

Documents

A Brotherly Word

To All Members of the Hungarian Lutheran Church

We thank God that he is still working amongst us today. Nevertheless, we are conscious of our responsibility towards our church, and this inspires us to raise our voices, because we see signs of crisis in its life. In November 1985 we engaged in brotherly conversation in order to examine the reasons for this crisis, and to search for solutions. So far, the leaders of our church have not responded adequately to the issues raised. We make public the results of both our present and any future discussions, hoping to inspire in others a sense of responsibility, and together to seek the way towards renewal in the life of our church.

1. We confess that

— The greatest treasure of the church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ and if this is proclaimed purely, it is still the power of God (Romans 1:16). It effectively brings about man's reconciliation with God, and so achieves new life in the context of human existence in today's world.

— The Gospel is the church's sole foundation and its guiding purpose. The church exists because the Holy Spirit, through the Gospel, awakens faith in human hearts, and through faith binds and shapes them into a congregation, the body of Christ, a brotherly communion. Equally, the church exists as the instrument of the Holy Spirit to make the Gospel known to all men.

— Only the Gospel can give correct norms and direction to the inner structure

of the church and to its service in the world. All other bases for the church's existence obscure its divine origin and real mission.

We consider to be mistaken those who, in considering the question of the church's mission, regard the theology of diaconia as being equivalent to the proclamation of the Gospel, making it possible, *ipso facto*, to separate diaconia from its source, the Gospel. This kind of interpretation of diaconia distorts and weakens the Gospel. Furthermore, the forcible turning of diaconia into an absolute truth curtails, even destroys, the internal freedom of church life. The breakdown of theological pluralism leads to intellectual infantilism, makes free theological discussion impossible, and poisons the atmosphere of brotherly love.

Yet diaconia, which emerges from the Gospel, represents a vital sign of church life in the healing of physical and mental debility, and also in the sense that, in church life, no one rules the other, but everyone lives and serves with self-denying love for the benefit of others.

2. We confess that the life of the church is rooted in the congregations. It follows from this that:

— all general church activities must be examined and developed from the viewpoint of congregational activity;

— there must be a search for a way out of the disintegrating, traditional church

structure towards a new form of life;

— there must be a reconsideration of the structural organisation of our church. We consider it necessary to simplify and decentralise the judicial structure, and that the election of leaders at every level should be carried out without outside influence, within a prescribed time, and with the possibility of recall.

3. We consider it extremely important, from the point of view of the present and the future of our church, to examine the theoretical and practical implications of secularisation. We have to face this world-wide phenomenon, which in our country is combined with ideological atheism, so that we can give the people of our church the help so far denied them.

Our church must steadfastly strive to ensure that Christians are active in seeking general knowledge and information about our world:

— to examine how Christians can fight authoritatively against war and brutality;

— to raise the spiritual and scientific standard of theological education, to clarify the position of women theology students, and of those taking correspondence courses;

— to examine and seek out solutions to today's problems concerning mission, evangelisation, and the task of ecumene;

— to extend the duties of lay people within the congregations and the church in general;

— to ensure the renewal of many and varied forms of brotherly contact in our church.

We have to develop an atmosphere within which sincere and brotherly criticism comes naturally. We have to strive to achieve the growth of mutual respect and love within the freedom of the Spirit. We have to be each other's pastors so that no one should be alone.

— to recognise the right of our church to have its own school, as do other

denominations.

4. We confess that the church carries within it a responsibility for the whole created world, and for that nation within whose political boundaries it lives. The Church practises its political responsibility by proclaiming God's word and through the activities of its institutions, as well as through the service of individual Christians within the community. We consider it offensive to the identity of the church anywhere in the world, that the church and its official representatives should be forced into active political life and the exercise of direct power, political decision-making, and the taking up of particular political standpoints. Participation in political life is the individual freedom and responsibility of every Christian — including those holding office in the church — as citizens of the state.

5. We suggest that as soon as possible national conferences should be organised, in which — by voluntary application — any member of our church may take part, and where, in a responsible manner and in an atmosphere of brotherhood and freedom, we can deal with the above-mentioned and other questions concerning the church.

In spite of the failings of our church life, of our sins and omissions, our hope is in Christ, who has all power in heaven and earth, who has commissioned us, and who is with his people till the end of the world.

Budapest, March 1986.

Note. One copy, personally signed, has been handed to the Presidium of the Hungarian Lutheran Church by our brotherly working group. We are making it public to our congregations without signatures, so as not to divert their attention from its content, and so that questions of personality instead of the desired theoretical clarifications should not come to the fore.

Concerning Measures for the Consolidation and Improvement of Atheist Propaganda in the Country.

At a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on 20 February 1986 (reported in Rabotnichesko Delo (Workers' Cause) the following day), the question of religion figured among the proposals ratified for discussion at the forthcoming 13th Party Congress. In the section entitled "Enhancing the Party's Leadership Role", the Central Committee states:

Ideological efforts must be intensified to counteract religious anachronisms. Socialist festivals and rituals must win ever-wider recognition, and the neglect of the material-technical basis of the socialist festival-ritual system must be overcome.

Systematic measures must be taken to improve the material-technical basis of propaganda and agitative activities, with special attention being paid to the widespread use of the achievements resulting from scientific and technical progress.

The skills of party organs and ideological specialists must be perfected so that they may correctly determine the goals, tasks and methods of ideological work at national, regional, and local level. The use of scientifically-formulated methods and sociological research must be improved in order to secure a swift and precise response, the setting of a realistic tone, and the successful impact of our ideological activities.

The language used here bears a remarkably close resemblance to that used by the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party almost three decades earlier in a document setting out measures which it considered necessary at that time in order to increase the effectiveness of atheist propaganda. Significantly, the entire 1957 document — the minutes of the Politburo, No. 344 (26 December) — was reprinted at about the same time this year in Ateistichna Tribuna (1986, No. 1), where it is described as "a truly historic document, which continues to inspire the scientific and ideological cadres to

develop the theory and practice of atheism in our country".

The far-reaching political and economic reforms in our country, brought about as a result of the victorious Ninth-of-September armed uprising, placed the relationship between the state and the church on a new footing. The church, as an establishment for the propagation, through its subject-matter, of a reactionary ideology, was separated from the state. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria guarantees all citizens freedom of conscience, i.e., the right of believers to profess their religion and to perform religious rites, and the right of atheists to propagate their scientific, materialist views. At the same time, it forbids the utilisation of the church and religion for political ends, as well as the formation on a religious basis of political organisations.

As a result of the establishment of the foundations of a socialist society in our country, the roots of religion in society have been seriously undermined. Under the direction of the Communist Party, an immense amount of scientific and culturally progressive activity is being carried out in order to disseminate the materialist view of life, and thus increase the awareness of the working masses. Marxism-Leninism is becoming the dominant ideology of our society. All this has resulted in the liberation from religious prejudices of a large proportion of the workers, the peasants, and the intelligentsia, and in their conscious and active participation in the building of the new life.

In this radically changed situation, in which the reactionary forces within the country have been defeated not only politically but also economically, and in which the vast majority of the people are certainly following the path of socialism, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which was in the past closely associated with the capitalist class, is beginning to seek real avenues towards *rapprochement* and

co-operation with the people's democratic state. It is in sympathy with a number of government measures pertaining to the internal and foreign policy of the country — it declares itself to be in favour of the strengthening of Bulgarian-Soviet friendship and the defence of world peace, and it expresses its readiness to help the Fatherland Front in the accomplishment of the tasks which it is performing in the public interest. In these ways, the church is setting about the implementation of a policy of loyalty to the socialist state.

This positive fact, has not, however, been correctly evaluated by party committees and organisations, nor by workers on the ideological front. They have counted on the long-standing atheistic traditions of this country and the religious indifference of a large part of the population to act as a sufficient barrier against the influence of religious ideology. To be precise, it is because of this, and because of an unwarranted fear of negative results stemming from anti-religious propaganda, that there appears to be an underestimation of the need for an ideological struggle against reactionary religious conceptions and, in many places, this task has been completely neglected. All this inevitably leads to an upsurge of church and religious activity, and to the spread and consolidation of religious ideology among certain sections of working people. In this way, the resolutions of the Fifth Congress of the BCP to conduct by a variety of means an active ideological struggle against religious ideology have been almost forgotten.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, having taken advantage both of the constitutional decrees concerning freedom of conscience, and of the absence of atheistic propaganda, has taken organisational and ideological measures to spread religion widely among the working people, and to preserve and consolidate religious usages and rites. Orthodox Christian brotherhoods are being formed; and in a number of larger towns and villages there are church choirs into which women and young people are being attracted. The church is very active in the organisation of pilgrimage groups, which visit monasteries and other religious and historical places. Recently, an appreciable increase has been noted in the number of people attending church, of whom a

considerable proportion are young. In all these areas of activity, no small role is played by the wives of priests, who cleverly exploit the fading or neglected activity of the former women's societies.

For several years, and particularly since the 20th Congress of the CPSU and the events in Hungary, when international reaction was to try to strike a blow against the communist movement and the people's democratic system, certain reactionary clergy have taken up a defiant stance and openly called for non-compliance with the laws and provisions of the Constitution. They were encouraged in these actions by the known disloyal behaviour of certain highly-placed ecclesiastical figures, and also by the synodal press. In the great majority of cases, these activities are the work of the class enemy and of its foreign promoters, who channel considerable energy into taking advantage of the body of religious believers and the religious establishment in order to further their treacherous, counter-revolutionary aims.

The party committees and organisations do not apply themselves with enough attention to the attempts to implant and expand the influence of religious ideology. In a number of places, communists are familiar neither with questions concerning the nature and role of religion, nor with the party's position *vis à vis* resolutions passed and *vis à vis* the church, in the particular circumstances of socialist construction. In addition, it is not uncommon for members of the party and activists of the DSNM (Dimitrov Young Communist League) to perform religious observances either openly or in secret. By doing so, they become propagators of religious superstitions and prejudices.

It is necessary to place on record the fact that the Committee for Religious Cults and Denominations in the Council of Ministers has not announced any intensification of religious propaganda, nor has it proposed effective measures for the elimination of the undesirable activities which have been identified in the operations of the church.

Recognising the seriousness of the question of overcoming religious superstitions and prejudices in the consciousness and way of life of the working people,

and bearing in mind the shortcomings in anti-religious propaganda, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party has made the following

RESOLUTIONS

1. It places party committees and organisations under an obligation to take every measure to widen and strengthen atheist propaganda. As the basis for this propaganda, it proposes the accessible elucidation and dissemination of natural-scientific knowledge among the population.

Particular attention should be addressed to elucidating questions about the construction of the universe, the origin of life and of man, the character of natural forces, the objectivity of natural and social laws, the new achievements in the spheres of astronomy, biology, chemistry, physiology, physics and other sciences, which undermine the foundations of idealist and religious concepts of the world and confirm the materialist view of nature and society.

In the practical solution of these problems the following must be borne in mind:

Scientific-atheist propaganda is not an end in itself, but a means used by the Communist Party to include the vast masses of working people in the policy of the socialist state, a means of involving them in the building of socialism, of cleansing their consciousness of all kinds of relics of the old regime. Therefore, the following directive of Lenin should be firmly adhered to: "Any kind of offence to the feelings of believers must be carefully avoided, as this leads only to the strengthening of religious fanaticism." The expression of anything offensive to the feelings of believers and church officials is at variance with the party's programme and policy, and can only damage the cause of socialism.

Any intervention in church affairs by state or party organs is inadmissible. Any instance of interference is a violation of the independence of the church guaranteed by the Constitution. In the struggle against religion, the party can use only religion's method of persuasion and its firmly repudiated method of administration. Only patient, skilfully organised

educative work, subservient always to the practical tasks of the construction of socialism, will help believers to free themselves from their religious delusions once and for all.

The socialist state assures full freedom of conscience: freedom for believers to confess their religion and freedom for atheists to propagate the atheist view of life. But freedom of conscience is not compatible with the utilisation of religion for political purposes; the priest of a religious cult is obliged to organise his activity within the sphere of purely religious matters. Every crossing of this frontier is a violation of Article 78 of the Constitution.

Religion is a private matter as far as the state is concerned: the state and its organs cannot oblige or compel anyone to renounce their religion or their church, and does not divide citizens into believers and non-believers, nor exclude followers of a religious cult from political trust. Religion, however, is not a private matter as far as the Communist Party is concerned. Marxism-Leninism and religion are incompatible and radically opposed ideologies. The promotion and practice of religious rites are not compatible with membership of the party.

The church's past should not be confused with its present. In the particular circumstances of the building of socialism, when the vast mass of believers adopt the policy of the Communist Party and, in fact, implement it, a path of loyal behaviour and full support for the people's democratic regime opens up for the church.

2. It charges party committees and organisations to attract, for the conduct of scientific-atheist propaganda, lecturers who are exceptionally well qualified in scientific matters, teachers in higher educational institutions, scientific workers, schoolteachers, specialists in the fields of industry and rural economy, writers and artists, who are capable of persuasively expounding the materialist view of nature and society and the anti-scientific character of religion.

The "Propaganda and Agitation" section of the Central Committee of the BCP and the party committees should organise periodic courses and seminars for the training and retraining in atheist issues of propagandist staff.

3. The Politburo of the Central Committee emphasises that it is incumbent upon all social, cultural-educational and ideological organisations and institutes to accept the major portion of responsibility in the fight to spread the materialist world-view among the population. Religious prejudices and superstitions can be overcome only on the basis of the common progress of all the cultural-educational activities of the working people. Thus, the social organisations — Fatherland Front, trades unions, the Dimitrov Young Communist League, and others — must determine to improve their ideological work. It is necessary for lectures on natural-scientific and atheist themes to be given systematically, for books and films with an anti-religious content to be debated, for excursions, outings and visits to be made to great socialist construction projects, historical sites and other cultural monuments connected with the state's heroic past.

It is necessary to create a special atmosphere for the conduct of civil marriages and the civil registration of new-born infants, by for example the skilful use of individual features from popular traditions of the past. On parallel lines with this, it is important to strive for the public acceptance of new festivals celebrating the triumph of the socialist revolution in our country, Bulgarian-Soviet friendship, and the working people's new socialist way of life: 9 September, 7 November, 8 March, 1 May etc. Likewise, state ceremonies should be organised to mark the anniversaries of the commissioning of industrial enterprises or the founding of cooperative farms, birthdays should be celebrated, and so on.

4. The national and local press should periodically publish popular-scientific and theoretical articles as well as other atheist propaganda material.

The publishing houses of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the National Council of the Fatherland Front, the Central Committee of the DSNM (Dimitrov Young Communist League) and the Central Council of the Trades Unions should increase the number of popular-

scientific pamphlets published and enlist Bulgarian authors to produce accessible reading matter, using materials from real life, in order to expose the reactionary nature of religious superstitions. To that end, special anthologies should be brought out, while *Profizdat* [the Trades Union publishing house — *Ed.*] should continue publishing its "Scientific-Atheist Knowledge" series and expand its circulation beyond trade-union activist circles.

5. The Ministry of Culture and Education must ensure in all schools the purposeful teaching of the social and natural-technical disciplines, the study of which offers many possibilities for the refutation of unscientific and idealistic views of the world, and from which may be drawn inferences and general conclusions of an atheistic nature.

For this purpose, an adequate number of popular-scientific films revealing the nature of such phenomena as electricity, atomic energy, and the structure and movement of matter must be produced, as well as films on the origin and motion of the earth, the origin of life, etc.

6. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences must undertake the publication of collections and monographs by eminent atheist Bulgarian scholars, public figures and writers.

7. The Union of Bulgarian Writers should take steps to produce artistic works of a profoundly atheist character, revealing the reactionary role of religious ideology and the church during certain periods in the history of our country.

8. The "Vassil Kolarov" state library should publish methodological and bibliographical material, dealing with the harm done by religious superstitions, the radical opposition that exists between science and religion, etc.; it should arrange exhibitions on natural-scientific and scientific-atheist literature.

From Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo minutes No. 344, 26 December 1957, reprinted in Ateistichna Tribuna No. 1, 1986.

Ukrainian Catholics Appeal to the Kremlin

The "Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of the Ukraine" is presumed to be the same group as the "Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics". The latter was formed in western Ukraine some time before September 1982, and, so far as is known, has remained under the chairmanship of Ukrainian Catholic lay leader Iosyp Terelya, who was re-elected chairman on 12 January 1984. Terelya has been imprisoned since 8 February 1985. It was from the membership of the Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics that

the Action (or Initiative) Group for the Defence of the Rights of Believers and the Church was formed on 9 September 1982. Around mid-April 1984, the Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics published one issue of the Ukrainian Catholic Herald, a samizdat journal containing essays, news items, poems and other material.

The Ukrainian Catholic Church, formerly known as the Greek-Catholic Church, has been illegal in the USSR since 1946.

To the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,
Moscow,
The Kremlin

A,

in the Catacombs of the Ukraine

Three years ago the representatives of the Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of the Ukraine, on behalf of the Action Group for the Defence of the Rights of Believers and the Church in the Ukraine, and on behalf of millions of Ukrainian Catholics, backed by the signatures of the chairman of the Action Group for the Defence of the Rights of Believers and the Church in the Ukraine, Vasyl Kobryn, and the secretary of this group, the priest Hryhori Budzinsky, appealed to the government of the USSR to restore to the Ukrainian Catholic Church the right to conduct legal activity in the Ukraine, within the USSR, and to restore the rights which were forcibly suppressed in 1946 and 1949.

It would seem that these people have not done anything wrong, or anything criminal by their action. They have not spread any slander; they have only affirmed and defended a historical truth known to the entire world. And yet, as a result of this action, these people, who value the truth more highly than their own lives, were condemned by a court like criminals. Vasyl Kobryn, the chairman of the Action Group for the Defence of the Rights of Believers and the Church in the Ukraine, was sentenced to three years' confinement in a corrective-labour camp, and Iosyp Terelya, chairman of the

Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of the Ukraine, was sentenced to seven years' confinement in a strict regime labour camp and five years' exile.

As the Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of the Ukraine, we now appeal once more to the government of the USSR to restore the rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the Ukraine, within the USSR, and state that:

1. From 1946 to 1949 the rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church were forcibly suppressed, but that church was not destroyed, since faith in God and in God's Church cannot be destroyed by any *sobor* or by any law. Believers can be physically destroyed individually or *en masse*. But since no mass physical destruction took place between 1946 and 1949, the Ukrainian Catholic Church has survived, is flourishing, and is growing stronger day by day in the catacombs into which it was forcibly driven. Every new wave of repression serves to strengthen still further the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the Catacombs of the Ukraine. Looking at the past forty years, it is clear that the prophetic words of the divine founder of the Ecumenical (that is, Catholic) Church, Jesus Christ, have come true: "And the gates of Hell shall not prevail

against it.” And today, too, we say joyfully, echoing that glorious prophet of our people, Taras Shevchenko: “Our soul is not dying, our will is not dying, and the insatiable one shall not plough fields on the bottom of the sea!” [poetic expression of impossibility — *Ed.*] and we echo also his call: “Fight and ye shall win. God helps everyone.” The Church is the living presence and the living union of living believers. We know and bear witness to the whole world that today, as in days of old, there remain millions of such Ukrainian Catholic believers. All the bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, together with their Metropolitan of L'vov, the overwhelming majority of priests, and millions of believers, have remained faithful to the Universal Catholic Church. In places where there is no foreign-language Catholic church, some believers attend former Ukrainian Catholic churches which have been forced to cease being Catholic, but this does not mean that they have gone over to a non-Catholic faith. A vivid example of this was provided by the Greek-Catholic believers in Pryshivshchyna, (the Prešov region in Czechoslovakia); although these believers had previously attended non-Catholic churches, (which were the only ones available to them and which earlier had been forcibly taken from them and given into the hands of non-Catholics), as soon as the rights of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite were restored, they all immediately began attending Catholic churches.

2. The Universal Catholic Church, including the Ukrainian Catholic Church, has never opposed and does not now oppose the state. On the contrary, unfortunately, history clearly shows that different states have opposed and still oppose the Church in different ways. For example, in 1914, when the Russian tsarist army entered the western Ukraine, which was under Austrian rule at that time, Ukrainian Catholic bishops and the Metropolitan of L'vov were immediately arrested, and pressure was put on the clergy to renounce the Catholic faith. But neither the clergy nor the believers renounced their faith. They remained faithful both to Catholicism and to their native Eastern Rite, to their native language, and to their national traditions. In former times the enemies of the people

had termed this religious and national consciousness and love of freedom “Mazepist separatism”.

3. The Universal Catholic Church, and thus the Ukrainian Catholic Church, has never recognised and does not now recognise any chauvinistic nationalism, whatever its source may be. Over the centuries the Ukrainian people have often been persecuted because of the rabid chauvinism of their neighbours. The Catholic Church, in accordance with its principles, has always supported and continues to support friendship between nations and social justice, and strongly opposes the use of the gallows, bullets, the axe, and the knout against those who champion religious and national freedom. Is it not a crying outrage to label the Ukrainian Catholic Church by saying that it displays “bourgeois nationalism” and “clerical nationalism” simply because Ukrainian Catholics, under conditions of centuries-long oppression, have maintained above all else not only their religion, but also their national identity, and their desire for social justice? All this is known the world over, and is acknowledged by every fair-minded person. Only rabid enemies of the people could characterise such fruitful activity on the part of the church as hostile, or accuse of collaboration with the occupiers of their country the very people who are persecuted by that occupying power.

4. The Ukrainian Catholic Church does not demand special treatment; it seeks only the rights proclaimed and guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, particularly in Article 52. But the Constitution itself can guarantee nothing if the rights it proclaims are not guaranteed by those who are responsible for so doing. Therefore, the Central Committee of Ukrainian Catholics in the Catacombs of the Ukraine demands an end to all discrimination against the Ukrainian Catholic Church; the release, as a matter of priority, of prisoners of conscience Terelya, Kobryn, Polaniya Bat'yo, and priests Vynnyts'ky, Roman, etc.; permission for the Ukrainian Catholic Church to conduct legal activity (permission which is granted to other Catholic groups in the USSR); and for the Metropolitan of L'vov and the Ukrainian Catholic bishops to occupy their rightful historical position once more. In this connection, the Central

Committee of Ukrainian Catholics advises the government of the USSR to contact with the administration of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the Vatican. When there is freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, the Catholic Church always tries to be loyal to the state. The Catholic Church does not seek political power. Catholic clergy are forbidden to engage in political activity. The church pursues spiritual goals, and gives priority to man's spiritual values and his eternal supernatural goal; it looks upon earthly temporal life as a gift from God, for on it depends man's eternal fate. We are to live in honest labour and love, with respect for every individual and his right to dignity and freedom of choice. Honest labour and love are a pledge of worldly happiness and joy, a pledge of the preservation and growth of those spiritual values which will lead us to eternal happiness and joy. When confronted with opposing views, the church preaches equitable, peaceful coexistence, and condemns enemies of human dignity who violate legitimate rights and prevent freedom of choice. The Second Vatican Council announced the "Decree on Religious Freedom". In this the Catholic Church proclaimed the freedom of the apostolate and freedom of conviction, thus condemning the imposition of any sort of totalitarian or authoritarian views. Unfortunately, at present there are entire systems which regard spiritually-inclined people as enemies, which forcibly impose their views on young people, and which consider any talk of freedom of choice to be ideological sabotage.

5. At the present time, too, it is clear to all that the activity of the Catholic

Church, particularly the activity of Pope John Paul II and his travels in foreign countries, is not intended to constitute a state within a state, but is directed toward the benefit of the whole world, toward friendship and brotherhood between peoples and nations, toward the goal of useful, conscientious labour and just distribution, and against violence and terrorism, against any incitement to religious, racial, national, and all other forms of conflict and hatred. Such activity is not a hindrance to the state, but a major benefit.

6. By restoring the rights of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Soviet state and Soviet government would win the respect of the whole Universal Catholic Church, the respect of Catholics (who constitute nearly a quarter of the world's population), and throughout the world the respect of all people of integrity and good will; confidence would grow significantly, and the authority of the Soviet state and the Soviet government would be immeasurably enhanced. The correction of a mistake made in the past would redound only to their credit.

In the Catacombs of the Ukraine,
8 February 1986.

Central Committee of
Ukrainian Catholics in
the Catacombs of the
Ukraine.

The signatures appended after those of Kobryn and Terelya will appear in the next appeals, when many more will be called upon to sacrifice themselves.

A Favourable View of Christian Morality in a Soviet Book

The following document takes the form of a Czech samizdat review of a book published officially in the Soviet Union. According to the Czech reviewer, František Kautman, the book reaches conclusions which are surprising for an officially-published Soviet writer. The author of the book, Ye. N. Davydov, implicitly rejects several Marxist assumptions, and approves the idea that only a return to firm moral values with a Christian basis can save mankind from pessimism and nihilism. Kautman's review presents a lengthy and detailed analysis of the background against which Davydov has written his book.

The book, entitled *Etika lyubvi i metafizika svoevolii* (*The Ethics of Love and the Metaphysics of Licence*) was published in 1982 in an edition of 50,000 copies — a medium-sized edition by Soviet standards. It was brought out by the Molodaya gvardiya (*Young Guard*) publishing house, whose recent past has been somewhat controversial. It has published a number of works of a Russian nationalist orientation, which has on occasion led to attacks on it in other, non-nationalist publications, and even to dismissals of its editors. Inherent in much nationalist writing is the theme of the need to return to the values of the past, including moral values, and consequently a recognition of the value of religion. It would appear that Davydov's book is another contribution to this school of thought.

¹František Kautman is a former Communist Party member, and a writer whose works now appear only in samizdat. Born in 1927, he studied at the Maxim Gorky Institute of Literature in Moscow from 1952-1957, and was then editor of the official Czech weekly *Kultura* until 1958. From 1959 to 1971 he worked in the Department of Czech Literature of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He lost this post in 1971, in the post-1968 purge of intellectuals. He held various menial jobs until 1974, when he was retired on health grounds. He published two books of essays on Dostoyevsky in 1966 and 1968, and a further samizdat study of the writer in 1977. He has published articles on a number of literary and historical subjects in samizdat, and also poetry.

Criticism of atheistic existentialism is nothing new or unusual in Soviet philosophical literature and has been carried on since the end of the Second World War basically from a Marxist point of view which, over the years, has gradually abandoned its original over-simplified dogmatic criteria and adopted more nuanced attitudes. Indeed, by the end of the seventies we were even beginning to encounter a degree of sympathy for some of the ideas of Camus and — in particular — Sartre (S. Velikovskiy: *V poiskakh utrachenogo smysla. Ocherki literaturny trageshchego gumanizma vo Frantsii* (Moscow, 1979); M. Kissel': *Filosofskaya evolyutsiya Zh. P. Sartra* (Leningrad, 1976); L. Filippov: *Filosofskaya antropologiya Zhan-Polya Sartra* (Moscow, 1977).) Sartre's development, particularly in the sixties when his attempts to reconcile his views with Marxism gave rise to a senile flirtation with Maoist notions of cultural revolution, encouraged such sympathies. Camus died too soon; besides which he was much more uncompromising towards Stalinism than Sartre: on the other hand, the humanist interpretation of his *homme absurde* is more accessible, and one could maintain that the humanising capacity of Camus' philosophy is greater and offers more scope.

In this context, therefore, Ye. N. Davydov's book *Etika lyubvi i metafizika svoevolii* (*The Ethics of Love and the Metaphysics of Licence*) published in Moscow in 1982, would not appear, at first glance, to be anything out of the ordinary. The book's ground-plan is a juxtaposition of the philosophical attitudes of two representatives of classic Russian literature, Lev Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, with those of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the two Western European models for Russian pessimism and nihilism. This leads on logically to a critique of Western European existentialism, chiefly as seen in the works of Sartre and Camus.

However, the book's approach is based on the controversial premise that both Tolstoy's critique of Schopenhauer's pessimism (which amounted to the conversion of a former Schopenhauerist) and the refu-

tation of Nietzsche by means of reference to Dostoyevsky's works (which did not occur until the twentieth century, long after both thinkers' deaths) were conducted from Christian standpoints. This is flying very close to the wind, for there is no way, in this context, that one may erect the usual smokescreen that these writers' artistic realism somehow outweighed their philosophical prejudices. On the contrary, it was in fact precisely these "prejudices" which hampered both Tolstoy's capacity to overcome Schopenhauerism and Dostoyevsky's critique of nihilism (which was, of course, conceived in much broader terms than Nietzschean philosophy). The conflict would have to be solved in metacritical terms: and this is an option not available to Davydov.

The thematic layout of the book, clearly defined by the author and its title, is consistently adhered to and its 274 pages provide both a theoretical justification and historical illustration of it. In Davydov's view, on the one hand there is life, love and absolute commitment to a moral code which never vacillates between good and evil, and on the other there is death (both as suicide and murder), licence, violence and moral relativism giving rise to the postulate: "everything is lawful".

Tolstoy and Schopenhauer, for example, part company when the former maintains that it is not in any sense Schopenhauer's "horror of life" (i.e. life *per se*) that is evil: what is evil is "my empty individualised life — life lived for others is good". This shift from individualism to altruism (and it is precisely in this area that both Russian writers so influenced Western Europe from the end of the 19th century) is the common denominator of the evolution of almost all the positive characters of the novels, stories and plays of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. In each case it culminated in a tendency towards idolisation of the people in the shape of the Russian peasant of the time. Of course, there is a fundamental difference in the way each of them approaches their subject matter. Davydov highlights this, pointing out that Dostoyevsky interprets the moral fibre of the people as a national characteristic (which is why Dostoyevsky's theory of *pochvennichestvo* — being close to the soil — tended towards Slavophilism, while never identifying totally with it) whereas Tolstoy regarded it as a social factor. This explains why Dostoyevsky was most concerned by his characters' relation to the

Russian people, whereas Tolstoy's concern was their relation to the Russian *people*.

Countless studies have been written on the parallels between Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, and Davydov makes no attempt to revise or supplement these — this not being the book's brief, after all. What interests the author are those elements that unite the two authors, of which there are plenty, especially in Tolstoy's last works.

However, to accept Tolstoy's or Dostoyevsky's critique of pessimism and nihilism without reserve, one is obliged to acknowledge their outlooks to be Christian: and this Davydov does — with a consistency we have encountered so far only in the works of those western (and some Russian) authors who approach the question from an uncompromisingly Christian ethical standpoint.

But as a result, out of the window goes the last criterion generally trotted out in the literature about the two Russian authors to prove their "contradictoriness". I am not referring to the now abandoned crude antithesis of artistic method versus "world outlook" which was so fashionable in Marxist criticism of the thirties and forties, but which would be a *a priori* untenable in terms of Davydov's chosen approach. What I have in mind is that — often well-argued — scepticism regarding the orthodoxy of both writers which is voiced even in Christian interpretations of their works.

What immediately springs to mind is the search for parallels between Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche. The earliest studies were inspired by Nietzsche's statement that Dostoyevsky was an author from whom he had learnt a great deal, particularly in terms of psychology. It was not a big jump from this to attempting to create a bridge between Nietzsche's theoretical postulates on the one hand, and the psychology and behaviour of Dostoyevsky's characters, on the other. This in turn led to the temptation to identify Dostoyevsky's nihilists with their author (as Lev Shestov did, for example) and to present the author as a forerunner of Nietzsche, or even to bracket Dostoyevsky with Nietzsche within the context of Nazi ideology (as the ideologists of Hitler's Germany had done); the final step was to use this interpretation as a basis to attack the "reactionary ideas of Dostoyevsky" as Yermilov did in 1947.

The greater part of Davydov's book is devoted to an examination of the Dostoyevsky-Nietzsche link. And let us admit

in all fairness that here the author displays greater sensitivity, circumspection and force of argument than most of his predecessors. He was assisted in his task by among other things, his knowledge of the collected works of Nietzsche, published only recently. Here, for the first time, appear Nietzsche's lengthy abstracts of certain works by Dostoyevsky, particularly *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *The Possessed* (Nietzsches Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Achte Abteilung. Erster Band (Berlin-New York: 1974); there are also references to Dostoyevsky in the second and third volumes of this edition.) For the first time this gives us a specific and comprehensive idea of Nietzsche's interpretation of Dostoyevsky's work, whereby we can begin to appreciate exactly how and what Nietzsche learnt from him. Davydov sensitively "disinterprets" this interpretation in quite a simple fashion. His argument is supported by Dostoyevsky's own warnings against false interpretations of his works: but it is this factor that provided the basis for theories about Dostoyevsky's "contradictoriness". After all, nihilists, people with "split personalities", the morally weak and deviants all had an immense force of attraction for Dostoyevsky the artist.

The point is that he was thereby touching on a raw nerve of the human essence which existentialism was later to develop. I refer to the crisis of modern humanity dating from the fall of mediaeval Christian universalism and already identified by Descartes, Spinoza, Montaigne, Pascal and Rousseau, as well as by the pre-romantics and romanticism itself. It is no accident that a key text to deciphering the whole of Dostoyevsky's work in this respect — *Notes from the Underground* — became one of the basic texts of existentialism. But beware! This text is a fragment whose dissonant tone was intended to be excised by an afterword which would interpret it from a Christian standpoint. It is not known why Dostoyevsky did not write it. He complained about the censor, but it is not inconceivable that here too there were more subjective reasons. Similar "misunderstandings" frequently confront Dostoyevsky's readers. There is the case of the mystifying suicide-note of the atheist in the *Diary of the Writer* which was taken by some readers as a justification for suicide, although the author (as he explained subsequently) had quite the opposite intention. Pobyedonostsev, the

procurator of the Holy Synod, was rightly concerned whether the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* would prove capable of compensating for Ivan's atheistic "rebellion" with an adequately positive component in the novel. As for Raskolnikov's conversion in *Crime and Punishment* — the readers are informed of this in a few vague sentences in the novel's "epilogue", where in actual fact they are being referred to a different novel.

There are only two ways to explain these phenomena: either the author found the artistic portrayal of positive ideals too difficult, and therefore did not attempt it, or he did not make a very good job of it (which is the way Dostoyevsky generally explained it to himself). Alternatively, his Christian convictions were not as unequivocal as he proclaimed them to be. But here we come up against the barrier of Dostoyevsky's innermost thoughts which we will never scale, unless we are prepared to indulge in speculation of a Marxist, Freudian or other variety.

Davydov makes no such attempt. He bases himself on the assumption that Dostoyevsky was motivated by the absolute postulates of Christian morality, and that there is no reason for us to identify the views of his nihilists with those of the author himself. Nietzsche, in his reading of Dostoyevsky, was impelled by the need to find arguments to back up his theory of "beyond good and evil" (and he found them). A strong personality is determined by a will for power: the genius and the criminal are fused in Nietzsche's works, or rather, the genius is not concerned about the criminality of his actions. And that is the hallmark of the "criminal geniuses" in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, which so fascinated Nietzsche. The same went for Raskolnikov's theory about Napoleon and the moral nihilism of Svidrigailov, Stavrogin and Fyodor Karamazov (which is reflected in a special way in Kirillov, Shatov and Pyotr Verkhovensky). Nietzsche sees Christianity as a weakness: an expression of mental and physical degeneracy, and as synonymous with idiocy — and Dostoyevsky provides him with an argument in favour of this in the person of Prince Myshkin, who represents a latter-day Christ in *The Idiot*. (Though had Nietzsche read Dostoyevsky's remarks on *Don Quixote*, which the author regarded as the greatest work of Christian literature, he could have discovered that in our situation an ideally

beautiful character cannot help but be ludicrous: after all, Don Quixote does finally go mad.) The only problem is that Prince Myshkin's idiocy is not actually a pathological condition (his sickness belongs to the novel's pre-history and returns only at its end; during its action Myshkin is absolutely sane), but instead it is artlessness, sincerity and naivety, or in other words, simple-mindedness [. . .]

It is impossible to deny the Christian dimension in most of Dostoyevsky's work, and the reason Nietzsche virtually failed to see it was that he had no desire to. Davydov explains quite convincingly the subjective, personal motives that led Nietzsche to formulate his militant anti-Christian morality and his "anti-Christianity" in general. In many ways it is such a mirror-image of Christianity and therefore inseparable from its antithesis that there are even some Christian philosophers and theologians who treat it with scepticism and regard Nietzsche's amorality as more acceptable than free-thinking indifference to religion. In any event, it is impossible to explain Nietzsche solely in terms of his attitude to morality and Christianity. Above all, he was a great analyst of the imminent disastrous global cultural "space age", which is why his analyses are so unpleasant; similarly, the analyses of the Marquis de Sade on the threshold of the soon-to-be-victorious "age of reason" were also correct.

However, Davydov's book is not a simple polemic with Nietzsche, nor with atheistic existentialism for that matter. This is not its aim. Its aim, above all, is to pose the question whether morality without absolute imperatives is conceivable, and if so, whether it is possible for human society to live by it. And on both counts its answer is a clear no.

In the process, however, the author is led to use expressions which shock when seen in the context of present-day Soviet thought. Since the days of Marx and Engels, Marxist thought has regarded the renaissance as one of the finest epochs of European history. In economic terms, Marxism regards it as the heroic age of the rising bourgeoisie — the bourgeoisie at its most "revolutionary", when in every sense it still represented "social progress". Not only does Marxism appreciate the art, budding science and the philosophical and political thought of that epoch, but it also accepts its conquistadorial and condottierial aspects and its use of violence (a factor which is regarded, anyway,

in Marxism as a legitimate birth-pang of any revolution). And all of a sudden, here we have Davydov criticising existentialists as followers of Nietzsche for their attempts to reconcile their admiration of the renaissance with the preaching of morality.

Nietzsche, the advocate of crime "as such" speaks here both as an idolator and apologist of the renaissance: the age of "great" criminals and the basest crimes. The German philosopher thereby displayed not only his unflinching historical intuition in sensing the historical "correlate" of his philosophy but also his enviable consistency which is so lacking in his followers when they try to combine admiration for the renaissance with an assertion of morals and morality (p. 94).

Indeed, Nietzsche does draw a direct parallel between genius and criminality, and between altruism and idiocy, hence his admiration for the Roman emperors, renaissance adventurers and Napoleon.

In Dostoyevsky's eyes, crime is a disease and repentance is the cure, or at least the path to it. For Nietzsche, on the contrary, crime is "the norm" and "healthy": repentance is a disease, not merely spiritual but also physical, testifying to the highly advanced "physical" degeneration of mankind (Davydov, p. 110).

In Nietzsche's view, crime is an expression of strength (Cesare Borgia, the Russian nation as personified in the murderers Gazin and Orlov* and Dostoyevsky's fellow-prisoners in the Omsk house of correction); weakness finds its expression in the moral code of love for one's neighbour, conscience and penitence, Christ and Christianity, the Russian nation as personified by Prince Myshkin and all those "humiliated and insulted" seekers after truth. Jesus is not a genius (as Ernest Renan, for example, deduces, while denying His divine origin) but an idiot. Morals and morality are all idiocy. Christian love is nothing but the fruit of Christ's sexual immaturity and his fear of contact with the world of sensuality.

* Characters in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead* — *Ed.*

“. . . the prime target of Nietzschean criticism is not religion but morality; not the religiosity of morality, but the morality of religion — it is this that arouses his pathological hatred.” (Davydov, p. 121).

Davydov moves on directly from this analysis to a critique of existentialism.

Dostoyevsky “minus” conscience — i.e. transformed into a hundred per cent Nietzschean and apologist for the notion of “supermen” transcending “good and evil” — it is in this guise that our great author was “integrated” into the framework of the existentialist intellectual study of the novel (pp. 139-40).

Sartre in *Les Mouches* and Camus in *L'Étranger* are, Davydov maintains, engaged in a struggle against conscience and regard it as their task to free mankind from its conscience. It is interesting that on this point, Davydov contrasts these atheist existentialists with the Christian (Protestant) existentialist Karl Jaspers (in *The Question of German Guilt*). Significantly, he makes no reference at all to G. Marcel or the Russian Christian existentialists (such as N. Berdyayev).

In terms of lexicology and ideas, Davydov maintains, Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant* is in many ways an analogy of Stirner's *The Individual and his Property*. To a degree he is right, but this is only one aspect of Sartre's philosophy — even at that stage in the evolution of his thinking. It would be necessary to situate it within the framework of the post-Hegelian evolution of French philosophy (taking into account Sartre's debt to Husserl and Heidegger) and the other components of existentialism *in statu nascendi*, while not forgetting that existentialism was not just a philosophical doctrine, but above all an artistic movement. In this case, it is as indefensible to draw unanimous conclusions about writers' philosophical attitudes on the basis of characters from their plays or novels as it is in the case of Dostoyevsky — something that Davydov rightly criticises Nietzsche for doing.

This is even more true of Camus than it is of Sartre. In a later text, Davydov criticises Camus' concept of *l'homme absurde* as justified in philosophical terms, particularly in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. The fact that Camus interprets Kirillov of *The Possessed* in such

a way as to make Kirillov's assertion of Christ not as “God-as-Man” but “Man-as-God” identical to his own concept of *l'homme absurde* does not imply that Nietzsche's nihilist and Camus' *homme absurde* are one and the same. “Absurdity” is not a philosophical doctrine like nihilism but instead an existential component of being in general, and it is not an idea that Camus derived from any nihilist ontology but from the manifestations of human behaviour he observed in the society of his time or in prominent works of literature (such as Kafka). Nonetheless, it is true that the absurd in this sense can only manifest itself fully in “Godless humanity” (i.e. “Man without God”) because Christianity does not concede in any way that absurdity may exist in God's creation (seeing as it does a purpose not only in human life but also in nature and the universe).

Whether we approve or reject this “fall from God” of modern man, we cannot deny that it has indeed occurred, and that as a result the absurd has fully asserted itself as a dimension of human existence. Camus' humanism consists in his refusal to forsake mankind even in this “crisis situation” (an approach similar to that taken by present-day “crisis theologies”) and his stress on the human dimension “in spite of everything” — however much the stone always rolls back down the hill. And it is in this very area that existentialism was a liberating factor in the vacuum which came into being in the countries of “existing socialism” of Central and Eastern Europe in the period between the disillusionment with Marxism and the final regeneration of Catholicism. Stalinism had deprived Marxism of any human dimension it had ever had, and it was allergically intolerant of all modern philosophies which in any way recalled it (Freudianism, Existentialism, Phenomenology, Neo-Thomism). It was only in the wake of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the advent of a period of dialogue that young Marxists made an attempt to integrate the anthropological aspects of these philosophical trends into Marxism. The fact that all these strivings came to naught and merely resulted in further disillusionment is another chapter, however.

Davydov latches on to *l'homme absurde* from another angle. He identifies it with Kirillov's “Man-as-God” above all as being a master of life and death who decides on his own existence or non-existence: it is this fac-

tor that constitutes his "Man-Godness". This is another point where Dostoyevsky's Christian approach is crystallised, as Davydov points out. Without the categorical moral commandment "Thou shalt not kill", the boundaries of any conceivable moral code must collapse. Man cannot be lord of life and death. His entire striving is for a "living life" (a favourite expression of Dostoyevsky, most likely derived from Schelling). It is this "living life", anchored in his heart, that transcends and overcomes all abstract theoretical constructs (Dostoyevsky uses the expression "cerebral ideas") that dehumanises him and lead to his downfall.

It is no accident that the supreme moral principle declares "Thou shalt not kill." And those who deny this principle only set their faces against life itself, however much they try to prove the contrary. Therein lies the tragedy of Kirillov, who failed to realise that by fighting moral absolutes he was fighting life, and hence himself also (Davydov, p. 213).

As we know, Kirillov — in general, a sympathetically drawn figure in Dostoyevsky's novel *The Possessed* — meets his end in a humiliating scene of bizarre suicide which is voluntary and involuntary at one and the same time, in an effort to "demonstrate" his "sublime" idea which turns it into its caricature. In so doing, Kirillov negates life not merely as a suicide but also by offering to use his self-slaughter to conceal the vile — albeit "ideologically-motivated" — murder of Sharatov, suspected by the nihilists of being a renegade. Thus the "Man-as-God" is seen as suicide and murderer in one.

Davydov cannot fail to realise that his argument does not implicate Kirillov, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer alone. If one accepts the principle, "Thou shalt not kill," then one rejects — on principle — war and revolution (irrespective of all the inherent contradictions which Ivan Karamazov impresses on Alyosha when he puts to him the question what he would do with a general who let his dogs tear a serf's child to pieces) as well as capital punishment, because for every death that comes about other than in a natural way or by accident, someone is responsible. It is therefore logical that Davydov should criticise S. Velikovskiy for rejecting Camus' maxim that he who is

forced to kill a tyrant must kill himself afterwards in order to restore the balance of human existence, because it is the one that leads implicitly in the direction of the Christian commandment.

Admittedly, Davydov attenuates his position by accepting that there are situations in life which demand action and behaviour that run counter to categorical moral imperatives. But in his view this does not constitute a reason for rejecting these imperatives: on the contrary, their existence provides the one and only regulator without which — as Dostoyevsky was wont to put it — "everything is lawful" and human society turns into a horde of cannibals.

What then remains to hold society together? What is there to direct it along the path of altruism? Christ preached the answer: Love. Characteristically, even on this point, Davydov does not exclude love between men and woman but accepts *de facto* the sacrosanctity of this relationship also, and from this standpoint too, he criticises Sartre (and in him, all the modern theories of eroticism and sexuality).

Obviously, the more you give in love, the richer you become, whereas the more you keep back "for yourself", the poorer you are; it is in love that one's "own" being is confirmed, precisely by asserting the existence of someone else — the loved one. Wherever this is not the case, the relationship between two mutually loving people is transformed into one of "partners", each of whom seeks what they can for themselves while in turn giving as little as possible themselves. Such a picture of mutual "sexploitation" (to use the expression of the neo-feminists) can be found, translated into the language of psychopathology, in the literary and philosophical essays of Jean-Paul Sartre whenever the question of "love" crops up (p. 255).

It is here that we come to the real significance of the title of Davydov's book. As he sees it, love is not just another component of morality: it is the cornerstone of the moral code. It is the single element that determines the character of all the others. And what is a moral code built on love if not

Christian morality, which can if wished be "supplemented" or "combined" with analogous components from Plato, Stoicism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, etc., as Lev Tolstoy did, for example, in his comprehensive collection of quotations published as *The Circle of Readings?* Such a moral code fully accords with Dostoyevsky's ethics, for he never fails to stress this "bright" side of Christianity whenever it is confronted by those Christian currents that accentuate the dark side: the corruption of the material world and horror of the Last Judgement (for example, the contrast between the mild-mannered teacher of life Father Zosima and the ill-tempered hermit Father Ferapont in *The Brothers Karamazov*).

In Davydov's interpretation, love is identified with life, that is, as a life-saving force in the broadest sense. It is contrasted with violence, seen as an alienated, abstract, rigid, "metaphysical" principle of death, that is, a life-destroying force. So, we might ask, what has become of the theory of violence as the motive force of history and the indispensable "lever of progress"?

Having got this far, Davydov does not hesitate to draw the logical conclusion, nor to take the argument still further. Dostoyevsky, from his Christian standpoint, drew conclusions about the historic mission of the Russian nation. He did so most eloquently and systematically in the famous "Pushkin Speech" delivered at the impressive commemoration of the founder of Russian poetry held in Moscow in 1880. In view of the fact that he delivered the speech just a few months before his own death, we may also regard it as, in a sense, his bequest to the Russian nation and mankind. The immediate reaction to the speech was devastating: the Slavophile Aksakov, who was due to speak next, declined to come to the rostrum on the grounds that "it has all been said"; Dostoyevsky's ideological opponent and personal enemy, the "Westerniser" Turgenev, came to the podium to embrace him; one enthusiastic student in the audience fainted from emotion; two merchants in the audience who had feuded for years were reconciled on the spot, and so on. Admittedly the euphoria lasted only a few hours, but it was extraordinary nonetheless.

"The Pushkin Speech" lends itself to several different interpretations, however, and these were not slow to arrive after the text had appeared in the press. One way of

looking at it is as an attempt to reconcile the two mutually vilificatory parties of "Slavophiles" and "Westernisers"; another is to see it as an attempt to bridge the gulf between the Russian intelligentsia and the people. A third view is that it was an effort to attenuate social contradictions and achieve class reconciliation. There is one other possible interpretation — particularly in the light of certain earlier and later passages in the *Diary of a Writer* — that it had nationalistic or even imperialistic overtones.

The "Speech" does indeed deal with Russia's historic mission, both in Europe and worldwide. Davydov's interpretation, however, stresses the fundamentally Christian-humanist and non-violent nature of this mission.

Such an interpretation is possible in that Dostoyevsky actually does base himself on the premise (which he had mapped out with Grigoryev many years before when defining *pochvennichestvo*) that the fundamental Characteristic of Pushkin's poetry is his capacity to identify totally with other nations and peoples. He defines this characteristic as "global sympathy" and asserts it to be a feature typical of the Russian soul. He thereby overturns the accepted view of Russian culture held in Europe. From this angle, its elasticity and easy acceptance of foreign influences are no longer seen as denoting slavishness, spiritual indolence and lack of originality — i.e. something basically negative — but instead become something eminently positive: the capacity to integrate and unite the cultures of different ages and races.

"The meaning of this idea," writes Davydov on page 266, "is from the very first universal. This is why it is symbolised in his works by the picture of Christ and not by any other figure more identifiable with a particular 'ethnic group'."

The substance of it has nothing to do with "ethnic group", "nationalism" or even "nationality" but concerns the essence of the moral idea itself. The question is whether the quest for self-denial is central to the people's life, whether this ideal is the dominant one in the people's traditions, culture and art, and whether our people have lived up to that ideal until modern times (pp. 266-267).

Dostoyevsky undoubtedly regarded the

Russian people's mission as being to take to Europe the message of the true Christ: namely, the Christ of love, sacrifice and self-denial, not of worldly power and material wealth — which is how he saw Orthodoxy in contrast to the secularised Catholic and Protestant churches of Western Europe.

In other words, the Russian nation would not be taking something specifically national to Europe, something that might conceivably run counter to European traditions and capable only of forcible indoctrination. It would be offering Europe its own Christian morality, but in a humanised and purified form, and anchored firmly in foundations of absolute criteria. Therefore its mission is not to "conquer" but to "sacrifice" itself for Europe and its paramount interests.

In the same way that he had called on the Russian intelligentsia to bow down before the Russian people and merit its confidence by means of self-sacrificing lowly acts ("Be humble, proud Man" — an appeal for which Dostoyevsky has often been attacked by the proponents of violent "actions") so here Dostoyevsky demands the same from the Russian nation as a whole, and even asserts it as its historic mission. (This interpretation is clearly at odds with Dostoyevsky's well-known remarks about English and French imperial policies and his support for the aggression in the Balkans (Constantinople shall be ours!) and in Asia. But nothing of the sort is stated in "The Pushkin Speech", nor even hinted at.)

Davydov, with admirable consistency, takes things to their logical conclusion. Not only does he make no attempt at "correcting" any of Tolstoy's or Dostoyevsky's attitudes, neither does he try to restrict their significance or validity to a given historical period.

On the contrary, he deliberately declares them to be valid for the present day:

... what is common to the way both authors treat their heroes is a conviction that only a return to firm moral values can save man from pessimism and nihilism. And these values are preserved solely in the lives of those who, in

their daily work, cherish for themselves and "everyone else" the supreme gift: human life, humanity (p. 272).

After all, Shatov had told Stavrogin that the way to attain God was through work. And in the concluding section of the book we have Davydov referring to those simple heroes who cherish life and its traditions outside the context of all theoretical constructs and slogans of whatever kind, the sort of heroes, in fact, whom we encounter in the works of the contemporary writers Astafiev (Akimka), Rasputin (Darya) and Aitmatov (Yedygei). (It is no coincidence that all these Soviet writers are also known to western readers.)

It is no accident that all these characters are making their appearance in Russian literature. We are talking about a deep-rooted symptom affecting not only literature but life itself. This is an optimistic testimony to the fact that "in spite of everything", "good feelings" do give rise to great achievements — however "imperceptible" and "unnoticed" they might be — and they do so in our midst (p. 274).

One might think that Davydov's book makes no particularly great or new contribution. Coming on top of countless interpretations of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and the existentialists, it is no easy job to come up with something novel — but this is not really the point any more. Davydov's book is a symptom of a real shift in thinking which probably goes much deeper and is more extensive than we might think. We would merely point out that it was published under the Komsomol's own imprint *Molodaya gvardiya* in 1982 in 50,000 copies. Moreover, its main editor was Academician M. B. Mitin, the author's dedication is to his "children and grandchildren" and, according to the publishing details, the book is intended for "the younger reader".

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Translated from Czech by A. G. Brain