THE SLAVOPHIL IDEA RE-STATE'D.

The War and the Revolution have shaken the very foundations of Russian life and so deeply modified our consciousness that we find ourselves asking: What has remained of our ideals and what has become of them? The time has not yet come for a complete answer to these questions, but we can already make out the main outlines of the transformation we have undergone. And as none of our former ideals and aspirations have escaped the influence of the great catastrophes of these years, they must all be drastically overhauled. What then has become of the Slavophil idea, one of the fondest and most cherished of our ideals? It was never universally popular, nor was it ever particularly vigorous, but it was a deep-rooted and organic idea, that attracted not a few of the most sincere and creative Russian minds. It was an aristocratic idea, and found its adherents chiefly among the élite. Still, the war for the liberation of the Slavs showed sufficiently how near and dear it was to the whole Russian people.

The Great War, that was to be such an exceptionally severe ordeal for Russia, had its origin in a Slavonic problem. In the most crucial and fateful moment of her history, Russia found herself acting as a Slavonic nation. The mission of living and suffering for Slavdom was thus revealed as Russia's supreme task by history itself. "Time" (in the words of V. F. Ern) "had turned Slavophil"; time, it seemed, was itself calling on those who had never thought of it before, to develop and deepen their Slavonic consciousness. Our repulsion from everything German, and our conscious breach with our former romantic cult for German poetry, philosophy and music, forced on us with unprecedented cogency the problem of our Slavonic consciousness and of Slavonic unity. Tremendous landslides then took place in the Russian soul, as well as in the whole of Slavdom—and at the time of the worst reverses at the front, no one in Russia regretted that this terrible war had been begun for the sake of Serbia.

When the Revolution came, and after it the Soviet Government—suddenly, as the wind puts out a candle, the same stream
of history swept away the tender growth of our new Slavonic consciousness. Russia entered on a period of such complex and painful ordeals, that she had enough of her own business to mind. Abandoned by all, left to herself alone, Russia is still toiling under the burden of her sickness, not placing her hope in anyone except herself. If it is ever granted by God that she recover her health and her freedom, she will owe it to no one but herself.

All, however, has not been lost that was called to life by the War. But its seeds have not (up to the present) come up within Russia, but outside Russia, in the minds of those who by or against their will have left their country. The old Slavophil tradition is alive to-day only among the émigrés; but what is going on among them is no doubt significant and characteristic of all Russia; no doubt when the émigrés are once more united to the rest of Russia, their theories will be accepted by all Russia.

To understand the vicissitudes of the Slavophil idea among the Russian émigrés, we must bear in mind that fairly numerous groups of Russian refugees have settled in every Slavonic country (Bulgaria, Jugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland), and thus come into close touch with each branch of the Slavs. Russians have thus been given an opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with the Slavonic nations, with their language, literature, manners and mentality. The Slavs have also come in touch with the Russian "element" among them, on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The importance of this coming together on Slavonic ground—unprecedented in its scope—is self-evident; all the more so, as in the case of most of the Slavs, it took place at a particularly favourable moment of their history. How reversed the rôles have become! Those of whom Russia had taken care have now been called to take care of her children; those who were unfree have won their freedom, while Russia has lost it. This state of things has now lasted for nearly ten years, and there is no near prospect of change. Russia has been cut in two; and however insignificant the mass of the émigrés as compared to that of the whole nation, they give expression to an aspect of Russia that remains concealed at home. To many observers, including many Slavs, there is doubt where to look for the real Russia—and this has led to a highly significant cleavage inside several Slavonic nations. It is particularly apparent in the first cradle of the Slavophil idea, Czechoslovakia. The Czechs are divided between the realism that finds such powerful expression in the writings of Dr. Beneš, and the idealism that has for its leader that veteran champion of the Slavonic idea, Dr. Kramář. The same cleavage
can be traced, though less distinctly and often complicated by other political and national issues, in Poland, in Jugoslovakia, and even in Bulgaria.

This cleavage is very significant, and, no doubt, prophetical. A profound spiritual process is going on to-day in all the Slavs; the foundations of their future life are being laid. The spiritual path of nations is being traced out. Slavonic union, the object formerly of such ardent wishes, but deprived of all but an ideal existence, still remains unrealised, owing to the morbid state of Russia. But at any rate all the Slavonic peoples are now free, and the former historical obstacles to their union have been removed. The Slavonic idea has entered on the most responsible and fateful phase of its existence. The future historian may recognise that the temporary absence of Russia from the stage of history will have afforded the Slavonic nations the opportunity of thinking out the issue by eliminating for a time all practical possibility of Slavonic union.

I am not going to survey what is going on in each of the individual Slavonic nations—but will concentrate on the destinies of the Slavophil idea in the Russian consciousness of to-day. Here, as elsewhere, this idea has met with sharp and violent criticism. The problems connected with it stand out in all their complexity and in all their difficulty. The romantic Slavophilism of yesterday has become impossible and unacceptable. The Russian émigrés settled in Slavonic countries are, as it were, going through a "natural experiment." The problem of Slavonic union is being verified on them by life itself. The union has become, in parts, so real and close that the old romantic attitude would be simply out of place. I do not want to imply that the Slavonic problem may be entirely solved by the "realistic" solution; on the contrary, I regard "realism" as an essentially short-sighted attitude. Its only virtue is that it eliminates all dreaminess and naiveté and insists on our soberly taking actual conditions into account. But far from eliminating idealism, realism thus interpreted only frees idealism from its romantic shell, from its unnecessarily emotional tone. The strength of Slavonic idealism should lie precisely in its proving effective and becoming a real factor of life after taking into account all the actual historical conditions. Devotion to an ideal is best of all tested at the moment of the fulfilment of the ideal. The criticism prevalent to-day in so many minds may turn out to be more fruitful than it might at first appear. For such criticism prepares the way for a revival of idealism, by freeing it from romantic
dreams and making it strong and creative for future action.

Still, it is clear that we are in a critical phase of the evolution of the Slavophil idea. That is why no important work on the Slav problem has appeared in Russian for some years, though plenty of short essays and studies have been published, and still more have been lived and thought out in silence. I shall try to pass in rapid review the main points of the Slav problem round which the Russian mind has worked—and this will probably be the best way of making clear what stage of development it has reached.

History has placed the family of Slavonic nations between West and East. To us, it is not the geographical aspect of this fact that is important, but its historical meaning. The original spiritual unity of the Slavs was lost in the course of history, and has been preserved only in the deepest recesses of their spiritual life. The principal sphere in which the separation is apparent is that of religion; one part of the Slavs is Roman Catholic, another is Orthodox, another again Protestant. The division is especially and tragically apparent in Czechoslovakia where all the three confessions are more or less strongly represented, weakening each other. Less acute, but still serious, is the situation in Jugoslavia. The religious difference cannot of course be regarded as external or inessential—all the more as the Slavonic race as a whole is endowed with great religious gifts. Half a century ago Štůr insisted on the idea that no unity is possible as long as the Slavs remain separated by religious differences. He called on the Slavs to accept Orthodoxy. But other ardent preachers of religious unity have looked for unity in Roman Catholicism. The extreme importance of this problem for the destinies of the Slavonic idea and of Slavonic unity must be fully recognised. The problem was put before the Russian public years ago by K. N. Leontyev, one of the keenest of Russian thinkers. He was dubbed a "disillusioned Slavophil," but the phrase does not exhaust his contribution to the Slavonic problem. It is not Leontyev's disillusionment in the Slavs that is important in him; not his aversion for their petty imitiveness of Western ways, and for their impotency to develop any Slavonic character of their own. What is important in Leontyev (though usually neglected by his critics) is his way of stating the Slavonic problem. The so-called elder Slavophils (Homyakov, Kireyevsky, Samarín, K. Aksakov) in practice combined their Slavonic aspiration and their attachment to the Slavs with a profound devotion to the Orthodox Church and with an explicit faith in the historical and cultural creative power of that Church. The gift of nature, and
the gift of grace—their love of the Slavs, and their faith in the creative force of Orthodoxy—blended in them spontaneously. But already in the following generation the mutual relation of the natural and of the religious elements of Slavophilism became a problem of growing importance. Leontyev marks the point in the evolution of the Slavophil idea when this problem was first completely realised. For Leontyev himself, Orthodoxy was of greater value than racial unity, and in his usual clear-cut way he expressed his solution in the words: "a policy of the Orthodox spirit must be preferred to a policy of the Slavonic flesh."

Leontyev was against the idea of merely racial union, and championed that of _spiritual kinship_. Racialism seemed to him to contain the germ of dissolution. This, of course, was an exaggeration. The harmonious union of love of the Slavs as such, with a highly developed religious consciousness, was once more to be witnessed in the person of Ivan Aksakov. In fact, with the exception of M. A. Bakunin, whose devotion to the Slavs went hand in hand with militant atheism, Russians who were friends of the Slavs were almost invariably profoundly religious. Still, the problem stated by Leontyev has not lost its importance. It has even become particularly insistent. Our time is, beyond doubt, one of a general revival of religious forces in the whole Christian world. It may even be that we are on the threshold of a new religious epoch, something like a new Middle Ages—an age of integral religious culture. The Russian consciousness of to-day is so full of this idea that hardly any room is left for the cultural neutrality of yesterday or for the conception of progress without religion. This predominant position of the religious problem implies the fundamental primacy of the religious principle and subordinates to it all other problems. This leads to the revival, and even to the emphasising, of confessional problems. It is true that, on the other hand, a tendency towards union is growing up in all the Christian world. But to the Orthodox consciousness (for all its freedom and breadth) this _rapprochement_ between the Christian confessions and even their mutual enrichment, cannot in the least imply any surrender of the fundamental principles of Orthodoxy. The growth of confessional consciousness is a highly significant fact. Christendom may be once more entering on a period of dogmatic consciousness, and this would be the only way towards the union of the Churches. The Orthodox Church is full of eager expectation—for she has room for all those individual and separate forces which are defective in so far as they are separate, but may be given meaning and justification on the basis of an organic synthesis, which can be given by the Orthodox Church.
All this will emphasise the primary importance of the religious principle in the consciousness of our epoch—and at the same time will show up the greatest difficulties in the present stage of development of the Slavophil idea. Outside the religious sphere—Slavonic unity has very little to build on. Nothing makes this clearer than the programme advanced in the writings of the most brilliant and powerful spokesman of "Slavonic realism"—Dr. E. Beneš. One cannot but feel that with such a programme Slavonic union cannot go very far. Of course the natural likeness and kinship of the Slavonic people is an inherent promise of Slavonic union, but this natural basis, uninspired by a common ideal or a common faith, is not enough, especially for an age like ours. That which was really inherent in Russian Slavophilism must be unfolded into a complete programme. The problem of Slavonic union must receive a religious foundation and a religious sanction. If this is possible, if a promise of the union of the Slavonic nations into a real family, may shine out of the depths of religious consciousness—then history will be with us; otherwise, however much attached to the Slavonic idea, we shall find ourselves forced to recognise its weakness and its obvious historical impotence. If we base the Slavonic idea on anything outside religion, we have nothing to build on, except, either the natural feeling of Slav solidarity (and this is too weakly a growth for an historical task of such difficulty as Slav union), or those "real" tendencies of life that the "realists" invoke for their support and which, taken by themselves, admit of quite a different interpretation (as has been made sufficiently evident by other Czech thinkers). The ideology of national union evolved in the early 19th century, no longer possesses sufficient spiritual vitality for a task of such magnitude as the union of the Slavs. The natural racial basis may be given significance only from some higher standpoint, and such can only be that of religion, taken as a living, creative force in history.

The fundamental problem of the Slavophil idea thus becomes the problem of the interrelation between the religious and the racial bases of that idea. Practically this means that, as long as a solution (if only preliminary) of the religious differences is not arrived at, the Slavonic idea will remain too weak and impotent to become a force in history. Our time is one of pronounced cultural dualism, when religious and non-religious movements are sharply opposed to each other. And it seems impossible to think of a serious and lasting realisation of the Slavonic idea, without taking into account this basic spiritual conflict of our time. The

1 An incisive, but largely just, criticism of the views of Dr. Beneš will be found in Dr. Kramář’s book, In Defence of a Slavonic Policy.
feeling of Slavonic unity may be a powerful motive of historical action, but it is not sufficient to be recognised as its moving force.

Besides the difficulty of religious difference, Slavonic union has another, only less important, obstacle in its way: the question of the cultural originality of the Slavs. All the Slavs are conscious of their difference from the Romano-Germanic world. But what is the real content of this difference? It is in Russia that the problem has been put to us with particular insistence. How difficult it is of solution, is sufficiently indicated by the fact that the opposition of Westerners and anti-Westerners dominates the evolution of Russian thought throughout the 19th century. To-day the originality and significance of Russian civilisation, as manifested in the 19th and 20th centuries, is no longer a matter of dispute—and still the relation of Russia to the West remains a subject of controversy. To a certain extent history has already given its judgment on this controversy; but the recent movement of Eurasianism is sufficient to show how vital the problem remains. But Russia is not alone. Since the War, the problem of the originality of the Slavs and of their relation to the West has been raised in every Slavonic country, though not with the same insistence. The movement we have defined as "Slavonic realism," is really "Slavonic Westernism" (especially in the case of Masaryk), while "Slavonic idealism" aspires towards Slavonic originality (not always, it is true, with complete distinctness) and often looks up to Russia, who, alone of Slav nations, has actually produced, on a large scale, a Slav type of culture.

I am not going to complicate the question by an analysis of local inter-Slavonic problems such as the relations of Russia and Poland, of Serbia and Bulgaria, of the Czechs and the Slovaks, the Ukrainian question, etc. These local problems, even unsolved (and perhaps insoluble in any near future), are powerless to weaken the general significance of the Slavonic idea. They may obsess individuals, but their very acuteness emphasises the fact that a union of all the Slavs is the only possible court of appeal for all these local conflicts. This is why, for instance, the Ukrainian publicists of to-day, for all their hostility to Russia, give all the more expression to their pan-Slavonic aspirations. The Slavonic idea is in a critical phase of its history, not because the Russo-Polish, the Russo-Ukrainian, the Serbo-Bulgarian and other conflicts are being given such unambiguous and drastic expression. From our point of view the present crisis of the Slavonic idea is rather a manifestation of its vital strength, and—as it were—a preliminary to its fuller disclosure and affirmation.

Freedom from alien rule, in its first stages, has naturally led the young Slavonic States to a certain self-centredness, due to the desire to become conscious of oneself in the new conditions as an independent and mature national organism. But it is just that tendency which under the name of realism emphasises this aspect of things (besides containing many other elements, which we have already alluded to) that is breaking the ground for a wider and stronger manifestation of the Slavonic idea. History has yet to find room for the idea of Slavonic union—and it may turn out to be not merely an idea, but a reality. I do not think I shall err greatly if I say that parallel to the growth of scepticism, indifference and downright rejection of the legacy of Slavophilism there can also be discerned to-day a slow, but steady accumulation of a live Slavonic idealism. The "sense of kin" existing between the Slavonic peoples is bringing the issue forward, and becoming the rallying-point of forces. It is thus not in the sphere of external historical conditions that we are to look for an explanation of the critical period which the Slavonic idea is traversing. It is its spiritual content and its actual ideological composition that have produced the crisis. We are living in a time when the romanticism of national or racial union is no longer sufficient to inspire the leaders of nations. Ours is a time of profound and basic crisis for civilisation. If Slavonic consciousness were to pass by the great problems of our time, this would only mean a falling into petty provincialism. If history has a use for the Slavonic idea, that idea will necessarily become the vehicle and the channel that will bring us through to a new epoch; or else Slavonic union will be only a local, historically unimportant event, powerless to inspire anyone. The movement which opposes itself to short-sighted and uninspired "realism" as Slavonic "idealism," is only a beginning, only a programme, not as yet a force in history. Slavdom, as a whole, has not yet arrived at a consciousness of its historical mission; it is aware, more clearly than ever before, that it has such a mission—but only intuitively aware of it. Being, as I am, firmly convinced of the historical necessity for our epoch of a religious renascence, I see in Slavdom the principal (though of course not the only) agent of such a renascence. The historical mission of Slavdom (and this is the Slavophil tradition) lies in religious action, in the reconstruction of civilisation in a Christian spirit. The same conviction was alive in Tolstoy, for all his estrangement from national problems. Shortly before his death he wrote to a Polish lady: "It is my dream that this tremendous revolution in the life of mankind will begin with us, with the Slav peoples, who are more
Christian in the true Christian sense, than other peoples." Let us not insist on this last idea. But it is our belief, as well as Tolstoy's, that tremendous religious forces are contained in Slavdom, and that only these forces can give a new direction to history.

But if the principal task of our time calls for a religious renascence, if Slavdom can and must set free its inner religious forces, this means that the historical vitality of the Slavonic idea is henceforward connected not so much with the natural kinship of the Slavonic nations, as with what can and must grow up out of their unity. The Slavonic idea must become merged, not in fact but in essence, in the idea of a religious transfiguration of life; and this again supposes if not the union, at least a real and creative rapprochement of the several Christian confessions in the name of a transfiguration of life according to Christian principles. The idea of "life becoming a church" (Dostoyevsky), the idea of a return to a church civilisation (but one that would have room for freedom and allow for the world as it is), is alone capable of firing us. Mere Slavonic union without a religious ideal can neither inspire us nor bring us together. That which was the mainspring of the Slavophils must become an historic reality. The Slav idea must be transfused with a religious ideal.

Such is the stage Slavophilism has reached in the Russian consciousness of to-day. So far, as in the early dawn, there is but a faint streak of light and it is still cold. But if the sun of Slavdom is to rise, if it is to give us light and heat, our way lies through our union in Slavdom towards the service of the eternal ideals, bequeathed to us by Christ. We must become one not in our own name but in that of Truth, which is to be realised through the unity of nations. Only as a family of nations can Slavdom give full growth to that which the Lord has placed in it as His idea. As long as we remain separate, we are powerless to give the world that which is contained in us. Until we achieve real union and until the "family" of Slav peoples becomes a real family, we are powerless to do the work entrusted to us by history. Without Slav union we shall never become historically effective, for God has ordained that there should be in the world not one Slav nation, but a whole family of Slav nations.

Russian consciousness, then, is far from having abandoned the traditions of the Slavophils: more than ever it is alive with them, with all that sober sense of responsibility to which we have been educated by the period in which we live.

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