sufferings as the above-mentioned countries have undergone.

"Then there comes the word 'Bible'. No other state is mentioned. This may signify that if in Russia, too, because of the disdain of God's commandments and the weakening of the canons and decrees of the Orthodox Church and for other reasons, piety is impoverished, then there must immediately follow the final fulfilment of that which is written at the end of the Bible, in the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian.

"He who saw this vision correctly observed that the explanation given him by an inner voice was terrible. Terrible will be the Second Coming of Christ and terrible the last judgement of the world. But not without terrors will also be the period before that when the Antichrist will reign, as it is said in the Apocalypse: ‘And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and death shall flee from them’ (9.6). The Antichrist will come during a period of anarchy, as the apostle says: ‘until he that restraineth be taken away from the midst’ (II Thessalonians 2.7), that is, when the powers that be no longer exist."305

St. Ambrose's identification of "him that restraineth" the coming of the Antichrist with the State had long roots in the patristic writings. St. John Chrysostom, Blessed Theophylact and others identified him with the Roman emperor, whose successor, as being the emperor of "the Third Rome", Russia, was the Russian Tsar. Metropolitan Philaret had restated the political teaching of Orthodoxy with exceptional eloquence in the previous reign. And now Bishop Theophan the Recluse wrote: "The Tsar's authority, having in its hands the means of restraining the movements of the people and relying on Christian principles itself, does not allow the people to fall away from them, but will restrain it. And since the main work of the Antichrist will be to turn everyone away from Christ, he will not appear as long as the Tsar is in power. The latter's authority will not let him show himself, but will prevent him from acting in his own spirit. That is what he that restraineth is. When the Tsar's authority falls, and the peoples everywhere acquire self-government (republics, democracies), then the Antichrist will have room to manoeuvre. It will not be difficult for Satan to train voices urging apostasy from Christ, as experience showed in the time of the French revolution. Nobody will give a

305 St. Ambrose of Optina, Pis’ma (Letters), Sergiev Posad, 1908, part 1, pp. 21-22 ®.
powerful 'veto' to this. A humble declaration of faith will not be tolerated. And so, when these arrangements have been made everywhere, arrangements which are favourable to the exposure of antichristian aims, then the Antichrist will also appear. Until that time he waits, and is restrained."

Another prophet of doom was Bishop Theophan the Recluse. In 1864 he wrote that the principles of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Narodnost' had to be preserved. "When these principles weaken or are changed, the Russian people will cease to be Russian. It will then lose its sacred three-coloured banner."

And again in 1871: "Our Russians are beginning to decline from the faith: one part is completely and in all ways falling into unbelief, another is falling into Protestantism, a third is secretly weaving together beliefs in such a way as to bring together spiritism and geological madness with Divine Revelation. Evil is growing: evil faith and lack of faith are raising their head: faith and Orthodoxy are weakening. Will we come to our senses? O Lord! Save and have mercy on Orthodox Russia from Thy righteous and fitting punishment!" 306

The future New-Martyr Anna Zertsalova wrote: "It was a sad time then in the capital. The holy churches, the unconquerable strongholds of Orthodoxy, stood in it as before, as did the unshakeable walls; the holy icons were adorned with shining covers of precious stones, the God-pleasers rested in the churches in their incorrupt relics. But the people were perishing from their vices and errors. The spirit of little faith and debauchery entered everywhere like the most savage plague into unstable heads. Tolstoy and other false teachers crept into inexperienced young hearts with their destructive propaganda, undermining in them the bases of faith and piety. The Lord was forgotten, forgotten were the rules of morality and honour; forgotten were the authorities and order; passions and vices broke out into liberty." 307

A fairly typical example of those who succumbed to this pernicious atmosphere, at least for a time, was Sergius Alexandrovich Nilus. "I was born," he writes, "in 1862 (25 August), in a family which on my mother's side counted in its midst not a few advanced people - advanced in the spirit for which the 60s of what is now already the last century was distinguished."

"My parents were nobles and landowners - major ones, moreover. It was perhaps because of their links with the land and the peasants that they escaped any extreme manifestation of the enthusiasms of the 70s. However, they could not escape the general, so to speak platonic-revolutionary spirit of the times, so great then was the allure of the ideas of egalitarianism, freedom of thought, freedom of thought, freedom... yes, perhaps freedom of action, too, which overcame everyone. It seems that at that time there was not one

307 Svetil'nik Pravoslavia (Candlestick of Orthodoxy), Moscow, 1912, pp. 5-6; in "Zhizneopisanie Protioiereia Valentina Amphiteatrova" (Life of Protopriest Valentine Amphiteatrov), Pravoslavnaia Zhizn' (Orthodox Life), 53, № 11 (658), November, 2004, pp. 9-10 ©.
home of the nobility in both the capitals where the state structure of the Russian empire was not reshaped in its own model, according to the measure of its understanding and according to the last book it had read, first from Sovremennik (The Contemporary), and then Otechestvennie Zapiski [Notes on the Fatherland] or Vestnik Evropy [Herald of Europe]. Of course, the hard food of conversations of a political character did not much help to develop in me religious dreams, as they were then called, and I grew up in complete alienation from the Church, uniting it in my childish imagination only with my old nanny, whom I loved to distraction.

"Nevertheless, I did not know any prayers and entered a church only by chance; I learned the law of God from teachers who were indifferent, if not outrightly hostile, to the word of God, as an intractable necessity of the school’s programme.

"That was the degree of my knowledge of God when I, as a youth who was Orthodox in name, went to university, where they already, of course, had no time for such trivialities as Orthodoxy.

"Left to my devices in the life of faith, I reached such an abominable degree of spiritual desolation as only that person can imagine who has lived in this spiritual stench and who has then, while on the path of his own destruction, been detained by the unseen hand of the benevolent Creator."308

Nilus did not actually become a revolutionary. But many others subjected to the same influences did, such as L.A. Tikhomirov. Few were those, like Nilus and Tikhomirov, who found their way back to the ancestral faith of Orthodoxy.

Thus did the woolly liberalism of the fathers corrupt the sons, preparing the way for the revolution…

The spiritual disease of the Russian educated classes was a disease contracted in the apostasy of the West and so could only receiving healing in the Orthodox Church of the East – the healing provided by her God-inspired confession of faith, her holy sacraments and, not least, the blood of her martyrs. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (I John 5.4-5).

And so the coming age, the Age of the Antichrist, would witness the final, climactic, unprecedentedly destructive (in both physical and spiritual terms) battle between the Church and the revolution, between Christ as revealed in the Orthodox Church of the East and the Antichrist as born and grown to awful maturity in the apostasy of the West…

The Alliance Israélite Universelle was founded in 1860 in Paris with a Central Committee led by Adolphe Crémieux. It was the first of a series of national Jewish organisations, such as the Anglo-Jewish Association in Great Britain, the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden in Germany and the Israelitische Allianz zu Wien in Austria, which began to campaign for Jewish rights in this period. Although the Alliance considered itself to be motivated by universalist sentiments, it did not disguise the fact that its aim was the defence of the Jewish faith: “Universal union is among our aspirations without any doubt, and we consider all men our brothers, but just as the family comes before strangers in the order of affection, so religion inspires and memory of common oppression fortifies a family sentiment that in the ordinary course of life surpasses others... Finally, there is the decisive consideration for not going beyond the religious confraternity: all other important faiths are represented in the world by nations – embodied, that is to say, in governments that have a special interest and an official duty to represent and speak for them. Ours alone is without this important advantage; it corresponds neither to a state nor to a society nor again to a specific territory: it is no more than a rallying-cry for scattered individuals – the very people whom it is therefore essential to bring together.”

Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes that, “‘insufficiently informed... about the situation of the Jews in Russia’, the Alliance Israélite Universelle ‘began to interest itself in Russian Jewry’, and soon ‘began to work for the benefit of the Jews in Russia with great constancy.’ The Alliance did not have departments in Russia and ‘did not function within her frontiers’. Besides charitable and educational work, the Alliance more than once directly addressed the government of Russia, interceding for Russian Jews, although often inopportune... Meanwhile, the newly-created Alliance (whose emblem was the Mosaic tablets of the law over the earthly globe), according to the report of the Russian ambassador from Paris, already enjoyed ‘exceptional influence on Jewish society in all States’. All this put not only the Russian government, but also Russian society on their guard. [The baptised Jew] Jacob Brafmann also agitated intensively against the Alliance Israélite Universelle. He affirmed that the Alliance, ‘like all Jewish societies, has a two-faced character (its official documents tell the government one thing, but its secret documents another)’, that the Alliance’s task was ‘to guard Judaism from the assimilation with Christian civilisation that was harmful to it’... “

“Fears about the Alliance were nourished by the original very emotional appeal of the Alliance’s organisers ‘to the Jews of all countries, and by forgeries. With regard to Jewish unity it declared as follows: Jews,... If you believe that the Alliance is for you – good, and that in constituting a part of various peoples, you nevertheless can have common feelings, desires and hope... if you think that your disunited attempts, good intentions and the strivings of individual people could become a powerful force, uniting into a

single whole and going in one direction and to one goal... support us by your sympathy and cooperation’.

“But later there appeared a secondary document which was printed in France – supposedly an appeal of Adolphe Crémieux himself ‘To the Jews of the Whole World’. It is very probable that this was a forgery. It is not excluded that it was one of the drafts of an appeal that was not accepted by the organisers of the Alliance (however, it fell in with Brafman’s accusations that the Alliance had hidden aims): ‘We live in foreign lands and we cannot interest ourselves in the passing interests of these countries as long as our own moral and material interests are in peril... the Jewish teaching must fill the world...’ A sharp controversy broke out in the Russian press, at the peak of which I.S. Aksakov in his newspaper Rus’ concluded that ‘the question of the inauthenticity... of the appeal does not in the present case have any particular significance in view of the authenticity of the Jewish views and hopes expressed in it’.

“The pre-revolutionary Jewish Encyclopaedia writes that in the 70s in the Russian press ‘voices in defence of the Jews began to be heard less frequently... In Russian society the thought began to be entrenched that the Jews of all countries were united by a powerful political organisation, the central administration of which was concentrated in the Alliance Israélite Universelle’. So its creation produced in Russia, and perhaps not only in Russia, a reaction that was the reverse of that aimed at by the Alliance.” 310

The leader of this trend in Russian thought was Aksakov. Relying especially on Brafman’s testimony, he wrote: “The Jews in the Pale of Settlement constitute a ‘state within a state’, with its own administrative and judicial organs, and with a national government – a state whose centre lies outside Russia, abroad, whose highest authority is the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris.” 311

Another country in which the Alliance’s influence was felt was Romania, which in the 1870s had about 250,000 Jews, about 7 per cent of the total population. According to David Vital, the Jews were in a worse situation in Romania than in Russia. “The Jews of Russia... were citizens. Theirs were diminished rights – as were, for different reasons and in different respects, those of the peasants of Russia as well. But they were not without rights; and both in theory and in administrative practice their legal situation and their freedoms were superior to those of the peasants... [However,] contrary to Russian practice, let alone that of the central and western European states, the new rulers of Romania set out not only to deny Jews ordinary civic rights, but to place them outside the law of the country altogether and to subject them to a system of arbitrary and punitive rule...” 312

310 Solzhenitsyn, Dvesti Let Vmeste (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, pp. 178-180 ©.
311 I.S. Aksakov, Rus’, October 10, 1881; in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 627.
312 Vital, op. cit., p. 488.
The Convention of Paris in 1858 had stipulated, as a condition of Romania’s autonomy from Turkey, that “all Moldavians and Wallachians shall be equal in the eye of the law and with regard to taxation, and shall be equally admissible to public employments in both Principalities” (Article XLVI). However, under pressure from the Prince of Moldavia the Powers had agreed that only Christians in Moldavia and Wallachia should have political rights. “The enjoyment of these rights may be extended to other religions by legislative arrangements.” In practice, however, the Romanian authorities had no intention of granting the Jews either civic or political rights. And in 1866, as the central synagogue of Bucharest was being destroyed, the national parliament, led by Ion Bratianu, the minister of finance, enacted Article VII of the new constitution which declared that “only foreigners of the Christian religion may obtain the status of a Romanian”.

At this point the Alliance became involved. “When a greatly agitated Adolphe Crémieux, now the grand old man of western European Jewry, turned to Napoleon III in 1867 to protest against [the Romanians’] conduct he was assured that ‘this oppression can neither be tolerated nor understood. I intend to show that to the Prince [Charles].’ As good as his word, the emperor telegraphed a reprimand to Bucharest, marginally softened by the ironic conclusion that ‘I cannot believe that Your Highness’s government authorises measures so incompatible with humanity and civilization’. The Hohenzollern prince, only recently installed as ruler of the country, still sufficiently uncertain of his status and throne not to be embarrassed by the image Romania and he himself might be presenting to ‘Europe’, took action. Bratianu was made to resign. Émile Picot, one of the prince’s private secretaries, was sent to Paris to meet the directors of the AIU in person (on 22 July 1867) and give them as good an account of the government’s position as he was able. Crémieux presiding, the meeting passed off civilly enough although, as Picot’s assurances of the good intentions of the Romanian government failed to correspond to what the AIU knew of the true conditions on the ground in Romania itself, the effort to mollify the Parisian notables failed. Crémieux then addressed himself directly to Prince Charles. Hardly less than imperious, his language speaks volumes both for the mounting indignation with which the condition of Romanian Jewry had come to be regarded by the leading members of the western European Jewish communities and for the historically unprecedented self-assurance with which many of them now approached their public duty. ‘The moment has come, Prince,’ Crémieux wrote, ‘to employ [your] legitimate authority and break off this odious course of events.’ Bratianu should be dismissed ‘absolutely’. The savage measures taken against the Jews should be annulled. The unfortunately who had been torn violently from their homes must be allowed to return. For the rest, ‘Inform [the country] that nothing will be neglected to erase the traces of this evil, pursue without respite the newspapers that have for the past year continually engaged in incitement to hatred, contempt, assassination, and expulsion of the Jews, dismiss all the cowardly officials who have lent a violent hand to this dreadful persecution and deal energetically with all violence directed at the Jews from this time on.’
“One may assume that this made unpleasant reading for Prince Charles, but it remained without real effect. Bratianu was not dismissed ‘absolutely’. He was, on the contrary, given a new post. The press was not restrained. Officials engaged in active persecution of Jews were not removed from office. And after 1870 and the plummeting of French prestige, Émile Picot, a Frenchman, was out of favour in Bucharest anyway and the channel he had opened to western Jewry collapsed – as, of course, did the political weight ascribed in Bucharest to the AIU itself.”

However, the French had another chance at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Supported by Bismarck and Disraeli, they laid down that the independence of Romania would be recognised on the same terms as that of Bulgaria and Serbia – that is, equality of treatment for members of all religious creeds (Article XLIV). As before, the Romanians more or less ignored the treaty, which seemed to show the impotence of the Jews in one part of Europe to help their compatriots in another.

On the other hand, “the campaign mounted on behalf of Romanian Jewry had been remarkably well organized and well supported...[And] the exertions of the notables and philanthropic organizations of western and central European Jewry on behalf of the Romanian Jews added more than a mite to the mythology of the ‘international power’ of the Jews” – if it was only a myth...

**The Rise of Orthodox Nationalism**

If liberalism, socialism and various false beliefs were sapping the foundations of Holy Russia, a different, albeit related disease was corrupting the rest of the Orthodox oikoumene: nationalism, or, as the Patriarchate of Constantinople would call it, phyletism. Like many nations in the West, the Orthodox nations of the Balkans and the Middle East were thinking of one thing: freedom!

The nationalism of the Orthodox Arabs manifested itself in a desire for a greater participation in Church life, which had been dominated by the Greeks since the early sixteenth century, when Patriarch Germanus forbade Orthodox Syrians from becoming monks, thereby excluding them from the higher posts in the Church. However, in 1872, writes Karen Armstrong, “the Arab members of the Greek Orthodox Church started to campaign vehemently for greater participation in their church. They felt despised and marginalized by the élite Greek minority. The quarrel started in Jerusalem but spread to the rest of Palestine, encouraged by the Russian consul, who had his own reasons for challenging the Greek hegemony of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land. At one point, Arab behaviour became so violent that the British consul saw it as an incipient revolt. Peace was eventually restored, but Arab discontent smouldered beneath the surface. In 1882 Arab Christians founded the

---

313 Vital, *op. cit.*, pp. 495-496.
Orthodox Palestine Society to fight against the foreign control of their church.”

The Southern Slavs – the Serbs and the Bulgarians – wanted freedom from the Turks – and looked to the Russians to liberate them. And the Greeks in the Free State of Greece wanted freedom for their fellow countrymen still under the Ottoman yoke in accordance with their “great idea” of the re-establishment of the Byzantine Empire. Only they did not look to the Russians to liberate them, as they had earlier in the century. For their attitude to Russia had cooled; they suspected her of “Pan-Slavist” designs, and of wanting to help Bulgaria take the ancient Greek lands of Thrace and Macedonia in which there was now a large Bulgarian population.

In Romania, westernization began shortly after the Greek revolution of 1821, which gave birth, in the words of Aleko Russo, to “a rain of constitutions and projects for social reform”. Vladimir Bukarsky writes: “In one of these reform projects, ‘the Caravunar constitution’, the concept of ‘national sovereignty’ was included under the influence of the French revolution. In spite of the ancient norms of Moldavian law, which divided the population of Moldavia into Orthodox and heterodox, ‘the Caravunar constitution’ came close to the German understanding of the nation: only a Moldavian by birth was recognized as a ‘Moldavian native’. The ‘advanced’ ideas of Europe gave birth in the Moldavian boyars to a still stronger denial of traditional cultural-spiritual forms, and scornful attitude to the historian of their own people, than among the Russian or Polish nobility. As the author of one of the reforming projects, the boyar Iordake Rosetti-Roznovanu, affirmed: ‘The past of Moldavia represents nothing interesting, not one event worthy of being kept in the annals of the nation’. And the Muntyanin Titu Maiorescu, later minister of education of Romania, called ancient Moldavian and Wallachian culture in general ‘eastern barbarism’. Among the traditional values subject to re-evaluation were the norms of the Moldavian language and Moldavian graphics. The ideology of Romanianism was not worked out in Moldavia and Wallachia, but in the Austrian province of Transylvania, where the Wallachians lived in conditions of servitude. The formation of the Transylvanian school of linguists, supposed Lucian Boia, was the work, not of the Wallachians themselves, but of the Greek Catholic intellectuals, who received their education in Vienna and Rome and who were possessed by the idea of the Latin origin of the Wallachians (although their direct ancestors are not the Romans, but Romanized Thracians and Slavs). The name ‘Romania’ was thought up in the 18th century by the Transylvanian German Martin Felmer. In the 80s of this century the Transylvanian linguists George (Dyerd) Shinkai, Samuel Klajin and others worked out the grammar of a language which they called Romanian, and also other textbooks which were printed in Latin script in Buda and Vienna. Moreover, it is characteristic that the Latinization of the Wallachian letters was taken on by the Catholic Church. The union with the Vatican, as the contemporary Romanian historian George Platon points out, excluded a part of the Transylvanian Wallachians from the Orthodox commonwealth of peoples. From the very beginning Romanian

national consciousness crystallized on the paths of the alienation from Orthodoxy as the bearer of the eastern cultural tradition and geopolitical orientation.”

In Romania, as the Ottoman suzerainty was reduced, both liberal and nationalist passions came to the fore. “After the Crimean War,” writes the Russian diplomat and future monk, Constantine Leontiev, “both the Moldovians and the Wallachians felt the need to serve national politics. Both princedoms elected for the first time one Gospodar, [Alexandru Ioan] Cuza, from the middle class (a simple police officer from the city of Galatz...)

“Kuza immediately democratised this all-Romania; he emancipated the peasants form their ancient serf dependency and thereby crushed the power of the Moldavian-Wallachian aristocracy. A constitution common to both princedoms began to function, as everywhere else, quite correct in form and, of course, liberal (destructive) in spirit.

“And what then? Almost immediately this liberal, national government began to close the monasteries, drove out the monks and seized the lands that had been offered to these communities from ancient times. The burden of this measure fell mainly on the Greek Patriarchates and the Holy Places, to which these communities and their lands were subject. (I will note in passing that the Russian government supported, albeit unsuccessfully, the Patriarchates here, for the Slavic race was not at issue in this matter, as it was in the later movement of the Bulgarians. In the Bulgarian affair we were liberals, we supported the Bulgarians against the Patriarch, and the success of our Slavic charges far exceeded our desires. In the Romanian affair of the subject monasteries we were conservatives and could do nothing for the Church.)”

The revival of Romanian statehood was accompanied both by anti-Orthodox and anti-Russian sentiment. Bukarsky continues: “Romania arose as a State in 1859 through the active support of England and France, who intended to create a ‘natural barrier’ on the path of the Russian army to Constantinople. The government of Alexander Jonah Cuza announced the submission of the Orthodox Church to the secular authorities and the secularization of Church property – the removal of Church and monastic property into State use. Indicative was the open vandalism caused by the ‘thieving’ (as the monks called it) government commission in the ancient...”


317 Leontiev, “Natsional’naia politika kak oruzhie vsemirnoj revoliutsii” (Nationalist politics as a weapon of universal revolution), Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom), Moscow, 1996, p. 530 ®. “Moreover, in Romania”, continues Leontiev, “soon after national unification, there happened in miniature what also happened in Spain in the 1870s. A small conservative rebellion broke out. According to the Treaty of Paris, a part of the old Bessarabian Bulgarian colonies had gone to Romania. They had their special local customs and privileges, which had been given them by Russia. They wanted to keep these special features – and rebelled. The democratic constitutional government of the new national Romania pacified them by force of arms and forced them to become like everyone else, levelled them and mixed them up with the rest of its population.” (op. cit., pp. 530-531)
monastery of Niamets. This commission removed the superior of the monastery, Archimandrite Gerasimus, from administering the life of the Lavra, sealed the chancellery, the archives, the library with its very valuable ancient manuscripts, and did not hesitate to rob the monastic treasuries, sacristy, wine cellars and barns. In the words of the monks, ‘the Turks were better that the Christian-commissars, Voltaireans, Calvinists and Lutherans who robbed the Niamets monastery.’ However, the limit of the Romanian authorities’ sacrilege and arbitrariness turned out to be their striving to encroach on the age-old rules of the monastic life. The government decreed that services in the Church-Slavonic language should be banned. All service books were removed, the monastic typography with its Cyrillic equipment was destroyed, even conducting services in honour of the Russian saints was banned and it was forbidden to commemorate them. The monks who resisted this sacrilege, headed by Hieromonk Andronicus, were immediately labelled ‘Russofils’ by the Romanian authorities. It was precisely after this that the Russian government returned into the possession of Nyamets Lavra the properties of Kitskany and Kopanka, where in January, 1864 the New-Niamets Holy Ascension monastery was founded – a jewel of Orthodoxy situated in the Transdniester territory. In the consciousness of Moldavians the idea was strengthened of Russia as of the preserver of traditional Moldavian values – language, letters and Orthodox faith, which had been defiled beyond the Prut by ‘Latinism’.”

In 1864 Cuza “convoked a Church Synod at which he recommended that the Romanian Orthodox Church change from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar. Also present at this Synod was Saint Calinic of Cernica (1787-1868), one of the most dauntless strugglers for the triumph of the truth and for the preservation of the True Faith. He was categorically opposed to the calendar innovation and exclaimed as he was leaving the hall in which the Synod was meeting: ‘I will not be reckoned with transgressors!’ Thus, the Prince did not succeed in implementing this recommendation, which had been imposed on him by Freemasons.”

The only conservative, anti-liberal and anti-nationalist group in the Orthodox East was its ruling class under the old millet system – the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. There were both good and bad reasons for this.

The good reason was that the patriarchate, together with the monks of Mount Athos over whom it had jurisdiction, stood for strict, traditional Orthodoxy. As such, it could not fail to resist the liberal, westernising trends that were gradually gaining the upper hand in Athens, Belgrade, Sophia and Bucharest. This Orthodox traditionalism made the patriarchate and the Russian government natural allies – although, as we shall see, events were to test that relationship.

318 Bukarsky, op. cit., p. 5.
319 Metropolitan Vlasie, preface to Constantin Bujor, Resisting unto Blood: Sixty-Five Years of Persecution of the True (Old Calendar) Orthodox Church of Romania (October 1924 – December 1989), Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003, p. 10.
A less good reason for the patriarchate’s conservatism was the fact that it and the leading Greek merchant families, the “Phanariots”, led what was in many ways a comfortable and privileged life under the Ottomans. And so they were in no hurry to be “liberated” – whether by their fellow countrymen in Free Greece or by the Russian Tsar.

In fact, as Philip Mansel writes, “the bishops, aware of the tsars’ cavalier treatment of the Russian Orthodox Church, feared that ‘protection’ would mean ‘slavery’. They told a Russian diplomat: ‘We are now rich and strong. Nine million souls in the hands of the Patriarch, his synod and seventy bishops. You with the right of protectorate will deprive us of everything.’” 320

However, that was before the Crimean War. After the war, Russia was no longer protector of the Christians at the Sublime Porte – and the Greeks felt the difference. And not only the Greeks. Thus in 1860 the Orthodox of Damascus were subjected to a massacre which the Russians were not able to prevent or avenge. 321

According to Professor A.P. Lopukhin, “the Christian subjects of the Sultan, whatever oppression and humiliation they were suffering, were now unable to rely on any outside help but were obliged to rely solely on their own resources... During the last years of the reign of Abdul Mecid [1839-61],... the Greeks... not only remained in a dreadful social and economic state, but even lost many of their former rights and privileges.” 322

The reason for this was a series of liberal reforms that the Western Powers imposed on Turkey at the Treaty of Paris in 1856, and which the Ottomans issued in the form of an Imperial Rescript. These were seen as supplementing and strengthening the policy of reform known as tanzimat which Turkey had begun in 1839, and were supposed to improve the lot of the Orthodox Christians under Ottoman rule - but actually made it worse.

As Mansel writes, “they promised Christians and Muslims equality before the law in place of their separate legal systems, equal liability to military service and access to government positions, freedom from confiscation and, in the words of the 1856 decree, ‘the attainment of full happiness for all classes of our imperial subjects who are bound to one another by the heartfelt bonds of a common patriotism and are all equal in our equitable compassionate view’. The last execution of a convert to Islam, who had reverted to Christianity, took place on 4 October 1843. Despite the protests of the five European ambassadors, alerted by the victim’s relations, an Armenian was decapitated in public and his body flung into the street. Thereafter the law

321 One of the victims of this massacre was Hieromartyr Joseph the Damascene (http://aaron.org/midwest/Articles/St._Joseph_Of_Damascus_A.htm).
lapsed. Mixed courts to judge cases involving both religions came into existence in 1847. In 1850 a commercial code based on French law was enacted. The power of kadis to regulate morals and markets, declining since 1826, was transferred to a new police ministry, also based on the French model. By 1876, largely under the influence of France, Ottoman law had been transformed, and the powers of the Patriarchs over the Armenian and Orthodox communities had also diminished.”  

The economic reforms were harmful both to the Ottomans and to their Christians subjects. As Peter Mansfield points out, the liberal free-trade principles imposed on the Ottomans by the West “prevented the reformers from providing the Ottoman infant industries with the protection they needed in order to survive.

“The truth was that there was no prospect of a ‘great leap forward’ in the Ottoman economy which would have enabled it to compete with those of the industrialized powers of Western Europe. The main features of advanced nineteenth-century capitalism and the expertise to manage them were lacking, and it would take much more than a generation to develop them. Moreover, the system of Capitulations meant that much of the more progressively managed parts of the economy were in foreign hands and therefore outside Ottoman control. In 1867 an amendment to the land code for the first time allowed foreigners to own land in the empire.

“The reformers did attempt to develop the backward infrastructure of the Ottoman economy – roads, railways and ports. But every effort in this direction only increased the burden of government debt. Despite some improvement in the collection of taxes, expenditure always outran revenues. Soon the Ottoman government was forced to take the fatal step of using receipts from foreign loans to meet the growing deficits. Finally, in October 1875, the government issued a public declaration that only half the amount needed to service the foreign debt could be paid in cash; the remainder would be covered with a new issue of government bonds. This was equivalent to a declaration of bankruptcy. Although twentieth-century experience has shown how debtor nations can skilfully exploit their position with their creditors, this was an appalling position in which the proud Ottomans found themselves.”

As living conditions declined, and the power of the patriarch over his people weakened, national passions exploded. In 1861 rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Bulgaria, Wallachia and Moldavia. In 1866 it was the turn of the island of Crete, where in an extraordinary outburst of patriotic passion reminiscent of the Russian Old Ritualists Abbot Gabriel of the monastery of Arkadiou blew up himself and nearly a thousand other Greeks rather than surrender to the Turks. Further rebellions broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria in the 1870s, which finally brought the Russians into the region in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878.

---

323 Mansel, op. cit, pp. 265-266.
However, the Russian intervention under Alexander II was different from earlier interventions under Nicholas I. Under Nicholas, wrote Leontiev, “the matter had been put in a more direct, clearer and spiritually more original manner: there was more talk of the rights of Russian protection, of Russian power. This was better essentially: but it did not come at the right time. It was too early. We had a failure [in the Crimean War]. Europe did not recognise in our actions at that time her own idea - emancipationist, democratic, egalitarian. She could not comprehend the Orthodox monarchist spirit; she hated it; she was not then in contradiction with herself and she won. From the 1860s Russian diplomacy, the Russian press and Russian society began to speak more and more loudly in favour of the Christians of the East, without relying, as in the 50s, on the right of our power, but much more on the rights of the Sultan’s Christian subjects themselves. Our politics after the Crimean war became more western in thought, that is, more liberal; in essence worse, more corrupt from a civil point of view. But it came at a better time; Europe, paralysed by an inner contradiction, could no longer unite in friendly manner against us; she was forced to make concessions to us constantly on the path of the liberal reforms that we suggested for the Christians. Because of this Turkey became weaker; the Christians became bolder and bolder, and we in the course of twenty years in all, step by step, destroyed the Turkish empire, on which so many remarkable statesmen of the West, from Metternich to Napoleon III and Palmerston, had placed so many hopes.”

This was paradoxical, but true: that the gradual weakening of the Ottoman empire, and liberation of the Christians from under the Turkish yoke, was in fact bad for the Orthodox commonwealth as a whole. Why? In order to understand the answer to this question, we need to go back to before the beginning of the Turkish yoke.

Before 1453 the Orthodox Christians were plagued by two diseases: an inclination towards western humanist culture; and disunity among themselves on ethnic lines, as first Bulgars and then Serbs tried to conquer Tsargrad, Constantinople, the capital City of the Orthodox Christian Empire. The Turkish conquest of the whole of the Balkans suppressed both diseases.

On the one hand, western influence was seen as harmful by the Turks as it was by the Christians, and the Ottoman authorities acted to cut it off.326 On

---

325 Leontiev, “Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh – I” (Letters on Eastern Matters – I), op. cit., p. 354. Cf. Mansel, op. cit., p. 248: “Wellington revealed the great truth: ‘The Ottoman Empire stands not for the benefit of the Turks but of Christian Europe.’ Metternich pronounced the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe ‘a political necessity for Austria.’”

326 For example, “when in the eighteenth century the Orthodox in Syria complained to the Porte of Catholic propaganda, the following decree was issued: ‘Some of the devilish French monks, with evil purposes and unjust intentions, are passing through the country and are filling the Greek rayah with their worthless French doctrine; by means of stupid speeches they are deflecting the rayah from its ancient faith and are inculcating the French faith. Such French monks have no right to remain anywhere except in those places where their consuls are located; they should not undertake any journeys or engage in missionary work” (in Fr. Alexander Schmemann, The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1963, p. 284).
the other hand, the millet system recognised only one Orthodox Christian nation under the Ecumenical Patriarch.

These two very important benefits of the Turkish yoke outweighed its disadvantages in the form of the restrictions on missionary activity, the forced induction of Bosnian boys into the Janissaries, and intermittent persecutions; just as the advantages of the pagan pax Romana had outweighed its disadvantages. The Christian leaders in both Church and State – specifically, the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople – understood this. So they did not try to destroy the empire, while trying to mitigate its savagery.

However, the above-mentioned diseases, while suppressed, had not been driven completely out of the body. And from the time of the French revolution, and especially after the Greek revolution of 1821, they began to work on each other. Thus western ideas about freedom and the rights of individuals and nations began to interact with frictions among the Christians caused by Greek bishops’ insensitivity to the needs of their Slavic, Romanian and Arabic flocks to produce a potentially revolutionary situation.

The idea animating the Greek part of this revolutionary movement was Pan-Hellenism, also known as “the great idea” (η μεγάλη ιδέα) – the idea, namely, that all the traditionally Greek lands not yet freed from the Turks - Crete, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, even Constantinople and the vast territory of Asia Minor – should be united under Greek suzerainty. This idea dated from well before the Greek revolution of 1821; some say it began immediately after the fall of Constantinople in 1453; but it gathered headway after the foundation of the Free State of Greece, being nourished especially by western-educated liberal thinkers in Athens. It is not to be confused with Byzantinism, the faith and culture of Christian Rome, the idea which Leontiev advocated...

The problems facing the realisation of the Panhellenic programme were twofold. The first, obviously, was that the Turks were not going to give up these territories without a fight. The second was that in some of these areas, especially Macedonia and Thrace, there were now more Slavs than Greeks – and the Slavs, too, were not going to give up what they considered to be their lands to the Greeks without a fight.

The Bulgarians in particular feared Greek expansionism, both political and ecclesiastical. Their fears were based on the fact that the Patriarch of Constantinople consistently appointed bishops for Bulgarian-speaking areas who spoke only Greek, celebrated the Liturgy only in Greek and founded only Greek-speaking schools.

This injustice elicited the sympathy of notable Russians such as Bishop Theophan the Recluse and Alexis Khomiakov for the Bulgarians in the early

---

327 As an archimandrite, Theophan was sent by the Russian government and the Most Holy Synod to Constantinople to gather information on the Greco-Bulgarian quarrel. On March 9, 1857 he presented his report, in which his sympathies for the Bulgarians were manifest. However, he also called on “magnanimous” Russia to come to the help of the Ecumenical
stages of the quarrel; while the atrocities suffered by the Bulgarians in the 1870s stirred up much larger swathes of Russian society with the idea of liberating the Southern Slavs from the Turkish yoke...

**Pan-Slavism: Danilevsky and Leontiev**

The Greeks believed that the Russians were not only aiming to liberate the Southern Slavs, but to unite all the Slavs under the leadership of Russia in order to conquer Constantinople and all the Greek lands. A superficially similar idea – that of Moscow the Third Rome - had been embraced by earlier generations of Greeks with ardour. But later, more liberal- and nationalist-minded Greeks rejected any interference of Russian in the Balkans. For in Free Greece Russia was no longer seen as the liberator of the Balkans for the sake of the Orthodoxy that the Russian and Balkan peoples shared, but as the potential enslaver of the Balkans for the sake of Russian great power chauvinism. True, many Greeks, especially in the Ottoman Empire and on Mount Athos, cherished more charitable views of Russia, which continued to support the Christians under the Turkish yoke in many ways; but the views of the western-educated liberals in Athens were gaining ground...

A sign of the times was the court case that took place on Mount Athos in 1874-1875 between the Russian and Greek monks of the monastery of St. Panteleimon with regard to the rights of the Russian monks to stay there. “The case divided the whole of Athos into two opposing camps: the Greek monks and the Russian monks. Only a few of the Greeks had the courage to support the Russians. Thanks to the energy and insistence with which the Russian monks defended their rights to the monastery, with documents in their hands and with the strong support of the Russian consul at the Porte [Count N.P. Ignatiev], the case ended with victory for the Russians.”

The Greeks accused the Russians of Pan-Slavism, a real phenomenon but one whose long-term significance the Greeks tended to exaggerate. Geoffrey Hosking writes: “An ethnographic exhibition in Moscow in 1867 provided the first forum for Panslavism as practical power politics. Mikhail Katkov urged that Russia should play the role of Prussia within Germany, bringing the Slavs together as a single polity. Such a campaign, he asserted, ‘would complete the triumph of the principle of nationality and provide a solid foundation for the contemporary equilibrium of Europe.’ The rector of Moscow University proclaimed ‘Let us unite as Italy and Germany have been united in one whole, and the name of the united nation will be: Giant!’ He also called for a common Panslav language: ‘May one literary language alone cover all the lands from the Adriatic Sea and Prague to Arkhangelsk and the Pacific Ocean, and may every Slav nation irrespective of its religion adopt this language as its means of communication with the others.’ There cannot be any doubt that he had Russian in mind.

---

Patriarchate – “we must not abandon our mother in the faith in this helpless situation of hers” (Life, in Archimandrite Nicon (Ivanov) and Protopriest Nicholas (Likhomakov), Zhitia Russkikh Sviatykh (Lives of the Russian Saints), Tutaev, 2000, vol. 2, p. 716 ®).

328 Lopukhin, op. cit., pp. 136-137.
“Not all the other Slavs present were content to accept unquestioningly Russian hegemony over their national life. The principal Czech spokesmen, Palacky and Rieger, called for a reconciliation between Russia and Poland, one moreover in which Russians as well as Poles would make concessions. The Russians, however, were adamant that they had made every possible attempt, since 1815, to give Poland its own state and its own national life, but had encouraged ingratitude, rebellion and attempts to annex Russian territory and population. These exchanges highlighted one of the ineluctable dilemmas of Panslavism: that those whom it purported to serve rejected cardinal elements of its programme and did not wish to become part of a Russian state where there was guarantee that democracy would prevail. The Poles in particular, thoroughly Roman Catholic and Westernized in outlook, were unwilling to accept continued Russian domination…

“With the formation of the German Empire in 1871, Panslavism became unequivocally a doctrine of Realpolitik, a means of containing the expansion of German influence in Central and Eastern Europe. General Rostislav Fadeyev believed that the stage was set for a showdown between the Germans and the Slavs, and he urged that Russia must either counter-attack, making use of its Slav ties to undermine Germany’s ally, Austria, or retreat behind the Dnieper and become a predominantly Asiatic power. With the support of the Slav peoples, furthermore, the way would lie open to Constantinople, which he proposed should be declared an open Slav city. For him, Panslavism was a pre-condition for remaining a European great power: ‘Slavdom or Asia’ he loved to repeat to Russian diplomats.

“They, however, were reluctant to accept the logic of his position, and he was dismissed from active service for propagating his ideas. The official Foreign Office view was that Russia should cooperate with Germany and Austria to reaffirm the legitimist monarchical principle in Eastern Europe, to counteract revolutionary movements there, whether nationalist or not, and to promote a stable balance of power. Panslavism could never be consistently espoused by the Russian government, for it was a policy which would inevitably lead to war against the Ottomans and Habsburgs, if not against the European powers in general. Besides, it was in essence a revolutionary strategy, directed against legitimate sovereign states. For the Russian empire to promote the principle of insurrectionary nationalism was, to say the least, double-edged.”

But the Russian empire was not promoting insurrectionary nationalism. And even the Pan-Slavism of General Fadeyev can be called “Pan-Slavist” only with major qualifications. Thus consider his Opinion on the Eastern Question of 1876: “The liberated East of Europe, if it be liberated at all, will require: a durable bond of union, a common head with a common council, the transaction of international affairs and the military command in the hands of that head, the Tsar of Russia, the natural chief of all the Slavs and Orthodox… Every Russian, as well as every Slav and every Orthodox Christian, should

---

desire to see chiefly the Russian reigning House cover the liberated soil of Eastern Europe with its branches, under the supremacy and lead of the Tsar of Russia, long recognized, in the expectation of the people, as the direct heir of Constantine the Great.”

The ideology expressed here is not Pan-Slavism, but Russia the Third Rome, the theory – which goes a long way back, before the age of nationalism – that Russia, as the successor of Rome and Byzantium, is the natural protector of all Orthodox Christians. Hence the reference to “all the Slavs and Orthodox”, and “every Slav and every Orthodox Christian”, and to Constantine the Great – who, needless to say, was not a Slav. Thus the sentiment expressed by Fadeyev is religious rather than racial, even if mixed, not unnaturally, with a consciousness of racial ties with the persecuted Slavic Orthodox.

The only major thinker who could described as a true Pan-Slavist was Nicholas Danilevsky, whose Russia and Europe (1869) “made use of Slavophile ideas,” as Andrzej Walicki writes. But “by means of conscious selection and revision …[he] was able to fit them into an entirely different ideological structure.

“In the first place Danilevsky had to jettison the Slavophile standpoint on statehood, since a doctrine that regarded the state as a ‘necessary evil’ or ‘external truth’ obviously conflicted with a program calling for the creation of a powerful economic and military federation led by Russia. In his assessment of Peter the Great, too, Danilevsky laid rather more stress on the political and military successes that helped to create a powerful empire than on the undignified ‘aping’ of Europe accompanying the reforms. The greatest changes were to be found in the interpretation of Russia’s historical mission: for the Slavophiles the goal had been the defense of certain universal ideals (‘true Christianity’, traditional social bonds); for Danilevsky the goal that justified all the cruelties of Russian history was the creation of a powerful state organism whose expansion would be subject only to the natural laws of evolution. Europe, he wrote indignantly, refused to recognize Russia’s mission and assigned her merely a modest role in ‘civilizing’ Asia. No great nation would be content with such a role. Fortunately her destiny was manifestly quite different: the Russian people, like the other Slavs, bore within it the germ of a new type of civilization that had nothing in common with the Germano-Romanic civilization of Europe. This new civilization would only flower after the conquest of Constantinople and the establishment of that city as the capital of a Slavic empire liberated and united by Russia. The ‘concept of Slavdom’ ought therefore to be, after God, the supreme ideal of every Slav, an ideal standing ‘higher than freedom, higher than science, higher than education, higher than all worldly goods, for none of these is attainable unless this ideal is realised.’

“The mistake the Slavophiles had made, according to Danilevsky, was to attribute an absolute and therefore universal value to ‘Russian’ or ‘Slavic’ principles. In effect they had fallen into the same error as the Westernizers,
who had identified European civilization with a universal culture. There could be no such thing as ‘universal values’ shared by the whole of mankind. Danilevsky declared; humanity expressed itself solely in specific ‘historico-cultural’ types that were simply different and that could not be compared; to attempt to evaluate these types from the point of view of their allegedly universal significance was just as absurd as to ask which concrete plant form – palm or cypress, oak or rose – better expressed ‘the concept of plant’. Since there could be no such thing as a universal mission, the Slavs could not have been selected to fulfil such a mission; nor could they, as a collective body, represent ‘true Christian principles’ in their actions, since such principles were only valid in relation to individuals. The demand for the application of Christian principles to politics, the ‘mysticism and sentimentalism’ of the period of the Holy Alliance, did not take into account the fact that only individuals were immortal and that self-sacrifice, the supreme ‘yardstick of Christian morality’, could be demanded of them alone. The laws governing the relations of states and nations could only be based on self-interest – ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’. In accordance with this ‘Benthamite principle of utilitarianism’, Danilevsky demanded the rejection of the surviving hold of legitimism on Russian foreign policy and preached an openly cynical attitude toward international alliances.

“… Danilevsky did not ignore moral criteria but only selected a different concept – that of realizing the ‘Slavic historico-cultural type’ – as the supreme moral frame of reference for Russia and all other Slav nations. From this ‘Slavic’ point of view it was easy for him to pronounce judgement on the ‘Jesuitical gentry state of Poland’, that ‘Judas of Slavdom’, which he compared to a hidden tarantula greedily devouring its eastern neighbor, unaware that its own body was being eaten by its western neighbors. It was from this standpoint, too, that he condemned Tsarist policy for its ‘softness’ toward Europe and accused the government of overlooking the interests of Russia and her Slavic sister nations by currying favor with the West. Even toward the Poles, Danilevsky thought, the tsarist government had shown an excess of chivalry by agreeing to incorporate Congress Poland into Russia instead of leaving her to non-Slavic Austria and Prussia….

“… In place of an abstract ‘universal humanity’ (obshchelovechestvo, conceived as a common yardstick of everything human), Danilevsky proposed the notion of ‘all-humanity’ (vsechelovechestvo), by which he meant a rich variety of cultural and national differences that could not be reduced to a common denominator or arranged in an evolutionary sequence. Anticipating the later theories of Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, Danilevsky divided mankind into ‘historico-cultural types’ comparable to different styles in architecture and paintings; progress was something that could only take place within the type, and categories of organic growth such as youth, maturity, and old age were applicable only to these various types and not to humanity as a whole. In view of the heterogeneity and variety of historical phenomena, there was no point in attempting to formulate theories that claimed to embrace the whole of history; these were invariably based on the
characteristic ‘false perspective’ of Europocentrism – the unconscious identification of the history of Europe with the history of mankind...

“Danilevsky distinguished ten types of civilization in the past: (1) Egyptian, (2) Chinese, (3) Assyrian-Babylonian-Phoenician or Ancient Semitic, (4) Hindu, (5) Iranian, (6) Hebrew, (7) Ancient Greek, (8) Roman, (9) Neo-Semitic or Arabian, and (10) Romano-Germanic or European. These civilizations were ‘incommensurable’ as far as their ‘principles’ were concerned, but they could be compared from a formal point of view...

“Unlike the Slavophiles, Danilevsky was not hostile to the Romano-Germanic principle. Of his ‘historico-cultural types’, the European type was one of the most outstanding, perhaps the finest produced so far; at the same time, however, he reaffirmed the Slavophile diagnosis of European decay. In his scheme European history had three periods of peak achievement. The first was the thirteenth century, which saw the flowering of an aristocratic and theocratic culture. The second was the seventeenth century, after the intellectual liberation of the Renaissance and the liberation of conscience of the Reformation; this period represented the creative apogee of European history (it was also the age to which all European conservatives looked back with the greatest nostalgia – with the exception of the Ultramontane Catholics, who wanted to go back even further). Liberation from feudalism at the end of the eighteenth century ushered in the third and last period of achievement – the technical and industrial age. During this period (in 1848) new forces had emerged that desired the total liberation and total destruction of the old European civilization. The Paris Commune, Danilevsky wrote in a note to a later edition of his book, was another and more terrifying embodiment of these forces: ‘It was the beginning of the end.’

“The eclipse of Europe did not, however, concern Russia or the Slavic nations. Whatever arguments the Russian Westernizers might put forward to the contrary, Russia emphatically did not belong to Europe; the best proof of this was that Europe itself did not consider Russia ‘one of us’, and turned its back on her in abhorrence. Positive evidence of Russia’s originality was the solution to the peasant question, which entailed the distribution of the land to the peasants but also the preservation of the village commune as a bulwark against the proletariat that was ruining Europe. By turning her back on Europe and shutting herself off from her, by conquering Constantinople and liberating and uniting her fellow Slavs, Russia would create a new, eleventh cultural type…”

In Danilevsky’s view, “the new Slavic civilization, with its capital at Constantinople, would synthesize the highest achievements of its predecessors in religion (Israel), culture (Greece), political order (Rome) and socio-economic progress (modern Europe), and would supplement them with the Slavic genius for social and economic justice. ‘These four rivers will unite on the wide plains of Slavdom into a mighty sea.’…”

332 Hosking, op. cit., p. 369.
Constantine Leontiev had once been Danilevsky’s disciple, and in his rejection of Western civilization in favour of the Slav, he continued to show affinities with both Danilevsky and the early Slavophiles. Thus, as S.V. Khatuntsev writes, “one of the sources of Leontiev’s ideas on the inevitability of serious conflicts between a Russia that was renewing and transforming itself and the civilization of the West was, without a doubt, the ideas of the Slavophiles. Proceeding from a recognition of the complete opposition of the two worlds – the ‘western’, ‘Romano-Germanic’, ‘Catholic-Protestant’, and the ‘eastern’, ‘Slavic-Orthodox’, the Slavophiles concluded that conflicts and wars between them were inevitable. So for Yu.F. Samarin, ‘the essential, root difference’ between the two worlds was already ‘a condition of struggle’ between them in all spheres, including the political. The political opposition between Western Europe and Slavdom was the initial basis of the views of I.S. Aksakov. Already in 1861 he was speaking about ‘the hatred, which is often instinctive’ of Europe for the Slavic, Orthodox world, the case of which was ‘the antagonism between the two opposing educational principles and the envy of the decrepit world for the new one, to which the future belongs’. Several years later Aksakov wrote: ‘The whole task of Europe consisted and consists in putting an end to the material and moral strengthening of Russia, so as not to allow the new, Orthodox-Slavic world to arise...’ However, he did not think that the opposition between the West and Russia unfailingly signified enmity or war between them. No less important for the genesis of the ideas of Leontiev that are being reviewed was his conception of the war of 1853-56 and the anti-Russian campaigns in Europe during the Polish rebellion of 1863-1864. Both the Eastern war and the anti-Russian campaigns convinced him that the West was irreconcilably hostile to Russia.”

However, under the influence of the Holy Elders and a closer knowledge of the East, Leontiev rejected his Pan-Slavist dreams. In fact, “towards the end of his life, in the early 1890s, he finally lost his faith in Russia’s ability to create a distinctive new cultural type. The future, he prophesied, belonged to socialism; possibly a Russian tsar would stand at the head of the socialist movement and would organize and discipline it just as the Emperor Constantine had ‘organized’ Christianity; or perhaps, he wrote in another apocalyptic prediction, a democratic and secular Russia would become the home of the Antichrist...”

Leontiev believed that if one subtracted Byzantine from Slavdom, very little distinctively new was left. An ardent Philhellene, he thought that narrowly Serbian and Bulgarian nationalisms were real and powerful forces, very similar in their psychology and the nationalist character of their aims to Greek nationalism. But Pan-Slavism existed more in the minds of the Greeks than in reality.

---

334 Walicki, op. cit., pp. 304-305.
For what in fact united all the Slavs as opposed to the Orthodox Slavic nations? Less than one might expect. Russia herself was far from being a purely Slavic empire; her aristocracy had been accepting Tatar and German nobles into its ranks for centuries.

Besides, as Tom Gallagher points out, “as a multi-national empire in its own right, Russia was hostile to the pretensions of European small state nationalism.” With the largest Slavic nation, Poland, she was in a state of constant friction, as the Roman Catholic Poles did everything in their power to undermine Orthodox Russian power. With the Catholic and Protestant Slavs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes – she was on more friendly terms. But it was not in her interests to foment revolution on ethnic lines in Austria, and as recently as 1848 Russian armies had acted to bolster Austrian power against the Magyars. With the Serbs and the Bulgars Russia had both blood and Orthodox Christianity in common. But a political union with these nations – even if they wanted it, which most did not – would have required absorbing non-Orthodox Hungary and non-Slavic Romania as well.

Nor was it in Russia’s interests to support individual Slavic nationalisms. For to support, say, Bulgarian pretensions to an independent Greater Bulgaria – as opposed to simply protecting Bulgarians suffering from Turkish cruelty – would have created conflicts with the Greeks, the Romanians and the Serbs; whereas it was in Russia’s interests to see unity among all the Orthodox nations. Even supposing that Russia in the name of some mythical Pan-Slavist ideal had been willing and able to conquer the whole of the Balkans and take Constantinople, she could not have held on to her gains for long. First, the western powers, including the new rising power of Germany, would have been stirred up to launch another crusade against her. Secondly, to drive the Turks out of Constantinople would not have meant their final defeat, and further operations deep into Asia would have been necessary. But thirdly and most importantly, the union between the Tsar of Russia and the Patriarch of Constantinople, upon which the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth was based, would have been shattered. For what then would the position of the Patriarch within the Russian empire have been? Still the first hierarch of Orthodoxy, or de facto subordinate to the Russian Synod? How would the Greeks (not to mention the Southern Slavs) react to exchanging one form of foreign dominion for another, albeit Orthodox?

Such mad dreams were far from the minds of the Russian tsar and his advisors for a still more important reason, a reason having to do with the internal condition of the Russian Empire. Nationalism, as Leontiev convincingly demonstrated, is closely related to liberalism. Both are rooted in the French revolution; both insist on the essential equality of men (in the case of liberalism) or nations (in the case of nationalism); both erase individual

---

differences, undermining *individuality* in the name of *individualism, hierarchy* in the name of *egalitarianism*.336

Now Russia was fighting a battle to the death against liberalism within her own borders. It therefore made no sense to champion the closely related heresy of nationalism (whether Slavic or non-Slavic, it made no difference337), still less to include nations infected by it within her own empire.

Leontiev also foresaw that state nationalism could lead to the internationalist *abolition* of states. “A state grouping according to tribes and nations is... nothing other than the preparation - striking in its force and vividness - for the transition to a cosmopolitan state, first a pan-European one, and then, perhaps, a global one, too! This is terrible! But still more terrible, in my opinion, is the fact that so far in Russia nobody has seen this or wants to understand it...”338 “A grouping of states according to pure nationalities will lead European man very quickly to the dominion of internationalism.”339

According to Wil van den Bercken, Leontiev “foresaw European unification, the fusing of the European states into ‘a federal republic... And many who do not really want this believe in such an outcome as an unavoidable evil.’ Leontiev explains this development in terms of ‘the crazy religion of thinking in terms of prosperity (evdemonism, eudaemonism)’ with its slogan of ‘le bien-être material et moral de l’humanité’. This striving for unity provoked in Leontiev a fear of cultural impoverishment. He feared that the old capital cities of Europe would be swept off the map because formerly they had been centres of hostility between the European nations, and that the monarchies would disappear in favour of ‘a banal workers’ republic. Leontiev asks himself: ‘What price must be paid for such a fusion? Will not a new pan-European state have to dispense in principle with recognizing all local differences?... In any case France, Germany, Italy, Spain, etc. will cease to exist as states; they will become districts of the new state as former Piedmont, Tuscany, Rome and Naples have become districts for Italy, and as now Hessen, Hanover and Prussia have themselves become districts of pan-Germany; they will become for pan-Europe what Burgundy and Brittany have long become for France!’ According to Leontiev, the cultural complexity of Europe cannot be maintained in a Europe which has been democratically levelled down, but only in the various monarchistic states of Europe...”340

---

336 “So much for the national development, which makes them all similar to contemporary Europeans, which spreads... petty rationalism, egalitarianism, religious indifference, European bourgeois uniformity in tastes and manners: machines, pantaloons, frock-coats, top hats and demagogy!” (“Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij” (The Fruits of the National Movements), op. cit., p. 560).

337 As Leontiev put it: ‘The Greeks have ‘the Byzantine empire’, ‘the Great Hellenic Idea’; while the Bulgars have ‘Great Bulgaria’. Is it not all the same?’ (“Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh – IV” (Letters on Eastern Matters – IV), op. cit., p. 363.


Leontiev believed, as Walicki writes, that “nations were a creative force only when they represented a specific culture: 'naked' or purely 'tribal' nationalism was a corrosive force destroying both culture and the state, a levelling process that was, in the last resort, cosmopolitan; in fact, nationalism was only a mask for liberal and egalitarian tendencies, a specific metamorphosis of the universal process of disintegration”.341

According to Leontiev, the nations’ striving to be independent of each other was based precisely on their desire to be like every other nation: “Having become politically liberated, they are very glad, whether in everyday life or in ideas, to be like everyone else”.

The nations were like a man who is released from prison at a time when an epidemic is raging outside. It would be safer for him to remain in prison until the epidemic passes instead of striving for “liberation”. In the same way, “the political nationalism of our time does not give national isolation, because the overwhelming influence of cosmopolitan tastes is too strong. The epidemic has not yet come to an end…”342

Moreover, from the all-important point of view of Ecumenical Orthodoxy, there was no difference between Jew or Greek, Scythian or barbarian. So it went against the spirit of Orthodoxy for Russia to take the side of one Orthodox nation against another. The aim of Russia as the protectress of Orthodoxy throughout the world had to be to cool passions, avert conflicts and build bridges.

Above all, peace had to be maintained between Russia and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, because if this “symphony” collapsed, Orthodoxy would collapse with it...

Thus Leontiev’s spiritual father, Elder Ambrose of Optina, wrote: “In your note about the living union of Russia with Greece, in our opinion you should first of all have pointed out how the Lord in the beginning founded the Ecumenical Orthodox Church, consisting of five Patriarchates, or individual Churches; and, when the Roman Church fell away from the Ecumenical Church, then the Lord as it were filled up this deprivation by founding the Church of Russia in the north, enlightening Russia with Christianity through the Greek Church, as the main representative of the Ecumenical Church. The attentive and discerning among the Orthodox see here two works of the Providence of God. First, the Lord by his later conversion of Russia to Christianity preserved her from the harm of the papists. And secondly, He showed that Russia, having been enlightened with Christianity through the Greek Church, must be in union with this people, as the main representative of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church, and not with others harmed by heresy. That is how our forefathers acted, seeing, perhaps, a pitiful example, beside the Romans, in the Armenian Church, which through its separation from the Ecumenical Church fell into many errors. The Armenians erred for two

341 Walicki, op. cit., p. 303.
reasons: first, they accepted slanders against the Ecumenical Church; and secondly, they wanted self-government and instead of this subjected themselves to the subtle influence of the westerners, from which they were protected by their very geographical position. The cunning hellish enemy also weaved his nets and is still weaving them over the Russians, only in a somewhat different form. The Armenians were confused first by accepting a slander against the Ecumenical Church, but afterwards by their desire for self-government. But the Russian could be closer to the same actions by accepting slanders against the first-hierarchs of the Ecumenical Church. And thus, through the enemy’s cunning and our blunders, it will turn out that we, wilfully departing from a useful and saving union with the Ecumenical Church, involuntarily and imperceptibly fall under the harmful influence of western opinions, from which Providence Itself has preserved and protected us, as was said earlier... You should have pointed out that absolute obedience is one thing, and relations with the Greek Church another. In the latter case there is nothing obligatory with regard to absolute obedience...”

Therefore neither Pan-Hellenism nor Pan-Slavism but Byzantinism, had to be the ideal: the ideal of a commonwealth of all Orthodox nations united by a strict adherence to the dogmas and traditions of Holy Orthodoxy in the religious sphere and loyalty to the Orthodox Emperor in the political sphere.

This vision has repelled many. Thus according to Walicki, “for Leontiev, ‘ascetic and dogmatic Orthodoxy’ was mainly distinguished by its ‘Byzantine pessimism’, its lack of faith in the possibility of harmony and universal brotherhood.”

However, this is not just: Orthodoxy does not reject the possibility of universal brotherhood. But it is realistic; it knows that man is fallen, and that neither the idea of human rights nor that of national rights can take the place of true love acquired through ascetic struggle. It is in this rejection of “rose-tinted” Christianity, and in his advocacy of an ascetic, but by no means cynical approach to politics, that the permanent significance of Leontiev lies...

The Greco-Bulgarian Schism

In 1872 this ideal of Byzantinism was put to a severe test when an ecclesiastical schism took place between the Greeks and the Bulgarians. The Bulgarians were the only Orthodox nation in the Balkans that had not achieved some measure of political independence through revolution. By the same token, however, they were the only nation that had not been divided by a political revolution. Thus the Greek revolution had divided the Greek nation between two states – the free state of Greece and the Ottoman Empire.
Successive Serbian rebellions had divided the Serbs between four states: the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian empire, the free state of Serbia and the free State of Montenegro. Romania, too, was a more-or-less independent state, but with many Romanians still outside its borders. Of the Balkan Christian nations in 1871, only the Bulgarians remained united in their lack of freedom under the Turkish yoke.

However, things were stirring in Bulgaria, too. Only the Bulgarians saw the main obstacle to their national ambitions not in the Ottomans - some were even happy at the thought of a “Turkish tsar” (after all, the Bulgarians were partly of Turkic origin) – but in the neighbouring Christian nations. There was particular tension in the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, which from ancient times had been Greek\textsuperscript{345}, but where there were now more Bulgarians than Greeks. The question was: if Turkish power finally collapsed west of the Bosphorus, which nation would take control of these provinces – the Greeks or the Bulgarians?

“The impetus for the Bulgarian movement for ecclesiastical independence,” writes Eugene Pavlenko, “was provided by the issuing in 1856 by the Turkish government of a decree promising liberal reforms. In 1860 there followed a de facto refusal of the Bulgarians to submit to the Patriarchate, which did not satisfy their demands for the right to elect their own bishops in their own dioceses and the granting to them the possibility of occupying the higher Church posts on an equal basis with the Greeks. The Patriarchate of Constantinople made various concessions: it issued Divine service books for the Bulgarian clergy in the Slavonic language, and appointed archimandrites from the Bulgarians. Later, under the influence of passions aroused on both sides, the demands of the Bulgarians intensified and flowed out into the desire to have their own separate exarchate. In 1867 the Constantinopolitan Patriarch Gregory VI proposed a project for the creation of a separate Bulgarian exarchate, but no meeting of minds was achieved on this project. It was hindered not only by the impossibility of precisely delineating dioceses with Greek and Bulgarian populations, but also by the gradually formed striving of the Bulgarians to create their own national Church, in which every Bulgarian, wherever he might be – in Bulgaria or in Asia Minor, would be in subjection only to the Bulgarian hierarchy. Such a striving was leading to a situation of ecclesiastical dual powers and to schism, but the Bulgarians were no longer upset by this. They wanted a schism, they were seeking it. They wanted separation not only from the Greeks, but also from the whole of Orthodoxy, since such a separation made them an independent people. ‘Look how willingly religion has been sacrificed for the same purely tribal principle, for the same national-cosmopolitan impulses!’ said K.N. Leontiev in this connection.\textsuperscript{346}

\textsuperscript{345} Moreover, the 28\textsuperscript{th} canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council specifically mentions Thrace and Macedonia as coming within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Greeks were to use this canon in defence of their position.

\textsuperscript{346} Leontiev, “Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij” (The Fruits of the National Movements), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 559.
“In 1868 Patriarch Gregory VI of Constantinople attempted to settle the Greco-Bulgarian question by convening an Ecumenical Council, but without success. In these circumstances the Bulgarians decided to act through the sultan and submitted to him a petition concerning the re-establishment of the ecclesiastical independence which had been lost because of the abolition of the Trnovo Patriarchate. ‘Asking the Porte to establish their national independent hierarchy,’ wrote Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, ‘shows that although the Bulgarians have had sufficient time to think over what they are doing, they still have the stubborn desire without having acquired understanding. It is possible to establish a new independent hierarchy only with the blessing of a lawfully existing hierarchy.’ In reply to this request of the Bulgarians the Porte put forward two projects. According to point 3 of both projects, ‘in Constantinople, next to the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, a pre-eminent Orthodox Metropolitan of Bulgaria must be introduced…, to whom the supervision of the administration of the Bulgarian churches is to be entrusted and under whom there will be an assembly, that is, a kind of Synod, occupied with church affairs.’ In point 5 of one of these projects the Bulgarian Church is also called ‘a separate body’, while the aforementioned assembly is more than once called a Synod.

“It goes without saying that Patriarch Gregory VI spoke out against such projects that transgress the canons of the Church. The ecclesiastical decrees which forbid such dual power situations are contained in:

(a) The 8th canon of the First Ecumenical Council: ‘Let there not be two bishops in a city.’
(b) The 35th canon of the Holy Apostles: ‘Let not a bishop dare to carry out ordinations outside the bounds of his diocese in cities and villages not subject to him’, which is confirmed and clarified by the 22nd canon of the Council of Antioch: ‘Let a bishop not go into another city that is not subject to him, nor into a settlement that does not belong to him, in order to ordain someone, and let him not establish priests or deacons in places subject to another bishop…’
(c) The 34th canon of the Holy Apostles: ‘The bishops of each people should know the first among them, and recognise him as their head, and do nothing exceeding their authority without obtaining his permission: but each must do only that which touches his diocese and those places that belong to it.’

“With regard to the words from the 34th canon of the Holy Apostles: ‘The bishops of each people’ there developed a polemic between the Bulgarians and Constantinople which was destined to have a long history. The Bulgarians considered that the words: ‘The bishops of each people’ meant the order of the joint administration of one and the same (geographical) district by several priestly hierarchies belonging to different nationalities. But this passage was interpreted in a different way by the Byzantine interpreters Zonaras, Balsamon and Aristene. Zonaras, in his explanation of the 34th canon

347 Metropolitan Philaret, in Leontiev, “Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh” (Letters on Eastern Matters), op. cit. p. 360.
Apostolic canon, says: ‘With this aim (the prevention of ecclesiastical disorder) the present canon commands that the first bishops of each district, that is, the hierarchs of the metropolia, should be recognised by all the bishops of that district as their head.’ Thus Zonaras considers the expression ‘of each people’ to be identical with the expression ‘of each district’. This interpretation is confirmed by the juxtaposition of the 34th Apostolic canon with the 9th canon of the Council of Antioch: ‘In each district it behoves the bishops to know the presiding bishop in the metropolia... in accordance with the rule of our fathers that has been in force since ancient times.’ Zonaras: ‘Although this canon does not coincide completely in its wording with the 34th canon of the Holy Apostles, nevertheless as far as the meaning is concerned it agrees with it in everything.’ Balsamon: ‘The content of this canon is explicated by the interpretation of the 34th Apostolic canon.’ Aristene: ‘This canon has exactly the same teaching as the 34th canon of the Holy Apostles.’ As we see, the authoritative Byzantine interpreters agree that by the expression ‘the bishops of each people’ ‘the bishops of each district’ must be understood, and so this canon agrees with all the remaining canons which forbid dual power in the Church.

“The Patriarch’s refusal to make concessions elicited the irritation of the Turkish government, and in 1870 the sultan issued a firman, in which permission was granted to the Bulgarians to establish a separate exarchate with a specified number of dioceses. The administration of the exarchate was given to the Synod of the Bulgarian bishops under the presidency of the exarch, who had to commemorate the name of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch during the Divine service. The Synod was obliged to refer to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate in connection with the most important matters of the faith, and after the election of its exarch it had to seek a confirmatory certificate from the Patriarch. The Bulgarians also had to receive chrism from the Patriarch. In accordance with the ecclesiastical canons (the 6th and 7th canons of the First Ecumenical Council and the 3rd canon of the Second Ecumenical Council), independent patriarchal sees and the Synods having equal honour to them have to be established in a conciliar fashion, and not on the orders of a secular power. Patriarch Gregory VI asked the Turkish government for permission to convene an Ecumenical Council to examine this question, but he was refused, and he resigned his see. In accordance with the decree of the Turkish government, the Bulgarian Assembly in Constantinople elected its exarch, who was presented to the sultan on April 4, 1872. However, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, who was now Anthimus IV, did not agree not only to recognise, but also to receive the exarch, from whom he demanded written repentance for all that had been done. But the semi-independent existence of the exarchate no longer suited the Bulgarians, either. They longed for complete separation from the Greeks, which could only be achieved by means of an ecclesiastical schism. On May 11, 1872, after the Gospel during the Liturgy, which was celebrated in Constantinople by the exarch together with the other Bulgarian bishops and many clergy, an act signed by the Council of seven Bulgarian bishops was proclaimed, which declared that the Bulgarian Church was independent. On May 15, the Patriarchal Synod declared the Bulgarian exarch deprived of his rank and
The other Bulgarian bishops, together with all the clergy and laity in communion with them, were subjected to ecclesiastical punishments. A declaration was also made concerning the convening of a Local Council.

“The feelings of the sides drawn in one way or another into the ecclesiastical conflict between the Greeks and the Bulgarians were described in detail on the eve of the Local Council of 1872 by K.N. Leontiev in his work, *The Fruits of the National Movements*. The Bulgarians affirmed that they would fight until ‘the last Bulgarian village, even including those in Asia Minor, is liberated from the ecclesiastical authority of the Patriarch’.

The Bulgarians did not fear a schism, they found a schism convenient for themselves. While the Turks, in their turn, considered that a quarrel between the Orthodox would be useful for their disintegrating state. The liberally inclined Russians sympathised with the ‘national-liberation’ movement of the Bulgarians... At the same time the Athenian Greeks were trying by all means to bring the matter to the convening of a Council and the ecclesiastical condemnation of the Bulgarians. Besides, they hoped that the Russian Holy Synod would finally come out openly in defence of the Bulgarians, after which they would be able to declare the Russians, too, to be schismatics, and having thereby separated themselves from the whole of Slavdom, tie their fate in with the peoples of Western Europe. The Athenian Greeks were drawn by the idea of a Great Hellas, the Bulgarians – by the idea of a Great Bulgaria. ‘We must baptise the sultan,’ they dreamed, ‘merge with the Turks, become established in Tsarigrad and form a great Bulgar-Turkish state, which instead of aging Russia would take up the leadership of Slavdom.’

‘Who has remained faithful to Orthodoxy?’ cried K.N. Leontiev. ‘It is only these same Greek bishops who are subjects of the Turks who have remained faithful to these foundations, to Orthodoxy and its ancient rules and spirit,’ He called these bishops Phanariots (after the Phanar, the quarter of Istanbul in which the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate was situated). They cursed Bulgarian phyletism at the Council of 1872, but did not allow a break also with Russia. The Russian Holy Synod, which at that time supported neither side, made no mistake meanwhile. The Constantinopolitan Patriarchate could not without transgressing the canons break with us, to which they were being urged by

---

350 Leontiev, “Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenij”, op. cit., p. 560. As he wrote in another place: “They wanted to have not, an administrative, or topographical exarchate within definite boundaries, but a tribal [ethnic] exarchate, a ‘phyletic’ exarchate as the Greek clergy put it at the council of 1872. The Ecumenical Patriarch could have given them an administrative exarchate or even a patriarchy, and he would have been forced to do that later by force of circumstances... but the Bulgarians wanted a ‘tribal’ exarchate, that is, they wanted all Bulgarians, wherever they lived, to depend directly and in all respects on their national clergy. Of course, the Patriarch did not even have the right to bow to their wishes in this form. The Bulgarians then separated in a self-willed manner; while the council declared them to be... ‘schismatics’...’ (“Dopolnenie k dvum stat’iam o panslavizme” (Supplement to Two Articles on Pan-Slavism), op. cit., p. 81.)

And again: “In the ecclesiastical question the Bulgarians and the Greeks were equally cunning and wrong according to conscience. The difference lay in the fact that canonically, formally, in the sense precisely of abstract principles of tradition, the Greeks were more right (“Khram i Tserkov’” (Temple and Church), op. cit., p. 165). (V.M.)
the Greeks of Hellas. But Constantinople did not wish to transgress the canons. Both in relation to the Bulgarians and in relation to Russia the Phanariots remained unshaken and faithful to the laws and traditions, in spite of all the difficulties caused by our liberals’ flirting with the Bulgarians.

“The Local Council of Constantinople opened on August 29, 1872. 32 hierarchs and all the Eastern Patriarchs except Jerusalem took part in it. On September 16, in its third session, the Constantinopolitan Council confirmed the decision according to which all the Bulgarian hierarchs with their clergy and laity were declared schismatics, and the whole of the Bulgarian Church was declared schismatic. In relation to phyletism the Council made the following decision: ‘…We have concluded that when the principle of racial division is juxtaposed with the teaching of the Gospel and the constant practice of the Church, it is not only foreign to it, but also completely opposed, to it.’ ‘We decree the following in the Holy Spirit: 1. We reject and condemn racial division, that is, racial differences, national quarrels and disagreements in the Church of Christ, as being contrary to the teaching of the Gospel and the holy canons of our blessed fathers, on which the holy Church is established and which adorn human society and lead it to Divine piety. 2. In accordance with the holy canons, we proclaim that those who accept such division according to races and who dare to base on it hitherto unheard-of racial assemblies are foreign to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and are real schismatics.’”

Patriarch Cyril of Jerusalem refused to sign the decision, and the Slavic and Romanian Churches remained in communion with the Bulgars; so it is difficult to say that the Bulgarians were in the full sense schismatics without questioning the Orthodoxy of those Churches that remained in communion with them – and this the Greeks, as we have seen, did not do…

Now the synodical condemnation of “phyletism” in 1872 was certainly timely. For not only were such passions dividing the Orthodox amongst themselves: the Bulgarians' attempts to achieve ecclesiastical independence from Constantinople had given rise to another danger - the Vatican's attempt to introduce a uniate movement into Bulgaria. Indeed, the poet F.I. Tiutchev compared the schism of the Bulgarians to that of the Roman Catholics: “This event is one of the most significant; it is fraught with the most serious consequences. We have descended to the level of Roman Catholicism, and our fall has been elicited by similar causes: the atheism of man, who blasphemously turns religion into a weapon of that which is least of all in the world connected with it, into a weapon for the striving for political lordship. And this invasion of politics into the sphere of religion does not become less...

---


352 This attempt was foiled by enlightened hierarchs such as Clement of Tarnovo. His relics were found to be incorrupt in the 1950s. See Bishop Photius of Triaditsa, "Metropolitan Clement of Tarnovo", Orthodox Life, vol. 46, No 6, November-December, 1996, pp. 21-23.
destructive from the fact that it is accomplished not for the benefit of traditional authority, but for the benefit of a weak, unhealthy nation...”

However, for many the conciliar condemnation of nationalism carried little weight because it came from the patriarchate that they considered the first sinner in this respect. Thus D.A. Khomiakov wrote. “Is not ‘pride in Orthodoxy’ nothing other than the cultural pride of the ancient Greek? And, of course, the true ‘phyletism’, formulated for the struggle against the Bulgarians, is precisely the characteristic of the Greeks themselves to a much greater extent than the Bulgarians, Serbs, Syrians and others. With them it is only a protest against the basic phyletism of the Greeks. The contemporary Greek considers himself the exclusive bearer of pure Orthodoxy...

Even Leontiev agreed: “Both you [Greeks] and the Bulgarians can equally be accused of phyletism, that is, in introducing ethnic interests into Church

354 Khomiakov, Pravoslavie, Samoderzhavie, Narodnost’ (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk: Belaruskaya Gramata, 1997, p. 19 ®. Cf. Glubovsky, N.N.: "Greek nationalism historically merged with Orthodoxy and protected it by its own self-preservation, while it in its turn found a spiritual basis for its own distinctiveness. Orthodoxy and Hellenism were united in a close mutuality, which is why the first began to be qualified by the second. And Christian Hellenism realized and developed this union precisely in a nationalist spirit. The religious aspect was a factor in national strivings and was subjected to it, and it was not only the Phanariots [the inhabitants of Greek Constantinople] who made it serve pan-hellenic dreams. These dreams were entwined into the religious, Orthodox element and gave it its colouring, enduring the Byzantine patriarch with the status and rights of 'ethnarch' for all the Christian peoples of the East, and revering him as the living and animated image of Christ (Matthew Blastaris, in his 14th century Syntagma, 8). As a result, the whole superiority of the spiritual-Christian element belonged to Hellenism, and could be apprehended by others only through Hellenism. In this respect the enlightened Grigoriis Byzantios (or Byzantiysky, born in Constantinople, metropolitan of Chios from 1860, of Heraklion in 1888) categorically declared that 'the mission of Hellenism is divine and universal'. From this source come the age-old and unceasing claims of Hellenism to exclusive leadership in Orthodoxy, as its possessor and distributor. According to the words of the first reply (in May, 1576) to the Tubingen theologians of the Constantinopolitan patriarch Jeremiah II (+1595), who spoke in the capacity of a 'successor of Christ' (introduction), the Greek 'holy Church of God is the mother of the Churches, and, by the grace of God, she holds the first place in knowledge. She boasts without reproach in the purity of her apostolic and patristic decrees, and, while being new, is old in Orthodoxy, and is placed at the head', which is why 'every Christian church must celebrate the Liturgy exactly as she [the Greco-Constantinopolitan Church] does (chapter 13). Constantinople always displayed tendencies towards Church absolutism in Orthodoxy and was by no means well-disposed towards the development of autonomous national Churches, having difficulty in recognising them even in their hierarchical equality. Byzantine-Constantinopolitan Hellenism has done nothing to strengthen national Christian distinctiveness in the Eastern patriarchates and has defended its own governmental-hierarchical hegemony by all means, fighting against the national independence of Damascus (Antioch) and Jerusalem. At the end of the 16th century Constantinople by no means fully accepted the independence of the Russian Church and was not completely reconciled to Greek autocephaly (from the middle of the 19th century), while in relation to the Bulgarian Church they extended their nationalist intolerance to the extent of an ecclesiastical schism, declaring her (in 1872) in all her parts to be 'in schism'. It is a matter of great wonder that the champions of extreme nationalism in the ecclesiastical sphere should then (in 1872) have recognized national-ecclesiastical strivings to be impermissible in others and even labelled them 'phyletism', a new-fangled heresy. "("Pravoslavie po ego sushchestvu” (Orthodoxy in its essence), in Tserkov’ i Vremia (The Church and Time), 1991, pp. 5-6 ®).
questions, and in the use of religion as a political weapon; but the difference lies in the fact that Bulgarian phyletism is defensive, while yours is offensive. Their phyletism seeks only to mark out the boundaries of their tribe; yours seeks to cross the boundaries of Hellenism.”

The conflict was therefore not resolved, although the mediation of the Russian Church, which remained in communion with both sides and gave holy chrism to the Bulgarians, somewhat softened it.

**At the Gates of Constantinople**

“The great game”, that is, the rivalry between the Russian and British empires, consisted essentially in British attempts to oppose Russia’s expansion towards the Eastern Mediterranean in defence of her co-religionists, the Orthodox Christians. “British interests in the Balkans,” writes Roman Golicz, “derived from wider economic interests in India via the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1858 the British Government had taken direct control over Indian affairs. Since 1869 the Suez Canal had provided it with a direct route to India. Britain needed to secure the shipping routes which passed through areas, like Suez, that were nominally Turkish.”

Or rather, that was the theory. In fact, Russia presented no threat to British interests in India, whether in the Eastern Mediterranean or in Central Asia, the other area of Anglo-Russian tensions. Rather, the real cause of British hostility to Russian expansion was simply visceral jealousy – the jealousy of the world’s greatest maritime empire in relation to the world’s greatest land-based empire. And it was expressed in a fierce, “jingoistic” spirit. As Selischev writes: “If Palmerston unleashed the Crimean war, then Disraeli was ready to unleash war with Russia in 1877-78, in order, as he wrote to Queen Victoria, to save the Ottoman state and ‘cleanse Central Asia from the Muscovites and throw them into the Caspian sea.’” Palmerston himself commented once that “these half-civilized governments such as those of China, Portugal, Spanish America require a Dressing every eight or ten years to keep them in order”. “And no one who knew his views on Russia,” writes Dominic Lieven, “could doubt his sense that she too deserved to belong to this category.”

---

355 Leontiev, “Panslavism i Greki” (Pan-Slavism and the Greeks), op. cit., p. 46.
358 Selischev, “Chto neset Pravoslaviu proekt ‘Velikoj Albanii?’” (What will the project of a ‘Greater Albania’ bring for Orthodoxy), *Pravoslavnaia Rus’* (Orthodox Russia), № 2 (1787), January 15/28, 2005, p. 10 ©.
The conflict really began in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, “a series of disconnected incidents, beginning with strident Muslim resistance to the plan that a new Orthodox cathedral being built in Sarajevo would tower over the sixteenth-century Begova mosque, sparked violence. From 1872 onwards there was resistance to Ottoman tax-gatherers, with peasants arming themselves and taking refuge in nearby Montenegro. The local authorities responded, as they usually did, with a knee-jerk brutality: by 1876 hundreds of villages had been burned and more than 5,000 Bosnian peasants killed. Soon the contagion of rebellion began to seep into the Bulgarian provinces. The threat of a general uprising seemed imminent.

“Every piece of revolutionary propaganda and each intelligence report read served to bolster the fear. Was the government in Constantinople to disregard the terrorist threats made by the Bulgarian revolutionaries? The insurgents wrote: ‘Herzegovina is fighting; Montenegro is spreading over the mountains and coming with help; Serbia is ready to put its forces on the move; Greece is about to declare war; Rumania will not remain neutral. Is there any doubt that death is hanging over Turkey?’ In July 1875, at Nevesinje in Herzegovina, the clan chiefs had met and thrown down a challenge to the Turks. One declared: ‘Ever since the damned day of Kosovo [Polje, in 1389] the Turk robs us of our life and liberty. Is it not a shame, a shame before all the world, that we bear the arms of heroes and yet are called Turkish subjects? All Christendom waits for us to rise on behalf of our treasured freedom… Today is our opportunity to rebel and to engage in bloody fight.’ This guerilla war, in Harold Temperley’s view, led directly to the revolt in Bulgaria and all that followed. It was a cruel war on both sides. The first things that the British Consul Holmes [in Sarajevo] saw as he entered Nevesinje were a Turkish boy’s head blackening in the sun, and a blood froth bubbling from the slit throat of a young Turkish girl…”

The Turks replied in kind. When the Bulgars rebelled in the town of Panagyurishte in Central Bulgaria the Turkish “Bashi Bazouks” unleashed a savage wave of reprisals that left many thousands of Bulgars dead. Many of the slain Bulgars are counted as martyrs of the Orthodox Church because they were martyred precisely because they refused to renounce their Orthodox faith for Mohammedanism.

For example, early in May, 1876, the Turks came to the village of Batak, and said to the second priest, Fr. Peter: “We’d like to say a couple of words to you, priest. If you carry them out, priest, we shall not kill you. Will you become a Turk [the word actually means: ‘become a Muslim’], priest?” Fr. Peter boldly replied: “I will give up my head, but I will not give up my faith!” Then the Turks beheaded him.

---

361 “*Proslavlenie khristian iz Bataka, muchenicheski postradavshikh za sv. Pravoslavnuu veru v 1876 godu*” (Glorification of the Christians from Batak who suffered martyricly for the holy Orthodox faith in 1876),
The other priest of the village, Fr. Nyech, saw all of his seven daughters beheaded. “And each time he was asked: ‘The turban or the axe?’ The Hieromartyr replied with silence. His last child having been put to death, the torturers plucked out the Priest’s beard, pulled out his teeth, gouged out his eyes, cut off his ears, and chopped his body, already lifeless, into pieces…”

And yet Western governmentz at first dismissed these reports, preferring to believe their ambassadors and consuls rather than The Daily Telegraph. Disraeli dismissed public concern about the Bulgarian atrocities as “coffee-house babble”. And when a conference was convened in Constantinople by the Great Powers, it failed to put any significant pressure on the Turks.

In July, 1876 Serbia and Montenegro also declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The main cause here was slightly different – the Ottomans’ imposition of a tithe of one-tenth or one-eighth of their crop on the Orthodox peasants of Bosnia and Hercegovina. When the harvest failed in 1874, the Ottomans resorted to force, and by the end of July all the peasants in the region had fled to the mountains in armed rebellion. As Noel Malcolm writes, “the basic cause of popular discontent was agrarian; but this discontent was harnessed in some parts of Bosnia by members of the Orthodox population who had been in contact with Serbia, and who now publicly declared their loyalty to the Serbian state. Volunteers from Serbia, Slavonia, Croatia, Slovenia and even Russia (plus some Italian Garibaldists, and a Dutch adventuress called Johanna Paulus) were flooding into the country, convinced that the great awakening of the South Slavs was at hand. The Bosnian governor assembled an army in Hercegovina, which acted with ineffective brutality during the autumn and harsh winter of 1875-6. The fiercer begs raised their own ‘bashi-bazooks’ (irregular troops) and, fearing a general overthrow in Bosnia, began terrorizing the peasant population. During 1876, hundreds of villages were burnt down and at least 5000 peasants killed; by the end of the year, the number of refugees from Bosnia was probably 100,000 at least, and possibly 250,000.”

Opposition to Disraeli’s policy of inaction was now mounting. In September, 1876 Gladstone, his great rival, publish The Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East: “Let the Turks now carry off their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mindirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope to clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.”

Disraeli, on the other hand, ascribed the violence to the activities of the secret societies, which he said were on the side of Serbia. “Serbia declared war on Turkey, that is to say, the secret societies of Europe declared war on Turkey, societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination and which, if necessary, could produce massacre.”

---

Public opinion was also demanding action in Russia. As Hosking writes, “Army officers, society ladies and merchants formed Slavic Benevolent Committees which called meetings, collected money, and began to send volunteers to fight for the Serbian army. Dostoevskii... preached war against the Turks as a means of achieving ‘eternal peace’. The authorities decided they could not condemn these efforts out of hand, and allowed Russian officers and men to take leave and volunteer for the Serbian army: among them was Fadeyev’s friend, General Mikhail Cherniaev, who soon became an emblematic hero for the Panslavs.”

“But Russian support was ineffective, and the Serbs were defeated.] The defeat of the Serbs faced the Russian government with a dilemma. It was engaged with other European powers in trying to impose on the Ottoman Empire and programme of reforms [to] eliminate grievances of the kind which had caused the revolt. The Ottomans were resisting the proposals, which left Russia in the position of having either to [come] to the aid of the Serbs and Bulgarians or see her influence in the Balkans sharply downgraded.”

On April 24, 1877 Russia “declared war on Turkey, but more to preserve Russia’s position in the European balance of power than with Panslav aims in mind. At a Slavic Benevolent Society meeting Ivan Aksakov called the Russo-Turkish war a ‘historical necessity’ and added that ‘the people had never viewed any war with such conscious sympathy’. There was indeed considerable support for the war among peasants, who regarded it as a struggle on behalf of suffering Orthodox brethren against the cruel and rapacious infidel. A peasant elder from Smolensk province told many years later how the people of his village had been puzzled as to ‘Why our Father-Tsar lets his people suffer from the infidel Turks?’, and had viewed Russia’s entry into the war with relief and satisfaction.”

As we have seen, there was also a large section of British opinion, led by Gladstone, that was against the Turks. However, nationalism and geopolitical considerations prevailed. The British Prime Minister Disraeli and his cabinet, supported by Queen Victoria, decided that if the Russians succeeded in taking Constantinople, this would be a casus belli. After a victorious campaign across the Balkans under the inspiring leadership of General M.D. Skopelev that brought her armies almost to the gates of Constantinople, Russia compelled Turkey to sue for peace early in 1878.

Immediately, the entire British Mediterranean Squadron was sent to the Dardanelles by Disraeli as British public opinion turned “jingoistic”:

We don’t want to fight, but by jingo if we do,
We’ve got the ships, we’ve got the men, and got the money too;
We’ve fought the bear before, and while we’re Britons true,
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.

364 Hosking, op. cit., p. 371.
The Russians agreed not to send troops into Constantinople if no British were landed on either side of the Straits. Then, in March, the Russians signed the treaty of San Stefano with Turkey that provided for the independence of Montenegro, Serbia and Romania, and a greatly expanded Bulgaria access to the Aegean Sea. “The Treaty also constituted Bulgaria as a tributary principality of Russia; it required a heavy financial indemnity from Turkey; it gave to Russia the right to select a port on the Black Sea; it opened up the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus at all times to Russian vessels; it obtained full right for all Christians remaining under Turkish rule; and it gave Bessarabia to Russia in exchange for the corner of Bulgaria known as Dobruja.”

In a little more than 20 years the Crimean war had been avenged: it was a great victory for the Orthodox armies… However, the Great Powers were determined to rob Russia by diplomatic means of the victory she had won by her military power. As Britain began to mobilize and Disraeli threatened the Russians, Bismarck convened a congress in Berlin in June, 1878, where it was agreed that all troops should be withdrawn from the area of Constantinople, and Greater Bulgaria was cut down to two smaller, non-contiguous areas – while Britain added Cyprus to her dominions. Disraeli had triumphed…

Serbia and Romania, together with Romania, were recognised as independent States (on condition, as we have seen, that they gave full rights to the Jews), but Serbia and Montenegro lost the acquisitions they had made in the war. More importantly, writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “Bosnia and Herzegovina were for some reason handed over to Austria for her ‘temporary’ use in order to establish ‘normal government’. In this way a mine was laid which, according to the plan of the Masons, was meant to explode later in a new Balkan war with the aim of ravaging and destroying Russia. At the congress Bismarck called himself an ‘honest broker’. But that was not how he was viewed in Russia. Here the disturbance at his behaviour was so great that Bismarck considered it necessary secretly (in case of war with Russia) to conclude with Austria, and later with Italy, the famous ‘Triple Union’…”

**Dostoyevsky on Russia**

The failure of Russian arms – or rather, of Russian diplomacy, since Russian arms had defeated the Turks – to conquer Constantinople and unite the Orthodox peoples under the Tsar’s rule, was a great blow to the Slavophiles and Panslavists. “At a Slavic Benevolent Society banquet in June 1878 Ivan Aksakov furiously denounced the Berlin Congress as ‘an open conspiracy against the Russian people, [conducted] with the participation of the representatives of Russia herself!’”

Dostoyevsky was also disillusioned. But his disillusionment was not the product of the failure of his “Pan-Slavist” dreams, as some have made out.

---

365 Golicz, *op. cit.*, p. 44.


For Dostoyevsky’s dreams were not “Pan-Slavist”, but “Pan-Human”, genuinely universalist. His dream was the conversion of the whole world to Christ, and thereby to real fraternity - that fraternity which the revolutionaries had promised, but had not delivered, and would never be able to deliver. A major step on the road to this dream was to be the liberation and unification of the Orthodox peoples of the East under the Russian tsar through the planting of the Cross on the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople by the Russian armies. Dostoyevsky found real brotherhood only in the Orthodox Church, and in that Orthodox nation which, he believed, had most thoroughly incarnated the ideals of the Gospel - Russia. “The moral idea is Christ. In the West, Christ has been distorted and diminished. It is the kingdom of the Antichrist. We have Orthodoxy. As a consequence, we are the bearers of a clearer understanding of Christ and a new idea for the resurrection of the world... There the disintegration, atheism, began earlier: with us, later, but it will begin certainly with the entrenchment of atheism... The whole matter lies in the question: can one, being civilized, that is, a European, that is, believe absolutely in the Divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? (for all faith consists in this)... You see: either everything is contained in faith or nothing is: we recognize the importance of the world through Orthodoxy. And the whole question is, can one believe in Orthodoxy? If one can, then everything is saved: if not, then, better to burn... But if Orthodoxy is impossible for the enlightened man, then... all this is hocus-pocus and Russia’s whole strength is provisional... It is possible to believe seriously and in earnest. Here is everything, the burden of life for the Russian people and their entire mission and existence to come...”

It was for the sake of Orthodoxy, the true brotherhood, that the Russian armies had sacrificed, and would continue to sacrifice themselves, for the freedom of the Greek, Slav and Romanian peoples. Russia, Dostoyevsky believed, had only temporarily been checked at the Gates of Constantinople, and would one day conquer it and hand it back to the Greeks, even if took a hundred years and more. Nor was this universalist love confined to Russia’s brothers in the faith: it extended even to her enemies in Western Europe – that “graveyard of holy miracles”. The lost half of Europe, immersed in Catholicism and its child, Protestantism, and its grandchild, atheism, would be converted from Russia: “Light will shine forth from the East!”

But in the meantime, what sorrows, what torture and bloodshed, lay in store for Europe, and first of all for Russia, whose ruling classes were already Orthodox only in name! It was all the fault of the misguided idealism that

---

369 V. Weidle writes: “Europe is a mother to us, as is Russia, she is our second mother; we have taken much from her and shall do so again, and we do not wish to be ungrateful to her.’ No Westernizer said this; it is beyond Westernizers, as it is beyond Slavophiles. Dostoyevsky wrote it at the height of his wisdom, on the threshold of death... His last hope was Messianism, but a Messianism which was essentially European, which developed out of his perception of Russia as a sort of better Europe, which was called upon to save and renew Europe” (The Task of Russia, New York, 1956, pp. 47-60; in Alexander Schmemann, The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1963, p. 338).
sought, on the basis of science and rationalism, to force men to be happy – or rather, to give them happiness of a kind in exchange for their freedom. This rationalist-absolutist principle was common both to the most believing (Catholic) and most unbelieving (Socialist) factions in Western political life, and was typified in the Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov, who “in his last remaining years... comes to the clear conviction that it is only the advice of the great and terrible spirit that could bring some sort of supportable order into the life of the feeble rebels, ‘the unfinished experimental creatures created as a mockery’. And so, convinced of that, he sees that one has to follow the instructions of the wise spirit, the terrible spirit of death and destruction. He therefore accepts lies and deceptions and leads men consciously to death and destruction. Keeps deceiving them all the way, so that they should not notice where they are being led, for he is anxious that those miserable, blind creatures should at least on the way think themselves happy. And, mind you, the deception is in the name of Him in Whose ideal the old man believed so passionately all his life! Is not that a calamity?....”

Since so many in Russia’s educated classes thought like Ivan Karamazov and the Grand Inquisitor (although much less seriously and systematically, for the most part), it was premature to think of the unification of the Orthodox peoples – still less, of the whole of Europe - under the leadership of Russia. The first need was to unite Russia within herself. And that meant uniting the educated classes with the bulk of the population, the peasant narod, whose lack of education and poverty, and attachment to the Orthodox Tsar and Church, repelled the proud, self-appointed guardians of the nation’s conscience. In fact, populism had been an underlying theme of that generation of liberals, most notably in the attempt of the young revolutionary narodniki to “go out to the people”. Dostoyevsky took it upon himself to show them a surer, because humbler way of being united with the people...

It has been said that Dostoyevsky was converted from the socialist ideas of his youth to the official slogan of Nicholas I’s Russia, “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Narodnost’”. This is true; but Dostoyevsky wrote little directly about Orthodoxy or Autocracy, probably because this would immediately have put off his audience. A generation earlier, Slavophiles such as Khomiakov and

---

370 Dostoyevsky’s friend, the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, expressed the absolutist principle in political life as “the striving to subject humanity in all its spheres and at every level of its life to one supreme principle which in its exclusive unity strives to mix and confuse the whole variety of private forms, to suppress the independence of the person and the freedom of private life.” There were two other principles: Democracy and Autocracy. Democracy, he defined as “the striving to destroy the stronghold of dead unity, to give freedom everywhere to private forms of life, freedom to the person and his activity;... the extreme expression of this force is general egoism and anarchy, and a multitude of separate individuals without an inner bond.” Autocracy, he defined as “giving positive content to the other two forces, freeing them from their exclusivity, and reconciling the unity of the higher principle with the free multiplicity of private forms and elements.” (“Tri Sily” (“Three Forces”), republished in Novij Mir (New World), No 1, 1989, pp. 198-199 ®). Autocracy is the natural political expression of Orthodoxy, Absolutism – of Catholicism (and Socialism), and Democracy – of Protestantism.


372 Lebedev, op. cit, p. 331.
Kireevsky had been able to speak more or less openly in support of the Church and the Tsar. But the years 1860-1880 had entrenched liberalism and positivism firmly in the hearts and minds of the intelligentsia. So Dostoyevsky had to approach the subject more indirectly, through the third element of the slogan – Narodnost’, Nationhood. Such an approach had the further advantage that it was the way Dostoyevsky himself had returned to the faith: from the time of his imprisonment in Siberia, his eyes had slowly been opened to the reality of the people, their spiritual beauty and their Orthodox faith.

At the same time, a whole pleiad of artists, the so-called pochvenniki, “lovers of the soil”, were coming to a similar discovery, giving a kind of second wind to Slavophilism. For example, in 1872, during the celebrations of the bicentenary of that most “anti-pochvennik” of tsars, Peter the Great, the young composer Modest Mussorgsky wrote to his closest friend: “The power of the black earth will make itself manifest when you plough to the very bottom. It is possible to plough the black earth with tools wrought of alien materials. And at the end of the 17th century they ploughed Mother Russia with just such tools, so that she did not immediately realize what they were ploughing with, and, like the black earth, she opened up and began to breathe. And she, our beloved, received the various state bureaucrats, who never gave her, the long-suffering one, time to collect herself and to think: ‘Where are you pushing me?’ The ignorant and confused were executed: force!... But the times are out of joint: the state bureaucrats are not letting the black earth breathe.

“We’ve gone forward! – you lie. ‘We haven’t moved!’ Paper, books have gone forward – we haven’t moved. So long as the people cannot verify with their own eyes what is being cooked out of them, as long as they do not themselves will what is or is not to be cooked out of them – till then, we haven’t moved! Public benefactors of every kind will seek to glorify themselves, will buttress their glory with documents, but the people groan, and so as not to groan they drink like the devil, and groan worse than ever: haven’t moved!”

Mussorgsky composed in Boris Godunov and Khovanschina two “popular” dramas which evoked the spirit of Mother Russia and the Orthodox Church as no other work of secular art had done. Dostoyevsky was to do the same in The Brothers Karamazov. He hoped, through the beauty of his artistic creations, to open the eyes of his fellow intelligenty to the people’s beauty, helping them thereby to “bow down before the people’s truth” – Orthodoxy. In this way, as the Prince said in The Idiot, “beauty” – the beauty of the people’s truth, the Russian God – “will save the world”.

However, Dostoyevsky’s concept of the people, and of Narodnost’, has been widely misunderstood, and needs careful explication. Some have seen in it extreme chauvinism, others – sentimentalism and cosmopolitanism. The very diversity of these reactions indicates a misunderstanding of Dostoyevsky’s antinomical way of reasoning.

373 Mussorgsky, quoted in Richard Taruskin, “The Power of Black Earth: Notes on Khovanschina”.

213
Let us consider, first, the following words of Shatov in *The Devils*: “Do you know who are now the only ‘God-bearing’ people on earth, destined to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new god and to whom alone the keys of life and of the new word have been vouchsafed?”374 The “people” here is, of course, the Russian people. And the God they bear is Christ, Who is “new” only in the sense that the revelation of the truth of Christ in Orthodoxy is something new for those other nations who were once Christian but who have lost the salt of True Christianity. Not that the Russians are considered genetically or racially superior to all other nations; for “Russianness” is a spiritual concept closely tied up with confession of the one true faith, which may exclude many people of Russian blood (for example, the unbelieving intelligentsia), but include people of other nations with the same faith. Thus Shatov agrees with Stavrogin that “an atheist can’t be a Russian”, and “an atheist at once ceases to be a Russian”. And again: “A man who does not belong to the Greek Orthodox faith cannot be a Russian.”375

It follows that “the Russian people” is a concept with a universalist content insofar as her Orthodoxy faith is universal; it is virtually equivalent to the concept of “the Orthodox Christian people”, in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither barbarian nor Scythian” (Colossians 3.11). For “if,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “it is possible to call the fact that Christianity has become the content of a certain people’s narodnost’ the national property of that people, then such a property belongs also to the Russian people. But we should rather add the term ‘universal’ here, because the very nationality is expressed in universality, universality has become the content of the narodnost’.”376

Shatov continues: “The purpose of the whole evolution of a nation, in every people and at every period of its existence, is solely the pursuit of God, their God, their very own God, and faith in Him as the only true one... The people is the body of God. Every people is a people only so long as it has its own particular god and excludes all other gods in the world without any attempt at reconciliation; so long as it believes that by its own god it will conquer and banish all the other gods from the world. So all believed from the very beginning of time – all the great nations, at any rate, all who have been in any way marked out, all who have played a leading part in the affairs of mankind. It is impossible to go against the facts. The Jews lived only to await the coming of the true God, and they left the true God to the world. The Greeks deified nature and bequeathed the world their religion – that is, philosophy and art. Rome deified the people in the State and bequeathed the State to the nations. France throughout her long history was merely the embodiment and development of the idea of the Roman god, and if she at last flung her Roman god into the abyss and gave herself up to atheism, which for the time being they call socialism, it is only because atheism is still healthier than Roman Catholicism. If a great people does not believe that truth resides in it alone (in itself alone and in it exclusively), if it does not believe that it

375 Dostoyevsky, *The Devils*, p. 255.
alone is able and has been chosen to raise up and save everybody by its own truth, it is at once transformed into ethnographical material, and not into a great people…”

It follows that what we would now call “ecumenism” – the belief that other nations’ gods or religions are as good as one’s own – is the destruction of the nation. And indeed, this is what we see today. For the ecumenist nations who recognize each other’s gods have become mere “ethnographical material”, members of the United Nations but not nations in the full sense of entities having a spiritual principle and purpose for their independent existence.

Therefore, according to this logic, any nation that asserts its own truth in the face of other supposed truths must be “nationalist”, and steps must be taken to reduce or destroy its power. Universalism is declared to be good and nationalism bad. However this fails to recognize the possibility – a possibility that Dostoyevsky insisted upon as a fact in the case of Russia – that a nation’s particular, national faith may have a universalist content.

The Pushkin Speech

Dostoyevsky’s ideas on Russia were summed up in the famous Pushkin Speech, delivered at the unveiling of the Pushkin Monument in Moscow on June 8, 1880. In this speech, writes Walicki, Dostoyevsky presents Pushkin as the supreme embodiment in art “of the Russian spirit, a ‘prophetic’ apparition who had shown the Russian nation its mission and its future.

“In the character of Aleko, the hero of the poem Gypsies, and in Evgeny Onegin, Dostoyevsky suggested, Pushkin had been the first to portray ‘the unhappy wanderer in his native land, the traditional Russian sufferer detached from the people…’ For Dostoyevsky, the term ‘wanderer’ was an apt description of the entire Russian intelligentsia – both the ‘superfluous men’ of the forties and the Populists of the seventies. ‘The homeless vagrants,’ he continued, ‘are wandering still, and it seems that it will be long before they disappear’; at present they were seeking refuge in socialism, which did not exist in Aleko’s time, and through it hoped to attain universal happiness, for ‘a Russian sufferer to find peace needs universal happiness – exactly this: nothing less will satisfy him – of course, as the proposition is confined to theory.’

“Before the wanderer can find peace, however, he must conquer his own pride and humble himself before ‘the people’s truth’. ‘Humble thyself, proud man, and above all, break thy pride,’ was the ‘Russian solution’ Dostoyevsky claimed to have found in Pushkin’s poetry. Aleko failed to follow this advice and was therefore asked to leave by the gypsies; Onegin despised Tatiana – a modest girl close to the ‘soil’ – and by the time he learned to humble himself it was too late. Throughout Pushkin’s work, Dostoyevsky declared, there were constant confrontations between the ‘Russian wanderers’ and the ‘people’s truth’ represented by ‘positively beautiful’ heroes – men of the soil expressing

---

377 Dostoyevsky, The Devils, pp. 256, 257-258.
the spiritual essence of the Russian nation. The purpose of these confrontations was to convince the reader of the need for a ‘return to the soil’ and a fusion with the people.

“Pushkin himself was proof that such a return was possible without a rejection of universal ideals. Dostoyevsky drew attention to the poet’s ‘universal susceptibility’, his talent for identifying himself with a Spaniard (Don Juan), an Arab (‘Imitations of the Koran’), an Englishman (‘A Feast During the Plague’), or an ancient Roman (‘Egyptian Nights’) while still remaining a national poet. This ability Pushkin owed to the ‘universality’ of the Russian spirit: ‘to become a genuine and complete Russian means… to become brother of all men, an all-human man.’

“In his speech Dostoyevsky also spoke about the division into Slavophiles and Westernizers, which he regretted as a great, though historically inevitable, misunderstanding. The impulse behind Peter’s reform had been not mere utilitarianism but the desire to extend the frontiers of nationality to include a genuine ‘all-humanity’. Dreams of serving humanity had even been the impulse behind the political policies of the Russian state: ‘For what else has Russia been doing in her policies, during these two centuries, but serving Europe much more than herself? I do not believe that this took place because of the mere want of aptitude on the part of our statesmen.’

“‘Oh the peoples of Europe,’ Dostoyevsky exclaimed in a euphoric vein, ‘have no idea how dear they are to us! And later – in this I believe – we, well, not we but the Russians of the future, to the last man, will comprehend that to become a genuine Russian means to seek finally to reconcile all European controversies, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-human and all-unifying Russian soil, to embrace in it with brotherly love all our brothers, and finally, perhaps, to utter the ultimate word of great, universal harmony, of the fraternal accord of all nations abiding by the law of Christ’s Gospel!’

“Before delivering his ‘Address’, Dostoyevsky was seriously worried that it might be received coldly by his audience. His fears proved groundless. The speech was an unprecedented success: carried away by enthusiasm, the crowd called out ‘our holy man, our prophet’, and members of the audience pressed around Dostoyevsky to kiss his hands. Even Turgenev, who had been caricatured in The Possessed [The Devils], came up to embrace him. The solemn moment of universal reconciliation between Slavophiles and Westernizers, conservatives and revolutionaries, seemed already at hand…”

It was indeed an extraordinary event. And while the enthusiasm was short-lived, the event represented in a real sense an historic turning-point: the point at which the unbelieving intelligentsia had the Gospel preached to them in a language and in a context that they could understand and respond to. For a moment it looked as if the “the Two Russias” created by Peter the Great’s reforms might be united. With the advantage of hindsight one may pour scorn on such an idea. But, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes:

“However accustomed people are to crawling in the dust, they will be grateful to every one who tears them away from the world below and bears them up on his powerful wings to the heavens. A man is ready to give up everything for a moment of pure spiritual joy and bless the name of him who is able to strike on the best strings of his heart. It is here that one must locate the secret of the amazing success won by the famous speech of Dostojevskij at the Pushkin festival in Moscow. The genius writer himself later described the impression produced by him upon his listeners in a letter to his wife: ‘I read,’ he writes, ‘loudly, with fire. Everything that I wrote about Tatiana was received with enthusiasm. But when I gave forth at the end about the universal union of men, the hall was as it were in hysterics. When I had finished, I will not tell you about the roars and sobs of joy: people who did not know each other wept, sobbed, embraced each other and swore to be better, not to hate each other from then on, but to love each other. The order of the session was interrupted: grandes dames, students, state secretaries – they all embraced and kissed me.’ How is one to call this mood in the auditorium, which included in itself the best flower of the whole of educated society, if not a condition of spiritual ecstasy, to which, as it seemed, our cold intelligentsia was least of all capable? By what power did the great writer and knower of hearts accomplish this miracle, forcing all his listeners without distinction of age or social position to feel themselves brothers and pour together in one sacred and great upsurge? He attained it, of course, not by the formal beauty of his speech, which Dostojevskij usually did not achieve, but the greatness of the proclaimed idea of universal brotherhood, instilled by the fire of great inspiration. This truly prophetic word regenerated the hearts of people, forcing them to recognize the true meaning of life; the truth made them if only for one second not only free, but also happy in their freedom.”

Tsar, Church and People

June 8, 1880 was the last date on which the deep divisions in Russian society might have been healed, and the slide to revolution halted. However, the opportunity was lost. Disillusion and criticism set in almost immediately from all sides. This was less surprising from the liberals, who were looking for another, leftist answer to the question: “What is to be done?” from Dostojevskij. They forgot that, as Chekhov wrote in 1888, an artist does not attempt to solve concrete social, political or moral problems, but only to place them in their correct context.

379 Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky), op. cit., pp. 9-10.
380 Another artist who tried through his art to unite the divisions in Russian society was the composer Modest Mussorgsky. In his great opera Boris Godunov he tried to “view the people as one giant being, inspired by one idea” (Julian Haylock, “Mussorgsky”, Classic FM Magazine, May, 2006, p. 31).
381 The only person who retained his enthusiasm for the Speech for years to come was the Slavophile Ivan Aksakov. As Dostojevskij wrote: “Aksakov (Ivan) ran onto the stage and declared to the public that my speech was not simply a speech but an historical event! The clouds had been covering the horizon, but here was Dostojevskij’s word, which, like the appearing sun, dispersed all the clouds and lit up everything. From now on there would be brotherhood, and there would be no misunderstandings” (in Volgin, op. cit., p. 267).
382 Volgin, op. cit., p. 266.
Somewhat more surprising was the less than ecstatic reaction of the right-wing litterati. Thus M.N. Katkov was very happy to publish the Speech in his Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette) - but laughed at it in private.\textsuperscript{383} Perhaps for him, too, the Speech offered too little in the form of concrete political solutions or advice - an open endorsement of the monarchy, for example.

And yet Katkov was not far from Dostoyevsky in his views. “M.N. Katkov wrote that the opposition between Russia and the West consists in the fact that there everything is founded on contractual relations, and in Russia – on faith. If western society is ruled by law, then Russian society is ruled by the idea… There is no question that good principles can be laid at the base of any state, but they are deprived of a firm foundation by the absence of religious feeling and a religious view of the world. Good principles are then held either on instinct, which illumines nothing, or on considerations of public utility. But instinct is an unstable thing in a reasoning being, while public utility is a conventional concept about which every person can have his own opinion.”\textsuperscript{384}

Like Dostoyevsky, Katkov was striving to build bridges, and especially a bridge between the Tsar and the People (he had been a liberal in his youth). “Russia is powerful,” he wrote, “precisely in the fact that her people do not separate themselves from their Sovereign. Is it not in this alone that the sacred significance that the Russian Tsar has for the Russian people consists?”\textsuperscript{385} “Only by a misunderstanding do people think that the monarchy and the autocracy exclude ‘the freedom of the people’. In actual fact it guarantees it more than any banal constitutionalism. Only the autocratic tsar could, without any revolution, by the single word of a manifesto liberate 20 million slaves.”\textsuperscript{386} “They say that Russia is deprived of political liberty. They say that although Russian subjects have been given legal civil liberty, they have no political rights. Russian subjects have something more than political rights: they have political obligations. Each Russian subject is obliged to stand watch over the rights of the supreme power and to care for the benefit of the State. It is not so much that each one only has the right to take part in State life and care for its benefits: he is called to this by his duty as a loyal subject. That is our constitution. It is all contained, without paragraphs, in the short formula of our State oath of loyalty…”\textsuperscript{387}

This was all true, and Dostoyevsky undoubtedly agreed with it in principle. However, he was doing something different from Katkov, and more difficult: not simply state the truth before an audience that was in no way ready to accept it in this direct, undiluted form, but bring them closer to the truth, and inspire them with the truth.

\textsuperscript{383} Volgin, op. cit., p. 271.
\textsuperscript{384} K.V. Glazkov, “Zashchita ot liberalizma” (“A Defence from Liberalism”), Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), No 15 (1636), August 1/14, 1999, pp. 9, 10, 11 ®.
\textsuperscript{385} Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1867, No 88; in L.A. Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 312 ®.
\textsuperscript{386} Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1881, No 115; in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 314.
\textsuperscript{387} Katkov, Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), 1886, No 341; in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 314.
And with this aim he did not call on his audience to unite around the Tsar. In any case, he had certain reservations about the Tsardom that made him in some ways closer to his liberal audience than Katkov. In particular, he did not support the “paralysis” that the Petrine system had imposed on the Church, whereas Katkov’s views were closer to the official, semi-absolutist position.

If Katkov may have preferred more on the monarchy in Dostoyevsky’s speech, Constantine Leontiev was scandalised by the lack of mention of the Church. Volgin writes that “at the end of the Pushkin festival Pobedonostev in a restrained way, without going into details, congratulated Dostoyevsky on his success. And then immediately after his congratulations he sent him ‘Warsaw Diary’ with an article by Constantine Leontiev. This article was angry and crushing. C. Leontiev not only annihilated the Speech point by point from the point of view of his ascetic... Christianity, but compared it directly with another public speech that had taken place at almost the same time as the Moscow festivities, in Yaroslavl diocese at a graduation ceremony in a school for the daughters of clergymen. ‘In the speech of Mr. Pobedonostev (the speaker was precisely him – I.V.),’ writes Leontiev, ‘Christ is known in no other way that through the Church: “love the Church first of all”. In the speech of Mr. Dostoyevsky Christ... is so accessible to each of us in bypassing the Church, that we consider that we have the right... to ascribe to the Saviour promises that He never uttered concerning “the universal brotherhood of the peoples”, “general peace” and “harmony”’.”

We will recall that he wrote much about the invasion of the twin spirits of liberal cosmopolitanism and nationalism into the Orthodox world. So when he writes that Dostoyevsky “extracted out of the spirit of Pushkin’s genius the prophetic thought of the ‘cosmopolitan’ mission of the Slavs”, it is with scarcely concealed irony. This irony becomes crushing when he speaks about waiting for “the fulfilment of the prophecy of Dostoyevsky, ‘until the Slavs teach the whole of humanity this pan-human love’, which neither the Holy Fathers nor the Apostles nor the Divine Redeemer Himself was able to confirm absolutely in the hearts of men.”

---

388 For example: “The whole labour and struggle of Russian History consisted in taking away the power of each over all, in the annihilation of many centres of power. This struggle, which in various forms and under various conditions took place in the history of all the great peoples, was with us difficult, but successful, thanks to the special character of the Orthodox Church, which renounced earthly power and never entered into competition with the State. The difficult process was completed, everything was subjected to one supreme principle and there had to be no place left in the Russian people for any power not dependent on the monarch. In his one-man-rule the Russian people sees the testament of the whole of its life, on him they place all their hope” (Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), № 12, 1884; in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 312). Again, “[the Tsar] is not only the sovereign of his country and the leader of his people: he is the God-appointed supervisor and protector of the Orthodox Church, which does not recognize any earthly deputy of Christ above it and has renounced any non-spiritual action, presenting all its cares about its earthly prosperity and order to the leader of the great Orthodox people that it has sanctified” (in Tikhomirov, op. cit., p. 313).

389 Volgin, op. cit., pp. 269-270.

390 Leontiev, “G. Katkov i ego vragi na prazdnike Pushkina” (G. Katkov and his enemies at the Pushkin festivities), in Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavdom), op. cit., p. 279 ®.

But was he being fair? Dostoevsky was not looking to the fusion of the races into one liberal-ecumenist conglomerate, but to their union in spirit through the adoption of the Orthodox faith, the essential condition of true brotherhood among both individuals and nations. Nor was he a chauvinist, but simply believed that the Russian people was the bearer of a truly universal content, the Orthodox Christian Gospel, which it would one day preach to all nations; for “this Kingdom of the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24.14).

As he wrote in another place: “You see, I’ve seen the Truth. I’ve seen it, and I know that men can be happy and beautiful without losing the ability to live on earth. I cannot – I refuse to believe that wickedness is the normal state of men. And when they laugh at me, it is essentially at that belief of mine.”

Leontiev returned to his criticism of this romantic, cosmopolitan or “chiliast” faith of Dostoyevsky’s, as he considered it, in an article entitled “On Universal Love”, in which he supported the liberal writer A.D. Gradovsky’s claim that Dostoyevsky was ignoring the prophecies of the Antichrist. “The prophecy of the general reconciliation of people in Christ,” he wrote, “is not an Orthodox prophecy, but some kind of general-humanitarian [prophecy]. The Church of this world does not promise this, and ‘he who disobeys the Church, let him be unto thee as a pagan and a publican’.”

Dostoyevsky himself replied to Gradovsky (and therefore also to Leontiev) as follows: “In your triumphant irony concerning the words in my Speech to the effect that we may, perhaps, utter a word of ‘final harmony’ in mankind, you seize on the Apocalypse and venomously cry out:

“‘By a word you will accomplish that which has not been foretold in the Apocalypse! On the contrary, the Apocalypse foretells, not ‘final agreement’, but final ‘disagreement’ with the coming of the Antichrist. But why should the Antichrist come if we utter a word of ‘final harmony’.’

“This is terribly witty, only you have cheated here. You probably have not read the Apocalypse to the end, Mr. Gradovsky. There it is precisely said that during the most powerful disagreements, not the Antichrist, but Christ will come and establish His Kingdom on earth (do you hear, on earth) for 1000 years. But it is added at this point: blessed is he who will take part in the first resurrection, that is, in this Kingdom. Well, it is in that time, perhaps, that we shall utter that word of final harmony which I talk about in my Speech.”

Leontiev counters by more or less accusing Dostoyevsky of the heresy of chiliasm: “It is not the complete and universal triumph of love and general righteousness on this earth that is promised to us by Christ and His Apostles;

392 Dostoyevsky, The Dream of a Ridiculous Man.
but, on the contrary, something in the nature of a seeming failure of the evangelical preaching on the earthly globe, for the nearness of the end must coincide with the last attempts to make everyone good Christians… Mr. Dostoyevsky introduces too rose-coloured a tint into Christianity in this speech. It is an innovation in relation to the Church, which expects nothing specially beneficial from humanity in the future…”

However, of one thing the author of The Devils, that extraordinary prophecy of the collective Antichrist, cannot be accused: of underestimating the evil in man, and of his capacity for self-destruction. The inventor of Stavrogin and Ivan Karamazov did not look at contemporary Russian society with rose-tinted spectacles. Dostoyevsky’s faith in a final harmony before the Antichrist did not blind him to where the world was going in his time.

"Europe is on the eve of a general and dreadful collapse," he wrote. “The ant-hill which has been long in the process of construction without the Church and Christ (since the Church, having dimmed its ideal, long ago and everywhere reincarnated itself in the state), with a moral principle shaken loose from its foundation, with everything general and absolute lost - this ant-hill, I say, is utterly undermined. The fourth estate is coming, it knocks at the door, and breaks into it, and if it is not opened to it, it will break the door. The fourth estate cares nothing for the former ideals; it rejects every existing law. It will make no compromises, no concessions; buttresses will not save the edifice. Concessions only provoke, but the fourth estate wants everything. There will come to pass something wholly unsuspected. All these parliamentarisms, all civic theories professed at present, all accumulated riches, banks, sciences, Jews - all these will instantly perish without leaving a trace - save the Jews, who even then will find their way out, so that this work will even be to their advantage.”

However, Leontiev accuses him also, and still more seriously, of distorting the basic message of the Gospel. Dostoyevsky’s “love” or “humaneness” (gumannost’) is closer to the “love” and “humaneness” of Georges Sand than that of Christ. Christian love and humaneness is complex; it calls on people to love, not simply as such, without reference to God, but “in the name of God” and “for the sake of Christ”. Dostoyevsky’s “love”, on the other hand, is “simple and ‘autonomous’; step by step and thought by thought it can lead to that dry and self-assured utilitarianism, to that epidemic madness of our time, which we can call, using psychiatric language, mania democratica progressiva. The whole point is that we claim by ourselves, without the help of God, to be either very good or, which is still more mistaken, useful….

“True, in all spiritual compositions there is talk of love for people. But in all such books we also find that the beginning of wisdom (that is, religious wisdom and the everyday wisdom that proceeds from it) is “the fear of God” – a simple,

395 Leontiev, op. cit., pp. 315, 322.
very simple fear both of torments beyond the grave and of other punishments, in the form of earthly tortures, sorrows and woes.”

However, far from espousing a “dry and self-assured utilitarianism”, Dostoyevsky was one of its most biting critics, satirising the rationalist-humanist-utilitarian world-view under the images of “the crystal palace” and “the ant-hill”. Nor did he in any way share in mania democratica progressiva.

Again, Leontiev rejects Dostoyevsky’s call to the intelligentsia to humble themselves before the people. “I don’t think that the family, public and in general personal in the narrow sense qualities of our simple people would be so worthy of imitation. It is hardly necessary to imitate their dryness in relation to the suffering and the sick, their unmerciful cruelty in anger, their drunkenness, the disposition of so many of them to cunning and even thievery... Humility before the people... is nothing other than humility before that same Church which Mr. Pobedonostsev advises us to love.”

However, “one must know,” wrote Dostoyevsky, “how to segregate the beauty of the Russian peasant from the layers of barbarity that have accumulated over it... Judge the people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations, they constantly yearn. Not all the people are villains; there are true saints, and what saints they are: they are radiant and illuminate the way for all!... Do not judge the People by what they are, but by what they would like to become.”

“I know that our educated men ridicule me: they refuse even to recognize ‘this idea’ in the people, pointing to their sins and abominations (for which these men themselves are responsible, having oppressed the people for two centuries); they also emphasize the people’s prejudices, their alleged indifference to religion, while some of them imagine that the Russian people are simply atheists. Their great error consists of the fact that they refuse to recognize the existence of the Church as an element in the life of the people. I am not speaking about church buildings, or the clergy. I am now referring to our Russian ‘socialism’, the ultimate aim of which is the establishment of an oecumenical Church on earth in so far as the earth is capable of embracing it. I am speaking of the unquenchable, inherent thirst in the Russian people for great, universal, brotherly fellowship in the name of Christ. And even if this fellowship, as yet, does not exist, and if that church has not completely materialized, - not in prayers only but in reality - nevertheless the instinct for it and the unquenchable, oftentimes unconscious thirst for it, indubitably dwells in the hearts of the millions of our people.

“But in communism, not in mechanical forms is the socialism of the Russian people expressed: they believe that they shall be finally saved through the universal communion in the name of Christ. This is our Russian socialism! It is

397 Leontiev, op. cit., p. 324.
398 Leontiev, op. cit., pp. 326, 327.
399 Dostoyevsky, The Diary of a Writer; in Figes, op. cit., p. 331.
the presence in the Russian people of this sublime unifying ‘church’ idea that you, our European gentlemen, are ridiculing.”

So Dostoyevsky’s “theology” was by no means as unecclesiastical as Leontiev and Pobedonostsev thought. And even if some of his phrases were not strictly accurate as ecclesiological theses, it is quite clear that the concepts of “Church” and “people” were much more closely linked in his mind than Leontiev and Pobedonostsev gave him credit for. Indeed, according to Vladimir Soloviev, on a journey to Optina in June, 1878, Dostoyevsky discussed with him his plans for his new novel, The Brothers Karamazov, and “the Church as a positive social ideal was to constitute the central idea of the new novel or series of novels”.

In some ways, in fact, Dostoyevsky was more inoculated against Westernism than Leontiev. Thus Leontiev complained to his friend Vasily Rozanov that Dostoyevsky’s views on Papism were too severe. And he was so fixated on the evils of liberalism and cosmopolitanism that he could be called an ecumenist in relation to medieval and contemporary Papism – an error that Dostoyevsky, with his penetrating analysis of the kinship between Papism and Socialism, was not prone to.

Fr. Georges Florovsky points out that “of particular importance was the fact that Dostoyevsky reduced all his searching for vital righteousness to the reality of the Church. In his dialectics of living images (rather than only ideas), the reality of sobornost’ becomes especially evident… Constantine Leontiev sharply accused Dostoyevsky of preaching a new, ‘rose-coloured’ Christianity (with reference to his Pushkin speech). ‘All these hopes on earthly love and on earthly peace one can find in the songs of Béranger, and still more in Georges Sand many others. And in this connection not only the name of God, but even the name of Christ was mentioned more than once in the West.’… It is true, in his religious development Dostoyevsky proceeded precisely from these impressions and names mentioned by Leontiev. And he never renounced this ‘humanism’ later because, with all its ambiguity and insufficiency, he divined in it the possibility of becoming truly Christian, and strove to encurch (otserkovit’) them. Dostoyevsky saw only insufficiency where Leontiev found the complete opposite…”

This is a penetrating remark, and reveals the difference in what we might call “pastoral” gifts between Dostoyevsky and Leontiev. Dostoyevsky started where his audience were – outside the Church, in the humanist-rationalist-utopian morass of westernism, and tried to build on what was still not completely corrupted in that world-view in order to draw his audience closer to Christ and the Church. In this way, he imitated St. Paul in Athens, who, seeing an altar with the inscription “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD”, gave the Athenians the benefit of the doubt, as it were, and proceeded to declare: “He

---

401 Soloviev, in David Magarshack’s introduction to his Penguin translation of The Brothers Karamazov, pp. xi-xii.
402 Florovsky, Puti Russkogo Bogoslovia (Paths of Russian Theology), Paris, 1937, pp. 300-301. 

223
Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you” (Acts 17.23). Constantine Leontiev would perhaps have objected that the Athenians, as pagans, were certainly not worshipping the True God at this altar. And he would have been formally right… And yet St. Paul saw the germ of true worship in this inchoate paganism, and, building upon it, led at any rate a few to the truth. This was also the method of Dostoyevsky with his semi-pagan Russian audience. And he, too, made some converts…

Again, if Dostoyevsky emphasised certain aspects of the Christian teaching such as compassionate love, humility before your neighbour and the humble bearing of insults, more than others such as the fear of God, fasting, sacraments, obedience to authorities, this is not because he did not think the latter were important, but because he knew that his audience, being spiritually infants, could not take this “hard” food, but had to begin on the “milk” of those teachings which were not so distasteful to their spoilt palates. And the results proved him right from a pragmatic, missionary point of view. For the unbelieving intelligentsia of several subsequent generations have been stimulated to question their unbelief far more by the writings of Dostoyevsky than by those of Leontiev and Pobedonostev, undoubtedly Orthodox though the latter are.

An admirer of Leontiev, V.M. (now Igumen Gregory) Lourié, has developed Leontiev’s line of criticism. Analysing Dostoyevsky’s remarks about “that rapture which most of all binds us to [God]”, Lourié concludes that “deification” is interpreted [by Dostoyevsky] as a psychological and even natural condition – a relationship of man to Christ, in Whom he believes as God. From such ‘deification’ there does not and cannot follow the deification of man himself. On the contrary, man remains as he was, ‘on his own’, and with his own psychology… In such an – unOrthodox – soteriological perspective, the patristic ‘God became man, so that man should become God’ is inevitably exchanged for something like ‘God became man, so that man should become a good man’; ascetic sobriety turns out to be simply inadmissible, and it has to be squeezed out by various means of eliciting ‘that rapture’.

And yet what is more significant: the fact that there is a certain inaccuracy in Dostoyevsky’s words from a strictly theological point of view, or the fact that Dostoyevsky talks about deification at all as the ultimate end of man? Surely the latter…

Even among the Holy Fathers we find inaccuracies, and as Lourié points out in other places, the Palamite ideas of uncreated grace and the deification of man through grace had almost been lost even among the monasteries and academies of nineteenth-century Russia. Which makes Dostoyevsky’s achievement in at least placing the germs of such thoughts in the mind of the

---

intelligentsia, all the greater. For in what other non-monastic Russian writer of the nineteenth century do we find such a vivid, profound and above all relevant (to the contemporary spiritual state of his listeners) analysis of the absolute difference between becoming “god” through the assertion of self (Kirillov, Ivan Karamazov) and becoming god through self-sacrificial love and humility (Bishop Tikhon, Elder Zosima)?

Leontiev also asserted (followed by Lourié) that Dostoyevsky’s monastic types are not true depictions of monastic holiness. “In his memoirs, Leontiev wrote: ‘The Brothers Karamazov can be considered an Orthodox novel only by those who are little acquainted with true Orthodoxy, with the Christianity of the Holy Fathers and the Elders of Athos and Optina.’ In Leontiev’s view (he himself became an Orthodox monk and lived at Optina for the last six months of his life), the work of Zola (in La Faute de l’abbé Mouret) is ‘far closer to the spirit of true personal monkhood than the superficial and sentimental inventions of Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov.’”

There is some truth in this criticism, and yet it misses more than one important point. The first is that Dostoyevsky was not intending to make a literal representation of anyone, but “an artistic tableau”. And for that reason, as he wrote to Pobedonostsev in August, 1879, he was worried whether he would be understood. The “obligations of artistry… required that I present a modest and majestic figure, whereas life is full of the comic and is majestic only in its inner sense, so that in the biography of my monk I was involuntarily compelled by artistic demands to touch upon even the most vulgar aspects so as not to infringe artistic realism. Then, too, there are several teachings of the monk against which people will simply cry out that they are absurd, for they are all too ecstatic; of course, they are absurd in an everyday sense, but in another, inward sense, I think they are true.”

Again, as Fr. Georges Florovsky writes: “To the ‘synthetic’ Christianity of Dostoyevsky Leontiev opposed the contemporary monastic way of life or ethos, especially on Athos. And he insisted that in Optina The Brothers Karamazov was not recognized as ‘a correct Orthodox composition’, while Elder Zosima did not correspond to the contemporary monastic spirit. In his time Rozanov made a very true comment on this score. ‘If it does not correspond to the type of Russian monasticism of the 18th-19th centuries (the words of Leontiev), then perhaps, and even probably, it corresponded to the type of monasticism of the 4th to 6th centuries’. In any case, Dostoyevsky was truly closer to Chrysostom (and precisely in his social teachings) than Leontiev… Rozanov adds: ‘The whole of Russia read The Brothers Karamazov, and believed in the representation of the Elder Zosima. “The Russian Monk” (Dostoyevsky’s term) appeared as a close and fascinating figure in the eyes of the whole of Russia, even her unbelieving parts.’… Now we know that the Elder Zosima was not drawn from nature, and in the given case Dostoyevsky did not proceed from Optina figures. It was an ‘ideal’ or ‘idealised’ portrait, written most of all from Tikhon of Zadonsk, and it was precisely Tikhon’s

\[404\] Magarshack, op. cit., p. xviii.
\[405\] Magarshack, op. cit., p. xvi.
works that inspired Dostoyevsky, constituting the ‘teachings’ of Zosima… By the power of his artistic clairvoyance Dostoyevsky divined and recognized this seraphic stream in Russian piety, and prophetically continued the marked-out line…”

The Jews under Alexander II

The first of Alexander’s great reforms, but the one having perhaps the most profound long-term consequences for the empire as a whole and for the tsar in particular, related to the Jews. In 1856, in the coronation manifesto, the Jews were placed on the same basis as the rest of the population in relation to military service. In the same manifesto, all their (very large) debts incurred in non-payment of taxes over the previous years were forgiven.

“More expansively than this,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “Alexander II expressed his intention to resolve the Jewish question – and in the most general sense favourably [for the Jews]. For the whole way in which the question was posed was radically changed. If under Nicholas I the government had set itself the task, first, of reforming the inner way of life of the Jews, gradually clearing it up through productive labour and education, in this way leading to the removal of administrative restrictions; then under Alexander II, by contrast, the government began by removing external restrictions and impediments, without searching deeply into possible inner causes of Jewish isolation and sickness, and hoping that then all remaining problems would be solved of themselves; it began ‘with the intention of merging this people with the native inhabitants of the country’, as the sovereign command of 1856 put it.”

During the rest of the reign almost all the restrictions on the Jews were dismantled one by one. Jews were now to be found in all parts of the empire, and the share of trade and industry owned by them rapidly increased. Moreover, their numbers also increased – to almost 4 million by 1880.

“This rapid growth in numbers alone, without any of the remaining accompanying particularities of the Jewish question, already placed before Russia a major problem of State. And here it is necessary, as always in any question, to try and understand both points of view. With this exceptional growth in Russian Jewry, two national needs began more and more often to collide. The need of the Jews (and the characteristic of their dynamic three-thousand-year life) was: how to settle as widely as possible among the people of other races so that as many Jews as possible could be engaged in trade, middle-man activities and production… And the need of the Russians, in the estimate of the government, was how to keep for themselves the conduct and development of their economic (and then cultural) life.

“But at the same time that the Jews were enjoying all these individual reliefs, let us not forget that the general reforms of Alexander II were

407 A.I. Solzhenitsyn, Dvesti Let Vmeste (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 136 ®.
following one after the other in Russia, thereby extending their canopy also over the Jews. For example, in 1863 the poll-tax was removed from the urban population, which meant also from the majority of the Jewish masses. There remained only the zemstva dues, and the Jews covered these from a general collection.

“But it was the most of important of these Alexandrine reforms, the most historically significant, a turning point in Russian history, the emancipation of the serfs and the abolition of serfdom in 1861, that turned out to be for the Russian Jews the most harmful, and for many even catastrophic. ‘The general socio-economic changes that took place in connection with the abolition of serfdom… significantly worsened the position of the broad Jewish masses’. The social change consisted in the fact that the many-millioned, rightless and property-less peasant class ceased to exist, whence the comparative advantage enjoyed by the Jews with their personal freedom disappeared. And the economic change consisted in the fact that ‘the liberated peasant… began to need the services of the Jews less’, that is, he was freed from the strict prohibition on selling all his products and buying goods in any other way than through an appointed middle-man (who in the western provinces was almost always a Jew). And also in the fact that the landowners, having been deprived of free peasant labour, ‘were now compelled,’ in order not to be ruined, ‘to occupy themselves personally with their economy, in which a prominent role formerly belonged to the Jews as lessees and middle-men in various commercial and industrial deals’.

“Let us note that the agricultural credit that was introduced in those years squeezed out the Jew ‘as organiser of the financial basis of the landowner’s life’. The development of consumer and credit associations led to ‘the liberation of the people from the tyranny of usury’.”

Alexander I’s plan to draw the Jews into agriculture was abandoned by Alexander II. “If in 1858 there were 64,000 Jewish colonists, that is, 8-10,000 families, by 1880 the Ministry counted only 14,000 souls, less than 2000 families. While in 1872 the commissions on the spot who checked whether the land was being used or lying fallow discovered that in the whole of the South-Western region there were fewer than 800 Jewish colonist families…

“And in 1866 Alexander II decided to rescind the special decrees on transforming the Jews into farmers. Now the task was: how to put Jewish farmers on the same basis as other farmers in the Empire. The Jewish colonies turned out to be incapable [of adapting to] the independent life on the land that had begun everywhere. Now it remained to open for them a way out of the farming estate, and to change them into craftsmen and merchants… They were allowed to buy out their land plots – and they bought then, and resold them at a great profit…”

“An official with forty years’ experience in agriculture (the State Counsellor Ivashintsev, who was sent in 1880 to investigate the state of the

---

colonies) wrote: throughout Russia ‘there was not one peasant community upon which benefits had been poured in such abundance’ – and ‘these benefits could not remain a secret for the peasants and could not fail to elicit in them bad feelings’. The peasants who were neighbours of the Jewish colonies ‘were annoyed… at the insufficiency of their own land, - they had to lease lands from the Jews at a high price – lands that had been assigned to the latter from the State budget in quantities exceeding their real needs”. It was this circumstance that explained,… “in part that hardening of the peasants against the Jewish farmers, which was expressed in the sacking of several Jewish settlements” (in 1881-82).”

Alexander’s reforms with regard to Jewish military recruitment also did not reap the results hoped for. Government statistics showed that out of the 3309 new recruits who did not respond to call-up in 1880, 3,054, that is, 92%, were Jews. In the period 1876-1883 31.6% of Jews called up did not respond – the figure throughout the Empire was 0.19%. The figure in 1894 was 13.6% for Jews, 2.6% for the other peoples of the Empire.

“From all that has been said we must not conclude,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “that in the war of 1877-78 against Turkey Jewish soldiers did not display courage and military resourcefulness. Convincing examples of the one and the other were cited at that time by the newspaper Russkij Evrej [The Russian Jew]. However, during that war there was great irritation against the Jews in the army, mainly because of the dishonourable contractor-quartermasters – and ‘these were almost exclusively Jews, beginning with the main contractors Gorowitz, Greger and Kahan’. The contractors supplied, at inflated prices, (we must suppose – under the protection of highly-placed officials) poor-quality equipment, the notorious ‘cardboard soles’, because of which the soldiers’ feet got frost-bite on Shipka.”

The Jews’ aversion to serving in the army was linked with their sudden conversion to the idea of accepting Russian education when the government offered privileges in military service to those with education. “From that time there took place ‘a flood of Jews into the general schools’. ‘After the military reform of 1874 even in many Orthodox families they began to send their sons to secondary and higher educational institutions for the sake of a shortening of their period of service’. These privileges were not only deferment of military service and a lightening of its burden, but, as Mark Aldanov recalls, the Jews were now able to take examinations to become officers ‘and receive officer ranks’. ‘They often [also] received the status of nobility.’ In the 70s there took place ‘a huge growth [in the numbers] of Jewish students in general educational institutions and the creation of a large layer of graduate intelligentsia [from among the Jews]’. In 1881 in all the universities of the country they numbered 9%, by 1887 the number had risen to 13.5%, that is, every seventh student. And in individual universities the number was much higher: in Kharkov medical faculty – 42%, in Odessa – 31%, and in the

409 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 154, 155.
410 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 151-152.
411 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 152.
medical faculty – 41%. In all the gymasia and pro-gymnasia of the country the percentage of Jews doubled from 1870 to 1880 – 12% (by comparison with 1865, a four-fold increase), in Odessa school district it attained 32% by 1886, and in individual academic institutions – 75% and more.”

And so the government’s aim of assimilating the Jews into Russian culture through education at last began to bear fruit in the reign of Alexander II. However, Russian education in this period was rapidly becoming radicalised. And so the institutions that, as it was hoped, would make the Jews into model Russian citizens and patriots in fact turned them into – revolutionaries...

Thus Solzhenitsyn writes: “It is precisely under Alexander II, when the restrictions on Jewish life in Russia were so weakened, that Jewish names begin to be encountered amidst the revolutionaries... In the student disturbances of 1861 we encounter Mikhoels, Utin and Gen.”

Again, Vital writes: “A breakdown based on official records of the calling, social status, and origin of 1,054 revolutionaries arrested, tried, condemned, and sent into punitive exile or placed under police surveillance in the course of the round-up of dissidents in 1873-7 showed that 68 – 6.5 per cent – were Jews. Of 79 condemned to exile 12 were Jews: 15.2 per cent. These were not immensely large figures, but they do illustrate the fact that the Jewish contingent was already strikingly in excess of the Jewish proportion of the total population of the empire.”

“It all began with the same ‘nihilism’ of the 60s. ‘Having attached itself to the “goy” enlightenment in Russia’, and beginning to read Russian literature, ‘Jewish youth soon after that also joined itself to the more advanced’ nihilism of that time – and it was the easier in that it was leagues away from the commandments of Jewish antiquity. Even the “fanatic ‘yeshibotnik’, immersed in the study of the Talmud’, after ‘two or three conversations with a nihilist’ parted with his ‘patriarchal views’ and even his external appearance. ‘Even after an insignificant exposure to “goy” literacy’, ‘a breach was made in his orthodox world-view, and he was capable of going further to the very extreme limits’. These young Jews were there and then caught up by universalist ideals: how all men will become brothers and how all will have the same prosperity. The task was grandiose: to liberate the whole of humanity from poverty and slavery!

“And then there was also Russian literature. Paul Axelrod was educated in a gymnasium on Turgenev, Belinsky and Dobroliubov (and then Lassalle oriented him straight to the revolution). Aptekmann was entranced by Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Pisarev... Lazar Goldenberg read up the same Dobroliubov, Chernyshevsky, Pisarev and Nekrasov, while Rudin captivated him by his death on the barricades. Solomon Chudnovsky was a

412 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 165-166.
413 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 213.
great fan of Pisarev, and wept when he died. The nihilism of Semyon Lourié also grew on the soil of Russian literature...

“The turning towards what was Russian was accompanied by a turning away from what was Jewish. Amongst many of these, the first Jewish revolutionaries, ‘a passionately hostile and derisive attitude toward ancient Jewry, as towards a kind of parasitical anomaly, was formed’. In the 70s ‘cells of Jewish radical youth were formed which in the name of the ideals of the populist movement [narodnichestvo] began also to distance themselves more and more from their own people... and began to be intensively assimilated and acquire ‘the Russian national spirit’...

“Aptekmann himself, who according to Deutsch’s description was ‘extremely exhausted physically, short, with a pale face’, ‘with sharply expressive national facial traits’, became a medical orderly in a village, and preached Socialism to the peasants through the Gospel.”

“There began the ‘going to the people’ with short visits and living there for several months at a time, a ‘flying’ flow. At first they calculated precisely on agitation and only on that. The picture painted was as follows: all that was needed was to open the peasants’ eyes to the contemporary state of affairs and exploitation, and that it was necessary to take the land and the instruments of work into public ownership – the peasants would be immediately convinced by that.

“But all this ‘going’ of the populists collapsed into nothing. And not only because some shot at the tsar (Soloviev, 1879), which was unexpected for them and caused them all to flee out of the countryside, for ‘they’ll take you’, and hide in the towns. But the main reason was that the peasants turned out to be completely indifferent to the propaganda of the populists and were even prepared to give them up to the authorities. And there was no way they could incite the peasants to rebellion!… Then the populists, both Russian (who were not much more successful) and Jewish, lost ‘faith in... the natural revolutionary temper and socialist instincts of the peasantry and even ‘turned into [extreme] pessimists’.”

“By the end of the 70s the Russian revolutionary movement was already sliding towards terror: rebellious Bakunism had then finally triumphed over enlightened Lavrism. From 1879 the view of ‘The People’s Will’ [party] that the populist staying among the peasants was useless had gained the advantage over the denial of terror. Only terror!! And even systematic terror!! (And they were not alarmed by the lack of responsiveness from the people and the poverty of the intelligentsia’s ranks. Terrorist acts – even directly against the tsar – followed one after another...”

415 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 218, 219, 220.
416 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 223.
417 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 228.
Meanwhile, most Jews remained fenced off by Talmudic edicts from Russian culture and even the Russian language. “The eminent Jewish-Russian lawyer, Genrikh Sliozberg,” write Kyril Fitzlyon and Tatiana Browning, “never forgot the ‘real grief’ of his family and relations when they discovered that his father had sent him to a Russian grammar school. His school uniform they found particularly irritating, sinful even. It was, they thought, ‘an apostate’s garb’, and his mother and grandmother cried bitterly every time they saw him in it.’ Again, ‘the Russian-Jewish revolutionary, Lev Deutsch, writing in 1923, clearly remembered the time when the Jews ‘considered it sinful to learn Russian, and its use was allowed only if absolutely essential and, of course, only for speaking to Christians (the goyim).’” 418

Education did create small groups of Russian Jewish patriots. But, on the one hand, as we have seen, the mass of the Jewish people remained unenlightened. And on the other, even among the russified Jewish intelligentsia voices were heard warning against complete assimilation. Thus in 1868 Perets Smolenskin warned that, in adapting to the general culture, the Jews should preserve their national spiritual character. And the Petersburg newspapers Rassvet [Dawn] and Russkij Evrej [Russian Jew] “strengthened the attraction of Jewish youth towards the study of the Jewish past and present life. At the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s there arose a watershed between the cosmopolitan and nationalist tendencies in Russian Jewry. ‘In essence the leaders of Rassvet no longer believed in the truth of assimilation… Rassvet, without realising it, went along the path of … the excitation of national self-consciousness… it had a vividly expressed national bias… the illusions of russification… were dispelled…” 419

In 1869 the baptised Jew Jacob Brafmann published Kniga Kagala (The Book of the Kahal), in which, on the basis of a detailed translation of the acts of the Minsk kahal at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, exposed and interpreted the kahal system, demonstrating the complete rightlessness of the majority of the members of the Jewish community. In 1976 the New Jewish Encyclopaedia confirmed that the material used by Brafman “is genuine and the translation of it quite accurate”. And in 1994 the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia declared that “the documents published by Brafmann are a valuable source for the study of the history of the Jews in Russia at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century”. “Brafmann asserted that ‘State laws cannot annihilate that harmful power hidden in Jewish self-government… According to his words, this organisation is not limited to local kahals… but encompasses, he says, the Jewish people throughout the world… and in consequence of this the Christian peoples cannot be delivered from Jewish exploitation until everything that aids the isolation of the Jews is destroyed’. Brafman supported ‘the view of the Talmud as not so much a codex of a religio-national character, but rather “a civil-political codex”, which went “against the flow of the political and moral development of Christian countries”’, creating ‘a Talmudic republic’. He insisted that ‘the Jews constitute a State within the State’, that the Jews ‘consider themselves

419 Solzhenitsyn, op.cit., pp. 177-178.
not bound by State laws’, the Jewish community has ‘as one of its basic aims “the darkening of the mind of Christians”’ to turn them only into fictional owners of the property that belongs to them’. More broadly, he ‘accused the Society for the Spreading of Enlightenment among the Jews and the Universal Jewish Union (the Alliance Israélite) of being a part of “a world-wide Jewish conspiracy”’. In Hessen’s opinion, ‘The Book of the Kahal… demanded only that the social self-government of the Jews should be destroyed at the root’, in spite of ‘civil rightlessness’.

“The State Council, ‘softening the decisive phraseology of the Book of the Kahal’, declared that the external distinguishing of the Jews from the rest of the population could be achieved by administrative measures, this ‘will in no way guarantee the annihilation of the self-enclosed and almost anti-Christian feelings of the Jewish communities’, but ‘the isolation of the Jews which is so harmful for the State’ can be ‘annihilated, on the one hand, by a weakening, as far as possible, of the social links of the Jews among themselves and of the Jewish elders’ abuse of their power, and on the other hand, which is still more important, by the spread of enlightenment among the Jews’.”

Solzhenitsyn has picked out the opinions of other leading writers of the time. Thus the “reactionary” editor of Moscow Gazette, M.N. Katkov, who had always defended the Jews, said that the pogroms came from ‘“evil-intentioned intriguers’, ‘who have deliberately darkened the popular consciousness, forcing them to decide the Jewish question, not by means of an investigation of it from all sides, but with the help of “raised fists”’.

“… I.S. Aksakov, a constant opponent of complete emancipation for the Jews, already at the end of the 50s had tried to restrain the government ‘from too bold steps” along this path. When a law was passed giving state service to Jews with degrees, he objected (1862): that the Jews were ‘a handful of people who completely reject the Christian teaching, the Christian ideal and moral code (and consequently all the bases of the social existence of the country), and confess a teaching that is contrary and hostile to it’. He was not in favour of equality for the Jews in political rights, although he was completely in favour of their having equality in purely civil rights, so that the Jewish people “should be provided with complete freedom of existence, self-government, development, education and trade… even… that they should be allowed to live throughout Russia’. In 1867 he wrote that economically ‘one should not talk about the emancipation of the Jews, but about the emancipation of the Russians from the Jews’. He noted the deaf indifference of the liberal press to the peasants’ condition and needs. And now Aksakov explained the way of pogroms in 1881 as the display of popular anger against ‘the oppression of the Russian local population by Jewry’, which is why during the pogroms there was ‘no burglary’, only the destruction of property and ‘some kind of simple-minded conviction of the rightness of their actions’; and he repeated that the question should be put ‘not about the equality in rights of the Jews with the Christians, but about the equality of the Christians with the Jews, and about the removal of the rightlessness of the Russian population before the Jews’…

420 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit, pp. 167-168.
"The writer D. Mordovtsev, who was sympathetic to the Jews, in his 'Letter of a Christian on the Jewish question', which was published in the Jewish newspaper Rassvet [Dawn], pessimistically called on the Jews 'to emigrate to Palestine and America, seeing this as the only solution of the Jewish question in Russia.'\footnote{Solzhenitsyn, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 197, 198.}

Again, in 1879 Constantine Pobedonostev wrote to Dostoyevsky: "They are at the root of the revolutionary socialist movement and of regicide, they own the periodical press, they have in their hands the financial markets; the people as a whole fall into financial slavery to them; they even control the principles of contemporary science and strive to place it outside of Christianity."\footnote{Pobedonostev, in Cohen and Major, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 627.}

And Dostoyevsky himself wrote: "Jewry is thriving precisely there where the people are still ignorant, or not free, or economically backward. It is there that Jewry has a champ libre! And instead of raising, by its influence, the level of education, instead of increasing knowledge, generating economic fitness in the native population, - instead of this, the Jew, wherever he has settled, has still more humiliated and debauched the people; there humaneness was still more debased and the educational level fell still lower; there inescapable, inhuman misery, and with it despair, spread still more disgustingly. Ask the native populations in our border regions: What is propelling the Jew – has been propelling him for centuries? You will receive a unanimous answer: mercilessness. 'He has been prompted so many centuries only by pitilessness for us, only the thirst for our sweat and blood.'"
circumstances), for this sole reason should they be completely crushed by exploitation, instead of being helped?\textsuperscript{423}

“And if reference is made to Europe, to France, for example, - there too, hardly has their status \textit{in statu} been harmless. Of course, there, Christianity and its idea have been lowered and are sinking not because of the Jew’s fault, but through their own fault; nevertheless, it is impossible not to note also in Europe the great triumph of Jewry which has replaced many former ideas with its own.

“Oh, it goes without saying that man always, at all times, has been worshipping materialism and has been inclined to perceive and understand liberty only in the sense of making his life secure through money hoarded by the exertion of every effort and accumulated by all possible means. However, at no time in the past have these tendencies been raised so cynically and so obviously to the level of a sublime principle as in our Nineteenth Century. ‘Everybody for himself and only for himself, and every intercourse with man solely for one’s self’ – such is the ethical tenet of the majority of present-day people, even not bad people, but, on the contrary, laboring people who neither murder nor steal. And mercilessness for the lower classes, the decline of brotherhood, exploitation of the poor by the rich, - oh, of course, all this existed also before and always; however, it had not been raised to the level of supreme truth and of science – it had been condemned by Christianity, whereas at present, on the contrary, it is being regarded as virtue.

“Thus, it is not for nothing that over there the Jews are reigning everywhere over stock-exchanges; it is not for nothing that they control capital, that they are the masters of credit, and it is not for nothing – I repeat – that they are also the masters of international politics, and what is going to happen in the future is known to the Jews themselves: their reign, their complete reign, is approaching! We are approaching the complete triumph of ideas before which sentiments of humanity, thirst for truth, Christian and national feelings, and even those of national dignity, must bow. On the contrary, we are approaching materialism, a blind, carnivorous craving for personal material welfare, a craving for personal accumulation of money by any means – that is all that has been proclaimed as the supreme aim, as the reasonable thing, as liberty, in lieu of the Christian idea of salvation only through the closest moral and brotherly fellowship of men.

“People will laugh and say that this is not all brought about by the Jews. Of course, not only by them, but if the Jews have completely triumphed and thriven in Europe precisely at the time when these new principles have triumphed there to the point of having been raised to the level of a moral principle, it is impossible not to infer that the Jews, too, have contributed their influence to this condition... The summit of the Jews is assuming stronger and firmer power over mankind seeking to convey to it its image and substance.

\textsuperscript{423} Dostoyevsky is here speaking about the situation of the Russians in the Ukraine in the seventeenth century especially, when they were under Polish political domination and Jewish economic domination.
Jews keep vociferating that among them, too, there are good people. Oh, God! Is this the point? – Besides, we are speaking not about good or bad people. And aren’t there good people among those? Wasn’t the late James Rothschild of Paris a good man? – We are speaking about the whole and its idea; we are speaking about Judaism and the Jewish idea which is clasping the whole world instead of Christianity which ‘did not succeed’...”  

Of course, the views of Dostoyevsky, Aksakov and other Russian “antisemites” are profoundly unfashionable today. Most critiques of Russian anti-Semitism simply ignore the facts about the Jews in Russia cited above. However, a more intelligent and interesting critique has been presented by Sir Geoffrey Hosking, who takes up the hint given here by Dostoyevsky that the Jewish idea took the place of Christianity, “which ‘did not succeed’”.

According to Hosking, “Anti-Semitism was a kind of frustrated Slavophilism, conceived in awareness of the ways in which Russians had failed to fulfil their potential nationhood. In the interests of great-power status, the Russians had spurned their myth of the chosen people and the empire of truth and justice. The Jews, by contrast, continued to believe that they were a chosen people and to hold to their messianic prophecies. Where Slavophiles dreamed of a peasant commune based on Orthodox principles, the Jews seemed still to have successful communities ruled over by their religious leaders. They had succeeded where the Russians had failed: in making a messianic religion the essence of their national identity.”

We may concede a degree of psychological truth in this analysis: the Russians were failing “to fulfil their potential nationhood”, if that nationhood was perceived as being the mission of the Third Rome, that is, of being the bearer of “light from the East”, the universal truth of Orthodox Christianity, to the benighted nations of Europe and Asia. Far from converting the Europeans to Orthodoxy, the Russians were being converted in large numbers to various westernist ideologies. Nor, in spite of flourishing missions in Alaska and (a little later) Japan, were they much more successful in Asia, where the very earthly motivations of great-power politics, little different from those of their great rivals, the British, prevailed.

Now a sense of failure can be treated in two ways: in the Orthodox way, by repentance and the confession of sin, and in the fallen way, by exaggerated self-assertion and the blaming of others. Slavophilism at its best, as we find it in Khomiakov or Kireevsky, implicitly contained a message of repentance: that Russia was falling away from her vocation as God’s people, and she should return to the traditions of the pre-Petrine, Muscovite period, when she had been more faithful to her heavenly calling. But in its later varieties, Slavophilism degenerated (as Soloviev was to point out) into mere nationalist self-assertion. Russia, the later Slavophiles maintained, was great not only, or even primarily, because she was the bearer of the one truth to all nations

---


(messianism), but also in a purely secular, material sense (Leontiev’s liberal nationalism).

In Dostoyevsky (as in Tiutchev) we see the tension between the earlier and later Slavophilisms; and if we have interpreted him as in essence closer to the early Slavophiles, that is, as a universalist Christian thinker of genius, we cannot deny that he sometimes gave grounds in his work for the opinion that he was simply a frenzied chauvinist.

The Jews were unique among Russia’s national rivals in being no threat to her (yet) in purely political, great-power terms, but a direct threat in terms of messianic mission. For the Jews, like the Russians, claimed to be the nation that knows the truth, the bearer of God’s saving message to the world. But the Jewish God was definitely not the Russians’ God – not Jesus Christ. And the whole of the Jewish religion was aimed at protecting it against the influence of this Russian God, Who happened to be a Jew by race, but Whom the Jews had crucified and continued to anathematize together with all Christians. So in religious terms – and Russia’s national “myth”, to use Hosking’s word, was something if not religious – there could be no compromise, no living together in amity between these two most religious of peoples. It was a matter of kto kogo?, to use Lenin’s phrase: who would rule whom? – and the constant strife between Jews and Russians in the Western Borderlands was therefore both wholly predictable and essentially unavoidable. Moreover, as Hosking rightly points out, the relative success of the Jews in maintaining their religious identity was an implicit rebuke to the Russians, who were losing theirs. In fact, it was hardly a coincidence that the appearance of the Jews in large numbers in the Russian lands towards the end of the eighteenth century had coincided almost exactly with the nadir of Russian religious consciousness in the reign of Catherine II. It was as if God had introduced the Jews into Russia to remind the Russians: “Just as the Jews fell away from Me when they chose national self-assertion instead of Me, so you can fall away if you pursue great-power wealth and status at the expense of faithfulness to My commandments. And just as they fell from being My People to being My fiercest enemies, so it can happen to you…”

The Tsar and the Constitution

The great reforms of Tsar Alexander’s reign, and especially those of the zemstva, which had given the nobility a taste of administration, stimulated demands for the restriction of the power of the Autocracy and the introduction of a constitutional monarchy. The initiative here came from the Moscow nobility, who in January, 1865, as Ivanov writes, “agitated for the convening of the people’s representatives, thanking the Tsar for his wise beginnings. The Moscow nobility, who always strove for the good of the State, asked him not to stop on his chosen path and bring to completion the state building begun by him through the convening of a general assembly of elected delegates from the Russian land for the discussion of the needs that are common to the whole state”. Emperor Alexander did not accept this appeal. He underlined that ‘not one assembly can speak in the name of the other classes’
and that the right to care for what is useful and beneficial for the State belonged to him as emperor.

“Alexander thought and wisely foresaw that the granting of a constitution for Russia would be disastrous for the latter.

“In a private conversation with one of the composers of the appeal (Golokhvostov), Alexander said: ‘What do you want? A constitutional form of administration? I give you my word, at this table, that I would be ready to sign any constitution you like if I were convinced that it was useful for Russia. But I know that if I do this today, tomorrow Russia will disintegrate into pieces.’

“The Tsar’s forebodings had solid foundations.

“On April 4, 1868 Karakozov made an attempt on the life of the Tsar.

“It was necessary to speak, not about a constitution, but about the salvation of the State…”

As Dominic Lieven writes Alexander “explained to Otto von Bismarck, who was then Prussian minister in Petersburg, that ‘the idea of taking counsel of subjects other than officials was not in itself objectionable and that great participation by respectable notables in official business could only be advantageous. The difficulty, if not impossibility, of putting this principle into effect lay only in the experience of history that it had never been possible to stop a country’s liberal development at the point beyond which it should not go. This would be particularly difficult in Russia, where the necessary political culture, thoughtfulness and circumspection were only to be found in relatively small circles. Russia must not be judged by Petersburg, of all the empire’s towns the least Russian one… The revolutionary party would not find it easy to corrupt the people’s convictions and make the masses conceive their interests to be divorced from those of the dynasty. The Emperor continued that ‘throughout the interior of the empire the people still see the monarch as the paternal and absolute Lord set by God over the land; this belief, which has almost the force of a religious sentiment, is completely independent of any personal loyalty of which I could be the object. I like to think that it will not be lacking too in the future. To abdicate the absolute power with which my crown is invested would be to undermine the aura of that authority which has dominion over the nation. The deep respect, based on innate sentiment, with which right up to now the Russian people surrounds the throne of its Emperor cannot be parcelled out. I would diminish without any compensation the authority of the government if I wanted to allow representatives of the nobility or the nation to participate in it. Above all, God knows what would become of relations between the peasants and the lords if the authority of the Emperor was not still sufficiently intact to exercise the dominating influence.’…

“… After listening to Alexander’s words Bismarck commented that if the masses lost faith in the crown’s absolute power the rise of a murderous peasant war would become very great. He concluded that ‘His Majesty can still rely on the common man both in the army and among the civilian masses but the “educated classes”, with the exception of the older generation, are stoking the fires of a revolution which, if it comes to power, would immediately turn against themselves.’ Events were to show that this prophecy was as relevant in Nicholas II’s era as it had been during the reign of his grandfather…”

The revolutionaries did not rest. In 1876 in London, the Jewish revolutionaries Liberman, Goldenburg and Zuckerman worked out a plan for the murder of the Tsar. Goldenburg was the first to offer his services as the murdered, but his suggestion was refused, “since they found that he, as a Jew, should not take upon himself this deed, for then it would not have the significance that was fitting for society and, the main thing, the people.”

“On April 2, 1879 the village teacher Alexander Soloviev fired at the Emperor Alexander near the Winter palace while he was going for his morning walk.

“On May 28, 1879 Soloviev was hanged, while three weeks later a secret congress of revolutionaries in Lipetsk took the decision to kill the Tsar.

“The propaganda of socialism, they argued, was impossible in Russia under the existing form of government, and for that reason it was necessary to strive for its overthrow, for the limitation of autocratic power, for the bestowal of political freedoms and the convening of the people’s representatives. The means for the attainment of this goal had to be terror, by which the plotters understood the murder of people in high positions, and first of all the Tsar.

“On November 19, 1879 the terrorists tried to blow up the Emperor’s train.

427 Lieven, Nicholas II, op. cit., pp. 142, 143.
428 S. P. Ivanov, Ivanov, Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Harbin, 1934, Moscow, 1997, p. 345 ®.
429 "The participation of the Masons in this deed,” writes Selyaninov, "cannot be doubted. This was discovered when the Russian government turned to the French government with the demand that it hand over Hartman, who was hiding in Paris under the name Meyer. Scarcely had Hartman been arrested at the request of the Russian ambassador when the French radicals raised an unimaginable noise. The Masonic deputy Engelhardt took his defence upon himself, trying to prove that Meyer and Hartman were different people. The Russian ambassador Prince Orlov began to receive threatening letters. Finally, the leftist deputies were preparing to raise a question and bring about the fall of the ministry. The latter took fright, and, without waiting for the documents promised by Orlov that could have established the identity of Hartman-Meyer, hastily agreed with the conclusions of Brother Engelhardt and helped Hartman to flee to England… In London Hartman was triumphantly received into the Masonic lodge ‘The Philadelphi’.” (in Ivanov, op. cit., p. 346).
“In 1880 a mine was laid and exploded under the Tsar’s dining room in the Winter palace.

“On February 12, 1880, on the insistence of the Tsarevich-heir, a ‘Supreme Investigative Commission’ was founded and Loris-Melikov was given dictatorial powers.

“From February 12 to August 6, 1880 there was established the so-called ‘dictatorship of the heart’ of Count Loris-Melikov.

“The liberals from the zemstvos and the professors were demanding a constitution, for this was the only way to struggle with the insurrection. The terrorists were attacking the government with bombs, daggers and revolvers, while the government replied with freedoms and constitutions.

“Count Loris-Melikov was, as was only to be expected, a humanist and a liberal and was under the direct influence of the Mason Koshelev.

“Count Loris-Melikov entered into close union with the zemstvos and the liberal organs of the press.

“The liberal Abaza was appointed to the ministry of finance; Tolstoy was retired.

“Count Loris-Melikov conducted a subtle intrigue and suggested the project for a State structure that received the name of ‘the constitution of Loris-Melikov’ in society.

“Lev Tikhomirov, the penitent revolutionary and former terrorist, being well acquainted with the events and people of the reign of Alexander II Nikolaevich, affirmed that Count Loris-Melikov was deceiving his Majesty and by his ‘dictatorship of the heart’ was creating a revolutionary leaven in the country.

the All-Russian despot confirms your legendary phrase: “The Intenationale is the sun of the future!”’, and speaks about the necessity of defending ‘our brave friend Hartman’. In reply, Garibaldi praised Hartman, and declared: ‘Political murder is the secret of the successful realization of the revolution.’ And added: ‘Siberia is the not the place for the comrades of Hartman, but for the Christian clergy.’ In 1881 Hartman arrived in America, where he was received with a storm of ovations. At one of the workers’ meetings he declared that he had arrived in the USA (!) with the aim of… helping the Russian people (!) to win freedom.” (in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 356 ®).

430 Abaza argued in favour of a constitution as follows: “The throne cannot rest exclusively on a million bayonets and an army of officials” (quoted in Figes, A People’s Tragedy, p. 41).
“Emperor Alexander II confirmed the report of his minister on the constitution on February 17, 1881, and on the morning of March 1 also confirmed the text announcing this measure, so that before its publication it should be debated at the session of the Council of Ministers on March 4.

“On the same day that the report of Count Loris-Melikov was signed, a bomb thrown by terrorists, cut short the life of the Sovereign.”

Ironically, since Alexander III rejected the project for a constitution, Russia had been saved from a constitution by the bombs of the terrorists…

---

431 Ivanov, op. cit., pp. 344-345.
II. THE ZENITH OF IMPERIALISM (1881-1905)
Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle for the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction… This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy, and those who come to believe in it wouldn’t think twice about killing a man, assaulting a woman, or robbing their closest friend – and they would do all this calmly, with a full recognition of their right to commit their crimes.

St. Barsanuphius of Optina.

This is the final struggle. Let us come together and tomorrow the International will be the human race. There are no supreme redeemers, no god, no Caesar, no tribune. Workers, let us make our own salvation.

Eugène Pottier, L’Internationale.

It is neither blindness nor ignorance that ruins nations and states. Not for long do they ignore where they are heading. But deep inside them is a force at work, favoured by nature and reinforced through habit, that drives them forward irresistibly as long as there is still any energy in them. Divine is he who controls himself. Most humans recognize their ruin, but they carry on regardless…

Leopold von Ranke.

After the murder of Tsar Alexander II, the expected political upheavals did not take place in Europe, and for a generation there was peace as the European and American empires expanded outwards into Africa and Asia rather than clashing with each other. This was a period of reaction in both East and West, when the inter-relatedness of all the royal families of Europe expressed as it were a common determination of the bearers of the monarchical principle to hold out against the revolution. But the appearance was deceptive: in the underground, and increasingly in the foreground, too, in the form of political assassinations, the revolution, both nationalist and internationalist, continued to develop. Moreover, the revolution in man’s understanding of himself and his place in the universe accelerated, for the first time reaching the common man.

Universal Evolutionism

After the initial opposition to it had been overcome, Darwinism rapidly evolved from a purely biological theory of origins into an explanation of the origins of the whole universe and everything in it. It therefore became the basis of a complete new philosophy and/or religion – but a religion without God. “In the beginning” now was not “the Word” (i.e. Divine Reason) but mindless chaos, and “all things were made” not by God, but by blind mutation and “natural selection” (i.e. death). These were the two hands of original Chaos, the father of all things – a conception as old as the pre-Socratic philosophers Anaximander and Heraclitus and as retrogressive as the pre-Christian religions of Egypt and Babylon.

Arthur Balfour, who became British Prime Minister in 1902, described the world-view that universal evolutionism proclaimed as follows: “A man – so far as natural science is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the Heaven-descended heir of all the ages. His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and transitory episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a dead organic compound into the living progenitors of humanity, science indeed, as yet knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings famine, disease, and mutual slaughter, fit nurses of the future lords of creation, have gradually evolved after infinite travail, a race with conscience enough to feel that it is vile, and intelligent enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past, and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish.”

A truly melancholy philosophy – and one that we must now define – and criticise - more closely. C.S. Lewis wrote: “By universal evolutionism I mean the belief that the very formula of universal process is from imperfect to perfect, from small beginnings to great endings, from the rudimentary to the elaborate, the belief which makes people find it natural to think that morality springs from savage taboos, adult sentiment from infantile sexual maladjustments, thought from instinct, mind from matter, organic from inorganic, cosmos from chaos. This is perhaps the deepest habit of mind in the contemporary world. It seems to me immensely implausible, because it makes the general course of nature so very unlike those parts of nature we can observe. You remember the old puzzle as to whether the owl came from the egg or the egg from the owl. The modern acquiescence in universal evolutionism is a kind of optical illusion, produced by attending exclusively to the owl’s emergence from the egg. We are taught from childhood to notice how the perfect oak grows from the acorn and to forget that the acorn itself was dropped by a perfect oak. We are reminded constantly that the adult human being was an embryo, never that the life of the embryo came from two adult human beings. We love to notice that the express engine of today is the descendant of the ‘Rocket’; we do not equally remember that the ‘Rocket’ springs not from some even more rudimentary engine, but from something much more perfect and complicated than itself - namely, a man of genius. The obviousness or naturalness which most people seem to find in the idea of emergent evolution thus seems to be a pure hallucination…”

---

Darwinism believed that Divine Providence did not exist and that “might is right”. And so Darwinist evolutionary biology fitted Schopenhauer’s metaphysical philosophy like a glove. For both the blind, selfish Will to live was everything; for both there was neither intelligent design nor selfless love, but only the struggle to survive. And if Schopenhauer’s striving for nothingness recalled the Buddhist nirvana, Darwin’s idea of species evolving into each other recalled the Hindu idea of reincarnation...

Schopenhauer in metaphysics, Darwin in science, and Marx in political theory formed a kind of unholy consubstantial trinity, whose essence was Will. Marx liked Darwinism because it appeared to justify the idea of class struggle as the fundamental mechanism of human evolution. “The idea of class struggle logically flows from ‘the law of the struggle for existence’. It is precisely by this law that Marxism explains the emergence of classes and their struggle, whence logically proceeds the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead of racist pre-eminence class pre-eminence is preached.”

However, Darwinism was also congenial to Marxism because of its blind historicism and implicit atheism. As Wurmbrand notes: “After Marx had read *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, he wrote a letter to Lassalle in which he exults that God – in the natural sciences at least – had been given ‘the death blow’”. Karl Marx, “was a devout Darwinist, who in *Das Kapital* called Darwin’s theory ‘epoch making’. He believed his reductionist, materialistic theories of the evolution of social organization to be deducible from Darwin’s discoveries, and thus proposed to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin. The funeral oration over Marx’s body, delivered by Engels, stressed the evolutionary basis of communism: ‘Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history.’”

“The years after 1870,” writes Gareth Stedman Jones, “were dominated by the prestige of the natural sciences, especially that of Darwin. Playing to these preoccupations, Engels presented Marx’s work, not as a theory of communism or as a study of capitalism, but as the foundation of a parallel ‘science of historical materialism’. Socialism had made a transition from ‘utopia’ to ‘science’”...

Not only Marxism, but also its ideological rival, free-trade capitalism, found support in Darwinism. Or rather: Darwinism can be seen as the application of the principles of capitalist competition to nature. Thus Bertrand Russell writes: “Darwinism was an application to the whole of animal and

---

435 Wilson writes that Marx’s task was “to convert the ‘Will’ of German philosophy… this abstraction into a force in the practical world” (*op. cit.*, p. 126).
437 Wurmbrand, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
vegetable life of Malthus’s theory of population, which was an integral part of the politics and economics of the Benthamites—a global free competition, in which victory went to the animals that most resembled successful capitalists. Darwin himself was influenced by Malthus, and was in general sympathy with the Philosophical Radicals. There was, however, a great difference between the competition admired by orthodox economists and the struggle for existence which Darwin proclaimed as the motive force of evolution. ‘Free competition,’ in orthodox economics, is a very artificial conception, hedged in by legal restrictions. You may undersell a competitor, but you must not murder him. You must not use the armed forces of the State to help you to get the better of foreign manufacturers. Those who have the good fortune to possess capital must not seek to improve their lot by revolution. ‘Free competition’, as understood by the Benthamites, was by no means really free.

“Darwinian competition was not of this limited sort; there were no rules against hitting below the belt. The framework of law does not exist among animals, nor is war excluded as a competitive method. The use of the State to secure victory in competition was against the rules as conceived by the Benthamites, but could not be excluded from the Darwinian struggle. In fact, though Darwin himself was a Liberal, and though Nietzsche never mentions him except with contempt, Darwin’s ‘Survival of the Fittest’ led, when thoroughly assimilated, to something much more like Nietzsche’s philosophy than like Bentham’s. These developments, however, belong to a later period, since Darwin’s Origin of Species was published in 1859, and its political implications were not at first perceived.”

**British Imperialism and Darwinism**

And yet the political implications of Darwin’s book are obvious from its full title: *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the struggle for life*. Darwin did not mean by “races” races of men, but species of animals. However, the inference to men was easily drawn, and was still more easily drawn after the publication of *The Descent of Man* in 1871.

Very soon different races or classes or groups of men were being viewed as if they were different species. “Applied to politics,” writes Barzun, “[Darwinism] bred the doctrine that nations and other social groups struggle endlessly in order that the fittest shall survive. So attractive was this ‘principle’ that it got the name of Social Darwinism.” Thus Social Darwinism may be defined as the idea that “human affairs are a jungle in which only the fittest of nations, classes, or individuals will survive”.

---

442 Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 794.
Social Darwinism leads to the conclusion that certain races are congenitally superior to others.443 “Only congenital characteristics are inherited,” writes Russell, “apart from certain not very important exceptions. Thus the congenital differences between men acquire fundamental importance.”

As Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: “The ideas of racial pre-eminence – racism, Hitlerism – come from the Darwinist teaching on the origin of the races and their unequal significance. The law of the struggle for existence supposedly obliges the strong races to exert a strong dominance over the other races, to the extent of destroying the latter. It is not necessary to describe here the incarnation of these ideas in life in the example of Hitlerism, but it is worth noting that Hitler greatly venerated Darwin…”444

However, while appearing to widen the differences between races of men, Social Darwinism also reduces them between men and other species - with some startling consequences.

Thus Russell writes: “If men and animals have a common ancestry, and if men developed by such slow stages that there were creatures which we should not know whether to classify as human or not, the question arises: at what stage in evolution did men, or their semi-human ancestors, begin to be all equal? Would Pithecanthropus erectus, if he had been properly educated, have done work as good as Newton’s? Would the Piltdown Men have written Shakespeare’s poetry if there had been anybody to convict him of poaching? A resolute egalitarian who answers these questions in the affirmative will find himself forced to regard apes as the equals of human beings. And why stop at apes? I do not see how he is to resist an argument in favour of Votes for Oysters. An adherent of evolution should maintain that not only the doctrine of the equality of all men, but also that of the rights of man, must be condemned as unbiological, since it makes too emphatic a distinction between men and other animals.”445

Another science that was used to support racist ideas was physical anthropology. “The 19th century,” writes Barzun, “was the heyday of physical anthropology, which divided mankind into three or more races. It was taken for an exact science in spite of conflicting statements, and it was the playground of historians, social theorists, and politicians, who surfeited the public with tomes, monographs, pamphlets, and magazine articles. The words Celt, Caucasian, Aryan, Saxon, Semite, Teuton, Nordic, Latin, Negro, Hamitic, Alpine, Mediterranean mingled with ‘cephalic index’ – ‘dolicho’-, ‘brachy’-, and ‘mesocephalic’ – and other techniques of the laboratory….”

---

443 Russell, op. cit., p. 753.
445 Russell, op. cit., p. 753. Indeed, a recent programme on British television seriously debated the question whether apes should have the same rights as human beings, and came to an affirmative answer…
“The physical anthropologists measured the dry specimen lengthwise and across, divided the latter measure by the former and multiplied by 100 to obtain their index. The three Greek prefixes cited above mean long, broad, and middle, and by the range within which an index falls an individual is classified. The line separating one range from another is of course arbitrary, and some zealous workers found more races than others by subdividing groups.

“The principal scientist engaged in this measuring and speculation was Paul Broca in Paris... He acknowledged that the cephalic index was not a natural feature and hence that the races derived from it were likewise an artifice.

“The next step was to find the concentrations of each type of skull in the population. This game was facilitated, unexpectedly, by the building of railroads. The land taken for them often included disused cemeteries, and the exhumed skulls went to those most eager to exploit them. The former inhabitants of the locality were then found to belong, all, or most, to the long- or the broad-headed race. The final step was to link the index with other characteristics by ascertaining the traits of the skulls’ owners when alive. (Measuring skulls in the living was uncertain owing to hair and tissue.) To find these traits, history and geography were consulted. It appeared that long skulls clustered in northern parts, had blue eyes, blond hair, and tall stature; southerly people had broad skulls, with brown eyes and hair and were short. Broca’s terms and digits soon formed the underpinning of a new ‘science’ name anthroposociology. In it blond hair and blue eyes meant Nordic, which mean Aryan, which meant superior.

“Rudolf Virchow, famous as a physician, public man, and anthropologist, noticed what apparently nobody else had seen, that the Germans were not all tall, blue-eyed blonds. He conducted a vast survey of German schoolchildren which showed over a third of them to be short and brown in coloring. It should have put an end to anatomical chauvinism, but it did not. The fantasy went on: in the superior long skull resided a brain that was self-reliant, enterprising, a likely planter of colonies and founder of empires. His German ancestors were truly noble − read Tacitus. By contrast, the broad skull denoted a subject race. Living under regimentation by a strong state (the Roman empire) had affected its character permanently. A broad skull would most likely be a proletarian and a socialist.

“Not all who argued about race for 60 years believed the same solemn fictions, but almost educated westerners believed in the root idea that race equals character and uttered some fiction of their own. There were Celtists who exalted the race’s imagination. Many in England had attacks of Saxonism. In southern Europe, ‘Latin’ leagues were founded to fend off the Teutonic barbarism. In Central Europe, Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism (mostly religious) opposed each other and all others. History and literature were ransacked for evidence of former eminence and ‘purity of stock’. There were a few critics such as Alfred Fouillée, who reaffirmed the unity of the
human race and the autonomy of ideas. They were rare. Until the end of the century, the best men of letters kept explaining art, temperament, or destiny by some casual or extended reference to race...”

Of course, in view of the history of the twentieth century, eugenic ideas are particularly important in relation to the rise of German nationalism and racism. “Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), an Englishman resident in Germany, narrowed the creative race from Aryans to Teutons. ‘True history,’ he wrote, ‘begins from the moment the German with mighty hand seizes the inheritance of antiquity.’”

Racist ideas based on the pseudo-sciences of Social Darwinism and physical anthropology appear to have been a contributory factor in the terrible exploitation of the Congo by the Belgian King Leopold after 1886 and in the suppression of the Hereros by the Germans in 1904. “The proportion of the population estimated to have been killed in the Congo under Belgian rule may have been as high as a fifth. The estimated mortality rate in the Herero War was higher still... Colonial authorities were encouraged to treat subject peoples as ‘subhuman’.”

For the late nineteenth century was an age, on the one hand, of empire, and on the other of popular democracy, which on the face of it were incompatible concepts. And so a new justification of empire was needed, a justification that would justify the imperial people as well as the imperial dynasty - and that justification was provided by racism. As Dominic Lieven writes, “An autocrat or even an aristocracy could rule over ethnically different peoples citing the same justifications of divine appointment, prescription or superior culture that they used to legitimise their governing of peoples of their own ethnicity. But a sovereign democratic nation could only justify its rule over other peoples in the long run by doctrines of innate racial superiority.”

“To some,” writes Diana Preston, “Darwinism seemed to legitimize distinctions between races and between individuals, and to justify the existence of social hierarchies and of rich and poor – indeed, of pecking orders of all sorts. Looking back over the nineteenth century, the well-known British journalist William Thomas Stead, later to go down with the Titanic, wrote: ‘The doctrine of evolution... may be regarded as the master dogma of the century. Its subtle influence is to be felt in every department of life. It has profoundly modified our conceptions of creation, and it is every day influencing more and more our ideas of morality. Men are asking, Why hesitate in consigning to a lethal chamber all idiots, lunatics and hopeless incurables? And in the larger field of national politics, why should we show any mercy to the weak? Might becomes right... Wars of extermination seem to receive the approbation of nature.’

446 Barzun, op. cit., pp. 577, 578-579.
447 Davies, op. cit., p. 817.
"Both Britons and Americans saw the Anglo-Saxon race as pre-eminent among the white races, which, in turn, rightly dominated the rest. One writer thought the Anglo-Saxons ‘in perfect accord with the characteristic conditions of modern life.’ The Anglo-Saxon focused on physical interests and material possession and consequently triumphed in world markets ‘because he has supreme gifts as an inventor of material things which appeal to the average man of democracy.’ His success in driving self-interest and ethical standards in double harness marked him out from others, but the writer believed the Anglo-Saxon to be ‘supremely unconscious of this duality in his nature’, concluding smugly that ‘there is a psychological difference between English-speaking men and others, which makes that which would be hypocrisy in others not hypocrisy in them. They are sentimentalists, and, as sentimentalists, not the best analysts of their motive and impulses.’

The British were particularly interested in such ideas, for on the one hand, they had by far the largest of the European empires, and on the other, they saw themselves as the standard-bearers of democracy, having “the mother of parliaments” and a tradition of resistance to tyranny since the time of Magna Carta. And so they concluded that it was the greater innate intelligence and superior character of the Anglo-Saxons that made them into the world’s most powerful nation, and gave them a right to rule the less genetically endowed nations of Africa and Asia. So the British never tried – in contrast to the French, who tried to make Algerians into Frenchmen – to make the black and brown peoples of their overseas colonies British: the perceived difference was simply too great.

As Ferguson writes: “If the British were, as Chamberlain and Milner believed, the master race, with a God-given right to rule the world, it seemed to follow logically that those they fought against were their natural-born inferiors. Was this not the conclusion drawn by Science itself – increasingly regarded as the ultimate authority in such matters?

“In 1863 Dr. James Hunt had dismayed his audience at a meeting in Newcastle of the British Association for the Advancement of Science by asserting that the ‘Negro’ was a separate species of human being, half way between the ape and ‘European man’. In Hunt’s view the ‘Negro’ became ‘more humanized when in his natural subordination to the European’, but he regretfully concluded that ‘European civilization [was] not suited to the Negro’s requirements or character’. According to one eyewitness, the African traveller Winwood Reader, Hunt’s lecture went down badly, eliciting hisses from some members of the audience. Yet within a generation such views had become the conventional wisdom. Influenced by, but distorting beyond recognition, the work of Darwin, nineteenth-century pseudo-scientists divided humanity into ‘races’ on the basis of external physical features, ranking them according to inherited differences not just in physique but also in character. Anglo-Saxons were self-evidently at the top, Africans at the bottom. The work of George Combe, author of A System of Phrenology (1825),

was typical in two respects – the derogatory way in which it portrayed racial
differences and the fraudulent way in which it sought to explain them: ‘When
we regard the different quarters of the globe [wrote Combe], we are struck
with the extreme dissimilarity in the attainments of the varieties of men who
inhabit them... The history of Africa, so far as Africa can be said to have a
history... exhibit[s] one unbroken scene of moral and intellectual desolation...
‘The Negro, easily excitable, is in the highest degree susceptible to all the
passions... To the Negro, remove only pain and hunger, and it is naturally in
a state of enjoyment. As soon as his toils are suspended for a moment, he
sings, seizes a fiddle, he dances.’ The explanation for this backwardness,
according to Combe, was the peculiar shape of ‘the skull of the Negro’: ‘The
organs of Veneration, Wonder and Hope... are considerable in size. The
greatest deficiencies lie in Conscientiousness, Cautiousness, Ideality and
Reflection.’ Such ideas were influential. The idea of an ineradicable ‘race
instinct’ became a staple of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century
writing...

“Phrenology was only one of a number of bogus disciplines tending to
legitimise the assumptions about racial difference that had long been current
among white colonists. Even more insidious, because intellectually more
rigorous, was the scientific snake-oil known as ‘eugenics’. It was the
mathematician Francis Galton who, in his book *Hereditary Genius* (1869),
pioneered the ideas that a ‘man’s natural abilities are derived by inheritance’;
that ‘out of two varieties of any race of animal who are equally endowed in
other respects, the most intelligent variety is sure to prevail in the battle of
life’; and that on a sixteen-point scale of racial intelligence, a ‘Negro’ is two
grades below an Englishman. Galton sought to validate his theories by using
composite photography to distinguish criminal and other degenerate types.
However, a more systematic development was undertaken by Karl Pearson,
another Cambridge-trained mathematician, who in 1911 became the first
Galton Professor of Eugenics at University College London. A brilliant
mathematician, Pearson became convinced that his statistical techniques
(which he called ‘biometry’) could be used to demonstrate the danger posed
to the Empire by racial degeneration. The problem was that improved welfare
provision and health care at home were interfering with the natural selection
process, allowing genetically inferior individuals to survive – and ‘propagate
their unfitness’. ‘The right to live does not connote the right of each man to
reproduce his kind,’ he argued in *Darwinism, Medical Progress and Parentage*
(1912). ‘As we lessen the stringency of natural selection, and more and more
of the weaklings and the unfit survive, we must increase the standard, mental
and physical, of parentage.’

“There was, however, one alternative to state intervention in reproductive
choices: war. For Pearson, as for many other Social Darwinists, life was
struggle, and war was more than just a game – it was a form of natural
selection. As he put it, ‘National progress depends on racial fitness and the
supreme test of this fitness was war. When wars cease mankind will no longer
progress for there will be nothing to check the fertility of inferior stock.’
“Needless to say, this made pacifism a particularly wicked creed. But fortunately, with an ever-expanding empire, there was no shortage of jolly little wars to be waged against racially inferior opponents. It was gratifying to think that in massacring them with their Maxim guns, the British were contributing to the progress of mankind.”

**French Imperialism and the Crusades**

The other great imperial power of the nineteenth century, France, was less affected by Darwinist and racist ideas. Indeed, the main difference between British and French imperialism lies in the fact that whereas the British tried to keep their colonial subjects at arm’s length, as befitted inferiors, the French made a genuine attempt to integrate their colonials into France, making them French citizens in the full sense. More important in the French justification of empire was the idea of national glory based on Christian mission.

This attitude is discernible even in French rulers who espoused the revolution rather than Catholicism. Thus, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, “if Louis-Philippe, the victor of the 1830 Revolution, did not share his predecessor’s exalted Catholicism, he was nonetheless addicted to national glory. He saw a direct connection between the heroic France of the First Crusade and the triumphs of the new crusade and conquest in Algeria of the 1830s, in which his sons played an active part. The essence of this new crusade was later painted by Horace Vernet, a particular favourite of the new king, in *The First Mass in Kabylia*, which depicts a field service. The troops kneel respectfully as the celebrant holds up the Host for them to see; symbolically the body and blood of Christ subdue the lowering mountains which form the background, while a group of Arabs sit sullenly in the foreground. In 1837, as the conquest advanced, Louis-Philippe began to remodel the great palace of Versailles to create a national history museum celebrating the many centuries of French military triumph. Vernet’s work would feature prominently among the vast canvases that covered the walls.

“The first rooms of the king’s museum depicted the Crusades, with a mock-Gothic style of decoration and a long list of the French Crusaders, the first heroes for France. Then came the other great figures of French military history, culminating in Napoleon’s supreme achievement. But the story of glory continued after the emperor. The final galleries, the Salle de Constantine and the Salle de la Smalah, honoured the new crusade in Algeria. The official guidebook to the museum left no doubt as to what was the message the visitor was intended to receive: ‘We there find again, after an interval of five hundred years, the French nation fertilising with its blood the burning plains studded with the tents of Islam. These are the heirs of Charles Martel, Godfrey de Bouillon, Robert Guiscard and Philip Augustus, resuming the unfinished labours of their ancestors. Missionaries and warriors, they every day extend the boundaries of Christendom.’

---

“Soon a steady stream of colonists began to settle in the nascent French Proconsulate of Algeria, providing a Christianizing presence in a terrain formerly ‘infidel’. A diocese was created in Algiers in 1838, which became an archdiocese in 1866, with two subsidiary bishoprics at Constantine and Oran. Two years later a new missionary order called the White Fathers was founded with the aim of carrying the Christian message into Kabylia and south into the desert. Dressed in a white robe, or gandoura, with a mantle, they looked more like Algerian Arabs than Frenchmen. Under the direct authority of the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome, in their ardour, discipline, asceticism and energy the White Fathers resembled the Jesuits in their exultant heyday centuries before.

“This preoccupation with North Africa survived Louis-Philippe, continued through the rule of Napoleon III, and on into the Third Republic that followed him. By the end of the nineteenth century, writers could look back at a constant extension of French conquest: in Algeria, in a French Proconsulate of Tunisia and in the French (and Spanish) partition of Morocco in the 1890s. The theme of the crusade remained popular. Michaud’s History had become a school textbook in 1844, with eighteen editions published by the end of the century, and in 1877 a new luxury edition appeared, which was illustrated with a set of magnificent engravings by Gustave Doré representing Christian power and dominance. This rhetoric and image of crusade in the first half of the nineteenth century was usually a mask for grubbier enterprises, but it is wrong to regard it with complete cynicism. French Algeria may have been a colony created first by accident, and then as a device to counter the unpopularity of successive governments in Paris. But many of the migrants to Algeria and even of the soldiers who fought there, and certainly the missionaries labouring in the deserts, often believed that they were following a higher calling. Nowhere else in the Islamic lands had there been such a reprise of the medieval Latin Kingdom. Once again a Christian community had been planted among the infidels. All patriotic citizens of France could rejoice that their nation, which had won Jerusalem in the First Crusade, had now brought Christian power back to the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This had been the great mission of Saint Louis, the nation’s patron saint, which was finally fulfilled some seven centuries after his death.

“Nor did France ever intend to leave. Algeria became an integral part of metropolitan France, and its existence an exemplar of France’s civilization and cultural destiny. That ‘civilizing mission’ was taught in every school in France and in the schools of the empire beyond the seas, and this unifying ideology gradually replaced the sectarian vocabulary of crusade, except in high Catholic circles. But support for French Algeria transcended the gulf between clericals and anticlericals. Many believed with an absolute conviction in France’s mission in North Africa and were prepared to use any means to sustain it. Other colonial territories, such as Indochina, could be abandoned or bargained away in the 1950s. Ironically, it was Algeria, the first fruit of the civilizing mission, a land reconquered by crusade, that ultimately destroyed the French Republic...”

American Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism

“On the eve of the First World War,” writes Ferguson, “Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, which among them accounted for less than 1 per cent of the world’s land surface and less than 8 percent of its population, ruled in the region of a third of the rest of the world’s area and more than a quarter of its people. All of Australasia, 90 percent of Africa and 56 percent of Asia were under some form of European rule, as were nearly all the islands of the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. And although only around a quarter of the American continent – mainly Canada – found itself in the same condition of dependence, nearly all the rest had been ruled from Europe at one time or another in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In both the north and the south, the polities of the American republics were fundamentally shaped by the colonial past.

“Nor do these calculations about the extent of the West European maritime empires tell the whole story of nineteenth-century empire. Most of Central and Eastern Europe was under Russian, German or Austrian imperial rule. Indeed, the Russian empire stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from Warsaw to Vladivostok. And still intact, though in a position of increasing inferiority to the European empires, were the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and the Chinese empire in the Far East. Independent nation-states, in short, were the exception to a worldwide imperial rule. Even Japan, the best-known example of an Asian state that had resisted colonization (though its economy had been forcibly opened to trade by the United States), had itself already embarked on empire building, having conquered Korea. And… the United States, though forged in the crucible of an anti-imperial war, had taken its first steps on the road to empire, having annexed Texas in 1845, California in 1848, Alaska in 1867 and the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and Guam in 1898. Indeed, its nineteenth-century history can be told as a transition from continental to hemispherical imperialism.” 453

If the British economic miracle had been a striking feature early in the century, by the later part the label of economic “tiger” had passed to the United States, thanks to its appropriation of the techniques of standardisation of parts and mass production. “In 1870,” writes Landes, “the United States had the largest economy in the world, and its best years still lay ahead. By 1913, American output was two and a half times that of the United Kingdom or Germany, four times that of France. Measured by person, American GDP surpassed that of the United Kingdom by 20 percent, France by 77, Germany by 86.” 454 And yet America remained officially anti-imperialist. “When Santo Domingo (the future Dominican Republic) effectively offered itself up for annexation in 1869, the proposal was defeated in Congress.” 455

455 Ferguson, Colossus, op. cit., p. 41.
However, such shyness about her imperial ambitions began to fade once America had acquired a powerful navy. For “until such times as the United States had a world-class navy, it could not really enforce its claim to what amounted to a hemispheric exclusion zone. In the 1880s the American fleet was still an insignificant entity, smaller even than the Swedish. However, inspired by Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan’s hugely influential book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, the United States embarked on a navy-building program more ambitious even than Germany’s. The achievement was astonishing: by 1907 the American fleet was second only to the Royal Navy. With this, the Monroe Doctrine belatedly acquired credibility. When Britain and Germany blockaded Venezuela in 1902, in response to attacks on European ships and defaults on European debts, it was Theodore Roosevelt’s threat to send fifty-four American warships from Puerto Rico that persuaded them to accept international arbitration. By the early 1900s Great Britain recognized the United States as one of those rival empires serious enough to be worthy of appeasement.”

It is in the 1890s that we see the first signs of the American’s future role as the world’s major liberal “anti-imperial empire”, whose main motivation was commercial gain. However, the Americans were never as committed to Free Trade as the British, their predecessors in the role. And more “purely” imperial reasoning also played its part. Thus “the American imperialist Albert Beveridge claimed, ‘We are a conquering race, we must obey our blood and occupy new markets and if necessary new lands.’ The Pacific was ‘the true field of our operations. There Spain has an island empire in the Philippines. There the United States has a powerful squadron. The Philippines are logically our first target.’”

The new imperial mood “was vividly caught in 1898 by one newspaper’s observation that ‘a new consciousness seems to have come upon us – the consciousness of strength – and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength... whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle. It means an Imperial policy...’”

In 1895 a rebellion against Spain broke out on Cuba. In 1898 the Americans under President McKinley decided to intervene in the struggle to force Spain to give up Cuba. The trumped-up excuse for declaring war on Spain “was the accidental explosion of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Bay, supposedly the fault of Spain...” After a “splendid little war”, in McKinley’s words, the Spanish conceded defeat in both Cuba and the Philippines.

---

457 Preston, op. cit., p. xxiii.
In Cuba, writes Joseph Smith, “the military intervention of the United States transformed a struggle for national liberation into a war of American military conquest. Americans used their superior power to dictate the peace settlement and the future political status of the island. The pre-eminence of the United States in Cuba was symbolically demonstrated in Havana on 1 January 1899 when the American military authorities refused to allow armed rebel soldiers to participate in the ceremonies marking the formal evacuation of the Spanish army from the island. It was a historic moment ending almost four centuries of imperial rule by Spain... Cuba had finally become independent in 1902. But independence was more nominal than real. Overshadowed by ‘the monster’, Cuba entered the twentieth century as an American protectorate rather than a truly independent nation.”

In the Philippines it was a similar story. “McKinley’s reported justification for annexing the [Philippines] was a masterpiece of presidential sanctimony, perfectly pitched for his audience of Methodist clergymen: ‘I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you... that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way – I don’t know how it was but it came... (1) That we could not give them back to Spain... (2) That we could not turn them over to France and Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient... (3) that we could not leave them to themselves – they were unfit for government... (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could by them as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died.’

“As McKinley portrayed it, annexation was an onerous duty, thrust upon the United States by the will of Providence. Such religious appeals doubtless had considerable public resonance. The decisive arguments for the occupation with the American political elite were nevertheless more military and mercenary than missionary...”

At the Treaty of Paris, the Philippines were ceded to the United States for $20 million – a good price, it would seem. But the eventual cost was much greater, because the Filipinos decided not to accept the Americans as their new colonial masters.

As John B. Judis writes, “the United States then waged a brutal war against the same Philippine independence movement it encouraged to fight against Spain. The war dragged on for 14 years. Before it ended, about 120,000 U.S. troops were deployed, more than 4,000 were killed, and more than 200,000 Filipino civilians and soldiers were killed.” The war alone, not counting post-war reconstruction, cost $600 million.

---

462 Ferguson, Colossus, op. cit., p. 50.
American imperialism was not always so violent. In 1898, after decades of interference, the Americans annexed Hawaii without bloodshed, and Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States by Spain in the same year. However, it was the violent conquest of the Philippines which proved to be the turning-point in American foreign policy.

In what happened in the Philippines, as Ferguson writes, “seven characteristic phases of American engagement can be discerned:

“1. Impressive initial military success
2. A flawed assessment of indigenous sentiments
3. A strategy of limited war and gradual escalation of forces
4. Domestic disillusionment in the face of protracted and nasty conflict
5. Premature democratisation
6. The ascendency of domestic economic considerations
7. Ultimate withdrawal.”

Judis writes: “Prior to the annexation of the Philippines, the United States stood firmly against countries acquiring overseas colonies, just as American colonists once opposed Britain’s attempt to rule them. But by taking over parts of the Spanish empire, the United States became the kind of imperial power it once denounced. It was now vying with Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan for what future U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt called ‘the domination of the world’.

“Some Americans argued the country needed colonies to bolster its military power or to find markets for its capital. But proponents of imperialism, including Protestant missionaries, also viewed overseas expansion through the prism of the country’s evangelical tradition. Through annexation, they insissted, the United States would transform other nations into communities that shared America’s political and social values and also its religious beliefs. ‘Territory sometimes comes to us when we go to war in a holy cause,’ U.S. President William McKinley said of the Philippines in October 1900, ‘and whenever it does the banner of liberty will float over it and bring, I trust, the blessings and benefits to all people.’ This conviction was echoed by a prominent historian who would soon become president of Princeton University. In 1901, Woodrow Wilson wrote in defense of the annexation of the Philippines: ‘The East is to be opened and transformed, whether we will or no; the standards of the West are to be imposed upon it; nations and peoples which have stood still the centuries through are to be quickened and to be made part of the universal world of commerce and of ideas which has so steadily been a-making by the advance of European power from age to age.’

“The two presidents who discovered that the U.S. experiment with imperialism wasn’t working were, ironically, Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt had been an enthusiastic supporter of the U.S. takeover of the Spanish empire. ‘[I]f we do our duty aright in the Philippines,’ he declared in

---

463 Ferguson, Colossus, op. cit., p. 48.
1899, ‘we will add to that national renown which is the highest and finest part
of national life, will greatly benefit the people of the Philippine Islands, and
above all, we will play our part well in the great work of uplifting mankind.’
Yet, after Roosevelt became president in 1901, his enthusiasm for overseas
expansion waned. Urged by imperialists to take over the Dominican Republic,
he quipped, ‘as for annexing the island, I have about the same desire to annex
it as a gorged boa constrictor might have to swallow a porcupine wrong-end-
to.’ Under Roosevelt, U.S. colonial holding shrunk. And after the Russo-
Japanese War in 1904-05, Roosevelt changed the United States’ diplomatic
posture from competitor with the other imperial powers to mediator in their
growing conflicts.

“Upon becoming president, Wilson boasted that he could ‘teach the South
American republics to elect good men.’ After Mexican Gen. Victoriano Huerta
arranged the assassination of the democratically elected President Francisco
Madero and seized power in February 1913, Wilson promised to unseat the
unpopular dictator, using a flimsy pretext to dispatch troops across the
border. But instead of being greeted as liberators, the U.S. forces encountered
stiff resistance and inspired riots and demonstrations, uniting Huerta with his
political opponents. In Mexico City, schoolchildren chanted, ‘Death to the
Gringos’. U.S.-owned stores and businesses in Mexico had to close. The
Mexico City newspaper El Imparcial declared, in a decidedly partial manner,
‘The soil of the patria is defiled by foreign invasion! We may die, but let us
kill!’ Wilson learned the hard way that attempts to instil U.S.-style
constitutional democracy and capitalism through force were destined to fail.” 464

From 1900, as J.M. Roberts writes, there began “the building of an isthmian
canal to connect the Caribbean and the Pacific, a project canvassed since the
middle of the nineteenth century, and once attempted by the French. The half-
century’s talk of building one was coming to a head when the Spanish-
American war broke out. American diplomacy negotiated a way round the
danger of possible British participation; all might have seemed plain sailing,
had not a snag arisen when, in 1901, a treaty with the United States providing
for the acquisition of a canal zone from Colombia was held up by the
Colombian legislature. A revolution was more or less overtly engineered in
Panama, the area of Colombia where the canal was to run, and the
revolutionaries were given United States naval protection against the
Colombian government. A new Panamanian republic duly emerged which
gratefully bestowed upon the United States the necessary land together with
the right to intervene in its affairs to maintain order. Work at last began in
1907 and the canal was duly opened in 1914, an outstanding engineering
triump. The capability it created to move warships swiftly from the Atlantic
to the Pacific and back transformed American naval strategy. A deep distrust
had been sown, too, in the minds of Latin Americans, about the ambitions
and lack of scruple of American foreign policy…” 465

464 Judis, op. cit., pp. 53-54.
“After the Franco-Prussian war,” writes Karen Armstrong, “the nations of Europe began a frantic arms race which led them inexorably to the First World War. They appeared to see war as a Darwinian necessity in which only the fittest would survive. A modern nation must have the biggest army and the most murderous weapons that science could provide, and Europeans dreamed of a war that would purify the nation’s soul in a harrowing apotheosis. The British writer I.F. Clarke has shown that between 1871 and 1914 it was unusual to find a single year in which a novel or short story describing a horrific future war did not appear in some European country. The ‘Next Great War’ was imagined as a terrible but inevitable ordeal: out of the destruction, the nation would arise to a new and enhanced life. At the very end of the nineteenth century, however, British novelist H.G. Wells punctured this utopian dream in The War of the Worlds (1898) and showed where it was leading. There were terrifying images of London depopulated by biological warfare, and the roads of England crowded with refugees. He could see the dangers of a military technology that had been drawn into the field of the exact sciences. He was right. The arms race led to the Somme and when the Great War broke out in 1914, the people of Europe, who had been dreaming of the war to end all wars for over forty years, entered with enthusiasm upon this conflict, which could be seen as a collective suicide of Europe. Despite the achievements of modernity, there was a nihilistic death wish, as the nations of Europe cultivated a perverse fantasy of self-destruction.

“In America, some of the more conservative Protestants were in the grip of a similar vision, but their nightmare scenario took a religious form. The United States had also suffered a terrible conflict and an ensuing anticlimax. Americans had seen the Civil War (1861-65) between the northern and southern states in apocalyptic terms. Northerners believed that the conflict would purge the nation; soldiers sang of the ‘glory of the coming of the Lord’. Preachers spoke of an approaching Armageddon, of a battle between light and darkness, liberty and slavery. They looked forward to a New Man and a New Dispensation emerging, phoenix-like, from this fiery trial. But there was no brave new world in America either. Instead, by the end of the war, whole cities had been destroyed, families had been torn asunder, and there was a white southern backlash. Instead of utopia, the northern states experienced the rapid and painful transition from an agrarian to an industrialized society. New cities were built, old cities exploded in size. Hordes of new immigrants poured into the country from southern and eastern Europe. Capitalists made vast fortunes from the iron, oil, and steel industries, while workers lived below subsistence level. Women and children were exploited in the factories: by 1890, one out of every five children had a job. Conditions were poor, the hours long, and the machinery unsafe. There was also a new gulf between town and countryside, as large parts of the United States, especially the

South, remained agrarian. If a void lay beneath the prosperity of Europe, America was becoming a country without a core.

“The secular genre of the ‘future war’ which so entranced the people of Europe, did not attract the more religious Americans. Instead, some developed a more consuming interest than ever before in eschatology, dreaming of a Final War between God and Satan, which would bring this evil society to a richly deserved end. The new apocalyptic vision that took root in America during the later nineteenth century is called premillennialism, because it envisaged Christ returning to earth before he established his thousand-year reign. (The older and more optimistic postmillennialism of the Enlightenment, which was still cultivated by liberal Protestants, imagined human beings inaugurating God’s Kingdom by their own efforts: Christ would only return to earth after the millennium was established.) The new premillennialism was preached in America by the Englishman John Nelson Darby (1800-82), who found few followers in Britain but toured the United States to great acclaim six times between 1859 and 1877. His vision could see nothing good in the modern world, which was hurtling towards destruction. Instead of becoming more virtuous, as the Enlightenment thinkers had hoped, humanity was becoming so depraved that God would soon be forced to intervene and smash their society, inflicting untold misery upon the human race. But out of this fiery ordeal, the faithful Christians would emerge triumphant and enjoy Christ’s final victory and glorious Kingdom.

“Darby did not search for mystical meaning in the Bible, which he saw as a document that told the literal truth. The prophets and the author of the Book of Revelation were not speaking symbolically but making precise predictions which would shortly come to pass exactly as they had foretold. The old myths were now seen as factual logos, the only form of truth that many modern Western people could recognize. Darby divided the whole of salvation history into seven epochs or ‘dispensations’, a scheme derived from a careful reading of scripture. Each dispensation, he explained, had been brought to an end when human beings became so wicked that God was forced to punish them. The previous dispensations had ended with such catastrophes as the Fall, the Flood, and the crucifixion of Christ. Human beings were currently living in the sixth, or penultimate, dispensation, which God would shortly bring to an end in an unprecedentedly terrible disaster. Antichrist, the false redeemer whose coming before the End had been predicted by St. Paul, would deceive the world with his false allure, take everybody in, and then inflict a period of Tribulation upon humanity. For seven years, Antichrist would wage war, massacred untold numbers of people, and persecute all opposition, but eventually Christ would descend to earth, defeat Antichrist, engage in a final battle with Satan and the forces of evil on the plain of Armageddon outside Jerusalem, and inaugurate the Seventh Dispensation. He would rule for a thousand years, before the Last Judgement brought history to a close. This was a religious version of the future-war fantasy of Europe. It saw true progress as inseparable from conflict and near-total destruction…. 
“There was one important difference, however. Where the Europeans imagined everybody enduring the ordeal of the next great war, Darby provided the elect with a way out. On the basis of a ... remark of St. Paul’s, who believed that Christians alive at the time of Christ’s Second Coming would be ‘taken up in the clouds... to meet the Lord in the air’, Darby maintained that just before the beginning of the Tribulation, there would be a ‘Rapture’, a snatching-up of born-again Christians, who would be taken up to heaven and so would escape the terrible sufferings of the Last Days. Rapture has been imagined in concrete, literal detail by premillenialists. They are convinced that suddenly airplanes, cars, and trains will crash, as born-again pilots and drivers are caught up into the air while their vehicles careen out of control. The stock market will plummet, and governments will fall. Those left behind will realize that they are doomed and that the true believers have been right all along. Not only will these unhappy people have to endure the Tribulation, they will know that they are destined for eternal damnation...”

Armstrong argues that premillenialism was modern “in its literalism and democracy. There were no hidden or symbolic meanings, accessible only to a mystical elite. All Christians, however rudimentary their education, could discover the truth, which was plainly revealed for all to see in the Bible. Scripture meant exactly what it said: a millennium meant ten centuries; 485 years meant precisely that; if the prophets spoke of ‘Israel’, they were not referring to the Church but to the Jews; when the author of Revelation predicted a battle between Jesus and Satan on the plain of Armageddon outside Jerusalem, that was exactly what would happen. A premillenial reading of the Bible would become even easier for the average Christian after the publication of The Scofield Reference Bible (1909), which became an instant best-seller. C.I. Scofield explained this dispensational vision of salvation history in detailed notes accompanying the biblical text, notes that for many fundamentalists have become almost as authoritative as the text itself.”

The leader of this conservative, fundamentalist Protestantism was Charles Hodge. In 1874 he wrote What is Darwinism?, an attack on evolutionism. “To any ordinarily constituted mind,” he wrote, “it is absolutely impossible to believe that the eye is not the work of design.” However, while Hodge and the fundamentalists were pleading for common sense and doctrinal orthodoxy, “other Protestants, such as the veteran abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher (1813-87), were taking a more liberal line. Dogma, in Beecher’s view, was of secondary importance, and it was unchristian to penalize others for holding different theological opinions. Liberals were open to such modern scientific enterprises as Darwinism or the Higher Criticism of the Bible. For Beecher, God was not a distant, separate reality but was present in natural processes here below, so evolution could be seen as evidence of God’s ceaseless concern for his creation. More important than doctrinal correctness was the practice of Christian love. Liberal Protestants continued to emphasize the importance of social work in the slums and cities, convinced that they could, by their dedicated philanthropy, establish God’s Kingdom of justice in

467 Armstrong, op.cit, pp. 139-140.
this world. It was an optimistic theology that appealed to the prosperous middle classes who were in a position to enjoy the fruits of modernity. By the 1880s, this New Theology was taught in many of the main Protestant schools in the northern states…

“…. American Protestants were discovering that they were profoundly at odds. Their difference threatened to tear the denominations apart. The chief bone of contention at the end of the nineteenth century was not evolution but the Higher Criticism. Liberals believed that even though the new theories about the Bible might undermine some of the old beliefs, in the long term they would lead to a deeper understanding of scripture. But for the traditionalist, ‘Higher Criticism’… seemed to symbolize everything that was wrong with the modern industrialized society that was sweeping the old certainties away. By this time, popularizers had brought the new ideas to the general public, and Christians discovered to their considerable confusion that [supposedly] the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, nor the Psalms by King David; the Virgin Birth of Christ was a mere figure of speech, and the Ten Plagues of Egypt were probably natural disasters which had been interpreted later as miracles. In 1888, the British novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward published Robert Elsmere, which told the story of a young clergyman whose faith was so undermined by the Higher Criticism that he resigned his orders and devoted his life to social work in the East End of London. The novel became a best-seller, which indicated that many could identify with the hero’s doubts. As Robert’s wife said, ‘If the Gospels are not true in fact, as history, I cannot see how they are true at all, or of any value.’…”

Other new sciences, such as psychology, contributed to the shaking of the foundations. Thus the psychologist William James, writes A.N. Wilson, was probing “the mystery of religious belief. Was it the case, as nineteenth-century literalists had believed, that Christianity depended upon the verifiability of a series of actual events or the provability – whatever that would mean – of the existence of God? Was there something in the human mind or personality which could explain why we are, or are not, religious? In his book, The Varieties of Religious Experience, delivered as lectures at St. Andrews University in 1902, William James found all but no ‘evidence’ which could justify belief, but he refused to be reductionist and suggested that piety was simply a matter of temperament, still less that religious feeling was a substitute for other sorts of feeling. He maintained the legitimacy of faith, and he did so on the robust grounds that faith, for many worked. He quoted with approval another American psychologist, Professor Leuga, as saying: ‘God is not known, he is not understood; he is used – sometimes as meat-purveyor; sometimes as moral support, sometimes as friend, sometimes as an object of love. If he proves himself useful, the religious impulse asks for no more than that. Does God really exist? How does he exist? What is he? are so many irrelevant questions. Not God, but life, more life, a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion.’”

A typically American, pragmatic and Vitalist – but completely inadequate – answer...

468 Armstrong, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
Pobedonostsev on Democracy

Although a belief in democracy was almost universal by now in the West, in some countries it was not obviously a success. Thus in France and Italy governments succeeded each other with bewildering rapidity. In his article “The New Democracy”, C.P. Pobedonostsev, the Over-Procurator of the Russian Holy Synod and tutor of Tsar Nicholas II, expounded the view that modern democracy differed essentially from ancient democracy.

In the ancient city-states, the suffrage was far from universal, and the de facto rulers were those who were best suited to govern the State. In modern democracy, by contrast, the new aristocracy of the nouveaux riches buys power by bribing and manipulating the masses. “In broadening its foundation, the newest democracy places universal suffrage as the goal closest to its heart. This is a fatal error, one of the most striking in the history of mankind. The political power which democracy tries to attain so passionately is splintered in this form into a multitude of particles, and each citizen acquires an infinitely small part of this right.”

“History witnesses that the most essential and fruitful and stable measures and transformations for the people have proceeded from the central will of statesmen or from a minority enlightened by a great idea and deep knowledge. By contrast, with the broadening of the suffrage a lowering of State thought and a vulgarisation of opinion in the mass of the electors has taken place. This broadening in large States has either been introduced with the secret aim of concentrating power, or has itself led to dictatorship. In France universal suffrage was removed at the end of the last century with the cessation of the terror; but afterwards it was restored twice in order confirm the absolute rule in it of the two Napoleons. In Germany the introduction of universal suffrage was undoubtedly aimed to confirm the central power of the famous ruler [Bismarck] who acquired great popularity by the huge successes of his politics... What will happen after him, God only knows.

“The game of collecting votes under the banner of democracy has become a common phenomenon in our time in almost all the European States, and it would seem that its lie has been displayed before all. However, nobody dares to rise up openly against this lie. The unfortunate people bears the burden, while the newspapers – the heralds of what is supposed to be public opinion – drown the cries of the people with their own shouts: ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ But for the unprejudiced mind it is clear that the whole of this game is nothing other than a struggle and fight of parties and a juggling with numbers and names. The votes – in themselves negligible quantities – receive a price in the hands of skilful agents. Their value is realised by various means and first of all by bribery in the various forms – from small cash and material payments to the handing out of profitable posts in excise and financial administration and in the civil service. Little by little a whole contingent of

voters is formed, voters that are accustomed to sell their votes or their agents. It reaches the point, for example in France, where serious citizens, right-thinking and hard-working, turn away in huge numbers from the elections, feeling the complete impossibility of struggling with the gang of political agents. Besides bribery, violence and threats are put into play, and electoral terror is organised, by means of which the gang puts forward its candidate by force: we know the stormy pictures of electoral meetings at which weapons are taken up and killed and wounded remain on the field of battle."471

In the new democracy, “the great lie of our age”, reasoned argumentation is not needed to convince a mainly uneducated electorate. More important is the slick slogan. “The art of making generalisations serves for them [political activists pushing for power] as a most handy weapon. Every generalisation comes about through a process of abstraction: out of a multitude of facts, some that do not serve the purpose are put aside completely, while others that do are grouped together and out of them a general formula is extracted. It is evident that the whole worthiness, that is, truthfulness and reliability, of this formula depends on the degree to which the facts from which it is drawn are of decisive importance, and the degree to which the facts which have been set aside as unsuitable are unimportant. The speed and facility with which general conclusions are drawn in our time are explained by the extremely cavalier way in which suitable facts are selected and generalised in this process. Hence the huge success of political orators and the striking influence of the general phrases on the masses into which they are cast. The crowd is quickly diverted by platitudes dressed up in loud phrases...; it does not think to check them, for it is not able to do that: in this way unanimity in opinions is formed, a seeming, spectral unanimity. Nevertheless, it produces a striking result. This is called the voice of the people, with the addition – the voice of God. A sad and pitiful error! The facility with which [the people] is diverted by platitudes leads everywhere to the extreme demoralisation of social thought, and to the weakening of the political nous of the whole nation. Present-day France presents a vivid example of this weakening. But even England is infected with the same illness...472

“The basic principle of democracy is the equality of the citizens. But this word alone explains nothing. It is good if this equality is an equality of the right to serve one’s country: each man is obliged to carry out this service according to his abilities and means, and participates to the degree that he is needed in administrative activity. That is how this concept was understood in the ancient democracies, especially in small States in which people could know each other, and public matters were discussed in the square. For the sake of self-preservation amidst the endless wars with neighbours, it was necessary to summon the best people to the government, and the best people were the most capable. Rome, which from the very beginning became a conquering republic, had to follow this same path, and its Senate became a gathering of the best people, who held in their hands the destinies of the State.

471 Pobedonostev, op. cit., pp. 278-279.
"But in modern democracies equality means the right of each and everyone to rule the affairs of his country – the right of a whole population of a large country to take part in the administration. On this is based the existing system of elections according to universal suffrage: in big States this leads to the preponderance of the masses, who belong to the least educated class and do not have a clear idea of State affairs, or of the people who are capable of administering them. It is evident that under this order the worthiness and ability of the elected person loses its significance: this is the essential difference between the new democracy and the old, and it is this that threatens destruction for the former. At the same time one should bear in mind that this mechanism of democracy is called to function in an epoch of an exceptional and unheard-of increase in the complexity of human affairs and relationships. Even one hundred years ago people did not dream of the present development of trade, industry and mechanisation, or of the present development of literature and the press with its huge significance, or of the present speed of communications, news and rumours of every kind. One can imagine how complicated all the functions of governmental and financial power, and the conditions in which they have to work, have become, and the innumerable quantity of facts and new ideas which the legislative power now has to reckon with.

"In this condition of society democracy has a frightening task which it cannot cope with. On taking up the supreme power, it must take upon itself the affairs of the supreme power, and the most important of these is the choosing of men for posts and responsibilities. Everything depends on this; if it fails in this... every law, whatever it may be, loses its significance, and the fundamental order of the whole State institution is deprived of trust and wavers. For the people the government is an abstract idea insofar as it is not incarnated in agents of power who are in direct contact with the people and its justified needs: if these agents are chosen haphazardly or for wrong reasons, then the whole of their activity becomes a burning subject of rumours that disturb the opinion of the people, and a weapon in the hands of all opponents of firm authority, whatever it may be.

"And so we see that from the time that the historical idea of people being called to State service in accordance with their estate and social position has lost all significance in democracy, service appointments have become a weapon in the hands of political parties which strengthen themselves by handing out posts. At the same time the number of posts increases exponentially, and this does not benefit, but burdens the people, since they serve not so much the general good as their own interests. But amidst general dissatisfaction, a passionate striving grows among the people to get well-paid and profitable posts. Everybody can see a picture of this fall in the new democracies in France, in Italy and in the United States. This fall is particularly evident in the higher and in the elective posts that have a political significance, sometimes even governors and members of legislative assemblies. Elective posts have a representative significance; administrative posts, by contrast, must in their essence be foreign to any such significance. But from the time of the French revolution the idea of this distinction has been
completely muddied in the new democracy, and the contrary idea has become popular that administrative posts serve as a reward for people who have served this or that powerful party or who have this or that variety of opinions. Moreover, people do not ask whether the person is capable or not capable of carrying out the particular duties of his post. In the past everyone thought and believed that the ruler must be better than those whom he rules, and the experience of history has confirmed that all the achievements of civilisation have been attained by the desires of the most capable people in spite of the opposition of the environment in which they had to work. But in the new democracy, in spite of this undoubted truth, the opinion has become entrenched that even a large State can be successfully administered by anyone, even someone unworthy. All this leads to demoralisation, thanks to which the private interests of a party or company of people acquires a preponderant significance in society at the cost of the public interest.

“A natural consequence of all this is the complete collapse of legislative assemblies or democratic parliaments [in contemporary France and Italy, for example]. According to the democratic theory the elected representative of the people is called to vote, not for what he recognises to be useful for the people or reasonable and just, but for what the people of the party which has elected and sent him considers to be best and needed, even if this does not agree with his personal opinion. Thus the election of representative is turned into a game of parties, which is just as passionate as any competitive game – a game governed by intrigue, false promises and bribery. Thus even the legislature falls into the hands of unenlightened, undiscriminating, and often avaricious people, or people who are indifferent to everything that is not bound up with the interests of the party.\footnote{473} Little by little all the people of straight thinking, honourable spirit and higher culture withdraw from participating in this game, especially when each of them has in his hands the work of his own special calling. Parliament is turned into a machine pushing out of itself a mass of laws that have not been thought through or worked out, which contradict each other and are completely unnecessary, which do not protect freedom, but constrict it in the interests of one part or one company.

“Everybody to a greater or lesser degree feels and recognises that the present democratic system of legislation is completely incoherent and based on a lie; and when a lie lies at the base of this institution, what is society to expect if not destruction? Democracy itself, we can say, has lost faith in its parliament, but is forced to be reconciled with it, because it has nothing to replace it with, and because everything that stood before has been destroyed, while democracy rejects in principle every idea of dictatorship. It is obvious to all that the falsely constructed building is wavering, is already shaking. But when and how it will fall, and what will arise on its ruins – that is the task of the sphinx that stands on the threshold of the twentieth century…”\footnote{474}

\footnote{473} As in Gilbert and Sullivan’s operetta, H.M.S. Pinafore: I always voted at my Party’s call / And I never thought of thinking for myself at all. (V.M.)
\footnote{474} Pobedonostsev, op. cit. pp. 281-283.
Constantine Leontiev wrote: “True, the division of Germany [before 1871] sometimes hindered the unity of order, but it also hindered the unity of anarchy... That must be remembered!”475 “The unity of anarchy”, in Leontiev’s meaning, was the seemingly unstoppable tendency throughout Europe towards a democratic, egalitarian, atheist society: “everything in that assimilationist direction from which nothing in the 19th century... neither war nor peace, neither friendship nor enmity, neither liberation nor the conquest of countries and nations can save... And they will not save until the point of satiety with equality and homogeneity is reached.”476

Democracy was indeed, as E.P. Thompson writes, “advancing everywhere in Europe, and by 1914 it was lapping the frontiers of Asia. The symbol was the right of the individual citizen to vote – a right increasingly buttressed from the 1880s onwards by secrecy of the ballot. The vote was often endowed, by enthusiastic radicals and frightened conservatives alike, with a magic power. Too many radicals expected universal suffrage to bring the millennium – to sweep away before it the last relics of feudalism, of aristocratic and plutocratic privilege, of popular squalor and ignorance... Many conservatives and moderate liberals took the radicals at their word, and feared that democracy would demolish monarchy, church, religion, public order, and all that they cherished. Therefore the struggles for extensions of the franchise and secrecy of the ballot were often long and bitter...”477

Together with an extended franchise went an enlarged state – although there were many, more direct causes of this enlargement. Among the most important was the growth of population. “The immense increase of population in earlier decades was now producing the most momentous of all modern European phenomena – ‘the age of the masses’. This, even more than the spread of democratic ideas, compelled every state to overhaul its machinery of government and administration... Every European government now had to administer and serve the interests of larger and denser agglomerations of people than ever before in the history of mankind. When the First World War began, the United Kingdom was still, as she had been since 1815, the most highly urbanized country in Europe, whereas France clung stubbornly to her rural character. But after her political unification Germany swung over sharply from a population almost as rural as the French to a position in which three out of every five Germans lived in towns. This ‘flight to the towns’ had begun before 1871, but it now took place in Germany at a speed unrivalled by any other nation.

“These changes in greater or lesser degree affected all European countries. In terms of politics and administration they meant that all governments were confronted with problems that British governments had been obliged to tackle

earlier in the century. These were problems of how to govern densely populated industrial towns; how to ensure adequate provision for public health and sanitation, public order, and police; how to protect industrial workers against bad conditions of working and living. Perplexing social problems were forced upon every government by the course of events; and the parallel growth of democratic ideas and of wider electorates ensured for these problems a high priority of attention...

“... Nearly every state in Europe, by 1914, had a code of legislation governing the building of houses and the making of streets; ensuring minimum standards of sanitation, safety, and conditions of labour in factories, mines and mills; regulating the entry of ships into ports and enforcing standards of purity and cleanliness in food and drink. In Britain the first landmarks were Disraeli’s Public Health Act of 1875 and a series of housing acts from 1875 onward. With the rapid growth of large towns and of mechanized industry, a larger proportion of every electorate was an industrial, wage-earning class dwelling in or near large towns and making its living in conditions that demanded greater social discipline, a higher degree of organization, and more sustained administrative activity on the part of governments. Every state, in this minimum sense, was becoming a welfare state even before 1914.”

Money was needed for all this. And so taxation, both direct and indirect, had to go up sharply. “In Britain the greatest constitutional crisis of the period, involving a long conflict between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, arose over this very issue. In his budget of 1909 the Liberal chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George, included the whole gamut of new fiscal devices which had been evolving for some years: heavy duties on tobacco and liquor; heavier death duties on personal estates, which had first been introduced by Sir William Harcourt in 1894; graded and heavier income tax; and additional ‘supertax’ on incomes above a fairly high level; a duty of twenty per cent on the unearned increment of land values, to be paid whenever land changed hands; and a charge on the capital value of undeveloped land and minerals. The Conservative majority in the House of Lords broke convention by rejecting this budget until it could be referred to the electorate for approval, and so initiated a two-year battle, which was ended only by the surrender of the Lords and the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911. This important Act permanently removed the Lords’ control over money bills and reduced their power over other bills to a mere capacity to delay them for two years. The merit of death duties, income tax, and supertax in the eyes of radicals and socialists – and their infamy in the eyes of conservatives and more moderate liberals – was that once accepted in principle they were capable of yielding an ever great return by a simple tightening of the screw. The screw was, in fact, repeatedly tightened throughout the following half century.

“During the 1890s, pari passu with the growth of governmental expenditures on social services and on armaments, Germany and her

component states, as well as Italy, Austria, Norway, and Spain, all introduced or steepened systems of income tax. France repeatedly shied away from it, though in 1901 she resorted to progressive death duties; it was 1917 before she at last introduced a not very satisfactory system of income tax. With the drift back to protectionism in commercial policy in the last quarter of the century, indirect taxes generally yielded a higher share of revenue than before. Every state had clung to considerable sources of indirect taxation, and as late as 1900 the bulk of the revenue of most governments came from these sources. Progressive taxation, weighing heavier on the more wealthy, was accepted by liberals as in accord with the principle of equality of sacrifice. To radicals and socialists it was welcome in itself as an instrument for achieving greater equality by systematically redistributing wealth. The modern state was to assume more and more the role of Robin Hood, robbing the rich to feed the poor…”

Minimum and Maximum Socialism

Was welfarism socialism? And was socialism, whether defined as welfarism or something more, compatible with traditional Christianity?

To answer these questions, we shall make use of the distinction between minimum (welfare) and maximum (revolutionary) socialism used by E. P. Thompson. After reviewing the proliferation of socialist parties before 1914, Thompson suggests “two general conclusions that have great importance for the later history of Europe. One is that within socialism there was a recurrent and inescapable cleavage: between those parties which, from an early stage in their growth, came to terms with the institutions of parliamentary democracy, with trade unionism and the cooperative movements; and those which held to more absolutist revolutionary doctrines, whether of Marxism or anarchism, and so dedicated themselves to the task of fighting and overthrowing all other parties and institutions. The best examples of the former are the British and Scandinavian Labour parties and the parliamentary socialist groups of France and Italy; of the latter, the supreme example is the Russian Social Democratic party after 1903. It had not yet become customary to distinguish between them by labelling the former Socialists, the latter Communists. That convention arose only after 1918. But here was the origin of the mid twentieth-century cleavage between western parliamentary socialism and eastern revolutionary communism. All the essentials of that conflict are already present in 1914, save that neither socialism nor communism had by then won power in any country.

“The second conclusion is that parliamentary socialism, like other working-class movements and organizations, grew and flourished most where the traditions and institutions of liberal democracy had already become most fully established. It was in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and France that reformist socialism took shape most quickly and won its earliest triumphs. Wherever universal suffrage remained for a long time impeded, as in Italy and Austria-Hungary, or wherever its operation was severely limited

479 Thompson, op. cit., p. 361.
by strong central authority, as in Germany, socialists went on using the language and preaching the ideas of revolutionary doctrinaire Marxism when their practice and their achievements were more moderate. Where parliamentary institutions could strike no roots and was replaced by extreme revolutionary communism. The pattern of socialism is, so to speak, a pattern superimposed on the territorial distribution of liberalism and democracy, and matches the extent of the new electorate.

“These conclusions are clinched by a comparison of the minimum and maximum programmes of policy which the different parties drew up and endorsed at various times. In western countries the parliamentary socialist parties, committed to seeking votes in order to gain political representation, normally drew up minimum programmes of those reforms best calculated to win broad electoral support. Inevitably these were mostly concerned with widening of the franchise, social welfare legislation, an eight-hour day, and improvement of conditions of work. Such was the minimum programme which the Italian Socialist party drew up in 1895. Their more abstract ideological aims were relegated to ultimate or maximum programmes, which appealed more to the intellectuals and preserved something of the party’s doctrinal character. Thus, when the French socialist groups combined in 1905, they drew up a common programme which included a statement of ultimate collectivism, of the party’s resolve to socialize the means of production and of exchange, and a protestation that it was ‘not a party of reform but a party of class struggle and revolution’: but it also included an assurance that ‘in parliament, the socialist group must dedicate itself to the defence and extension of political liberties and the rights of workers, to the promotion and realization of reforms which will ameliorate the conditions of life and of the class struggle of the working classes’. The difference of emphasis between French and German socialism emerges if this statement is compared with the German Social Democrats’ Erfurt Programme, which they adopted in 1891. It was a more thoroughgoing Marxist statement than its predecessor, the Gotha programme of 1875. It propounded orthodox Marxist philosophy as its very foundation, and gave this theoretical basis more prominence. But it added, as its immediate and practical aims, demands closely similar to those of Gotha, or of the Italian and French minimum programmes: including universal direct suffrage for men and women over twenty, freedom of expression and meeting, secular education, an eight-hour day, social welfare legislation, and progressive income tax.

“The more fundamental difference between all western socialism and Russian communism becomes clear if these programmes are compared with the Russian Social Democratic programme adopted in 1903. It too, in accordance with precedent, was divided into maximum and minimum aims. But it was not exposed to the Italian or French or German danger of exalting the minimum at the expense of the maximum, in order to gain electoral votes. In western countries since 1871 (and even since 1848) the whole notion of a minimum programme depended on its being attainable within the existing framework of capitalist society without revolution; the whole point of the maximum programme was to keep before men’s eyes the doctrines and the
ultimate aims of socialism, but to relegate them to a distinct category of aims unattainable without revolution. In Russia both minimum and maximum programmes were of necessity revolutionary. The minimum political demands of 1903 began with the revolutionary overthrow of the tsarist regime and its replacement by a democratic republic. The minimum economic demands were those normally included in the minimum demands of western socialists: an eight-hour day and six-day week; effective factory inspection; state insurance against sickness and old age; the confiscation of church lands. But these, too, in Russia before 1914, were revolutionary demands, and there was no essential difference between this minimum programme and the maximum programme of the proletarian socialist revolution. Indeed the most important decision taken in 1903... was not about programmes at all, but about the actual organization of the party as a militant force, tempered for the struggle against the whole existing order...

“These differences of programmes and of organization involve a still wider contrast. It was not merely an issue of whether socialism should be economic or political in its scope, whether it should concentrate on capturing or on destroying existing states. To enter into competition with other parliamentary parties for winning votes, and to win from government concessions of value to the working classes, enmeshed every social democratic party, however vocal its protestations of ultimate proletarian purposes, in more nationalistic ways of thinking and behaviour. In universal suffrage what counts is the vote of the individual elector, whatever his class; and in restricted electorates majorities lie with the non-proletarian electors. The leaders of a parliamentary socialist party instinctively think in terms not of classes but of individual voters and of majorities. They find themselves thinking in general, national terms, rather than in narrow terms of class war. Their working-class supporters, benefiting increasingly from legislation in their interests passed and enforced by the national state, likewise think more and more in national and non-revolutionary terms, since they become aware that they have more to lose than their chains. The growth of social democracy and parliamentary labour parties brought about a nationalizing of socialism. This changing outlook was at variance with the older traditions of universal humanitarian socialism which were inherently internationalist in outlook, just as it was in conflict with the resolutely internationalist tenets of orthodox Marxism... The conflicts between socialist movements that had been domesticated or ‘nationalized’, and revolutionary movements that still thought exclusively in terms of class war and proletarian action, were fought out before 1914. They repeatedly arose in the many congresses of the First and Second Internationals, until in 1914 the supreme issue seemed to be socialism versus nationalism...”480

According to this analysis, the “domestication” of socialism in western countries, its yoking to nationalist feeling, was a product of their progress towards universal suffrage, whereas the internationalist, revolutionary character of socialism in the East was a product of its failure to democratize. So the causal nexus was as follows: in the west: democracy => socialism =>

480 Thompson, op. cit., pp. 405-407, 408.
national socialism; in the east: autocracy $\rightarrow$ democracy $\parallel$ revolution $\rightarrow$ international socialism. This would suggest that the triumph of national socialism in Germany in the 1930s was a natural consequence of German historical development, and could well have happened elsewhere in the West, whereas the triumph of international socialism in Russia was an unnatural consequence of – in fact a break in - her natural development.

Socialism and Christianity

This conclusion runs directly counter to western historians’ usual claim that German fascism was a freakish departure from the normal western democratic development, whereas Soviet communism was a natural development of Tsarist “despotism”. Such an important conclusion, however, needs more supporting evidence before we can accept its validity.

Evidence is provided by the fact that the major forms of Christianity in Eastern and Western Europe – that is, the “souls” of the eastern and western peoples - reacted quite differently to the progress of democracy and socialism. In the East, the Orthodox Church rejected democracy, and upheld autocracy, on principled, scriptural grounds: that the source of authority in both Church and State is the will of God, not the will of the people (Romans 13.1), and that the task of political authority is to incarnate the will of God in the life of the people – the ruler is permitted to carry out the people’s will only to the extent that it is compatible with the will of God. The West, however, had become reconciled to the logical contradiction between “by the grace of God” and “by the will of the people” a long time since – in England by 1688, in France by 1789 and more solidly by 1848, and in Italy and Germany by 1870. Western Christianity – Roman Catholicism more than Protestantism, since the latter, in itself a revolutionary teaching, was almost always on the side of the revolution - offered only intermittent and largely ineffective resistance to the march of democracy and socialism. By the end of the nineteenth century even the pope had become reconciled with democracy, and by the end of the twentieth, in accordance with Dostoyevsky’s prophecy in The Devils, with socialism, too – as long as it was “with a human face”.

The introduction of the welfare state was an important milestone on the path to the dechristianization of Europe. Until the nineteenth century, in both East and West, the poor had been looked after by individual wealthy Christians and by the Church. Undoubtedly, there were abuses of this “system”, and it remained true, as the Lord said, that “the poor you always have with you”. But it had the priceless advantage of providing the possibility of true Christian virtue in rich and poor alike – the rich could conquer avarice through compassionate giving in the name of Christ, while the poor could pray for their benefactors while patiently enduring their want – again, in the name of Christ. In this way, as the Holy Fathers explained, social inequality could serve for the salvation of all.

However, beginning with the French revolution, the Christian approach to poverty and inequality was increasingly discarded. Poverty was a “scandal”,

271
whose solution lay not in voluntary charity by the rich to the poor, but in compulsory taxation of the rich and handouts to the poor administered by “expert” intellectuals. (Of course, State intervention on behalf of the poor had taken place in earlier ages, but on a smaller scale and always in cooperation with the Church rather than as a rival to her.) The problem was: the State was still too weak to take on the burdens that the Church had taken on before, while the poor, as a result of the industrial revolution and the increasing hard-heartedness of capitalist morals, multiplied alarmingly…

In the country where this problem was most acute, England, welfare legislation may be said to have begun with Disraeli’s Public Health Act of 1875 and Housing Acts of the late 1870s. However, there was opposition to massive State intervention, not for Christian reasons, but because it contradicted the doctrines of limited government, free trade and manly self-help of which the Victorians were so enamoured. Even as late as 1886, the minister responsible for the Poor Law, Joseph Chamberlain, said: “The spirit of independence which leads so many of the working classes to make great personal sacrifices rather than incur the stigma of pauperism, is one which deserves the greatest sympathy and respect… It is not desirable that the working classes should be familiarised with poor relief.”

However, it was a somewhat different situation on the continent, where pauperism was not such a stigma, free trade was not a dogma, and the socialist movement was much more powerful… And so the modern form of “the nanny state” was first introduced, not in England, but in Germany. According to Arnold Toynbee, the German model of the welfare state showed “how to raise a whole population to a standard of unprecedented social efficiency by a system of compulsory education and of unprecedented social security, by a system of compulsory health and unemployment insurance.”

482 Toynbee, A Study of History. Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D.C. Somervell, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 95. E.P. Thompson writes: “Just as Germany provided the most spectacular example, in those years, of massive and speedy industrial expansion, so she also set the pace in systematic social legislation. The emphasis in the German system lay neither on factory legislation, which Bismarck distrusted as external interference in employers’ affairs, nor on unemployment insurance, which he treated as of minor importance. It aimed at a comprehensive national provision for security against the three commonest vicissitudes of urban life – sickness, accident, and incapacity in old age. Acts tackling successively these three problems were passed in 1883, 1884, and 1889. In 1911 the whole law of social insurance was codified and extended to various classes of non-industrial workers, such as agricultural labourers and domestic servants. Before these laws were passed, a multitude of local provisions had been made voluntarily by benefit societies, guilds, burial clubs, and parishes. The Reich system utilized these older forms but gradually absorbed and replaced them by new local and factory associations which administered the insurance schemes. By 1913 some fourteen and a half million persons were insured in this way. To the sickness and pension funds, both workers and employers contributed and both were represented on their management. In the course of time such benefits as free medical attendance and hospital care were extended, and by 1914 codes of factory legislation and of child labour were at last added. Although the prewar Reich did not set up unemployment insurance, it set up labour exchanges, and some municipalities had local schemes of insurance and relief for unemployed workers. Germans were pioneers in the thoroughness and extent of their welfare system. When war began, German workers were protected against the hazards of an
The rest of Europe was quick to follow where Germany led. “Everywhere the state shouldered new kinds of responsibility for the safety and well-being of its citizens, and the principle of contributory insurance helped to reconcile laissez-faire individualism with this spectacular growth of state activity.”

However, in Germany, as in England, welfarism was introduced, not by socialist governments, but by conservative politicians, who were compelled to introduce welfare measures both because they were necessary and because if they had not, then the liberals or socialists would have triumphed at the ballot box. Thus in 1884 Bismarck said: “Give the working man a right to work as long as he is healthy, assure him care when he is sick, assure him maintenance when he is old. If you do that and do not fear the sacrifice, or cry out at state socialism – if the state will show a little more Christian solicitude for the working man, then I believe that the gentlemen of the social-democratic programme will sound their bird-call in vain.” In other words, in Bismarck’s view, state socialism – the welfare state - was necessitated by a decline in Christian love; if Christians loved their neighbour more, the ground would be cut from under the feet of the socialists. This was genuine insight. For although, as we have seen in the last section, there were many political, economic and social reasons for the rise of socialism in Europe, these reasons were not fundamental. The most fundamental reason was the decline of Christianity: socialism filled the gap caused by the decline in Christian faith and morality with its own faith and morality.

As such, socialism could not fail to be antichristian; and historically, the founders of socialism were certainly antichristian. Not only Marx and Engels, but before them Saint Simon, Fourier and Owen, were all antichristian theorists. This is not to say that minimal socialism, i.e. welfarism, was incompatible with Christianity or Christian governance. On the contrary: it is difficult to see how any modern country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could have survived without a vast increase of the state budget and state activity to protect the masses from the consequences of modern urban civilization. Orthodox Russia, as we shall see, was no exception to this rule. In practice, however, - and we see this in even the more moderate socialist parties, - it has proved impossible to “insulate” minimal socialism completely from the antichristian theories of maximal socialism (which we shall simply call “socialism” from now on). To many, welfarism appeared to be a “Christian” product of socialism, a proof that Christianity and socialism were compatible. But this was to ignore both the nature of Christianity and the nature of socialism in its original and “purer” forms. Socialism was much, much more than welfarism. It was and is a whole worldview based on atheism and materialism and directly opposed to Christianity;

industrial society than those of any other country. This was a not unimportant element in her national solidarity and strength” (op. cit., p.358).

483 Thompson, op. cit., p. 359.
it stood for an omnipotent State that squeezed religion as far as possible out of the public arena.

Richard Pipes writes: “Socialism is commonly thought of as a theory which aims at a fairer distribution of wealth for the ultimate purpose of creating a free and just society. Indisputably this is the stated program of socialists. But behind this program lurks an even more ambitious goal, which is creating a new type of human being. The underlying premise is the idea of Helvétius that by establishing an environment which makes social behaviour a natural instinct, socialism will enable man to realize his potential to the fullest. This, in turn, will make it possible, ultimately, to dispense with the state and the compulsion which is said to be its principal attribute. All socialist doctrines, from the most moderate to the most extreme, assume that human beings are infinitely malleable because their personality is the product of the economic environment: a change in that environment must, therefore, alter them as well as their behaviour.

“Marx pursued philosophical studies mainly in his youth. When, as a twenty-six-year-old émigré in Paris, he immersed himself in philosophy, he at once grasped the political implications of the ideas of Helvétius and his French contemporaries. In The Holy Family (1844-45), the book which marked his and Engels’s break with idealistic radicalism, he took his philosophical and psychological premises directly from Locke and Helvétius: ‘The whole development of man...’ he wrote, ‘depends on education and environment.’ ‘If man draws all his knowledge, sensations, etc., from the world of the senses and the experience gained from it, the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man experiences and gets used to what is really human... If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human.’

“This, the locus classicus of Marxist philosophy, justifies a total change in the way society is organized – that is, revolution. According to this way of thinking, which indeed inexorably flows from the philosophical premises of Locke and Helvétius, man and society do not come into existence by a natural process but are ‘made’. This ‘radical behaviorism’, as it has been called, inspired Marx in 1845 to coin what is probably his most celebrated aphorism: ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it.’ Of course, the moment a thinker begins to conceive his mission to be not ‘only’ observing the world and adapting to it, but changing it, he ceases to be a philosopher and turns into a politician with his own political agenda and interests.

“Now, the world can conceivably be ‘changed’ gradually, by means of education and legislation. And such a gradual change is, indeed, what all intellectuals would advocate if their exclusive concern were with improving the human condition, since evolution allows for trial and error, the only proven road to progress. But many of those who want to change the world regard human discontent as something not to be remedied but exploited. Exploitation of resentment, not its satisfaction, has been at the center of socialist politics since the 1840s: it is what distinguished the self-styled
‘scientific’ socialists from their ‘utopian’ forerunners. This attitude has led to the emergence of what Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu called in 1902, in a remarkably prescient book, the ‘politics of hatred’. Socialism, he noted, elevates ‘hatred to the heights of principle’, sharing with its mortal enemies, nationalism and anti-Semitism, the need “chirurgically” to isolate and destroy the alleged enemy.’ Committed radicals fear reform because it deprives them of leverage and establishes the ruling elite more solidly in power: they prefer the most savage repression. The slogan of Russian revolutionaries – ‘chem khuzhe, tem luchshe’ (‘the worse, the better’) spelled out this kind of thinking.”

And this kind of thinking is clearly antichristian. But it is not only in the deliberate whipping up of hatred that the antichristianity of socialism reveals itself. Still more fundamental are its dogmas of materialism and atheism. This was explained by the future Hieromartyr Archbishop Hilarion (Troitsky): “One of the more prominent misunderstandings which have arisen in this area is the misunderstanding about socialism. On the one hand, they aver that Christ was a socialist; and on the other, that socialism is entirely in agreement with Christianity... In light publicistic literature one may constantly encounter attempts to reconcile pagan socialism and Christianity...

“V.A. Kozhevnikov [who “knows socialism from its very sources, much far better than the majority of our woeful socialists”] states that, as far as the relationship of socialism to Christianity goes, there is no, even partial truth: ‘Here everything is in content contrary to Christian truths, and is in form offensive to Christian sensibilities.’

“In vain do some think that socialism is merely a theory of economics. No, socialism replaces everything with itself; it is founding its own religion. In the resolutions of the various socialist assemblies and the discourses of socialist leaders one finds clearly and definitely expressed the demand for a revolution in all human thought. ‘Socialism is not and cannot be a mere economic science, a question concerning the stomach only... In the final analysis, socialists are striving to bring about revolution throughout the entire juridical, moral, philosophical, and religious superstructure’ (Vandervelde). ‘Is socialism merely an economic theory?’ we read in the socialistic catechism of Bax and Kvelch; ‘In no way! Socialism envelops all the relations of human life.’ According to Bax, in religion socialism is expressed as atheistic humanism.

“If socialism looks upon itself as a world-view, what, then, is this world-view? It is, first of all, a consistent materialism. A materialistic understanding of history, as acknowledged by the socialists themselves, comprises the essence of the entire theory of their teaching, its cornerstone, according to the expression of Bernstein. ‘One must seek the basic reasons of all social changes and revolutions not in the heads of men and not in their views on eternal righteousness and justice, but in changes in the means of production and distribution’ (Engels). If socialism is so closely bound up with materialism, how can it bear any relationship to religion? Crudely distorting the moral and

---

educational significance of religion, the materialistic criticism of Marx and Engels sees religion as the mere ‘handiwork of man’, the product of ignorant imagination or profit motives; and God Himself as a reflection of economic relations. Even in the Christian God they dare to see an ‘anthropological idealization of a capitalism which thirsts for power and satisfaction.’ Religion is called forth, in the words of Engels, ‘by the dark, primordial ideas of man concerning his personal nature and that which surrounds him,’ and is defined in its permutations ‘by class, and consequently economic, relations’. Religion seemed to Marx to be a superstition which has outlived its time, ‘a dead question for the intelligentsia, but an opium for the people.’ According to this, Marx considered ‘freedom of conscience from the charms of religion’ to be ‘the assistance of the people toward real happiness’.

“True, there are thinkers who maintain that socialism is not inescapably bound up with materialism, but they are not real socialists. Such thinkers try to impart to socialism a philosophical and ethical, even a Christian, coloration. Schtaudinger tries to convince his ‘brother socialists’ that ‘the basic ideas of Christ are the same as ours; His idea of unity is our God. His idea of the existence of this unity is our Christ. And although we deny all dogmas, in principle our ethics are Christian.’

“Dyed-in-the-wool socialists staunchly refuse to accept the recommended ‘deepening’ of the bases of socialism, which, in their opinion, is entirely unsuitable. Bebel rains down mockery upon the invitation that ‘everyone study, and philosophize, and work on oneself’. Conrad Schmidt distances himself from Kantian humanism, because in it there is no agitational power, there are only old metaphysical ideas, monastic asceticism, and morals more appropriate to angels. In the experiments at ‘deepening’ socialism, Plekhanov sees ‘an opium to lull the proletariat to sleep’. Mering sees it as ‘turbid waters in which to catch an unclean fish’. Menger does not understand the reason for loud speeches about unneeded lofty philosophical principles, when we are facing ‘our own ethics, which overturn every religious foundation and are a guarantee even against the rebirth of religious consciousness’. Dietzgen long ago proposed ‘to jettison all that is majestic in morality’, because ‘the special logic of the proletariat delivers us from all philosophical and religious mysticism’. Similar thoughts are expressed by Kautsky, Lenin and Axelrod. We are fed up, says Axelrod, with the boring and monotonous pestering of the critics, teachers, the various perfecters of socialism; it is time for them to cease! To take their path would mean to fall into a dreadful muddle and a demoralization of mind, to take from socialism its living, revolutionary aspect, in other words, its essence, and to replace it again with the reactionary, religious character of the whole philosophical mentality.

“I think that everyone can now see that socialism, as a distinct world-view, is in essence the adversary of all idealism, of all the immutable principles of morality, and the enemy of all religion. Reducing everything in the world to matter, the socialist world-view leaves no place for the divine Principle.
“Such is the theoretical relationship of socialism to religion. In practice, socialists often resort to compromise to gain tactical advantage, which in the language of morality one must call a betrayal of what is true and right... One must of necessity direct serious attention to religion, as Engels puts it, ‘that greatest of conservative powers’. ‘We will never succeed in earning trust if we begin to demand that the government take violent measures against the Church,’ admits Kautsky. What to do? ‘In order to overcome the mistrust of the workers and infiltrate them more quickly, in our own ranks there is arising the aspiration to suppress our fundamental views and, in the name of temporary success, to sacrifice clarity of thought and the sensibilities of our own comrades’. This Anton Pannekoek openly and cynically admits. And so we see how socialists ‘adapt’. According to the Erfurt program, religion is a personal matter. According to the ‘workers’ catechism’, social-democracy demands neither atheism nor theism. Schtampfer maintains that ‘the theses of socialism are concerned neither with God nor the afterlife; it is slander to say that it is the sworn enemy of our Church’. One can be both a Christian and a social-democrat (Kautsky). In all these and similar statements, there is absolutely no sincerity. The Erfurt program does not satisfy the more consistent socialists; they demand that an inimical relationship with the Church be stressed more emphatically. In actual fact, the socialists are waging war against religion, but, in accordance with their tactical ploys, they take refuge behind a personal struggle against ‘clericalists’, and this struggle is justified by the fact that the ‘clericalists’ (1) have pretensions to political power, (2) are fanatics, (3) foster ignorance, and (4) support the capitalist class. Yet all of this is, of course, a mere sham; the socialists are in reality inimical to all religion, are against God.

“But is not such hypocrisy, such falsehood, immoral, scandalously immoral? To this the socialists answer us thus: ‘Mere moral means have nothing to recommend them to us. You will not get far in politics with them’ (Bebel). ‘In each party perfidious tricks are unavoidable, and the laws of traditional morality here recede completely into the background’ (Menger). What can you do with party tactics? But these tactics are such as would move Jesuits to ecstasy. The more direct and (if one can speak of honesty among them) honest socialists, however, let the cat out of the bag and openly state their enmity towards religion. On August 22nd, 1901, the French Social- Revolutionary Party resolved: ‘Citizens, the members of the Party vow that under no circumstances will they carry out any religious acts whatever in conjunction with representatives of any denomination’ (freedom of conscience!!!). On December 31st, 1878, Bebel, in the presence of the entire Reichstag, declared: ‘In the area of religion, we aspire to atheism’; and on September 16th, 1878, he expressed ‘a firm trust that socialist will lead to atheism’. This same blasphemer Bebel calls himself the enemy of all religion, ‘of which people of high quality have no need’. At the Gall Assembly, Liebknecht expressed the hope that ‘the basic principles of socialism will overcome religious forms of popular ignorance’. According to Todt, ‘He who is himself not an atheist and does not commit himself with all zeal to the dissemination of atheism is not fit to be called a socialist’. Lafarge is indignant ‘that religious principles are still not utterly extirpated from the minds of the
learned’, but is comforted by the hope that in the future socialism would completely erase faith in God from men’s souls….

“It is understood that in the socialist world-view there will also be no place for belief in the immortality of the soul. The denial of immortality is one of the main conditions for the success of socialism, ‘because with the weakening of belief in heaven, socialist demands for heaven on earth will be strengthened’ (Bebel). Dietzgen advises that one prefer ‘a comfortable world here’ to the other world. On February 3rd, 1893, a certain Catholic deputy asked the social-democrats of the German Reichstag the question as to whether they believed in the afterlife. They answered unanimously in the negative. One socialist newspaper, Neue Zeit, suggested that ‘the threats of hell be mocked, and that pointing to heaven be disdained’…

“The perfection of the ‘modern socialist movement’ is not in Christian life on earth, nor in eternal blessedness in heaven. Both the former and the latter are relegated to the archives. ‘Our ideal is not poverty, nor abstinence, but wealth, and wealth immeasurable, unheard of. This wealth is the good of all humanity, its holy object, its Holy of holies, toward the possession of which all our hopes are directed’ (Dietzgen).

“But enough! Enough of these mindless words! I hope my readers will forgive me for setting down these blasphemies of the socialists and offending their Christian sensibilities with them. I have only wanted to show what moral ugliness socialism is, what an abyss of falsehood lies within it, and, therefore, how mistaken is any attempt to reconcile socialism and the divine Christian Faith…”.486

**Masonry and Socialism**

Very important in this connection is the relationship between Socialism and Freemasonry, which in spite of being banned by both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches, continued to grow during the nineteenth century, consisting of 26,000 lodges and 1,670,000 adepts by its end.487

In the Anglo-Saxon countries and in Germany, Masonry was theist and anti-revolutionary, concentrating on the development of ritual. Thus at a conference of Supreme Councils in Lausanne in 1875, when some of the resolutions were tending in an antichristian direction, the English delegates called for a review of the texts in order to emphasise belief in God and the immortality of the soul. When other delegates rejected such a review, the English left the conference. Only later was their demand satisfied.488

---

488 Soloviev, *op.cit.*, p. 29.
Of course, the theism of Anglo-Saxon Masonry was not theist in a Christian sense. If most of the lower-order Masons considered that “the Grand Architect of the Universe” was simply another name for the Christian God, higher-order Masons knew better… Since 1750, when the Royal Arch degree had been introduced into Masonry, these higher initiates knew that the name of the Masonic god was “Jah-Bul-On”.

As Jasper Ridley writes: “In the admission ceremony to the Royal Arch, the initiate is told the name of God, the Great Architect of the Universe. This is one of the most closely guarded secrets of the Freemasons. In recent years they have published many of the secrets that they have guarded for centuries, but not the name of God, which is revealed to the members of the Royal Arch. Renegades from Freemasonry have published it, and it is now generally know that the name is Jahbulon, with the ‘Jah’ standing for Jehovah, the ‘Bul’ for Baal, and the ‘On’ for Osiris.

“The anti-masons have made great play with the masons’ worship of Jahbulon. The Egyptian God, Osiris, might be acceptable [!], but the masons’ worship of Baal outrages them. The bishops of the Church of England who have become Freemasons are asked to explain how they can reconcile their Christian beliefs with a worship of Baal, who is regarded in the Bible as absolute evil; and these bishops have been very embarrassed by the question…”

There were important practical reasons why the Masonic god should be a syncretist mixture of different pagan gods. Masonry was now spreading to non-European races, and it was desirable that the gods of these races should be given a place within the all-encompassing Masonic deity. Thus English Masonry allowed both Mohammedans and Hindus into its Indian lodges on the grounds, as the Duke of Sussex ruled, that “the various ‘gods’ of the Hindus were not separate gods but personifications of characteristics of one central deity”. Implicitly, therefore, Krishna and Shiva and Allah were considered to be personifications of the Great Architect no less than Jehovah, Baal and Osiris. The result was, as Ridley writes, that “before the end of the nineteenth century Rudyard Kipling, who was an especially ardent Freemason and was first initiated as a mason in India, was claiming that the religious and racial quarrels which troubled British India disappeared inside the masonic lodges”.

By contrast with Anglo-Saxon Masonry, the Grand Orient in France adopted a more revolutionary and anti-theist stance. Thus when, after the Republican victory in the 1877 general election, the Grand Orient “decided to remove all references to God and the Great Architect [and the immortality of the soul] from their ceremonies, to remove the Bible from their lodges, and to admit agnostics and atheists, this was too much for the English Grand Lodge. The Grand Orient argued that to admit atheists was the final step in the policy of religious toleration which the Freemasons had always supported; but

---

490 Ridley, op. cit., p. 220.
English Grand Lodge broke off relations with the Grand Orient, as did the American Freemasons. The Grand Orient declared that by their action ‘English Grand Lodge has struck a blow against the cosmopolitan and universal spirit of Freemasonry’.”

“The victory of universal suffrage, laicism and positivism in the Grand Orient was complete. From now on Masonry became the school and the provider of cadres of the republican party. In general it identified itself with the middle and petit bourgeoisie, who through their elites strove to snatch the administration of the country from the highest-placed social classes, and the history of the Third Republic demonstrates how successful they were.”

The closeness of Continental Masonry and International Socialism is shown by the coincidence of their major congresses. Thus in 1889, on the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, the Grand Orient “created in Paris an international Masonic congress of representatives of the centres in Spain, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, Greece and other states... Almost simultaneously in Paris there took place a representative international socialist congress, which factually speak laid the foundations of the Second Internationale. At the sessions sharp differences were immediately revealed between the revolutionary wing, the reformists and the anarchists, which, however, did not prevent them from taking a series of important decisions. Among the delegates were also Masons: P. Lafargue and L. Dupré (France), A. Costa and E. Malatesta (Italy), D. Neuwenhuis (Holland) and others. It is important to note that from this time a definite synchronicity can be observed in the conducting of the congresses of both organizations, with essentially fairly similar problems being reviewed. It also impossible not to see a definite influence of the order on the Internationale.”

Again, in August, 1900 another international congress of Continental Masonry took place, followed, only a month later, by another congress of the Second Internationale. Many of the delegates to the latter were Masons, including Lafargue (on the revolutionary wing), Costa and Malatesta (among the reformists). “As a result, with some qualifications a resolution was passed in the spirit of reconciliation between labour and capital, which the Masons had long insisted on.”

In 1902 the Continental Masons decided to form an International Bureau of Masonic Links (IBML) in Neuchatel, Switzerland, whose organization was entrusted to the local “Alpina” lodge. Alpina was chosen because of it had official contacts with both the French and Anglo-Saxon lodges, and still retained references to the Great Architect and the immortality of the soul in its constitution. “Although the Bureau, headed by the former Grand Master of the ‘Alpina’ lodge, Pastor E. Cartier la Tante (1866-1924) sent a circular informing the federations of England, the USA, Germany and their numerous representatives.”

---

491 Ridley, op. cit., p. 220.
494 Soloviev, op. cit., p. 39.
allies of its formation, suggesting that they unite, the latter did not react, and
with the exception of the Germans did not take part in the activity of the
IBML. However, in, for example, the London Masonic press the position of
the United Great Lodge of that country was laid out in some detail. The
Bureau was represented as ‘the central power’ of Masonry having
sovereignty, while ‘Alpina’ was seen as the captive and servant of the Grand
Orient of France. In becoming friendly with GOF, which had removed from
its rules the reference to the Great Architect of the Universe, Alpina had
thereby ‘taken a step in an atheist direction’ and could not be recognized as a
lawful association. As for the other members of the Bureau, they were to be
considered as “underground and incorrect great lodges. The accusations had
an artificial character, but with some variations they continued for several
more long years…”

**Masonry and Spiritualism**

Masonry was only one aspect of a general spiritual malaise. In 1816 Mary
Shelley had published her novel *Frankenstein*, which expressed a fear not only
that science might go off the right path and produce monsters, but that it
might reveal that man, like Frankenstein, did not have a soul, but was purely
material, so that God did not exist. The rapid growth of science, and the
emergence of such antitheist theories as Darwinism, accentuated these fears in
the later part of the century. But the result was not atheism, or only atheism.
More common was the resort to non-Christian forms of religion, of which
Masonry was one, but by no means the only one.

“The malaise of the late nineteenth century,” writes A.N. Wilson, “was not
primarily a political or an economic one, though subsequent historians might
choose to interpret it thus. Men and women looked at the world which
Western capitalism had brought to pass since Queen Victoria had been on the
throne – over forty years now! – and they sensed that something had gone
hideously awry…

“Gladstone bellowing on the windswept moorlands of Mithlothian;
Wagner in the new-built Bayreuth Festival Theatre watching the citadel of the
Gods go down in flames; world-weary Trollope scribbling himself to death in
the London clubs; Dostoyevsky coughing blood, and thrusting, as he did, his
New Testament into the hands of his son – these could hardly be more
different individuals. Yet they all at roughly the same moment in history were
seized with comparable misgiving. It is like one of these disconcerting
moments in a crowd of chattering strangers when a silence suddenly falls; or
when a sudden chill, spiritual more than atmospheric, causes an individual to
shiver and to exclaim ‘I feel as if a man has just walked over my grave.’”

Christianity “had, by the time of the nineteenth century, begun to stare at
its own apocalypse. The biblical scholars of Tübingen had undermined the
faith of the Protestant North in the infallibility of Scripture; while the

painsstaking lifetime of botanical and biological observations of Charles Darwin had shaken the faith of intellectuals in the Creator himself. By the end of the Victorian century, atheism had become the religion of the suburbs, as G.K. Chesterton observed.

“There is no doubt that, as the career and popularity of H.G. Wells demonstrates, unbelief was rife among the masses…”

Masonry combined with a general tendency towards occultism and spiritualism in European and American culture.

“All these tendencies,” wrote Tikhomirov, “while quarrelling and fighting amongst themselves, in essence represent merely separate units of one and the same army.

“The first impulse towards the regeneration of pagan mysticism was given by spiritualism, which first developed in the United States. Perhaps this is linked to the fact that in the 1820s the French Templar order of Freemasonry divided into two parts, one of which, remaining in France, began to decay considerably, while the other moved to America, where, by contrast, it reached a high level of development.

“In any case, already by the end of the 40s of the 19th century, spiritistic ‘phenomena’ were already abundant in the United States of America, and in 1852 there were up to 30,000 mediums and several million convinced spiritualists. From America spiritualism migrated in 1853 to England, and then to France and Germany, passing everywhere, as V. Bykov says, through one and the same developmental progression. That is, first it would manifest itself in knocks, then in table-levitation, then writing, and finally direct communications [with evil spirits]. This teaching was embraced in Europe even by noted scientists, such as Aragon, Farraday, Tyndal, Chevrel, Flammariion, Kruke, Wallace, Rimman, Tsolner, etc., who first approached spiritualist phenomena with scepticism, but then became ardent followers of spiritualism. In 1858 a certain Hippolyte Rivel, writing under the pseudonym Allan Kardek and with the help of spirits, composed a six-volumed work containing the spiritualist philosophy with a religious-mystical colouring. In the opinion of V. Bykov, it is not possible to establish exactly when spiritualism appeared in Russia, but in any case at the beginning of the 50s of the 19th century, that is, at the same time as the whole of Europe and, moreover, in its mature form (table-lifting, writing and speaking mediumism) and in ‘such an epidemic force’ that already in 1853 Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow considered it necessary to speak against it. In the 60s the spiritualist movement increased still more in strength. It was also joined here by several eminent scientists and social activists, such as Professor N. Wagner, Professor Yurkevich, Vladimir Dal’, the academician Ostrogradsky, Professor Buglerov, etc. A.N. Aksakov was particularly involved in the popularisation of this movement. At the beginning of the 20th century a notable role in the

development of our spiritualism was played by Vlad[imir] Pavl[ovich] Bykov, who later spoke out against it and became its untiring opponent.

“At the world congress in Belgium in 1910, the numbers of correctly organised spiritualists, having their own circles and meetings, were calculated at 14,000,000 people, and the numbers of sympathisers who had not yet managed to organise themselves correctly – at 10,000,000…” 498

And so “the closing decades of the nineteenth, and early decades of the twentieth centuries, saw a deepening interest, among thinking people, in the occult and the dead. Yeats was obsessed with mediums, ouija boards and the like. He was far from being unusual. Arthur Balfour, philosopher and prime minister, was in constant touch with the Other Side, and was in receipt of over 20,000 letters from his dead sweetheart, penned by a spirit medium.” 499

The Founding of Zionism

A new chapter in the history of European Jewry began on 5 January 1895, when Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the only Jew serving in the French army general staff, was publicly degraded.

Paul Johnson writes that he “had been accused, tried and convicted – on what subsequently emerged to be fabricated evidence – of handing secrets to the Germans. Watching the ceremony, one of the few journalists allowed to attend, was Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the Paris correspondent of the Vienna liberal daily, Neue Freie Presse. Two weeks before he had attended the courtroom and heard Dreyfus pronounced guilty. Now he stood by as Dreyfus was brought before General Darras, who shouted: ‘Alfred Dreyfus, you are unworthy to bear arms. In the name of the French people we degrade you!’ Immediately, in a loud voice, Dreyfus shouted: ‘Soldiers! An innocent man is being degraded! Soldiers! An innocent is dishonoured! Long live France – long live the Army!’ A senior non-commissioned officer cut off Dreyfus’ badges and buttons. He took out his sword and broke it across his knee. The prisoner was marched round the courtyard, still shouting that he was innocent. An immense and excited crowd, waiting outside, heard his cries and began to whistle and chant slogans. When Herzl left the building, it was beginning to scream ‘Death to Dreyfus! Death to the Jews!’ Less than six months later, Herzl had completed the draft of the book which would set in motion modern Zionism, Der Judenstaat.” 500

The Dreyfus affair, combined with Herzl’s own experience of German and Austrian anti-Semitism, had an enormous impact on him. 501 It demonstrated

---

498 Tikhomirov, op. cit., pp. 480-481.
499 Wilson, After the Victorians, op. cit., p. 92.
501 As he admitted to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration in London in 1902: “Seven years ago, when I was living in Paris, I was so impressed with the state of Jewry throughout Europe that I turned my attention to the Jewish question and published a pamphlet which I called ‘A Jewish State’. I may say that it was not my original intention to publish the pamphlet or to take part in a political movement. But, after placing before a number of
to him that for various reasons – envy at Jewish success, the influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, the increase of racialist theories – the Jews would never be assimilated into the existing system of European statehood, and would have to seek a homeland, a territorial State, of their own if they were to survive.

“It was against this threatening background that Herzl began to abandon his assimilationist position. He had previously considered all kinds of wild ideas to get the Jews accepted. One was a huge programme of social re-education for Jews, to endow them with what he termed ‘a delicate, extremely sensitive feeling for honour and the like’. Another was a pact with the Pope, whereby he would lead a campaign against anti-Semitism in return for ‘a great mass movement for the free and honourable conversion of all Jews to Christianity’. But all these schemes soon seemed hopeless in face of the relentless rise of anti-Semitic hatred…

“… In May 1895 [the antisemite] Lueger became Mayor of Vienna. To devise an alternative refuge for the Jews, who might soon be expelled from all over Europe, seemed an urgent necessity. The Jews must have a country of their own!

“Herzl completed the text of his book, Der Judenstaat, outlining his aims, in the winter of 1895-6. The first extracts were published in the London Jewish Chronicle, 17 January 1896. The book was not long, eighty-six pages, and its appeal was simple. ‘We are a people, one people. We have everywhere tried honestly to integrate with the national communities surrounding us and to retain only our faith. We are not permitted to do so… In vain do we exert ourselves to increase the glory of our fatherlands by achievements in art and in science and their wealth by our contributions to commerce… We are denounced as strangers… If only they would leave us in peace… But I do not think they will…’ So Herzl proposed that sovereignty be conceded to the Jews over a tract of land large enough to accommodate their people. It did not matter where. It could be in Argentina, where the millionaire Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831-96) had set up 6,000 Jews in a series of agricultural colonies. Or it could be Palestine, where similar Rothschild-financed colonies were in being. What mattered was the sanction of Jewish opinion; and they would take what was offered…

“Herzl began by assuming that a Jewish state would be created in the way things had always been done throughout the Exile; by wealthy Jews at the top deciding what was the best solution for the rest of Jewry, and imposing it. But he found this impossible. Everywhere in civilized Europe the Jewish establishments were against his idea. Orthodox rabbis denounced or ignored him…

influential Jews my views upon the Jewish question, and finding that they were utterly oblivious of the danger which I then foresaw – that they could not see the large black cloud gathering in the East – I published the pamphlet which resulted in the establishment of the Zionist movement.” (Vital, op.cit., p. 439).
“Nevertheless, what Herzl quickly discovered was that the dynamic of Judaism would not come from the westernised elites but from the poor, huddled masses of the Ostjuden, a people of whom he knew nothing when he began his campaign. He discovered this first when he addressed an audience of poor Jews, of refugee stock, in the East End of London. They called him ‘the man of the little people’, and ‘As I sat on the platform... I experienced strange sensations. I saw and heard my legend being born.’ In eastern Europe, he quickly became a myth-like figure among the poor. David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) recalled that, as a ten-year-old boy in Russian Poland, he heard a rumour: ‘The Messiah had arrived, a tall, handsome man, a learned man of Vienna, a doctor no less.’ Unlike the sophisticated middle-class Jews of the West, the eastern Jews could not toy with alternatives, and see themselves as Russians, or even as Poles. They knew they were Jews and nothing but Jews... and what Herzl now seemed to be offering was their only chance of becoming a real citizen anywhere. To Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952), then a second-year student in Berlin, Herzl’s proposals ‘came like a bolt from the blue’. In Sofia, the Chief Rabbi actually proclaimed him the Messiah. As the news got around, Herzl found himself visited by shabby, excitable Jews from distant parts, to the dismay of his fashionable wife, who grew to detest the very word Zionism. Yet these were the men who became the foot soldiers, indeed the NCOs and officers, in the Zionist legion; Herzl called them his ‘army of schnorrers’.”

The unexpected (to Herzl) importance of East European Jewry to Zionism was not accidental. In his Autoemancipation (1882), the Russian Jewish doctor Lev Pinsker had appealed to Russian and Germany Jewry to abandon, in view of the pogroms of the previous year, the failed idea of emancipation and the last gleams of hope in the brotherhood of peoples. “For the living,” he wrote, “the Jew is a dead man; for the natives, an alien and a vagrant; for property holders, a beggar; for the poor, an exploiter and a millionaire; for the patriot, a man without a country; for all classes a hated rival.”

Another important East European Zionist was Usher Ginzberg, or Ahad-Gaam (“one of the people”). Solzhenitsyn writes: “He sharply criticised practical Palestinophilia as it then was. His position was: ‘Before directing our efforts at “redemption on the land”, it is necessary to care about “redemption of hearts”, about the intellectual and moral perfection of the people’. ‘To place in the centre of Jewry a living spiritual striving for the unification of the nation, its stirring up and free development in the national spirit, but on pan-human foundations’. This point of view later received the name of ‘spiritual Zionism’ (but not ‘religious’, this is important).

When Herzl ascended the podium at the first Zionist conference, “he looked like ‘a man of the House of David, risen all of a sudden from his grave in all his legendary glory,’ recalled Mordechai Ben-Ami, the delegate from Odessa. ‘It seemed as if the dream cherished by our people for two thousand years had come true at last and Messiah the Son of David was standing before us.’” (Karen Armstrong, A History of Jerusalem, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 365). (V.M.).

“In the same 1889 Ahad-Gaam, for the unification of those who were devoted to the redemption of Jewish national feelings, created a league – or order, as he called it, ‘Bnei Moshe’ (‘the Sons of Moses’). Its constitution ‘was in many ways like the constitutions of Masonic lodges: the entrant gave a promise on oath to fulfil exactly all the demands of the constitution; new members were initiated by a master, an ‘elder brother’… The entering ‘brother’ bound himself selflessly to serve the idea of national redemption, even if he were sure that there was no hope for the speedy realisation of the ideal’. In the manifesto of the order it was proclaimed that ‘the national consciousness has primacy over religious [consciousness], and individual interests are subject to national [interests]’, and it was demanded that he deepen his feeling of selfless love for Jewry above every other aim of the movement. The order prepared ‘the ground for the reception of the political Zionism’ of Herzl, which Ahad-Gaam did not want at all.

“In 1891, 1893 and 1900 Ahad-Gaam also travelled to Palestine – and reproached the lack of organisation and rootlessness of the Palestinian colonisation of that time, ‘he subjected to severe criticism the dictatorial behaviour of those serving Baron’ E. Rothschild.

“Thus in Europe Zionism was born a decade later than in Russia...

“At the first Congress the representatives of Russian Zionism ‘constituted a third of the participants… 66 out of 197 delegates’ – in spite of the fact that for some this might look like an oppositional move in relation to the Russian government… In this way ‘Zionism drew its strength... from the circles of oppressed Eastern Jewry, which found only a limited support amongst the Jews of Western Europe’. But for this reason the Russian Zionists represented for Herzl the most serious opposition. Ahad-Gaam conducted a stubborn struggle with the political Zionism of Herzl (on whose side, however, there rose the majority of the old Palestinophiles). He sharply criticised the pragmatism of Herzl and Nordau and, as he thought, ‘[their] alienation from the spiritual values of Jewish culture and tradition’. He ‘found political Zionism’s hope of founding a Jewish autonomous State in the near future chimerical; he considered the whole of this movement to be exceptionally harmful for the work of the spiritual regeneration of the nation… Not to care about saving perishing Judaism, that is, not to care about spiritual-national and cultural-historical attainments, to strive not for the regeneration of the ancient people, but for the creation of a new one from the scattered particles of the old matter’. He used and even emphasised the word ‘Judaism’, but evidently not in a religious sense, but as an inherited spiritual system...

“The quarrels shook the Zionists. Ahad-Gaam sharply criticised Herzl, and in support of the latter Nordau accused Ahad-Gaam of ‘secret Zionism’. Every year there took place Zionist World Congresses, and in 1902 there took place a Congress of Russian Zionists in Minsk, whither the quarrels crossed over...
“At the beginning of the century the poet N. Minsky expressed the following thought: ‘that Zionism is the loss of the pan-human measure, that it reduces the universal cosmopolitan dimensions of Jewry [!] to the level of ordinary nationalism. ‘The Zionists, while talking about nationalism, in fact turn away from the genuine national face of Jewry and are zealous only that they should be like everyone, and become no worse than others.’

“It is interesting to compare this with the remark of the Orthodox [Christian] thinker S. Bulgakov, which was also made before the revolution: ‘The greatest difficulty for Zionism consists now in the fact that it is not able to return the faith of the fathers that is being lost, and is forced to base itself on the national or cultural-ethnographic principle, on which no truly great nationality can establish itself.’”

So Herzl had considerable opposition from within Jewry: most assimilated Jews, the Jews who already had their own plans for Jewry in Palestine (like Baron Edmund Rothschild) and the religious Jews who rejected the idea of a secular Jewish nationalism, were against Zionism. However, he found unexpected support from some Gentile leaders, who were in favor of Zionism as a means of reducing the Jewish population of Europe. Thus the Russian interior minister, V.K. Plehve, said to him in August, 1903: “You are preaching to a convert… we would very much like to see the creation of an independent Jewish State capable of absorbing several million Jews.”

Again, the Kaiser said: “I am all in favour of the kikes going to Palestine. The sooner they take off the better.”

Herzl even had support from Gentile Christians. “In fact,” writes Walter Russell Mead, “American Protestant Zionism is significantly older than the modern Jewish version; in the nineteenth century, evangelicals repeatedly petitioned U.S. officials to establish a refuge in the Holy Land for persecuted Jews from Europe and the Ottoman Empire.

“U.S. evangelical theology takes a unique view of the role of the Jewish people in the modern world. On the one hand, evangelicals share the widespread Christian view that Christians represent the new and true children of Israel, inheritors of God’s promises to the ancient Hebrews. Yet unlike many other Christians, evangelicals also believe that the Jewish people have a continuing role in God’s plan. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, close study of biblical prophecies convinced evangelical scholars and believers that the Jews would return to the Holy Land before the triumphant return of Christ.”

505 According to Vital (op. cit., p. 468), Plehve’s memorandum to Herzl was approved beforehand by the Tsar. However, little came of his promise because in July, 1904 Herzl died and Plehve himself was assassinated by the Social Revolutionaries.
506 In 1879 William Marr had written: “The Jewish idea of colonizing Palestine could be wholesome for both sides [Jews and Germans]” (in Pipes, op. cit., p. 28).
However, the symbiotic relationship between America and Israel did not yet exist. More important at this stage were the British, who, as Karen Armstrong writes, had “developed a form of gentile Zionism. Their reading of the Bible convinced them that Palestine belonged to the Jews, and already in the 1870s sober British observers looked forward to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine under the protection of Great Britain.”

And so, as Geoffrey Hanks writes, “Herzl was actively assisted by an Anglican clergyman, William Hechler, whose motivation was quite different to that of Herzl. For Hechler, his reading of prophecy had led him to conclude that the Jews would be returned to their homeland [in 1897] which would be followed by the Second Coming... After reading Herzl’s book, The Jewish State, he joined forces with the author to promote the Zionist cause by persuading the Sultan of Turkey to allow Jewish immigration to Palestine. He was able to arrange a meeting in 1898 between Herzl and the Kaiser in Jerusalem. When he failed to secure German support for the cause he next looked to England for help, which came in the form of the Balfour Declaration [of 1917]...”

The support of England was to prove critical for the success of Zionism. “Herzl rightly called it ‘the Archimedean point’ on which to rest the lever of Zionism. There was considerable goodwill among the political elite. A lot had read Tancred; even more Daniel Deronda. Moreover, there had been a vast influx of Russian Jewish refugees into Britain, raising fears of anti-Semitism and threats of immigrant quotas. A Royal Commission on Alien Immigration was appointed (1902), with Lord Rothschild one of its members. Herzl was asked to give evidence, and Rothschild now at last agreed to see him, privately, a few days before, to ensure Herzl said nothing which would strengthen the cry for Jewish refugees to be refused entry. Rothschild’s change from active hostility to friendly neutrality was an important victory for Herzl and he was happy, in exchange, to tell the Commission (7 July 1902) that further Jewish immigration to Britain should be accepted but that the ultimate solution to the refugee problem was ‘the recognition of the Jews as a people and the finding by them of a legally recognized home’.

“This appearance brought Herzl into contact with senior members of the government, especially Joe Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, and the Marquess of Landsdown, Foreign Secretary. Both were favourable to a Jewish home in principle. But where? Cyprus was discussed, then El Arish on the Egyptian border. Herzl thought it could be ‘a rallying-point for the Jewish people in the vicinity of Palestine’ and he wrote a paper for the British cabinet bringing up, for the first time, a powerful if dangerous argument: ‘At one stroke England will get ten million secret but loyal subjects active in all walks of life all over the world.’ But the Egyptians objected and a survey proved unsatisfactory. Then Chamberlain, back from East Africa, had a new idea, Uganda. ‘When I saw it,’ he said, ‘I thought, “That is a land for Dr. Herzl. But of course he is sentimental and wants to go to Palestine or thereabouts.”’

508 Armstrong, op. cit., p. 360.
fact Herzl... would have settled for Uganda. So Lansdowne produced a letter: ‘If a site can be found which the [Jewish Colonial] Trust and His Majesty’s Commission consider suitable and which commends itself to HM Government, Lord Lansdowne will be prepared to enterin favourable proposals for the establishment of a Jewish colony of settlement, on conditions which will enable the members to observe their national customs.’ This was a breakthrough. It amounted to diplomatic recognition for a prot-Zionist state. In a shrewd move, Herzl aroused the interest of the rising young Liberal politician, David Lloyd George, by getting his firm of solicitors to draft a proposed charter for the colony. He read Lansdowne’s letter to the Sixth Zionist Congress, where it aroused ‘amazement... [at] the magnanimity of the British offer’. But many delegates saw it as a betrayal of Zionism; the Russians walked out. Herzl concluded: ‘Palestine is the only land where our people can come to rest.’ At the Seventh Congress (1905), Uganda was formally rejected…

Even with the Zionist movement formally committed to Palestine as its only possible homeland, there was still strong opposition to the idea from within Jewry. “The Orthodox,” writes Johnson, “argued that Satan, having despaired of seducing Israel by persecution, had been given permission to try it by even more subtle methods, involving the Holy Land in his wicked and idolatrous scheme, as well as all the evils of the enlightenment. Zionism was thus infinitely worse than a false messiah – it was an entire false, Satanic religion. Others added that the secular state would conjure up the godless spirit of the demos and was contrary to God’s command to Moses to follow the path of oligarchy: ‘Go and collect the elders of Israel’...; ‘Heaven forbid’, wrote two Kovno sages, ‘that the masses and the women should chatter about meetings or opinions concerning the general needs of the public.’ In Katowice on 22 May 1912 the Orthodox sages founded the Agudist movement to coordinate opposition to Zionist claims. It is true that some Orthodox Jews believed Zionism could be exploited for religious purposes. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) argued that the new ‘national spirit of Israel’ could be used to appeal to Jews on patriotic grounds to observe and preach the Torah. With Zionist support he was eventually made Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem. But most of the religious Jews already in Erez Israel heard of Zionism with horror. ‘There is great dismay in the Holy Land,’ wrote Rabbi Joseph Hayyim Sonnenfeld (1848-1932), ‘that these evil men who deny the Unique One of the world and his Holy Torah have proclaimed with so much publicity that it is in their power to hasten redemption for the people of Israel and gather the dispersed from all the ends of the earth.’ When Herzl entered the Holy Land, he added, ‘evil entered with him, and we do not yet know what we have to do against the destroyers of the totality of Israel, may the Lord have mercy’. This wide, though by no means universal opposition of pious Jews to the Zionist programme inevitably tended to push it more firmly into the hands of the secular radicals…”

510 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 400-402. At the Sixth Congress Herzl had been forced to stand before the delegates, raise his right hand and quote the words of the psalmist: ‘If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither!’ (Armstrong, op. cit., p. 366).

But the reverse process was also seen: the conversion of secular radicals to an almost mystical love of the land of Israel, a factor that makes Zionism more than a form of secular nationalism. For, as Karen Armstrong writes, “Jerusalem was still a symbol that had power to inspire these secular Zionists as they struggled to create a new world, even if they had little time for the city as an earthly reality. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who would become the second President of the State of Israel, was converted to Zionism while speaking at a revolutionary rally in Russia. Suddenly he felt dissociated from his surroundings and in the wrong place. ‘Why am I here and not there?’ he asked himself. Then he had a vision. There arose ‘in my mind’s eye the living image of Jerusalem, the holy city, with its ruins, desolate of its sons’. From that moment he thought no more of revolution in Russia but only of ‘our Jerusalem’. ‘That very hour I reached the absolute decision that our place is the Land of Israel, and that I must go there, dedicate my life to its upbuilding, and as soon as possible.’…

“The trouble was that Jerusalem was not ‘desolate of its sons’. It already had sons, a people who had lived there for centuries and who had their own plans for the city. Nor was the city a ruin, as Ben-Zvi imagined… [Moreover,] its Arab resident had come to resent the Turkish occupation and were alarmed by the Zionist settlers. In 1891 a number of Jerusalem notables sent a petition to Istanbul, asking the government to prevent a further immigration of Jews and the sale of land to Zionists. The last known political act of Yusuf al-Khalidi had been to write a letter to Rabbi Zadok Kahn, the friend of Herzl, begging him to leave Palestine alone: for centuries, Jews, Christians, and Muslims had managed to live together in Jerusalem, and this Zionist project would end such coexistence. After the Young Turk revolt in 1908, Arab nationalists of Palestine began to dream of a state of their own, free of Turkish control. When the first Arab Congress met in Paris in 1913, a telegram of support was signed by 387 Arabs from the Near East, 130 of them Palestinians. In 1915, Ben-Gurion became aware of these Arab aspirations for Palestine and found them profoundly disturbing. ‘It hit me like a bomb,’ he said later. ‘I was utterly confounded.’ Yet, the Israeli writer Amos Elon tells us, despite this bombshell, Ben-Gurion continued to ignore the existence of the Palestinian Arabs. Only two years later, he made the astonishing suggestion that in a ‘historical and moral sense,’ Palestine was a country ‘without inhabitants.’ Because the Jews felt at home there, all other inhabitants of the country were merely the ethnic descendants of various conquerors. Ben-Gurion wished the Arabs well as individuals but was convinced that they had no rights at all…”

And so most of the elements necessary for the creation of the most insoluble political problem of modern times were already in place: Jewish Zionism, the “Christian Zionism” of the Anglo-Saxon nations, and Arab nationalism. Only one element was lacking (or rather: dormant): fundamentalist Islam…

512 Armstrong, _op. cit_, pp. 367-369.
State versus Church in France

The Dreyfus affair had enormous implications for France, splitting the country in two long after his eventual acquittal. The Jew Bernard Lazare and the left-wing politician Georges Clemenceau led the Dreyfusards, while the writer Charles Maurras and many Catholics and intellectuals sided with their opponents. In 1898 the Catholic monarchist nationalist association, Action Française was founded, and in the same year the novelist Emile Zola entered the lists on the side of the Dreyfusards, publishing his famous pamphlet J’accuse.

“J’accuse,” writes Alistair Horne, “an open letter to the President of the Republic, dramatically crystallized opinion in Paris... L’affaire was, in the words of Léon Blum, a future prime minister and a Jew himself, then in his twenties, ‘A human crisis, less extended and less prolonged in time but no less violent than the French Revolution.’ To an English visitor, ‘Paris palpitated’, and the same man sensed a lust for blood in the air. Divisions created by l’affaire ran all through Parisian society. At cafés ‘Nationalists’ and ‘Revisionists’ sat at different tables on opposite sides of the terraces; salons became polarized; Monet and Degas didn’t speak for years; Clemenceau fought a duel with an outspoken anti-Semite; six out of seven Ministers of Defence resigned in the course of the scandal...”513

Jean Comby writes: “Waldeck-Rousseau, head of government, took steps against those members of religious orders who had become involved in politics, the Assumptionists, and then worked out legislation against the congregations which had grown up without definite legal status. They were upbraided for their political action, their riches, their rejection of human rights, and their influence on some of the youth group whom they made an opposition to Republican youth.

“The law of 9 July 1901, which on the whole was very liberal towards the associations, made an exception of the congregations: they had to obtain special authorization from the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate.

“In 1902 the new head of government, Emile Combes, a one-time seminarian who had become fiercely anti-clerical, turned the law on associations into a militant law. He closed 3000 educational establishments which had not been authorized. In 1903 he caused all requests for authorization to be refused en bloc with the exception of a few missionary congregations. Finally in 1904 he forbade even authorized congregations to do any teaching. The dispersion of the congregations gave rise to some painful scenes, such as the expulsion of the Carthusians. Men and women belonging to religious orders had to shut their schools and return to the lay state, or else go into exile. It was a traumatic experience for them to live in the secular world when they were old and had no resources.

“Anti-clericalism broke out to an unprecedented degree. Outcasts in the administration, teaching and the army, practising Catholics had files opened on them and were kept under surveillance. Processions were attacked, sometimes with loss of life. Saints who had given their names to streets had to make way for heroes of the Republic and of science.

“The Concordat existed, but what did it mean in such a context? A great many small things led to the breaking off of diplomatic relations between France and the Vatican in July 1904. Everything was pointing towards separation. Catholics observed the Concordat for doctrinal and financial reasons. Some supporters of separation wanted to make de-Christianization a machine. Others, in particular the law reporter Aristide Briand, wanted a moderate separation which would burst the abscess of anti-clericalism. The Law of Separation was promulgated on 9 December 1905. It recognized freedom of worship. It recognized freedom of conscience and abolished the budget for worship. The churches’ possessions were handed over to administrative religious associations formed by the faithful of the various denominations.

“The Concordat of 1901 was abolished in a unilateral manner because the other signatory, the pope, had not been consulted. Pius X condemned the law for a first time in the encyclical Vehementer (February 1906), and for a second time (August 1906) when forbidding the formation of administrative religious organizations which took no account of the hierarchical organization of the church. Meanwhile, the survey of the churches’ possessions had led to violent incidents in some places. Because of its association with them, the church had to abandon seminaries, presbyteries, bishoprics, which were handed over to the community. However, in order not to inflame the situation, the churches and many of the presbyteries were allowed to use the buildings as before and the community was responsible for their upkeep.”

As was to be expected, many of the violent attacks on the Church came from the Grand Orient and its affiliates in continental Masonry, which, as we have seen, had been exclusively atheist anti-theist and militantly antichristian since 1877.


“If it has to be said very loudly that the Church, Catholicism or even Christianity is incompatible with any republican regime. Christianity is an outrage to reason, an outrage to nature. I also declare very clearly that I wish to pursue the idea of the Convention and to complete the work of de-Christianizing France which was taking place in utter calm and as happily as could be imagined until the day when Napoleon concluded his Concordat...

And why do we Republicans and above all we socialists want to de-Christianize this country? Why are we fighting against religion? We are fighting against religion because we believe - and I say this again - that it is a permanent obstacle to progress and civilization.”

On the other hand, the Pope in his encyclical Vehementer (11 February 1906) wrote: “This theory of separation is the clearest negation of the supernatural order. In fact it limits the action of the state to the pursuit of public prosperity in this life, though that is only a secondary matter for religious societies; and as though such a thing were alien to it, it is in no way concerned with the ultimate reason for their existence, which is eternal bliss.” (Comby, op.cit., p. 161) (V.M.)
Thus in 1881 the Belgian Mason Frély wrote: “Down with the Crucified One! You have already held the world under your yoke for 18 centuries, your kingdom is finished. God is not needed.”

Again, at the 1902 Convent of the Grand Orient, the Grand Master, Brother Delpeche, expressed the hatred of Christ in a striking form: “The triumph of the Galilean has lasted twenty centuries. In his turn he is dying. That mysterious voice, which once cried: ‘Great Pan is dead!’ from the mountains of Epirus, is today proclaiming the end of that deceiving God who had promised an age of peace and justice to those who would believe in him. The illusion has lasted long enough; but the lying God is disappearing in his turn; he is going to take his place, amidst the dust of the ages, with those other divinities of India, Egypt, Greece and Rome, who saw so many deluded creatures prostrate themselves before their altars. Freemasons, we realise, not without joy, that we ourselves are no strangers to this downfall of false prophets. The Church of Rome, based on the Galilean myth, began to decline rapidly from the very day on which the Masonic association was established. From a political point of view, Freemasons have often differed among themselves. But at all times Freemasonry has stood firm on this principle – to wage war against all superstitions and against all forms of fanaticism.”

Again, in 1913 the Convent of the Grand Orient of France declared: “We no longer recognise God as the aim of life; we have created an ideal which is not God, but humanity.”

The Freemasons “were so closely associated with the Radical Party,” writes Ridley, “that some of them tended to look askance at Socialists who wished to become Freemasons. After the French Socialist Party, the SFIO, was formed in 1905, there were applications from Socialists who wished to join. Despite the objections of these old Radical Party hacks, the Grand Orient agreed to admit Socialists, and lowered the admission fees and the subscription which had previously been too high for members of the working class who would have liked to join. At the beginning of the twentieth century several prominent Socialists – Jean Longuet, Jean Monnet, Roger Salengro, and Vincent Auriol – were Freemasons; but the two greatest French Socialists of the twentieth century, Jean Jaurès and Léon Blum, were not.

“Many schoolteachers were Freemasons, and often came into conflict with the local Catholic priest. In 1910 the Catholics were complaining that at least 10,000 schoolteachers were Freemasons. The army and the Church continued to regard the Freemasons as a subversive organization...”

---

515 Frély, in Archpriest Lev Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 357 ©.
516 De Poncins, Freemasonry and the Vatican, Chulmeigh : Britons Publishing Company, p. 73.
“By 1914,” writes J.M. Roberts, “more than four-fifths of the world’s land surface outside Antarctica was under either a European flag, or the flag of a nation of European settlement.” This extraordinary, global expansion of European power must be considered the most striking fact of the century 1815-1914. Other changes in that period – the growth of nationalism, of democracy and socialism, of science (including pseudo-science) and technology – were perhaps more profound. But it was European imperialism that spread these profounder developments throughout the world, and therefore made possible the transformation of the world in the image of European culture and the European revolution that we see today.

The last phase of this European conquest of the world that ended in 1914 was marked especially by the “Scramble for Africa”, “a spreading of European power into the non-European world unrivalled in extent and pace since the sixteenth-century Spanish conquests in the Americas. Outside Algeria or South Africa, for most of the nineteenth century only a little of Africa behind a few coastal enclaves had been in European hands. In 1879 the arrival of a British army in Egypt registered yet another setback for the Ottoman empire, of which that country remained formally a part, and also a change in the continent’s fate; to the south, even before the century ended, Anglo-Egyptian rule had been pushed deep into the Sudan. Elsewhere, southwards from Morocco round to the Cape of Good Hope, the African coastline was by the beginning of the twentieth century entirely divided between Europeans (British, French, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese and Belgians) with the exception of the isolated black republic of Liberia. The empty wastes of the Sahara and Sahel became nominally French, Tunisia was a French protectorate. The Belgian king enjoyed as a personal estate (and his agents acted atrociously) most of the rest of the Congo, which was soon to prove some of the richest mineral-bearing land in Africa; the Belgian state was to take over responsibility from him for what was called the ‘Congo Free State’ in 1906. Further east, apart from the Boer republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State over which the British government claimed suzerainty, British territories ran almost continuously from the Cape of Good Hope up to the Rhodesias, which were hemmed in by the Belgian Congo and German and Portuguese East Africa (Tanganyika and Mozambique). The last two cut them off from the sea, but further north, from Mombasa, Kenya’s port, a belt of British territory stretched throughout Uganda to the borders of the Sudan and the headwaters of the Nile. Somalia (divided between the British, Italian and French) and Italian Eritrea isolated Ethiopia, the only African country other than Liberia still to escape European domination. This ancient Christian [Monophysite] polity was ruled by the only African monarch of the nineteenth century to avert the European threat by a military success, the annihilation of an Italian army at Adowa in 1896. Other Africans could not prevail, as the Anglo-Egyptian conquest of the Sudan in 1898, and, in the next century, the Portuguese mastery (with some difficulty) of insurrection in Angola in 1902, the British destruction of the Zulu and Matabele in 1907, and,

---

519 Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
most bloodily, the German quelling of Tanganyika in 1907 and massacred of the Herrero of south-west Africa in the same year, were to show.\textsuperscript{520}

And yet the paradoxical thing is that, as Niall Ferguson writes, “the twentieth century rejected empire, in principle, if not in practice. The rejection may be said to have begun with the publication of one of the most influential of all anti-imperialist tracts, J.A. Hobson’s \textit{Imperialism: An Essay}, the central thrust of which – that the British Empire was a racket, run for the sole benefit of a tiny elite of financiers and their clients – later inspired Lenin’s tract \textit{Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism}. To Lenin, the First World War was a direct result of imperialist rivalries…”\textsuperscript{521}

If the twentieth century rejected imperialism, it remained, as Hobson wrote, “the most powerful movement in the current politics of the western world” at least until the First World War, and is far from dead today, although the original imperialist nations have bowed out of the race. The question is: what caused it? And: how did it influence the perceptions and beliefs of the imperialists themselves?

Eric Hobsbawm writes: “The major fact about the nineteenth century is the creation of a single global economy, progressively reaching into the most remote corners of the world, an increasingly dense web of economic transactions, communications and movements of goods, money and people linking the developed countries with each other and with the undeveloped world… Without this there was no particular reason why European states should have taken more than the most fleeting interest in the affairs of, say, the Congo basin or engaged in diplomatic disputes about some Pacific atoll. This globalization of the economy was not new, though it had accelerated considerably in the middle decades of the century. It continued to grow – less strikingly in relative terms, but more massively in terms of volume and numbers – between 1875 and 1914. European exports had indeed grown more than fourfold between 1848 and 1875, while they only doubled from then until 1915. But the world’s merchant shipping had only risen, between 1840 and 1870, from 10 to 16 million tons, whereas it doubled in the next forty years, as the world’s railway network expanded from a little over 200,000 kilometres (1870) to over 1 million kilometres just before the First World War.

“This tightening web of transport drew even the backward and previously marginal into the world economy, and created a new interest among the old centres of wealth and development in these remote areas. Indeed, now that they were accessible many of these regions seemed at first sight to be simply potential extensions of the developed world, which were already being settled and developed by men and women of European stock, extirpating or pushing back the native inhabitants, generating cities and doubtless, in due course, industrial civilization: the USA west of the Mississippi, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Algeria, the southern cone of South America. The prediction, as we shall see, was off the mark. Nevertheless, though often

\textsuperscript{520} Roberts, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 96-97.

\textsuperscript{521} Ferguson, \textit{Colossus}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 172.
remote, such areas were in contemporary minds distinct from those other regions where, for climatic reasons, white settlement was unattractive, but where – to quote a leading imperial administrator of the time – ‘the European may come, in small numbers, with his capital, his energy and his knowledge to develop a most lucrative commerce, and obtain products necessary to the use of his advanced civilization’.

“For that civilization now had need of the exotic. Technological developments now relied on raw materials which, for reasons of climate or the hazards of geology, were to be found exclusively or profusely in remote places. The internal-combustion engine, that typical child of our period, relied on oil and rubber. Oil still came overwhelmingly from the USA and Europe (Russia and, a long way behind, Rumania) but already the oilfields of the Middle East were the subject of intensive diplomatic confrontation and horse-trading. Rubber was exclusively a tropical product, extracted by the atrocious exploitation of natives in the rainforests of the Congo and the Amazon, the target of early and justified anti-imperial protest. In due course it was extensively cultivated in Malaya. Tin came from Asia and South America. Non-ferrous metals of previously negligible importance became essential for the steel alloys required by high-speed technology. Some of these were freely available in the developed world, notably the USA, but others were not. The new electrical and motor industries hungered for one of the most ancient metals, copper. Its major reserves and eventually producers, were in what the late twentieth century called the Third World: Chile, Peru, Zaire, Zambia. And, of course, there was the constant and never satisfied demand for the precious metals which, in this period, turned South Africa into by far the greatest gold-producer in the world, not to mention its wealth of diamonds. Mines were the major pioneers in opening up the world to imperialism, and all the more effective because their profits were sensational enough to justify also the construction of feeder-railways.

“Quite apart from the demands of a new technology, the growth of mass consumption in the metropolitan countries produced a rapidly expanding market for foodstuffs. In sheer volume this was dominated by the basic foodstuffs of the temperate zone, grain and meat, now produced cheaply and in vast quantities in several zones of European settlement – in North and South America, Russia and Australasia. But it also transformed the market for the products long and characteristically known (at least in German) as ‘colonial goods’ and sold by the grocers of the developed worlds: sugar, tea, coffee, cocoa and its derivatives. With rapid transport and conservation, tropical and sub-tropical fruits became available: they made possible the ‘banana republic’…

“These developments did not change the shape and character of the industrialized or industrializing countries, though they created new branches of big business whose fortunes were closely tied to those of particular parts of the globe, such as the oil companies. But they transformed the rest of the world, inasmuch as they turned it into a complex of colonial and semi-colonial territories which increasingly evolved into specialized producers of
one or two primary products for export to the world market, on whose vagaries they were entirely dependent. Malaya increasingly meant rubber and tin, Brazil coffee, Chile nitrates, Uruguay meat, Cuba sugar and cigars. In fact, with the exception of the USA, even the white-settler colonies failed to industrialize (at this stage) because they too were caught in this cage of international specialization. They could become exceedingly prosperous, even by European standards, especially when inhabited by free and, in general, militant European immigrants with political muscle in elected assemblies, whose democratic radicalism could be formidable, though it usually stopped short of including the natives. A European wishing to emigrate in the Age of Empire would probably have done better to move to Australia, New Zealand, Argentina or Uruguay than anywhere else, including the USA. All these countries developed labour and radical-democratic parties, or even governments, and ambitious systems of public social welfare and security (New Zealand, Uruguay) long before European states did. But they did so as complements to the European (i.e. essentially British) industrial economy, and hence it did not pay them - or at any rate the interests committed to exporting primary products - to industrialize. Not that the metropoles would have welcomed industrialization. Whatever the official rhetoric, the function of colonies and informal dependencies was to complement metropolitan economies and not to compare with them.

“The dependent territories which did not belong to what has been called (white) ‘settler capitalism’ did not do as well. Their economic interest lay in the combination of resources with a labour force which, consisting of ‘natives’, cost little and could be kept cheap. Nevertheless the oligarchies of landowners and compradore traders - local, imported from Europe or both - and, where they had them, their governments, benefited from the sheer length of the period of secular expansion for their region's export staples, interrupted only by short-lived, though sometimes (as in Argentine in 1890) dramatic crises generated by trade cycle, over-speculation, war and peace. However, while the First World War disrupted some of their markets, the dependent producers were remote from it. From their point of view the era of empire, which began in the late nineteenth century, lasted until the Great Slump of 1929-33. All the same, in the course of this period they were to become increasingly vulnerable, as their fortunes were increasingly a function of the price of coffee (which by 1914 already produced 58 per cent of the value of Brazilian and 53 per cent of Columbian exports), of rubber and tin, of cocoa, beef or wool. But until the vertical fall in the price of primary commodities during the 1929 slump, this vulnerability did not seem of much long-term significance compared to the apparently unlimited expansion of exports and credits. On the contrary, as we have seen, before 1914 the terms of trade appeared to be, if anything, running in favour of the primary producers.

“Nevertheless, the growing economic significance of such areas for the world economy does not explain why, among other things, there should have been a rush by the leading industrial states to carve up the globe into colonies and spheres of influence. The anti-imperialist analysis of imperialism has suggested various reasons why this should have been so. The most familiar of
these, the pressure of capital for more profitable investment than could be ensured at home, investment secure from the rivalry of foreign capital, is the least convincing. Since British capital exports expanded enormously in the last third of the century, and indeed the income from such investments became essential for the British balance of payments, it was natural enough to connect the ‘new imperialism’ with capital exports, as J.A. Hobson did. But there is no denying that very little indeed of this massive flow went to the new colonial empires: most of British foreign investment went to the rapidly developing and generally old white-settler colonies, soon to be recognized as virtually independent ‘dominions’ (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa), and to what might be called ‘honorary’ dominions, such as Argentina and Uruguay, not to mention the USA. Moreover, the bulk of such investment (76 per cent in 1913) took the form of public loans to railways and public utilities which certainly paid better than investment in the British government debt – an average of 5 per cent as against an average of 3 per cent – but were equally certainly less lucrative than the profits of industrial capital at home, except no doubt for the bankers organizing them. They were supposed to be secure rather than high-yield investments. None of this means that colonies were not acquired because some group of investors did not expect to make a killing, or in defence of investments already made. Whatever the ideology, the motive for the Boer War was gold.

“A more convincing general motive for colonial expansion was the search for markets. The fact that this was often disappointed is irrelevant. The belief that the ‘overproduction’ of the Great Depression could be solved by a vast export drive was widespread. Businessmen, always inclined to fill the blank spaces on the map of world trade with vast numbers of potential customers, would naturally look for such unexploited areas: China was one which haunted the imagination of salesmen – what if every one of those 300 millions bought only one box of tin-tacks? – and Africa, the unknown continent, was another. The Chambers of Commerce of British cities in the depressed early 1880s were outraged by the thought that diplomatic negotiations might exclude their traders from access to the Congo basin, which was believed to offer untold sales prospects, all the more so as it was being developed as a paying proposition by that crowned businessman, King Leopold II of the Belgians. (As it happened, his favourite method of exploitation by forced labour was not designed to encourage high per capita purchases, even when it did not actually diminish the number of customers by torture and massacre).

“But the crux of the global economic situation was that a number of developed economies simultaneously felt the same need for new markets. If they were sufficiently strong their ideal was ‘the open door’ on the markets of the underdeveloped world; but if not strong enough they hoped to carve out for themselves territories which, by virtue of ownership, would give national business a monopoly position or at least a substantial advantage. Partition of the unoccupied parts of the Third World was the logical consequence. In a sense, this was an extension of the protectionism which gained ground almost everywhere after 1879: ‘If you were not such persistent protectionists,’ the
British premier told the French ambassador in 1897, ‘you would not find us so keen to annex territories.’ To this extent the ‘new imperialism’ was the natural product of an international economy based on the rivalry of several competing industrial economies, intensified by the economic pressures of the 1880s. It does not follow that any particular colony was expected to turn into Eldorado by itself, though this is what actually happened in South Africa, which became the world’s greatest gold-producer. Colonies might simply provide suitable bases or jumping-off points for regional business penetration. That was clearly stated by an official of the US State Department round the turn of the century, when the USA followed international fashion by making a brief drive for a colonial empire of its own.

“At this point the economic motive for acquiring some colonial territory becomes difficult to disentangle from the political action required for the purpose, for protectionism of whatever kind is economy operating with the aid of politics. The strategic motive for colonization was evidently strongest in Britain, which had long-established colonies which were crucially placed to control access to various zones of land and sea believed to be vital to Britain’s worldwide commercial and maritime interests or, with the rise of the steamship, which could function as coaling stations. (Gibraltar and Malta were old examples of the first, Bermuda and Aden turned out to be useful examples of the second.) There was also the symbolic or real significance for robbers of getting an appropriate share of loot. Once rival powers began to carve up the map of Africa or Oceania, each naturally tried to safeguard against an excessive portion (or a particularly attractive morsel) going to the others. Once the status of a great power thus became associated with raising its flag over some palm-fringed beach (or, more likely, over stretches of dry scrub), the acquisition of colonies itself became a status symbol, irrespective of their value. Around 1900 even the USA, whose kind of imperialism has never before or since been particularly associated with the possession of formal colonies, felt obliged to follow the fashion. Germany deeply resented the fact that so powerful and dynamic a nation as herself should own so notably smaller a share of colonial territory than the British and the French, though her colonies were of little economic and less strategic interest. Italy insisted on capturing notably unattractive stretches of African desert and mountain in order to back her standing as a great power, and her failure to conquer Ethiopia in 1896 undoubtedly lowered that standing.

“For if great powers were states which acquired colonies, small powers had, as it were, no ‘right’ to them. Spain lost most of what remained of her colonial empire as a consequence of the Spanish-American War of 1898... Plans to partition the remainder of Portugal’s African empire between the new colonialists were seriously discussed. Only the Dutch quietly kept their rich and ancient colonies (mainly in South-east Asia), and the King of the Belgians, as we have seen, was permitted to carve out his private domain in Africa on condition that he allowed it to be accessible to all, because no great power was willing to give others a significant share of the great basin of the Congo river. One ought, of course, to add that there were large tracts of Asia and the Americas where, for political reasons, massive share-outs of territory
by European powers were out of the question. In the Americas the situation of the surviving European colonies was frozen by the Monroe Doctrine: only the USA had freedom of action. In most of Asia, the struggle was for spheres of influence in nominally independent states, notably China, Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Exceptions to this were the Russians and the Japanese – the former successful in extending their area in Central Asia but unsuccessful in acquiring chunks of north China, the latter acquiring Korea and Formosa (Taiwan) as a result of a war with China in 1894-5. The main zones of competitive land-grabbing were thus, in practice, in Africa and Oceania.

“Essentially strategic explanations of imperialism have thus attracted some historians, who have tried to account for the British expansion in Africa in terms of the need to defend the routes to, and the maritime and terrestrial glacis of, India against potential threats. It is indeed important to recall that, speaking globally, India was the core of British strategy, and that this strategy required control not only over the short sea-routes to the subcontinent (Egypt, the Middle East, the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and South Arabia) and the long sea-routes (the Cape of Good Hope and Singapore), but over the entire Indian Ocean, including crucial sectors of the African coast and its hinterland. British governments were keenly aware of this. It is also true that the disintegration of local power in some areas crucial for this purpose, such as Egypt (including the Sudan), drew the British into establishing a much greater direct political presence than originally intended, and even into actual rule. Yet these arguments do not invalidate an economic analysis of imperialism. In the first place, they underestimate the directly economic incentive to acquire some African territories, of which Southern Africa is the most obvious. In any case the scramble for West Africa and the Congo was primarily economic. In the second place they overlook the fact that India was the ‘brightest jewel in the imperial crown’ and the core of British global strategic thinking precisely because of her very real importance to the British economy. This was never greater than at this time, when anything up to 60 per cent of British cotton exports went to India and the Far East, to which India was the key – 40-45 per cent went to India alone – and when the international balance of payments of Britain hinged on the payments surplus which India provided. In the third place, the disintegration of indigenous local governments, which sometimes entailed the establishment of European rule over areas Europeans had not previously bothered to administer, was itself due to the undermining of local structures by economic penetration. And, finally, the attempt to prove that nothing in the internal development of western capitalism in the 1880s explains the territorial redivision of the world fails, since world capitalism in this period clearly was different from what it had been in the 1860s. It now consisted of a plurality of rival ‘national economies’ ‘protecting’ themselves against each other. In short, politics and economics cannot be separated in a capitalist society, any more than religion and society in an Islamic one. The attempt to devise a purely non-economic explanation of the ‘new imperialism’ is as unrealistic as the attempt to devise a purely non-economic explanation of the rise of the working-class parties.”

---

Imperialism: (2) The Cultural-Religious Aspect

In 1897 many of the crowned heads of Europe assembled in London to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne. The Diamond Jubilee celebrations, bringing together representatives of every nation of the empire, marked the zenith not only of the British empire, the largest in extent to that date in world history, but the acme of the idea of empire in general. And yet, as so often in history, the celebration of the triumph of the idea came when the idea was already being rejected...

The great poet of empire, Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), wrote a poem for the occasion, Recessional (referring to the procession of clergy out of church after a service), which was published in The Times the next day:

Far-called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget – lest we forget…

Coming from the “jingoistic” poet par excellence, this call to humility was unexpected. The British Empire, he warned, could go the same way as those ancient empires of Nineveh and Tyre if it succumbed to pride...

“The novelist Walter Besant wrote, ‘The people, bewildered with pride, were ready to shout they knew not what – to go they knew not whither. And then the poet spoke, and his words rang true. I know of no poem in history so opportune, that so went to all our hearts – that did its work and delivered its message with so much force.’”

The call to beware of hubris in this great poem was timely; only 17 years later there would begin the period of the two world wars, as a result of which Britain would lose her empire, if not all at once through military defeat, at any rate gradually, through exhaustion.

Pride in being the citizen of a great empire was fostered by governments in order to restrain discontent in the lower classes. As Hobsbawm writes, “Ever since the great imperialist Cecil Rhodes observed in 1895 that if one wanted to avoid civil war one must become imperialist, most observers have been aware of so-called ‘social imperialism’, i.e. of the attempt to use imperial expansion to diminish discontent by economic improvements or social reform or in other ways. There is no doubt at all that politicians were perfectly aware of the potential benefits of imperialism. In some cases – notably Germany – the rise of imperialism has been explained primarily in terms of ‘the primacy of domestic politics’...”

523 Adams, op. cit., p. 37.
“... Imperialism encouraged the masses, and especially the potentially discontented, to identify themselves with the imperial state and nation, and thus unconsciously to endow the social and political system represented by that state with justification and legitimacy. And in an era of mass politics... even old systems required new legitimacy. Here again, contemporaries were quite clear about this. The British coronation ceremony of 1902, carefully restyled, was praised because it was designed to express ‘the recognition, by a free democracy, of a hereditary crown, as a symbol of the world-wide dominion of their race’ (my emphasis). In short, empire made good ideological content.” 524

Paradoxically, therefore, the economic motives which, as Hobsbawm has shown, were the primary cause of imperialism, had beneficial political side-effects in the form of providing the emotional sop of “glory” to the discontented masses, which in turn had the effect of giving a belated boost to the now distinctly “old-fashioned” ideas of empire, dominion and hierarchy. Of course, the power of some of these European monarchs and emperors was at least partially subject to parliaments and so, as Hobsbawm says, symbolical. Nevertheless, there is power in symbols, especially if the symbols are persons who seem to justify themselves by continuing in power for long periods (Queen Victoria reigned for 64 years, and Franz Joseph had ruled Austria since 1848)...

And so the combination of the welfare state plus the “glory” of belonging to a powerful nation-state-empire helped to keep the revolution at bay for perhaps another generation. Indeed, the last decades before 1914 can be seen as a kind of “Indian summer” of the monarchical principle, when most European states, in spite of their democratic principles, were headed by monarchs, mostly German and mostly related in one way or another to Queen Victoria, the matriarch of Europe.

Another cultural-religious aspect of imperialism was the boost that it gave to Christian missions. Missionaries used the opportunities opened up by imperialism to penetrate the furthest corners of the earth: often they were there before the secular administrators and armies. The biggest missionary drives came from the biggest imperial empires: those of England (Protestant), France (Catholic) and Russia (Orthodox); but many other European and North American nations made contributions.

Comby writes: “When missionaries again began to leave Europe in the years from 1815 to 1820, European public opinion was not very interested in colonies in distant lands. The missionaries had few means at their disposal and put themselves on the level of travellers and explorers. Sometimes rivalries between Protestants and Catholics or the persecution of Christians involved the intervention of European governments pushed by religious groups (as in Oceania and Indo-China).

“After 1870, the European powers rivalled one another in the conquest of new territories: in 1885 the Treaty of Berlin divided Africa into areas of

influence. Article 6 recognized the freedom of preaching under the protection of the colonial powers. Colonization opened up an immense field to evangelization and mission could favour colonization. Colonial powers and missions joined together in a common task: building schools, hospitals, and so on. The colonizers wanted the missionaries to be of their own nationality. When the territory changed hands, the old missionaries were replaced by those of the new owner.

“However, there was not always perfect agreement between the missionary, the administrator, the soldier and the colonist. While loyal to the occupying power, the missionaries did not pay any less attention to the abuses of colonization, and the administrators thought of the missionaries as a rival power. The latter were closer to the people by their presence among them and by their knowledge of the language. They protested against the forced labour and an industrialization which destroyed traditional structures. Although French anti-clericalism was not exported to the colonies, the missionaries accused the administrators of favouring Islam at the expense of Christianity.”

Many missionaries did extraordinary work. But where conversions to Christianity were superficial – as was very often the case – the result could be a syncretistic mixture of Christianity and paganism, as when Jesuit missionaries in China were forced to compromise with pagan ancestor-worship, or hybrids between Catholicism and voodoo appeared in Latin America. Or the preaching of the superiority of Christianity might be confused in the mind of the convert with the superiority of the white race or of his technological culture, as happened in New Guinea.

525 Comby, op. cit., p. 174.
526 Cf. the cargo myth in New Guinea, which “has developed from the end of the nineteenth century to our day. The text which follows reflects the way in which it was expressed in the 1930s.

“'In the beginning Anut (God) created the heaven and the earth. On the earth he gave birth to all the flora and fauna and then to Adam and Eve. He gave these power over all things on earth and established a paradise for them to live in. He completed his beneficial work by creating and giving them cargo: canned meat, steel utensils, sacks of rice, tins of tobacco, matches, but not cotton clothing. For a time they were content with that, but finally they offended God by having sexual relations. In anger God chased them out of paradise and condemned them to wander in the bush. He took the cargo away from them and decreed that they were to spend the rest of their existence being content with the minimum needed to live.

“God showed Noah how to build the ark – which was a steamship like those one sees at the port of Madang. He gave him a peaked cap, a white shirt, shorts, socks and shoes... When the flood ended, God gave Noah and his family cargo as a proof of his renewed goodness towards the human race... Shem and Japheth continued to respect God and Noah and as a result continued also to benefit from the resources of cargo. They became the ancestors of the white races who have profited from their good sense. But Ham was stupid. He uncovered his father’s nakedness... God took the cargo away from him and sent him to New Guinea, where he became the ancestor of the natives.

“'God had said to the missionaries: “Your brothers in New Guinea are plunged into utter darkness. They have no cargo because of the folly of Ham. But now I have pity on them and want to help them. That is why you missionaries must go to New Guinea and remedy the error of Ham. You must put his descendants on the right way. When they again follow me, I will send them cargo, just as today I send it to you white people...”’” (Comby, op. cit., p. 177)
Or a complete reversal might happen: the potential convert, seeing the insensitivity, materialism or cruelty of his would-be instructors, could come to the firm conclusion that their own faith and race were superior, as happened in China.  

Perhaps the most unexpected result of the European missionary movement of the nineteenth century was the phenomenon of reverse conversion – the adoption by the conquerors of the faith of the conquered.

The beginning of this process may be said to date to 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny. Before that, English imperialism was determined to impose the truth of Christianity on the heathen. There was no hint of ecumenist indifference or relativism – and very little of Christian charity either. 

But then came the Indian Mutiny and the bloody reprisals that followed it. Missionary zeal cooled, and racism and avarice became the dominant motives of imperial rule. “A brown skin alone sufficed to earn death, and only a tiny minority among the British protested.”

This was followed, towards the end of the nineteenth century, by the gradual adoption, whether consciously or unconsciously, of the Hindu notion of the relativity of all religions. Thus Madame Blavatsky adopted a form of Hinduism in India and then preached it in Europe. And Swami Vivekandra preached Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893...

Indeed, reverse conversion may be seen to be the most profound and long-term effect of nineteenth-century imperialism. Relativism and ecumenism, which are indigenous to eastern religion, became entrenched in the lands of the West. And resistance to them was enfeebled by the guilt that the western peoples began to feel about their imperial past...

---

527 An anti-Christian tract of a Chinese secret society in around 1875 read: “Accursed be these Europeans, these missionary dogs or these governors of dogs who come to preach a barbarous religion and destroy the holy wisdom, who profane and defame the holy Confucius, although they have not studied the first page of a book. Heaven can no longer tolerate them and the earth refused to bear them; let us strike them, and send them to meditate eternally in the depths of hell. May their tongues be cut out because they seduce the masses by their lies and their hypocrisy has a thousand means of tearing out the heart... Let us throw their bodies in the desert to be food for dogs.” (Comby, op. cit., p. 178)

528 Thus Max Hastings writes: “Rev. Midgeley Jennings, in 1857 the Christian chaplain of Delhi, was nothing if not serious about his job. He considered the old Mughal capital ‘the last bastion of the Prince of Darkness himself’. He was determined that British power in the subcontinent should be harnessed to the wholesale conversion of the heathen. He asserted that the Christian faith was ‘a pearl of great price’ that could provide a just return to the Indian people for the Koh-i-noor diamond, so recently looted for Victoria’s crown.

“‘The time appears to have come when earnest consideration should be given to... whether or not all the men should embrace the same system of religion,’ wrote another zealot in the same cast as Jennings, and also quoted by William Dalrymple in The Last Mughal. ‘Railways, steam vessels and the electric telegraph are rapidly uniting all the nations of the earth... Hinduism is being everywhere undermined. Great will some day, in God’s appointed time, be the fall of it.’” (Review of William Dalrymple, The Last Mughal, London: Bloomsbury, 2006, in The Sunday Times Books, October 1, 2006, pp. 46-47.

529 Hastings, op. cit., p. 46.
German Nationalism

If Germany provided the world’s first welfare state, and the world’s largest socialist party, it was far from being a leftist country in general. A powerful reaction to certain aspects of democracy was building up.

After the first flush of pride in the victory over France in 1870, a general feeling of dissatisfaction set in in Germany. Many were unhappy at the triumph of Prussia and its regimented, despotic spirit. Engels had welcomed Bismarck’s success in reducing German “particularism”, but “the main disadvantage,” he said, “and it is a very big one, is the inevitable swamping of Germany by the Prussian spirit”. The liberals were unhappy that Germany was not a fully parliamentary state, but was still largely controlled by the king, the army and the Prussian aristocracy. Antisemites like Paul de Lagarde, on the other hand, were unhappy that Germany was becoming too liberal, and that the new unified German state was the “little” one, excluding Austria – whose inclusion, he believed, justified a great war. The Catholics were unhappy with Bismarck’s Kulturkampf legislation for obligatory civil marriage and the prohibition of the Jesuit order, resistance to which caused most Prussian bishops and thousands of priests to be thrown into prison. Over all this was a vaguer feeling that something was rotten in the house of Germany with its “hard-boiled Realpolitik and oppressive piety, ostentatious theatrical poses, self-righteous nationalism combined with internal discord, and finally materialism, overwhelmed by the successes of the natural sciences, but yet prepared suddenly to change into cheap mysticism”.

These problems became more acute when William II came to the throne in 1888. Bismarck was dismissed, and a treaty with Russia was allowed to lapse. “The monarch,” writes Spellman, was moving Germany “into an aggressive and expansionist posture. In language reminiscent of eighteenth-century divine-right absolutism, he informed the Provincial Diet of Brandenburg in 1891, ‘that I regard my whole position and my task as having been imposed on me from heaven, and that I am called to the service of a Higher Being, to Whom I shall have to give a reckoning later.’ To Bismarck’s successor William confided in 1892 that he was not interested in personal popularity (although his actions belied this), ‘for, as the guiding principles of my actions, I have only the dictates of my duty and the responsibility of my clear conscience towards God’. In 1900 William told the future George V of England that as Kaiser he alone ‘was master of German policy and my country must follow me wherever I go’. In the judgement of one recent observer the emperor personified the dynastic culture of later nineteenth-century Europe: ‘He was a monarch by Divine Right yet always the parvenu; a medieval knight in shining armour and yet the inspiration behind that marvel of modern technology, the battle fleet; a dyed-in-the-wool reactionary yet also – for a time at least – the Socialist Emperor who supported basic accident and retirement insurance for the industrial worker.’

It has been pointed out that Germany’s victory over France in 1870 served to calm the passion of wounded pride elicited by the defeats inflicted by Napoleon. However, the victory also had the opposite effect, stoking up national pride in the new, united nation-state and a new belief in its rights in relation to its neighbours. Thus while Germany’s problem in 1806 had been defeat in war, the temptation after 1870 was victory and the hubris that came from it. War had humbled the old enemy and united the nation (almost): why should it not continue to cure the nation’s ills?

The roots of war-worship were to be found in Germany’s not-so-distant past. Thus in his treatise On War (1832) the Prussian general Karl von Clausewitz had famously declared that “war is the continuation of politics by other means”. Gradually the idea became entrenched that war is a cleansing process sweeping away the decadence that comes from too much peace. And there were more mystical reasons for supporting war. Thus Hegel considered that “the German spirit is the spirit of the new world. Its aim is the realization of absolute Truth as the unlimited self-determination of freedom.” Clearly war could not be taboo to “unlimited self-determination”...

As Barbara Ehrenreich writes: “In the opinion of Hegel and the later theorists of nationalism, nations need war – that is, the sacrifice of their citizens – even when they are not being menaced by other nations. The reason is simple: The nation, as a kind of ‘organism’, exists only through the emotional unity of its citizens, and nothing cements this unity more decisively than war. As Hegel explained, peace saps the strength of nations by allowing citizens to drift back into their individual concerns: ‘In times of peace civil life expands more and more, all the different spheres settle down, and in the long run men sink into corruption, their particularities become more and more fixed and ossified. But health depends upon the unity of the body and if the parts harden, death occurs.’ Meaning, of course, the death of the nation, which depends for its life on the willingness of the citizens to face their own deaths. War thus becomes a kind of tonic for nations, reviving that passion for collective defence that alone brings the nation to life in the minds of its citizens. Heinrich von Treitschke, the late-nineteenth-century German nationalist, put it excitedly: ‘One must say in the most decided manner: “War is the only remedy for ailing nations!” The moment the State calls, “Myself and my existence are at stake!” social self-seeking must fall back and every party hate be silent. The individual must forget his own ego and feel himself a member of the whole... In that very point lies the loftiness of war, that the small man disappears entirely before the great thought of the State...’

Fortunately, while Bismarck was no liberal, he was not a warmonger, defining politics, contrary to Clausewitz, as “the art of the possible”. He did not look for Lebensraum in the East or the Balkans (they were not worth “the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier”), which meant that he did not come into conflict with Russia. Nor did he join in the scramble for colonies overseas.

---

532 Davies, op. cit., p. 780.
Moreover, his nationalism was a provincial, Prussian one rather than a pan-German one. Bismarck renounced the idea of a “greater Germany” that included Austria, which would really have destroyed the balance of power and created the political revolution Disraeli feared. In any case, not having Austria was no disadvantage in terms of power, because Prussia without Austria was so much more powerful than all the other German princes put together that the new state, in spite of the resentment of its junior members at the preponderance of Prussia, was never in danger of fissiparous disintegration in the way that Austro-Hungary had been and continued to be.

Moreover, Austria was henceforth bound to depend on her more powerful “sister” if she was to retain her power in the face of Russia, and could be relied on not to enter into alliances with other great powers. With her complex mixture of nationalities, Germanic, Hungarian, Slav and Latin, Austria was weak; so it was not in her ally Germany’s interests that she should be dissolved into her constituent nationalities, thereby creating conflicts and involving the great powers on different sides of the conflicts. Bismarck did not encourage Austria’s forays into the Balkans, which might have involved Russia on the side of the Slavs and Germany on the side of Austria - which is precisely what happened in 1914...

So while Bismarck was at the helm of the German state, it was not likely that she would engage in rash military enterprises. Nevertheless, he did encourage militarism as a cultural tendency. For, as Evans points out, “it was above all in order to protect the autonomy of the Prussian officer corps from liberal interference that Bismarck was appointed in 1862. He immediately announced that ‘the great questions of the day are not decided by speeches and majority resolutions – that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood’. He was as good as his word. The war of 1866 destroyed the Kingdom of Hanover, incorporating it into Prussia, and expelled Austria and Bohemia from Germany after centuries in which they had played a major part in shaping its destinies, while the war of 1870-71 took away Alsace-Lorraine from France and placed it under the direct suzerainty of the German Empire. It is with some justification that Bismarck has been described as a ‘white revolutionary’. Military force and military action created the Reich; and in so doing they swept aside legitimate institutions, redrew state boundaries and overthrew long-established traditions, with a radicalism and a ruthlessness that cast a long shadow over the subsequent development of Germany. They also thereby legitimized the use of force for political ends to a degree well beyond what was common in most other countries except when they contemplated imperial conquests in other parts of the world. Militarism in state and society was to play an important part in undermining German democracy in the 1920s and in the coming of the Third Reich.

“Bismarck saw to it that the army was virtually a state within a state, with its own immediate access to the Kaiser and its own system of self-government. The Reichstag only had the right to approve its budget every seven years, and the Minister of War was responsible to the army rather than
to the legislature. Officers enjoyed many social and other privileges and expected the deference of civilians when they met on the street. Not surprisingly, it was the ambition of many a bourgeois professional to be admitted as an officer in the army reserves; while, for the masses, compulsory military service produced familiarity with military codes of conduct and military ideals and values. In times of emergency, the army was entitled to establish martial law and suspend civil liberties, a move considered so frequently during the Wilhelmine period that some historians have with pardonable exaggeration described the politicians and legislators of the time as living under the permanent threat of a coup d’état from above.

“The army impacted on society in a variety of ways, most intensively of all in Prussia, then after 1871 more indirectly, through the Prussian example, in other German states as well. Its prestige, gained in the stunning victories of the wars of unification, was enormous. Non-commissioned officers, that is, those men, who stayed on after their term of compulsory military service was over and served in the army for a number of years, had an automatic right to a job in state employment when they finally left the army. This meant that the vast majority of policemen, postmen, railwaymen and other lower servants of the state were ex-soldiers, who had been socialized in the army and behaved in the military fashion to which they had become accustomed. The rule-book of an institution like the police force concentrated on enforcing military models of behaviour, insisted that the public be kept at arm’s length and ensured that, in street marches and mass demonstrations, the crowd would be more likely to be treated like an enemy than an assembly of citizens. Military concepts of honour were pervasive enough to ensure the continued vitality of duelling among civilian men, even amongst the middle classes, though it was also common in Russia and France as well.

“Over time, the identification of the officer corps with the Prussian aristocracy weakened, and aristocratic military codes were augmented by new forms of popular militarism, including in the early 1900s the Navy League and the veterans’ clubs. By the time of the First World War, most of the key positions in the officer corps were held by professionals, and the aristocracy was dominant mainly in traditional areas of social prestige and snobbery such as the cavalry and the guards, much as it was in other countries. But the professionalization of the officer corps, hastened by the advent of new military technology from the machine gun and barbed wire to the aeroplane and the tank, did not make it any more democratic. On the contrary, military arrogance was strengthened by the colonial experience, when German armed forces ruthlessly put down rebellion of indigenous peoples such as the Hereros in German South-West Africa (now Namibia). In 1904-07, in an act of deliberate genocide, the German army massacred thousands of Herero men, women and children and drove many more of them into the desert, where they starved. From a population of some 80,000 before the war, the Hereros declined to a mere 15,000 by 1911 as a result of these actions. In an occupied part of the German Empire such as Alsace-Lorraine, annexed from France in 1871, the army frequently behaved like conquerors facing a hostile and refractory population. Some of the most
flagrant examples of such behaviour had given rise in 1913 to a heated debate in the Reichstag, in which the deputies passed a vote of no-confidence in the government. This did not of course force the government to resign, but it illustrated none the less the growing polarization of opinion over the role of the army in German society.”

Now it was in rivalry with Britain that German militarism particularly manifested itself. And yet it was not at all obvious why Britain and Germany should be such implacable opponents. The two countries had never fought against each other: Britain’s traditional rival was France, more recently Russia; and Germany feared above all the powerful nations to the west and east of her – the same France and Russia – who by this time had formed a military alliance. It was in fact more logical, from a geopolitical point of view, for the two Protestant nations of Britain and Germany, linked as they were by race, by religion and even by dynasty, to unite against the two other powers.

Nor were their interests in other respects that divergent. True, there were commercial rivalries – but not so fierce as to be likely to lead to war. True, Britain had a vast colonial empire overseas, whereas Germany had almost nothing. But Bismarck had set the general direction of German expansion: not overseas, but overland. While Britain would build her power on her maritime strength and overseas empire, Germany would build up her army on land and satisfy her Lebensraum by looking to the east – an enterprise that Britain, with her morbid antipathy to Russia, was unlikely to oppose.

However, Divine Providence so disposed events as to lead Britain away from her natural ally and closer to her former rivals. The first such event was the Boer War of 1899-1902 in South Africa, which Britain won, but at great cost, both morally and financially. The Germans were, of course, rooting for their cousins, the Boers; and they noted, as did the rest of the world, how the British had fought for purely avaricious ends (the acquisition of the diamond mines), and with considerable cruelty to the losers, whose lands were destroyed and whose women and children were herded into concentration camps – the first of their kind in history.

The second event was a joint naval action of British and German naval forces against Venezuela in 1902. The aim was to punish the Venezuelans for reneging on their debts; but the methods used, against almost defenceless people, caused revulsion – and it was the actions of the German vessels that seemed especially repellent. Thus in New York the Evening Post sneered: “As a method of maintaining German prestige the attack upon a mud fort and a collection of naked fishermen must be regarded as a failure.” Chancellor Bernhardt von Bulow claimed that “no American or British admiral would have done otherwise.” But the damage to German prestige was done; resentment against the Anglo-Saxons was aroused. And so, as Anthony Delano writes, “after the Venezuela adventure, the Kaiser was later to say, relations between Britain and Germany were never the same.”

In 1898, the Navy League had been founded by the arms manufacturer Krupp with a view to catching up with Britain on the seas. “Within a decade,” writes Richard Evans, “it was dwarfing the other nationalist groups, with a membership totalling well over 300,000 if affiliated organizations were counted as well. By contrast, the other nationalist pressure-groups were seldom able to exceed a membership of around 50,000, and the Pan-Germans seemed to be permanently stuck below the 20,000 mark.”

However, the nationalists, and particularly the Pan-Germans, were to be the force of the future. Building on the militarism described above, they created an ideology that was to re-emerge after the defeat of the First World War in the form of Nazism.

Freudian Psychology

Earlier we observed: “Schopenhauer in metaphysics, Darwin in science, and Marx in political theory formed a kind of unholy consubstantial trinity, whose essence was Will.” We may add to this unholy trinity of false teachers exalting the power of Will – Sigmund Freud, whose Interpretation of Dreams (1900) and Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1904) are sometimes seen as heralding the beginning of a truly modern consciousness. If Darwin defines the modern attitude to the physical and biological world, and Marx does the same in relation to the social world, while Schopenhauer gives to both a philosophical base, Freud defines it in relation to the inner world of the psyche. His theory, too, is a doctrine of will, combining both the eros-will of the biological world as interpreted by Darwin and Schopenhauer and the thanatos-will of the social world as interpreted by Marx. But he internalizes them, as it were, within the individual human psyche and in particular within the unconscious, the “id”.

A.N. Wilson calls The Interpretation of Dreams “one of the most extraordinary and revolutionary texts ever to come from a human brain”. It “expounded the theory on which all subsequent psychoanalysis was based, even or especially those psychoanalytical theories which reacted most violently against it: namely, that the human mind consists of what might be described as two layers. With the outer layer, of our conscious mind, we reason and form judgements. In reasonable, well-balanced individuals, the pains and sorrows of childhood have been worked through, put behind them. With the unhealthy, however, neurotic or hysterical individuals, there is beneath the surface of life a swirling cauldron of suppressed memories in which lurk the traumas (the Greek word for wounds) of early experiences. Under hypnosis, or in dreams, we re-enter the world of the subconscious and with the care of a helpful analyst we can sometimes revisit the scenes of our early miseries and locate the origins of our psychological difficulties…

“On the publication of Die Traumdeutung, there were many people who, if not actually tempted to burn the book, must have found its contents shocking.

536 Evans, op. cit., p. 46.
‘If Oedipus the King is able to move modern man no less deeply than the Greeks who were Sophocles’ contemporaries, the solution can only be that the effect of Greek tragedy does not depend on the contrast between fate and human will, but is to be sought in the distinctive nature of the subject-matter exemplifying this contrast. There must be a voice within us that is ready to acknowledge the compelling force of fate in Oedipus… His fate moves us only because it could have been our own as well, because at our birth the oracle pronounced the same curse upon us as it did on him. It was perhaps ordained that we should all of us turn our first sexual impulses towards our mother, our first hatred and violent wishes against our father. Our dreams convince us of it. King Oedipus, who killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, is only the fulfilment of our childhood wish. But, more fortunate that he, we have since succeeded, at least insofar as we have not become psychoneurotics, in detaching our sexual impulses from our mothers, and forgetting our jealousy of our fathers.’ Dr Freud, further, told his Vienna lecture audiences: ‘The dream of having sexual intercourse with the mother is dreamed by many today as it was then, and they recount it with the same indignation and amazement [as Oedipus].’

The most important purely psychological idea of Freud’s was that of repression. Repression, as C.S. Lewis reminds us, must not be confused with suppression. “Psychology teaches us,” he writes, “that ‘repressed’ sex is dangerous. But ‘repressed’ is here a technical term: it does not mean ‘suppressed’ in the sense of ‘denied’ or ‘resisted’. A repressed desire or thought is one which has been thrust into the subconscious (usually at a very early age) and can now come before the mind only in a disguised and unrecognisable form. Repressed sexuality does not appear to the patient to be sexuality at all. When an adolescent or an adult is engaged in resisting a conscious desire, he is not dealing with a repression nor is he in the least danger of creating a repression. On the contrary, those who are seriously attempting chastity are more conscious, and soon know a great deal more about their own sexuality than anyone else…”

Lewis regards Freud’s purely psychological theories as true and not at all incompatible with Christianity: the problems arise with his philosophical ideas. However, his purely psychological theories have not stood the test of time. Thus “every particular idea is wrong,” says psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer: “the universality of the Oedipus complex, penis envy, infantile sexuality…” This is not to say that these phenomena are never found.

---

537 Wilson, After the Victorians, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
539 Psychoanalysis, he believes, says nothing very useful about normal feelings, but does help to remove abnormal or perverted feelings. “Thus fear of things that are really dangerous would be an example of the first kind [of feelings]: an irrational fear of cats or spiders would be an example of the second kind. The desire of a man for a woman would be of the first kind: the perverted desire of a man for a man would be of the second… What psychoanalysis undertakes to do is to remove the abnormal feelings, that is, give the man better raw material for his acts of choice; morality is concerned with the acts of choice themselves” (op. cit., p. 81).
Only that they do not play that vast, almost exclusive, role in the formation of human personality that Freud and the Freudians attributed to them.

As for his philosophical ideas, two in particular have proved to be both influential and enduring: first, the idea that human psychology is completely reflected in the activity of the brain, so that neuroscience and psychology should eventually merge\textsuperscript{542}, and secondly, the idea that the roots, not only of man’s abnormal actions, but even of his higher activities, the things which are most characteristic of his humanity – politics, art, religion - are to be found in childhood conflicts.

But let us begin with that which Freud is most often credited with – or accused of: starting the twentieth-century revolution in sexual morality. And we must say immediately that this is not just. Freud was an heir, rather than the originator, of the long romantic tradition of exalting the fallen instincts to primacy in the life of the soul; and he never actually preached free love in the manner of his contemporaries H.G. Wells or D.H. Lawrence. Nevertheless, his pseudo-scientific division of the soul into “ego”, “super-ego” and “id” had this important consequence: that it treated the internalized social conscience, the “super-ego”, as no less irrational in origin than the “id”. The task of psychoanalysis was to strengthen the “ego”, the sole outpost of rationality in the soul, against the irrational pressure of both the “id” and the “super-ego”. This was not to say that the “super-ego” was to be rejected, – as Freud argued in \textit{Civilization and its Discontents} (1930), submission to it, at least most of the time, is the price we pay for civilization, - but that it was to recognized for what it was: a faculty owing its origins to childhood conflicts and traumas and no more rational in itself than the “id” which it censored.

“Unfortunately,” writes Fr. (later Bishop) George Grabbe, “in almost all modern theories [on the education of children] the influence of the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, can be discerned to a greater or lesser degree. Therefore it is impossible to pass it by in silence.

“When in the nineties of the last century he began to publish the results of his investigations, it seemed to many to be a kind of revelation. Many thought that he really had found the key revealing the way to the understanding and study, if not of all psychical illnesses, at any rate, the majority of psycho-neuroses.

“Freud was a Jew and an atheist. It goes without saying that this limited his understanding of psychological problems. There was much that he did not see, could not see, did not want to see, or saw in a distorted mirror – although, perhaps, he also tried to be an objective scientist.

\textsuperscript{541} Thus Jessie Chambers recounts how D.H. Lawrence told her: “You know, Jessie, I’ve always loved mother.” “I know you have,” I replied. “I don’t mean that,” he answered, “I’ve loved her – like a lover – that’s why I could never love you.” (in Wilson, \textit{After the Victorians}, \textit{op. cit}, p. 73).

\textsuperscript{542} The idea was first put forward in his \textit{Project for a Scientific Psychology} (1895) (Claudia Kalb, “The Therapist as Scientist”, \textit{Newsweek}, March 27, 2006, p. 42).
“Psychoanalysis, which he founded, proceeds from the premise that all the difficulties arising in the life of man in relation to the society that surrounds him are unfailingly based on some unuttered, internal conflict that nests in his subconscious.

“Here, however, it is necessary to clarify what precisely is understood in psychoanalysis by the sphere of the subconscious.

“Human thought is realised on two levels: the conscious and the subconscious. Between them is a thread, a defined boundary. This is graphically represented by the plane dividing the two halves of the brain – the upper and the lower. In the upper, or conscious part of the brain everything needed for the administration of the everyday reality of the man is concentrated, while the fruits of the experience of life pass into the subconscious sphere, whence, when it is necessary, they again enter the conscious sphere of the brain by means of the association of ideas and memory. The subconscious sphere, therefore, is as it were a huge warehouse of experience and experiences written in the book of life. All the feelings, all the experiences lived through, all the ideas, all the judgements and completed acts are written there exactly and in detail, as on a sound- or video-tape...

“Although psychoanalysis contains within its name the word ‘soul’, it concentrates its investigations on the functions of the brain. But we, of course, know that with the latter is mysteriously linked our invisible soul, which constitutes a part of our personality. We must suppose that much that the psychiatrists refer to as the workings of the subconscious sphere of the brain in fact belong not only, or not so much, to the brain, as to the soul.

“When a man is hypnotised, the conscious part of his brain is put to sleep, and the hypnotist himself as it were takes its place and insinuates this or that instruction to the never-sleeping subconscious part of the brain, which passes them on to separate organs of movement and feeling.

“Orthodox asceticism, through a man’s voluntary submission of himself to God and constant prayer carried out not only consciously but also subconsciously (that is ‘prayer of the heart’), concentrates grace-filled experiences, thoughts and feelings in the subconscious sphere, and thereby makes the ascetic internally united in his striving for God.

“But the subconscious sphere can also be, so to speak, a warehouse of sinful experiences and feelings with which the soul and conscience, being ruled by certain moral ideals, cannot be fully reconciled. However, in the interaction of the two spheres of the brain there can also be the opposite phenomenon, when the good that lives in the soul and in the subconscious fights with the sinful movement of conscious thought before the man can accept the sin that is insinuated by it.
“This internal struggle can have devastating consequences for the human soul, especially if sin opens the way to the devil to take control of human thought, which we call demon-possession and which, of course, the psychiatrist-positivists do not recognise. As a result of the internal conflict abnormal phenomena appear that serve as the subject of investigation of psychiatrists, for whom Freud as it were revealed the existence in man of the subconscious sphere.

“Most often they see the cause of this conflict in the suppression of passions of a sexual nature dwelling in man.

“The struggle with these passions is truly the lot of the majority of mortals. In Christianity this struggle is inspired by the striving to preserve one’s moral and spiritual purity, without which our union with God is impossible. In prayer, love and labour for the glory of God our carnal instincts are as it were transfigured.

“Outside this [context] abstinence from the passions turns out to be an imposed or external law or implacable rules of decency, and then it becomes a heavy burden for a man.

“Psychoanalysis usually looks at abstinence only from this latter point of view. For it the aim, without going into a moral evaluation of a man’s passions, is to remove the suffering elicited by the struggle inside him, to pacify him, reconcile him with the passion living in him, pointing out to him a path on which he can peacefully live in society without transgressing its external laws of decency, but at the same time without condemning his passion and without rejecting it.

“The overcoming of passions and sin is recognised as necessary only insofar as the man who gives himself up to them unrestrainedly harms his own health. That is, the passions are not subjected to extirpation. The limitation of their satisfaction is dictated in essence not so much by higher moral principles as by practical considerations.

“Psychoanalysis preaches a life directed by the instincts, the suppression of which in its eyes is an abnormal phenomenon and one that threatens to engender dangerous internal conflicts…

“Even the unbelieving Freud scientifically discovered among people the presence of a certain psychological life hidden from the materialists. His opponents found even more significant signs of it in man. Some of them came to the conclusion that religious feeling was innate in every man. Jung said that he who does not see this is blind.

“Freud and his disciples, both those who were faithful to him and those who rebelled against him, were unable to obtain the complete picture because, in investigating people damaged by original sin and deprived of inner unity, they did not have a correct criterion for the norm…

314
“Education founded on the principles of psychoanalysis cannot raise the level of morality, for psychoanalysis, which sometimes almost claims to take the place of religion, in actual fact has no firm religious or moral foundations. The criterion of the norm for every person in psychoanalysis is the person himself with all his sins and inadequacies, in a condition of calm after the overcoming of all conflicts arising within his consciousness. In psychoanalysis they try to overcome and remove conflicts by putting the conscience to sleep and reconciling the person with the sin that lives in him. Therefore the very profound critic of psychoanalysis, Arved Runestam, in his book *Psychoanalysis and Christianity* (Augustiana Press, 1958) notes with reason that psychoanalysis in theory and practice is in general a powerful proclaimer of the right to a life directly ruled by instinct. ‘One cannot say,’ he writes, ‘that this signifies the recognition of morality as an evil in itself. But morality is represented rather as an inescapable evil than a positive good’ (p. 37)…”

**The Psychoanalysis of Totalitarianism**

It was in this first decade of the twentieth century that the great totalitarian dictators Hitler and Stalin were growing up. The new science of psychoanalysis was coming into being at the same time; and it is tempting, in view of the emphasis psychoanalysis places on childhood fantasies and traumas, to examine whether psychoanalysis throws any light on the rise of the dictators through a study of their childhood and youth. Some light is cast on the personalities of Hitler and Stalin by the following psychological analysis of their childhood by a distinguished historian.

“Hitler,” writes Alan Bullock, “has naturally attracted the interest of psychiatrists, and several studies have been published paying particular attention to his relationship with an over-protective mother and a domineering father, a common enough pattern in the German-speaking world at the turn of the century and one which Freud saw as the origin of an Oedipus complex. Most historians, however, have found difficulty in placing too much reliance on psychological ‘explanations’ of Hitler, for two reasons. The first is the lack of reliable evidence, forcing the psychiatrist into an excessive reliance on speculation and arguments from analogy. The second is that, even if one accepts that it helps to describe Hitler (or Stalin) as a man suffering from the delusions of a psychopathic, a schizophrenic or a paranoid personality, how does one distinguish between the normally crippling effect of such disorders, as encountered by psychiatrists in their ordinary practice, and the extraordinary measure of success which Hitler (and Stalin) achieved in translating their delusions into a terrifying reality?

“In the present state of the art – and of the evidence – the best course appears to be to treat any claim to a comprehensive analysis of Hitler and Stalin with scepticism, but to make use of particular insights which may be

---

thrown up in psychological studies. Two examples will make clear what I mean.

“The first is Erik Erikson’s ‘identity crisis in adolescence’ which he places, in Hitler’s case, between his first rejection by the Academy [of Arts] in September 1907, when he was eighteen, and his second in October 1908, a period also marked by the shock of his mother’s death. According to Erikson, if a young man or woman fails to overcome the crisis of adolescence and establish an identity, serious psychological damage will follow. Erikson argues that this is what happened to Hitler, who remained ‘the unbroken adolescent who had chosen a career apart from civilian happiness, mercantile tranquillity and spiritual peace’.

“The second is Erich Fromm’s argument that the cause of the conflict between Hitler and his father was not, as Hitler claimed, his refusal to accept his father’s wish to see him become a civil servant, nor, as the Freudians claim, an Oedipal rivalry for the love of his mother. Instead, Fromm sees Hitler’s failure at high school as due to an increasing withdrawal into a world of fantasy, and his quarrel with his father as a rejection of the father’s unwelcome attempt to bring him back to a sense of reality and make him face the question of his future. The affection his mother Klara had lavished on him in his first five years was to encourage a sense of his own uniqueness – as in the case of Stalin. Fromm argues that both men, despite the differences between them, were classic cases of the narcissistic personality type.

“‘Narcissism’ is a concept originally formulated by Freud in relation to early infancy, but one which is now accepted more broadly to describe a personality disorder in which the natural development of relationships to the external world has failed to take place. In such a state only the person himself, his needs, feelings and thoughts, everything and everybody pertaining to him are experienced as fully real, while everybody and everything else lacks reality or interest.

“Fromm argues that some degree of narcissism can be considered an occupational illness among political leaders in proportion to their conviction of a providential mission and their claim to infallibility of judgement and a monopoly of power. When such claims are raised to the level demanded by a Hitler or a Stalin at the height of their power, any challenge will be perceived as a threat to their private image of themselves as much as to their public image, and they will react by going to any lengths to suppress it.

“So far psychiatrists have paid much less attention to Stalin than to Hitler. Lack of evidence is part of the reason. There has been no parallel in the case of the Soviet Union to the capture of documents and interrogation of witnesses that followed the defeat of Germany. But more important is the striking contrast in temperament and style between the two men: the flamboyant Hitler, displaying a lack of restraint and extravagance of speech which for long made it difficult for many to take him seriously, in contrast to the reserved Stalin, who owed his rise to power to his success, not in exploiting,
but in concealing his personality, and was underestimated for the opposite reason – because many failed to recognize his ambition and ruthlessness. Nor surprisingly, it is the first rather than the second who has caught the psychiatrists’ attention. All the more interesting then is the suggestion that underlying the contrast there was a common narcissistic obsession with themselves.

“There is one other insight, which Stalin’s American biographer, Robert Tucker, has adopted from Karen Horney’s work on neurosis. He suggest that his father’s brutal treatment of Stalin, particularly the beatings which he inflicted on the boy, and on the boy’s mother in his presence, produced the basic anxiety, the sense of being isolated in a hostile world, which can lead a child to develop a neurotic personality. Searching for firm ground on which to build an inner security, someone who in his childhood had experienced such anxiety might naturally search for inner security by forming an idealistic image of himself and then adopting this as his true identity. ‘From then on his energies are invested in the increasing effort to prove the ideal self in action and gain others’ affirmation of it.’ In Stalin’s case, this fits his identification with the Caucasian outlaw-hero, whose name he assumed, and later with Lenin, the revolutionary hero, on whom he fashioned his own ‘revolutionary persona’, with the name of Stalin, ‘man of steel’, which echoed Lenin’s own pseudonym…”

Of course, terms such as “narcissism” are not so different from traditional categories of Christian morality such as “pride”, “vanity”, etc. So this approach is hardly earthshakingly original. Nevertheless, the idea that these psychological traits or moral vices arise, in part, out of experiences in childhood is an interesting one with a certain, albeit limited, validity.

This approach is also helpful in the understanding of why these two evil men adopted their ideologies. In both cases, the reverse side of narcissism, or love of self, is the hatred of the other who threatens one’s image of the self. Hitler early identified the Jew as his hate-object. For Stalin it was all authorities - from the Church which threw him out of the seminary to the Tsarist state which sent him to Siberia.

The ideology of Marxism fitted well into this psychology. “He found a natural attraction in the Marxist teaching of the inevitability of class war and the overthrow of an unjust and corrupt social order. The attraction was as much psychological as intellectual, appealing to the powerful but destructive emotions of hatred and resentment which were to prove so strong a force in Stalin’s character, and offering a positive outlet for an ambition and abilities which would otherwise have been frustrated. As Robert Tucker wrote, the gospel of class war legitimised his resentment against authority: ‘it identified his enemies as history’s.’”

---


So much for the psychology of politicians – or, at any rate, of totalitarian politicians. But what of those who follow them, the masses? Can they be understood in similar terms?

Why do the people surrender their freedom into the hands of their leaders? To reply: because it is in their political or economic interests is to treat the matter in “far too rational a manner”, according to Freud. “Libidinal ties are what characterize a group”. It is the love of the people for their leader that creates the group and the relationships within the group, which disappear “at the same time as the leader”. “The credulity of love is the most fundamental source of authority”.

Such an explanation seems inadequate to explain most democratic politics with its much more mundane, often highly critical attitude to political leaders. With regard to totalitarian politics, however, it is much more applicable. Indeed, it seems impossible to explain the passionate love of the peoples of Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia for their leaders without invoking some such deep psychological motive – stirred up and exploited by the demonic powers of the spirit world.

Consider, for example, the quasi-hypnotic effect that Hitler had on the German masses. The 1934 Nuremberg rally, writes Martin Gilbert, “had seemed to Hitler the ideal vehicle for nationwide propaganda, using documentary film with artistic presentation. He entrusted this task to a former actress and fiction film maker, Leni Riefenstahl, who worked to turn the 1934 rally into an epic paean of praise for the ‘Leader’. Her film Triumph of the Will (Triumph des Willes) was finished in 1935, and gave German audiences an almost mystical view of Hitler’s charismatic appeal: the film opens with Hitler in an aeroplane flying to Nuremberg, and descending through the clouds to the city and the rally, where the Nazi Party officials proclaim repeatedly: ‘Hitler is Germany, the Party is Germany, thus Germany is Hitler and the Party is Germany’. The film historian Charles Musser writes: ‘The exchange of looks and salutes creates a bond of obedience between these different levels, one in which the identity of the self is only found through identifying with the nation and the Party. In the process, Hitler and the various troops are eroticized by Riefestahl’s adoring vision.’

We see a similar process taking place in relation to Stalin. A Lithuanian writer wrote: “I approached Stalin’s portrait, took it off the wall, placed it on the table and, resting my head in my hands, I gazed and meditated. What should I do? The Leader’s face, as always so serene, his eyes so clear-sighted, they penetrated into the distance. It seems that his penetrating look pierces

547 Freud, Group Psychology, p. 94; in Rieff, op. cit., p. 235.
548 Freud, Three Essays, p. 150; in Rieff, op. cit., p. 237.
my little room and goes out to embrace the entire globe... With my every fibre, every nerve, every drop of blood I feel that, at this moment, nothing exists in this entire world but this dear and beloved face.”

The masses' eroticization of their leaders went together with their brutalization. With the discarding of reason, both eros and thanatos are activated. Films deploring war, such as Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, were denigrated in Nazi Germany, while conflict and hardness were exalted over tenderness and compassion. “Hitler rejected ‘the loathsome humanitarian morality’, which he followed Nietzsche in seeing as a mask for people’s defects: ‘In the end, only the urge for self-preservation can conquer. Beneath it is so-called humanity, the expression of a mixture of stupidity, cowardice, and know-it-all conceit, will melt like snow in the March sun. Mankind has grown great in eternal struggle, and only in eternal peace does it perish.”

The same moral revaluation, the same emphasis on steely hardness (Stalin comes from the Russian word for “steel”) was taking place in Stalinist Russia. “Nadezhda Mandelstam described how ‘Thou shalt not kill’ was identified with ‘bourgeois’ morality: ‘A number of terms such as ‘honour’ and ‘conscience’ went out of use at this time – concepts like these were easily discredited, now the right formula had been found.’ She noticed that people were going through a metamorphosis: ‘a process of turning into wood – that is what comes over those who lose their sense of values’.”

---

4. THE EAST: PEACEMAKERS AND WARMONGERS

It is especially worthy of note – and I always linger on this word in the Gospel – that Scripture puts as the last sign of the beginnings of the sorrows that must precede the coming of the Antichrist – rebellions.

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov.553

Our Tsar is the representative of the will of God, and not of the will of the people. His will is sacred for us, as the will of the Anointed of God; we love him because we love God. If the Tsar gives us glory and prosperity, we receive it from him as a Mercy of God. But if we are overtaken by humiliation and poverty, we bear them with meekness and humility, as a heavenly punishment for our iniquities. And never do we falter in our love for, and devotion to, the Tsar, as long as they proceed from our Orthodox religious convictions, our love and devotion to God.

Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.554

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Revelation 3.2-3

The period 1881-1905, from the murder of Tsar Alexander II to the abortive revolution of 1905, was a period of “reaction” in Russian politics – of reaction, that is, to the liberal reforms of Alexander II and the liberal, westernizing attitudes they presupposed.

Reaction expressed itself in three main areas: in the rejection of constitutionalism in politics, in the suppression of nationalism among the non-Russian peoples of the empire and especially among the Jews, and in the preservation of the status quo in Church-State relations. However, less resistance was offered to western influence in at least two areas: in the beginnings of western-style economic imperialism in the Far East, and in the development of ecumenical contacts with western Christian confessions. Moreover, towards the end of the period the liberal-atheist mania of the 1860s was resumed on a much broader scale…

The Murder of Tsar Alexander II

On March 1, 1881, in broad daylight, a bomb was thrown at the Tsar’s carriage. It injured some of the guards but left him unhurt. Disregarding his personal safety, he left his carriage and was attending to the injured when a second bomb was thrown, fatally wounding him and many others. He was rushed to the Winter Palace where he died in the presence of his grief-stricken family. Both his son and heir, the future Tsar Alexander III, and his grandson, the future Tsar Nicholas II, were present. A magnificent church dedicated to

553 Bishop Ignatius, Sochinenia (Works), volume IV, pp. 494-495 ®.
554 St. Barsanuphius, Keleinie Zapiski (Cell Notes), Moscow, 1991, p. 44 ®.
the Resurrection of Christ, "Upon the Blood", was built on the place of the murder, which later became a stronghold of the Catacomb Church...

“The murder of Alexander II,” writes G.P. Izmestieva, “was seen by monarchical Russia as the culmination of the liberal ‘inebriation’ of earlier years, as the shame and guilt of all, God’s judgement and a warning.” As St. Ambrose of Optina wrote on March 14: “I don’t know what to write to you about the terrible present times and the pitiful state of affairs in Russia. There is one consolation in the prophetic words of St. David: ‘The Lord scattereth the plans of the heathens, He setteth aside the devices of the peoples, and He bringeth to nought the plans of princes’ (Psalm 32.10). The Lord allowed Alexander II to die a martyric death, but He is powerful to give help from on high to Alexander III to catch the evildoers, who are infected with the spirit of the Antichrist. Since apostolic times the spirit of the Antichrist has worked through his forerunners, as the apostle writes: ‘The mystery of iniquity is already working, only it is held back now, until it is removed from the midst’ (II Thessalonians 2.7). The apostolic words ‘is held back now’ refer to the powers that be and the ecclesiastical authorities, against which the forerunners of the Antichrist rise up in order to abolish and annihilate them upon the earth. Because the Antichrist, according to the explanation of the interpreters of Holy Scripture, must come during a time of anarchy on earth. But until then he sits in the bottom of hell, and acts through his forerunners. First he acted through various heretics who disturbed the Orthodox Church, and especially through the evil Arians, educated men and courtiers; and then he acted cunningly through the educated Masons; and finally, now, through the educated nihilists, he has begun to act blatantly and crudely, beyond measure. But their illness will turn back upon their heads, as it is written in the Scriptures. Is it not the most extreme madness to work with all one’s might, not sparing one’s own life, in order to be hung on the gallows, and in the future life to fall into the bottom of hell to be tormented forever in Tartarus? But desperate pride pays no attention, but desires in every way to express its irrational boldness. Lord, have mercy on us!”

It was not only the holy elders who saw in Russia the main obstacle to the triumph of “the mystery of iniquity”. “The same withholding role in Russia,” writes Mikhail Nazarov, “was seen by the founders of Marxism: ‘... It is clear to us that the revolution has only one truly terrible enemy – Russia’; the role of Russia is ‘the role predestined from on high of the saviour of order’.

“In those years Marx wrote in the New Rhine Newspaper (the organ of the ‘League of Communists’): ‘Russia has become a colossus which does not cease to elicit amazement. Russia is the one phenomenon of its kind in history: the terrible power of this huge Empire... on a world scale’. ‘In Russia, in this despotic government, in this barbaric race, there is such energy and activity as one would look for in vain in the monarchies of the older States’. ‘The Slavic

---

barbarians are innate counter-revolutionaries’, ‘particular enemies of democracy’.

“Engels echoed Marx: what was necessary was ‘a pitiless struggle to the death with Slavdom, which has betrayed and has a turncoat attitude towards the revolution… a war of destruction and unrestrained terror’. ‘A general war will pay back the Slavic barbarians with a bloody revenge.’ ‘Yes, the world war that is to come will sweep off the face of the earth not only the reactionary classes and dynasties, but also whole reactionary peoples – and this will be progress!’”

The elders saw signs of the coming Antichrist not only in specific acts of terrorism, such as the murder of Alexander II, but also in the general weakening and softening of the power of the Orthodox Autocracy.

Thus Constantine Leontiev, a disciple of Elder Ambrose of Optina, wrote: “One great spiritual elder said: ‘It is true that morals have become much softer. But on the other hand most people’s self-opinion has grown, and pride has increased. They no longer like to submit to any authorities, whether spiritual or secular: they just don’t want to. The gradual weakening and abolition of the authorities is a sign of the approach of the kingdom of the antichrist and the end of the world. It is impossible to substitute only a softening of morals for Christianity.’”

But, as St. John (Maximovich) of Shanghai and San Francisco wrote: “Alexander II’s murder unleashed a storm of indignation in Russia, which helped strengthen the moral fibre of the people, as became evident during the reign of Alexander III…”

**The Jewish Question**

Now the murder of the Tsar was carried out by a revolutionary organization called “The People’s Will”, which consisted mainly of Jews. This fact, in the words of Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), “clarified for people who were capable of at any rate some thought that these murders and blasphemies were not at all the expression of the people’s will, but on the contrary, a shameful spitting at that will. Moreover, they proceeded not so much from an honourable predilection for false theories as from the hands of the natural enemies of the fatherland – people of another race and nation, who were being rewarded with a corresponding financial payment.”

---


Paradoxically, however, the Jews who joined the revolutionary movement and killed the Tsar were not religious Jews who believed in the Talmud, but atheists – and their atheism had been taught them in Russian schools by Russian teachers who had abandoned their own, Orthodox faith and adopted the faith of the revolutionary thinkers of the West.

But this distinction was lost on the ordinary people, who suffered in their everyday life from (religious) Jews that exploited and deceived them, and believed that the (atheist) Jews who killed the Tsar must be of the same kind. Moreover, the violence of the act profoundly shocked them; for, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn explains, “that the deaths of the heirs or tsars of the previous century – Alexis Petrovich, Ivan Antonovich, Peter III, Paul – were violent remained unknown to the people. The murder of March 1, 1881 shocked the minds of the whole people. For the masses of the simple people, and especially the peasants, it was as if the foundations of their life were being shaken. But again, as the narodovoltsy had calculated, this could not fail to be reflected in some kind of explosion. And it was. But in an unpredictable way: in pogroms against the Jews in New Russia and Ukraine.”

On April 15 the first pogrom broke out in Elizavettgrad. It spread to Kiev and Kishinev and Odessa. The government reacted energetically: in Kiev 1400 people were arrested.

However, there were not enough policemen for the scale of the disturbances, and “the government recognised that it had been insufficiently active. An official declaration proclaimed that in the Kiev pogrom ‘measures to rein in the crowd had not been undertaken quickly and energetically enough’. In June, 1881 the director of the department of police, V.K. Plehve, in his report to the sovereign on the situation in Kiev province named ‘as one of the reasons “for the development of the disturbances and their not very speedy suppression” the fact that the military court “was very condescending to the accused, and very superficial in approaching the affair’. Alexander III commented on the report: ‘This is unforgiveable’."

Many western historians have accused the Tsarist government of complicity in the pogroms. But in fact, as David Vital admits, “Alexander did display genuine dismay and dissatisfaction when reports of the weak and ineffective conduct of the security forces were brought to him; and fury when he learned of cases of military officers and men having actually joined the mob. His instructions were to deal firmly with rioters, to see to it that their leaders were severely flogged; and to make clear to the civil and military authorities alike that their business was to restore and maintain order before all else…. All in all then, while much was murky in official Russia at this time, the grounds for positing a momentarily disoriented, intrinsically inefficacious

561 Solzhenitsyn, Dvesti let vmeste (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, part 1, p. 185 ©.
562 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 189.
government not so much stimulating as failing to cope with simmering, popular, generalized discontent seem solid enough."

Again, Dominic Lieven writes: "... The pogroms were terrible but they were a long way from the systematic ethnic cleansing, let alone genocide, of whole peoples which were to be the strategies of supposedly more civilized European people towards the Jews. Moreover, all recent research emphasizes that the tsarist central government itself did not organize or instigate pogroms, though local authorities sometimes winked at them and more often were slow to stamp on them. Tsarist ministers did not connive in murder and were in any case deeply uneasy at outbreaks of mass violence and very scared that the ‘dark people’s’ uncontrollable propensity for anarchic settling of scores might easily target the ruling classes themselves. On the other hand, it is the case that knowledge of their superiors’ frequent antipathy to the Jews could encourage junior officials to believe that failure to stop pogroms could go unpunished..."

"The reasons for the pogroms were earnestly investigated and discussed by contemporaries. Already in 1872, after the Odessa pogrom, the governor-general of the South-Western region had warned in a report that such an event could happen again in his region, for ‘here hatred and enmity towards the Jews is rooted in history and only the material dependence of the peasants on them at the present, together with the administration’s measures, holds back an explosion of discontent in the Russian population against the Jewish race’. The governor-general reduced the essence of the matter to economics: ‘I have counted and estimated the commercial-industrial property belonging to the Jews in the South-Western region, and at the same time have pointed to the fact that the Jews, having taken eagerly to the renting of landowners’ lands, have leased them out again to the peasants on very onerous terms’. And this causal nexus ‘was generally recognised in the pogrom years of 1881’.

“In the spring of 1881 Loris-Melikov had also reported to the Sovereign: ‘At the root of the present disturbances lies the profound hatred of the local population for the Jews who have enslaved them. But this has undoubtedly been used by evil-minded people.’"

This was true. The “evil-minded” revolutionaries, both Russian and Jewish, used the hatred to their own end. And yet it is little wonder that conservative opinion, while deploring the pogroms, saw the root cause of the Jews’ problems in the Jews themselves, in their economic exploitation of the peasants.

When Loris-Melikov was succeeded in 1881 by Count N.P. Ignatiev, the latter, on the instructions of the emperor, sent him a memorandum on the causes of the pogroms. In it, writes Geoffrey Hosking, he outlined “his fears

565 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 192.
about domination by ‘alien forces’. In it he linked the whole Westernizing trend with the Jews and the Poles… ‘In Petersburg there exists a powerful Polish-Jewish group in whose hands are directly concentrated, the stock exchange, the advokatura, a good part of the press and other public affairs. In many legal and illegal ways they enjoy immense influence on officialdom and on the course of affairs in general.’ They used this influence to mould public opinion in the interests of their favourite schemes: ‘the broadest possible rights for Poles and Jews, and representative institutions on the western model. Every honest voice from the Russian land is drowned out by Polish-Jewish clamours that one must only listen to the ‘intelligentsia’ and that Russian demands should be rejected as old-fashioned and unenlightened.’”\(^{566}\)

Among the most important causes of the pogroms, write M. and Yu. Krivoshein, Ignatiev “mentioned the changed economic condition of the peasants after the reform of 1861: having become personally free, but unskilled in financial operations, the peasants gradually fell into dependence on the local Jewish usurers and, in this way, peasant gardens, lands, cattle, etc. began to pass over to the latter. Explosions of popular anger followed.

“In his turn the very prominent banker Baron G.O. Ginzburg interceded before the emperor for the usurers who had been beaten up by the peasants, imploring him not to allow repressions against his co-religionists. The banker’s reply was Count N.P. Ignatiev’s speech in the name of Alexander III before a deputation of Jewish society:

“… ‘Your situation is not comforting, but it depends to a great extent on you to correct it. Living amidst a population that is foreign to you, you have drawn upon yourselves such hatred that for several months I was forced to apply force merely to protect you. Investigations have by no means confirmed your favourite ploy, that they are attacking you as proprietors. Still less can what has happened in the south be ascribed to religious intolerance. The Russian people, like the state, is very tolerant in matters of faith – it takes a lot to draw it out of its tolerance. In the East there live many people of other races amidst the Russian population who are not Christians. However, it is not necessary to employ armies there in order to defend them.

“While being profoundly sorrowful over the disorders that have taken place, and doing everything that depends on me to prevent them in the future, I warn you that I will not act in a one-sided manner. On reviewing the causes of the disorders, and having studied their details, it is impossible not to recognize that in many cases they have been elicited by the Jews themselves; lengthy cohabitation with the Jews has rooted the conviction in the local population that there is no law which the Jew would not be able to bypass.

“‘One can rely on the bayonet, but one cannot sit on it. Remember that you are being protected, but that it is impossible to tolerate a situation in which it is constantly necessary to protect the Jews from the consequences of popular

\(^{566}\) Hosking, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 390.
anger. Try to search out for yourselves productive occupations, labouring with your own hands, abandon tavern-keeping and usury... I am willing and ready to assist you in everything that can accelerate your transition to agricultural, craft and factory work, but of course you will find in me a very powerful opponent if you, under the guise of crafts and other productive occupations, develop throughout the provinces of Russia the trades that you usually practise now.

"I will end the way I began: as long as you keep your kahal organization, your cohesion and your striving to take everything into your hands, while violating the laws of the country, you will in no way be able to count on privileges and a broadening of your rights or places of settlement, which will create fresh complications..."  

Ignatiev’s reference to the kahal organization was especially emphasized by religious leaders, such as Archbishop Nicanor of Odessa and Kherson, who said in 1890: “Religion is the basis of the powerful Jewish spirit. The more or less secret-open religious organisation of the kahal is that mighty, many-cylindered machine which moves the millions of Jews to secretly planned ends. Only a blind man could not see how terrible and threatening is this power! It is striving for nothing less than the enslavement of the world!... In the last century it has had horrific successes by relying on European liberalism, on equality before the law, etc. It is mixing up people of other faiths more and more closely, while it rules its own people like a machine. All the Jews are in essence like one man. We reason in a liberal way whether it is useful or harmful to ban bazaars on feast-days. But the secret Jewish power says to its own people: ‘Don’t you dare! Honour the Sabbath! Honour the law of your fathers! The law gives life and power to Jewry!’ And look: not a single Jew dares to go out on Saturday from Nikolaev to Kherson or Odessa. The railway trains are empty, while the steamer services between these great cities stop completely. It is strange and offensive for the Christian people and such a great Kingdom as ours! But what a foreign power! And how bold and decisive it is. This is a religious power coming from the religious organisation of the kahal.”

Of course, the kahal, that “state within a state”, was supposed to have been abolished in the reign of Nicholas I. Evidently, as in so many other ways, the Jews had managed to get round that law...

In May, 1882 the government issued new “temporary rules” which “forbade Jews to resettle or acquire property in rural areas, even within the Pale, while outside it the police were instructed to enforce restrictions on Jewish residence which had previously been widely flouted. In the following years Jews were barred from entering the advokatura and the military-medical professions, while a numerus clausus was imposed on their admission to secondary and higher education in general. They were also

denied the vote in zemstvo and municipal elections. In 1891, at Passover, there was a mass expulsion of illegal resident Jews from Moscow, which deprived the city of two-thirds of its Jewish population.”

The Jewish radicals of the previous reign had seen themselves as joining Russian culture, whose famous writers had been their idols. Unfortunately, however, the pogroms served to radicalize Jewish youth still further and in an opposite direction, so that their radicalism was now nationalist rather than internationalist, and anti-Russian rather than pro-Russian. As Solzhenitsyn writes: “The general turning-point in Jewish consciousness in Russia after 1881-82 could not fail, of course, to be reflected to some extent also in the consciousness of the Jewish revolutionaries in Russia. These youths had first left Jewry, but afterwards many returned, ‘the departure from “Jew street” and return to the people’, ‘our historical destiny is bound up with the Jewish ghetto, and from it comes our national essence’. Until the pogroms of 1881-82 ‘it absolutely never entered the head of any of us revolutionaries to think about the necessity’ of publicly explaining the role of the Jews in the revolutionary movement. But the pogroms elicited ‘amongst… the majority of my compatriots an explosion of discontent’. And so ‘not only the intelligent Jews in general, but also some revolutionary Jews, who previously had felt not the slightest bond with their nationality… suddenly recognised themselves as obliged to devote their strength and abilities to their unjustly persecuted compatriots’. ‘The pogroms brought out previously hidden feelings and made the youth more sensitive to the sufferings of their people, and the people more receptive to revolutionary ideas.”

And yet there is reason to believe that the great wave of Jewish emigration from Russia to the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – about two million Jews emigrated to America alone before 1914 - was not elicited primarily by the pogroms. A more important factor, probably, was the introduction of a state monopoly on the sale of alcohol in 1896.

Solzhenitsyn writes: “There is no doubt about it: the introduction of the state wine monopoly turned out to be a very powerful blow at the economy of Russian Jewry. And right up to the World War itself, when it more or less came to an end, the state wine monopoly continued to be a favourite target of public displeasure – although only it introduced strict control over the quality of the spirits sold in the country and their purity. And although the state monopoly also removed the livelihood of Christian publicans…, it was nevertheless made out to be primarily an anti-Jewish measure: ‘The introduction of the state sale of wines in the Pale of Settlement at the end of the 90s deprived more than 100,000 Jews of their livelihood’, ‘the authorities counted on pushing the Jews out of their village localities’, and from that time ‘trade in alcohol did not have its former significance for the Jews’.

569 Hosking, op. cit., pp. 392-393.
570 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 192.
“And it is precisely from the end of the 19th century that the emigration of Jews from Russia intensified. Its statistical link with the introduction of the state sale of wines has not been established, but these 100,000 lost livelihoods point to it. In any case, the Jewish emigration (to America) did not increase substantially until 1886-87, jumped for a short time in 1891-92, and its long and massive rise began in 1897…”\(^{572}\)

However, other means of exploiting the Christian peasantry remained. 18% of the Jews before the revolution, about one million people, were occupied in the sale of bread. And sometimes they would hoard the harvest and refuse to sell it so that the prices should fall. “It is not by accident that in the 90s of the nineteenth century agricultural cooperatives (under the leadership of Count Haydn and Bekhteev) arose for the first time in Russia, forestalling Europe, in the southern provinces. [This was envisaged] as a counter-measure to this essentially completely monopolistic hoarding of peasant bread.”\(^{573}\)

The Jews were also heavily involved in the lumber, sugar, gold, oil and banking industries. And by 1900 they controlled one-third of the trade of Russia.

With such a heavy involvement in the country’s economy, it is not surprising to learn that, of those Jews who emigrated between 1899 and 1907, only one per cent were educated.\(^{574}\) The educated had no reason to leave: there were plenty of opportunities for them in Tsarist Russia. We might also have expected that those who remained would be gradually assimilated. But no: the Jews chose emancipation (education), but not assimilation. They fought for equality of rights, but without the loss of their Jewishness.\(^{575}\)

“From the beginning of the century a ‘Bureau for the Defence’ of the Jews in Russia was organized from prominent lawyers and publicists…

“In these years ‘the Jewish spirit was roused to struggle’, and in many Jews there was ‘a rapid growth in social and national self-consciousness’ – but national self-consciousness no longer in a religious form: with the ‘impoverishment at the local level, the flight of the more prosperous elements… among the youth into the cities… and the tendency to urbanization’, religion was undermined ‘among the broad masses of Jewry’ from the 90s, the authority of the rabbinate fell, and even the yeshbotniks were drawn into secularization. (But in spite of that, in many biographies in the Russian Jewish Encyclopaedia were read about the generation that grew up on the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: ‘he received a traditional Jewish religious education’.)

\(^{572}\) Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 293-294.

\(^{573}\) Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 299.

\(^{574}\) Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 311.

\(^{575}\) Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., pp. 313-314.
“However, as we have seen, *Palestinophilia* began to develop in an unexpected form and with a strength that was unexpected for many…”

“Anti-Jewish manifestations - both abroad and in Russia - were being passionately discussed already in 1884 by Vladimir Soloviev, who was disturbed by them: ‘The Jews have always treated us in a Jewish way; but we Christians, by contrast, have not yet learned to treat Judaism in a Christian way’; ‘with regard to Judaism the Christian world *in its majority* has so far displayed either zeal not according to reason or a decrepit and powerless indifferentism’. No, ‘Christian Europe does not tolerate the Jews - unbelieving Europe does’.

“Russian society felt the growing importance of the Jewish question for Russia as much as half a century after the government. Only after the Crimean war did ‘embryonic Russian public opinion begin to become conscious of the presence of the Jewish problem in Russia’. But several decades would have to pass before the *primary importance* of this question was recognized. ‘Providence implanted the largest and strongest part of Jewry in our fatherland,’ wrote Vladimir Soloviev in 1891.

“But a year earlier, in 1890, Soloviev, finding incitement and support in a circle of sympathizers, composed the text of a ‘Protest’. [He wrote] that ‘the only reason for the so-called Jewish question’ was ‘forgetfulness of justice and love of man’, ‘a mindless attraction to blind national egoism’. – ‘The incitement of tribal and religious enmity, which is so counter to the spirit of Christianity… radically corrupts society and can lead to moral savagery…’ – ‘It is necessary decisively to condemn the anti-Semitic movement’ – ‘already from the single feeling of national self-preservation’.

“S.M. Dubnov recounts how Soloviev collected more than a hundred signatures, including those of Lev Tolstoy and Korolenko. But the editors of all the newspapers received a warning: don’t publish this protest. Soloviev ‘addressed Alexander III with an ardent letter’. However, he was warned through the police that if he insisted he would be administratively persecuted. And he abandoned the idea.

“As in Europe, the many-faceted growth of Jewish strivings could not fail to elicit in Russian society – alarm in some, sharp opposition in others, but sympathy in yet others…

“And in others – a political calculation. Just as in 1881 the People’s Will revolutionaries had thought of the usefulness of playing on the Jewish question…, so, some time later, the Russian liberal-radical circles, the left wing of society, appropriated for a long time the usefulness of using the Jewish question as a weighty political card in the struggle with the autocracy: they tried in every way to re-iterate the idea that it was impossible to attain equality of rights for the Jews in Russia in any other way than by the complete overthrow of the autocracy. Everyone, from the liberals to the SRs and

---

Bolsheviks, brought in the Jews again and again – some with sincere sympathy, but all as a useful card in the anti-autocratic front. And this card, without a twinge of conscience, was never let out of the hands of the revolutionaries, but was used right up to 1917…”

**Soloviev on Russia**

It was not only in relation to the Jewish question that the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev found himself expressing typically liberal viewpoints in the distinctly conservative 1880s. He was also a critic of the regime’s turn towards Russian nationalism. And he was an early “prophet” of ecumenism.

We have seen how, a generation earlier, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov had criticized the vaguely ecumenical Christianity that prevailed among the educated classes, and their admiration of western forms of Christianity. This admiration soon began to express itself in actual conversions. Thus a convert to English Evangelical Protestantism was Count V.A. Pashkov, and among the converts to Catholicism was Soloviev himself, although it is thought that he received communion from an Orthodox priest on his deathbed.

In 1889, in his work *La Russie et l’Eglise universelle* (Russia and the Universal Church), Soloviev tried to argue in favour of a union between the Russian empire and the Roman papacy. The Roman papacy was to be preferred above the Orthodox Church as the partner to the Russian empire because, in Soloviev’s opinion, the Orthodox Church had become a group of national Churches, rather than the Universal Church, and had therefore lost the right to represent Christ. “In every country reduced to a national Church,” he wrote, “the secular government (be it autocratic or constitutional) enjoys the absolute plenitude of all authority, and the ecclesiastical institution figures only as a special minister dependant on the general administration of the State.”

The Orthodox Church had a wealth of mystical contemplation, which must be preserved. “In Eastern Christendom for the last thousand years religion has been identified with personal piety, and prayer has been regarded as the one and only religious activity. The Western church, without disparaging individual piety as the true germ of all religion, seeks the development of this germ and its blossoming into a social activity organized for the glory of God and the universal good of mankind. The Eastern prays, the Western prays and labours.”

However, only a supernational spiritual power independent of the State could be a worthy partner of the State, forming the basis of a universal theocracy. For “here below, the Church has not the perfect unity of the heavenly Kingdom, but nevertheless she must have a certain real unity, a bond at once organic and spiritual which constitutes her a concrete

---

institution, a living body and a moral individual. Though she does not include the whole of mankind in an actual material sense, she is nevertheless universal insofar as she cannot be confined exclusively to any one nation or group of nations, but must have an international centre from which to spread throughout the whole universe...

“Were she not one and universal, she could not serve as the foundation of the positive unity of all peoples, which is her chief mission. Were she not infallible, she could not guide mankind in the true way; she would be a blind leader of the blind. Finally were she not independent, she could not fulfil her duty towards society; she would become the instrument of the powers of this world and would completely fail in her mission...

“If the particular spiritual families which between them make up mankind are in reality to form a single Christian family, a single Universal Church, they must be subject to a common fatherhood embracing all Christian nations. To assert that there exist in reality nothing more than national Churches is to assert that the members of a body exist in and for themselves and that the body itself has no reality. On the contrary, Christ did not found any particular Church. He created them all in the real unity of the Universal Church which He entrusted to Peter as the one supreme representative of the divine Fatherhood towards the whole family of the sons of Man.

“It was by no mere chance that Jesus Christ specially ascribed to the first divine Hypostasis, the heavenly Father, that divine-human act which made Simon Bar-Jona the first social father of the whole human family and the infallible master of the school of mankind.”

As we have seen, Dostoyevsky radically disagreed with his friend on this point, considering the papacy to be, not so much dependent on the State, as a State itself, and therefore not a Church, a spiritual institution, still less the Universal Church. Nor did he agree with the doctrine of papal infallibility, which Soloviev also supported. As Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote in 1890, in his review of Soloviev’s book: “If a sinful man cannot be accepted as the supreme head of the Universal Church without this bride of Christ being completely dethroned, accepting the compatibility of the infallibility of religious edicts with a life of sin, with a wicked will, would amount to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of wisdom by admitting His compatibility with a sinful mind. Khomiakov very justly says that besides the holy inspiration of the apostles and prophets, Scripture tells us of only one inspiration – inspiration of the obsessed. But if this sort of inspiration was going on in Rome, the Church would not be the Church of Christ, but the Church of His enemy. And this is exactly how Dostoyevsky defines it in his ‘Grand Inquisitor’ who says to Christ: ‘We are not with Thee, but with him’...

“Dostoyevsky in his ‘Grand Inquisitor’ characterised the Papacy as a doctrine which is attractive exactly because of its worldly power, but devoid
of the spirit of Christian communion with God and of contempt for the evil of the world…”

Soloviov’s views on Russia are also influenced by his Catholicism, especially in his rejection of Slavophilism in favour of what he considered a more universalist vision. Nevertheless, they contain important observations which are worth examining.

As N.O. Lossky writes, expounding Soloviev: “The relation between free theocracy and the past history of mankind can be established if we examine the ‘three fundamental forces’ which govern human evolution. One of these forces is centripetal: its purpose is to subordinate humanity to one supreme principle, to do away with all the manifoldness of particular forms, suppressing the freedom of personal life. The second force is centrifugal; it denies the importance of general unifying principles. The result of the exclusive action of the first force would be ‘one master and a dead multitude of slaves’: the extreme expression of the second force would be, on the contrary, ‘general egoism and anarchy, a multitude of separate units without any inner bond.’ The third force ‘lends the positive content to the first two, relieves them of their exclusiveness, reconciles the unity of the supreme principle with the free multiplicity of particular forms and elements and thus creates the wholeness of the universal human organism giving it a peaceful inner life.’

“The third force, which is called upon to give the human evolution its absolute content, can only be a revelation of the higher divine world; the nation which is to manifest this force must only serve as an intermediary between mankind and the world and be its free and conscious instrument. Such a nation must not have any specific limited task; it is not called upon to work out the forms and elements of human existence, but only to impart a living soul, to give life and wholeness to disrupted and benumbed humanity through its union with the eternal divine principle. Such a people has no need for any special prerogatives, any particular powers or outward gifts, for it does not act of its own accord, it does not fulfil a task of its own. All that is required of the people which is the bearer of the third divine force is that it should be free from limitedness and one-sidedness, should elevate itself over the narrow specialized interests, that it should not assert itself with an exclusive energy in some particular lower sphere of activity and knowledge, that it should be indifferent to the whole of this life with its petty interests. It must wholly believe in the positive reality of the higher world and be submissive to it. These qualities undoubtedly belong to the racial character of the Slavs, and in particular to the national character of the Russian people.’

“Soloviev hopes, therefore, that the Slavs and especially Russia, will lay the foundations of a free theocracy. He also tries to prove this by the following arguments of a less general nature. ‘Our people’s outer form of a servant, Russia’s miserable position in the economic and other respects, so far from

being an argument against her calling, actually confirms it. For the supreme power to which the Russian people has to introduce mankind is not of this world, and external wealth and order are of no moment for it. Russia’s great historical mission, from which alone her immediate tasks derive importance, is a religious mission in the highest sense of this word.”

This thesis, expounded in an address called “Three Forces”, and dating from 1877, shows Soloviev at his most Orthodox and most interesting. Clearly, Orthodoxy is the “third force”, as opposed to the totalitarian tendencies of the first (Catholicism, Islam, Communism) and the anarchical tendencies of the second (Protestantism, Democracy). However, his later works show a leaning towards the first force; and he takes his friend Dostoyevsky’s idea about the ability of the Russian nature to absorb foreign influences in a heretical direction.

Thus Lossky continues: “Indeed, the ideal of the Russian people is of [a] religious nature, it finds its expression in the idea of ‘Holy Russia’; the capacity of the Russian people to combine Eastern and Western principles has been historically proved by the success of Peter the Great’s reforms; the capacity of national self-renunciation, necessary for the recognition of the Pope as the Primate of the Universal Church, is inherent in the Russian people [sic!], as may be seen, among other things, from the calling in of the Varangians [?]. Soloviev himself gave expression to this characteristic of the Russian people when he said that it was ‘better to give up patriotism than conscience’, and taught that the cultural mission of a great nation is not a privilege: it must not dominate, but serve other peoples and all mankind.

“Soloviev’s Slavophil messianism never degenerated into a narrow nationalism. In the nineties he was looked upon as having joined the camp of the Westernizers. In a series of articles he violently denounced the epigons of Slavophilism who had perverted its original conception. In the article ‘Idols and Ideals’, written in 1891, he speaks of ‘the transformation of the lofty and all-embracing Christian ideals into the coarse and limited idols of our modern paganism… National messianism was the main idea of the old Slavophils; this idea, in some form of other, was shared by many peoples; it assumed a pre-eminently religious and mystical character with the Poles (Towianski) and with some French dreamers of the thirties and forties (Michel, Ventra, etc.). What is the relation of such national messianism to the true Christian idea? We will not say that there is a contradiction of principle between them. The true Christian ideal can assume this national messianic form, but it becomes then very easily pervertible (to use an expression of ecclesiastical writers); i.e., it can easily change into the corresponding idol of anti-Christian nationalism, which did happen in fact.’…

“Soloviev struggled in his works against every distortion of the Christian ideal of general harmony; he also struggled against all the attempts made by man to satisfy his selfishness under the false pretence of serving a noble

---

581 It was published separately in *Novij Mir (New World)*, № 1, 1989, pp. 198-199.
cause. Such are for instance the aims of chauvinistic nationalism. Many persons believe, Soloviev tells us, that in order to serve the imaginary interests of their people, ‘everything is permitted, the aim justifies the means, black turns white, lies are preferable to truth and violence is glorified and considered as valor... This is first of all an insult to that very nationality which we desire to serve.’ In reality, ‘peoples flourished and were exalted only when they did not serve their own interests as a goal in itself, but pursued higher, general ideal goods.’ Trusting the highly sensitive conscience of the Russian people, Soloviev wrote in his article, ‘What is Demanded of a Russian Party?’ ‘If instead of doping themselves with Indian opium, our Chinese neighbors suddenly took a liking to the poisonous mushrooms which abound in the Siberian woods, we would be sure to find Russian jingos, who in their ardent interest in Russian trade, would want Russia to induce the Chinese government to permit the free entry of poisonous mushrooms into the Celestial empire... Nevertheless, every plain Russian will say that no matter how vital an interest may be, Russia’s honor is also worth something; and, according to Russian standards, this honor definitely forbids a shady deal to become an issue of national politics.’

“Like Tiutchev, Soloviev dreamed of Russia becoming a Christian world monarchy; yet he wrote in a tone full of anxiety: ‘Russia’s life has not yet determined itself completely, it is still torn by the struggle between the principle of light and that of darkness. Let Russia become a Christian realm, even without Constantinople, a Christian realm in the full sense of the word, that is, one of justice and mercy, and all the rest will be surely added unto this.’”

As a warning against the dangers of the rise of a Russian nationalism lacking the universalist dimension of the early Slavophiles and Dostoyevsky, Soloviev’s critique had value. But his attempt to tear Russia away from Constantinople and towards Rome was misguided. And it had an unhealthy influence on other writers, such as D.S. Merezhkovsky. Thus Merezhkovsky, according to Sergius Firsov, “found it completely normal to compare Roman Catholicism headed by the Pope and the Russian kingdom headed by the Autocrat. Calling these theocracies (that is, attempts to realise the City of God in the city of man) false, Merezhkovsky pointed out that they came by different paths to the same result: the western – to turning the Church into a State, and the eastern – to engulfing the Church in the State. ‘Autocracy and Orthodoxy are two halves of one religious whole,’ wrote Merezhkovsky, ‘just as the papacy and Catholicism are. The Tsar is not just the Tsar, the head of the State, but also the head of the Church, the first priest, the anointed of God, that is, in the final, if historically not yet realised, yet mystically necessary extent of his power – ‘the Vicar of Christ’, the same Pope, Caesar and Pope in one.’”

582 Lossky, op. cit, pp. 115-117.
Merezhkovsky’s comparison of the Pope and the Tsar, though greatly exaggerated, had a certain basis in fact; in the fact, namely, that the relationship between Church and State in Russia since Peter the Great had not been canonical, but leaned in a caesaropapist direction, with the Tsar having too great a control over the decisions of the Church hierarchy. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this question became increasingly topical, with general agreement on the nature of the problem, but much less on its solution.

The debate centred especially on the personality and policies of Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostsev, who from April 24, 1880 to October 19, 1905 occupied the post of over-procurator of the Russian Holy Synod and whose policy of Orthodox conservative nationalism was dominant in Russia until the publication of the October manifesto in 1905. Since Pobedonostsev personified this policy of the supremacy of the Orthodox Autocracy perhaps even more than the tsars whom he served, and since his influence extended far beyond his role as over-procurator, he was reviled more than any other figure by the liberal press. He was portrayed as standing for the complete, tyrannical domination by the State of every aspect of Russian life; and among the epithets the press gave him were “prince of darkness, hatred and unbelief”, “state vampire”, “the great inquisitor” and “the greatest deicide in the whole of Russian history”.

These were vile slanders; for Pobedonostsev was a pious man who believed in the Church, and educated the future Tsar Nicholas on the necessity of his being a servant of the Church. And although he never tried to correct the uncanonical state of Church-State relations, and even expressed the view that Peter the Great’s removal of the patriarchate was “completely lawful”, his work as over-procurator was in fact very beneficial. Thus he did a great deal for the development of parish schools, an essential counter-measure to the spread of liberal and atheist education in the secular schools, for the spread of the Word of God in various languages throughout the empire, for the improvement in the lot of the parish priest and for an enormous (fourfold) increase in the number of monks over the previous reign.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the power that the tsars wielded over the Church through the over-procurators was anti-canonical. In the 16th and 17th centuries there had been something like real “symphony” between Church and State. However, the eighteenth century tsars from Peter the Great onwards succeeded, through the lay office of over-procurator, in making the Church dependent on the State to a large degree. Finally, through his decrees of November 13, 1817 and May 15, 1824 Alexander I made the Holy Synod into a department of State. Fortunately, the over-procurators of the 19th century...
century were in general more Orthodox than those of the 18th century. But this did not change the essentially uncanonical nature of the situation.”

Some of the complaints about the State’s interference in Church affairs were exaggerated - for example, the Petrine decree that priests should report the contents of confession if they were seditious. As Pobedonostsev himself pointed out, this had long been a dead letter. Others, however, were serious and had major consequences - as, for example, the tendency of over-procurators to move bishops from one diocese to another.

Firsov writes: “While C.P. Pobednostsev was over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, the transfer of hierarchs from see to see was finally turned into a kind of ‘educational’ measure. The paradox consisted in the fact that ‘while exalting the position of bishops from an external point of view, he [Pobedonostsev] at the same time had to increase his control over them’. The over-procurator was quite unable to square this circle: he wanted an intensification of Episcopal activity and at the same time did not want to present the hierarchs with the freedom of action that was necessary for this. State control over the Church had to be kept up. It was precisely for this reason that the over-procurator so frequently moved Vladykos from see to see. According to the calculations of a contemporary investigator, ‘out of 49 diocesan bishops moved in 1881-1894, eight were moved twice and eight – three times. On average in one year three diocesan bishops were moved and three vicars; four vicars received appointments to independent sees’. In 1892-1893 alone 15 diocesan bishops and 7 vicar bishops were moved, while 14 vicar-bishops were raised to the rank of diocesan. At times the new place of their service and the composition of their flock differed strikingly from the former ones. In 1882, for example, a hierarch was transferred to Kishinev from Kazan, then in his place came the bishop of Ryazan, and he was followed by the bishop of Simbirsk.

“One can understand that this ‘shuffling’ could not fail to affect the attitude of hierarchs to their archpastoral duties: they were more interested in smoothing relations with the secular authorities and in getting a ‘good’ diocese. One must recognise that serious blame for this must attach to the long-time over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, C.P. Pobedonostev…”

Nevertheless, the theoretical works of Pobedonostsev demonstrate a profound understanding of the importance of the Church in Russian life and indicate that, whether his views on Church-State relations were correct or not,

586 Peshkov provides a certain, not very convincing correction to this point of view: “It is necessary to take into account that even in the Synod he did not have that direct administrative power which any minister in Russia’s Tsarist government possessed in the department subject to him, since the Most Holy Synod was a collegial organ, whose decision-making required the unanimity of its members. As Pobedonostev himself emphasised, ‘juridically I have no power to issue orders in the Church and the department. You have to refer to the Synod.’ In particular, when Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg expressed himself against the publication in Russia of the New Testament in the translation of V.A. Zhukovsky, C.P. Pobedonostev had to publish it abroad, in Berlin…” (Peshkov, op. cit., p. 7)
587 Firsov, op. cit., p. 77.
he knew, as few others, what was truly in the Church’s interests, considering
that the State could not without profound damage to itself and the nation as a
whole touch upon the religious consciousness of the people, upon which its
own power depended; for the people will support only that government
which tries to incarnate its own “idea”.

Thus in an article attacking the doctrine of the complete separation of
Church and State that was becoming popular in Europe and Russia he wrote:
“However great the power of the State, it is confirmed by nothing other than
the unity of the spiritual self-consciousness between the people and the
government, on the faith of the people: the power is undermined from the
moment this consciousness, founded on faith, begins to divide. The people in
unity with the State can bear many hardships, they can concede and hand
over much to State power. Only one thing does the State power have no right
to demand, only one thing will they not hand over to it – that in which every
believing soul individually and all together lay down as the foundation of
their spiritual being, binding themselves with eternity. There are depths
which State power cannot and must not touch, so as not to disturb the root
sources of faith in the souls of each and every person…”588

But in recent years a division has opened up between the faith of the
people and the ideology of the State. “Political science has constructed a
strictly worked out teaching on the decisive separation of Church and State, a
teaching in consequence of which, according to the law that does not allow a
division into two of the central forces, the Church unfailingly turns out to be
in fact an institution subject to the State. Together with this, the State as an
institution is, according to its political ideology, separated from every faith
and indifferent to faith. Naturally, from this point of view, the Church is
represented as being nothing other than an institution satisfying one of the
needs of the population that is recognised by the State – the religious need,
and the State in its most recent incarnation turns to it with its right of
authorisation, of supervision and control, with no concern for the faith. For
the State as for the supreme political institution this theory is attractive,
because it promises it complete autonomy, a decisive removal of every
opposition, even spiritual opposition, and the simplification of the operations
of its ecclesiastical politics.”589

“If the issue consists in a more exact delineation of civil society from
religious society, of the ecclesiastical and spiritual from the secular, of a direct
and sincere separation, without cunning or violence – in this case everybody
will be for such a separation. If, coming to practical matters, they want the
State to renounce the right to place pastors of the Church and from the
obligation to pay for them, this will be an ideal situation... When the question
matures, the State, if it wishes to make such a decision, will be obliged to
return to the person to whom it belongs the right to choose pastors and

588 Pobedonostev, Moskovskij Sbornik: Tserkov’ i Gosudarstvo (Moscow Anthology: Church and
State), op. cit., p. 264.
589 Pobedonostsev, op. cit., p. 266.
bishops; in such a case it will no longer be possible to give to the Pope what belongs to the clergy and people by historical and apostolic right…

“But they say that we must understand separation in a different, broader sense. Clever, learned people define this as follows: the State must have nothing to do with the Church, and the Church – with the State, and so humanity must revolve in two broad spheres in such a way that in one sphere will be the body and in the other the spirit of humanity, and between the two spheres will be a space as great as between heaven and earth. But is that really possible? It is impossible to separate the body from the spirit; and spirit and body live one life.

“Can we expect that the Church – I’m not talking just about the Catholic, but any Church – should agree to remove from its consciousness civil society, familial society, human society - everything that is understood by the word ‘State’? Since when has it been decreed that the Church exists in order to form ascetics, fill up monasteries and express in churches the poetry of its rites and processions? No, all this is only a small part of that activity which the Church sets as her aim. She has been given another calling: teach all nations. That is her business. The task set before her is to form people on earth so that people of the earthly city and earthly family should be made not quite unworthy to enter the heavenly city and the heavenly community. At birth, at marriage, at death – at the most important moments of human existence, the Church is there with her three triumphant sacraments, but they say that the family is none of her business! She has been entrusted with inspiring the people with respect for the law and the authorities, and to inspire the authorities with respect for human freedom, but they say that society is none of her business!

“No, the moral principle is one. It cannot be divided in such a way that one is a private moral principle, and the other public, one secular and the other spiritual. The one moral principle embraces all relationships - private, in the home and political; and the Church, preserving the consciousness of her dignity, will never renounce her lawful influence in questions relations both to the family and to civil society. And so in demanding that the Church have nothing to do with civil society, they only give her greater strength.”

“The most ancient and best known system of Church-State relations is the system of the established or State Church. The State recognises one confession out of all as being the true confession of faith and supports and protects one Church exclusively, to the prejudice of all other churches and confessions. This prejudice signifies in general that all remaining churches are not recognised as true or completely true; but it is expressed in practice in various forms and a multitude of all manner of variations, from non-recognition and alienation to, sometimes, persecution. In any case, under the influence of this system foreign confessions are subject to a certain more or less significant diminution in honour, in law and in privilege by comparison with the native, State confession. The State cannot be the representative only of the material interests of society; in such a case it would deprive itself of spiritual power.

590 Pobedonostsev, op. cit., pp. 268-269.
and would renounce its spiritual unity with the people. The State is the stronger and more significant the clearer its spiritual representation is manifested. Only on this condition is the feeling of legality, respect for the law and trust in State power supported and strengthened in the midst of the people and in civil life. Neither the principle of the integrity or the good of the benefit of the State, nor even the principle of morality are sufficient in themselves to establish a firm bond between the people and State power; and the moral principle is unstable, shaky, deprived of its fundamental root when it renounces religious sanction. A State which in the name of an unbiased relationship to all beliefs will undoubtedly be deprived of this central, centrifugal force and will itself renounce every belief – whatever it may be. The trust of the people for their rulers is based on faith, that is, not only on the identity of the faith of the people and the government, but also on the simple conviction that the government has faith and acts according to faith. Therefore even pagans and Mohammedans have more trust and respect for a government which stands on the firm principles of belief, whatever it may be, than for a government which does not recognise its own faith and has an identical relationship to all beliefs.

“That is the undeniable advantage of this system. But in the course of the centuries the circumstances under which this system received its beginning changed, and there arose new circumstances under which its functioning became more difficult than before. In the age when the first foundations of European civilisation and politics were laid, the Christian State was a powerfully integral and unbroken bond with the one Christian Church. Then in the midst of the Christian Church itself the original unity was shattered into many kinds of sects and different faiths, each of which began to assume to itself the significance of the one true teaching and the one true Church. Thus the State had to deal with several different teachings between which the masses of the people were distributed. With the violation of the unity and integrity in faith a period may ensue when the dominant Church, which is supported by the State, turns out to be the Church of an insignificant minority, and herself enjoys only weak sympathy, or no sympathy at all, from the masses of the people. Then important difficulties may arise in the definition of the relations between the State and its Church and the churches to which the majority of the people belong.

“From the beginning of the 18th century there begins in Western Europe a conversion from the old system to the system of the levelling of the Christian confessions in the State – with the removal, however, of sectarians and Jews from this levelling process. [However, it continues to be the case that] the State recognises Christianity as the essential basis of its existence and of the public well-being, and belonging to this or that church, to this or that belief is obligatory for every citizen.

“From 1848 this relationship of the State to the Church changes essentially: the flooding waves of liberalism break through the old dam and threaten to overthrow the ancient foundations of Christian statehood. The freedom of the State from the Church is proclaimed – it has nothing to do with the Church.
The separation of the State by the Church is also proclaimed: every person is free to believe as he wants or not believe in anything. The symbol of this doctrine is the fundamental principles (Grundrechte) proclaimed by the Frankfurt parliament in 1848/1849. Although they soon cease to be considered valid legislation, they served and serve to this day as the ideal for the introduction of liberal principles into the most recent legislation of Western Europe. Legislation in line with these principles is everywhere now. Political and civil law is dissociated from faith and membership of this or that church or sect. The State asks nobody about his faith. The registration of marriage and acts of civil status are dissociated from the Church. Complete freedom of mixed marriages is proclaimed, and the Church principle of the indissolubility of marriage is violated by facilitating divorce, which is dissociated from the ecclesiastical courts...

“Does it not follow from this that the unbelieving State is nothing other than a utopia that cannot be realized, for lack of faith is a direct denial of the State. Religion, and notably Christianity, is the spiritual basis of every law in State and civil life and of every true culture. That is why we see that the political parties that are the most hostile to the social order, the parties that radically deny the State, proclaim before everyone that religion is only a private, personal matter, of purely private and personal interest.

“[Count Cavour’s] system of ‘a free Church in a free State’ is based on abstract principles, theoretically; at its foundation is laid not the principle of faith, but the principle of religious indifferentism, or indifference to the faith, and it is placed in a necessary bond with doctrines that often preach, not tolerance and respect for the faith, but open or implied contempt for the faith, as to a bygone moment in the psychological development of personal and national life. In the abstract construction of this system, which constitutes a fruit of the newest rationalism, the Church is represented as also being an abstractly constructed political institution…, built with a definite aim like other corporations recognised in the State...

“… In fact, [however,] it is impossible for any soul that has preserved and experienced the demands of faith within its depths can agree without qualification, for itself personally, with the rule: ‘all churches and all faiths are equal; it doesn’t matter whether it is this faith or another’. Such a soul will unfailingly reply to itself: ‘Yes, all faiths are equal, but my faith is better than any other for myself.’ Let us suppose that today the State will proclaim the strictest and most exact equality of all churches and faiths before the law. Tomorrow signs will appear, from which it will be possible to conclude that the relative power of the faiths is by no means equal; and if we go 30 or 50 years on from the time of the legal equalisation of the churches, it will then be discovered in fact, perhaps, that among the churches there is one which in essence has a predominant influence and rules over the minds and decisions [of men], either because it is closer to ecclesiastical truth, or because in its teaching or rites it more closely corresponds to the national character, or because its organisation and discipline is more perfect and gives it more
means for systematic activity, or because activists that are more lively and firm in their faith have arisen in its midst...

“And so a free State can lay down that it has nothing to do with a free Church; only the free Church, if it is truly founded on faith, will not accept this decree and will not adopt an indifferent attitude to the free State. The Church cannot refuse to exert its influence on civil and social life; and the more active it is, the more it feels within itself an inner, active force, and the less is it able to adopt an indifferent attitude towards the State. The Church cannot adopt such an attitude without renouncing its own Divine calling, if it retains faith in it and the consciousness of duty bound up with it. On the Church there lies the duty to teach and instruct; to the Church there belongs the performance of the sacraments and the rites, some of which are bound up with the most important acts and civil life. In this activity the Church of necessity enters ceaselessly into touch with social and civil life. And so to the degree that the State, in separating itself from the Church, retains for itself the administration exclusively of the civil part of all these matters and removes from itself the administration of the spiritual-moral part, the Church will of necessity enter into the function abandoned by the State, and in separation from it will little by little come to control completely and exclusively that spiritual-moral influence which constitutes a necessary, real force for the State. The State will retain only a material and, perhaps, a rational force, but both the one and the other will turn out to be insufficient when the power of faith does not unite with them. And so, little by little, instead of the imagined equalisation of the functions of the State and the Church in political union, there will turn out to be inequality and opposition. A condition that is in any case abnormal, and which must lead either to the real dominance of the Church over the apparently predominant State or to revolution.

“These are the real dangers hidden in the system of complete Church-State separation glorified by liberal thinkers. The system of the dominant or established Church has many defects, being linked with many inconveniences and difficulties, and does not exclude the possibility of conflicts and struggle. But in vain do they suppose that it has already outlived its time, and that Cavour’s formula alone gives the key to the resolution of all the difficulties of this most difficult of questions. Cavour’s formula is the fruit of political doctrinairism, which looks on questions of faith as merely political questions about the equalisation of rights. There is no depth of spiritual knowledge in it, as there was not in that other famous political formula: freedom, equality and brotherhood, which up to now have weighed as a fateful burden on credulous minds. In the one case as in the other, passionate advocates of freedom are mistaken in supposing that there is freedom in equality. Or is our bitter experience not sufficient to confirm the fact that freedom does not depend on equality, and that equality is by no means freedom? It would be the same error to suppose that the very freedom of belief consists in the levelling of the churches and faiths and depends on their levelling. The whole of recent history shows that here, too, freedom and equality are not the same thing.”591

Freedom of Conscience

Closely related to the question of the Church’s freedom in relation to the State were the questions of freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and religious toleration, which also became the subjects of lively debate at this time.

The idea of religious toleration is, of course, not new, and certainly not a value that was discovered by modern liberalism. The Roman Empire prided itself on its tolerance; the persecutions of Christians were intermittent, albeit savage, affairs set against a general background of the acceptance of all gods and goddesses. Other empires renowned for their fierceness, such as the Mongol, were also surprisingly respectful of the priests of other religions.

The main motive of religious toleration in the ancient world was simple: political expediency – a multi-ethnic and multi-faith population is more easily controlled if all its faiths are respected and legalised. Another motive was superstition. After all, calculated the ruler (who was almost always religious), the god of this people is more likely to help me if I do not persecute his people...

Christianity introduced a new depth and a new complexity to the question of religious toleration. On the one hand, the Christians, like the Jews before them, rejected the idea of a multiplicity of gods, and insisted that there was only one name by which men could be saved – that of the One True God, Jesus Christ: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent” (John 17.3). On the other hand, the Christians set no value on the forcible conversion of people to the Faith: man, being in the image of God, was free, and could come to God only by his own free will. Thus the first Christian emperor, St. Constantine the Great, who is unjustly blamed by many Protestants for introducing Christian intolerance into the State, declared: “It is one thing to undertake the contest for immortality voluntarily, another to compel others to do it likewise through fear of punishment.”502 Non-violence to the persons of heretics combined with mercilessness to the heresies themselves was especially emphasised by St. John Chrysostom, who wrote: “Christians above all men are forbidden to correct the stumblings of sinners by force... It is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice.”

We come to the conclusion that the idea of religious toleration, being founded on the Christian principle that religious conversion must be free since man is by nature free, should be placed as one of the foundation stones of a Christian society. Moreover, Orthodox Christians today have a special reason to value religious toleration, in that they form a very small minority in

almost every contemporary state, and would almost certainly be subjected to persecution if some such principle were not in force.

At the same time, religious toleration should never be confused with indifferentism or ecumenism – that is, the idea that all religions are in principle equal. In fact, it is the combination of the idea of religious toleration with ecumenism in modern societies that constitutes, paradoxically, probably the greatest contemporary threat to religious freedom. For if all religions are considered equal, it becomes a crime to say that one of them is superior or truer than the others. Thus religious indifference ultimately leads to a resumption of religious persecution... Religious toleration is good, not because all religions are equal, but because man is free, and to attempt to violate his freedom is in principle evil. False ideas, whether in science or philosophy or religion, can only be defeated by being shown to be wrong in open debate, through persuasion and not through coercion.

However, every society in history has accepted certain limitations on man’s freedom; every society, whether authoritarian or democratic, takes measures to prevent the spread of what it considers to be particularly harmful ideas, or heresies. Thus an Orthodox society may ban atheism or homosexuality, while a democratic society will ban racism or sexism or religious “exclusivism”. The justification of censorship and those restrictions on freedom which we find in all societies is that while man is free, some men are less free than others by virtue of their youth or mental incapacity or lack of education, and their freedom is further weakened by being brought into bondage by evil ideas and passions. Once a man has been infected by false ideas, the only cure is reasoned argument, education; we cannot convert him by force. But we can reasonably limit his freedom to infect others, especially the intellectually weak and children.

Therefore religious toleration must be exercised together with religious discrimination – that is, discrimination in favour of the one true religion. And if that is not possible in any contemporary society, insofar as none of them is ruled by Orthodox Christian rulers, we must nevertheless work for the establishment of those laws and habits which make it easier for men to come to a knowledge of the truth and true morality and escape from the snares of falsehood. For in the final analysis, it is not religious freedom that is the ultimate value, but religious truth, since, as the Lord says, “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8.32).

This conclusion was reinforced by an important distinction made by Archbishop Ambrose of Kharkov between freedom of conscience and all the other freedoms we have been discussing. “What, it seems, could be better,” he asked, “than to present to people the possibility of going freely along the path to the knowledge of the truth, without restraining or limiting them by other people’s influence? What could be better than the independent development in them of various mental powers and gifts? But in fact it turns out that for the majority a teacher and leader on the path to the truth is required, because they themselves do not find this path and often even do not see it and do not
recognize it, although it is clearly indicated to them. Would it not be better to give people the opportunity to exercise their freedom in independent activity in accordance with the laws of Divine and human righteousness, without any interference of guides? Then one could only rejoice at the appearance in them of the special perfections of human nature that are particular to each person. But in fact it turns out that people sometimes so forget and trample on these laws that one has to put them in prison. If people are such in relation to the knowledge of the truth and in free activity in accordance with the laws of righteousness, then can they be different when they are alone with their conscience, which is the expression of the common condition of a man? Obviously not.”

Archbishop Ambrose points out that the consciences of men are in very various conditions. Some have “crude, sensual” consciences, which remain unfeeling even when they have committed great crimes. Others “speak lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Timothy 4.2). Others have “literalist” consciences that will forgive great crimes, but not infringements of ritual rules. Still others have “fanatical” consciences, which in their zeal to spread their faith will not shrink from imposing their views on others by force. Others have “servile” consciences, which may be overwhelmed by the consciousness of their sins, but can find no way out of their condition. Still others have “fearful” consciences; they are overwhelmed and overcome by fear after committing merely trivial offences. And then there is the conscience of the saint, who, when he sins, repents deeply, and recovers his habitual peace of mind and joy of heart. Only this conscience is truly free, being able to retain its equilibrium and clarity even under conditions of the fiercest persecution. This freedom consists “not in external rights and advantages, social and political, but in the unshakeable feeling of inner peace, in the inner liberation of the spirit from all hindrances to the observance of the law that arise in the damaged nature of man.”

It follows that there is an important distinction between freedom of conscience, which depends on the moral condition of a man, and freedom of the press, of the word, of religion, etc. The latter, external freedoms may or may not advance the inner freedom that is freedom of conscience. They are justified if they do in the given situation, and not justified if they do not.

“And so,” concludes Archbishop Ambrose, “we must seek for freedom of conscience, not in the sphere of earthly rights, but in the sphere of spiritual perfections. We must expect it, not from state laws, but from our own moral labours and exploits, and ask for it, not from earthly kings and rulers, but from the Lord God. As regards the broadening of rational freedom in public life, we must discuss freedom of thought, freedom of the word, freedom of convictions, freedom of confession, but not freedom of conscience. All these varieties of freedom can only be paths to freedom of conscience, but it itself stands higher than them. ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’ (II Corinthians 3.17).”

The Reign of Tsar Alexander III

The conservative views of such men as Pobedonostsev were protected and nurtured during the 1880s by the Tsar, who quietly reversed the main direction of his father’s reforms. Once he received a letter from the executive committee of “The People’s Will”, in which they called on him to give “a general amnesty for all political crimes of the past”, and “to summon representatives from the whole of the Russian people to review the existing forms of state and social life and reconstruct them in accordance with the people’s desires”. As if in answer to this letter, the tsar, in his manifesto, “On the Unshakableness of the Autocracy” of April 29, 1881: “We call on all our faithful subjects to serve us and the state in faith and righteousness, to the uprooting of the abominable rebellion that is devastating the Russian land, to the confirmation of faith and morality, to the good education of children, to the destruction of unrighteousness and theft, to the instilling of order and righteousness in the acts of the institutions given to Russia by her benefactor, our beloved parent.” Although the new tsar promised to work within the institutions created by his father, there was no promise of any new ones, let alone a constitution - the project of Leris-Melikov, which Alexander II was about to sign at the time of his death, was quietly dropped. And when his new minister of the interior, Count N.P. Ignatiev, proposed convening a Zemsky Sobor before his coronation, the tsar said that he was “too convinced of the ugliness of the electoral representative principle to allow it at any time in Russia in that form in which it exists throughout Europe”. 594

His world-view was expressed in the advice he gave his heir, the Tsarevich Nicholas Alexandrovich: “You are destined to take from my shoulders the heavy burden of State power and bear it to the grave exactly as I have borne it and our ancestors bore it. I hand over to you the kingdom entrusted by God to me. I received it thirteen years ago from my blood-drenched father... Your grandfather from the height of the throne introduced many important reforms directed to the good of the Russian people. As a reward for all this he received a bomb and death from the Russian revolutionaries... On that tragic day the question arose before me: on what path am I to proceed? On that onto which I was being pushed by ‘progressive society’, infected with the liberal ideas of the West, or that which my own conviction, my higher sacred duty as Sovereign and my conscience indicated to me? I chose my path. The liberals dubbed it reactionary. I was interested only in the good of my people and the greatness of Russia. I strove to introduce internal and external peace, so that the State could freely and peacefully develop, become stronger in a normal way, become richer and prosper. The Autocracy created the historical individuality of Russia. If – God forbid! – the Autocracy should fall, then Russia will fall with it. The fall of the age-old Russian power will open up an endless era of troubles and blood civil conflicts. My covenant to you is to love everything that serves for the good, the honour and the dignity of Russia. Preserve the Autocracy, remembering that you bear responsibility for the destiny of your subjects before the Throne of the Most High. May faith in God

594 Krivosheev & Krivosheev, op. cit., pp. 91, 90, 88.
Tsar Alexander succeeded in most of the tasks he set himself. He avoided war, while gaining the respect of the European rulers. He suppressed the revolution, giving emergency powers to local governors in troubled areas, and checked the power of the zemstva and the press. He increased the prosperity of all classes. And he strengthened the Church and the family.

The Tsar was helped by the fact that “the public reacted with horror,” as Richard Pipes, to the murder of his father, “and the radical cause lost a great deal of popular support. The government responded with a variety of repressive measures and counter-intelligence operations which made it increasingly difficult for the revolutionaries to function. And the ‘people’ did not stir, unshaken in the belief that the land which they desired would be given them by the next Tsar.

“There followed a decade of revolutionary quiescence. Russians who wanted to work for the common good now adopted the doctrine of ‘small deeds’ – that is, pragmatic, unspectacular activities to raise the cultural and material level of the population through the zemstva and private philanthropic organizations.

“Radicalism began to stir again in the early 1890s in connection with the spurt of Russian industrialization and a severe famine. The Socialists-Revolutionaries of the 1870s had believed that Russia would follow a path of economic development different from the Western because she had neither the domestic nor the foreign markets that capitalism required. The Russian peasantry, being poor and heavily dependent on income from cottage industries (estimated at one-third of the peasant total income), would be ruined by competition from the mechanized factories and lose that little purchasing power it still possessed. As for foreign markets, these had been pre-empted by the advanced countries of the West. Russia had to combine communal agriculture with rural (cottage) industry. From these premises Socialist-Revolutionary theoreticians developed a ‘separate path’ doctrine according to which Russian would proceed directly from ‘feudalism’ to ‘socialism’ without passing through a capitalist phase.

595 Alexander III, in Fomin, S. & Fomin, T. op. cit., 1998, vol. 1, p. 354. Prince Sergius Trubetskoy illustrated the link between family feeling and feeling for the monarchy during his childhood under the same Tsar Alexander: “Father and mother, grandfathers and grandmothers were for us in childhood not only sources and centres of love and unquestioned authority; they were enveloped in our eyes by a kind of aura which the modern generation does not know... Our fathers and grandfathers were in our children’s eyes both patriarchs and family monarchs, while our mothers and grandmothers were family tsaritsas.”
“This thesis was advanced with the help of arguments drawn from the writings of Marx and Engels. Marx and Engels initially disowned such an interpretation of their doctrine, but they eventually changed their minds, conceding that there might be more than one model of economic development. In 1877, in an exchange with a Russian, Marx rejected the notion that every country had to repeat the economic experience of Western Europe. Should Russia enter the path of capitalist development, he wrote, then, indeed, nothing could save her from its ‘iron laws’, but this did not mean that Russian could not avoid this path and the misfortunes it brought. A few years later Marx stated that the ‘historical inevitability’ of capitalism was confined to Western Europe, and that because Russia had managed to preserve the peasant commune into the era of capitalism, the commune could well become the ‘fulcrum of Russia’s social rejuvenation’. Marx and Engels admired the terrorists of the People’s Will, and, as an exception to their general theory, Engels allowed that in Russia the revolution could be made by a ‘handful of people’.

“Thus, before a formal ‘Marxist’ or Social-Democratic movement had emerged in Russia, the theories of its founders were interpreted, with their sanction, when applied to an autocratic regime in an agrarian country, to mean a revolution brought about, not by the inevitable social consequences of matured capitalism, but by terror and coup d’état.

“A few Russians, led by George Plekhanov, dissented from this version of Marxism. They broke with the People’s Will, moved to Switzerland, and there immersed themselves in German Social-Democratic literature. From it they concluded that Russia had no alternative but to go through full-blown capitalism. They rejected terrorism and a coup d’état on the grounds that even in the unlikely event that such violence succeeded in bringing down the tsarist regime, the outcome would not be socialism, for which backward Russia lacked both the economic and cultural preconditions, but a ‘revived tsarism on a Communist base’.

“From the premises adopted by the Russian Social-Democrats there followed certain political consequences. Capitalist development meant the rise of a bourgeoisie committed, from economic self-interest, to liberalization. It further meant the growth of the industrial ‘proletariat’, which would be driven by its deteriorating economic situation to socialism, furnishing the socialist movement with revolutionary cadres. The fact that Russian capitalism developed in a country with a pre-capitalist political system, however, called for a particular revolutionary strategy. Socialism could not flourish in a country held in the iron grip of a police-bureaucratic regime: it required freedom of speech to propagate its ideas and freedom of association to organize its followers. In other words, unlike the German Social-Democrats, who, since 1890, were able to function in the open and run in national elections, Russian Social-Democrats confronted the prior task of overthrowing autocracy.
“The theory of a two-stage revolution, as formulated by Plekhanov’s associate, Paul Akselrod, provided for the ‘proletariat’ (read: socialist intellectuals) collaborating with the bourgeoisie for the common objective of bringing to Russia ‘bourgeois democracy’. As soon as that objective had been attained, the socialists would rally the working class for the second, socialist phase of the revolution. From the point of view of this strategy, everything that promoted in Russia the growth of capitalism and the interests of the bourgeoisie was – up to a point – progressive and favourable to the cause of socialism.”

These various strands of socialist thinking had little influence in Russia during the reign of Alexander III. And it was not from bomb-throwing raznochintsy and peasants that the real threat to the regime came – at this time. The real threat came, not from socialists, but from liberals, and not from the lower classes, but from the nobility who dominated local government.

Oliver Figes explains: “The power of the imperial government effectively stopped at the eighty-nine provincial capitals where the governors had their offices. Below that there was no real state administration to speak of. Neither the uyezd or district town nor the volost or rural townships had any standing government officials. There was only a series of magistrates who would appear from time to time on some specific mission, usually to collect taxes or sort out a local conflict, and then disappear once again. The affairs of peasant Russia, where 85 per cent of the population lived, were entirely unknown to the city bureaucrats. ‘We knew as much about the Tula countryside,’ confessed Prince Lvov, leader of the Tula zemstvo in the 1890s, ‘as we knew about Central Africa.’

“The crucial weakness of the tsarist system was the under-government of the localities. This vital fact is all too often clouded by the revolutionaries’ mythic image of an all-powerful regime. Nothing could be further from the truth. For every 1,000 inhabitants of the Russian Empire there were only 4 state officials at the turn of the century, compared with 7.3 in England and Wales, 12.6 in Germany and 17.6 in France. The regular police, as opposed to the political branch, was extremely small by European standards. Russia’s expenditure on the police per capita of the population was less than half of that in Italy or France and less than one quarter of that in Prussia. For a rural population of 100 million people, Russia in 1900 had no more than 1,852 police sergeants and 6,874 police constables. The average constable was responsible for policing 50,000 people in dozens of settlements stretched across nearly 2000 square miles. Many of them did not even have a horse and cart. True, from 1903 the constables were aided by the peasant constables, some 40,000 of whom were appointed. But these were notoriously unreliable and, in any case, did very little to reduce the mounting burdens on the police. Without its own effective organs in the countryside, the central bureaucracy was assigning more and more tasks to the local police: not just the maintenance of law and order but also the collection of taxes, the implementation of government laws and military decrees, the enforcement of health and safety

regulations, the inspection of public roads and buildings, the collection of statistics, and the general supervision of ‘public morals’ (e.g. making sure that the peasants washed their beards). The police, in short, were being used as a sort of catch-all executive organ. They were often the only agents of the state with whom the peasants ever came into contact.

“Russia’s general backwardness – its small tax-base and poor communications – largely accounts for this under-government. The legacy of serfdom also played a part. Until 1861 the serfs had been under the jurisdiction of their noble owners and, provided they paid their taxes, the state did not intervene in the relations between them. Only after the Emancipation – and then very slowly – did the tsarist government come round to the problem of how to extend its influence to its new ‘citizens’ in the villages and of how to shape a policy to help the development of peasant agriculture.

“Initially, in the 1860s, the regime left the affairs of the country districts in the hands of the local nobles. They dominated the zemstvo assemblies and accounted for nearly three-quarters of the provincial zemstvo boards. The noble assemblies and their elected marshals were left with broad administrative powers, especially at the district level (uezd) where they were virtually the only agents upon whom the tsarist regime could rely. Moreover, the new magistrates (mirovye posredniki) were given broad judicial powers, not unlike those of their predecessors under serfdom, including the right to flog the peasants for minor crimes and misdemeanours.

“It was logical for the tsarist regime to seek to base its power in the provinces on the landed nobility, its closest ally. But this was a dangerous strategy, and the danger grew as time went on. The landed nobility was in severe economic decline during the years of agricultural depression in the late nineteenth century, and was turning to the zemstvos to defend its local agrarian interests against the centralizing and industrializing bureaucracy of St. Petersburg. In the years leading up to 1905 this resistance was expressed in mainly liberal terms: it was seen as the defence of ‘provincial society’, a term which was now used for the first time and consciously broadened to include the interests of the peasantry. This liberal zemstvo movement culminated in the political demand for more autonomy for local government, for a national parliament and a constitution. Here was the start of the revolution: not in the socialist or labour movements but – as in France in the 1780s – in the aspirations of the regime’s oldest ally, the provincial nobility…”

The government’s lack of support at the local level was glaringly revealed during the Volga famine of summer, 1891, which was caused by severe frosts in the winter followed by drought in the spring. Covering an area twice the size of France, the famine together with the consequent cholera and typhus killed half a million people by the end of 1892. Unfortunately, the government made several blunders, and on November 17, while appointing the Tsarevich

Nicholas as president of a special commission to provide help to the suffering, it was forced to appeal to the public to form voluntary organizations.

At the height of the crisis, in October, 1891, Elder Ambrose of Optina died; and with his passing it seemed as if the revolutionary forces, which had been restrained for a decade, came back to life. They were led now by a privileged noble, the writer Count Lev Tolstoy, whom St. Ambrose had called “very proud” and who now joined the relief campaign. Under his influence the lawful expression of compassion for the poor in response to the state’s appeal was turned into an unlawful attack on the very foundations of that state.

“With his two eldest daughters,” writes Figes, “he organized hundreds of canteens in the famine region, while Sonya, his wife, raised money from abroad. ‘I cannot describe in simple words the utter destitution and suffering of these people,’ he wrote to her at the end of October 1891. According to the peasant Sergei Semenov, who was a follower of Tolstoy and who joined him in his relief campaign, the great writer was so overcome by the experience of the peasants’ sufferings that his beard went grey, his hair became thinner and he lost a great deal of weight. The guilt-ridden Count blamed the famine crisis on the social order, the Orthodox Church and the government. ‘Everything has happened because of our own sin,’ he wrote to a friend in December. ‘We have cut ourselves off from our own brothers, and there is only one remedy – by repentance, by changing our lives, and by destroying the walls between us and the people.’ Tolstoy broadened his condemnation of social inequality in his essay ‘The Kingdom of God’ (1892) and in the press. His message struck a deep chord in the moral conscience of the liberal public, plagued as they were by feelings of guilt on account of their privilege and alienation from the peasantry. Semenov captured this sense of shame when he wrote of the relief campaign: ‘With every day the need and misery of the peasants grew. The scenes of starvation were deeply distressing, and it was all the more disturbing to see that amidst all this suffering and death there were sprawling estates, beautiful and well-furnished manors, and that the grand old life of the squires, with its jolly hunts and balls, its banquets and its concerts, carried on as usual.’ For the guilt-ridden liberal public, serving ‘the people’ through the relief campaign was a means of paying off their ‘debt’ to them. And they now turned to Tolstoy as their moral leader and their champion against the sins of the old regime. His condemnation of the government turned him into a public hero, a man of integrity whose word could be trusted as the truth on a subject which the regime had tried so hard to conceal.

“Russian society had been activated and politicized by the famine crisis, its social conscience had been stung, and the old bureaucratic system had been discredited. Public mistrust of the government did not diminish once the crisis had passed, but strengthened as the representatives of civil society continued to press for a greater role in the administration of the nation’s affairs. The famine, it was said, had proved the culpability and incompetence of the old regime, and there was now a growing expectation that wider circles of society would have to be drawn into its work if another catastrophe was to be avoided. The zemstvos, which had spent the past decade battling to
expand their activities in the face of growing bureaucratic opposition, were now strengthened by widespread support from the liberal public for their work in agronomy, public health and education. The liberal Moscow merchants and industrialists, who had rallied behind the relief campaign, now began to question the government’s policies of industrialization, which seemed so ruinous for the peasantry, the main buyers of their manufactures. From the middle of the 1890s they too supported the various projects of the zemstvos and municipal bodies to revive the rural economy. Physicians, teachers and engineers, who had all been forced to organize themselves as a result of their involvement in the relief campaign, now began to demand more professional autonomy and influence over public policy; and when they failed to make any advances they began to campaign for political reforms. In the press, in the ‘thick journals’, in the universities, and in learned and philanthropic societies, the debates on the causes of the famine – and on reforms needed to prevent its recurrence – continued to rage throughout the 1890s, long after the immediate crisis had passed.

“The socialist opposition, which had been largely dormant in the 1880s, sprang back into life with a renewed vigour as a result of these debates. There was a revival of the Populist movement (later rechristened Neo-Populism), culminating in 1901 with the establishment of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Under the leadership of Viktor Chernov (1873–1952), a law graduate from Moscow University who had been imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress for his role in the student movement, it embraced the new Marxist sociology whilst still adhering to the Populist belief that all the workers and peasants alike - what it called the ‘labouring people’ – were united by their poverty and their opposition to the regime. Briefly, then, in the wake of the famine, there was growing unity between the Marxists and the Neo-Populists as they put aside their differences about the development of capitalism (which the SRs now accepted as a fact) and concentrated on the democratic struggle...

“Marxism as a social science was fast becoming the national creed: it alone seemed to explain the causes of the famine. Universities and learned societies were swept along by the new intellectual fashion. Even such well-established institutions as the Free Economic Society fell under the influence of the Marxists, who produced libraries of social statistics, dressed up as studies of the causes of the great starvation, to prove the truth of Marx’s economic laws. Socialists who had previously wavered in their Marxism were now completely converted in the wake of the famine crisis, when, it seemed to them, there was no more hope in the Populist faith in the peasantry. Petr Struve (1870–1944), who had previously thought of himself as a political liberal, found his Marxist passions stirred by the crisis: it ‘made much more of a Marxist out of me than the reading of Marx’s Capital’. Martov also recalled how the crisis had turned him into a Marxist: ‘It suddenly became clear to me how superficial and groundless the whole of my revolutionism had been until then, and how my subjective political romanticism was dwarfed before the philosophical and sociological heights of Marxism.’ Even the young Lenin
only became converted to the Marxist mainstream in the wake of the famine crisis.

“In short, the whole of society had been politicized and radicalized as a result of the famine crisis. The conflict between the population and the regime had been set in motion…”

The Roots of the Revolution

Let us look more closely at the philosophy of the radical intelligentsia. And let us begin by examining a definition of socialism. Richard Pipes writes: “Socialism is commonly thought of as a theory which aims at a fairer distribution of wealth for the ultimate purpose of creating a free and just society. Indisputably this is the stated program of socialists. But behind this program lurks an even more ambitious goal, which is creating a new type of human being. The underlying premise is the idea of Helvétius that by establishing an environment which makes social behaviour a natural instinct, socialism will enable man to realize his potential to the fullest. This, in turn, will make it possible, ultimately, to dispense with the state and the compulsion which is said to be its principal attribute. All socialist doctrines, from the most moderate to the most extreme, assume that human beings are infinitely malleable because their personality is the product of the economic environment: a change in that environment must, therefore, alter them as well as their behaviour.

“Marx pursued philosophical studies mainly in his youth. When, as a twenty-six-year-old émigré in Paris, he immersed himself in philosophy, he at once grasped the political implications of the ideas of Helvétius and his French contemporaries. In The Holy Family (1844-45), the book which marked his and Engels’s break with idealistic radicalism, he took his philosophical and psychological premises directly from Locke and Helvétius: ‘The whole development of man…,’ he wrote, ‘depends on education and environment.’ ‘If man draws all his knowledge, sensations, etc., from the world of the senses and the experience gained from it, the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man experiences and gets used to what is really human… If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human.’

“This, the locus classicus of Marxist philosophy, justifies a total change in the way society is organized – that is, revolution. According to this way of thinking, which indeed inexorably flows from the philosophical premises of Locke and Helvétius, man and society do not come into existence by a natural process but are ‘made’. This ‘radical behaviorism’, as it has been called, inspired Marx in 1845 to coin what is probably his most celebrated aphorism: ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it.’ Of course, the moment a thinker begins to conceive his mission to be not ‘only’ observing the world and adapting to it, but changing it, he ceases to be a philosopher and turns into a politician with his own political agenda and interests.

“Now, the world can conceivably be ‘changed’ gradually, by means of education and legislation. And such a gradual change is, indeed, what all intellectuals would advocate if their exclusive concern were with improving the human condition, since evolution allows for trial and error, the only proven road to progress. But many of those who want to change the world regard human discontent as something not to be remedied but exploited. Exploitation of resentment, not its satisfaction, has been at the center of socialist politics since the 1840s: it is what distinguished the self-styled ‘scientific’ socialists from their ‘utopian’ forerunners. This attitude has led to the emergence of what Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu called in 1902, in a remarkably prescient book, the ‘politics of hatred’. Socialism, he noted, elevates ‘hatred to the heights of principle’, sharing with its mortal enemies, nationalism and anti-Semitism, the need “chirurgically” to isolate and destroy the alleged enemy.’ Committed radicals fear reform because it deprives them of leverage and establishes the ruling elite more solidly in power: they prefer the most savage repression. The slogan of Russian revolutionaries – ‘chem khuzhe, tem luchshe’ (‘the worse, the better’) spelled out this kind of thinking.”

But where does this hatred come from? Further insight into this question is gained by studying a collection of articles written by a group of converts from socialism and published in 1909 under the title Vekhi (Landmarks), which criticized the revolutionary credo of the intelligentsia from several points of view. One of the contributors, the philosopher, Simeon Ludwigovich Frank, wrote: “The Symbol of Faith of the Russian intelligent is the good of the people, the satisfaction of the needs of ‘the majority’. The service of this aim is for him the highest and in general the only duty of man, and what is more than this is of the evil one. It is precisely for this reason that he not only simply denies or does not accept other values – he even directly fears and hates them. One cannot serve two gods at the same time, and if God, as Maxim Gorky had already openly made known, was ‘the essence of the people’s soul’, then all the other gods were false gods, idols or devils. Activity guided by love for science or art, life overshadowed by a religious light in the direct sense, that is, communion with God, all this distracts from service to the people, weakens or destroys moralistic enthusiasm and signifies, from the point of view of the intelligent’s faith, a dangerous hunting after mirages. Therefore all this is rejected, partly as stupidity or ‘superstition’, partly as an immoral direction of the will. This, of course, does not mean that the Russian intelligentsia is in fact alien to scientific, aesthetic and religious interests and experiences. It is impossible to kill the spirit and its inveterate demands, and it is natural that living people who have clothed their soul in the moral uniform of the ‘intelligent’ should retain in themselves all the feelings intrinsic to man. But these feelings live in the soul of the Russian intelligent in approximately the same way as the feeling of pity for an enemy lives in the soul of a warrior, or as the striving for the free play of fantasy in the consciousness of a strictly scientific thinker: they live precisely as an unlawful, albeit ineradicable weakness, as something in the best case merely tolerable. Scientific, aesthetic and religious experiences are always referred here, so to

599 Pipes, op. cit. pp. 135-137.
speak, to the private, intimate life of a man; more tolerant people look on
them as a luxury, an amusement for hours of leisure, as a sweet eccentricity;
the less tolerant condemn them in others and hide them with shame in
themselves. But the intelligent, as an intelligent, that is, in his conscious faith
and public activity, must be alien to them – his world-view and his ideal are
hostile to these sides of human life. From science he takes several
popularized, distorted or ad hoc positions, and although he often prides
himself in the ‘scientificness’ of his faith, he also rejects scientific criticism
with annoyance, as well as all the pure, disinterested work of scientific
thought; while aesthetics and religion are completely unnecessary for him. All
this – pure science, and art, and religion – is incompatible with moralism,
with the service of the people; all this relies on love for objective values and,
consequently, is alien, and for that reason also hostile, to that utilitarian faith
which the Russian intelligent confesses. The religion of the service of earthly
needs and the religion of the service of ideal values strike against each other,
and however complex and varied their irrational psychological interweaving
in the soul of the intelligent, in the sphere of the intelligent’s consciousness
their conflict leads to the complete annihilation and expulsion of ideal
demands in the name of the integrity and purity of the moralistic faith.

“Nihilistic moralism is the fundamental and most profound trait of the
spiritual physiognomy of the Russian intelligent: from the denial of objective
values there proceeds the deification of the subjective interests of one’s
neighbour (‘the people’), hence there follows the recognition that the highest
and only task of man is the service of the people, and hence in its turn there
follows ascetic hatred for everything that hinders or even merely does not
assist the realization of this task. Life has no other objective, inner meaning;
it’s only good is to be materially provided for, to be satisfied in one’s
subjective demands; therefore man is bound to devote all his strength to the
amelioration of the lot of the majority, and everything that distracts from this
is evil and must be mercilessly rooted out – that is the strange, logically badly
founded, but psychologically strongly welded together chain of judgements
that rules the whole behaviour and all the valuations of the Russian
intelligent. Nihilism and moralism, lack of faith and a fanatical severity of
moral demands, and a lack of principle in a metaphysical sense – for nihilism
is also the denial of principled demands, it is an idiosyncratic, rationally
unfathomable and at the same time in real life a strong merging together of
antagonistic motives into a powerful psychical force. And it is that frame of
mind which we call nihilistic moralism.”

If we look more closely at the nature and origins of this atheistic but
moralistic, rationalistic but at the same time quasi-mystic faith of the Russian
intelligentsia we may find it in the Jewish chiliasm of the early Christian
centuries.

Thus Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov, who in the 1870s was still a
revolutionary, but who later repented and became an ardent monarchist,

Frank, “Etika nigilizma” (The Ethics of Nihilism), in Vekhi (Landmarks), Moscow, 1909, pp.
183-185 ®.
wrote: “In spite of the seeming irreligiousness of the 19th century, in its most passionate dreams it is reminiscent of a moment not so much of cold unbelief, as of an error of religious thought, Jewish messianism or the Christian chiliasm that was born from it. The idea of earthly all-blessedness, whether it is expressed in the expectation of ‘the sensible kingdom of Christ’ or of a sorrowless ‘future order’ in the most various of philosophies, grows on the soil of one and the same psychology. The new chiliasm has consciously abandoned religion. But this difference is not as decisive as it seems. The very dreams about an earthly blessedness are already a rebuke to the weakness of spiritual feeling. On the other hand, the unconscious feeling which makes our rationally unbelieving revolutionaries, not simple epicureans, but fanatical dreamers about their future sorrowless order, bear unmistakeable signs of the spiritual strivings of an erring religious quest…

“One may even now foresee some features of a future mystical anarchism, which is still thought now by the revolutionaries to be sick and illogical, but – as in Count L. Tolstoy, for example, - is already making itself talked about, and not only in Russia…

“It is not the inadequacies of the old order, but an insuperable dream about the new order that was and will remain the moving power of the revolution…”

“There is nothing that can be done against further corruption until people understand the source of the mistake.

“This mistake consists in the concept of the autonomy of the personality. The false teaching of its supposed autonomy appears first of all as a result of its rebellion against God. Being left without God, and in this condition feeling itself to be autonomous, the personality at first tries to find a full satisfaction of its strivings in this earthly world. But this is impossible. The world is not capable of that. From here there begins the renunciation of the world in the form that it is according to these earthly laws. One after another there appear dreams of ‘the future order’. Trying these orders, the autonomous personality rejects them one after the other, intensifying its rejection of the real world more and more…”

“Among us revolutionary destruction constitutes the faith, hope and duty of every good radical. Everything that is rebellion, protest, overthrow is looked upon as something useful, containing the seed of progress. Destruction is considered still more useful if it is directed against the preservation of the existing order.”

---

602 Tikhomirov, “Pochemu ia perestal byt’ revoliutsionerom” (Why I ceased to be a Revolutionary), in “Korni zla” (The Roots of Evil), Pravoslavnaia Rus’ (Orthodox Russia), № 7 (1412), April 1/14, 1990 ®.
Frank also saw the desire for autonomy as lying at the root of the revolution: “Socialism is at the same time the culmination and the overthrow of liberal democracy. It is ruled by the same basic motive that rules the whole modern era: to make man and mankind the true master of his life, to present him with the possibility of ordering his own destiny on his own authority...”

“Socialism is the last stride in the great rebellion of mankind and at the same time the result of its total exhaustion - the complete spiritual impoverishment of the prodigal son in the long centuries of his wandering far from his father's home and wealth.”

Utopianism-chiliasm is based not only on a heretical eschatology, but also on a false anthropology that denies the fall of man. For utopia on earth is possible only on the assumption that the men who live in the utopia are sinless and passionless, being governed only by perfect love and humility. To suppose that any class of men, once delivered from injustice and poverty, will automatically behave like angels, is a myth. Still more mythical is the idea that the kingdom of love and brotherhood can be ushered in by hatred and fratricidal war. The means do not justify the ends; and the employment of evil means leads unfailingly to evil ends.

As Solzhenitsyn has said, “If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the dividing line between good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy his own heart?” If the line between good and evil passes, not between classes or nations, but down the middle of each human heart, it follows that the triumph of good over evil is possible only through the purification of the human heart, every human heart. And that is a spiritual task which is accomplished by spiritual, not material or political means, by confession of the faith and repentance of sin, not by rebellion against the king and the redistribution of property.

This brings us to a still deeper flaw of utopianism – its materialism. For while the heresy of chiliasm at any rate recognized the existence of God and the spiritual nature of man, utopianism reduces everything to the blind determinism of insensate matter. For the ancient heretics, utopia could only be introduced by God, and was awarded to the righteous in response to the right use of their freewill. For the moderns, there is neither God nor freewill – but utopia will come in any case, as the result of the iron laws of necessity. And this fatalistic faith both gives the revolution its frightening power – for men acquire extraordinary self-confidence when they know that they must win in the end – and guarantees its terrifying cruelty – for without freewill there is no responsibility, and, as one of Dostoyevsky’s characters said, “if there is no God, everything is permitted”.

---


“Cosmic possession,” writes Fr. George Florovsky, “is how we can define the utopian experience. The feelings of unqualified dependence, of complete determination from without and full immersion and inclusion into the universal order define utopianism’s estimate of itself and the world. Man feels himself to be an ‘organic pin’, a link in some all-embracing chain – he feels unambiguously, irretrievably forged into one whole with the cosmos… From an actor and creator, consciously willing and choosing, and for that reason bearing the risk of responsibility for his self-definition, man is turned into a thing, into a needle, by which someone sews something. In the organic all-unity there is no place for action – here only movement is possible.”

As another contributor to Vekhi, Nicholas Berdyaev, wrote: “Just as pious mystics once strove to make themselves into an image of God, and finally to become absorbed in Him, so now the modern ecstasies of rationalism labour to become like the machine and finally to be absorbed into bliss in a structure of driving belts, pistons, valves and fly-wheels…”

**Tsar Nicholas II**

When he succeeded to the throne on the death of his father in 1894, Tsar Nicholas II became the ruler of the largest and most variegated empire in world history. Extending from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from the Arctic tundra to the sands of Central Asia, it included within its borders a great number of races and religions. It had the largest army in the world and perhaps the fastest-growing economy. And its influence extended well beyond its borders. The Orthodox Christians of Eastern Europe and the Middle East looked to it for protection, as did the Orthodox missions in Persia, China, Japan, Alaska and the United States.

Since Tsar Nicholas has probably been more slandered and misunderstood than any ruler in history, it is necessary to begin with a characterization of him. “Nicholas Alexandrovich,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “was born on May 6/19, 1868 on the day of the memorial of Job the Much-Suffering. Later he used to say that it was not by chance that his reign and his suffering would become much-suffering. In complete accordance with the will of his father, Nicholas Alexandrovich grew up ‘as a normal, healthy Russian person’… From childhood he was able first of all ‘to pray well to God’. His biographer would unanimously note that faith in God was the living condition of his soul. He did not make a single important decision without fervent prayer! At the same time, being a young man and not yet Tsar, Nicholas Alexandrovich externally lived in the same way that almost all worldly young people of his time and his level of education. He loved sport, games, military activities, and acquired a fashionable for that time habit of smoking. He had an affair with the ballerina Kshesinskaya – which, however, he decisively cut short after an

---

open and firm explanation with his father. He read a great deal, both spiritual
and scientific and artistic literature (he loved L. Tolstoy’s War and Peace), he
loved amateur dramatics and various ‘shows’ in the circle of his family and
friends, he was keen on amusing tricks. But all this was to a degree, without
extremes, and never going to the service of the passions. He had a strong will,
and with the help of God and his parents he was able to control and rule
himself. In sum, he preserved a wonderful clarity, integrity and purity of soul.
The direct gaze of his deep, grey-blue eyes, which often flashed with
welcoming humour, penetrated into the very soul of his interlocuters,
completely captivating people who had not yet lost the good, but he was
unendurable for the evil. Later, when his relations with the Tsar were already
hostile, Count S.Yu. Witte wrote: ‘I have never met a more educated person in
my life than the presently reigning Emperor Nicholas II’. Nicholas
Alexandrovich was distinguished by a noble combination of a feeling of
dignity with meekness (at times even shyness), extreme delicacy and
attentiveness in talking with people. He was sincerely and unhypocritically
simple in his relations with everybody, from the courtier to the peasant. He
was organically repelled by any self-advertisement, loud phrases or put-on
poses. He could not endure artificiality, theatricality and the desire ‘to make
an impression’. He never considered it possible for him to show to any but the
very closest people his experiences, sorrows and griefs. It was not cunning,
calculated concealment, but precisely humility and the loftiest feeling of
personal responsibility before God for his decisions and acts that led him to
share his thoughts with almost nobody until they had matured to a point
close to decision. Moreover, like his father, he put these decisions into effect in
a quiet, unnoticed manner, through his ministers and courtiers, so that it
seemed as if they were not his decisions... Later only his wife, Tsarina
Alexandra Fyodorovna, knew the hidden life of his soul, knew him to the
end. But for others, and especially for ‘society’, Nicholas Alexandrovich, like
his crown-bearing forbear, Alexander I, was and remained an enigma, ‘a
sphinx’. It would not have been difficult to decipher this enigma if there had
been the desire, if people had looked at his deeds and judged him from them.
But ‘educated’ society did not have this desire (there is almost none even
now!). However, there was a great desire to represent him as ‘the all-Russian
despot’, ‘the tyrant’ in the most unflattering light. And so sometimes
spontaneously, at other times deliberately, a slanderous, completely distorted
image of Tsar Nicholas II was created, in which by no means the least
important place was occupied by malicious talk of the ‘weakness’ of his will,
his submission to influences, his ‘limitations’, ‘greyness’, etc. One could test
the Russian intelligentsia, as if by litmus paper, by their attitude to the
personality of Nicholas Alexandrovich. And the testing almost always
confirmed the already clearly established truth that in the whole world it was
impossible to find a more despicable ‘cultural intelligentsia’ in its poverty and
primitiveness than the Russian!... However, the personality of Nicholas II was
not badly seen and understood by those representatives of the West who were
duty-bound to understand it! The German chargé in Russia, Count Rechs,
reported to his government in 1893: ‘... I consider Emperor Nicholas to be a
spiritually gifted man, with a noble turn of mind, circumspect and tactful. His
manners are so meek, and he displays so little external decisiveness, that one
could easily come to the conclusion that he does not have a strong will, but the people around him assure me that he has a very definite will, which he is able to effect in life in the quietest manner.’ The report was accurate. Later the West would more than once become convinced that the Tsar had an exceptionally strong will. President Emile Lubet of France witnessed in 1910: ‘They say about the Russian Tsar that he is accessible to various influences. This is profoundly untrue. The Russian Emperor himself puts his ideas into effect. His plans are maturely conceived and thoroughly worked out. He works unceasingly on their realization.’ Winston Churchill, who knew what he was talking about when it came to rulers, had a very high opinion of the statesmanship abilities of Nicholas II. The Tsar received a very broad higher juridical and military education. His teachers were outstanding university professors, including... C.P. Pobedonostsev and the most eminent generals of the Russian army. Nicholas Alexandrovich took systematic part in State affairs, and was president of various committees (including the Great Siberian railway), sitting in the State Council and the Committee of Ministers. He spoke English, French and German fluently. He had an adequate knowledge of Orthodox theology...

In an age when family life, especially among the nobility, was being undermined, the family of Tsar Nicholas presented an icon, as it were, of what Christian family life should be. Love, obedience and humility were at the root of all their relations. It was fitting, therefore, that the family as a whole should receive the crown on martyrdom in 1918...

The Tsar was unparalleled in Russian history for his mercifulness. He pardoned criminals, even revolutionaries, and gave away vast quantities of his own land and money to alleviate the plight of the peasants. It is believed that he gave away the last of his personal wealth during the Great War, to support the war effort. Even as a child he often wore patched clothing while spending his personal allowance to help poor students to pay for their tuition.

The reign of the meek and gentle Tsar Nicholas II gave an unparalleled opportunity to tens of millions of people both within and outside the Russian empire to come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. Moreover, the strength of the Russian Empire protected and sustained Orthodoxy in other parts of the world, such as the Balkans and the Middle East. The Tsar considered it his sacred duty to restore to Russia her ancient traditional culture, which had been abandoned by many of the "educated" classes in favour of modern, Western styles. He encouraged the building of churches and the painting of icons in the traditional Byzantine and Old Russian styles. In the words of Archpriest Michael Polsky, "In the person of the Emperor Nicholas II the believers had the best and most worthy representative of the Church, truly 'The Most Pious' as he was referred to in church services. He was a true patron of the Church, and a solicitor of all her blessings."

---

During the reign of Nicholas II, the Church reached her fullest development and power. “By the outbreak of revolution in 1917... it had between 115 and 125 million adherents (about 70 per cent of the population), around 120,000 priests, deacons and other clergy, 130 bishops, 78,000 churches [up by 10,000], 1,253 monasteries [up by 250], 57 seminaries and four ecclesiastical academies.” Traditional church arts were encouraged, and old churches were renovated. The Emperor himself took part in the laying of the first cornerstones and the consecration of many churches. He visited churches and monasteries in all parts of the country, venerating their saints. Moreover, he took a very active part in the glorification of new ones, sometimes urging on an unwilling Holy Synod. Among those glorified during his reign were: St. Theodosius of Chernigov (in 1896), St. Isidore of Yuriev (1897), St. Seraphim of Sarov (1903), St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk (1909), St. Anna of Kashin (1910), St. Joasaph of Belgorod (1911), St. Hermogenes of Moscow (1913), St. Pitirim of Tambov (1914), St. John (Maximovich) of Tobolsk (1916) and St. Paul of Tobolsk (1917).

The Emperor stressed the importance of educating the peasant children within the framework of church and parish and, as a result, the number of parish schools, which were more popular among the peasants than the state, zemstvo schools, grew to 37,000. Moreover, Christian literature flourished; excellent journals were published, such as Soul-Profiting Reading, Soul-Profiting Converser, The Wanderer, The Rudder, The Russian Monk, The Trinity Leaflets and the ever-popular Russian Pilgrim. The Russian people were surrounded by spiritual nourishment as never before.

Nor did the Emperor neglect the material condition of his people. Under his leadership Russia made vast strides in economic development. He changed the passport system introduced by Peter I and thus facilitated the free movement of the people, including travel abroad. The poll tax was abolished and a voluntary programme of hospitalisation insurance was introduced, under which, for a payment of one rouble per year, a person was entitled to free hospitalisation. The parity of the rouble was increased greatly on the international markets during his reign. In 1897, a law was enacted to limit work hours; night work was forbidden for women and minors under seventeen years of age, and this at a time when the majority of the countries in the West had almost no labour legislation at all. As William Taft commented in 1913, "the Russian Emperor has enacted labour legislation which not a single democratic state could boast of".

The young Tsar Nicholas was a peacemaker by nature, and early in his reign he suggested that all nations come together in order to cut their military forces and submit to general arbitration on international disputes. “The

---

preservation of universal peace,” he wrote, “and the reduction in weapons that weigh on all the peoples is, in the present situation, a goal to which the efforts of all governments should strive.” Military expenses were an ever-increasing burden on the peoples, disrupting their prosperity. “Hundreds of millions are spent on the acquisition of terrible means of destruction which, while considered the last word in science today, must lose all value tomorrow in view of new inventions... Thus as the weapons of each state grow, they answer less and less to the goals put forward by governments.”

As a result of the Tsar’s proposal, the Hague Peace Conference was convened on May 18, 1899, and was attended by representatives of 26 nations. Several useful resolutions were passed. “However,” writes O.F. Soloviev, “at the very beginning Germany made clear her lack of desire even to consider the central question of disarmament, in spite of the intentions of the other participants. Kaiser Wilhelm II made a sensational speech in Wiesbaden in which he declared that the best guarantee of peace was ‘a sharpened sword’. Then, for the sake of consensus, the remaining delegates, at the suggestion of the Frenchman L. Bourgeois (1851-1926), a former president of the council of ministers and a Mason, limited themselves to accepting an evasive formula on the extreme desirability of ‘limiting the military burdens which now weigh on the world for the sake of improving both the material and the moral prosperity of mankind’.

“After this the attention of delegates was concentrated on the third commission, which discussed problems of arbitration under the presidency of the same Bourgeois, with [one of the leaders of the Grand Orient of Belgium, Jacques] Decan as secretary. As a result of these efforts, which were supported by other governments, success was obtained in paralysing the attempts of the Germans completely to exclude the application of arbitration procedures in the regulation of conflicts. In the preambule to the convention on ‘the peaceful resolution of international conflicts’, which was unanimously accepted, it was noted that the conference had been convened on the initiative of ‘the most august monarch’, Nicholas II, whose thoughts it was necessary to strengthen by an agreement on the principles of right and justice, on which ‘the security of states and the prosperity of peoples’ rested. The first article of the first section ‘On the Preservation of Universal Peace’ made the following provision: ‘With the aim of averting, if possible, the turning to force in the mutual relations between states, the signatory powers agree to apply all their efforts to guarantee a peaceful resolution of international disagreements.’ ... Decan in his report to the commission was apparently the first to use the term ‘League of Nations’ to apply to the union of state approving of similar documents. Later the term was more and more widely used long before the creation, after the First World War, of an international organization of that name.”

---

The Hague Conference was probably the first – and last – time that the two great opposing ideological forces of Europe – Russian Orthodox Tsarism and Continental Freemasonry – worked together in a fruitful way. However, as was only to be expected, the two powers had quite different understandings of the ultimate uses of peace. We see this most clearly in their attitudes to the two European power blocs that were forming between the French and Russians, on the one hand, and the German and Austrians, on the other.

The French ruling circles were all in favour of the alliance with Russia, since the consuming passion of the French since the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was the recovery of the former French territories of Alsace-Lorraine from Germany, and this was clearly impossible without the support of some major power such as Russia. However, the Grand Orient of France, whose influence on French politics was increasing all the time, saw things differently. Their main concern was to effect a reconciliation between the French and German centres of Continental Masonry, a task made much more difficult by the nationalist passions on both sides.

“Evidence of this,” writes O.F. Soloviev, “is provided by articles in the secret GOF journal, L’Acacia, which in many ways reflected the intentions of the leadership of the Great Lodge of France and the Great Orient of France. The main editor and author of the editorial articles, writing under the name ‘Hiram’, was the well-known journalist S. Limousène (1840-1909), who touched on the influence of Franco-German relations on world politics. This brother was simultaneously in the lodges of the three French ‘obediences’ and was in close contact with their leaders, which gave an additional weight to his utterances and thoughts.

“At the beginning of 1904 L’Acacia published an article by Limousène entitled ‘The Question of Alsace-Lorraine. Germany, France, Russia and Masonry’, whose central thesis was that the reconciliation of the first two countries would have to come one day ‘because of the necessity of agreeing for the sake of joint resistance to the Russian invasion’, for the State structures of Russia and France were ‘socially incompatible’. In the words of the author, the French were sympathetic only to the representatives of the Russian ‘intelligentsia and revolutionaries’. Moreover, [the Russians] have, he said, a different mentality from ours, conditioned by life in ‘the conditions of the most terrible and despotic regime, which is without any intellectual culture and unusually corrupted’. Moreover, even the Russians who are close [to us] in spirit believe in the inevitability of revolution, which will engender still more serious excesses and internal struggle than the revolution in France in 1789. In the end reaction will gain the upper hand thanks to ‘the masses of muzhiks’ – after all, the village population of Russia is much more backward than the French at the end of the 18th century. The result will be the expansion of Russia into Western Europe. But so far France helps Russia materially in the capacity of a friend and ally, which has allowed Moscow to build strategic railways while modernizing her weapons. There followed leisurely reflections

611 Thus in 1901 Masons founded the Radical party and the party of the Radical Socialists (Soloviev, op. cit., p. 38).
on the striving of Russia to realize ‘the dream of world hegemony that was cherished already by Peter I’.

“The objections that Nicholas II was a peace-loving person and the initiator of the Hague conference were declared to be unsustainable in view of Russia’s predatory politics in Manchuria, which ‘will unfailingly lead to war with Japan’. Besides, such a liberal monarch had destroyed representative institutions in Finland, although he had sworn to preserve them. He was also weak-willed and indecisive, like the executed French King Louis XVI. In a word, such an order was not only distinguished by despotism, but also disorganized the country. ‘The genuine politics of Western Europe would have to consist in the dividing up of this colossus as long as it has not yet become too strong. It would have to use a possible revolution in order to re-establish Poland as a defensive rampart for Europe, while the rest of Russia would have to be divided into three or four states. Balance of power politics will remain the only fitting politics in the given conditions until the rise of the United States of Europe, which France will assist.’ In conclusion, the article noted that sooner or later, and without fail, ‘France will have to be reconciled with Germany’.”

Fortunately for Russia, France was not reconciled with Germany. And in spite of an almost entirely Masonic cabinet at the beginning of World War I, nationalist passions continued to keep not only the two governments at loggerheads, but even their Masonic institutions. In other respects, though, the article was remarkably farsighted, from the future dominance of Russia (albeit Soviet, not Tsarist Russia) to the importance of that quintessentially Masonic project, the United States of Europe. In one important respect, however, the article was quite wrong: in its estimate of the character of Tsar Nicholas II. He was neither weak-willed nor a war-monger nor a despot. But he was absolutely determined to uphold the traditional Orthodox world-view and bring it unharmed into the twentieth century. The Grand Orient knew that, and was determined to stop him. On the struggle between these two powers, Orthodox Tsarism and Continental Freemasonry, would depend the future of the world in the century to come...

However, “the greatest of the Tsars” (the words of Blessed Pasha of Sarov) was destined to reign at a time of spiritual decline, even apostasy. And as the twentieth century dawned, apocalyptic signs multiplied. Thus in 1900 the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev had a vision of Christians fleeing into the caves to escape what he called “the collective Antichrist”, which he felt was coming soon to Russia. And in his Three Conversations on the Antichrist he saw the Antichrist uniting Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants into a single false church. Both presentiments were to be fulfilled after the Russian revolution of 1917 with the arrival of Soviet power… In general, therefore, the reign of Tsar Nicholas II could be described as the period of preparation for the coming of “the collective Antichrist”, Soviet power, a last chance for people to repent and come to God before the cataclysm came and swept them all – or almost all away.

Soloviev, op. cit., pp. 41-42.
The two most important decisions of Russian foreign policy around the turn of the century were the alliance with France in 1894, and the turning towards the Far East. The former clearly strengthened both France and Russia against the most dynamic power in Europe, Germany, although it increased the risk of conflict with Germany insofar as it divided Europe into two systems of alliances. However, there was no direct threat to Germany in the Franco-Russian alliance because Russia’s second major foreign-policy decision, to expand in the Far East, showed that her priorities now lay as much in Asia as in Europe. Only in the Orthodox peoples of Eastern Europe did Russia have an important interest. But here tension had been considerably lowered by the agreement with Austria in 1897 to preserve the status quo in the Balkans.

As the Tsar remarked to the German Foreign Minister, von Bulow, in 1899: “There is no problem that finds the interests of Germany and Russia in conflict. There is only one area in which you must recognize Russian traditions and take care to respect them, and that is the Near East. You must not create the impression that you intend to oust Russia politically and economically from the East, to which we have been linked for centuries by numerous national and religious ties. Even if I myself handle these matters with somewhat more scepticism and indifference, I still would have to support Russia’s traditional interests in the East. In this regard I am unable to go against the heritage and aspirations of my people.”

But why was Russia so interested in the Far East? There were two possibilities: economic imperialism on the western model, or the desire to bring Orthodox Christianity to the Eastern peoples.

Now Russia had been baptizing the Asiatic peoples within and beyond her frontiers for some centuries. And among the greatest achievements of the late Russian Empire were the missions of St. Macarius (Nevsky) of the Altai, St. Nicholas of Japan, and St. Innocent of Alaska. Nor was this ideal confined to churchmen. As Oliver Figes points out, Dostoevsky had spoken of Russia’s “civilizing mission in Asia”: “Inspired by the conquest of Central Asia, Dostoevsky, too, advanced the notion that Russia’s destiny was not in Europe, as had so long been supposed, but rather in the East. In 1881 he told the readers of his Writer’s Diary:

‘Russia is not only in Europe but in Asia as well... We must cast aside our servile fear that Europe will call us Asiatic barbarians and say that we are more Asian than European... This mistaken view of ourselves as exclusively Europeans and not Asians (and we have never ceased to be the latter)... has cost us very dearly over these two centuries, and we have paid for it by the loss of our spiritual independence... It is hard for us to turn away from our window on Europe; but it is a matter of our destiny... When we turn to Asia,

---

613 Tsar Nicholas, in Lieven, Nicholas II, p. 94.
with our new view of her, something of the same sort may happen to us as happened to Europe when America was discovered. With our push towards Asia we will have a renewed upsurge of spirit and strength... In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves [the words 'slave' and 'Slav' are etymologically identical], while in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we can be Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit and draw us on; the movement needs only to be started.'

This quotation is a perfect illustration of the Russians' tendency to define their relations with the East in reaction to their self-esteem and status in the West. Dostoevsky was not actually arguing that Russia is an Asiatic culture; only that the Europeans thought of it as so. And likewise, his argument that Russia should embrace the East was not that it should seek to be an Asiatic force: but, on the contrary, that only in Asia could it find new energy to reassert its Europeanness. The root of Dostoevsky’s turning to the East was the bitter resentment which he, like many Russians, felt at the West’s betrayal of Russia’s Christian cause in the Crimean War, when France and Britain had sided with the Ottomans against Russia to defend their own imperial interests. In the only published very he ever wrote (and the qualities of ‘On the European Events of 1854’ are such that one can see why this was so) Dostoevsky portrayed the Crimean War as the ‘crucifixion of the Russian Christ’. But, as he warned the Western readers of his poem, Russia would arise and, when she did so, she would turn toward the East in her providential mission to Christianize the world.

Unclear to you is her [Russia’s] predestination!
The East – is hers! To her a million generations
Untiringly stretch out their hands…
And the resurrection of the ancient East
By Russia (so God had commanded) is drawing near.”

However, the strategy to penetrate the Far East initiated by the Minister of Finance Count Sergius Witte - a man of talent and energy but deeply distrusted by all conservatives - was not of a spiritual nature. His philosophy was closer to that of General A.A. Kireev: “We, like any powerful nation, strive to expand our territory, our ‘legitimate’ moral, economic and political influence. This is in the order of things…”

“As the main architect of Russia’s industrialization,” writes Pipes, “[Witte] was eager to ensure foreign markets for her manufactured goods. In his judgement, the most promising export outlets lay in the Far East, notably China. Witte also believed that Russia could provide a major transit route for

---

614 Figes, Natasha’s Dance, pp. 415-416.
615 On October 13, 1901, N.V. Muraviev, the Minister of Justice said that Witte, “thanks to his wife Matilda, a pure-blooded Jewess, has concluded a close union with the Jews and is confusing Russia… In his hands are special organs of his secret police… He is preparing, if there were to be a change of reign, to take power into his own hands. He has… influence everywhere” (Gubanov, op. cit., p. 705).
cargo and passengers from Western Europe to the Pacific, a potential role of which she had been deprived by the completion in 1869 of the Suez Canal. With these objectives in mind, he persuaded Alexander III to authorize a railway across the immense expanse of Siberia. The Trans-Siberian, begun in 1886, was to be the longest railroad in the world. [Tsar] Nicholas, who sympathized with the idea of Russia’s Far Eastern mission, endorsed and continued the undertaking. Russia’s ambitions in the Far East received warm encouragement from Kaiser Wilhelm II, who sought to divert her attention from the Balkans, where Austria, Germany’s principal ally, had her own designs.

“In the memoirs he wrote after retiring from public life, Witte claimed that while he had indeed supported a vigorous Russian policy in the Far East, he had in mind exclusively economic penetration, and that his plans were wrecked by irresponsible generals and politicians. This thesis, however, cannot be sustained in the light of the archival evidence that has surfaced since. Witte’s plans for economic penetration of the Far East were conceived in the spirit of imperialism of the age: it called for a strong military presence, which was certain sooner or later to violate China’s sovereignty and come into conflict with the imperial ambitions of Japan...”617

Witte succeeded in persuading the Tsar to his point of view. Thus “before 1904,” writes Dominic Lieven, “Nicholas’s priorities in terms of foreign policy were clear. Unlike Russians of so-called pan-Slav sympathy, he did not believe that his country’s manifest destiny lay in the Balkans, nor did he feel that Petersburg must necessarily support the Balkan Slavs just because they were people of the same race and religion. The Emperor was determined that, should the Ottoman Empire collapse, no other power must steal Constantinople, thereby barring Russia’s route out of the Black Sea and assuming a dominant position in Asia Minor. To avoid such a possibility in 1896-7 he was even willing to contemplate very dangerous military action. But, above all, Nicholas was intent on developing Russia’s position in Siberia and the Far East. Particularly after 1900, his personal imprint on Russia’s Far Eastern policy became very important.

“Many of the Emperor’s advisors were dismayed by the diversion of Russia’s resources and attention to the Far East. The Ministry of Finance resented the cost of building up the Pacific fleet. The Foreign Ministry feared that it would no longer be strong enough in Europe to balance between France and Germany. But it was above all the Minister of War, obsessed by the dangers of a conflict with Germany and Austria on the western front, who was most alarmed by Russia’s Far Eastern policy. Bemoaning the money and troops being lavished on Manchuria, Kuropatkin commented in 1900 that ‘never in the whole history of Russia has our western frontier been in such danger in the event of a European war as is true today.’ In January 1902 Kuropatkin repeated that ‘we have to return again to the West from the East’ since the situation in Europe was potentially very dangerous.

“Such arguments seem to have cut little ice with the imperial couple. In August 1903, for instance, the Empress told Kuropatkin that he was wrong to worry so much about Europe. The ‘yellow peril’ in the East was a real threat whereas no danger at present existed in the West. Nicholas believed that Russia’s future lay in Siberia and Asia. In this era most intelligent Europeans tended to see their country’s future greatness as dependent on the possession and development of large colonies. In this competition Russia had great advantages. Her empire, second only in size to Britain’s, was potentially immensely rich. It was also a single land mass and therefore far more defensible than a maritime empire scattered across the globe. The Russian population, already much larger than that of any other European state, was growing at tremendous speed... Certainly the Romanovs’ empire was multinational but in Nicholas II’s reign the Slav element was growing much more quickly than the Tsar’s Asian and Muslim subjects. Economic development was very rapid. The people’s initiative and creative energy had not been stifled and crippled by the economic system... It was in Nicholas II’s reign that the British geographer Halford Mackinder began to expound his theory that domination of the Eurasian heartland was the key to future global supremacy. At the same time the famous Russian scholars Dmitri Mendeleev and V.P. Semyonov-Tyan-Shansky argued that Russia’s centre of gravity must and would shift to Asia. The geographer A.I. Voeykov stressed the vital future significance of the Pacific economy and its trade routes. Such voices were very much in a minority within the psychologically insecure Eurocentrism that dominated the Russian intelligentsia. It was, however, to Nicholas’s credit that he shared this Eurasian outlook and believed that time was working in its and Russia’s favour. It is only against this background of Nicholas II’s largely correct perception of this geopolitical trend that one can understand his long-term optimism about Russia’s future. Set against this majestic vision of Russia’s unique and powerful Eurasian destiny many of the complaints of Russian educated society and not a few of the country problems appeared to be relatively small and transitory difficulties in the Emperor’s eyes.

“It would, however, be naïve to think that the main reason why Russia’s attention shifted to the Far East between 1894 and 1904 was simply Nicholas II’s views on his country’s priorities. The background to Russia’s Far Eastern policy was the competition between the great powers to control territories, markets and raw materials across the whole globe. China was the biggest plum still hanging on the tree and, given the increasing decrepitude of the Manchu government, it seemed ripe to fall. There was therefore a strong incentive to reserve one’s place in the Far Eastern sun by snatching valuable Chinese provinces before one’s rivals cut one out. Securing railway concessions in desirable regions as the first step in this process. In this competition Russia had both advantages and difficulties. Because it bordered on China, once the Trans-Siberian railway [begun by Alexander III] was completed it was better placed geopolitically than any of its European rivals. On the other hand, the population of Siberia was less than one fifth that of Japan. Russia’s Pacific fleet was weak and her only port, Vladivostok, was ice-bound in winter and easily blockaded. Moreover, Russia’s industrial products
were seldom able to compete in an open market with those of Europe and the USA. To corner part of the Chinese market Russia would probably have to discriminate against foreign competition by political means, which was bound to incur the wrath of the other powers.618

The Chinese were in a weak position. As we have seen, the British, the French and the Russians had all annexed Chinese territory in the nineteenth century. Moreover, in 1884-5 the French defeated the Chinese over Indo-China, and ten years later the Japanese defeated them after interventions in Taiwan, the Ryukyu islands and Korea.

The rise of Japan and her defeat of China, writes Diana Preston, “shocked the world and prompted the Kaiser to coin the expression ‘die Gelbe Gefahr’ – ‘the Yellow Peril’. The idea that an armed, ambitious Asia was turning its covetous gaze westward quickly took hold. In The Yellow Danger, a potboiler by M.P. Shiel published in London in 1898, the Chinese are portrayed as conspiring with Britain’s Continental enemies to break Britannia’s power in the Far East. Their real goal, however, is to forge a secret alliance between China and Japan to enable them to become masters of Europe and Asia. ‘What appalling fate would be that of Europe if the yellow races in their hundreds of millions organized a westward march is beyond the imagination of man to conceive,’ says one character. Nevertheless, the scenario is depicted for the reader. Screaming Chinese play ball with severed heads and limbs in the streets of Paris and ‘the Oriental’ indulges an almost natural penchant for cannibalism. ‘The low hedge that divides the yellow man from omnivorousness was in Europe found to be very low indeed – where the flesh of men is not yellow, but pink, like the new-born mouse. At the first spur of hunger, the hedge was leapt with an easy bound.’

“The Yellow Danger is peppered with phrases like ‘fiendish love of cruelty’ and ‘devilish cunning’ to describe the Oriental character. Exactly the same language is to be found in the letters and diaries of the foreigners trapped in Peking in 1900 and in articles in the international press. Raging against the supposed massacre in Peking, The Times warned of ‘a universal uprising of the yellow race’…

“Darwinism appeared to give respectability to anti-Chinese fears and prejudices. It encouraged Westerners to think of Orientals as less highly evolved and more prey to savage animal instincts. In 1897 the North China Herald had published an article entitled ‘Darwinism and China’. Citing the work of the Dutch scientist Eugene Dubois, who claimed to have discovered the ‘missing link’ in the shape of an ape-man in Java, the anonymous author argued that the Oriental was plainly less highly evolved than the European. Anyone who doubted this had only to walk down a street in China: ‘Many Chinese have retained vestigial control of the feet which Europeans have lost… Observations of barefooted coolies on a damp road will prove plainly enough that the inner part of the sole never touches the ground.’ He went on: ‘Man is never nearer to the beasts than when he is angry’; when a Chinaman

618 Lieven, op. cit., pp. 94-96.
was enraged his ‘simian ancestry’ returned, transforming him into ‘a raging beast whose eyes glare, whose mouth foams with almost as poisonous a secretion as that of a mad dog... Watch him half bend himself downwards and then spring up with a jerk, gesticulating arm and twitching fingers hardly under control... the very picture of an enraged anthropoid ape.”

China’s defeat at the hands of Japan prompted some Chinese to wonder whether the westernisation undertaken by that country was what China also needed. Thus K’ang Yu-wei, a Confucian reformer, submitted a Memorial to the Imperial Throne in 1898, saying: “A survey of all states in the world will show that those states which undertook reform became strong while those states which clung to the past perished. The consequences of clinging to the past and the effects of opening up new ways are thus obvious. If Your Majesty, with Your discerning brilliance, observes the trends in other countries, you will see that if we can change, we can preserve ourselves, but if we cannot change, we shall perish.”

Meanwhile, Russia’s relations with Japan were deteriorating. “The first step towards confrontation with Japan,” writes Lieven, “came in 1895. In the peace treaty that followed its victory over the Chinese, Tokyo secured, amongst other possessions, the naval base of Port Arthur and control over southern Manchuria. Russia masterminded a coalition with Germany and France to force the Japanese to give up these gains. It also helped the Chinese to pay off their war indemnity. As a reward, in the autumn of 1896 Petersburg won from the Chinese the right to link Vladivostok to the Trans-Siberian railway which it was building by a short cut across northern Manchuria.

“The scheme was Witte’s and it possessed clear advantages. The Manchurian route was easier and cheaper to build than a line across Russian territory. It also opened up the prospect of Russian domination of Manchuria, which was potentially a very rich province. By forestalling foreign competitors and dominating northern Chinese markets Witte hoped to recoup many of the costs of building the Trans-Siberian railway. With Nicholas II’s support, he imposed his policy despite the doubts of some other Russian ministries. These doubts were well justified. It was extremely dangerous to place hundred of miles of Russia’s main line of communication to the East in a foreign and turbulent province. Witte’s hope of wringing back quick profits out of Manchuria were always fanciful, whereas the financial and political costs of defending his railway soon proved to be exorbitant. Moreover, by travelling across foreign territory the railway partly sacrificed one of its main objectives, namely the encouragement of colonization in Russia’s Far Eastern provinces.”

Moreover, the agreement with China to build the railroad across Manchuria had been achieved through some double-dealing on the part of

---

621 Lieven, op. cit., pp. 96-97.
Witte. “He obtained China’s consent with bribes given the Chinese statesman Li Hung-chang and the promise of a defensive alliance. An agreement to this effect was signed in June 1896 during Li Hung-chang’s visit to Moscow to attend the coronation of Nicholas II. The signatories pledged mutual help in the event of an attack on either of them or on Korea. China allowed Russia to construct a line to Vladivostok across Manchuria, on the understanding that her sovereignty in that province would be respected.

“Russia immediately violated the terms of the treaty by introducing numerous police and military units into Manchuria and establishing in Kharbin a quasi-independent base of operations...”

Very soon the Russo-Chinese alliance was tested. “In November 1897 the Germans occupied the Chinese port of Kiaochow. The Russian Foreign Minister, M.N. Muravyov, believed that the British were likely to take Port Arthur in response. He therefore advocated that Russia should move into Port Arthur first. At a meeting on 26 November chaired by the Emperor, both the Minister of Finance and the Naval Minister opposed the seizure of Port Arthur, the latter on the grounds that a Korean port would be far more suitable for the navy’s needs. Perhaps for this reason Nicholas concurred with the majority view not to take Port Arthur, despite his personal view that it was vital for Russia to have a warm-water port in the Far East. Two weeks later, however, after private conversations with Muravyov, Nicholas changed his mind, a pattern of behaviour which drove his ministers to despair. In March 1898, under heavy pressure, the Chinese agreed to lease Port Arthur and its hinterland to Russia. In compensation for German and Russian gains the British took the port of Weihaiwei. The Japanese therefore had the mortification of seeing Russia ensconced in a port from which Tokyo had been evicted only three years ago amidst pious claims that the European powers were acting to protect China’s territorial integrity.”

The Europeans were scrambling for Chinese territory because they believed that China was about to collapse. The British “Open Door” principle, urged on the other great powers by the American secretary of state, had in effect made China a western colony. True, the defeat at the hands of Japan had led to a brief attempt to reform on western lines; but this failed. This

---

625 “A few Chinese intellectuals and civil servants had founded in the 1890s a society for the study of ‘self-strengthening’ to consider Western ideas and inventions that might be helpful. Its leaders pointed to the example of Peter the Great of Russia as a modernizer and, more significantly, to what was then going on in Japan. Yet even these would-be reformers still sought to root change in Confucian tradition, albeit one purified and invigorated. Members of the gentry administrative class, they sought to work within the traditional framework and machinery of power to bring about reform and technological innovation without compromising the fundamentals of Chinese culture and ideology. Unfortunately, this meant that what came to be known as the ‘Hundred Days of Reform’ of 1898 was almost at once
failure, and the sometimes overbearing attitude of Christian missionaries and their Chinese converts, led to the building up of pressure within the country.

There were also political and economic pressures. In 1898 the Yellow River flooded, destroying 1,500 villages. There were also plagues of locusts and drought. These disasters were exploited by the Boxers, who were secretly supported by the Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi. Their symbol was the raised fist, hence their name. They blamed the disasters on foreigners and the Christianity they had imported, which, they said, was angering the gods. The Boxer rebellion was the last rebellion of the old, pagan world against the onslaught of western (including Russian) imperialism. And for the first time the European powers (including the Russians) joined forces under a German commander to suppress it and demand a large indemnity from the Chinese.

Superficially, this looked like the triumph of a united Christian Europe against the last and greatest pagan power in the world. But the reality was very different. In 1901, as a direct result of her humiliating defeat at the hands of the foreigners, the Dowager Empress was forced to introduce the modernizing reforms she had rejected before. However, the dynasty was not prepared to surrender power as the western-educated reformers wanted. So in 1911 an army revolt at Wu-ch’ang in 1911 spread through China, deposed the last emperor, Pu Yi, and brought the over 2000-year-old empire to an end. On January 1, 1912, the leader of the revolt, Sun Yat-sen, was proclaimed temporary president. But in 1949 a communist republic was proclaimed, and now, a century after the Boxer Uprising, China threatens western political and economic hegemony as never before...

As for Russia, immediately after the Boxer Uprising, she poured troops into Manchuria “to protect Witte’s precious railway. Once in possession of Manchuria Petersburg was disinclined to retreat, at least until absolute security could be guaranteed to its railway and the Chinese would concede Russia’s economic domination of the province. This Peking was unwilling to entangled in court politics. Reform edicts were swiftly overtaken by a coup d’état by the dowager empress, Tzu Hsi, who locked up the emperor whose ear the reformers had sought” (Roberts, op. cit., pp. 60-61).

626 Frances Wood writes: “Though the origins of Boxer belief and their ambitions remain unclear, it was evident from the beginning that anti-foreignism was a major component. Contemporary Chinese who opposed the movement referred to its adherents as quanfei or ‘boxing bandits’. More formally, they were known as the Yihetuan or ‘Militia united in righteousness’. Foreigners simply called them ‘Boxers’. The ‘boxing’ arose from their practice of a form of martial art which was supposed to ensure spiritual protection: ‘When you’ve reached the field of battle, as soon as the gods have entered your bodies you’ll go up to heaven, and the devils [foreigners] will have no way to attack you,’ bellowed one commander at his followers” (No Dogs and Not Many Chinese, London: John Murry, 1998, p. 159).

627 The main objects of Boxer wrath were missionaries and railways, since these were both obviously foreign imports. “Whilst the Taiping rebellion of the mid-nineteenth century had been viewed almost as a spectator sport by many foreign residents in china, the Boxer rebellion terrified all foreigners in China, caused the death of several hundred missionaries (and many thousand Chinese Christians)” (Wood, op. cit., p. 159).

628 J.M. Roberts calls it “the only instance in history of a combined, if reluctant, military effort by all the great powers of the day..., which... led to a declaration in June 1900 by the Chinese government that it was at war with the entire world”. (op. cit., p. 61).
do. Its stand was strongly backed by Britain, the USA and Japan, all of which demanded free access for foreign trade to Manchuria. The signatories of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, clearly directed against Russia, in January 1902 further stiffened Chinese resolve.\textsuperscript{629}

And so Russia entered the twentieth century dangerously isolated in the Far East. Moreover, a related event had undermined her moral standing. During the Boxer rebellion, certain Russian military commanders in Blagoveschensk on the Amur had driven some thousands of Chinese out of the city and into the river. This showed that Russia had begun to be infected by the racist and imperialist spirit of the pseudo-Christian West.

She would bear her punishment for it in the Russo-Japanese war only a few years later. This was indicated by Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who “was profoundly saddened by this event and foretold that it was precisely there, in the Far East, that we were bound to await the special punishment of God. The text of this prophecy has unfortunately not been found, but Vladyka Anthony himself spoke about it in his sermon before the service at the conclusion of peace with Japan [in 1905]. Pointing to the fact that the unsuccessful war with Japan was God’s punishment for the apostasy of Russian society from the age-old foundations of Russian life, Vladyka Anthony said: ‘… I will speak about the fact that it is not only the traitors of the fatherland that are guilty before God, I will say what I said five years ago, when I foretold that it would be precisely there, in the Far East, that we had to expect a particular punishment of God. But I will speak not with evil joy, as do our enemies, but with sadness and with shame, as a Christian and a Russian priest. In Blagoveschensk, on the Amur, five years ago, we permitted a cruel action to take place. Several thousand Chinese, who were in service to Russian citizens, for the general security of the latter, were deceitfully led out of the city and forced into the river, where they found inescapable death… It was not for this that the Lord opened up before us the confines of the Far East, from the Volga to the sea of Okhotsk, so that we amazed the foreigners by our heartlessness. On the contrary, it is there, in the East, and not in the West, that lies the missionary and even messianic calling of our people. Russians did not want to understand this calling – not simple people, of course, but people who consider themselves enlightened, who, following the example of their western enlighteners, would not allow themselves the slightest rudeness in relation to any European rascal, but do not consider humble, straightforward and industrious inhabitants of the East even to be people. We were bound to reveal to them Christ, we were bound to show them the Russian breadth of spirit, Russian love of man, Russian trustiness, but we showed them only animal self-preservation that does not stop before anything. This is our first guilt, for God even in the Old Testament imputed the sinful fall of a people’s military commanders to the whole people.’”\textsuperscript{630}

\textsuperscript{629} Lieven, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{630} Archbishop Nicon (Rklitsky), \textit{Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago}, volume 2, New York, 1957, pp. 140-141 ©.
But this does not exhaust the spiritual significance of events in the Far East at the turn of the century. During the Boxer rebellion 222 Chinese Orthodox from the Russian Spiritual Mission in Peking – the first saints of the twentieth century – were martyred. To some, the preaching of the Gospel in the greatest and most inaccessible of the pagan empires, China, and its first-fruits in the form of the Chinese martyrs, indicated that the end was coming, in fulfillment of the Lord’s words: “This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, and then the end will come (Matthew 24.14)...”

The Orthodox Churches and “Proto-Ecumenism”

The first see in Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was going through a difficult period. One of the reasons for this was its exposure, at the centre of the Ottoman Empire, to various heterodox influences – not only the Islam of the Ottoman rulers, but also the Catholicism and Protestantism of the western powers. Another reason was its own internal divisions.

Both the Catholics and the Anglicans were adopting a more “eirenical”, ecumenist approach to inter-Church relations at this time. Pope Leo XIII had already shown himself a liberal in political terms, striving to come closer to the republican government of France, the Kaiser’s Germany and even the revolutionary movement. He brought the Vatican into the world of stock-market speculation, and founded the first Vatican bank. Then, on June 20, 1894, he issued an encyclical on the union of the Churches “addressed,” in the words of Patriarch Anthimus’ encyclical in reply dated August, 1895, “to the sovereigns and peoples of the whole world, in which he also called on our Orthodox, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ to unite with the throne of the Pope, understanding this union in the sense that we should recognize him as the supreme pontiff and the highest spiritual and secular head of the whole Church scattered throughout the earth and the only deputy of Christ on earth and distributor of all grace”. The encyclical that the patriarch wrote in reply to the Pope lists all the heresies of the papacy and calls on it to return to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church. For “truly,” continues the encyclical, “every Christian heart must be filled with the desire for the union of the Churches, especially the union of the whole Orthodox world... Therefore in her public prayers [the Orthodox Church] prays for the union of all those who are dispersed and for the return of all those who erred to the correct path of the truth, which alone can lead to the Life of all that exists, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ...”

The Catholic writer Adrian Fortescue finds this worthy reply “unpardonably offensive”. In revenge, as it were, he mocks the internal divisions within the patriarchate in a manner that is tendentious but which nevertheless is worth quoting as demonstrating how the undeniably scandalous state of the patriarchate was perceived by the outside world: “In 1894 [Ecumenical Patriarch] Lord Neophytos VIII occupied the see. He was a prelate who really cared for the dignity and independence of his Church, and

by way of restoring them he ventured on a feeble attempt at resisting the tyranny of the Porte [the Ottoman government] in canonical matters. But when he asked the other Orthodox Churches to help him (Russia could have claimed almost anything as the acknowledged protector of all Orthodox Rayahs), their jealousy of the Phanar was so much greater than their zeal for ecclesiastical independence that no one would do anything. The Bulgarian trouble, to which of course he could not put an end, alienated his own friends – they always seem to accuse the perfectly helpless Patriarch when the Bulgars become specially unbearable – so the Porte had no difficulty in making them depose him. On October 25 (O.S.), 1894, the synod and the mixed council agreed that he must resign, and a deputation of five members waited on him to inform him of their unanimous decision. So Neophytdos VIII had to go back to private life in his house on the Antigone island. Having got rid of the Patriarch, the synod and the mixed council quarrelled so badly about his successor that their members excommunicated each other, and things came to an absolute block, till the Minister of Religions, Riza Pasha, wrote to say that he had annulled all their acts, and that they were to elect a new Patriarch at once. In defiance of the law the Porte struck off seven names from the first list of twenty-eight candidates which was sent up; one of these names was that of Germanos of Heraclea, who would otherwise almost certainly have been chosen. The popular candidate was the ex-Patriarch, Joachim III (1878-1884), but (it was said at the time) Germanos managed to get his name struck off too; so at last Anthimos VII (Metropolitan of Leros and Kalymnos) was elected. There was a tumult at his enthronement; the people wanted Joachim, and would cry ‘Unworthy’ (Ἀνθιμός αὐτοκράτορος) instead of the proper form. Germanos had prudently retired to Vienna. However, Lord Anthimos began the reign in which he chiefly distinguished himself by his unpardonably offensive answer to the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. In two years the popular party succeeded in having him deposed. The immediate reason was the affair of Ambrose of Uskub [Skopje], in which he was accused of betraying the cause of Hellas. No accusation could have been more unjust. The cause of Hellas is the one thing no Ecumenical Patriarch ever betrays; he was only helpless before the Porte and the Russians. He did his best to keep his see. As soon as he heard that the synod wanted him to retire he suspended the leaders of the opposition and ordered them to go back to their dioceses. Of course they refused to obey. Poor Anthimos did all a man could. He went to the Yildiz-Kiösk and implored the Sultan to protect him, but the Sultan had other things to think about, and, on February 8, 1897, he went to swell the number of ex-Patriarchs, who wait in hope of being some day re-elected. There were now three – Joachim III, Neophytdos VIII, and Anthimos VII. Constantine V (Valiades) was elected Patriarch in April. Lord Constantine seems to have been one of the best of all the later Ecumenical Patriarchs. He set about reforming the education of priests, insisted that the services of the Church should be celebrated with proper reverence, and modified some of the incredibly pretentious etiquette which his court had inherited from the days of the Old Empire. There seemed no possible reason why he should be deposed, except that the parties of the ex-Patriarchs wanted their candidates to have another chance. In the spring of 1901 it was first rumoured that Lord Constantine V was shaking on his throne. Twelve metropolitans of his synod
and six laymen in the mixed council voted for his resignation. The rich bankers and merchants of the Phanar were all in favour of Germanos Karavangelis, of Pera. Constantine tried to remove that danger by sending him to be Metropolitan of Kastoria, a long way off in Macedonia. Nevertheless, on April 9th, Constantine’s resignation was demanded by both synod and mixed council. But he did not want to resign, and for a time the Porte supported him. The Greek paper Anatolia, strongly partisan of the ex-Patriarch, Joachim III, all too hurriedly announced that Constantine had ceased to reign. It was immediately suppressed by the Government, and its proprietor was put in prison. The free Greeks of the kingdom were also all for Constantine. But in Holy Week his metropolitans again waited on him with the demand that he should resign. He was naturally indignant that they should disturb him during these august days, and he declared that his health was perfectly good and that he intended to go on presiding over the Orthodox Church. Four metropolitans were on his side. He celebrated the services of Holy Week surrounded by these four, but boycotted by all the rest of his synod. The opposition then sent an order to the four, forbidding them to communicate with the deposed one, and they besieged the Minister of Religions, Abdurrahman, with petitions for his removal. The Porte tried to save him as long as it could, but the opposition was too strong. Again there was an absolute block at the Phanar. The synod refused to sit under Constantine; and so he fell. He retired to Chalki, and Joachim III was re-elected. Lord Joachim, the reigning Patriarch, had already occupied the throne of Constantinople from 1878 to 1884. Since then he had been an ex-Patriarch with a strong party demanding his re-election. On Friday, June 7 (O.S.), 1901, after the fall of Constantine V, he was chosen by eight-three votes, and the Porte then gave him his berat."

Joachim III introduced a period of relative stability into the patriarchate. But it was precisely in this period that the influence of Anglican ecumenism came most strongly to bear. Thus according to the leading organ of the patriarchate, “the first impulse towards official communion between the two Churches (Orthodox and Protestant) was provided by the Lambeth conference of July, 1897, in which 194 bishops from the whole Anglican communion came together and unanimously voted for action aimed at the union of the Churches... After this, in February, 1898, Archbishop Friedrich of Canterbury sent letters to the Patriarchs of the East and the Archbishop of Cyprus with copies of the decisions of the conference with regard to the union of the Churches... He asked the Orthodox Church accept the baptism of the Anglicans and allow her priests to give the Divine Gifts to dying Anglicans in places where they did not have their own priests... In September, 1899, in a letter to Patriarch Constantine V the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed the burning desire of the English for clearer understanding and the establishment of closer relations, declaring that it would be difficult to set out the details of such a course and that the longed-for communion should proceed with ever-increasing depth insofar as the determination of some kind of programme towards this end had been shown to be difficult... He pointed out that the

---

communion of the two Churches would become surer through the cessation of proselytism, through visits of Orthodox clergy to London and of the Archbishop of Canterbury and English priests to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople on the great feasts and other official days, and through each Church telling the other of important changes taking place in her... On the basis of an agreement on these points by both sides, mutual correspondence began in December, 1900 and continued. After this various other events took place demonstrating the friendly relations between the two Churches...”

The first such “demonstration of friendly relations” was Patriarch Joachim’s declaring, in 1902, that Papism and Protestantism were “great ramifications (αναδεντραδας) of Christianity”. However, before embarking on an ecumenist course, he wisely decided to issue an encyclical asking all the other Orthodox Churches (except Antioch and Bulgaria, whose hierarchies, for different reasons, he did not recognise) to express their opinions on union with the western churches. He also asked their opinion on the proposed change to the new, Gregorian calendar. This was related to the ecumenical venture, because the difference between the old, Julian calendar used in the Orthodox East and the new, Gregorian calendar used in the Catholic-Protestant West was the first obstacle to the practical implementation of ecumenism – celebrating the major Christian feasts together.

The Local Orthodox Churches were unanimous in their rejection of the new calendar (Alexandria and strife-torn Cyprus did not reply). As for ecumenism, it is instructive to read the summary of the Churches' replies by a Fortescue: “His Holiness [Joachim III] speaks of the Latins with every possible charity, moderation, and courtesy, and hopes for reunion with us. Which hope may God fulfill. The difference of his tone from that of Anthimos VII, in the famous answer to Pope Leo XIII, is very remarkable. The answers of the sister-Churches, however, show how little they are disposed to listen to the voice of their honorary chief...

“Jerusalem answered cordially and sympathetically. Patriarch Damianos said that it is unhappily hopeless to think of reunion with Latins or Protestants as long as they go on proselytising in the East. But union with the Anglicans is possible and very desirable... Athens answered that no union is possible, least of all with the Old Catholics, who will not give a plain account of what they do or do not believe. Bucharest said that the only union possible would be the conversion of the Latin and Protestant heretics to the one true Orthodox Church; the Old Catholics are specially hopeless, because they have given up confession and fasting, try to unite with the Anglicans, and do not know what they themselves believe... Belgrade likes the idea of union with the Old Catholics especially... Russia answered at great length and very offensively [sic]. What, said the Holy Russian Synod, is the good of talking about reunion with other bodies when we are in such a state of disorder ourselves? It went on to draw up a list of their domestic quarrels, and hinted plainly that they were all the fault of the Phanar. For the rest, union with the

---

Latins is impossible, because of the unquenchable ambitions of the See of Rome, which long ago led her to her fall. As for the Anglicans, the Church of Russia has always been well disposed towards them: ‘We show every possible condescension to their perplexities, which are only natural after so long a separation. But we must loudly proclaim the truth of our Church and her office as the one and only heir of Christ, and the only ark of salvation left to men by God’s grace.’

634

When Patriarch Joachim had received all the replies, he published a second encyclical in 1904 which expressed his own moderate, but firm opinion, both about ecumenism and about the first major step necessary in order to implement ecumenism in a practical way – the change from the traditional Orthodox Julian calendar to the papal Gregorian calendar that was in use throughout the West: “The Church is one, in identity of faith and similarity of habits and customs, in accordance with the decisions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils; and one it must be, and not many and diverse, differing from each other both in dogmas and in the basic principles of Church government...

“This is our opinion concerning the calendar: the Paschalion is venerable and immovable, having been fixed already centuries ago and sanctioned by the constant practice of the Church. In accordance with it, we have been taught to celebrate the radiant Resurrection of the Lord on the first Sunday after the full moon of the spring equinox, or on the Sunday following; and we are not allowed to make innovations in this. And it is mindless and pointless for those who are lying in wait to ambush our immovable Julian calendar by jumping only 13 days, so that our menologia and those of the followers of the other calendar should coincide. On the one hand, there is no compelling reason to omit all these days; such an act has no ecclesiastical or scientific justification. And on the other hand, the coincidence of the menologia will be only temporary, viz., until the year 2100, when there will again begin to be a difference of one day…”

635

635 Agios Agathangelos Esphigmenites (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou), № 124, March-April, 1990, pp. 17-19 (in Greek).

This was followed by a further bout of infighting among the hierarchs. Thus Fortescue continues: “So far then Lord Joachim III has shown himself a wise and admirable Patriarch. Alas! He has one fault, and that is an unpardonable one. He has already reigned five years, and the rival parties think it is quite time for him to retire, so as to give their favourites another chance. Already the opposition to him in his synod has declared itself. In January, 1905, there was a scene. Lord Prokopios of Durazzo led the anti-Joachimite side, and in a long speech attacked a number of the Patriarch’s actions. ‘Holy man of Durazzo,’ said Joachim angrily, ‘thou hast learnt thy lesson well. These are the plots brewed in the conventicles of the holy man of Ephesus.’ ‘All holy one,’ said Joachim of Ephesus, ‘there are no conventicles held in my house.’ Then he, too, made a list of accusations, and eight metropolitans ranged themselves on his side. The Patriarch tried the old and always hopeless expedient of forbidding Prokopios to attend the meetings of the synod. That only brought matters to a climax. The eight members at once deposed Joachim and telegraphed the news to Petersburg, Bucharest, Athens, Belgrade, &c. Then, as usual, both sides appealed to the Sultan. Abdulhamid once more had the exquisite pleasure of lecturing them all on charity and concord. ‘Patriarch Effendi,’ says he, ‘you are breaking the laws of the Church. You have no right to exclude Prokopios, and you must make it up with the eight metropolitans.’ Then he
That should have been the end of the matter as far as the Orthodox Church was concerned. However, the tide of western pressure continued to rise. This came particularly from the Anglicans. The “High Church” wing of their Church took particular interest in the Russian Church, whose highly traditional ethos and status as a local national Church seemed to them to be a model of what the Anglican Church should be.

Unfortunately, the sincere interest of the Anglicans in Russian Orthodoxy did not go so far as to see in Orthodoxy the One True Church; and the rapprochement between the two Churches turned out to be more of a danger to the Russians than an opportunity to the Anglicans. In 1908 the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar reported that a recent synod of the Anglican Church had decided that the Anglican Churches could baptize the children of Orthodox coming to Anglican priests in places where there were no Orthodox priests, but only on condition that this baptism was not repeated by Orthodox clergy. Then, in 1910, the first “World Missionary Conference” was convened in Edinburgh. This is considered by some to mark the historical beginning of the ecumenical movement. Its president, John Mott, was the first to introduce the terms “Ecumenism” and “ecumenical” into common currency.636

In 1914 the “World Congress for International Friendship through the Churches”. This led to the creation of the “Life and Work” Movement, which later combined with the “Faith and Order” Movement to form the World Council of Churches in 1948. However, the outbreak of the First World War put a temporary halt to these developments...

The University Strike

“If,” writes Richard Pipes, “one wishes to identify events that not merely foreshadowed 1917 but led directly to it, then the choice has to fall on the disorders that broke out at Russian universities in February, 1899. Although they were soon quelled by the usual combination of concessions and repression, these disorders set in motion a movement of protest against the autocracy that did not abate until the revolutionary upheaval of 1905-6. This First Revolution was also eventually crushed but at a price of major political concessions that fatally weakened the Russian monarchy. To the extent that historical events have a beginning, the beginning of the Russian Revolution may well have been the general university strike of February 1899.”637

sent for the eight. ‘My metropolitans, what right have you to depose the Patriarch? It is not right. You must make it up with Lord Joachim.’ He further hinted that if the precepts of their own Prophet are not enough to control their passions and to make them live in peace, he would have to refer the matter to the invincible Ottoman Police. Eventually the Minister of Religions, our inimitable friend Abdurrahman, last November, sent a note to Joachim, telling him his duty and the Canons of the Orthodox Church, and exhorting him to be a good Patriarch; but so far the Porte is for him and he still reigns. However, the opposition is by no means dead, and we may hear any day that he has gone the weary way to Chalki once more, and that a new bishop rules over the Great Church.” (op. cit., pp. 347-348)
We may doubt that “the beginning of sorrows” truly began with the university strike. Nevertheless it was the beginning of disorder, the beginning of a wave of riots and assassinations. And it is significant that this disorder should have begun with those who had not yet completed their education and had not yet received the wisdom that experience of life gives. There is much in the revolution that resembles the rebellion of an adolescent against his parents. In a healthy society such a rebellion is frowned upon and checked; for it overturns the normal order. The tragedy of these years was that the elders followed the younger, not daring to seem “behind the times”, to resist “progress”. The result was a terrible regression, the destruction of civilization and the ascendancy of barbarism.

“Since the 1860s,” continues Pipes (we follow his account in spite of his bias in favour of the students), “Russian institutions of higher learning had been the principal center of opposition to the tsarist regime: revolutionaries were, for the most part, either university students or university dropouts. At the turn of the century, Russia had ten universities as well as a number of specialized schools which taught religion, law, medicine, and engineering. They had a total enrollment of 35,000. The student body came overwhelmingly from the lower classes. In 1911, the largest contingent was made up of sons of priests, followed by sons of bureaucrats and peasants: hereditary nobles constituted less than 10 percent, equal to the number of Jews [that is, much higher than the percentage of Jews in the population as a whole]. The Imperial Government needed an educated elite and promoted higher education, but it wished, unrealistically, to confine education strictly to professional and vocational training. Such a policy satisfied the majority of students, who, even if critical of the regime, did not want politics to interfere with their studies: this is known from surveys taken in the revolutionary year of 1905. But whenever the authorities overreacted to the radical minority, which they usually did, the students closed ranks.

“In 1884, in the course of the ‘counter-reforms’, which followed the assassination of Alexander II, the government revised the liberal University Statute issued twenty-one years earlier. The new regulations deprived the universities of a great deal of autonomy and placed them under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. Their faculties could no longer elect rectors. Disciplinary authority over the students was entrusted to an outsider, a state inspector, who had police functions. Student organizations were declared illegal, even in the form of zemliachestva, associations formed by students from the same province to provide mutual assistance. Students were understandably unhappy with the new regulations. Their unhappiness was aggravated by the appointment in 1897 as Minister of Education of N.P. Bogolepov, a professor of Roman law, the first academic to hold the post but a dry and unsympathetic conservative whom they dubbed ‘Stone Guest’. Still, the 1880s and 1890s were a period of relative calm at the institutions of higher learning.
“The event which shattered this calm was trifling. St. Petersburg University traditionally celebrated on February 8 the anniversary of its founding. On that day it was customary for the students, after taking part in formal festivities organized by the faculty, to stage celebrations in the center of the city. It was pure fun in which politics played no part.”

Nevertheless, the authorities decided to issue a warning that if there were disturbances this year, as there had been in previous years, disciplinary measures would be taken. The students were annoyed, and decided to go on strike until the government assured them that their rights would be respected.

“Up to this point the grievance was specific and capable of being satisfied.

“But the protest movement was promptly taken over by radicals in charge of an illegal Mutual Aid Fund (kassa vzaimopomoschi) who saw in it an opportunity to politicize the student body. The Fund was dominated by socialists, some of whom would later play a leading role in the revolutionary movement, among them Boris Savinkov, a future terrorist, Ivan Kaliev, who in 1905 would assassinate Grand Duke Sergei, the governor-general of Moscow, and George Nosar (Khrustalev), who in October 1905 would chair the Petrograd Soviet. The leaders of the Fund at first dismissed the strike as a ‘puerile’ exercise, but took charge once they realized that the movement enjoyed broad support. They formed an organizing committee to direct the strike and dispatched emissaries to the other schools with requests for support. On February 15, Moscow University joined the strike; on February 17, Kiev followed suit; and before long all the major institutions of higher learning in the Empire were shut down. An estimated 25,000 students boycotted classes. The strikers called for an end to arbitrary discipline and police brutality; they posed as yet no political demands.

“The authorities responded by arresting the strike leaders. More liberal officials, however, managed to persuade them that the protests had no political purpose and were best contained by satisfying legitimate student grievances. Indeed, the striking students believed themselves to be acting in defense of the law rather than challenging the tsarist regime. A commission was appointed under P.S. Vannovskii, a former Minister of War, a venerable general with impeccable conservative credentials. While the Commission pursued its inquiries, the students drifted back to classes, ignoring the protests of the organizing committee. St. Petersburg University voted to end the strike on March 1, and Moscow resumed work four days later.

“Displeased by this turn of events, the socialists on the organizing committee issued on March 4, in the name of the student body, a Manifesto that claimed the events of February 8, 1899, were merely ‘one episode of the regime that prevails in Russia, [a regime] that rests on arbitrariness, secrecy [bezglasnost’], and complete lack of security, including even the absence of the most indispensable, indeed, the most sacred rights of the development of human individuality…’ The Manifesto called on all the oppositional elements

638 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
in Russia to ‘organize for the forthcoming struggle’, which would end only ‘with the attainment of its main goal – the overthrow of autocracy.’ In the judgement of the police official reporting on these events, this Manifesto was not so much the expression of student disorders as a ‘prelude to the Russian Revolution’.

“The episode just described was a microcosm of the tragedy of late Imperial Russia: it illustrated to what extent the Revolution was the result not of insufferable conditions but of irreconcilable attitudes. The government chose to treat a harmless manifestation of youthful spirits as a seditious act. In response, radical intellectuals escalated student complaints of mistreatment at the hands of the police into a wholesale rejection of the ‘system’. It was, of course, absurd to insinuate that student grievances which produced the university strike could not be satisfied without the overthrow of the country’s political regime: restoring the University Statutes would have gone a long way toward meeting these grievances, as most students must have believed, since they returned to classes following the appointment of the Vannovskii Commission. The technique of translating specific complaints into general political demands would become a standard procedure for Russian liberals and radicals. It precluded compromises and partial reforms: nothing, it was alleged, could be improved as long as the existing system remained in place, which meant that revolution was a necessary precondition of any improvement whatsoever.

“Contrary to expectations, the Vannovskii Commission sided with the students, placing the blame for the February events on the police. It concluded that the strikes were neither conspiratorial in origin nor political in spirit, but a spontaneous manifestation of student unhappiness over their treatment. Vannovskii proposed a return to the 1863 University Statutes, as well as a number of specific reforms including the legalization of student assemblies and zemliachestva, reducing the amount of time devoted to the study of Latin, and abolishing the Greek requirement. The authorities chose to reject these recommendations, preferring to resort to punitive measures.

“On July 29, 1899, the government issued ‘Temporary Rules’ which provided that students guilty of political misconduct would lose their military deferments. At the time of publication, it was widely assumed that the measure was intended to frighten the students and would not be enforced. But enforced it was. In November 1900, after a year and a half of quiet, fresh university disturbances broke out, this time in Kiev, to protest the expulsion of two students. Several universities held protest meetings in support of Kiev. On January 11, 1901, invoking the July 1899 ordinance, Bogolepov ordered the induction into the army of 183 Kievan students. When St. Petersburg University struck in sympathy, 27 of its students were similarly punished. One month later, a student by the name of P.V. Karpovich shot and fatally wounded Bogolepov: the minister was the first victim of the new wave of terrorism which in the next few years would claim thousands. 639

639 G.M. Soldatov writes: “In the years of the reign of the holy Tsar there suffered at the hands of cunning revolutionaries his relatives and up to 1800 ministers, governors and other higher
Contemporaries regarded Bogolepov’s measures against the students and his assassination as marking the onset of a new revolutionary era.

“More university strikes followed at Kharkov, Moscow, and Warsaw. Hundreds of students were expelled by administrative procedures. In 1901, hoping the calm the situation, the government appointed Vannovskii, then seventy-eight years of age, to take Bogolepov’s place. Vannovskii introduced modifications in the university rules, authorizing student gatherings and relaxing the ancient language requirements. The concessions failed to appease the students; indeed, student organizations rejected them on the grounds that they indicated weakness and should be exploited for political ends. Having failed to calm the universities, Vannovskii was dismissed.

“Henceforth, Russian institutions of higher learning became the fulcrum of political opposition. Viacheslav Plehve, the arch-conservative director of the Police Department, was of the opinion that ‘almost all the regicides and a very large number of those involved in political crimes’ were students. According to Prince E.N. Trubetskoi, a liberal academic, the universities now became thoroughly politicized: students increasingly lost interest in academic rights and freedoms, caring only for politics, which made normal academic life impossible. Writing in 1906, he described the university strikes of 1899 as the beginning of the ‘general crisis of the state’.”

Plehve was particularly associated, as Pipes writes, with “a unique experiment in police-operated trade unions, known as ‘Zubatovschshina’, after S.V. Zubatov, the chief of the Moscow political police (Okhrana). It was a bold attempt to remove Russian workers from the influence of revolutionaries by satisfying their economic demands. Russian workers had been stirring since the 1880s. The nascent labour movement was apolitical, confining its demands to improvements in working conditions, wages, and other typically trade-unionist issues. But because in Russia of that time any organized labor activity was illegal, the most innocuous actions (such as the formation of mutual aid or educational circles) automatically acquired a political and, therefore, seditious connotation. This fact was exploited by radical intellectuals who developed in the 1890s the ‘agitational’ technique which called for inciting workers to economic strikes in the expectation that the inevitable police repression would drive them into politics.

“Zubatov was a onetime revolutionary who had turned into a staunch monarchist. Working under Plehve, he had mastered the technique of psychologically ‘working over’ revolutionary youths to induce them to cooperate with the authorities. In the process he learned a great deal about worker grievances and concluded that they were politically harmless and acquired a political character only because existing laws treated them as illegal. He thought it absurd for the government to play into the hands of revolutionaries by transforming the workers’ legitimate economic aspirations

representatives of power” (“Kliuch k ponimaniu tsaria” (The Key to the Understanding of the Tsar), Nasha Strana (Our Country), no. 2807, November 17, 2006, p. 1 (in Russian). (V.M.)  
640 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 6-8. 

382
into political crimes. In 1898, he presented a memoir to the police chief of St. Petersburg, D.F. Trepov, in which he argued that in order to frustrate radical agitators, workers had to be given lawful opportunities to improve their lot. Radical intellectuals posed no serious threat to the system unless they gained access to the masses, and that could be prevented by legitimizing the workers’ economic and cultural aspirations. He won over Trepov, and other influential officials, including Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich, the ultrareactionary governor-general of Moscow, with whose help he began in 1900 to organize official trade unions. This innovation ran into opposition from those who feared that police-sponsored labor organizations not only would annoy and confuse the business community but in the event of industrial conflicts place the government in a most awkward position of having to support workers against their employers. Plehve himself was sceptical, but Zubatov enjoyed powerful backing of persons close to the Tsar. Great things were expected of his experiment. In August 1902, Zubatov was promoted to head the ‘Special Section’ of the Police Department, which placed him in charge of all the Okhrana offices. He expanded the Okhrana network beyond its original three locations (St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Warsaw) to the provincial towns, assigning it many functions previously exercised by other police groups. He required officials involved in political counterintelligence to be thoroughly familiar with the writings of the main socialist theoreticians as well as the history of European socialist parties.

“Zubatov’s scheme seemed vindicated by the eagerness with which workers joined the police-sponsored trade unions. In February 1903, Moscow witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of 50,000 workers marching in a procession headed by Grand Duke Sergei to the monument of Alexander II. Jewish workers in the Pale of Settlement, who suffered from a double handicap in trying to organize, flocked to Zubatov’s unions in considerable numbers.

“The experiment nearly came to grief, however, in the summer of 1903, following the outbreak in Odessa of a general strike. When Plehve ordered the police to quell the strike, the local police-sponsored trade union collapsed... The following month Plehve dismissed Zubatov, although he allowed some of his unions to continue and even authorized some new ones.

“Witte (Vospominania, II, Moscow, 1960, 218-10) says that in July 1903 Zubatov confided to him that Russia was in a revolutionary situation which could not be resolved by police measures. Zubatov also predicted Plehve’s assassination. This was betrayed to Plehve, who fired Zubatov and exiled him to the provinces. In March 1917, on learning of the Tsar’s abdication, he committed suicide...”

Rebellious Priests

We have seen that sons of priests formed the largest section in the university student population; and the strong representation of former

Pipes, op. cit., pp. 11-12 and note.
seminarians and students from the priestly caste in the revolutionary movement was a striking, even apocalyptic phenomenon. Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Nechaiev were early examples. Joseph Stalin was the most famous example of all…

In 1894 Stalin, as Alan Bullock writes, became “one of the 600 students at the Russian Orthodox theological seminary in Tiflis. The Tsarist authorities had refused to allow a university to be opened in the Caucasus, fearing that it would become a centre for nationalist and radical agitation. The Tiflis seminary served as a substitute, and was attended by many young men who had no intention of entering the priesthood…

“… The official policy of Russification made the seminary a stronghold of Georgian nationalism. A student expelled for his anti-Russian attitude in 1886 had assassinated the Principal, and only a few months before Stalin’s admission a protest strike of all the Georgian pupils led to the seminary’s closure by the police and the expulsion of eight-seven students…

“… [Stalin’s] daughter Svetlana wrote after his death: ‘A church education was the only systematic education my father ever had. I am convinced that the seminary in which he spent more than ten years played an immense role, setting my father’s character for the rest of his life, strengthening and intensifying inborn traits.

“‘My father never had any feeling for religion. In a young man who had never for a moment believed in the life of the spirit or in God, endless prayers and enforced religious training could only produce contrary results… From his experiences at the seminary he came to the conclusion that men were intolerant, coarse, deceiving their flocks in order to hold them in obedience; that they intrigued, lied and as a rule possessed numerous faults and very few virtues.’

“One form which Stalin’s rebellion took was spending as much time as possible reading illicit books obtained from a lending library in the town and smuggled into the seminary. Besides Western literature in translation, and the Russian classics – also forbidden – Stalin became acquainted with radical and positivist ideas which he is said to have picked up from reading translations of Darwin, Comte and Marx, as well as Plekhanov, the first Russian Marxist.

“Growing discontented with the vague romantic ideals of Georgian nationalism, Stalin organized a socialist study circle with other students, including Iremashvili, and according to the latter soon began to show intolerance towards any member who disagreed with him. He found a natural attraction in the Marxist teaching of the inevitability of class war and the overthrow of an unjust and corrupt social order. The attraction was as much psychological as intellectual, appealing to the powerful but destructive emotions of hatred and resentment which were to prove so strong force in Stalin’s character, and offering a positive outlet for an ambition and abilities which would otherwise have been frustrated. As Robert Tucker wrote, the
gospel of class war legitimized his resentment against authority: ‘it identified his enemies as history’s’. ”

One member of Stalin’s group was Lado Ketshoveli, who was a ringleader in the revolt that led to the closing down of the seminary, found the first underground Marxist press in the Transcaucasus, and in 1902 was arrested and shot dead by guards after shouting from his cell window: “Down with the autocracy! Long live freedom! Long live socialism!” “To Stalin he still remained, many years afterwards, the exemplar of a revolutionary fighter and his influence no doubt helped to precipitate Stalin’s break with the seminary. By his fifth year the school authorities regarded Stalin as a hardened troublemaker, and he was expelled in May 1899 on the ground that ‘for unknown reasons’ he failed to appear for the end-of-year examinations. Iremashvili, who had accompanied him to the seminary, wrote later that he took with him ‘a grim and bitter hatred against the school administration, the bourgeoisie and everything in the country that represented Tsarism’. ”

It is obviously dangerous and unjust to draw any general conclusions about the nature of seminary education from Stalin’s example alone. Nevertheless, the fact that so many former seminarians, sons of priests and even priests (e.g. Gapon in the 1905 revolution) joined the revolutionary movement indicated that something was wrong in the Church. Could the radicalism at the bottom of the hierarchy have had something to do with liberalism at the top? Could the lack of zeal of the leaders of the Church be influencing the followers to look for certainty elsewhere? If so, then only a revival of zeal for the truth of Christianity would be able to quench zeal for the falsehood of the revolution...

Ferment in the Russian Church

The traditional mainstays of Tsarist Russia had been the peasantry and the Church. And the Church in turn gained much from the support of the State. However, it was increasingly accepted that while the Church should be supported by the State, she should not depend on it, financially and administratively, to the degree imposed on her by Peter the Great’s Spiritual Regulation, which had abolished the patriarchate and made the Church almost a department of the State. Indeed, by the turn of the century it had become almost an article of faith among the Church and near-Church intelligentsia that Church-State relations needed a thorough overhaul in order to bring them closer to the “symphonic” ideal inherited from Byzantium.

However, this movement was opposed by Pobedonostsev, who feared that a reform of Church-State relations, even if desirable in itself from a canonical point of view, might lead to Church-State separation and the gradual dechristianisation of society. Sergei Firsov writes: “Pobedonostsev saw and understood better than many that the demolishing of the Petrine Synodal system in Russian conditions would not lead to the recreation of correct

643 Bullock, op. cit., p. 16.
mutual relations between the Church and the State, but would only strengthen anti-government forces. To represent the Church and the kingdom as existing in isolation from each other was psychologically impossible, while any changes in the ecclesiastical structure could be understood by ‘the simple people’ only as the abolition of the previous Church-State relationship [because ‘for our peasant form is everything’]. It was not by chance that Pobedonostsev, while talking with General A.A. Kireev about Church problems and ‘about learning’, declared that what he feared above all was a new schism: ‘It’s fine for you, but where shall we go with our darkness, with the peasant. I fear a schism, that’s what I fear!’”

It is not clear whether he meant a Church schism, or a schism between the peasants and the State. In either case, the events of 1905, when liberal reforms by the Tsar led to a wave of worker and peasant uprisings, showed that the old man had a point...

However, there was a contradiction in Pobedonostev’s position. On the one hand, he sincerely believed that the Church was the soul of the State and the People, and should be its teacher, corrector and inspirer. On the other hand, he acted as if he did not believe this, but rather that the Church should be tutored and disciplined by the State, and that he himself, as the representative of the State, should act as the task-master of the Church hierarchy...

Tsar Nicholas, with his deep love of pre-Petrine Russia, took a close interest in this question. He believed in giving the Church more freedom, and that that freeing the Church from the dead hand of the State would ultimately be to the benefit of both Church and State. But, perhaps under the influence of his former tutor, Pobedonostsev, he acted cautiously. Nevertheless, one of the most important measures of his reign was his removal from the Constitution in 1901 of the phrase describing him as “Supreme Judge” of the Church. And, as we shall see, if political events had not intervened, it is likely that this would have been only the first step in a far-ranging reform of Church-State relations, bringing them back to true “symphony”.

The movement for Church reform first manifested itself publicly in 1901, when, somewhat reluctantly, Pobedonostsev allowed the convening of a series of religio-philosophical meetings between the “God-searching” intelligentsia and the clergy in St. Petersburg. These meetings - the idea of D.S. Merezhkovsky, V.V. Rozanov and a Synodal official, V.A. Ternavtsev - were an attempt to respond to a definite turning away of a part of the intelligentsia from sixties-style positivism to some kind of religion. Unfortunately, however, the conversion was, as often as not, not to Orthodoxy but to some vague kind of mysticism or theosophy. For Russia at that time was teeming with false teachers and prophets: revolutionaries such as Lenin and Trotsky, freethinkers and heretics such as the novelist Lev Tolstoy or the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev, theosophists such as Blavatsky and the “silver age” poets, and a huge army of masons, liberals, nihilists, anti-

———

644 Firsov, Russkaia Tserkov’ nakanune Peremen (konets 1890-x – 1918 gg.) (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2001, p. 47 ©.
monarchists and ecumenists who were busy undermining the foundations of Church and State. Even when the intelligentsia did convert to Orthodoxy, as when the philosophers Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Frank and Struve converted from Marxism, it was not to a pure, patristic Orthodoxy, as is proved by the “renovationist Orthodoxy” of Bulgakov and Berdiaev after the revolution. Nevertheless, if these “God-seekers” were ever to acquire true Orthodoxy, they needed to encounter the Church in her more learned representatives. Hence the significance of the religio-philosophical meetings, which were chaired by a rising star of the Russian Church, Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky).

“Sergius,” writes G.M. Soldatov, “was popular in circles waiting for the introduction of ‘democratic’ reforms in the State. In his sermons and speeches he criticized the relationship between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in the Russian Empire.”645 This would have been a risky subject to raise only ten years earlier; but times were changing rapidly, and Sergius, as his future career proved, was always sensitive to how the times were changing, and accommodated himself to them accordingly...

At the same time he did make a fair point in the eighth of the religio-philosophical meetings, arguing that only if the State ceased to use the Church as a weapon would it become possible “to raise the question of freedom of conscience. Otherwise it will be only by virtue of indifferentism that the State can give freedom to the sects along with the Church”. But “Russian State power cannot be indifferent or atheist if it does not want to renounce itself” 646 In other words: if the State was truly the defender of Orthodoxy, as it claimed, it should free the Church from political tasks and bondage that were alien to her nature. Otherwise, freedom would simply help the sectarians and atheists to fight against the Church, while she remained unable to defend herself freely. Thus the questions of Church reform and freedom of conscience were inescapably linked...

It was not only liberals like Sergius who favoured Church reform. The former revolutionary-turned-monarchist L.A. Tikhomirov published an article arguing that the State should “give the Church independence and the possibility of being the kind of organization she must be in accordance with her own laws, while remaining in union with her”.647 The problem was that both conservatives and liberals could argue for Church reform, but for completely different motives. Tikhomirov wrote as one who had seen the revolution from within, and turned away from it with all his heart, acknowledging the only true defence against it to be the strengthening of Church consciousness among the people. The liberals, on the other hand, were motivated, not by a desire to see the Church free and therefore able to exert a more powerful influence on society, but rather the opposite: a desire to humble the State and destroy the Church’s influence once and for all. As for

645 Soldatov, “Tolstoj i Sergij: Iude Podobnie” (Tolstoy and Sergius: Images of Judas), Nasha Strana (Our Country), № 2786; Vernost’ (Fidelity), № 32, January 1/14, 2006 ®.
646 Firsov, op. cit., p. 117.
647 Tikhomirov, “Gosudarstvennost’ i religia” (Statehood and religion), Moskovskie Vedomosti (Moscow Gazette), March, 1903, p. 3; in Firsov, op. cit., p. 137.
the liberal bishops such as Sergius, they leapt onto the band-wagon of the reform of Church-State relations, and of what later came to be called renovationism, in order to further their own careers...

St. John of Kronstadt and Lev Tolstoy

Another liberal-renovationist cause that Bishop Sergius espoused during the religio-philosophical meetings was the supposed injustice of the novelist Tolstoy’s excommunication from the Church.

Now the Church had anathematised Tolstoy on February 20-23, 1901 in the following words: “In his writings Count Lev Tolstoy has blasphemed against the holy sacraments, denying their grace-filled character, has not venerated the Orthodox Church as his Church, has spoken evil of the clergy, has said that he considers that to venerate Christ and worship Him as God is blasphemy, while saying of himself, by contrast: ‘I am in God, and God in me’. It is not the Church that has rejected him, casting him off from herself, but he himself has rejected the Church: Lev himself has of his own will fallen away from the Church and is no longer a son of the Church, but is hostile to her. All attempts of the clergy to admonish the prodigal have failed to produce the desired fruits: in his pride he has considered himself cleverer than all, less fallible than all and the judge of all, and the Church has made a declaration about the falling away of Count Lev Tolstoy from the Russian Orthodox Church”. Tolstoy was in essence a Protestant, who stood for a Christianity reduced to “pure” morality without the Church or the sacraments. He not only preached his own Gospel (according to his own translation published in Geneva), and created his own sect: he also subjected the teaching and the sacraments of the Orthodox Church to ridicule, as in his novel Resurrection.

I.L. Solonevich points out that for centuries the Russian Empire lived in the conditions of a military camp. Such conditions required obedience and discipline, but “this obedience and this discipline were not particularly sweet. In the last one hundred years Russia has experienced, so to speak, a permanent revolution. A permanent rebellion against the authorities and against discipline. This rebellion took the most various forms – from Pugachevschina to Tolstoyism. And if we take our greatest writer as an example, we can now, after our ‘great and bloodless’ [revolution of 1917], value his deeds more or less in accordance with their merits. The Tolstoyan rebellion did very much both for the undermining of the Russian monarchy (‘I cannot keep silent’) and for the undermining of Russian Orthodoxy (‘The Gospel of Tolstoy’) and for the undermining of the Russian family (‘The Kreutzer Sonata’), and even for the undermining of the Russian courts, which in Resurrection are portrayed as a talentless and feelingless machine – while the Russian courts were the most merciful and conscientious in the world.”

---

648 Vladimir Gubanov (ed.), Nikolai II-i i Novie Mucheniki (Nicholas II and the New Martyrs), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 701 ®.
Tolstoy was opposed especially by the extraordinary priest St. John of Kronstadt, who demonstrated by his wonderful life abounding in good works and extraordinary miracles, that Christianity “does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2.5). He wrote of Tolstoy that he had “corrupted his moral personality to the point of deformity and mortification”, and that he had “made himself into a complete savage with regards to the faith and the Church, because of his lack of education in the faith and piety since his youth.” St. John appealed for help: “Holy warriors of the heavenly Church, take up arms, take up arms for the Church of God on earth. She, the beloved bride, is impoverished, she suffers from the savage attacks on her from the atheist Lev Tolstoy…”

St. John especially bemoaned Tolstoy’s influence on youth: “Our intelligentsia youths have subverted the social and educational order, they have taken politics and the law-courts upon themselves without being called to do so by anyone; they have taken to judging their masters, their teachers, the government and all but kings themselves; together with their head, Lev Tolstoy, they have judged and condemned the universal and fearful Judge Himself… Verily, the day of the dread Judgement is near, for the deviation from God which was foretold has already occurred and the forerunner of the antichrist has already revealed himself, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.”650

Tolstoy was a forerunner of the antichrist in the precise sense of the word since he did not believe in the Divinity of Christ (I John 2.22, 4.3; II John 7). But Bishop Sergius, following the popular trend, defended him against the decision of his own Synod. Soldatov writes: “Sergius compared Lev Tolstoy to Julian the Apostate, whom, as he said, no council had condemned and who had not been excommunicated, but who was an apostate from Christianity. For that reason, he said, ‘it was not necessary to excommunicate Tolstoy, since he himself consciously left the Church’…”651 After the revolution, Bishop Sergius would become one of the leaders of the pro-communist “Living Church”, and then became the first “Soviet Church” patriarch …

St. John of Kronstadt, a fervent monarchist, was opposed not only to Tolstoy, but also to the whole “proto-renovationist” current in the Church led by Bishop Sergius. “These people,” he wrote, “are rejecting the Church, the sacraments, the authority of the clergy and they have even thought up a journal The New Way [which published reports on the religio-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg]. This journal has undertaken to search for God, as if the Lord had not appeared to people and had not revealed the true way. They will find no other way than in Christ Jesus, our Lord. […] It is Satan who reveals all of these new ways and stupid people

651 Soldatov, op. cit.
who don’t understand what they are doing and are driving themselves and their nation to ruin by spreading their satanic ideas among the nation.”

Fr. John had great influence with the royal family, and the tsar visited him secretly. This influence was noted and feared by a new player in church and court circles – the false elder Gregory Rasputin. As Archbishop Theophan (Bystrov), at that time inspector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, witnessed to the Extraordinary Commission investigating the Royal Family in 1917: “Rasputin indicated with unusual skill that he had reservations [about Fr. John]… Rasputin… said of Fr. John of Kronstadt… that he was a saint but, like a child, lacked experience and judgement… As a result Fr. John’s influence at court began to wane…”

Fr. John was supported by the better clergy, such as the future metropolitan and hieromartyr Fr. Joseph (Petrovykh), who wrote: “Lack of faith, impiety and all kinds of harmful tendencies are now pouring over Holy Rus’ in a still more swollen river. They were restrained by this powerful personality [Fr. John], who was put forward by the Providence of God to oppose the heretic Tolstoy.”

**Monasticism and Ecumenism**

Another arena of conflict between “rightist” church intelligentsy and “leftist” renovationists was monasticism. A movement to promote monasticism, not only within monastic walls, but also within the theological academies and seminaries, was led by Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), rector of the Kazan Theological Academy. Many of his pupils were to occupy important posts after the revolution both inside and outside Russia. Bishop Anthony placed particular emphasis on pastoral theology in the system of higher theological education, and his devotion and love effected a gradual change in the system of education in the direction of a closer and more constant spiritual and moral intercourse between teachers and taught. Almost every day after supper he would arrange tea-parties with the students in his rooms. "On a long table," writes one of the participants, "there stood a samovar and ten to fifteen glasses, with sugar and jam. One of the students would pour out the tea. Over tea a conversation would begin and perplexities would be resolved. Sometimes quarrels would arise. But in general, there were all sorts of people present, and one could learn much."

Another important influence was Archbishop Theophan (Bystrov). As rector of the St. Petersburg Academy from 1909, Vladyka Theophan enlivened the religio-moral atmosphere in the academy and created a whole direction among the students, a kind of school of “Theophanites”, as they were called.

---


He tried to instill in the students a respect for the lofty authority of the Holy Fathers of the Church in everything that pertained to Church faith and piety. When replying to a question of a theological or moral character he tried to avoid speaking “from himself”, but immediately went to the bookcase and found a precise answer to the question from the Holy Fathers. And yet this was by no means merely book knowledge: because of his ascetic life, he knew the truth of the teachings of the Fathers from his own experience. He would go to all the services, and often spend whole nights in prayer standing in his cell in front of the analog and the icons. He would even take service books with him on his travels, and read all the daily services.

His very look inspired respect, and soon cases of amazing spiritual perspicacity revealed themselves. Never familiar, always correct and restrained in manner, but at the same time warm and attentive, he was a fierce enemy of all modernism and falsehood. If the conversation took a vulgar turn, he would immediately turn away, however distinguished his interlocutor. This caused him to have many enemies, but people also involuntarily respected him. Once the famous writer V.V. Rozanov spoke at length to him against monasticism. Vladyka Theophan did not reply with a single word. But his silence was effective, for at the end the writer simply said: “But perhaps you are right!”

The debate for and against monasticism also affected Moscow Theological Academy, where the proponents of monasticism, especially Archimandrite Nicon (Rozhdestvensky), the future Hieromartyr Archbishop of Vologda, and Archimandrite Joseph (Petrovykh), the future Hieromartyr Metropolitan of Petrograd, were opposed by several of the secular professors. “This polemic between the professors of the Academy and the steward of the Holy Trinity – St. Sergius Lavra, Archimandrite [later Bishop] Nicon (Rozhdestvensky) began already in 1902 and unfolded on the pages of the journals Soul-Profiting Reading and The Theological Herald. The professors subjected monasticism in its contemporary form to sharp criticism and called on the monks to carry out in a practical way the commandment of love for one’s neighbour in the form of social service. Archimandrite Nicon defended the contemplative character of monasticism. The articles on both sides were quite sharp in character. In March, 1904 Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow banned an article by the Academy Professor N.F. Kapterev, which was being prepared for the press as a reply to Archimandrite Nicon. On March 18 an extraordinary session of the Academy Council took place for this reason. The decision was taken to protest against the metropolitan’s ban. Archimandrite Joseph did not agree with this decision, supported the ban on the publication and expressed himself against N.F. Kapterev’s article because of its unbecoming and sharp attacks and even ‘the poison of barbs, mockeries and insults directed not only against opponents but also against monasticism itself, but very well concealed under an external mask of objective scholarship’.

---

654 Monk Anthony (Chernov), Vie de Monseigneur Théophane, Archevêque de Poltava et de Pereiaslavl (The Life of his Eminence Theophan, Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslavl), Lavardac: Monastère Orthodoxe St. Michel, 1988 (in French)
“For his words Archimandrite Joseph was publicly and coarsely reproached by the offended N.F. Kapterev, after which he left the meeting. The scene made a bad impression on everyone, but Fr. Joseph was not spared - it was considered that he had received his due for his conceit and his speech against the professorial corporation and one of its most senior members. Professor I.V. Popov in a letter of April 16, 1904 wrote: ‘Joseph set off straight from the meeting to the elders at the skete. There he wept and wrote a petition for his retirement…’ At Pascha a deputation from the professors was received by Metropolitan Vladimir, who also summoned Archimandrite Joseph. In spite of the warm reception and long conversation with the professors, the ban was not removed, and Kapterev’s article was not printed.”

In 1909 Metropolitan Vladimir appointed one of Bishop Anthony’s pupils at Kazan, Archimandrite Theodore (Pozdeyevsky) as rector of the Moscow Academy, and then consecrated him as Bishop of Volokolamsk. Vladyka Theodore published a work, *The Meaning of Christian Asceticism*, which became a kind of manifesto of the “new wave” of monastics. And after the revolution Vladyka’s Danilov monastery in Moscow would become one of the power-houses of the Catacomb Church.

Bishop Theodore wrote: "Many contemporary renovators of Christianity think it unnecessary to take account of the true attitude of Christianity towards man, his nature and the meaning of life. They create their own ideal of life and judge Christianity in accordance with that ideal. They want to bring in Christianity as the most suitable, so to speak, most vital factor contributing to the realization of their ideal. The most important thing, the question of sin, is completely ignored by them, and they have no idea what it is. That is why, for example, Merezhkovsky, who accuses Christianity of the split between flesh and spirit that destroyed the pagan world, has no explanation of where this split appeared among the pagans or why they lived by affirming the flesh. But Christianity says that this destructive split and disharmony in the nature of man was not imposed on man from without, but lives within him, as a consequence of sin... This is the corruption, illness and servitude of man to the flesh, and in order to understand what happened in the soul of man through sin it is necessary to penetrated into the psychology of sin. One should point out that, among the representatives of that part of the intelligentsia which is thinking of going along the path of Christianity, this path is indeed new, because, far from wanting to accept Christianity as it is and always was, historically speaking, they want to find - or, better, invent - in this same Christianity certain new ways of incarnating it in life and, through it, of renovating human life... For the man who is used to living in accordance with the ideals of the new philosophy of life, or in accordance with the moods revealed by the philosophy of Nietzsche and the wild heroes of the works of Gorky, L. Andreyev, etc., it is of course not easy immediately to accept Christianity in its historical integrity, and such people find much in the teaching of the Christian Church that is as strange as it is incomprehensible. The Apostle Paul said that the preaching of Christ

---

crucified appeared as very strange and difficult to accept: for some it was simply a deception, and for others - sheer madness... This same teaching about Christ, crucified and suffering, this demand that man should crucify his passions and lusts, this Christianity imbued with the spirit of compunction and the suppression of the carnal principle in the name of spiritual interests - in a word: the ascetical spirit of Christianity has disturbed the new pagans who seek in the Christianity the truth of life (as they understand it, of course) and has become a stone of stumbling and fall in the task of following Christ. Open the pages of any work of Merezhkovsky, Minsky or Rozanov, and you will see that their articles are mainly occupied with a criticism of monasticism, which is identified with asceticism. This strange phenomenon is the result of the fact that a part of the intelligentsia which is seeking God has approached Christianity with the very definite aim of reforming it, which is nothing other than the same decadence applied to the religious life..."

"The proponents of the idea that ascetics should do public service make the direct demand that the antiquated institution of monasticism should be reformed by turning monasteries into associations and congregations with a predominantly practical significance. Among secular writers, Merezhkovsky, for example, in his article 'The Last Saint', directly states that 'the whole of ancient eastern and Russian asceticism is imbued with the spirit of hatred and disdain for society'. Berdyaev for some reason represents asceticism as rejoicing in the existence of diabolical evil in the world, for if this evil did not exist, where would ascetics go in their search for reasons to suffer? This is an example of the contemporary misunderstanding of the nature and meaning of Christian asceticism...

Closely related to the assault on monasticism was a less violent but no less insidious and dangerous attack on the dogma of the Unity of the Church. For generations now – in fact, since the time of Peter the Great’s infatuation with Lutheranism – it had been customary among the educated classes to deride the idea that there is only One True Church, and that that Church is the Orthodox Church. Holy hierarchs and elders such as St. Ignatius Brianchaninov and St. Ambrose of Optina had defended the dogma, and warned against the corrosive effects of ecumenist relativism or "indifferentism", as it was then called. However, pro-Catholic religious philosophers such as Vladimir Soloviev, and the generalised influence of Protestant liberalism, continued to erode the foundations of the True Faith. Even the official service-books of the Russian Church revealed an unclear, ambiguous attitude towards the sacraments of the heretics and schismatics.

Thus in the Trebnik, or Book of Needs, we read: "Know this also, that a schismatic baptism, and a heretical one, by those who believe in the Holy Indivisible Trinity, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Church determines to be ultimately acceptable in every way.” Again, Bulgakov’s Nastol’naia Kniga, or Handbook for Clergy, explains that Roman Catholics, if they have been baptised and confirmed, should be received by the “Third Rite”, that is, renunciation of heresies and repentance.

If they have not been confirmed, they must be chrismated. They must never be baptised. “Recognising Baptism as a requirement for becoming a member of her, [the Russian Orthodox Church] accepts Jews, Muslims, pagans and those sectarian who distort the fundamental dogmas of the Orthodox Church through Baptism; Protestants are accepted through Chrismation; and those Catholics, Armenians and members of the Anglican Church who have not received Chrismation or Confirmation, and also those who have fallen away from Orthodoxy, she accepts through the Third Rite, through Repentance, repudiation of errors and Communion of the Holy Mysteries.”

In 1903, in an Epistle to the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Holy Synod declared that the Russians were against union with heretics and were “unchangeably convinced... that our Eastern Orthodox Church, which has inviolably preserved the complete deposit of Christ, is alone at the present time the Ecumenical Church”. “As regards our relations with the two great ramifications of Christianity, the Latins and the Protestants, the Russian Church, together with all the autocephalous Churches, ever prays, awaits, and fervently desires that those who in times of old were children of Mother Church and sheep of the one flock of Christ, but who now have been torn away by the envy of the foe and are wandering astray, ‘should repent and come to the knowledge of the truth’, that they should once more return to the bosom of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, to their one Shepherd. We believe in the sincerity of their faith in the All-Holy and Life-Originating Trinity, and on that account we accept the baptism of both the one and the other. We respect the Apostolic Succession of the Latin hierarchy, and those of their clergy who join our Church we accept in the Orders which they then possess, just as we do in the case of Armenians, Copts, Nestorians and other bodies that have not lost Apostolic Succession. ‘Our heart is enlarged’ (II Corinthians 6.11), and we are ready to do all that is possible in order to promote the establishment upon earth of the unity which we so much desire. But, to our great regret and to the common grief of all true children of the Church, at the present time we are obliged to think, not so much of softening our relations towards Western Christians, and of a love-abounding drawing of their communities into union with us, as of a tireless, ever-watchful defence of our own.”

---

657 S.V. Bulgakov, *Nastol’naia Kniga sviaschenno-tserkovno-sluzhitel’ej* (Handbook for Church Servers), Kharkov, 1900, p. 928 ©. In a footnote Bulgakov writes: “Accepting confirmed Anglicans [and Catholics] by the ‘Third Rite’ could be permitted only under the condition of recognition that the Anglican Church has a completely legitimate hierarchy, truly having preserved the grace of the priesthood in unbroken succession from the Apostles.” In line with this acceptance of Anglican order, Bishop Tikhon of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, the future Martyr-Patriarch, attended the consecration of Reginald Weller as Episcopalian Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in 1900 (“The Living Church, November 17, 1900”). In his diary under December 16/29, 1900, Archbishop Nicholas (Kasatkin) of Japan mentions this fact with some annoyance: “Why did Tikhon worm himself in there in a hierarchical mantia?”

With regard to the Syro-Chaldean Nestorians, the position of the Church of Russia was expressed in a Synodal ukaz dated March 17-21, 1898, № 1017, which stated that in accordance with the 95th Canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council they were to be received according to the Third Rite, and that their clergy had be received in full ecclesiastical rank, with no re-ordination.
of the rational sheep committed to our charge from unceasing attacks and multiform seductions on the part of the Latins and the Protestants.”

In general, it is hard to disagree with Andrew Psarev that “by the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russian theological thought regarding non-Orthodox Christians paralleled the position of Blessed Augustine, which stated that a baptism performed by the non-Orthodox in the name of the Holy Trinity is legitimate, given that it comes from the Lord Himself; however, for as long as the sin of schism from the Orthodox Church is not overcome, this sacrament does not provide salvation for the non-Orthodox.”

However, a stricter view more in accordance with the Church canons was adopted by Archbishop Anthony (Khramovitsky). He explained that the refusal to rebaptise or reordain a heretic did not entail the belief that the heretic was inside the Church. It was rather an acceptance that the form of these rites was correct and did not have to be repeated; so that this form became as it were a cup receiving the grace that is imparted only in the Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, however, this widespread practice of “economy” in the reception of heretics led to frequent misunderstandings in the ecumenical era that began after the First World War...

The “proto-ecumenism” of the Russian Church in this period was influenced by the fact that the tsars were tended, for political reasons, to transgress the Church canons regarding prayer with heretics. For as the Russian empire had expanded over the centuries, so had the number of subjects of other faiths than Orthodox Christianity, to the extent that by the late imperial period, as Igor Smolich put it, it was no longer a “confessionally united kingdom”, but an “interconfessional empire”. And so, for example, a Buddhist temple was built in St. Petersburg - to the horror of Archbishop Nicon of Vologda. Again, Tsar Nicholas II became the godfather of the future King Edward VIII at his Anglican baptism - and in 1904 Kaiser Wilhelm was invited to be godfather of the Tsarevich Alexis. Again, as Archimandrite Macarius (Veretennikov) writes, “Tsar Alexander III... visited Buddhist temples and attended their services; [and] Tsar Nicholas II also (for example, during the world war) visited Catholic churches, Jewish synagogues and Muslim mosques, attended their services, and kissed the Catholic cross. From a purely ecclesiastical-formal point of view the Orthodox tsar should not have done that, but as the head of a super-confessional empire, as emperor he was forced to it.”

---

658 A translation of the whole Epistle is to be found in Athelstan Riley, Birkbeck and the Russian Church, London: Macmillan, 1917, pp. 247-257.
659 Andrei Psarev, “The Development of Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia’s Attitude Toward Other Local Orthodox Churches”, http://www.sobor2006.com/printfriendly2.php?id=119_0_3_0, p. 5.
661 Ferguson, op. cit., p. 100.
The New Theology

We see, then, that the ferment in political and social life was matched by a scarcely less varied, if less violent, ferment of opinions and movements in Church life. On the one hand, we see the conservative churchmen such as St. John of Kronstadt and Bishops Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Theophan (Bystrov), Nicon (Rozhdestvensky), Joseph (Petrovykh) and Theodore (Pozdeyevsky). And on the other we see the renovationists such as Bishops Sergius (Stragorodsky) and Antonin (Granovsky), and “the new pagans” such as Tolstoy, Merezhkovsky, Rozanov, Bulgakov and Berdyaev. These debates were to become more rather than less important in the course of time. For it would be largely along the lines drawn in these pre-revolutionary decades that the Church schisms of the post-revolutionary period would develop.

In addition, we should note a current of thought that arose among certain Church conservatives against what was seen to be the dead scholasticism of the contemporary teaching of theology in Russia. A conventional target was Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov)’s *Dogmatic Theology*, which, while a fine sourcebook for patristic quotations, was considered by many to be lacking in inspiration. Thus Professor Nicholas N. Glubokovsky, while not denying that the “undoubted and huge” virtues of Macarius’ book, argued that “the author is dragged towards the past, lives by its traditions and is governed by former methods. For him dogma is a finished theoretical formula that is undeniably obligatory in its abstract, irrefutable completedness. In this case only one scientific operation is permitted in relation to it – the establishment of its truth by the logically interrelated connections of all its parts the crushing force of its external arguments. Hence the whole construction inevitably acquires the character of a priori dryness and bookish lifelessness, and the scientific exposition turns out to be directly scholastic…”

Fairly typical of this tendency was the former Tolstoyan and future hieromartyr-bishop of the Catacomb Church, Michael Alexandrovich Novoselov. He advocated a more living, experiential approach to theology in general and anti-heretical polemics in particular. “Our school theology,” he wrote, “on the soil of which the struggle against the opponents of the Church is waged, is foreign to religious experience and not only inspires nobody and brings nobody to God, but even kills the living shoots of religious life which are apprehended in the pious family and in church. The disgust or distrust which theology elicits in many alumni of our theological (and sometimes also secular) educational institutions is hardly a secret to anyone. Indifference to the faith or its rejection – that is our heritage.

“Look: who rules the mind and the aroused conscience of the Russian man? Literature, philosophy, science – only not theology, which in its extreme schematism decisively refuses to see the living human soul with its demands,

---

torments and doubts. It does not take the man with his present spiritual requirements and does not raise him, cautiously and penetratingly, to a higher level of self-knowledge and self-feeling. This role secular literature has taken upon itself, although unfortunately it is not always in agreement with Christian ideals.

“Who has good success with us in the purely religious sphere? Vladimir Soloviev, Khomiakov, Samarin, Kireevsky, Nesmelov, that is, people who are particularly foreign to the methods of school theologising.

“How do such spiritual writers (who, however, are significant more for those who are not yet far from the Church, and still more those living in it) such as Bishop Theophan, Bishop Anthony of Ufa, Fr. John Sergiev (I have in mind his book, My Life in Christ) attract people to themselves? By renouncing the stereotypical, the dead and the deadening, the formal-dialectical method of thinking. They have gone along a new path of theological thought, a path which, it would seem, should most accurately be called ‘psychological’…”

The call for a more living approach to theology was not wrong in itself; we can find it in some of the later Byzantine Fathers, the study of whom was only just beginning in the Russian theological institutions. However, it contained potential dangers. One was that “exciting” but heretical theologians (Novoselov mentions Soloviev!) were preferred to “boring” but Orthodox ones like Metropolitan Macarius. Another was that false diagnoses of the causes of Russian theology’s supposed “deadness” were offered.

Thus, as Protopriest Valentine Asmus writes, “Professor M.M. Tareev of the Moscow Theological Academy tried to demonstrate that Russian Orthodoxy had to cast off the yoke of Byzantine asceticism, which had dried up the Russian religious genius. A vivid representative of ‘the national theology’ was Tareev’s colleague, Vladimir Alexeevich Troitsky, in monasticism Hilarion (he was ordained to the episcopate after the revolution). He shared the ambiguity of Slavophilism, which well understood the universal meaning of Christianity and at the same time was inclined to see in Orthodoxy ‘the wealth of tribal faith’ (Khomiakov), as if it were naturally inherent in the Russians and Slavs as a whole. ‘The spirit of Slavdom is defined by Orthodoxy’ (Troitsky, The Church as a Union of Love, Moscow, 1998, p. 333). ‘I always somehow feel a lie in the position of the Slav Catholic’. Everything specifically Catholic ‘must be extremely opposed to the Slavic soul. The betrayal of Orthodoxy is… the betrayal of Slavdom, a going over to a western key in mood and in life’ (this was said about the Poles, p. 334). The remarkable thought of Tertullian that the human soul is by nature Christian is here narrowed to a single tribe taken on its own. The Russian man even in the fall preserves such natural resources as are not to be found in others, and even flirting with the devil is for him child’s play. ‘The German has sold his soul to the devil, but the Russian has given it away in such way that – and in this is

---

the undoubted superiority of the Russian – he can leave the devil, while the German has nothing with which to redeem himself’ (p. 115)."  

Another danger was that the perception was created, whether justly or unjustly, that the reformers were striving to form an elite within the Church that would gradually replace the old cadres. Bishop Anthony in particular was seen as trying to create a core body of learned monks who would replace the old professorial cadres. Thus, “recalling the 1890s, N.N. Glubokovsky used to remark that it was precisely at that time that the opinion began to form as if the theological academies ‘did not even have meagre resources of churchliness [tserkovnostyi], and were theological [dukhovnie] more because of the sign that stood out on them’. The professor thought that ‘these crafty invectives’ had appeared with the artificial development of a new monasticism, which created a special ‘direction’ in the Russian Church that announced and practised ‘in the spirit of true churchliness’ that ‘everything is permitted, allowed and forgiven to monks’. Later, wrote Glubokovsky, ‘there developed tendentious agitation for the monastic tonsure to be declared one of the sacraments, and if there were meant to be no more than seven, then it was necessary to dethrone marriage and put monasticism in its place, which would serve God following the example of the redemption on the Cross “through the compassionate love” of Christ alone…’  

Glubovsky is here referring to Bishop Anthony’s controversial theory of redemption, according to which Christ saved us simply through the power of His compassionate love and not through offering any “expiation” of God’s justice. This product of the new, “living” theology, which was shared by other leading theologians such as Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky) and Archimandrite Hilarion (Troitsky), bordered on heresy, and was to cause major arguments after the revolution. One of the earliest critics of Bishop Anthony was the future New Hieromartyr Archbishop Victor of Vyatka. He noted in 1912 that the “new theology” of Bishops Anthony and Sergius “would shake the Church”. Later, after Sergius issued his disastrous, pro-Soviet “Declaration” of 1927, which caused a huge schism in the Church, Archbishop Victor saw in this a direct result of Sergius’ pre-revolutionary teaching on salvation…  

**The Nationalities Policy**  

Among the many kinds of freedom idolized in the late nineteenth century, by no means the least important, as we have seen, was the freedom of the nation; and in a multi-national empire such as Russia the spread of nationalism could not fail to be a major concern of the authorities. Alexander III’s answer, which was followed by his son, Nicholas II, was to introduce the policy known to historians as “Russification”, a well-meaning attempt to  

---  

666 Firsov, op. cit., p. 91.  
unite the empire around the language and culture of the dominant imperial nation. Let us see how that was applied in the different regions.

1. **Poland and the West.** Perhaps the clearest failure of Russian nationalities policy, besides the Jews, was Poland. Alexander I’s grant to the Poles of a very liberal constitution, more liberal than anything on offer in Russia itself, was brought to an end by the revolution of 1831. Then the second revolution of 1863 necessitated a harsher reaction; Russification was part of that reaction.

Thus Hosking writes: “Most Polish officials were replaced by Russian ones, and the Russian language was imposed for official business. The University of Warsaw was converted into a wholly Russian institution, whilst it was stipulated that Polish schools, even at primary level, should teach all subjects in Russia, save the Polish language itself. In practice, the government had no means to impose these provisions, and Polish-language schooling continued, albeit clandestinely.

“Poland did derive economic benefits from being included within the empire’s tariff enclosure: it was able to sell its industrial products in a huge market that needed them. With some 8% of the population, Poland produced about a quarter of the empire’s industrial output, notably in textiles, metallurgy and machine tools…”

In spite of these benefits, the Poles remained unremittingly hostile to Russia. “In 1905-6 Poland was perhaps the most violent part of the empire. Immediately after Bloody Sunday, in January 1905, workers in the textile centre of Lodz went on strike and demonstrated with placards proclaiming ‘Down with the autocracy! Down with the war!’ They also had economic demands: an eight-hour day and huge wage rises. The police intervened, and in the resultant fighting perhaps one hundred people were killed. That scene was repeated several times during 1905. At times Poland was in a state of virtual civil war, in which students, schoolchildren and often criminal bands were involved as well as workers. Only the peasants remained relatively quiescent: they had neither the grievances nor the communal solidarity of those in Russia.”

---

669 In the countryside, as Lieven writes, “efforts were made to boost peasant agriculture and, on the eve of 1914, to give the Orthodox and therefore supposedly Russian and loyal peasantry a bigger voice in elected local government. Above all, however, large sums and efforts were devoted to reducing Polish landowning in the region and implanting a Russian landowning elite in its place. The policy had some similarities to the manner in which the English went about consolidating their hold on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland. In the eighteenth century, for instance, the English authorities were convinced that the almost complete expropriation of the Catholic landowning class deprived potential rebellion of its leaders and made revolt impossible unless Ireland was invaded by sizeable French armies. “In comparison to the English in Ireland, Russian policy towards Polish landlords in the Western Borderlands was less ruthless and thoroughgoing. The number of Polish landowners and the size of their estates in the Western Borderlands was much reduced after 1863 but Poles still remained just over half of all estate-owners in Lithuania and Belorussia at the turn of the twentieth century. Even in Ukraine west of the Dnieper, where the number of small
“Altogether the armed struggle in Poland during 1905-6 lasted longer than the guerrilla war of 1863-4 and claimed more lives. It was also a grave strain on the Russian armed forces: at the height of the troubles some 300,000 men were stationed there, as compared with 1,000,000 on the Japanese front. No clearer example could be imagined of the high cost of trying to Russify a people with a well-developed national identity and sense culture, religion and citizenship quite different from that of Russia.”

True; and yet the cause of Russia’s failure in Poland cannot be laid entirely on the policy of russification. The root problem was the implacable opposition of Polish Catholicism to Russian Orthodoxy. As long as the combination of Catholicism and fervent nationalism prevailed, there was no hope, not only of assimilation, but even of peaceful relations between the two peoples. Catherine II’s conquest of Poland, while it had certain geopolitical advantages (e.g. the access of Russian armies with their supply trains to Germany and France), proved in the long run to have created the Achilles heel of the Russian empire, in that it included into the empire two peoples – the Poles and the Jews – whose opposition to Russia remained implacable to the end.

2. Ukraine and Belorussia. If Poland was to Russia what Ireland was to England, then Ukraine and Belorussia were to Russia what Scotland and Wales were to England. In the latter comparison, a common faith – Orthodoxy in the case of Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia, Protestantism in the case of England, Scotland and Wales - made coexistence easier. Even so, in an age of increasing nationalism there were bound to be centripetal pressures; and even where there was considerable identity of civilization – in the sense of “ideas and traditions… inherited from the ancient world and from Christianity”, it was the cultural difference – that is, idiosyncracies of speech, folklore, dress and everyday life - that tended to be emphasised. But underlying cultural differences could lead to a betrayal of the deeper civilizational traditions of the nation seeking to distinguish itself.

Polish estate-owners was drastically reduced after 1863, Poles still retained most of the medium-sized and big properties. In Ireland by contrast, only 5 per cent of the land was owned by Catholics by 1776. English policy was also more effective: a solid English elite society and culture was established in Ireland and dominated the country for many generations. Despite spending great sums on subsidizing Russian landowning, St. Petersburg was on the whole unable to create a sizeable group of landowners willing actually to live on estates in the Western Borderlands and to challenge Polish economic and cultural dominance. In fact, it was probably anachronistic in the second half of the nineteenth century to devote such resources and energy to implanting a landowning elite. In an era of impending mass literacy and urbanization it might well have made more sense even in the relatively backward Western Borderlands to target the children of richer peasants and other emerging middle-class elements. In this region, as in much of Eastern and Central Europe, it was to be these groups that were crucial in the creation of mass national identities.” (Empire, p. 274). (V.M.)

670 Hosking, op. cit., p. 378.
672 As when, for example, “Welsh Baptist ministers dressed up as Druids at the Welsh national Eisteddfod” (Davies, op. cit., p. 817).
The Russians, by contrast, emphasised their civilizational unity with the Ukrainians and Belorussians. All three nations confessed Orthodox Christianity, and Kiev was “the mother of all Russian cities”, the capital of a pan-Russian State which in the eleventh century had covered the territories of all three peoples. Moreover (although here the commonality was cultural rather than civilizational), all three peoples were Eastern Slavic, and their languages could be said to be different dialects of a single original language. So, as the Russians argued, they were all really one nation…

The Ukrainian nationalists, writes Oliver Figes, “took inspiration from the Ukrainian national movement in neighbouring Galicia. As part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Galicia had been granted relatively liberal rights of self-government. This had allowed the Ukrainians, or ‘Ruthenians’ (dog-Latin for ‘Russians’) as they were known by the Austrians, to promote their own Ukrainian language in primary schools and public life, to publish native-language newspapers and books, and to advance the study of Ukrainian history and folk culture. Galicia became a sort of ‘Ukrainian Piedmont’ for the rest of the national movement in tsarist Ukraine: a forcing-house of national consciousness and an oasis of freedom for nationalist intellectuals. Lviv, its capital, also known as Lemberg (by the Germans) and as Lvov (by the Russians), was a thriving centre of Ukrainian culture. Although subjects of the Tsar, both the composer Lysenko and the historian Hrushevsky had found their nation in Galicia. The nationalist intellectuals who pioneered the Ukrainian literary language in the middle decades of the nineteenth century all borrowed terms from the Galician dialect, which they considered the most advance, although later, as they tried to reach the peasantry with newspapers and books, they were forced to base it on the Poltavan folk idiom, which, as the dialect of the central Ukraine, was the most commonly understood. The seminal texts of this national literary renaissance were published by the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius prior to its dissolution by the tsarist authorities in 1847. The romantic poetry of Taras Shevchenko, which played the same role as Mickiewicz’s poetry in Poland in shaping the intelligentsia’s national consciousness, was the most important of these. Ukrainian-language publications continued to appear, despite the legal restrictions on them. Many were published by the Kiev section of the Russian Geographical Society, whose nationalist members devoted themselves to the study of Ukrainian folk culture, language and history.”

The Russian authorities refused to accept the existence either of a separate Ukrainian people or of a Ukrainian language. The Ukrainians were called, somewhat patronizingly, “Little Russians” by contrast with the “Great Russians” to the north. And P.A. Valuev, minister of the interior, insisted that “there never has been a distinct Little Russian language, and there never will be one”. As Lieven writes, tsarist statesmen “focused their attention on the linguistic and cultural foundations of national identity and therefore of subsequent political nationalism. In 1863 General Annenkov, the governor-general of the Kiev region, flatly opposed the publication of the bible in

---

674 Hosking, op. cit., p. 379.
Ukrainian, commenting that by its publication Ukrainian nationalists ‘would achieve so to speak the recognition of the independence of the Little Russian language, and then of course they will make claims to autonomy for Little Russia.’ Thirteen years later a key government memorandum warned of the dangers of ‘various doctrines which superficially contain nothing political and seem to relate only to the sphere of purely academic and artistic interests’. In the long run their danger could be very great. ‘Nothing divides people as much as differences in speech and writing. Permitting the creation of a special literature for the common people in the Ukrainian dialect would signify collaborating in the alienation of Ukraine from the rest of Russia.’ The memorandum went on to emphasize the very great importance of the Ukrainians to the Russian nation and state: ‘To permit the separation… of thirteen million Little Russians would be the utmost political carelessness, especially in view of the unifying movement which is going on alongside us among the German tribe.’ In the light of such views the tsarist regime did its utmost from 1876 to stop the development of a written Ukrainian language or high culture. Virtually all publication in Ukrainian was banned until the period 1905-14, when revolution, the semi-constitution of 1906 and the partial liberalization of politics allowed the language greater leeway. Even in the so-called Constitutional Era, however, not only the government but also the imperial parliament refused to contemplate any teaching of or in Ukrainian in schools, once again taking a much tougher line over Ukrainian than other languages.’

And yet here was the rub: that the ruling civilization (and culture) of most of Russia’s ruling elites was no longer the Orthodox Christianity that had united all the Eastern Slavic peoples in the past: it was the civilization of contemporary Western Europe. So “Russification” in practice often meant Westernization with a Russian tinge and in the Russian language.

A better policy, surely, would have been for the government to emphasize the “civilizational”, - that is, in essence, religious - unity between the three peoples without trying to deny their cultural - especially linguistic - differences. For among the peasants, if not for the intelligentsia, civilizational, religious unity was still strong – and stronger than any nationalist passion. As Figes writes, “in Belorussia and the northern Ukraine there was so much ethnic and religious intermingling – in an area the size of Cambridgeshire there might be a mixture of Belorussian, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Jewish and Lithuanian settlements – that it was difficult for anything more than a localized form of ethnic identity to take root in the popular consciousness. One British diplomat... concluded that this was still the case as late as 1918: ‘Were one to ask the average peasant in the Ukraine his nationality he would answer that he is Greek Orthodox; if pressed to say whether he is a Great Russian, a Pole, or an Ukrainian, he would probably reply that he is a peasant; and if one insisted on knowing what language he spoke, he would say that he talked “the local tongue” ’”

676 Figes, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
3. Finland. Lieven writes: “Conquered in 1809, the Grand Duchy of Finland enjoyed a high degree of autonomy throughout the nineteenth century. In Russian terms its status was anomalous, not only because it was uniquely free of Petersburg’s control but also because it possessed representative institutions and a secure rule of law. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century pressure increased from Petersburg to bring parts of Finnish law and administration into line with Russian norms. It stuck in Russian gullets, for instance, that Russians resident in Finland enjoyed fewer rights than ethnic Finns, something that was not true of Finns living in Russia. With Russo-German antagonism growing and Sweden a very possible ally of Germany in any future war, the extent to which Helsinki was almost completely free from Petersburg’s supervision also caused worry. So long as Finland was governed by Count N.V. Adlerberg (1866-81) and then Count F.L. Heiden (1881-98) the very sensible rule prevailed that infringements on Finnish autonomy must be kept to the strictly necessary minimum. When General N.I. Bobrikov was appointed Governor-General in 1898, however, not only did he arrive with sweeping plans to increase Petersburg’s control, he also implemented this policy with a tactless, ham-fisted brutality which turned Finland into a hotbed of opposition.

“Real trouble with Finland began when Petersburg imposed its own military conscription system on the Finns and sought to unify the Russian and Finnish armies. Though this scheme had been in the making for a number of years, it was pushed hard by the new Minister of War, Aleksei Kuropatkin, who was appointed in 1898. The majority of Russian senior officials opposed Kuropatkin’s conscription law in the belief that it would needlessly antagonize the Finns and it was actually voted down in the State Council, the body of senior statesmen who advised the Tsar on legislation. As was his right, however, Nicholas overrode the council and Kuropatkin’s conscription law went into effect. In the Emperor’s defence it could be argued that had he failed to back up his new Minister of War the latter’s authority would have been fatally damaged. Moreover, the government’s case vis-à-vis Finland was not entirely unjustified, its fears for the security of Petersburg, very close to the Finnish border, causing it particular alarm. In terms of political wisdom and tact, however, Kuropatkin’s law, not to mention Bobrikov’s antics, were a disaster. The government, which had hoped to play off the ethnic Finnish majority against the country’s Swedish elite, quickly united the whole country against itself. Among those who protested to Nicholas about Bobrikov’s policy was his mother, herself a Scandinavian princess. In what was, coming from her, an extremely angry letter, she accused her son of going back on his promise to her that Bobrikov would be reined in and commented that ‘all that

677 Hosking writes: “Its parliament, the Diet, began to meet regularly after 1863, and passed a number of measures which underlined Finland’s distinctive status within the empire: the spread of education, consolidation of freedom of worship, the issue of a separate currency and the establishment of a Finnish army.” (op. cit., p. 380). (V.M.)

678 Hosking writes: “The Finns responded first of all with a petition for which they collected the signatures of no less than one-fifth of their population, and then with a boycott of all Russian institutions. This affected especially the army: in 1902 less than half the young men called up for service reported for duty, and they had to run the gauntlet of hostile crowds of their compatriots around the draft boards” (op. cit., p. 381).
has been and is being done in Finland is based on lies and deceit and leads straight to revolution’. Apart from asserting that the Finns would come round if the government showed itself resolute, Nicholas’s reply to his mother skated around the main issue at stake. Seen from the Russian perspective this issue was, in Kireev’s words, that ‘thanks to Bobrikov and his system we have created a new Poland at the gates of Saint Petersburg! And it would have been easy to avoid this.’

“In its approach to the Finnish question Petersburg made mistakes which were typical of the Russian government at this time. Policy towards Finland was decided on its own, not in the wider context of an overall strategy for achieving the government’s aims and avoiding danger across the whole range of the empire’s affairs. It made no sense to challenge Finnish nationalism at a time when the regime already had its hands full with a host of other domestic enemies. Nor did the government clearly define its essential interests in Finland in the light of its overall commitments, and then devote the necessary means to achieve these limited goals. By the time Governor-General Bobrikov was assassinated in June 1904 Finland was moving towards open insurrection. By then, however, much of urban Russia was moving in the same direction…”

4. The Baltic. “The Baltic region,” writes Hosking, “resembled Finland in so far as the Russian authorities supported, up to a point, the claims of the subordinate nationalities, the Estonians and Latvians, against the dominant Germans. But they pursued this policy with much greater caution than in Finland, since the Baltic Germans were far more important to them than the Swedes. Indeed, it could be argued that, of all ethnic groups in the whole empire, the Baltic Germans were the most loyal. However, their loyalty was to the Tsar personally, and to the empire as a multi-national entity, not to Russia as a nation. As Alexander Graf Keyserling, former rector of Dorpat University, wrote in 1889, ‘As long as the Emperor dominates the nation, we shall be able to survive and develop further.’ It was not only the Russian nation he had in mind. The growth of German nationalism was equally ominous for the Baltic landowners, since it threatened to swamp the Ritterschaften (aristocratic corporations) with Germans from the towns and Estonians or Latvians from the countryside, both more numerous than themselves. In the long run they would all become the mere pawns of European great-power politics.

“The first Russian statesman to attack the German domination in the Baltic was Iurii Samarin, who was sent to Riga as a senatorial inspector in 1849. He regarded the German urban guilds and the Ritterschaften as corrupt relics of an antiquated system which prevented the monarch from acting as the protector of ordinary people and obstructed Russians from exercising their legitimate authority in the Russian Empire. ‘We Russians claim the right to be in Russia what the French are in France and the English throughout the British dominions.’ At this stage, before the drive to national homogenization had gripped the authorities, such views were unwelcome to the Tsar:

679 Lieven, Nicholas II, pp. 86-87.
Nicholas ordered that Samarin be detained in the Peter-Paul Fortress for twelve days and personally rebuked him. ‘Your attack is aimed at the government: what you really meant was that since the reign of the Emperor Peter we have been surrounded by Germans and have ourselves become Germanised.’

“By the 1870s, however, different views prevailed in St. Petersburg. Reform had come to Russia, rendering Tsars more reluctant to acknowledge intermediate authorities between themselves and their subjects. Besides, the unification of Germany naturally reinforce the ethnic identification of Baltic Germans, especially those in the towns. Ivan Aksakov had warned of this danger in 1862, when he complained that the Baltic Germans, ‘though devoted to the Russian throne, preach war to the death against the Russian nationality; faithful servants of the Russian state, they care not a fig for the Russian Land’. Alexander III took a symbolically important decision when, on his accession to the throne in 1881, he declined to confirm the privileges of the Ritterschaften, as all his successors had done since Peter the Great.

“Administrative integration began with the introduction of the new municipal institutions in the Baltic in 1877, but the authorities shrank from undermining the Ritterschaften in the countryside by introducing Russian-style zemstvos there. To that extent, the old policy of accommodating local elites continued: the Ritterschaften remained as the ultimate repositories of local authority right through to 1917, though their practical power was gradually being chipped away both by social change and by governmental measures. In the 1880s they lost judicial powers with the introduction of the new Russian courts, along with the use of Russian in all administrative and judicial procedures. Their supervision of schools was weakened by the opening of numerous ‘ministerial schools’ run from St. Petersburg and offering intuition in Russian only: it was here that many Estonians and Latvians received their basic education and began to move into professional and administrative positions, becoming what St. Petersburg hoped would be the agents of future Russian domination. At the same time an attempt was made to make Russian compulsory in all but the lowest forms of primary schools. In 1893 Dorpat University was closed and reopened as Iur’ev University, a Russian institution: professors and lecturers (with the revealing exception of theology) who were not prepared to teach in Russian had to resign.

“In religious matters there was a return to the policy of forbidding Estonians and Latvians who had converted – usually under threat - to Orthodoxy to return to the Lutheran faith. Those who had done so now found that their marriages were declared invalid, while pastors who had celebrated them were suspended investigation. Some 120 suffered this fate before the policy was abandoned in 1894…”

---

*680 Hosking, op. cit., pp. 382-384.*
Here Hosking distorts the evidence. There was a genuine, unforced movement of Latvians towards Orthodoxy, of which the most famous product was the future hieromartyr Archbishop John (Pommer) of Riga, who was devoted to Russia and whose Orthodoxy was completely sincere. The Latvian peasants of his region had begun to show an interest in Orthodoxy in the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks to the preaching of the faith in their native language; and Hieromartyr John's great-grandfather had been one of the first to accept Orthodoxy in the region, for which he was subjected to persecution by the local German landowners. If there was persecution, it was much more likely to be by Lutherans against the Orthodox. Thus when St. John's great-grandfather died he was buried outside the bounds of the local Lutheran cemetery (there were no Orthodox cemeteries at that time) as the leader of the "rebels". The native peasants raised a mound over the place of his burial and put an eight-pointed star on top of it, but both the mound and the cross were removed by the Lutheran authorities.

5. The Caucasus. The Georgian State and Church are much older than the Russian – the Church was granted autocephaly in the fourth century at the Council of Antioch. The Bagration dynasty was founded in 886, and Georgia’s golden age took place from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. In the 1220 the Mongols invaded, and thereafter Georgian history consisted of a long succession of Muslim invasions in which the country was repeatedly devastated and many thousands martyred for the Orthodox faith.

Daniel Sargis writes: “In the late eighteenth century, King Irakly II of Georgia, an Orthodox Christian, was threatened by the Islamic rulers of Persia and Turkey. He turned to Russia, his Christian neighbour, for protection. In 1783, Empress Catherine the Great of Russia and King Irakly II signed the treaty of Georgievsk, in which Russia guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Georgian kingdom in return for control of Georgia’s foreign policy. The treaty also guaranteed the royal status of the Bagratid dynasty…: ‘Henceforth Irakly II, as a believer in the same faith as Ours and as an ally of Russia, bears the title of King of Georgia, in which title and rights he and his issue are confirmed by Russia forever and for all time.’

“In 1795, the Persian shah, Aga Muhammad, demanded that King Irakly acknowledge Persian suzerainty over Georgia. King Irakly, declining to break his treaty with Russia, refused. The Persians then invaded. No Russian assistance was provided, but the old King, then more than 80 years old, managed to repulse the invaders three times before he was outnumbered and defeated. Finally, the Russians intervened and pushed out the Persians.

681 Figes writes that “the regime’s policies of Russification helped to promote the Orthodox cause: in Poland and the Baltic, for example, 40,000 Catholics and Lutherans were converted to the Orthodox Church, albeit only nominally, during the reign of Alexander III” (op. cit., p. 64). But on what basis does he say “nominally”? Just as the return of more than two million uniates to Orthodoxy in 1839 in the same region was by no means nominal, so there is no reason to suspect that these conversions were nominal.

682 Lyudmilla Koeller, Sv. Ioann (Pommer), Arkhiiepiskop Rizhskij i Latvijskij (St. John (Pommer), Archbishop of Riga and Latvia), Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1984 ©. (V.M.)
“In 1798, Irakly II died and was succeeded by his son, King George XII. Fearing the Persian threat, King George suggested to Empress Catherine’s son and successor, Tsar Paul I, that he incorporate Georgia into the Russian Empire while allowing the Bagrations to continue to bear the title of King... At first, Emperor Paul agreed, but in the end he simply seized the country, putting an end by the long reign of the Bagrations.”

The annexation of Georgia was proclaimed by Paul I on December 18, 1800, and was reaffirmed by his successor, Alexander I, on September 12, 1801. On the whole Georgia benefited from being part of the Russian empire – it could hardly have survived against the Muslims from outside. And Georgian saints such as Elder Ilarion of Mount Athos, could be sincerely, even fiercely pro-Russian.

However, the price was high. “Within ten years,” writes Lado Mirianashvili, “the Russian authorities had abolished the Georgian monarchy, the Church’s autocephaly, and the patriarchal throne – all of which had withstood the Turks, the Mongols, and the Persians. During the subsequent 106 years, nineteen exarchs of the Russian Synod ruled the Georgian Church. Church services in Georgian were terminated, frescoes were whitewashed, and ancient Georgian icons and manuscripts were either sold or destroyed.

“The wanton destruction of the Iberian culture resulted in the emergence of the Georgian independence movement in the last half of the 19th century. Under the leadership of poet, historian, and philosopher St. Ilia Chavchavadze, members of the Georgian intelligentsia sought to preserve their language and culture, while promoting state independence and Church autocephaly. Both the Russian government and the Communist revolutionaries opposed this national movement, the latter because the movement proclaimed Georgia to be a Christian state. In 1907 the militant social democrats killed the ‘father of modern Georgia’, St. Ilia, in an attempt to crush the national movement, whose Christian ideology undermined the Communist agenda.”

Although Georgian nationalism was essentially Christian in nature, harking back nostalgically to the medieval Christian kingdom, according to Hosking it had “an anti-capitalist colouring, owing to the competition with the Armenians”, who dominated banking and commerce in the towns. “They also considered that, as a small nation, their interests were best protected by

683 Sargis, The Romanoffs and the Bagrations, 1996; quoted by Brien Horan, “The Russian Imperial Succession”, http://www.chivalricorders.org/royalty/gotha/russucr.htm. The smaller Georgian kingdoms of Samegrelo and Imereti (western Georgia) were annexed in 1803 and 1804, respectively.


685 “The romantic poetry of Chavchavadze and Baratashvili lamented the lost greatness of the Georgian kingdoms in the Middle Ages” (Figes, op.cit., p. 75).
internationalism, or more specifically, by membership of a democratic multi-
national federation formed on the framework of the Russian Empire. Two of
the leading Georgian radicals, Noa Zhordania and Filip Makharadze, studied
in Warsaw, where they became convinced that Poles and Georgians, for all
their differences, were conducting a common struggle against the autocratic
county, and must work together. Marxism fulfilled both the internationalist
and the anti-capitalist requirements. The Georgians became perhaps the most
sophisticated Marxists in the empire, taking over from the Austrian Marxists
the notion of individual cultural autonomy as the best way of making
possible inter-ethnic cooperation in a multi-national state. They also adapted
their original agrarian programme so that it met the demands of peasants,
and in that way were able to make themselves the leading political force in
the countryside as well as the towns.686

Meanwhile, in the third of the Transcaucasian territories, Azerbaidjan, “the
emergence of a national consciousness was complicated by the domination of
Islam, which tended towards supra-national forms and blocked the growth of
a secular culture and a written language for the masses. To begin with,
ironically, it was the Russians who encouraged the Azeris’ secular culture to
develop, promoting the plays of Akhundzada, the ‘Tatar Molière’, and
commissioning histories of the Azeri folk culture and language, as a way of
weakening the influence of the Muslim powers to the south.”687

policy was economic rather than assimilationist. Uniquely in the Russian
country, one may consider this region a genuine colony. Its status differed
from that of other parts of the empire in several ways. Its inhabitants were
known as inorodtsy, a category common enough in other contemporary
countries, but not applied elsewhere in the Russian one: it implied an alien and
inferior political status. The whole territory was not even fully incorporated
into the empire: the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara remained
nominally sovereign, as protectorates bound to Russia by one-sided treaties
which included them in the Russian customs union.

“In the regions incorporated into the empire, the Russian authorities did
not interfere in religion, education, local administration or law courts. These
were Muslim and so far removed from Russian practice that any attempt to
adapt them would have had scant chance of success and would have
provoked intense resistance, which might have been exploited by the British
to bolster their position in Central Asia. In this way a largely military
supreme power in the region overlay a traditional and unchanged medium-
and lower-level hierarchy.”688

However, in 1898 the Urmian spiritual mission of the Russian Orthodox
Church was opened in Persia. By 1900 there had already been opened more
than 60 schools serving 2300 students. On August 21, 1901 the future

686 Hosking, op. cit., pp. 385-386.
687 Figes, op. cit., p. 75.
Hieromartyr, Fr. John Vostorgov was sent to Persia to oversee the work of the mission and began to labour for the conversion of the Syro-Chaldeans to Orthodoxy. For several years he waged a determined battle, the result of which was that three bishops - Mar Elijah, Mar John and Mar Marian - expressed their desire to be united to the Church. Thus was initiated the Syro-Chaldean Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church.

We may conclude that Russification was not a success in any of the regions of the Russian empire that it was applied, even in those, such as Ukraine and Belorussia, where religious, linguistic and cultural similarities were greatest. Nevertheless, it is an exaggeration to call this policy one of oppression and tyranny (we shall deal with the special case of the Jews later). And the epithet of “the prison of the peoples” given to Russia by her enemies was by no means just. In general, Russia coped remarkably well with the extraordinary diversity of peoples and traditions within her borders. Thus what subordinate people anywhere had more freedom than the Finns, the Muslims of Central Asia or the pagans of Siberia in the Russian empire?

It is not clear that any other contemporary multinational empire succeeded any better in solving one the most intractable problems of politics: how to accommodate different peoples with different cultures and religions within a unitary state. The British had the problem of Ireland, the French – of Algeria; while the Austro-Hungarians had to contend with a whole series of discontented nationalities. “The Russian empire,” writes Lieven, “included a wide range of peoples of very different cultures and levels of socio-economic development. Any attempt to impose a single, ‘coherent’ strategy on all of them would have been unthinkable and catastrophic. Moreover, it should be by now be clear that there was no easy solution to the dilemmas of empire in the modern era. If tsarism floundered, so too did all its imperial rivals.”

Lieven thinks that “in principle it might have been possible to strengthen empire by the appeal of the great civilization [understood here in a sense inclusive of “culture”] to which the imperial regime was linked. Together with the economic and military advantages of empire, this might at least have provided some defence against the nationalist challenge... The century before 1914 had witnessed a tremendous flowering of Russian literary and musical culture. Not only had the Russian intelligentsia developed a very impressive high culture, but it was also open to people of varying races and religions, and had genuinely cosmopolitan sympathies and outlooks. Drawing inspiration from all the strands of European culture and speaking many languages, the Russian intelligentsia’s culture was in some respects genuinely broader than the more national perspective common in the individual cultures of Western Europe. Though Polish and German subjects of the tsar were never likely to defer to Russian culture, the educated classes of Ukraine, Belorussia and the other smaller Christian peoples might well do so,

---

690 Lieven, Empire, op.cit., p. 275.
especially if they were allowed to develop their own languages and cultures alongside Russian. Even the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Muslim reformers, the so-called Jadids, often had considerable respect for the Russian intelligentsia’s culture and were inclined to ally with it in order to modernize their own societies. Given the deep antagonism between the tsarist regime and much of the Russian intelligentsia, however, the pull of intelligentsia culture on the non-Russians was not much help to the empire’s rulers. If, for example, Ukrainian or Jewish socialists were often drawn to all-imperial revolutionary parties rather than to more narrowly national ones, this was scarcely a gain from the tsar’s point of view…"\(^691\)

Here we come to the hub of the matter: Russification was of little value if the Russia it propagated was not Orthodoxy, the root of Russian culture and the one thing that could truly unite its peoples at a deep level. But the Russian government, while generously supporting Orthodox missions to pagan peoples, and in general supporting Orthodoxy everywhere, did not always see its nationalities policy in terms of the spreading of Orthodoxy.

There were several reasons for this. First, the actual preaching of Orthodoxy is a task of the Church, not the State – and the Church was barely able to cope with the task of preaching the Gospel to the Russians themselves. (Thus St. John of Kronstadt had wanted to preach Christ to the Alaskan Indians, but decided to stay in Russia, where so many baptised people were still in need of conversion to True Christianity.) Secondly, the principles of religious tolerance and religious indifferentism had let down deep roots into the culture of the elites, who, if they had to preach or impose something, preferred that it would not be a dogmatic religion. And thirdly and most importantly, as Lieven points out, the dominant culture and religion of the Russian elites was no longer Orthodoxy, but West European liberalism, which led naturally to socialism, anti-tsarism and anti-Russianism.

And so if the Russian elites were to draw the constituent peoples of the empire away from centrifugal nationalism and towards a centripetal universalism, it could not be to the universalist civilization or “high culture” of Orthodox Christianity, the official religion of the empire, but to the quite different “high culture” of West European liberalism. What actually happened was a kind of bifurcation. Orthodoxy continued to be preached, with positive results, to the pagans and to the peasants, but the intelligentsia also continued to preach their gospel, the gospel of westernism, constitutionalism and ecumenism, with the most catastrophic results for the whole world…

Figes makes the important observation that it was not the liberals with their emphasis on individual human rights who exploited the nationalist unrest among the empire’s non-Russian peoples, but the socialists. “This socialistic aspect of the nationalist movements is worth underlining. For the late twentieth-century reader might be tempted to assume, on the basis of the collapse of Communism and the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe, that

\(^691\) Lieven, Empire, op. cit., p. 276.
they must have been opposed to socialist goals. What is striking about the nationalist movements within the Russian Empire is that their most successful political variants were nearly always socialist in form: Joseph Piłsudski’s Polish Socialist Party led the national movement in Poland; the Socialist Party became the national party of the Finns; the Baltic movements were led by socialists; the Ukrainians Socialist Revolutionaries were the leading Ukrainian national party; the Mensheviks led the Georgian national movement; and the Dashnak socialists the Armenian one. This was in part because the main ethnic conflict also tended to run along social lines: Estonian and Latvian peasants against German landlords and merchants; Ukrainian peasants against Polish or Russian landlords and officials; Azeri workers, or Georgian peasants, against the Armenian bourgeoisie; Kazakh and Kirghiz pastoralists against Russian farmers; and so on. Parties which appealed exclusively to nationalism effectively deprived themselves of mass support; whereas those which successfully combined the national with the social struggle had an almost unstoppable democratic force…”

The Liberation Movement

“By 1902-3,” writes Dominic Lieven, “rumblings of revolution, or at least of fundamental constitutional change, were in the air. Not everyone heard them. Even in April 1904, three months before his assassination, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vyacheslav Plehve, did not believe in ‘the closeness of danger’ to the regime. Plehve’s optimism was partly based on the belief that ‘in the event of things going to extremes, the government will find support in the peasantry and urban lower-middle class’. In addition he recalled having survived earlier times of crisis and panic. ‘I have lived through more than one moment like the one we are living through now,’ he commented. ‘After the First of March [1881: the day Alexander II was assassinated] Count Loris-Melikov said to Plehve on the day after Alexander III rejected Alexander II’s constitution that “the Tsar will be killed and you and I will be hanged on a gallows”. Nothing happened though.’

“Other senior officials were less optimistic, often understanding better than Plehve that opposition to the government was by now much broader and deeper than had been the case a quarter of a century before. Kireev himself commented, as early as October 1900, that ‘I have seen a lot of intelligent people recently and in one voice, some with joy… others with horror, they all say that the present system of government has outlived its era and we are heading towards a constitution.’ Even the very conservative Konstantin Pobedonostsev agreed on this. A year later Kireev stated that in upper-class and senior bureaucratic circles ‘in the eyes of the great majority a constitutional order is the only salvation’. He himself believed, however, that ‘it is precisely this [constitutional order] which will in fact destroy us’. Like Alexander Polovtsov his eyes were turned towards the peasant masses, with their huge numbers and their potential for anarchy and socialism. ‘For the time being the peasants are still firm, still untouched. They are, as before, monarchists. But anyone can throw them into a muddle.’

---

“Those with the greatest interest in throwing the masses ‘into a muddle’ were of course the revolutionary socialist parties. Russian revolutionary socialism in the early twentieth century was divided into two currents, one Marxist, the other not. The former strand was represented by the Social Democrats, who in 1903 split into two factions, Menshevik and Bolshevik. The non-Marxist strand comprised the Socialist Revolutionary Party, formally constituted only in 1901, but deriving its ideas, traditions and older cadres from the nineteenth-century Russian socialist movement. In terms of ideas, the greatest distinction between the two was that the Marxists believed that the urban workers would spearhead the socialist revolution, which could only occur after capitalism had fully developed. The Socialist Revolutionary Party, on the other hand, claimed that a coalition of peasants, workers and poorer members of the intelligentsia and lower-middle class would achieve the socialist revolution, which could come immediately if the revolutionary parties pursued the proper tactics and exploited their opportunities.

“Unlike the Social Democrats, the Socialist Revolutionaries [called SRs] carried out a campaign of terror against leading officials as part of their strategy, killing three ministers between 1901 and 1904 alone and in the process sowing a good deal of alarm and confusion in the government. Partly for this reason the security police tended to regard the Socialist Revolutionaries as a more immediate and dangerous threat than the Social Democrats. The evaluation was not the product of mere panic or short-sightedness. The Marxists’ dogmatism and their obsession with the working class seemed to make them unlikely leaders of a successful revolution in a still overwhelmingly peasant country in which capitalism was only beginning to take root. Moreover, the fact that the majority of Social Democratic leaders were non-Russians, and a great number were Jews, made it seem less likely than ever that they would be able to compete with the Socialist Revolutionaries for the support of the Russian masses. Events were in part to prove the police right. When the monarchy fell in 1917 it was indeed the Socialist Revolutionaries who enjoyed by far the most popularity among the masses, not only in the countryside but also generally in the cities. Russia’s socialist future should have lain in their hands. The combination of their own ineptitude, Lenin’s intelligence and ruthlessness, and the specific conditions of wartime Russia were to deprive the Socialist Revolutionaries of the spoils of victory.

“In Russia socialist parties existed long before liberal ones. The Russian intelligentsia borrowed its ideas from the more developed societies of Central and Western Europe and had already created revolutionary socialist groups by the 1860s. The origins of Russia’s liberal parties on the other hand only go back to the foundation of the so-called Liberation Movement in 1901. From the very start this movement was divided into two main currents, which were to split in 1905-6 into the more radical, Constitutional Democratic [known as the Cadets], and more conservative, Octobrist, strands of Russian liberalism. In sociological terms this split roughly coincided with the division between members of the professional and intellectual middle class on the one hand,
and liberal landowners on the other. In terms of ideas, the basic divide came over whether one would insist on full-scale parliamentary government or accept some compromise combining elements of popular representation with parts of the existing regime. All sections of the Liberation Movement were, however, united in demanding civil rights and the end of the absolute monarchy. By 1904-5 the movement proved capable of mobilizing a broad coalition of supporters from middle- and upper-class Russia and of forging links with parts of the workers’ movement too. Though never likely in the long run to be able to compete with the socialists for mass support, the Liberation Movement was nevertheless a great challenge to the regime. Its wealthy activists, who often dominated the zemstvos, provided protection and patronage for a wide range of people opposed to the regime, some of them very radical. Many figures in the Liberation Movement came from the same world as senior officialdom and were even at times close relations. Such people were not easy to silence by mere repression and their arguments often carried conviction with liberal members of the ruling elite, weakening the government’s unity in the fact of the revolution.⁶⁹³

The stated objectives of the Russian liberals, continues Pipes, “were not different from those of the Western liberals. In their strategy and tactics, however, the Russian liberals drew very close to the radicals: as Paul Miliukov, their leader, like to boast, their political program ‘was the most leftist of all those advanced by analogous groups in Western Europe’. Ivan Petrunkevich, another leading Kadet, thought that Russian ‘liberals, radicals, and revolutionaries’ were distinguished not by political objectives but by temperament.

“This left-wing tendency was dictated by two considerations. The liberals, appealing to the mass electorate, had to compete with radical parties, which also stood to the left of their Western European counterparts, making the most extreme and utopian promises to the electorate. It was a challenge they had to meet. To steal the thunder from the socialists, the liberals adopted a radical social program, which included a demand for the expropriation of

⁶⁹³ Lieven, Nicholas II, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 89-91. Pipes describes the origin of this movement as follows: “The ranks of zemstvo constitutionalists were augmented in 1901 by a small but influential group of intellectuals, defectors from Social-Democracy who had found intolerable its partisanship and dogmatism. The most prominent among them was Peter Struve, the author of the founding manifesto of the Social-Democratic Party and one of its outstanding theoreticians. Struve and his friends proposed to forge a national front, encompassing parties and groupings from the extreme left to the moderate right, under the slogan ‘Down with the Autocracy’. Struve emigrated to Germany and with money provided by zemstvo friends founded there in 1902 the journal Osvobozhdenie (Liberation). The periodical carried information not permitted in censored publications, including secret government documents supplied by sympathizers within the bureaucracy. Issues smuggled into Russia helped forge a community of ‘Liberationists’ (Osvobozhdentsy) from which, in time, would emerge the Constitutional-Democratic Party. In January 1904, its supporters founded in St. Petersburg the Union of Liberation (Soiuz Osvobozhdeniia) to promote constitutionalism and civil rights. Its branches in many towns attracted moderate elements as well as socialists, especially Socialists-Revolutionaries. (The Social-Democrats, insisting on their ‘hegemony’ in the struggle against the regime, refused to collaborate.) These circles, operating semi-legally, did much to stimulate discontent with existing conditions.” (op. cit., pp. 151-152) (V.M.)
large landed estates (with compensation at ‘fair’ rather than market prices), as well as Church and state properties, for distribution to the peasants. Their platform also called for a comprehensive program of social welfare. They would turn a deaf ear to the counsels of moderation, afraid of ‘compromising’ themselves in the eyes of the masses and losing out to the socialists.

“Even more compelling were tactical reasons. To wrest from the autocracy first a constitution and a legislative parliament and then parliamentary democracy, the liberals required leverage. This they found in the threat of revolution. In 1905-7 and then again in 1915-17, they urged the monarchy to make political concessions to them as a way of avoiding a much worse fate. The party maintained discreet silence in regard to SR terror, which its liberal principles should have caused it to condemn outright.

“The political practice of the Kadets thus displayed a troublesome ambivalence – dread of revolution and exploitation of the revolution – and proved a gross miscalculation: playing with the revolutionary threat contributed not a little to promoting the very thing the liberals most wished to avoid. But this they would realise only after the event, when it was too late.

“Although more moderate than the socialists, the liberals gave the Imperial regime greater trouble, because they had in their ranks socially prominent individuals who could engage in politics under the guise of legitimate professional activity. Socialist students were fair game for the police. But who would dare to lay hands on a Prince Shakhovskoi or a Prince Dolgorukov, even as they were busy organizing a subversive liberal party? And how could one interfere with gatherings of physicians or jurists, although it was common knowledge that the participants discussed forbidden subjects? This difference in social status explains why the directing organizations of the liberals could function inside Russia, virtually free of police interference, while the SRs and SDs had to operate from abroad. It also explains why in both 1905 and 1917 the liberals were the first on the scene and in charge, weeks before their socialist rivals made an appearance.

“The Russian liberal movement had two main bases of support: the zemstva and the intelligentsia.

“The zemstva were elected on a franchise that ensured solid representation of the landed gentry, then considered by the monarchy to be a staunch supporter. They functioned on the district and provincial level, but the government did not allow them to form a national organization, fearing that it would arrogate to itself quasi-parliamentary functions. The elected deputies tended to be either liberal-constitutionalists or Slavophile conservatives, both hostile to the autocracy and bureaucratic rule, but opposed to revolution. The salaried personnel hired by the zemstva (agronomists, physicians, teachers, etc.), known as the Third Element, was more radical but also non-revolutionary.
“Properly treated, the zemstva might have helped stabilize the monarchy. But for the conservatives in the bureaucracy, and especially those in the ministry of the Interior, the zemtsy were an intolerable irritant: busybodies who meddled in affairs that were none of their business and hindered the efficient administration of the provinces. Under their influence, Alexander III in 1890 restricted the authority of the zemstva, giving the governors wide latitude to interfere with their personnel and activities.”

And with good reason: Pipes here fails to mention the degree to which the zemstva’s 70,000 teachers, doctors, statisticians and agronomists, collectively known as the “Third Element” (as opposed to the first two elements, the administrators and elected deputies), inculcated liberal ideas in the young. To consider that these ideas were “radical but also non-revolutionary” is naïve. The Interior Minister Plehve called them “the cohorts of the sans-culottes”; he believed that, coming themselves from a peasant or lower-class background, they were trying to use their position in the zemstva to stir up the peasantry. The radical schoolteachers raised a whole generation of radical schoolchildren. Their influence on millions of the younger generation was undoubtedly one of the main causes of the revolution.

Alexander III and Pobedonostsev, made valiant attempts to counter this corrupting influence by encouraging and financing a vast web of church-parish schools, a policy continued by Nicholas II. However, the struggle was an unequal one: the zemstvo schools had more money, and not all the church-parish schools were of the highest quality in view of the fact that some Church teachers had also been infected by liberal ideas.

Pipes continues: “Harrassed by the authorities, zemstvo leaders in the 1890s held informal national consultations, often disguised as professional and scientific meetings. In 1899, they went further, organizing in Moscow a discussion group called Beseda (Symposium). Its membership was sufficiently prominent socially and professionally for the police to look at its meetings through their fingers: these took place in the Moscow mansion of Princes Peter and Paul Dolgorukov.

“In June 1900, the government once again restricted the competence of the zemstva, this time in the realm of taxation. It further ordered the dismissal of zemstvo deputies who were especially active in promoting constitutional causes. In response, Symposium, which until then had confined its deliberations to zemstvo affairs, turned attention to political questions. To many zemtsy, the government’s persecution raised the fundamental question whether it made sense to pursue ‘constructive’, apolitical work under a regime dominated by bureaucracy and police bent on stifling every manifestation of public initiative. These doubts were heightened by the publication in 1901 in Germany of a confidential memorandum by Witte which urged the total abolition of zemstva as institutions incompatible with autocracy...

---

694 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 149-151.
695 Figes, A People’s Tragedy, p. 51.
“At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were in Russia thousands of men and women committed to fundamental change. A good part of them were ‘professional revolutionaries’, a novel breed who dedicated their lives to plotting political violence. They and their supporters might quarrel among themselves about strategy and tactics – whether to engage in terror, whether to ‘socialize’ or ‘nationalize’ the land, whether to treat the peasant as an ally or as an enemy of the worker. But they were at one on the central issue: that there was to be no accommodation, no compromise with the existing social, economic and political regime, that it had to be destroyed, root and branch, not only in Russian but throughout the world. So strong was the influence of these extremists that even Russia’s liberals came under their spell...

“The fact that the intelligentsia rejected any accommodation with official Russia, that it exacerbated discontent and opposed reform, made it unlikely that Russia’s problems could be peacefully resolved…”

**Kishinev, 1903**

Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes: “Neither in Middle, nor Northern, nor Eastern Russia, never, not even in the upheaval that shook the whole people in October, 1905, were there any Jewish pogroms (they were against the revolutionary intelligentsia in general, against their rejoicing and mockery over the Manifesto of October 17). However: before the whole world pre-revolutionary Russia – not the Empire, but Russia – was slandered as causing pogroms, as black-hundredist...

“But Jewish pogroms were stirred up at all times and only in the South-West of Russia (as also was the case in 1881).”

The Kishinev pogrom began on April 6, 1903 – the last day of the Jewish Pascha and the first day of the Orthodox Pascha. According to the official figures drawn up in the indictment by the procurator of the local court, V.N. Goremykin, it began with “the usual clashes between Jews and Christians which have always taken place in recent years at Pascha” and with “the hostility of the local Christian population towards the Jews”. And then “two weeks before Pascha... rumours began to circulate in Kishinev that there would be a slaughter of Jews in the forthcoming feast”. A particularly inflammatory role was played here by the newspaper *Bessarabets*, whose editor, Pavolachi Krushevan, also published *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It printed “from day to day sharp articles of an anti-Jewish tendency, which did not fail to leave a trace... among the salesmen and petty scribes, etc. of the uneducated people of Bessarabia. The latest provocative articles of

---

696 Pipes, op. cit., p. 152.
697 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 321.
698 The Protocols purport to be the minutes of a meeting of Jewish elders somewhere in the West, but are in fact largely plagiarized from Maurice Joly’s *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquieu et Machiavel*, published in 1864. When the forgery was demonstrated to Tsar Nicholas II, he said: “Drop the Protocols. One cannot defend a pure cause by dirty methods.” See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, London: Serif, 1996, pp. 126, 285-289.
Bessarabets contained communications about the murder in Dubossary of a Christian child supposedly carried out by Jews by ritual means..."\(^{699}\)

According to the indictment, 42 people were killed, including 38 Jews. About 500 Jewish shop fronts were destroyed. By April 9, 816 people had been arrested, of which 664 were charged with crimes. Other authors give different figures, but not significantly so.

"The conclusion of the indictment was: the disorders ‘grew to the indicated proportions only thanks to the incompetence of the police, who did not have the required leadership... The preliminary investigation has not unearthed any evidence that would indicate that the above-mentioned disorders were prepared beforehand.’

"And they were not unearthed by any subsequent investigation.

"But in spite of this, the Jewish ‘Bureau of Defence’ (with the participation of the very influential M. Vinaver, G. Sliozberg, L. Bramson, M. Kulisher, A. Braudo, S. Pozner and M. Krol), had no sooner heard about the pogrom in Petersburg than they excluded from the beginning any other causes of it than a tsarist plot: ‘Who gave the order for the organization of the pogrom, who directed the dark forces that carried it out?’ – ‘Immediately we learned under what circumstances the Kishinev slaughter took place, it became clear for us that this diabolic undertaking would never have taken place... if it had not been thought up in the Department of Police and carried out in fulfilment of orders from there’. Although, of course, writes the same M. Krol in the 40s of the 20th century, ‘the scoundrels organized the Kishinev pogrom in strict secrecy, we are profoundly convinced that the Kishinev slaughter was organized from above, with the knowledge, and perhaps even on the initiative of Plehve. Only if we had the most indisputable evidence against them could we tear the mask from these highly-placed murderers and place them in a fitting light before the whole world. Therefore we decided to send the well-known lawyer Zarudny to Kishinev.’ ‘He was the most suitable person to carry out the mission that we had laid on him’, he ‘took it upon himself to discover the hidden springs of the Kishinev slaughter’, after which the police ‘to make a diversion arrested some tens of robbers and thieves’. (Let us recall that on the day after the pogrom 816 were arrested.) – Zarudny collected and took away from Kishinev ‘exceptionally important material’, that is to say: ‘that the main culprit and organizer of the pogrom was the chief of the Kishinev garrison Levendal’\(^{700}\).

This “exceptionally important material” was never published anywhere. Goremykin looked into the accusations against Levendal and found them baseless. But Krushevan, whose inflammatory articles had indeed helped the pogrom on arriving in Petersburg two months later, was attacked and wounded with a knife by Pinkhas Dashevsky... The government sacked the governor of Bessarabia, while Plehve issued a circular to all governors, city

\(^{699}\) Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 322.
\(^{700}\) Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-328.
bosses and heads of police expressing disturbance at the inactivity of the Kishinev authorities and calling for decisive action to cut of violence.

Nor was the Orthodox Church silent. The Holy Synod issued a circular ordering the clergy to take measures to root out hatred of the Jews. Fr. John of Kronstadt said: “Instead of a Christian feast they have arranged a disgustingly murderous feast to Satan.” And Bishop Anthony (KhраОovitsky) said: “The terrible punishment of God will attain those evil-doers who shed blood asking for that of the God-man, His Most Pure Mother, the Apostles and Prophets; ‘that they should know that the Jewish race, which has been rejected up to now, is dear to the Spirit of God, and that every one who would want to offend it will anger the Lord.”

The Jews and radicals inside Russia, and the European and American press outside Russia, were loud in their accusations that the Russian government was responsible for the Kishinev pogrom. The newspaper magnate William Hurst even used the fateful word “holocaust”... On May 18 The Times of London published a letter of a “completely secret letter” of Plehve to the Kishinev governor von Raaben in which Plehve supposedly asked the governor not to put down any disturbances against the Jews but only to inform him about them. The letter turned out to be a forgery, as even pro-Semitic sources accept. However, this did not prevent the 1996 edition of The Jewish Encyclopaedia from reiterating the accusation as if it were fact...

Regicide in the Balkans

Russia’s victory over the Ottoman empire in 1877-78 fundamentally changed the political situation in the Balkans. The Turks were now in slow, uneven, but inexorable retreat from Europe, while all the Orthodox nations had independent nation-states (Bulgaria was, strictly speaking, only autonomous, but declared full independence in 1908). However, freedom did not immediately bring prosperity, and certainly not peace...

One problem was that the peasantry, the majority of the population in all the Balkan countries, was no less oppressed by heavy taxes and indebtedness under the national regimes than it had been under the Turks. This led to peasant rebellions in several countries: in Serbia in 1883, in Bulgaria in 1899 and, most seriously, in Romania in 1907, where 120,000 troops were called out and 10,000 peasants were killed. There was simply not enough land to support a rising population, and many thousands of able-bodied men – men who were greatly needed at home – were forced to emigrate, especially in Greece and Montenegro.

701 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 329.
702 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 332.
703 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 333.
704 Vital, op. cit., p. 513.
705 Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 335.
A second problem was tension between the newly independent states. Thus in 1885 Serbia invaded Bulgaria (the Bulgars won), and towards the end of the century the Serbs, the Bulgars and the Greeks were fighting proxy wars against each other for control of Macedonia. Only rarely did the Orthodox nations unite against their common foe, the Turks, as in the First Balkan War of 1912: more often it was Orthodox against Orthodox, as in the Second Balkan War of 1913, when Greeks, Serbs and Romanians united against the Bulgars (who were defeated). Inter-Orthodox rivalries were exacerbated by the fact that, as a result of the Treaty of Berlin, Austria-Hungary gained a protectorate in Bosnia and greater influence in the area as a whole. This meant that Serbia was forced to seek good relations with that great power (until the dynastic coup of 1903 brought in a pro-Russian dynasty), while Bulgaria remained under the influence of the other great power, Russia.

Each of the Orthodox nations, inspired by its recent acquisition of independence, strove to extend its boundaries at the expense of its neighbours. Strong national feeling had served them well in preserving their integrity during the centuries of the Ottoman yoke. But it served them less well when that yoke was crumbling, and the virus of nationalism reinvigorated their enemies as well. Thus the winds of nationalism began to blow in Albania and Kosovo, which Serbs regard as their national heritage and which had not hitherto had a strong national movement. Even the Turks, stung by their defeats, began to abandon the ideal of a multi-national and multi-cultural empire and look for a “Turkey for the Turks” ideology.

More fundamentally, the Balkan nations had no coherent political ideology. Orthodoxy was in decline, and the traditional Orthodox “symphony of powers” had not been revived. Instead, weak autocratic rulers (Nicholas of Montenegro was a partial exception) worked uneasily or not at all with embryonic parliaments imbued with western ideas of democracy and socialism. The most shocking example of this internal disorder was the killing of King Alexander and Queen Draga of Serbia in Belgrade in 1903. Indeed, it has been argued that the murder of the Serbian King in 1903 led to the shots at Sarajevo in 1914, the First World War and the Russian revolution.707

707 Thus the English writer Rebecca West in her famous Yugoslav travelogue, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: “On June the eleventh, 1903, Alexander Obrenovitch, King of Serbia, and his wife Draga were murdered in the Palace at Belgrade, and their naked bodies thrown out of their bedroom into the garden. The Queen’s two brothers and two Ministers were also killed. The murder was the work of a number of Army officers, none of whom was then known outside Serbia… The conspirators blew open the door of the Palace with a dynamite cartridge which fused the electric lights, and they stumbled about blaspheming in the darkness, passing into a frenzy of cruelty that was half terror. The King and Queen hid in a secret cupboard in their bedroom for two hours, listening to the searchers grow cold, then, warm, then cold again, then warm, and at last hot, and burning hot. The weakly King was hard to kill: when they threw him from the balcony they thought him doubly dead from bullet wounds and sword slashes, but the fingers of his right hand clasped the railing and had to be cut off before he fell to the ground, where the fingers of his left hand clutched the grass. Though it was June, rain fell on the naked bodies in the early morning as they lay among the flowers…

“…When Alexander and Draga fell from that balcony the whole of the modern world fell with them. It took some time to reach the ground and break its neck, but its fall started then… Peter Karageorgevitch came to the throne under every possible disadvantage. He was close
And yet it was not the military strength of Serbia under her new king that was the real cause of Sarajevo in 1914, but the moral weakness that allowed not only the killing of the old king but the continuance in power of his murderers... God is not mocked, and He does not allow anyone to touch His anointed. And if such a sequence of events was not inevitable (after all, after the murder of Tsar Paul I, Russia still recovered enough to defeat Napoleon in 1812), the murder was a symptom of a wider malaise, not only in Serbian, but in Orthodox Christianity as a whole, that was soon to bring down upon it the wrath of God and the collapse of the “Sardian” period of Orthodox Christian history and the whole period of the Orthodox Christian Empire that lasted from St. Constantine the Great to Tsar Nicholas II...

on sixty and had never seen Serbia since he left it with his exiled father at the age of fourteen; he had been brought up at Geneva under the influence of Swiss liberalism and had later become an officer in the French Army; he had no experience of statecraft, and he was a man of modest and retiring personality and simple manners, who had settled down happily at Geneva, to supervise the education of his three motherless children and pursue mildly bookish interest. It appears to be true that though he had told the conspirators of his readiness to accept the Serbian throne if Alexander Obrenovitch vacated it, he had had no idea that they proposed to do anything more violent than force an abdication; after all, his favourite author was John Stuart Mill. The Karageorgevitch belief in the sacredness of the dynasty brought him back to Belgrade, but it might have been safely wagered that he would need all the support he could get to stay there. He was entirely surrounded by the conspirators whose crime he abhorred, and he could not dismiss them, because in sober fact they numbered amongst them some of the ablest and most public-spirited men in Serbia; and with these fierce critics all about him perfectly capable of doing what they had done before, he had to keep order in a new and expanding country, vexed with innumerable internal and external difficulties.

“But Peter Karageorgevitch was a great king. Slowly and soberly he proved himself one of the finest liberal statesmen in Europe, and later, in the Balkan wars which drove the Turk out of Macedonia and Old Serbia he proved himself a magnificent soldier. Never was there worse luck for Europe. Austria, with far more territory than she could properly administer, wanted more and had formed her Drang nach Osten, her Hasten to the East policy. Now the formidable new military state of Serbia was in her way, and might even join with Russia to attack her. Now, too, all the Slav peoples of the Empire were seething with discontent because the free Serbians were doing so well, and the German-Austrians hated them more than ever. The situation had been further complicated since Rudolf’s day because the Empire had affronted Slav feeling by giving up the pretence that Bosnia and Herzegovina were provinces which she merely occupied and administered, and formally annexing them [in 1908]. This made many Slavs address appeals to Serbia, which, as was natural in a young country, sometimes answered boastfully.

“The situation was further complicated by the character of the man who had succeeded Rudolf as the heir to the Imperial Crown, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Este. This unlovable melancholic had upset all sections of the people by his proposals, drafted and expressed without the slightest trace of statesmanship, to make a tripartite monarchy of the Empire, by forming the Slavs into a separate kingdom. The reactionaries felt this was merely an expression of his bitter hostility towards the Emperor and his conservatism; the Slavs were unimpressed and declared they would rather be free, like Serbia. The reaction of Austria to this new situation was extravagant fear. The Austrian Chief of General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, was speaking for many of his countrymen and most of his class when he ceaselessly urged that a preventive war should be waged against Serbia before she became more capable of self-defence. He and his kind would not have felt this if Alexander Obrenovitch had not been murdered and given place to a better man, who made a strong and orderly Serbia...” (Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, pp. 11-13).
The Sarov Days

“From 1895 to 1901,” writes Lebedev, “four daughters were born to the Tsar and Tsarina: Great Princesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia. But an Heir was needed! Because of the absence of an Heir complications arose in the official definition of the order of succession to the Throne. From the end of the 19th century and in the first years of the 20th, there was a sharp increase in students’ and workers’ disturbances. Under the influence of revolutionaries the workers’ strikes and demonstrations acquired not only an economic, but also a political character. Terrorist parties appeared again, and the murders of state functionaries began. In such a situation, clarity in the matter of the succession of tsarist power was more necessary than ever – an Heir was needed! It seemed that for a pair who had had four daughters this could happen only by a miracle, since medical means did not help. Various people renowned for the gift of healing were invited, beginning with natives ones (certain ‘blessed’ ones) and ending with foreigners such as the Frenchman Philippe. But nobody was able to help. The thought arose that a miracle could take place through the intercession of St. Seraphim of Sarov, whose glorification, on the initiative of the Tsar, was already being prepared.

“The Royal Family had known about the great Wonderworker of the Russian Land for a long time. But a particular impression was made on the Tsar and Tsarina by the book A Chronicle of the Seraphimo-Diveyevo Women’s Monastery, written and given personally to Nicholas II by Archimandrite Seraphim (Chichagov) – a scion of a noble family, one of the most educated and talented representatives of the nobility, who want to exchange a military career for monastic asceticism... In the Chronicle there were so many teachings, words of the holy elder of Sarov, prophecies, information about his miracles that the Royal Family was inspired with great faith in him! The triumphant glorification of Seraphim of Sarov, who had already been widely venerated in the people for a long time, was appointed from July 17-20, 1903. The Tsar came to Sarov with his whole family, his mother, the widowed Empress Maria Fyodorovna, his brothers, the Great Princes, other members of the Imperial House, and his suite. The Royal Family had never undertaken such a pilgrimage before. It was unlike any of the other journeys undertaken by the Tsar and Tsaritsa to holy places. Up to 300,000 worshippers from every corner of Russia assembled in Sarov for those days. Nicholas II tried to be present at all the long, almost unending services. The peak of the festivities was the transfer of the relics of St. Seraphim from the monastery’s hospital church of SS. Zosimas and Sabbatius, where he had been buried, into the Dormition cathedral of the Sarov community on July 18. The coffin with the relics was borne on their shoulders by the Tsar, the Great Princes and the hierarchs, tightly surrounded by a sea of people.”

The festivities were truly an icon of Holy Russia: the Royal Family and the Great Princes mixed with thousands of peasants in the true, unforced union that only the true worship of God and the veneration of His saints can produce. Many miracles of healing took place, and those who were present

---

witnessed to the extraordinary spiritual peace and joy that was granted the worshippers.

“Something unseen and unheard took place. Russian Tsar and his Family were for several days in immediate prayerful union with hundreds of thousands (!) of Russian people, praying together with them, in their very heart. The secret police were as it were dissolved in this mass; in fact, there was essentially no need for its presence! It was truly ‘with one heart and one mouth’ that the Orthodox people glorified God, the God-pleaser Seraphim and God’s Anointed, Tsar Nicholas II!... Such a meeting with Holy Russia, represented by such a multitude of the people and with the breathing of the special grace of God, bound up with the glorification of St. Seraphim of Sarov, turned out to be the first for the Royal Couple and... the last...

“The Sarov days of 1903 became a key event in the whole reign. During the festivities the Tsar received from the widow of P.A. Motovilov a letter of St. Seraphim of Sarov addressed precisely to him, Nicholas II ['to the Tsar in whose reign I shall be glorified'], ‘sealed (but never opened!) with the soft part of a piece of bread. The Tsar read the letter and his face changed, and after reading it... he wept (neither before nor after this did anyone see him in tears). To this day nobody knows what was in the letter. We can guess that it contained some kind of prophecy about his destiny, or the destiny of Russia. In the same period Nicholas II visited the fool-for-Christ Pasha of Sarov... She symbolically (by means of a doll) foretold to the Tsar the birth of a son, and spoke much with him in figurative language. The Tsar left amazed and joyful: ‘I have travelled across the whole of Russia and have not met such a saint. Everyone has received me as Tsar, but she as a simple person,’ he said. Pasha placed the portrait of Nicholas II in her prayer corner and made many prostrations to the earth in front of it, which greatly exhausted her cell-attendants who used to lift and lower Pasha since she could not make prostrations herself because of illness. ‘Matushka, why are you praying to the Tsar?!’ they asked. ‘You know nothing,’ replied the blessed one. ‘He will be higher than all the Tsars.’ When war began in 1914 Pasha, covered in tears, began to kiss the feet of the Tsar on the portrait, saying: ‘Dear one, it is already near the end,’ and sent him the message: ‘Your Majesty, come down from the Throne yourself’...

“The visit to Sarov quickly produced results: On July 30 / August 12, 1904 the Heir to the Throne Alexis Nikolayevich was born! We can imagine the joy of the Crown-Bearing Parents! In the first months of the life of the new-born it was still not known what a terrible disease nestled in him He looked completely healthy, he was simply a beautiful child...

“Now we can understand how the thought of the Tsar about the return of Russia to the pre-Petrine foundations of life were linked into one with the impressions and feeling that arose in the Royal Couple in the Sarov days...”

---

709 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 390.
The Sarov days were like a last warm glow from the fading fire of Holy Rus’. They demonstrated that the ideal of a nation united by the Orthodox faith and in submission to a benevolent Tsar-Father was still a living reality. And indeed, there were many great saints still living in Russia at that time, such as St. John of Kronstadt and the Optina elders, and many hundreds of thousands more who would suffer martyrdom during the Soviet period.

**Peasant Russia**

However, the bitter fact was that on the whole the Russian people was falling away from Christianity. And not only among the westernized educated classes. The peasants, too – that class which the tsars believed was most devoted to Altar and Throne – were losing their zeal. “According to an analysis of the Church’s books of registration of confession, it was quite usual for Russian peasants at the end of the 19th century not to confess their sins and not to partake of Holy Communion for several years. Only around 20 per cent of the peasants per year in Central Russia used to go to confession.”

It was this fact that, more than any other, pointed to the fall of the dynasty and Holy Russia. For the time being, however, it was hidden from the consciousness of the tsar himself. He was not to know that the rapturous expressions of devotion he received from peasant delegations in many parts of the country, and most strikingly in Sarov in 1903, came from an ever-dwindling proportion of the common people. He was not to know that Sarov, 1903 marked the high point of his reign, after which it would be a steady descent into revolution and anarchy...

Dominic Lieven writes: “At the turn of the century... the government was less scared by working-class militancy than by growing evidence of peasant discontent. In June 1901 A.A. Polovtsov wrote: ‘after the students’ disorders there have followed strikes and factor workers’ battles with the police. Next the peasant mass will rise up with a demand for land. Today’s militia [the conscript army], torn away from this very land for a short period, will not use its weapons to curb these appetites, which it itself shares. This will be the end of the Russia which we know.’ Nine months later, when a wave of arson and rioting swept the countryside in Poltava and Kharkov provinces, Polovtsov’s prediction seemed amply justified. In the wake of these agrarian troubles the Secretary to the Committee of Ministers, Anatol Kulomzin, sought to reassure his wife. There had always, he wrote, been agrarian riots of this kind in Russia, during which peasants customarily paid back stewards and foremen for a multitude of old scores and minor injustices. Troops had refused to open fire on only one occasion, and even then out of simple dislike for the officer who gave the order. Alexander Kireev had less reason to hide his fears since

---

his comments were confined to his private diary. ‘I think we can cope with the students and co. without difficulty but millions of peasants... that’s a completely different matter.’

“Witte’s response was to claim, correctly, that ‘the picture of the peasants’ miserable condition is greatly exaggerated’, particularly by opponents of the government’s economic policy who sought to hide their selfish interests or ideological preferences behind claims that the Ministry of Finance was ruining the peasantry. Throughout the 1890s Witte opposed direct subsidies or cheap credit to agriculture as a waste of scarce resources. In his view investment in industry was more useful even for the rural population because jobs in the cities would reduce land hunger in the villages and, above all, provide agriculture with markets for its produce and therefore with the incentive to modernize. Witte doubted whether big capital investments in noble estates could ever be justified given the low costs of production in the Americas and Australasia, whose agricultural produce was now flooding the world market. Though more sympathetic as regards cheap credit for peasant farms, he argued that the structure of peasant landowning made large-scale lending to the peasantry very dangerous. By law most peasant farms belonged not to individuals or even families but to the whole village community. Nor could this land be sold or mortgaged. As a result there was no way to secure loans or recover debts from the peasantry, as the latter knew only too well.

“By the early twentieth century, however, it was no longer possible for Witte to shrug off attacks on his indifference to peasant needs. Political pressure to ‘do something about agriculture’ was building up, as was fear of peasant discontent. After a tour of the provinces at the turn of the century even the rather dim Dmitri Sipyagin, the Minister of Internal Affairs, commented that ‘we are standing on a volcano’. In addition, the state’s finances were in increasing disarray, and the need to increase its revenues pressing.

“Nicholas II was kept well informed about the problem of both the peasantry and the treasury. In addition to receiving regular reports on these subjects from his ministers, he also on occasion was sent special memoranda by other high officials. In the spring of 1903, for instance, the Emperor received an analysis of his country’s budgetary crisis from Peter Saburov, a senior official whose career had included service both as an ambassador and as a financial expert, a very unusual combination in Victorian Europe. Saburov warned Nicholas that the huge and always increasing costs of the arms race ‘together with the sad economic position of the mass of the tax-paying population naturally arouse fears for the stability of the state’s finances... To restore the state’s fiscal power is only possible by means of raising the economic position of the peasantry... But it is already becoming clear that to fulfil this necessary but complicated task heavy sacrifices from the treasury will be needed.’
“Both Serge Witte and Vladimir Kokovtsov, who succeeded the critically ill Edvard Pleske as Minister of Finance in 1904, shared Saburov’s concern about the parlous state of Russia’s finances. Kokovtsov indeed commented that ‘I look with alarm on our economic and financial position’ and condemned what he described as the ‘fantasies’ that underlay much government expenditure. ‘These fantasies I see all around,’ he added: ‘in the exorbitant and unreasonable strengthening of the fleet, in our active foreign policy waged at the expense of the peasant’s hungry stomach… [in] the automatic attempt to get money for everything instead of stopping this saturnalia of expenditure and beginning to reduce the tax burden to a measure where it corresponds with the growth in income.’ But whereas Witte and Kokovtsov, like Saburov, believed that excessive armaments were the key to Russia’s financial problems, neither shared his view that international agreement to the reduction of armaments was possible, or indeed his conviction that the first step in this direction should be made through a deal between Nicholas II and the German Kaiser. Nor could the Tsar have any illusions on this score since the failure of his appeal for a reduction of armaments in 1898 had taught him the impossibility of halting the arms race. But, as Serge Witte pointed out to Nicholas in January 1902, if the escalation of defence costs could not be halted, it was hard to see how the peasants’ tax burden could be greatly reduced or large sums provided for the modernization of village life and peasant agriculture. The conclusion drawn by Witte was that improvement of the peasants’ lot would have to come less from the largesse of the treasury than from changes in the system of peasant landholding. The farmer, he told Nicholas, must have individual rights and freedom, including unrestricted property rights to his land. In other words, Witte was calling for the abolition of the peasant commune, the cornerstone of Russia’s rural economy and society.

“Ever since the abolition of serfdom in 1861, indeed to some extent even before that, the commune had been the most important institution in Russian rural life. The peasant community, which was usually but not always made up of inhabitants of a single village, administered and judged by its own members through officials elected by itself. It also bore collective responsibility for paying the state’s taxes. Although in principle the administrative, judicial and fiscal institutions of the village were distinct from the community’s collective ownership of the land, in practice the power of the commune was enormously enhanced by the fact that it controlled, and in many cases periodically redistributed, the villagers’ basic source of wealth.

“Defenders of the commune believed it was a form of social welfare, which would ensure that no peasant would go without the means of survival. They felt that at least until the capitalist economy had developed to the point where millions of secure jobs existed in the cities, the only way to avoid pauperization was to ensure that any peasant, even if he was temporarily resident in a town, would have a plot of land on which to fall back. Because the masses would not be destitute and would have rights to the use of property, it was believed that they would be more immune to radical and socialist propaganda than urban workers and landless agricultural labourers.
in the West. Not even the most ardent defenders of the commune would probably have argued that, from the narrow perspective of agricultural modernization, it was the best form of landownership; they did deny, and probably rightly, that it was as serious an obstacle to technical improvement as its enemies suggested. The fact that the commune was seen to be an old Russian institution which would preserve the country from the perils that had attended modernization in the West also added to its appeal. Anatol Kulomzin, for instance, was very much on the liberal and Westernizing wing of the ruling elite. He wrote, however, that even he swallowed whole the Russian nationalist view of the commune, so flattering to patriotic pride, and ‘only troubles of 1905-6 which pointed to the socialist spirit which the commune had bred in the life of the peasantry finally sobered me.’”

Here was the central paradox of the peasant question: that its basic institution, the commune, both protected from socialism of the western, Marxist type, and fostered socialism of the eastern, “Asiatic” type. The latter we may also call “peasant socialism”, since it is found to a greater or lesser extent in many peasant societies. For some degree of communal ownership of land is a characteristic of almost all pre-industrial societies, and the transition from a mainly agricultural to a mainly industrial economy is almost always accompanied by the taking over of communal lands into private ownership.

Now the commune and “peasant socialism” was doomed in Russia from the moment that Alexander II decided, after the defeat in the Crimean War, to enter upon the path of industrialization. For industrialization required industrial workers living near industrial centres, which meant that peasants had to be free to sell up and move – in other words, they had to be free citizens in relation to their noble owners and free landholders in relation to their communes. The problem was that, while emancipation had made them citizens and freed them from the bonds of the landowner, it had not made them truly independent of the commune and therefore truly independent landholders. In fact, since emancipation had made many nobles poorer, persuading them, too, - seven out of ten of them - to move to the cities, the communes had become even stronger, moving into the cultural void left by the nobility and controlling more land that used to belong to the nobility. (This was in contrast to, for example, Britain, where the landowning nobility remained powerful in the countryside long into the industrial age.) And so, though doomed in the longer term, peasant socialism for a time became more powerful and more aggressive.

Pipes writes: “The muzhik had no notion of property rights in the Roman sense of absolute dominion over things. According to one authority, Russian peasants did not even have a word for landed property (zemel'naja sobstvennost’): they only spoke of possession (vladenie), which in their mind was indissolubly bound up with physical labor. Indeed, the muzhik was not even able clearly to distinguish the land to which he held legal title by virtue of purchase from his communal allotment and from the land which he leased,

712 Pipes, op. cit., p. 112.
all of which he called ‘our land’: ‘The expression “our land” in the mouth of the peasant includes indiscriminately the whole land he occupies for the time being, the land which is his private property… the land held in common by the village (which is therefore only in temporary possession of each household), and also the land rented by the village from neighbouring landlords.’ The muzhik’s whole attitude toward landed property derived from a collective memory of centuries of nomadic agriculture, when land was as abundant as water in the sea and available to all. The ‘slash-and-burn’ method of cultivating virgin forest had gone out of use in most of Russia in the late Middle Ages, but the recollection of the time when peasants roamed the forest, felling trees and cultivating the ash-covered clearings, remained very much alive. Labor and labor alone transformed res nullius into possession: because virgin soil was not touched by labor, it could not be owned. To the peasant’s mind, appropriation of lumber was a crime, because it was the product of labor, whereas felling trees was not. Similarly, peasants believed that ‘he who cuts down a tree with a beehive in it is a thief, because he appropriates human labor; he who cuts down a forest which no one has planted benefits from God’s gift, which is as free as water and air.’ Such a viewpoint, of course, had nothing in common with the rights of property as upheld in Russia’s courts. No wonder that a high proportion of the criminal offenses for which peasants were convicted had to do with illegal cutting of trees. This attitude was not motivated by class antagonism: it applied as much to land and forest owned by fellow peasants. The belief that the expenditure of manual labor alone justified wealth was a fundamental article of faith of the Russian peasantry, and for this reason it despised landlords, bureaucrats, industrial workers, priests, and intellectuals as ‘idlers’. Radical intellectuals exploited this attitude to denigrate businessmen and officials.”

Pipes probably exaggerates the contempt of the ordinary peasant for non-peasants here, and in particular for priests. The priest was often as poor as himself, and had to work his own allotment in order to survive. The period after the revolution showed that the solidarity between priest and peasant was still a powerful bond in many villages. In general, however, there can be no question but that a different attitude to landownership put many peasants at odds not only with the property-owning classes, officials and businessmen, but also with the Tsar and the Church, which upheld the traditional – that is to say, the Roman – concept of ownership.

Pipes continues: “Such thinking underlay the universal belief of the Russian peasantry after Emancipation in the inevitable advent of a nationwide repartition of private land. In 1861, the liberated serfs could not understand why approximately one-half of the land which they had previously tilled was given to the landlords. At first, they refused to believe in the genuineness of such an absurd law. Later, after they had reconciled themselves to it, they decided that it was a temporary arrangement, soon to be annulled by a new law that would turn over to them, for communal distribution, all privately held land, including that of other peasants. Legends circulating in the villages had as one of their recurrent themes the prediction

713 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 116-117.
of the imminent appearance of a ‘Savior’ who would make all of Russia into a land of communes. ‘The peasants believe,’ according to A.N. Engelgardt, who spent many years living in their midst and wrote what is possibly the best book on their habits and mentality, ‘that after the passage of some time, in the course of census-taking, there will take place a general levelling of all the land throughout Russia, just as presently, in every commune, at certain intervals, there takes place a repartitioning of the land among its members, each being allotted as much as he can manage. This completely idiosyncratic conception derives directly from the totality of peasant agrarian relations. In the communes, after a lapse of time, there takes place a redistribution of land, an equalization among its members. Under the [anticipated] general repartition, all the land will be repartitioned, and the communes will be equalized. The issue here is not simply the seizure of landlord land, as the journalists would have it, but the equalization of all the land, including that which belongs to peasants. Peasants who have purchased land as property, or, as they put it, ‘for eternity’, talk exactly as do all the other peasants, and have no doubt whatever that the ‘lands to which they hold legal title’ can be taken away from their rightful owners and given to others.’ The soundness of this insight would be demonstrated in 1917-18.

“Peasants expected the national repartition of land to occur any day and to bring them vast increments: five, ten, twenty, and even forty hectares per household. It was a faith that kept the central Russian village in a state of permanent tension: ‘In 1879 [following the war with Turkey] all expected that a ‘new decree’ would be issued concerning land. At the time, every small occurrence gave rise to rumors of a ‘new decree’. Should a local village official... deliver the landlord a paper requiring some sort of statistical information about land, cattle, structures, etc., the village would at once call a meeting, and there it would be said that a paper had come to the landlord about the land, that soon a ‘new decree’ would be issued, that in the spring surveyors would come to divide the land. Should the police prohibit the landlord of a mortgaged estate to cut lumber for sale, it was said that the prohibition was due to the fact that the Treasury would soon take over the forest, and then it would be available to all: pay one ruble and cut all you want. Should anyone take out a loan on his estate, it was said that the landlords had gotten wind that the land would be equalized, and so they hurried to turn their properties over to the Treasury for cash.’

“Such thinking meant that the Russian village was forever poised to attack private (non-communal) properties: it was kept in check only be fear. This produced a most unhealthy situation. The revolutionary potential was an ever-present reality, in spite of the peasant’s anti-revolutionary, pro-monarchist sentiments. But then his radicalism was not inspired by political or even class animus. (When asked what should happen to landlords who had been evicted from their lands in consequence of the ‘Black Repartition’, some peasants would suggest they be place on a government salary.) Tolstoy put his finger on the crux of the problem when shortly after Emancipation he wrote: ‘The Russian revolution will not be against the Tsar and despotism but
against landed property. It will say: from me, the human being, take what you want, but leave us all the land.’

“In the late nineteenth century, the peasant assumed that the nationwide repartition would be ordered by the Tsar: in peasant legends of the time, the ‘Savior’, the ‘Great Leveller’, was invariably the ‘true tsar’. The belief fortified the peasantry’s instinctive monarchism. Accustomed to the authority of the bol’shak in the household, by analogy it viewed the Tsar as the bol’shak or master (khoziain) of the country. The peasant ‘saw in the Tsar the actual owner and father of Russia, who directly managed his immense household’ – a primitive version of the patrimonial principle underlying Russian political culture. The reason why the peasant felt so confident that the Tsar would sooner or later order a general partition of the land was that, as he saw it, it lay in the monarch’s interest to have all the lands justly distributed and properly cultivated.

“Such attitudes provide the background to the peasant’s political philosophy, which, for all its apparent contradictions, had a certain logic. To the peasant, government was a power that compelled obedience: its main attribute was the ability to coerce people to do things which, left to themselves, they would never do, such as pay taxes, serve in the army, and respect private property in land. By this definition, a weak government was no government. The epithet Groznyi applied to the mentally unbalanced and sadistic Ivan IV, usually rendered in English as ‘Terrible’, actually meant ‘Awesome’ and carried no pejorative meaning. Personas who possessed vlast’ (authority) and did not exercise it in an ‘awe-inspiring’ manner could be ignored. Observance of laws for the peasant invariably represented submission to a force majeure, to the will of someone stronger, not the recognition of some commonly shared principle or interest. ‘Today, as in the days of serfdom,’ wrote the Slavophile Iurii Samarin, ‘the peasant knows no other sure pledge of the genuineness of imperial commands than the display of armed force: a round of musketry still is to him the only authentic confirmation of the imperial commands.’ In this conception, moral judgement of governments or their actions was as irrelevant as approval or condemnation of the vagaries of nature. There were no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ governments: there were only strong and weak ones, and strong ones were always preferable to weak ones. (Similarly, serfs used to prefer cruel but efficient masters to kindly but ineffective ones.) Weak rulers made it possible to return to primitive freedom or volia, understood as license to do whatever one wanted, unrestrained by man-made law. Russian governments took account of these attitudes and went to great lengths to impress on the country the image of boundless power. Experienced bureaucrats opposed freedom of the press and parliamentary government in good part because they feared that the existence of an overt, legitimized opposition would be interpreted by the peasantry as a sign of weakness and a signal to rebel.”

Again, we may suspect Pipes of some exaggeration here. The large-scale peasant rebellions against Soviet power in Tambov province and Siberia in

1920-21, and still more the rebellion against collectivization in the Black Earth region in the late 1920s and early 1930s, show that large numbers of peasants did know the difference between a “good” and “bad” power, and by no means always identified might with right. Moreover, the rebellion in the Black Earth region was closely linked with the True Orthodox Church and a specifically Orthodox Christian doctrine of political legitimacy: that for Orthodox Russians only the Orthodox tsar could be a legitimate, God-established authority, and that the “authority” that overthrew him could only be an “anti-authority”, established not by God but by the devil (Revelation 13.2).

Nevertheless, such a teaching came to the fore in the peasantry only as a result of the fiery trial of the revolution, when the terrible sufferings caused by the new “authority” had forced the peasants to rethink their assumptions about power and the eighth, ninth and tenth commandments (on stealing, killing and envy), and return to the traditional teaching of the Church. The very success of the revolution, and the rapidity with which all forms of deference to authority collapsed in 1917, witnesses to the truth of Pipes’ thesis for the majority of the peasants. And therefore the traditional hypothesis of right-wing historians and publicists that the revolution was caused mainly by the ideas of westernizing intellectuals needs to be modified at any rate to this extent: that if westernizers and westernizing ideas started and led the revolution, its success was guaranteed by the support it received from peasants who were scarcely touched by western ideas, but who had fallen away from the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church in other ways...

And yet “the fish rots from the head”: once the head has rotted, there are few obstacles to the rest of the body undergoing the same corrupting process. Ultimately, the gradual alienation of the peasantry from its Orthodox roots must be attributed to the failure of its teachers, the nobility, the intellectuals and even the clergy, to provide right teaching in word and deed. The close unity of upper and lower classes that we observe in medieval Russia was ruptured by the eighteenth-century tsars and nobility, and while the nineteenth-century tsars were much more pious, they were unable to do more than slow down, but not reverse, the destructive process their predecessors had initiated.

Pipes continues: “At the turn of the century, observers noted subtle changes in the attitudes of the peasantry, particularly the younger generation. They were religiously less observant, less respectful of tradition and authority, restless, and somehow disaffected not only over land but over life in general.

“The authorities were especially perturbed by the behaviour of those who moved into the cities and industrial centers. Such peasants were no longer intimidated by uniformed representatives of authority and were said to act ‘insolently’. When they returned to the village, permanently or to help out with the field work, they spread the virus of discontent. The Ministry of the Interior, observing this development, objected, on security grounds, to further
industrialization and excessive rural mobility, but, for reasons previously stated, it had little success.

“One of the causes of changes in the mood of the peasantry seems to have been the spread of literacy, actively promoted by the authorities. The 1897 census revealed a very low level of literacy for the Russian Empire as a whole: only one in five (21 percent) of the inhabitants could read and write. But disaggregated the statistics looked considerably better. As a result of the combined efforts of rural schools and private associations, literacy showed a dramatic spurt among the young, especially males: in 1897, 45 percent of the Empire’s male inhabitants aged ten to twenty-nine were recorded as literate. At this rate, the population of the Empire could have been expected to attain universal literacy by 1925.

“Literate peasants and workers read most of all religious books (the gospels and lives of saints) followed by cheap escapist literature, the Russian equivalent of ‘penny dreadfuls’ – a situation not unlike that observed in England half a century earlier…

“Growing literacy, unaccompanied by proportionately expanding opportunities to apply the knowledge acquired from reading, probably contributed to the restlessness of the lower classes. It has been noted in other regions of the world that schooling and the spread of literacy often produce unsettling effects. African natives educated in missionary schools, as compared with untutored ones, have been observed to develop a different mentality, expressed in an unwillingness to perform monotonous work and in lower levels of honesty and truthfulness. Similar trends were noted among young Russian peasants exposed to urban culture, who also seemed less ready to acquiesce to the routine of rural work and lived in a state of powerful, if unfocused expectations aroused by reading about unfamiliar worlds.”

Orlando Figes points out that “the growth of the cities far outstripped the pace of church-building in them, with the result that millions of new workers, having been uprooted from the village with its church, were consigned to live in a state of Godlessness. The industrial suburb of Orekhovo-Zuevo, just outside Moscow, for example, had only one church for 40,000 residents at the turn of the century. Iuzovka, the mining capital of the Donbass, today called Donetsk, had only two for 20,000.”

Of course, industrial workers were still half-peasants, and often used to return to their villages at harvest time. But there, instead of recovering their Church consciousness in the more godly atmosphere of the village, they tended to infect the villagers with their own corrupt urban ways.

Moreover, continues Figes, “the traditional extended peasant family began to break up as the younger and more literate peasants struggled to throw off

---

715 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 119-120.
the patriarchal tyranny [sic] of the village and set up households of their own. They looked towards the city and its cultural values as a route to independence and self-worth. Virtually any urban job seemed desirable compared with the hardships and dull routines of peasant life. A survey of rural schoolchildren in the early 1900s found that half of them wanted to pursue an ‘educated profession’ in the city, whereas less than 2 per cent held any desire to follow in the footsteps of their peasant parents. ‘I want to be a shop assistant,’ said one schoolboy, ‘because I do not like to walk in the mud. I want to be like those people who are cleanly dressed and work as shop assistants.’ Educators were alarmed that, once they had learned to read, many peasant boys, in particular, turned their backs on agricultural work and set themselves above the other peasants by swaggering around in raffish city clothes. Such boys, wrote a villager, ‘would run away to Moscow and take any job’. They looked back on the village as a ‘dark’ and ‘backward’ world of superstition and crippling poverty – a world Trotsky would describe as the Russia of ‘icons and cockroaches’ – and they idealized the city as a force of social progress and enlightenment. Here was the basis of the cultural revolution on which Bolshevism would be built. For the Party rank and file was recruited in the main from peasant boys like these; and its ideology was a science of contempt for the peasant world. The revolution would sweep it all away…”

Unrest in the Army

We have mentioned the Church and the peasantry as the mainstays of the Tsarist regime. In the long run, this is true; and as long as the Church and the peasants remained loyal to the Tsar, he remained in power. But there was a third force that the Tsar particularly valued and that was to prove particularly important in the revolutionary years: the army.

Figes writes: “The patrimonial principle survived longer in the army than in any other institution of the Russian state. Nothing was closer to the Romanov court or more important to it than the military. The power of the Empire was founded on it, and the needs of the army and the navy always took precedence in the formulation of tsarist policies. All the most important reforms in Russian history had been motivated by the need to catch up and compete in war with the Empire’s rivals in the west and south: Peter the Great’s reforms had been brought about by the wars with Sweden and the Ottomans; those of Alexander II by military defeat in the Crimea…

“Many historians have depicted the army as a stalwart buttress of the tsarist regime. That was also the view of most observers until the revolution. Major Von Tettau from the German General Staff wrote in 1903, for example, that the Russian soldier ‘is full of selflessness and loyalty to his duty’ in a way ‘that is scarcely to be found in any other army of the world’. He did ‘everything with a will’ and was always ‘unassuming, satisfied and jolly – even after labour and deprivation’. But in fact there was growing tensions between the military – in every rank – and the Romanov regime.

“For the country’s military leaders the root of the problem lay in the army’s dismal record in the nineteenth century, which many of them came to blame on the policies of the government. Defeat in the Crimean War (1853-6), followed by a costly campaign against Turkey (1877-8), and then the humiliation of defeat by the Japanese – the first time a major European power had lost to an Asian country – in 1904-5, left the army and the navy demoralized. The causes of Russia’s military weakness were partly economic: her industrial resources failed to match up to her military commitments in an age of increasing competition between empires. But this incompetence also had a political source: during the later nineteenth century the army had gradually lost its place at the top of government spending priorities. The Crimean defeat had discredited the armed services and highlighted the need to divert resources from the military to the modernization of the economy. The Ministry of War lost the favoured position it had held in the government system of Nicholas I (1825-55) and became overshadowed by the Ministries of Finance and the Interior, which from this point on received between them the lion’s share of state expenditure. Between 1881 and 1902 the military’s share of the budget dropped from 30 per cent to 18 per cent. Ten years before the First World War the Russian army was spending only 57 per cent of the amount spent on each soldier in the German army, and only 63 per cent of that spent in the Austrian. In short, the Russian soldier went to war worse trained, worse equipped and more poorly serviced than his enemy. The army was so short of cash that it relied largely on its own internal economy to clothe and feed itself. Soldiers grew their own food and tobacco, and repaired their own uniforms and boots. They even earned money for the regiment by going off to work as seasonal labourers on landed estates, in factories and mines near their garrisons. Many soldiers spent more time growing vegetables or repairing boots than they did learning how to handle their guns. By reducing the military budget, the tsarist regime created an army of farmers and cobbler.

“The demoralization of the army was also connected to its increasing role in the suppression of civilian protests. The Russian Empire was covered with a network of garrisons. Their job was to provide more or less instant military assistance for the provincial governors or the police to deal with unrest. Between 1883 and 1903 the troops were called out nearly 1,500 times. Officers complained bitterly that this police duty was beneath the dignity of a professional soldier, and that it distracted the army from its proper military purpose. They also warned of the damaging effect it was likely to have on the army’s discipline. History proved them right. The vast majority of the private soldiers were peasants, and their morale was heavily influenced by the news they received from their villages. When the army was called out to put down the peasant uprisings of 1905-6 many of the units, especially in the peasant-dominated infantry, refused to obey and mutinied in support of the revolution. There were over 400 mutinies between the autumn of 1905 and the summer of 1906. The army was brought to the brink of collapse, and it took years to restore a semblance of order.
“Many of these mutinies were part of a general protest against the feudal conditions prevailing in the army. Tolstoy, who had served as an army officer in the Crimean War, described them in his last novel Hadji-Murad. The peasant soldiers, in particular, objected to the way their officers addressed them with the familiar ‘your’ (tyi) – normally used for animals and children – rather than the polite ‘you’ (vyi). It was how the masters had once addressed their serfs; and since most of the officers were nobles, and most of the soldiers were sons of former serfs, this mode of address symbolized the continuation of the old feudal world inside the army. The first thing a recruit did on joining the army was to learn the different titles of his officers: ‘Your Honour’ up to the rank of colonel; ‘Your Excellency’ for generals; and ‘Your Radiance’ or ‘Most High Radiance’ for titled officers. Colonels and generals were to be greeted not just with the simple hand salute but by halting and standing sideways to attention while the officer passed by for a strictly prescribed number of paces. The soldier was trained to answer his superiors in regulation phrases of deference: ‘Not at all, Your Honour’; ‘Happy to serve you, Your Excellency’. Any deviations were likely to be punished. Soldiers would expect to be punched in the face, hit in the mouth with the butt of a rifle and sometimes even flogged for relatively minor misdemeanours. Officers were allowed to use a wide range of abusive terms – such as ‘scum’ and ‘scoundrel’ – to humiliate their soldiers and keep them in their place. Even whilst off-duty the common soldier was deprived of the rights of a normal citizen. He could not smoke in public places, go to restaurants or theatres, ride in trams, or occupy a seat in a first- or second-class railway carriage. Civic parks displayed the sign: DOGS AND SOLDIERS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER. The determination of the soldiery to throw off this ‘army serfdom’ and gain the dignity of citizenship was to become a major story of the revolution.

“It was not just the peasant infantry who joined the mutinies after 1905. Even some of the Cossack cavalry – who since the start of the nineteenth century had been a model of loyalty to the Tsar – joined the rebellions. The Cossacks had specific grievances. Since the sixteenth century they had developed as an elite military caste, which in the nineteenth century came under the control of the Ministry of War. In exchange for their military service, the Cossacks were granted generous tracts of fertile land – mainly on the southern borders they were to defend (the Don and Kuban) and the eastern steppes – as well as considerable political freedom for their self-governing communities (voiskos, from the word for ‘war’). However, during the last decades of the nineteenth century the costs of equipping themselves for the cavalry, of buying saddles, harnesses and military-grade horses, as they were obliged to in the charters of their estate, became increasingly burdensome. Many Cossack farmers, already struggling in the depression, had to sell part of their livestock to meet their obligations and equip their sons to join. The voiskos demanded more and more concessions – both economic and political – as the price of their military service. They began to raise the flag of ‘Cossack nationalism’…”
“The government’s treatment of the army provoked growing resentment among Russia’s military elite. The fiercest opposition came from the new generation of so-called military professions emerging within the officer corps and the Ministry of War itself during the last decades of the old regime. Many of them were graduates from the Junker military schools, which had been opened up and revitalized in the wake of the Crimean defeat to provide a means for the sons of non-nobles to rise to the senior ranks. Career officials dedicated to the modernization of the armed services, they were bitterly critical of the archaic military doctrines of the elite academies and the General Staff. To them the main priorities of the court seemed to be the appointment of aristocrats loyal to the Tsar to the top command posts and the pouring of resources into what had become in the modern age a largely ornamental cavalry. They argued, by contrast, that more attention needed to be paid to the new technologies – heavy artillery, machine-guns, motor transportation, trench design and aviation – which were bound to be decisive in coming wars. The strains of modernization on the politics of the autocracy were just as apparent in the military as they were in all the other institutions of the old regime…”

The Tsar loved the army, but in the end the army proved to be one of the Empire’s critical weak points. In 1905 it wavered in its loyalty. And in 1917 it was the desertion of the generals that brought the regime down...

**The Russo-Japanese War**

“In November 1902,” writes Pipes, “high-ranking Russian officials held a secret conference in Yalta to discuss China’s complaints about Russia’s treaty violations and the problems caused by the reluctance of foreigners to invest in Russia’s Far Eastern ventures. It was agreed that Russia could attain her economic objectives in Manchuria only by intense colonization; but for Russians to settle there, the regime needed to tighten its hold on the area. It was the unanimous opinion of the participants, Witte included, that Russia had to annex Manchuria, or, at the very least, bring it under closer control. In the months that followed, the Minister of War, A.N. Kuropatkin, urged aggressive action to protect the Trans-Siberian Railroad: in his view, unless Russia was prepared to annex Manchuria she should withdraw from there. In February 1903, Nicholas agreed to annexation.”

Russia was also interested in Korea. “The ruler of Korea,” writes J.M. Roberts, “had only taken his title of emperor in 1897; only in 1901 did his government first decide to send representatives to foreign countries (even the Chinese had already done this). Several nations had interests in Korea: the Americans and British had long encouraged the ‘opening’ of the country to trade and reform (as they saw it), the Russians and the Japanese competed there for political supremacy and possible territorial aggrandizement, and (in theory as the suzerain power but actually increasingly powerless in Korean affairs) the Chinese went on claiming that Korea was a dependency of the

---

Middle Kingdom. This was one reason for the Japanese (who had successfully occupied Seoul in the 1890s during a war against China) to promote ‘westernizing’ influences in the court and among officials.720

“Russia’s main interest in Korea lay in the proximity of that country’s northern border to Vladivostok, which made domination of the whole country by another great power worrying. In addition, the Russian navy lusted after a Korean port and feared that if the Japanese controlled both sides of the Straits of Tsushima they could easily cut communications between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The Koreans themselves looked to Russia for protection from Japan, which was clearly the greatest threat to their independence, and offered Russia many inducements to occupy itself in their affairs. But the greatest single complicating factor in Russia’s relations with Korea was the large timber concession which a number of aristocrats close to Nicholas had secured on the river Yalu, with the aim of building up a Russian bridgehead in northern Korea.

“The leaders in the Yalu enterprise were A.M. Bezobrazov and V.M. Vonlyarlyarsky. Both came from prominent families of the Russian aristocracy and were former officers of the Chevaliers Gardes, the most exclusive regiment in the Russian army. Bezobrazov gained access to Nicholas II through the former Minister of the Imperial Court, Count I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkow. Neither Bezobrazov nor Vonlyarlyarsky were interested in the Yalu enterprise for the sake of personal gain. They saw their company as a means by which non-official patriots could out-maneuvre bureaucratic caution and push forward Russia’s cause in the East. There was to be a latter-day version of Britain’s East India Company but without its initially commercial priorities. The whole scheme bore the stamp of aristocratic arrogance and amateurism. Its leaders were convinced of their own innate superiority to mere bureaucrats. Without knowing the East, they nevertheless urged on Nicholas the belief that the Orientals would back down in the face of a confident show of Russian power. There was more than a touch of opera to the Bezobrazov affair. Rather typical was the fact that at one point secret correspondence between Bezobrazov and Nicholas II was sent through their respective batmen so that the ministers should be kept in the dark about it. But there was nothing funny in the effect of Bezobrazov’s influence, which was both to increase Nicholas’s distrust of his official advisers and to encourage him to take a tougher and more intransigent line with the Japanese and Chinese governments. In October 1901, for instance, the Emperor told Prince Henry of Prussia that ‘I do not want to seize Korea – but under no circumstances can I allow the Japanese to become firmly established there. That would be a casus belli.’ Here was the voice of Bezobrazov not of Nicholas’s ministerial advisers, whose position on Korea was much less bellicose.

“Bezobrazov, Vonlyarlyarsky and their supporters in particular urged on Nicholas two ideas to which he was very inclined to listen. They told him that Russia was a proud and mighty country which should speak in a strong voice

and take no cheek from foreigners, least of all Orientals. This Guards officers’ patriotism was music to his ears. His aristocratic advisers, loathing the bureaucracy and above all Witte, also told Nicholas that he was the captive of his ministers, who colluded in keeping information from him, imposing their own views and sabotaging his instructions when they conflicted with their own interests. By 1900 Nicholas felt this to be true, not merely as regards Far Eastern policy but across the whole range of government business. Frustrated by his seeming powerlessness and aware of mounting criticism of his rule, he turned more and more to unofficial advisers in an effort to secure alternative sources of information and greater freedom from ministerial control. Among these advisers Bezobrazov was typical in his aristocratic control. Among these advisers Bezobrazov was typical in his aristocratic origins and in his appeal to Nicholas’s patriotic and anti-bureaucratic instincts. In July 1901 Alexander Polovtsov commented that ‘in no field of policy is there a principled, well considered and firmly directed course of action. Everything is done in bursts, haphazardly, under the influence of the moment, according to the demands of this or that person and the intercessions emerging from various corners. The young Tsar feels more and more contempt for the organs of his own power and begins to believe in the beneficial strength of his own autocracy, which he manifests sporadically, without preliminary discussion and without any link to the overall course of policy.’

“As in his domestic policy Nicholas sought to balance between his groups of advisers, drawing information from both and thereby seeking a basis on which he could determine policy for himself. This had a disastrous impact on Russia’s Far Eastern policy in 1902-3 and on the way it was perceived by foreigners, above all the Japanese. It was not merely that Bezobrazov’s advice was dangerous and mistaken. Outsiders did not know what Petersburg’s policy was. Faced by criticism that divisions between ministers and unofficial advisers were causing government policy in East Asia to be incoherent and uncoordinated, in August 1903 Nicholas appointed Admiral Alekseev Viceroy of the Far East and subordinated to him all responsibility not only for civil and military affairs but also for diplomatic relations with Tokyo and Peking. This was to make a bad situation worse. Alekseev was a sailor, not a diplomat or a statesman. By definition neither he nor other officials in the East could have a balanced overall grasp of the Empire’s many interests for they were committed to pursuing a forward policy in their own bailiwick.

“The Japanese now had to deal with Alekseev in Port Arthur but they knew, of course, that the Viceroy’s decisions would have to be ratified by the Tsar, and therefore by those high officials to whom he chose to listen, in Petersburg. Confusion was compounded by the fact that during the critical period between August and November 1903 Nicholas II was seldom in his capital, spending most of his time on official and private visits to Western Europe. Though Japanese counsels were themselves divided, had Russia consistently stood out for a free hand for herself in Manchuria in return for Japanese control over Korea. Tokyo would almost certainly have agreed in the end. The demilitarization of northern Korea could have been obtained through such a deal had Petersburg offered some concessions in southern
Manchuria. But the Russians overestimated the strength of their position, and the incoherence and delay in their responses to Tokyo convinced the Japanese that Petersburg was simply prevaricating. Nicholas’s own statements betrayed his uncertainty and miscalculations. In October 1903 he telegraphed to Alekseev: ‘I do not want war between Russia and Japan and will not permit this war. Take all measures so that there is no war.’ In late December, however, he commented that the situation reminded him of the 1895 crisis when Japan backed down under firm Russian pressure and surrendered Port Arthur. Referring to Japan, Nicholas remarked: ‘all the same it is a barbarian country. Which is better: to risk war or to continue with concessions?’ In February 1904 the Japanese permitted Russia no more wavering and attacked Port Arthur.”

In April Japan crossed the Yalu River into Russian-occupied Manchuria, forcing the Russians back into Port Arthur. After a series of victories on land and on sea, the Japanese began a long siege of Port Arthur and succeeded in taking the city in January, 1905. This was followed, in May, by the Battle of Tsushima, in which the Russians lost 5000 sailors killed with 6000 captured, while only 117 Japanese sailors died. 

Russia sued for peace. At Portsmouth, USA, in September, 1905, thanks to the very tough negotiating stance of Tsar Nicholas, skilfully carried out by Count Sergius Witte, favourable terms were won for Russia. Nevertheless, the loss of prestige was great, and gave renewed encouragement to the revolutionaries.

The Russo-Japanese war is the first instance of a phenomenon that was to be of major importance in 1917: the financing of Russia’s enemies by American Jews. Archpriest Lev Lebedev asserts that “Japan would never have risked attacking Russia herself if she had not been specially incited to it by England and the U.S.A.

“At the end of 1903 the American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff, Morgan and also ‘First National Bank’ and ‘National City Bank’ loaned Japan 30 million dollars so that she should attack Russia.” On January 27, 1904, without

721 Lieven, op. cit., pp. 97-100.  
723 Perhaps not realizing how advantageous the terms were for the Russians, or perhaps realizing that such concessions had to be made because the Russians would have won if war had continued, the Grand Orient of France congratulated the mediator in the peace negotiations, American President Theodore Roosevelt (a Freemason since 1901) in the following telegram: “The Grand Orient of France has the honour to address to you its warmest congratulations for the outstanding service you have just offered to mankind. Masonry is happy to see the triumph, thanks to one of its eminent sons, of the principles of peace and brotherhood.” On September 4, Secretary of State Loomis, wrote back on behalf of the president, thanking the French Masons. As O.F. Soloviev points out, this direct exchange between the Grand Orient and the American president was unprecedented, and showed the increasing influence of Continental Masonry in world affairs (Soloviev, op. cit., p. 45).  
724 In all he loaned $200 million to Japan during the war, while preventing other firms from lending to Russia (Solzhenitsyn, op. cit., p. 347). (V.M.)
declaring war, Japanese ships treacherously attacked the Russian squadron in Port Arthur (on the Lyaodun peninsula in China, where Russia had built a powerful naval base on leased land). The war began which, according to the plans of its inspirers, was bound to be accompanied by a revolution in Russia. The military actions developed in a direction unfavourable to Russia. The suddenness of the attack gave Japan many advantages. If all Russia’s military forces in the Far East did not exceed 100,000 men, Japan moved up an army of 300,000. Japan’s numerical and, to a certain degree, technical superiority allowed her to win a series of major victories over the Russian armies. The fortress of Port Arthur fell [in January, 1905] after a lengthy and heroic siege. In other battles at Mukden near Lyaoyan in Manchuria, the Russians were also defeated, and retreated. In the naval battles the Russians more than once defeated the Japanese. But... in [May,] 1905, in the Korean bay of Tsushima, the second Russian squadron under Admiral Rozhdestvensky, which had come from the Gulf of Finland through all the seas and oceans to the place of its destruction, was almost completely annihilated. But here, too, non-Japanese forces inimical to Russia helped... While ‘Rozhdestvensky’s squadron was accomplishing its gigantic voyage as if in the light of a torch lighting up the whole world’, wrote the newspaper Novoe Vremia (New Times), ‘nobody knew about the movements of the Japanese naval forces even in the ports of China’. The Japanese information services were actively helped by the Jews. Some of them acted as spies in the Russian army, others tried to demoralize it, which is witnessed by the commander-in-chief of the armies in the Far East, General Kuropatkin. In 1906 the well-known journalist M.O. Menshikov wrote in the same Novoe Vremia: ‘The last terrible war... was armed with the most active participation of the Jews. In order to thrust Japan against Russia, it was necessary to arrange for Japan not only external loans, but also the most ardent sympathy [for Japan] in America and England. This sympathy, as has now been established beyond doubt, was artificially stirred up in the American press, which almost completely in Jewish hands. In the course of a whole series of years an army of Jewish hacks has slandered Russia, poured an unbelievably dirty torrent of abuse on her, and stirred people up to hate and despise everything Russian. As a result public opinion, and not only in America, was confused. The huge reading world was pitifully deceived...’ At the height of the war the Paris newspaper Presse noted: ‘Japan has not been waging war against Russia alone. She has a powerful ally – Jewry.’”

Undoubtedly the Jews’ support for the revolution at home and for the Japanese abroad was an important factor. But ultimately the Russians could blame only themselves. According to St. John of Kronstadt, the real cause of the defeat was the leaders’ negligent attitude towards Orthodoxy. And the theft of Russia’s greatest holy thing, the wonderworking Kazan icon of the Mother of God, on June 29, 1904 indicated that the Mother of God had

726 “The leader of our army A.N. Kuropatkin left all the icons given to him in captivity with the Japanese pagans, while he took all the secular things. What an attitude to the faith and the holy things of the Church! It was for this that the Lord is not blessing our arms and the enemies are conquering us.” (in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 373).
withdrawn her protection from Russia. For “not in vain”, wrote Archbishop Nicon (Rozhdestvensky), “has there long been the belief in the people that as long as this holy icon is intact, and stands guard between Christian Europe and the heterodox, pagan-Muslim world of Asia, we can be calm. But if she, our fervent Intercessor, leaves her place, then woes and misfortunes threaten us, and we shall remain defenceless…”  

In the end, Russia lost because “a house that is divided against itself cannot stand” (Mark 3.25). Thus “at the end of 1904, on the eve of the preparation of a general attack against the Japanese army near Lyaodun, strikes began in the major Russian military factories and on the railways, which left the Russian army without ammunition and food and allowed the Japanese to take back the initiative. The first defeats of the Russian army elicited the genuine joy of the liberals and a flow of congratulations on this score to the emperor of Japan… With regard to the surrender to the Japanese of Port Arthur his Majesty Emperor Nicholas II organized a government judicial inquiry, since there were no military reasons for the capitulation…” 

In spite of that, “the Russian army conducted its retreat in good order, and its losses in manpower turned out to be almost two times fewer than those of the Japanese… The experience of the war of 1904-1905 allowed Russia in the next three to four years to carry out a military reform and modernize her armaments, munitions and technical equipment in all sections of the army. In spite of colossal credits by the standards of those times from England and the USA, and the participation of Germany in the technical fitting out of the army and fleet, Japan was so exhausted by this military encounter that it was only fourteen years later, at the very end of the First World War, that she was able to re-establish her pre-war military potential and join the Entente.” 

St. Nicholas of Japan

The war with Japan caused particular problems for the Russian Orthodox Mission in Japan, headed by Archbishop Nicholas (Kasatkin). A peasant from Smolensk province, St. Nicholas first went to Japan in 1861. Encouraged to learn Japanese by St. Innocent, enlightener of Alaska, he began an astonishingly successful mission that brought tens of thousands of native Japanese to the faith and aroused the admiration of all, including the Japanese. In July, 1882 he presided over the first All-Japanese Orthodox Council. A delegation from Peking was also present, including several churchmen who were later martyred during the Boxer Uprising in 1900. 

On the eve of the Russo-Japanese war, “alarmed by the possibility of war with their co-religionists, the Orthodox Japanese turned to their bishop. He replied that they, like all Japanese, were obliged by their oath to carry out

---

728 Lebedev, op. cit.
730 He is now canonized. His feastday is February 3.
their military duty, but to fight was not at all the same as to hate one’s enemy, but means to defend one’s fatherland. The Saviour Himself bequeathed patriotism to us when He sorrowed over the lot of Jerusalem. The archpastor himself decided to stay in Japan with his flock, even if there was a war... And it began in February 1904. Then Bishop Nicholas handed over all ecclesiastical affairs to the council of priests, and himself served his last liturgy before the war. At the end of the service in his farewell sermon to his flock he called on it to pray for victory for their fatherland, but he, as a subject of the Russian Emperor, could not take part in the common service; but he would be happy to see his flock carrying out their duty. In his encyclical of February 11, 1904, Bishop Nicholas blessed the Japanese to carry out their duty, not sparing their lives, but reminded them that our fatherland is the Church, where all Christians constitute one family; he told them to pray for the re-establishment of peace and asked for mercy to prisoners of war. After this he shut himself away and gave himself over to exploits of prayer... Nobody in Russia understood the hierarch of Japan as well as Emperor Nicholas II. At the end of the war the Tsar wrote to him: ‘You have shown before all that the Orthodox Church of Christ is foreign to worldly dominion and every tribal hatred, and embraces all tribes and languages with her love. In the difficult time of the war, when the weapons of battle destroy peaceful relations between peoples and rulers, you, in accordance with the command of Christ, did not leave the flock entrusted to you, and the grace of love and faith gave you strength to endure the fiery trial and amidst the hostility of war to keep the peace of faith and love in the Church created by your labours...’ 

Archbishop Nicholas’ noble affirmation, in word and deed, of the primacy of faith over politics did not go unappreciated. Michael Van Remortel writes: “In the very midst of home front hostility in 1904, the Japanese publisher Aisui Nakagawa wrote and distributed a laudatory profile of Bishop Nikolai... [After the war], in respect of Vladyka Nikolai’s efforts on behalf of Russian prisoners, he was awarded the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky by Tsar Nicholas II. In April 1906, the Holy Synod elevated him to the dignity of Archbishop; at that point, the Harisutosu Orthodox Church of Japan became an independent jurisdiction within the Russian Orthodox Church. In 1907, another diocese was created in western Japan, with its cathedral at Kyoto...

“An ecumenical assembly of American bishops voted Archbishop Nikolai the most outstanding Christian evangelist in the entire world...”

St. Nicholas’ death in 1912 was covered by all the newspapers of Japan. His life witnessed in the most vivid way to the fact that Christianity, while supporting true patriotism, is a universalist religion which always places the universalist message of the Gospel above the interests of any individual State or nation.

---


The Role of the Press

We have noted that one of the causes of the defeat of the Russians in the war with Japan was the defeatist attitude of the liberals in the rear, which was magnified by the diatribes of the largely Jewish-controlled press. Now the press had emerged as an important factor in international relations for the first time in the Crimean War, when reports in the British press of military incompetence and insanitary conditions in the hospitals, together with photographs from the battlefield, had had an important influence on public opinion, and thence on the government. It became even more important in the Balkan crises of the 1870s when reports of Turkish atrocities in The Daily Telegraph and The Manchester Guardian were an important ally to Gladstone in his campaign to jolt Disraeli’s government out of its pro-Turkish indifference.

“Already in the 70s,” writes Solzhenitsyn, “the ‘unbridledness of the Russian press’ had been noted more than once by Dostoyevsky. In relation to the State it displayed itself even at the conference of March 8, 1881 under the just-crowned Alexander III, and more than once after that: the journalists behaved like self-willed representatives of society.

“The expression: ‘Three hostile newspapers are more dangerous than 100,000 hostile soldiers’ has been ascribed to Napoleon. This phrase became very applicable to the Russo-Japanese war. The Russian press was openly defeatists throughout the war, in each of its battles. And, still more important: it did not hide its sympathy for terrorism and revolution.

“This press, which developed unchecked in 1905, was seen during the Duma period as, in the words of Witte, mainly ‘Jewish’ or ‘half-Jewish’: more precisely, with a predominance of leftist or radical Jews in the key correspondents’ and editors’ posts. In November, 1905 D.I. Pikhno, the editor of the Russian national newspaper Kievlianin, who had already been in this post for 25 years and studied the Russian press, wrote: ‘Jewry... has placed huge stakes on the card of the Russian revolution... The serious part of Russian society had understood that at such moments the press is a force, but it did not have this power – it was in the hands of its opponents, who spoke in its name throughout Russia and forced themselves to be read, because there were no other publications, and you can’t create them in one day... and [society] was lost in the multitude of lies in which it could not find its way.’

“L. Tikhomirov saw nothing national in this, but in 1910 he made the following comments on the character of the Russian press: ‘Tearing on the nerves... One-sidedness... They don’t want decency, gentlemanliness... They have no ideal, and have no understanding of it.’ And the public brought up by this press ‘demands glibness and hooliganism, it cannot value knowledge, and does not notice ignorance’.

“And, from completely the opposite political extreme, a Bolshevik publicist [M. Lemke], expressed himself as follows on the character of this press: ‘In
our post-reformation era ideas have become cheap, while information, sensation and unabashed authoritarian ignorance fill the press.’

“Speaking, more specifically, about culture, Andrew Bely complained in 1909, although he was by no means a rightists or ‘chauvinist’: ‘The leaders of national culture turn out to be people who are foreign to this culture… Look at the lists of those working on the newspapers and journals of Russia: who are the musical and literary critics of these journals? You will see almost exclusively Jewish names: among these critics there are some talented and acute people, there are some among them who understand the tasks of a national culture, perhaps, more profoundly than the Russians: but they are exceptions. The general mass of Jewish critics are completely foreign to Russian art. They write in an Esperanto jargon and terrorize every attempt to deepen and enrich the Russian language.’

“In those same years the far-sighted Zionists Vl. Zhabotinsky complained about the ‘leading newspapers sustained on Jewish money and filled with Jewish workers’ and warned: ‘When the Jews hurled themselves en masse to create Russian politics, we foretold them that nothing good would come out of it, neither for Russian politics, nor for Jewish.’

“The Russian press played a decisive role in the pre-revolutionary Cadet-revolutionary storming of the government: its mood was powerfully picked up and expressed by Duma deputy A.I. Shingarev: ‘Let this power sink! We will not cast this power even a bit of rope!’ It is appropriate to mention here that the First Duma stood up in memory of the victims of the Belostok pogrom (not agreeing… that this was an armed battle between anarchists and soldiers); the Second Duma – in honour of the murdered terrorist Iollos. But when Purishkevich suggested standing in honour of those killed at their posts as policemen and soldiers, he was forbidden to speak and excluded from the session: at that time it seemed unthinkable to the enflamed parliamentarians to sympathize with those who kept simple order in the State, which was necessary for all of them, and for a generally quiet life.

“A member of the Union of [Jewish] Complete Equality, A. Kulisher, drew the truthful conclusion – but late, looking back at the past in the émigré Jewish Tribune in 1923: ‘In Russian-Jewish society before the revolution there really were people and whole groups whose activity can be characterized precisely as… the absence of a feeling of responsibility for the turmoil in the minds of Russian Jewry… the spreading of an indefinite and light-minded ‘revolutionism’… The whole essence of their politics consisted in being more leftist than anyone else. Always remaining in the role of irresponsible critics, never going to the end, they saw their purpose in saying: ‘Not enough!’… These people were ‘democrats’… But there were also democrats who called themselves ‘The Jewish Democratic Group’ who attached this adjective to every unsuitable noun, composing an intolerable Talmud of democratism… They created around themselves an irresponsible mood of groundless maximalism, with no precise limit to their demands. This mood manifested itself with destructive consequences in the revolution.’ The destructiveness
proceeding from this press was indeed one of the weakest, most vulnerable points in the Russian State by 1914 and 1917...”

In the role of the press, as in many other ways, we see how early-twentieth century Russia was a type, a microcosm, as it were, of the problems of modern civilization...

Towards the Reestablishment of Symphony

There is strong evidence that not only was the Tsar deeply interested in the project of the convening of Church Council for the first time since 1666, and in the restoration of the patriarchate, but had even suggested, shortly after the birth of the Tsarevich, and probably on December 17, 1904, his own candidature to the post of patriarch! According to the account of Archbishop Anthony (Khраповицкый), “the senior hierarchs, including myself, were summoned to his Majesty. At that time, in accordance with the will of the Tsar, preparatory work was being conducted for the convening of a Council at which the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia was to take place. And his Majesty, following the course of the matter, wanted to see us. When we assembled in the palace, the Tsar asked us whether we had chosen a candidate. We glanced at each other and were silent. Each of us was probably thinking about himself as the most fitting Patriarch. After quite a long pause we replied: ‘No, your Majesty.’ A short period ensued; the Tsar again summoned us to himself, and put the same question to us. In our embarrassment we were forced, as before, to give a negative answer. Then the Tsar, after looking at us in silence, fell into thought. Some moments passed. The Tsar again began to speak: ‘If you have not found a candidate, then I have someone in mind.’ We all listened attentively, waiting to see which one of us the Tsar would point to. But what was our amazement when the Tsar declared to us: ‘I myself am a candidate’. Stunned, we could not even find anything to say in reply. And the Tsar continued: ‘The heir to the throne has been born. When he has grown up a little, Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich will become the regent. The Empress has agreed to go into a monastery. And I will be tonsured.’

The process that led to this discussion had begun a little earlier, in November, 1904, when a report sponsored by the Minister of the Interior Prince P.D. Sviatopolk-Mirsky was completed envisaging important changes in a liberal direction in both Church and State. This led to the convening of an important conference on December 2 that included all the government ministers and four of the Tsar’s uncles, and an ukaz called “On Plans for the Perfecting of State Order”, which was signed on December 12. The sixth point of this ukaz spoke of the sovereign’s unbending desire to grant tolerance to schismatics and non-Orthodox confessions in the empire. The question this immediately raised was: how would this affect the interests of the dominant confession of the empire, the Orthodox Church? In order to answer this question, a note entitled “On the Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox

---

735 Archbishop Anthony, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., p. 394.
“Church” was composed for the president of the council of ministers, Count S.Yu. Witte, by professors of the theological academies in the capital.

“The note said that while externally free and protected by the State, the Orthodox Church was weighed down by heavy chains. The expulsion of the principle of sobornost’ from Church life had led to a change in her spirit. The main cause of the disorders was recognized to be Peter’s Church reform, as a result of which the Church’s administration had turned into one of the ‘numerous wheels of the complex machine of State’. The secular bureaucratic element was called a constant barrier between the Church and the people, as also between the Church and the State, while the only way to excite life from the dead was to return to the former, canonical norms of administration.

“Witte also subjected the contemporary situation of the Orthodox parish to sharp criticism; ‘only the name remained’ from it. The reasons for the fall of the parish were attributed by the authors of the note to the development of State centralization and the intensification of serfdom in Russia in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries; the imposition of police duties on the clergy, as a consequence of which it was separated from its flock; the caste alienation of the clergy, and the payments it demanded for the carrying out of needs. But the autonomous re-establishment of small ecclesiastical units, which is what the parishes were, would not attain its aim if a general reform of the Church administration were not carried out: the parishes had to be linked by spiritual communion and pour into the community of the diocese, while ‘diocesan assemblies’ having Local Councils as their model should be convened periodically in parallel with the parish meetings.

“Later the note touched on the problem of the alienation from the Church of a significant part of the intelligentsia. Only the Church herself could resolve this problem and overcome the ‘spiritual schism’. The problem of the theological school was also raised; it was declared to be a task of the whole State, ‘for the degree of the influence of religion on the people depends completely on its organization’. The union of Church and State was wholeheartedly approved, while the ‘self-governing activity’ of the ecclesiastical and state organism, in the opinion of the authors, had to achieve the equilibrium destroyed by Peter the Great. With this aim it was necessary to convene a Local Council in which both white clergy and laity would participate. ‘In view of the present undeniable signs of a certain inner shaking both of society and of the masses of the people,” pointed out Witte, ‘it would be dangerous to wait. Religion constitutes the main foundation of the popular spirit, and through it the Russian land has stood and been strong up to now.’

“And so in S.Yu. Witte’s not the question was posed not about particular changes, but about a general ecclesiastical reform, which would lead to a strengthening of the independence of the Orthodox Church and would sharply reduce the privileges of the over-procurator’s authority. After all, it was a secret to nobody that in speaking about ‘dry bureaucratic principles’, the president of the Committee of Ministers had in mind the rules that found
their completed expression in the activity of the department of the Orthodox confession.

“It was at about the same time, in February, that another note appeared expressing the opinion of the capital’s Metropolitan Anthony: ‘Questions relating to desirable transformations in the position of our Orthodox Church’. Vladyka reviewed concrete questions of the reform of the ecclesiastical administration that demanded a very speedy resolution. Referring to the discussions on religious toleration that had taken place in the Committee of Ministers, he noted: the authorities are opening to those who have separated from the Orthodox Church (the Old Ritualists, sectarians and others) ‘a definite position in the State’ without touching their inner church life, at the same time that the ‘ruling’ Church is deprived of such freedom. Citing the Popovtsi Old Ritualists who had accepted ‘the Austrian hierarchs’ as an example, Metropolitan Anthony warned: ‘The danger may occur that this community will be turned into the people’s Church while the Orthodox Church will remain only the State Church’.

“In pointing to the Church’s position within the State, Vladyka placed before the authorities a question of principle: had not the moment come to weaken the control of the secular authorities over the life of the Church? Other questions followed logically from that: should not the Church be given a greater freedom in the administration of her internal affairs? Should Orthodox priests also have the right to be permanent members of social-state institutions having their place in the parishes? After this it was natural to pose the further question on the desirability of providing the Church hierarchy with the right to participate in the sessions of the State Council, the Committee of Ministers and other higher state institutions with the right to vote in them.

“The note undoubtedly touched on the privileges of the over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod. After all, if the desires expressed by the metropolitan were to be satisfied, the Orthodox episcopate would receive the possibility of independently, with the mediation of the State, influencing legislative proposals touching the Church, that is, it would have the right of a political voice in the empire. It is understandable that C.P. Pobedonostsev could not welcome such self-will, the more so in that, besides questions on the position of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the metropolitan gave reasons for the need to review the structure of the Church and some aspects of the Church’s administration, and spoke about the particular importance of recognizing the parish as a legal person and on the desirability of reviewing the laws that regulated the right of the Church to own, acquire and use property…”

This debate highlighted two contradictions within the present position of religion in the Russian empire, contradictions that could be removed only simultaneously or not at all. The first contradiction was that the 44th and 45th articles of the Basic Laws of the Empire guaranteed freedom of religion - but the Emperor had to be Orthodox and was obliged both to watch over the

---

736 Firsov, op. cit., pp. 149-153.
purity of the Orthodox Faith and to protect the Orthodox population of the empire from threats presented by schisms and heresies. And the second contradiction was that the Orthodox Church was the dominant confession of the empire - but, since it was also a department of State, it was less, rather than more free in relation to the State than the other confessions. Increasing freedom of religion in the sense, not simply of allowing freedom to practise religious rites (which already existed), but of creating real equality between the religions from the point of view of the State (which did not yet exist) would have the effect of abolishing the first contradiction - but only by removing the Emperor’s role as guardian of the Orthodox faith and substantially increasing the threat to Orthodoxy from certain confessions in certain regions (for example, Catholicism in the western regions). This could be compensated for, in the view of the hierarchs, only by abolishing the second contradiction at the same time - that is, by giving the Church a free hand to defend herself from the competition of other confessions without interference from the State.

Pobedonostsev suspected that Witte and Metropolitan Anthony were in league against him, and mounted a vigorous campaign to stop the projected reforms, defending the Petrine system. On March 13 he succeeded in persuading the emperor to remove the question of Church reforms from the competence of the Conferences of Ministers and Heads of State Departments and place it before the Holy Synod. However, this was only a seeming victory: the Holy Synod was no less in favour of the reforms than was Witte and the State. On March 17 the Synod recognized the necessity of reviewing the present situation of the Church vis-à-vis the State “in view of the changed situation of the heterodox confessions, the so-called Old Ritualists and sectarians, and transform the Church’s administration”. The restoration of the patriarchate was deemed desirable “for the sake of the honour of the Russian State”, and it was suggested that a Local Council be convened in Moscow composed of the diocesan bishops and their representatives. On March 18 the Synod resolved to present a report to the Tsar with an icon. On March 22 the seven members of the Synod signed an appeal to the Tsar to convene a Council “at the appropriate time” in Moscow, at which a patriarch would be elected and a series of major questions of Church life would be discussed.737

Once again, on March 31, Pobedonostsev succeeded in persuading the Tsar to put off the Synod’s project, and to postpone giving Metropolitan Anthony an audience “for a certain time”. As the Tsar wrote on the Synod’s appeal: “I admit the impossibility of accomplishing, in the anxious times we are living through, such a great work requiring both calm and careful thought as the convening of a Local Council. I reserve for myself, when the fitting time for this will come, in accordance with the ancient examples of the Orthodox Emperors, the task of giving this work momentum and convening a Council of the All-Russian Church for the canonical discussion of matters of faith and Church administration.”

However, Pobedonostsev’s victory could only be temporary: society’s interest in the reforms was increasing, and even V.M. Skvortsov in the

737 Firsov, op. cit., p. 163.
conservative journal Missionerskoe Obozrenie [Missionary Review], after pointing out that the martyred Great Prince Sergius Alexandrovich had been in favour of the reforms, expressed the opinion that “the reform of the administration of the dominant Church has appeared as the logical end and natural consequence of the confessional reform which was so quickly and decisively pushed through by S.Yu. Witte and a special Conference of the Committee of Ministers”.

On May 5, the Tsar consented to see the metropolitan, who explained that to delay the reform was neither possible nor desirable. “But as long as Pobedonostsev is alive, we cannot expect much.” On May 18 the Tsar officially thanked the Synod for the icon and the report that had been composed two months before, thereby indicating that Pobedonostsev’s bid to keep the Petrine system untouched had failed...

The confessional reform referred to reached its legal enactment in the Tsar’s ukaz of April 17, the Sunday of Pascha, “On the Strengthening of the Principles of Religious Toleration”. St. John of Kronstadt, among others, was critical of the decree, seeing it as one product of the revolutionary unrest: “Look what is happening in this kingdom at the present time: everywhere students and workers are on strike; everywhere there is the noise of parties who have as their goal the overthrowing of the true monarchical order established by God, everywhere the dissemination of insolent, senseless proclamations, disrespect for the authority of the ruling powers established by God, for ‘there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God’: children and young people imagine that they are the master and commanders of their own fates; marriage has lost all meaning for many and divorces at will have multiplied to endlesness; many children are left to the whims of fate by unfaithful spouses; some kind of senselessness and arbitrariness rule... Finally, an unpunished conversion from Orthodoxy into any faith whatever is allowed [the Decree of April 17, 1905]; even though the same Lord we confess designated death in the Old Testament for those denying the law of Moses.

“If matters continue like this in Russia and the atheists and the anarchist-crazies are not subjected to the righteous retribution of the law, and if Russia is not cleansed of its many tares, then it will become desolate like the ancient kingdoms and cities wiped out by God’s righteous judgement from the face of the earth for their godlessness and their wickedness: Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Greece-Macedonia.

“Hold fast, then, Russia, to your faith, and your Church, and to the Orthodox Tsar if you do not wish to be shaken by people of unbelief and lawlessness and if you do not wish to be deprived of your Kingdom and the Orthodox Tsar. But if you fall away from your faith, as many intelligently have fallen away, then you will no longer by Russia or Holy Rus’, but a rabble of all kinds of other faiths that wish to destroy one another…”

738 Skvortsov, in Firsov, op. cit., p. 172.
And again he said: "Russia, if you fall away from your faith, as many intelligently have already fallen away, you will no longer be Russia or Holy Rus’. And if there is no repentance in the Russian people, the end of the world is near. God will remove the pious tsar and will send a whip in the form of impious, cruel, self-called rulers, who will drench the whole land in blood and tears."\textsuperscript{740}

At about the same time, St. John’s friend and fellow-wonderworker, Protopriest Valentine Amphiteatrov said: “Pray well for the Sovereign. He is a martyr. Without him the whole of Russia will perish…”\textsuperscript{741}

These warnings followed in a long line of nineteenth-century prophecies. Thus already at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Prophet Abel had prophesied to Tsar Paul I: “Nicholas II will be a holy tsar, like Job the much-suffering. He will have the mind of Christ, patience and dove-like purity. The Scriptures speak about him: Psalms 90, 10 and 20 have revealed to me the whole of his destiny. He will exchange a royal crown for a crown of thorns, he will be betrayed by his people as was once the Son of God. He will be a redeemer, he will redeem his people, like the bloodless sacrifice. There will be a war, a great war, a world war. People will fly through the air like birds, and swim under the water like fish, they will begin to exterminate each other with evil-smelling sulphur. On the eve of victory the Russian throne will collapse. But the betrayal will grow and multiply. And your great-grandson will be betrayed, many of your descendants will also whiten their garments in the blood of the Lamb, the peasant will seize power with his axe in madness, but he himself will later weep. A truly Egyptian punishment will begin… Blood and tears will soak the wet earth. Rivers of blood will flow. Brother will rise up against brother. And again: fire, the sword, invasions of aliens and the inner enemy of the godless authority. The Jew will beat the Russian land with a scorpion, he will take hold of her holy things, close the churches of God and execute the best Russian people. This will be allowed by God, it will be the wrath of the Lord against Russia for her rejection of the Anointed of God.”\textsuperscript{742}

\textsuperscript{740} Otets Ioann Kronshtadtskij (Father John of Kronstadt), Utica, N.Y., 1958.
\textsuperscript{741} Protopriest Valentine, in “Zhizneopisanie protoierea Valentina Amphiteatrova (II)” (Life of Protopriest Valentine Amphiteatrov – II), Pravoslavnaja Zhizn’ (Orthodox Life), № 12 (659), December, 2004, p. 29 ®.
\textsuperscript{742} Monk Abel, in Gubanov, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 30.