

of the Synagoge. — Finally, Father Moneta-Caglio (Italy) talked about the origin of the Gregorian “Jubilus.”

In the Congress of Grottaferrata, a wide circle of specialists in Byzantine and Eastern liturgical music met for the first time and discussed some of their problems, solved some of their differences and layed the foundations for closer cooperation. Hence, we would be justified in characterizing the Congress as the most important event in the history of Byzantine and Eastern liturgical music studies since the Conference of Höeg, Tillyard and Wellesz in Copenhagen in 1931 which gave birth to the *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae*. We hope that the second meeting of the Congress in Athens in 1971 will be equally successful.

Athens

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CROCE AND RUSSIAN THOUGHT

Benedetto Croce confessed with “mortification” in 1917, at the time of Lenin’s triumphant return to Petrograd from prolonged exile, that he had not read a single of Lenin’s books or pamphlets. With his typical sarcasm Croce proclaimed his ignorance of Lenin whom he ironically called a “new Plato” and a “contemporary European philosopher and [his] illustrious colleague” completely unknown to him. Admittedly Croce was amazed at the tremendous welcome Lenin received in Petrograd and the widespread publicity accorded him in the Italian press, and he immediately sought to obtain Lenin’s *Materialism and Empirico-Criticism*, *Critical Notes on a Reactionary Philosophy*, but without success.

However, he did obtain two books that dealt with Russian philosophy: Thomas Masaryk’s *Russia and Europe*, which he read in the German edition, *Zur Russischen Geschichts-und Religionsphilosophie* (1913), and Paul Miliukov’s, *Le mouvement intellectuel russe* (Paris, 1918). At once Croce perused the volumes with his well-known passion for things unknown.

Croce’s knowledge of Russian intellectual life was not only superficial but prejudiced as well. He was firmly convinced, for instance, that the “mental level” of the Russian people was rather low. Though he believed that every people “whether is large or small” has a “science or a culture,” Russia was the exception that confirmed the rule. Russia, was Croce’s conviction, could not have any original philosophy but merely a certain level of “intelligentsia,” which was quite a different matter.

As a result he was terrified with the slogan *pensare alla russa* (think in the Russian fashion) which was then tremendously popular in Western Europe. To Croce this meant to think outside any logical framework or philosophical system. To think in the Russian fashion "was neither properly a science nor a culture" but "a passionate polemic about everything and an explosion of paradoxes: something that very much resembled what in goof and simple Italian is called "*stravaganza*."

In an article published in the *Giornale d'Italia* (September 4, 1918) and later on reprinted in his collected works, in the volume *Pagine sulla Guerra* (Bari, 1928. Pp. 276-283), Croce denied that Lenin's writings possessed any originality; as far as Croce was concerned Lenin merely parroted Engels' worst banalities. This conviction was reinforced by Croce's subsequent readings about Lenin's thinking in the "daily press."

Croce believed that this lack of intellectual originality was not merely a "particular characteristic of Lenin" but was generally true of all Russian thinkers and philosophers as he had got to know them through Masaryk's volume on Russian thought. This conviction led Croce to ask: "What then is Slavism or Slavophilism about which so much was said as the juxtaposition of the Russian to the European spirit, as an augury of a new historical epoch in which Holy Russia would impose her own specific vision of the world, her own political and social ideals, her theocracy, her autocracy and her contempt for material well being, her asceticism and her mysticism?"

Croce denied that Slavophilism was an original philosophy. On the contrary, he insisted that it was merely a "surrogate" adaptation of the German philosophy of history. The Russians simply substituted for the German claim to world hegemony their own pretention of national superiority. Thus the Russian rebellion against Europe and Western values and their insistence on opposing the Russian spirit to European culture, was nothing more than an "echo" of the arguments which had been advanced by the reactionary, Catholic and Romantic polemicists of the post-Napoleonic period—men like Bonald, De Maistre, Haller, Göres, Baader, the second Schelling, all of whom were extensively read by the Russians.

Croce insisted that the same was true of the Russian revolutionaries who sought to deprive Europe of its traditional social leadership. Though Croce advocated that Russian revolutionary ideology was a mixture of authentic and misunderstood Hegel, of Feuerbach's radicalism and "naked and crude positivism and materialism" he did concede to them originality in the sphere of revolutionary action. Thus in Croce's opinion Belinsky did nothing more than to assign to Nicholas I the role that Hegel accorded to King of Prussia;

he considered ridiculous the ideas of Chernishevsky and Pisarev and accused them of "aping" Vogt, Buchner and Moleschott: he regarded the 1862 program of *Young Russia* as a "*mixtum compositum* of a badly digested Schiller, Gracchus Babeuf and Feuerbach," compounded with nihilism that also Herzen repudiated. Lavrov in Croce's opinion failed to introduce nothing new what already has not been said by Proudhon, Buckle, Ruge and Bruno Bauer, and Michailowsky repeats again and again whatever Hegel and Comte have already said. The only two Russians to whom Croce conceded a measure of originality and logical thinking were Herzen and Bakunin.

Following his thinking, Croce dismissed the totality of Russian thought often in a typical condescending however rather convincing manner. "In glancing through the long series of summaries offered by Masaryk" in his book *Russia and Europe*, "I felt no desire to know the books of a single of these Russian authors. It also seemed useless to me to memorize their often difficult names which appeared to me as mere pseudonyms of European writers who are well known to all of us."

Croce categorically rejected Masaryk's thesis concerning the originality of Russian thought. Admittedly, Croce believes, by the mere fact that a nation or an individual exist, "they possess a certain originality of their own." But in the case of the Russian thought he refuses to accept the general conviction that there was anything unique that could be considered as a universal relevance in Russian thought. Russian thinkers cannot be considered as having contributed anything of universal value because they even failed to "harmonize" what they took from others into their own "national culture."

To prove this point Croce compared the impact of German philosophy on Italy. Thus Italy was able, according to Croce, creatively absorb and extend German thought because it has anticipated it much earlier through such philosophers as Muratori and Vico.

Nothing comparable could be said of Russia which failed even in the "cautious and humble endeavor of the diligent scholar who strives to follow the thoughts of the master, to interpret them, to conquer and apply them" to the national and native conditions. The problem was that the Russians variously adopted and then rejected different European schools of thought without really understanding any of them or being able to absorb them into their own culture. Croce readily conceded the literary genius of such men as Tolstoy, for instance, but considered him singularly poorly prepared to discuss the depths of religion and the nuances of art. To prove this point, Croce mercilessly demolished Tolstoy's rather primitive aesthetical criticism of Shakespeare.

Perhaps Croce felt compelled in his 1918 article in the *Giornale d'Italia*

to compare the creative manner in which Italy absorbed and adapted German philosophy, with the allegedly superficial Russian understanding of Hegel, Kant and others, because his own "German-inspired" philosophical system was at the time under severe attack from positivists, nationalists, futurists and other philosophical and literary trends. Croce argued that while German thought had helped Italy to liberate itself from the stagnation into which it had been driven by positivist school, that same German influence had the effect of adding to the intellectual chaos in Russia. The reason for that, Croce was arguing had to be found in the fact that the Russian thinkers were "unprepared and weak minds who were confronted with the complex doctrines and heavy with a long history that instead of educating and fortifying them, have excited them and upset them and with no remedy destroyed them." Thus, "More than anything else, German philosophy," Croce's argument goes, "which has been influential in Russia has been the most pernicious." For Croce asserts the German philosophy is the philosophy of "adults." From that one of Hegel that is a philosophy of adults to that of Marx in the same time realistic and metaphysical, unscrupulous and partisan, that requires the acumen of the adults"—German philosophy met a total misunderstanding among the Russian thinkers.

Thus, Croce believes, that the Russian thought contributed little or nothing of value to philosophy. However, it should be studied from the point of view of social history.

And Croce never retreated from his earlier convictions concerning the poverty of Russian creative thought. Thus for instance twenty years after, in 1938, during a conversation I had with him, Croce brought up his 1918 article and then added:

"I could be wrong but I believe that in the realm of philosophy Russia offers only repetition, a fantastic perversion and a terrible distortion of European thought. Even over the past twenty years (since I wrote that article) Bolshevik Russia has not produced a single book, not one page that contributes to the enlightenment of a single philosophical problem. Whatever I have read in translation of the writings of recent Russian writers, theoreticians and historians, was a boring repetition of Marxist formulas. Russia did have in the past literary geniuses such as Tolstoy, but not philosophers. I am not the only one to discover the profound gap in the Russian mind which is due to an absence of logico-scholarly education, which has contributed so much of value to European culture." (*Agonija Evrope*, Beograd, 1940).