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Religion, National Character, and the “Rediscovery of Russian Roots”

Although I sympathize with Mr. Haney’s wish to avoid the irrelevant associations of the vague and emotively charged terms “nationalism” and “chauvinism,” I find his substitute term “culturalism” highly—even if in the end harmlessly—ambiguous. In precisely what sense of the term “culture” are contemporary Russian “culturalists” interested in and devoted to the Russian culture of earlier times? Mr. Haney tells us that they are interested in both “haute culture” and “popular [culture].” But there would seem to be another pertinent sense of the term “culture,” that of the cultural anthropologists, for whom culture is, roughly, “any set of values and norms that function in a given society.” In this sense, one can speak of the “culture of the Australian bushmen” or, trendily, of contemporary “drug cultures” (or “subcultures”). In Mr. Haney’s first sense of “culture”—high culture (that is, art, religion, law, morality, philosophy)—the term is more or less synonymous with “civilization.” In this sense one speaks of the “culture of the Italian Renaissance.”

The final sense of the term—popular culture—is perhaps intermediate between the other two, containing elements of both. In this sense one speaks of “mass culture.” This last sense strikes me as relatively unimportant in the writings of contemporary Russian “culturalists.” They are concerned primarily with culture in the other two senses: consideration of Russian culture in the anthropologist’s sense leads them to questions about basic national values, national character, and what one Soviet commentator has referred to sarcastically as the “genetic code” of the Russian peasant.¹ Consideration of high culture leads them to a study, and celebration, of old churches, icons, medieval Russian literature, pre-Petrine church music, and Slavophile philosophy.

Those of the new Slavophiles or *pochvenniki*² whose “culturalism” is

1. Alexander Ianov, “Slavianofily i Konstantin Leont'ev,” *Voprosy filosofii*, 1969, no. 8, p. 98.

2. The terms *pochvennik* and *pochvennichestvo*—derived from *pochva* (“soil”)—were made current by Dostoevsky and Apollon Grigoriev in the 1860s. *Pochvennichestvo* may be freely rendered as “cult of the soil and primitive immediacy”; *pochvenniki* are those

I have discussed the topic of this essay with Joseph Brodsky and Arcadi Nebolsine and have learned much from both of them. Neither, of course, is responsible for any of my conclusions.

tinged with xenophobia understandably place special emphasis on Russian national character. Thus Viktor Chalmaev, in *Molodaia gvardiia* (1968), as quoted by Mr. Haney, claims that the Russian character is marked by a sense of “social justice, patriotism, bravery, and also the search for truth and conscientiousness.” That such claims are both one-sided and dubious, and that the very conception of national character is both contradictory and complex, is persuasively argued by Grigorii Pomerants, a sophisticated and articulate *tamizdat* Moscow critic of the new Slavophiles: “There are Russian traits which derive from the heroic [*bogatyrskii*] epochs or aspects of Russian history—expansiveness, daring, and a devil-may-care attitude. And then there is Russian obsequiousness and Russian loutishness. There are traits which were formed in the Church (womanly meekness and a readiness to forgive all) and traits which were formed in the stable [presumably: brutality, coarseness, and profanity].” As for the idealized peasant: “In wartime, when the government permits him to be brave, the Russian peasant pulls himself together and becomes a human being. In peacetime, when the government does not permit this, he loses his self-respect, does vile things, drinks, and behaves insolently while drunk.”³ Pomerants adds that the historical Pugachev and Tolstoy’s fictional Platon Karataev, though polar opposites in every way, are *both* “typical Russian peasants.”⁴

Pomerants rejects the “kvas and honey-cake”⁵ pseudo-*pochvennichestvo* of the *Molodaia gvardiia*-Chalmaev-Soloukhin type, because, as he says, it involves a xenophobic, aggressive, “pogrom” nationalism which seeks the cause of whatever is evil in Russian history in some “foreign microbe”—for example, the Jews.⁶ Pomerants may be an alarmist, but he detects among some of the more extreme spokesmen for nationalist groups which have sprung up around VOPIK—the All-Union Voluntary Society for the Preservation of Monuments of History and Culture, with its seven million members—a thinly veiled threat: “The Russian people can be aroused only by a call to massacre the Jews.” The Soviet authorities, he writes, guess that “the uproar about holy

who profess this cult. As the expression “primitive immediacy” suggests, the nineteenth-century *pochvenniki* were, in a sense, antirationalist; contemporary Soviet *pochvenniki* (or pseudo-*pochvenniki*) are, in several senses, anti-intellectual.

3. Grigorii Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe* (Frankfurt, 1972), p. 172.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 172n.

5. A rough American equivalent for *kvasnoi patriotizm* (an expression used by Chaadaev in polemic with the Slavophiles) would be “coca-cola patriotism”; and for *prianichnoe slavianofil'stvo* (“honey-cake Slavophilism”), “apple-pie Americanism.”

6. Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe*, p. 327. Ianov emphasizes that the spokesmen for the official *narodnost'* of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s were much more xenophobic and anti-Western than the early Slavophiles. See his “Zagadka slavianofil'skoi kritiki” (“The Mystery of Slavophile Criticism”), *Voprosy literatury*, 1969, no. 5, pp. 92, 93.

Russia won't hurt, but will fit in rather nicely: at present it is the red-bilberry jam which garnishes the military-patriotic chicken, and perhaps later it will be something else: the unofficial reconnoitering for an ordinary official pogrom (in the spirit of Comrades Moczar and Gomułka).⁷ This may be overdramatic; but Soloukhin and others of his circle are known to be both xenophobic in general and anti-Semitic in particular. Their "excesses of patriotism," to which Mr. Haney refers, are not, I fear, "just that [and no more]"; rather, they appear to be one side of a coin the other side of which is an unyielding hostility to non-Russians—Jews in the first instance, but also Soviet Asiatics and other non-Slavs.⁸ This hostility is accompanied by a general anti-Westernism and anti-intellectualism.

7. Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe*, p. 163. The parenthetical remark refers to the 1968 anti-Semitic campaign of the Polish Communist Party and government. As for the military relevance of the new Russian chauvinism—a question which Mr. Haney says he is not competent to discuss—I would note the prominent role currently being played by Marshal of the Soviet Union Vasilii Chuikov, hero of the battle of Stalingrad, whose memoirs (parts 2 and 3) were serialized in *Molodaia gvardiia* during 1971 and 1972. One should also keep in mind that Chalmaev's 1964 brochure, *Geroicheskie v sovetskoi literature* (*The Heroic in Soviet Literature*), and his 1965 book, *Mir v svete podviga* (*The World in the Light of the Heroic Exploit*), both include extensive discussions of military heroism and exploits on the field of battle.

8. The most explicit public expression of anti-Semitism by a Soviet neo-Slavophile that I have seen is contained in the recent three-part article by Mikhail F. Antonov, "Uchenie slavianofilov: Vysshii vzlet narodnogo samosoznaniia v Rossii v dolensinskii period" ("The Slavophile Teaching: High Point of Popular Self-Consciousness in Russia in the pre-Leninist Period"), in the *samizdat* Moscow journal *Veche*. (We know of Antonov only that he is a young Moscow architect who in 1968 was declared "not answerable for his actions" and committed to a special psychiatric hospital. See *Khronika tekushchikh sobytii*, Apr. 30, 1969; English trans. in Peter Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia*, London, 1972, p. 431.) Antonov repeatedly attacks "homeless" or "rootless" (*besrodnyi*) and "cosmopolitan" Russian intellectuals—using the familiar Stalinist code-words for "Jewish intellectuals" (see *Veche*, no. 2 [May 1971], pp. 21, 23). He decries the contemporary "violent attack on the soul of the Russian people by innumerable rootless cosmopolitan elements" (no. 3 [September 1971], p. 24) and stresses that the intelligentsia is "alien" to the Russian people and given to—another favorite Stalinist term—"groveling [*niskopoklonstvo*] before the West" (p. 25). Antonov sees the present and pressing "task of the Russian people" as beating off the "attack of rootless and cosmopolitan elements" (*ibid.*, p. 37). Making his meaning absolutely clear, Antonov rebukes Stalin for having entrusted the "fight against the cosmopolitanism of the intellectuals" to the intellectuals themselves (no. 1 [January 1971], p. 17).

It is significant that the editors of *Veche* printed a letter from a reader (apparently Moslem), in no. 4 (January 1972), raising the question of Great Russian anti-Semitism and discrimination against other national minorities. The editors' answer was evasive, citing a nineteenth-century Georgian (General Bagration) and Armenian (Loris-Melikov), both of whom rose to high station under the tsars, as evidence of nondiscrimination. (This information is based on the account given in *Khronika*, Mar. 5, 1972.)

After I had completed this essay I came upon the chilling account of Soviet anti-Semitism in Mikhail Agursky's *samizdat* review of Iurii Ivanov's *Ostorozhno: Sionizm*

In a radio lecture a year or two ago the distinguished historian of Old Russian literature Dmitrii S. Likhachev, while praising the positive qualities of Russian culture, emphasized that it was not entirely self-generated but had been repeatedly enriched by contact with non-Russian cultures: first the Byzantine, then the Tatar, then in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the West European, and finally, at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the Jewish. In making this last statement Likhachev may have had in mind the contributions to Russian culture of such men as Levitan, Gershenzon, Sheshtov, S. L. Frank, Mandelshtam, Pasternak, and Chagall. In any case, his remarks elicited a flood of critical responses—objecting both to his treatment of “Jewish culture” as a distinctive entity, on the model of “Byzantine culture,” and to his positive evaluation of the Jewish impact on Russian culture.

According to Pomerants, the myth of an original pure national character which needs only to be purged of imposed, extraneous vices collapses upon closer examination: “What has been imposed on one for seven hundred years has long since become one’s own. One must free oneself from one’s *own* vile-ness, not from somebody else’s.”⁹ To struggle against the sins and faults of one’s native country while standing wholly on native soil is like trying to pull oneself up out of a swamp—“a task for a Baron Munchausen or a V. Soloukhin.” Pomerants continues: “The old Slavophiles had a yardstick by which to measure Russia—God.¹⁰ The new *pochvenniki* have nothing, except that they love their own children more than other people’s children. But what if what is one’s own is bad?” And he concludes: “In order *truly* to rise one must learn to hate one’s own vile-ness. And to love something better: God, an Idea . . .” (p. 174).

It is, I think, significant that the renewal of interest in Old Russia, which may have been more or less spontaneous in the beginning, was soon co-opted by the Komsomol, through its official organ *Molodaia gvardiia*. Soloukhin is a member of the *Molodaia gvardiia* editorial board, and Chalmaev is a regular contributor. The Supreme Soviet awarded *Molodaia gvardiia* the Order of the

(*Caution: Zionism!*, Moscow, 1970), under the title, “Selling Anti-Semitism in Moscow” (trans. Peter Reddaway), *New York Review of Books*, Nov. 16, 1972, pp. 19–23. According to Agursky, “nationalist ideology presented in communist language is becoming a singularly effective political force” (p. 19) and is developing into a “deification of the [Russian] people, a racism with gnostic overtones, which aspires to fill the religious vacuum that has formed.” His estimate of the seriousness of Russian anti-Semitism is no less alarming than Pomerants’s: “The only way,” Agursky writes, “to end the Russian-Jewish conflict in Russia would be to allow mass emigration by Jews to Israel” (p. 23).

9. Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe*, pp. 171–72 (italics added).

10. Pomerants quotes a stanza from Khomiakov’s powerful religious-political poem “Rossii” (“To Russia”) written in 1854, on the eve of the Crimean War, which includes a vivid catalogue of Russian “sins” (ibid., p. 174).

Red Banner of Labor on the fiftieth anniversary of the journal's founding; the editorial accepting this honor is full of both Russian nationalist and Marxist-Leninist rhetoric.¹¹ The editors of *Molodaia gvardiia* seem to be trying to use Russian chauvinism to fill the ideological void left in the lives of Soviet young people by the collapse of traditional Marxism-Leninism.

Mr. Haney notes that much of the current "culturalism" is "not at variance with . . . Soviet orthodoxy." Interestingly enough, Antonov, writing without pressure of censorship, embraces Lenin though he repudiates Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov as Western formalists tainted by "abstract analytical rationality [*rassudochnost'*]." Lenin, he insists, accepted the Slavophile principle of *obshchinnost'* ("communality"). A world view adequate to the spiritual needs of the Russian people must combine Russian Orthodoxy and Leninism!¹²

The distinction between Chalmaev-style chauvinism and a sympathetic but temperate quest for Russian roots is quite coolly drawn by Efim Dorosh in the passage paraphrased by Mr. Haney: "Old Russia was a land of many things and . . . , although a love and affection for the true accomplishments of the creators of Russian culture is desirable, mysticism, [excessive] emotion, and chauvinism are not."

On two points Dorosh would not disagree with the Soloukhins and Chalmaevs: (1) He tells of seeing a young painter working near a lovely old Moscow church, but with his back turned toward it. The young man was painting a nearby gasoline station with its line of waiting trucks and taxis! Dorosh considers all Russians to blame for the warping of that young painter's scale of values. "We" (Russians) built a filling station opposite the church; "we" changed the ancient name of Ostozhenskaia Street to Metrostroevskaia (Subway-Construction) Street; both actions express a lack of respect for our history and our ancient art. (2) "The sense of history," Dorosh writes, "includes something more than simply love for what is old; it is a moral category, since it gives a man a sense of himself as heir of the past, and an awareness of his responsibility toward the future. I even think that there is something of immortality in it. . . . It is necessary for a man to picture his own life as a prolongation of a life which has long existed and which does not come to an end."¹³ Here is perhaps the core, in a nonchauvinistic formulation, of the ideology of Russian "culturalism."

11. See *Molodaia gvardiia*, 1972, no. 8, editorial.

12. Antonov, "Uchenie slavianofilov," *Veche*, no. 3, p. 39. In invidious contrast to allegedly integral and communal "Leninism-Orthodoxy" stands allegedly fragmented and individualistic "Marxism-Catholicism" (*ibid.*, p. 45)!

13. Efim Dorosh, *Zhivoe derevo iskusstva (The Living Tree of Art)* (Moscow, 1967), p. 158.

But Dorosh does not share the anti-urbanism of the Soviet *pochvenniki* and *derevenshchiki*.¹⁴ Contemporary buildings, he maintains, can fit in with the old, without clashing, so long as “each is perfect in its kind and both are contained within a clear plan for the whole city.” He continues: “An old [wooden] private house or wooden church can only gain from being set next to the severe surfaces of contemporary buildings, and the latter in turn are enriched by having beside them such contrasting forms. What is ancient, standing in the midst of what is contemporary, bears witness to the immortality of a people.”¹⁵

Antonov dissents vigorously from such conciliatory views. “Cosmopolitan rootlessness” is expressed both in the destruction of old churches and wooden houses and in the building of new glass-and-concrete “aquariums”—a process which is turning Moscow into a poor imitation of West European cities. Antonov would tear down the aquariums and rebuild in a neo-Byzantine style—as the architect of St. Basil’s would do if he were working under contemporary conditions.¹⁶ (Exactly how such an architect would build is not clear; but it is clear that he would avoid the principles of “Western architecture” like the plague, since they are “totally alien” to the Russian spirit.)

So much for national character and for the high culture of ancient Russia. What about the philosophy of Russian roots? What about the Slavophiles and Konstantin Leontiev?

With respect to the scholarly, and even journalistic, attention devoted to both Leontiev and the Slavophiles in the 1960s, one can only say: it’s about time! In a lively and informed essay, Alexander Ianov complains that Leontiev is indeed a “forgotten” thinker, but only in Russia.¹⁷ In the West, Ianov notes, the last work on him appeared in 1966 (Gasparini’s long essay in his *Scrittori russi*), in Russia the last appeared in 1915. The last Western dissertation

14. Antonov cites with approval an anti-urban tract of Soloukhin’s (in *Literaturnoia gazeta*) which maintains that the Soviet city-dweller has ceased to be a genuine Russian, and that only the rural Russian is now a true bearer of *natsional’nost’* and *samobytnost’* (cultural “independence” or “self-sufficiency”). See Antonov, “Uchenie slavianofilov,” *Veche*, no. 1, p. 34.

15. Dorosh, *Zhivoe derevo iskusstva*, p. 125.

16. Antonov, “Uchenie slavianofilov,” *Veche*, no. 3, pp. 37–38.

17. Ianov, “Slavianofily,” p. 97. Ianov notes that after long Soviet neglect, Leontiev is suddenly fashionable. His name has appeared more frequently during the past fifty weeks (as of summer 1969) than during the previous fifty years! But Leontiev the thinker is treated inconsistently and superficially. Thus he is called by some (i.e., Chalmaev, whom Ianov does not name) the “Chaadaev of the 1860s–1880s,” but by others a mystical and superstitious Russian chauvinist (*ibid.*, pp. 97–98). An article on Leontiev has appeared in *Veche*, nos. 3 and 4 (September 1971 and January 1972), but I have not seen it. In another article Ianov points to a similarly widespread Soviet ignorance concerning the Slavophiles. See his “Zagadka,” pp. 100–101.

(Kurland's) dates from 1957, the last Russian dissertation from 1909! In fact, the contrast is even starker than Ianov makes it: Stephen Lukashevich published a book on Leontiev in 1967, and the two-volume edition of Leontiev's writings with an introduction and notes by George Ivask appeared in 1969. Among recent Leontiev dissertations there is Alexander Obolensky's, which dates from 1967.

The treatment of Leontiev and the Slavophiles in the authoritative *Filosofskaia entsiklopediia* (published in five volumes between 1960 and 1970) varies in tone with the individual contributor and with the date of publication. P. Shkurinov wrote harshly critical and generally tendentious articles on K. Aksakov (1960), Leontiev (1964), and *pochvennichestvo* (1967); Z. Kamensky contributed rather more informative and somewhat less critical articles on I. Kireevsky (1962), Khomiakov, and the Slavophiles (both 1970). In the last two articles Kamensky's discussion is supplemented by a section written by P. Galtseva and I. Rodnianskaia, which in each case is measurably fairer and more sympathetic than the Kamensky section. The article on Samarin (1967) by S. S. Dmitriev is decently objective, and not entirely unsympathetic. Superior to all of these in seriousness, fairness, and sympathy is the I. Ivano article on the eighteenth-century religious philosopher Grigorii Skovoroda (1970).

On the whole, this group of articles gives the Soviet reader a much fuller account of the thought of the Slavophiles and of other Russian religious philosophers than anything previously available in Soviet publications. Antonov's three-part article in *Veche* (1971) includes a compact anthology of the writings of Khomiakov and Kireevsky. But of course nothing on the Slavophiles yet published in the Soviet Union is comparable to Andrzej Walicki's monumental study, *W kręgu konserwatywnej utopii* (Warsaw, 1964)—which at least some Soviet scholars know.¹⁸

Ianov's study—in its crisp conciseness and easy expertise—is not only a welcome change from the editorial norm of *Voprosy filosofii*; it also introduces a distinction which, if it were to be generally accepted by Soviet historians of philosophy, might make possible the study—perhaps the eventual reprinting of the works!—of Leontiev and the Slavophiles.¹⁹ Ianov's verbal distinction is not easy to render in English; he contrasts thought which is *konservativnaia* with that which is *okhranitel'naia*. The latter term would usually be translated as "conservative" too. But Ianov's conceptual distinction is clear enough; he is contrasting the *konservativnaia* position ("critical, oppositionist, and re-

18. Ianov cites it in "Slavianofily," p. 99.

19. Thus far the only Soviet reprinting of a Slavophile author is the volume of Khomiakov's poetry included in the *bol'shaia seriia* of the *Biblioteka poeta* in 1969.

formist conservatism”) of the Slavophiles and Leontiev with the *okhranitel'naia* position (“official, conforming, and status-quo conservatism”) of Uvarov, Bulgarin, and Pobedonostsev.²⁰

I think that Mr. Haney exaggerates the extent to which the “re-emergence of vigorous Russian nationalism has gone hand in hand with an increasing interest in religion.” I take the term “hand in hand” to express a causal connection; such a connection seems to me dubious, although the two developments are contemporary and to some extent parallel. I also doubt that Soloukhin has, in Mr. Haney’s words, “very personal, deep religious convictions.” Those passages in “Chernye doski” which might be taken as evidence of such convictions are of two kinds: (1) passages in which Soloukhin describes and implicitly condemns the closing and leveling of churches, their conversion into warehouses and workshops, and the destruction of icons, altars, and religious books²¹ (but such protests are based on aesthetic and nationalistic, not religious, grounds), and (2) passages, such as that quoted by Mr. Haney, in which Soloukhin reports the religious sentiments of others, mostly of older peasant women.²² To be sure, Soloukhin refrains from mocking such sentiments or countering them with antireligious sermonettes. But such restraint does not constitute evidence that he has any religious convictions of his own.

I find even less evidence of religious convictions in the case of Chalmaev and the editorial board of *Molodaia gardiia*. Indeed, Pomerants’s rather harsh analysis of the motives of the Soloukhins and Chalmaevs strikes me as quite plausible. They are—he says—ambitious men, with some talent, who “recognize neither sanctities nor taboos.” They want to retain a semblance of independence in their essentially servile position vis-à-vis the authorities.²³ So

20. Ianov develops the distinction between Slavophilism and “official *narodnost*”—with numerous quotations from nineteenth-century sources—in “Zagadka,” pp. 95, 103, 107, 111, and 114–15. He also criticizes those Soviet commentators who have failed to recognize this distinction (pp. 99, 112).

21. “Chernye doski” in *Zimnii den'* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 137–38, 165–66, 194, 199–200, 214, 257, 281. Even here one suspects an anti-Semitic *podtekst*; many of Soloukhin’s readers will be aware that the harsh antireligious campaign of the 1930s was headed by a Jew, Emelian Iaroslavsky (Gubelman), and that Jewish Party members played a considerable role in the confiscation of church treasures and the closing of churches—all of which aroused strong anti-Jewish feelings among Russian Orthodox believers. (See Agursky, “Selling Anti-Semitism in Moscow,” p. 20.)

22. In addition to the passage cited by Mr. Haney, the most impressive concerns the old peasant woman Dunia. (See Soloukhin, “Chernye doski,” p. 263.)

23. Chalmaev’s two books, mentioned earlier, are full of party rhetoric—for example, references to the “heroic exploits” of the CPSU (*Geroicheskoe v sovetskoi literature*, p. 8). This brochure, which went to press in September 1964, just before Khrushchev’s fall, quotes him twice; Chalmaev’s 1965 book does not mention him at all. The brochure admiringly quotes V. Kochetov (pp. 25–26); the book lavishes fulsome praise on several of Kochetov’s works (*Mir v svete podviga*, pp. 325–42).

they join the kind of pseudo-*pochvennik* "opposition" that is uniquely without risk of "serious unpleasantness."²⁴ This, I might add, does not mean that their nationalist feelings are feigned or insincere, but only that if the official wind were blowing in a different direction, they would keep such feelings to themselves. Pomerants concludes that nationalism of the *Molodaia gvardiia* type is "philistine" (*meshchanskii*), opportunistic, untroubled by moral doubts, and lacks any feeling for the tragic dimension of Russian history. When Soloukhin tries to "imitate" the tragic sense of Russian destiny, he falls into empty rhetoric.²⁵ This judgment, though severe, agrees with my estimate of both Chalmaev and Soloukhin and of the part they are playing in the current revival of interest in "Holy Russia."

But what about other aspects of the "rediscovery of Russian roots" that seem to suggest a degree of religious commitment? For example, the passion for collecting icons? I would contend that nonreligious motives prevail here too: aesthetic motives, the "excitement of the treasure hunt," competitiveness and the desire to possess a "unique exemplar,"²⁶ a cluster of antiquarian and nationalistic motives, and even—in a few cases—acquisitive ones (icons as a "good investment").

Dorosh, who says explicitly that the "traditions of the church (*tserkovnost'*)" are alien to him,²⁷ expresses something like religious feeling in this connection—but I find it closer to "moral" or "historical" feeling. "If you imagine how many tears have been shed," he writes, "in the course of half a thousand years [in a certain church at Zagorsk]," you will come to regard the spot as "holy and precious."²⁸ This echoes a remark of Ivan Kireevsky's, reported by Herzen (with which Dorosh was undoubtedly familiar), that a certain icon of the Virgin had "for whole ages" absorbed the "prayers of the afflicted and unhappy. . . . It had become a living organism, a meeting place between the Creator and men." But Kireevsky, in significant contrast to Dorosh, dropped to his knees before the icon and "prayed meekly" to the Mother of God.²⁹

24. Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe*, p. 164. I confess that I find Mr. Haney's comparison of Chalmaev's alleged "search for the broad Russian soul" with that of the "lesser Slavophiles"—apparently he means Aksakov, Samarin, and P. Kireevsky—offensive to the memory of honest, intelligent, and sensitive thinkers.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

26. Soloukhin himself recognizes these last two classes of motives. See "Chernye doski," pp. 126, 132, 213. Brodsky sees such motives as involving an obsession with mere things, a kind of "fetishism."

27. Dorosh, *Zhivoe derevo iskusstva*, p. 236.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

29. Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, trans. Constance Garnett, trans. revised Humphrey Higgs, 4 vols. (London, 1968), 2:539.

In another place Dorosh expresses what might be taken for a kind of religious feeling; however, I would interpret it as aesthetic feeling. He writes: "In the squares of the Kremlin, paved with flat slabs of stone, its cathedrals rising to the heavens, you have a sense of being in touch with eternity. . . ." ³⁰ That this is an aesthetic, not a religious experience is, I think, evident from the phrase which follows immediately: "such is the infinite clarity of this architecture."

I do not deny that interest in and commitment to religion in the Soviet Union is increasing or that there has been a significant rise in the number of baptisms and church weddings—of which *Leningradskaiia pravda* has been complaining, as Mr. Haney reminds us. What I question is the connection of these phenomena with the "rediscovery of Russian roots." If the connection were as close as Mr. Haney suggests, one would expect the Russian Orthodox Church to be gaining members at a rapid rate. In fact, it is far outdistanced in this respect by the Evangelical Baptist denomination, whose members have no special interest in the Russian past. The Baptists are strong among the Ukrainians and other non-Great Russian groups.

The current trend toward restoring crosses to Orthodox churches may have quite secular motives: aesthetic, historical, "Intouristic." Even if the ringing of church bells should become widespread in Soviet cities—which is not wholly inconceivable—it would be premature to conclude that religious motives had prevailed. The motives might be aesthetic, Intouristic, or both.

Dorosh points out that those Soviet secularists who cling to their "iconomachy" (*ikonoborchestvo*—on the model of the term "theomachy" [*bogoborchestvo*]), resisting the current Russian passion for icons in fear that it will encourage a religious revival, are making the same mistake as religious believers who assume that the "saint and his image are identical." In any case, Dorosh says, the icons in functioning churches are so dark and so obscured by their metal cases as to be aesthetically unavailable. In that setting they amount to little more than "fetishes, magical objects."³¹ Dorosh is here emphasizing in a rather blunt way the obvious distinction between the *aesthetic* and *religious* meaning and function of icons, church architecture, church music, and so forth.³² That this distinction had long been ignored or denied by official Soviet antireligionists does not in the least detract from its validity.

My own—no doubt professionally biased—guess is that the genuinely religious searchings of Soviet young people will be better served by the new Soviet editions of the writings of religious thinkers, both Slavic and Western, and by sympathetic commentaries on their works, than by the restoring of

30. Dorosh, *Zhivoe derevo iskusstva*, p. 124.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

32. Soloukhin repeats and elaborates this distinction ("Chernye doski," pp. 212–13).

crosses to Russian churches, or by all the icon-hunts, verse, fiction, and editorial sermonizing of Soloukhin, Chalmaev, and the entire editorial board of *Molodaia gvardiia* taken together.³³ I have in mind, for example, the splendid four-volume edition of Plato (which includes translations by Vladimir Soloviev, among others), edited by V. F. Asmus and A. F. Losev (Moscow, 1968–72); Piama P. Gaidenko's informed and sympathetic study of the thought of Kierkegaard;³⁴ the two-volume edition of Skovoroda's poetry, fables, correspondence, and religious-philosophical dialogues (first edition of six thousand copies, Kiev, 1961; second edition of one hundred thousand, 1972); the volume of Khomiakov's poetry already mentioned; the works of Dostoevsky; and so forth.

Finally, I would suggest three possible motives for the new wave of Russian "culturalism"—beyond those mentioned by Mr. Haney: (1) There is the "demographic trauma" experienced by Great Russians when the latest Soviet census was published and they learned that they were barely holding their own in terms of biological reproduction, while the Asiatic—mainly Muslim—peoples of the Soviet Union were increasing dramatically.³⁵ For the first time the Great Russians face the prospect of being reduced to a minority of the total Soviet population. In view of their dwindling role in the Soviet future, it is not surprising that Great Russians should be retreating into the "greatness of their past." It is in this sense, perhaps, that Pomerants's reference to *utrobny patriotizm* ("back-to-the-womb patriotism") is most apropos.³⁶ (2) Mr. Haney notes that the new book by Likhachev and his daughter stresses the similarities between the aesthetics of Russian icon-painting and certain trends in twentieth-century art. Dorosh, in fact, had made the same point earlier.³⁷ The powerful stylization and "abstractness" of Russian icons provide the Soviet viewer with a welcome alternative to the representational realism which dominates nineteenth-century Russian as well as Soviet painting—as even the most casual visitor to the Russian Museum in Leningrad or the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow is painfully aware. (3) But there is also the more general point: Most contemporary Western art is still inaccessible

33. The remarkable Soviet motion picture *Andrei Rublev*—which I saw in Paris in 1970—may well increase interest in Russian Orthodoxy as well as in Old Russian culture. But "interest in" is not yet "commitment to." Moreover, this film operates at a cultural and intellectual level quite distinct from that of the writings of Soloukhin and Chalmaev.

34. P. P. Gaidenko, *Tragediia estetizma: Opyt kharakteristiki mirosozertsaniia Serena Kirkegora* (Moscow, 1970).

35. This point is made persuasively by Georgie Anne Geyer in her lively and informative, if occasionally somewhat inaccurate, account, "A New Quest for the Old Russia," *Saturday Review*, Dec. 25, 1971, p. 17.

36. Pomerants, *Neopublikovannoe*, p. 166.

37. Dorosh, *Zhivoe derevo iskusstva*, p. 139.

to most of the educated Soviet public.³⁸ And Western (and indeed Eastern!) architecture, both old and new, is a treasure which only the tiniest fraction of the Soviet cultivated public will ever be able to experience personally. Educated Russians know this only too well. So, quite naturally, they turn with an almost desperate intensity to the treasures which *are* available to them—old churches, icons, and pre-Petrine church music.

38. This last point was suggested to me by Arcadi Nebolsine.