

entered Europe during the period of the great social and political revolutions of the 19th century, pitted and antagonized the Slavophiles against the Westerners who sought, each one, to provide the answer to Russia's future role. Like many 19th century Russian nationalist thinkers who considered Moscow, and implicitly Russia, to be, in the Russian tradition, the Third Rome, the center of true Orthodoxy, the protector and savior of the world, and the nucleus of future civilization, contemporary Soviet Russian writers, too, emphasize in their literary works the superiority of the Communist system, of Soviet ideology and culture, and consider the Soviet Union as the center of world socialism. But while this attitude has been slightly altered since the death of Stalin, the search for Russia's historical self-identity as a nation, the controversial point which beset the Slavophiles and Westerners alike in the 19th century, remains still a crucial issue without as yet reaching a definite solution.

This collection of studies in such an important and controversial subject is a valuable contribution to the understanding of Russian nationalism through the medium of literary works of the Russian writers and poets. It is an indispensable source to any literary man or historian who seeks to understand Russia's past and present spirit of nationalism.

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George Ivask, *Konstantin Leontiev: Zhizn' i Tvorchestvo* (Konstantin Leontiev: Life and Work), Bern and Frankfurt, Herbert Lang and Peter Lang, 1974, pp. 430.

Konstantin Leontiev (1831-1891) served the Russian Empire as physician, diplomat, and censor. Between these assignments and concomitant with them he wrote fiction, literary criticism, and politico-philosophical articles. In literature he had more in common with the trends which preceded and followed him than with contemporary realism. In politics Leontiev was an inveterate enemy of the bourgeois, liberal, tendencies that prevailed in European and Russian society. Consequently he was little-known and without significant influence during his lifetime. Posthumously he began to attract attention when some of his critiques and predictions became vindicated by new literary trends and momentous political events. George Ivask, Professor of Slavic languages and literatures at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, is the leading contemporary authority on Leontiev and in the biography under review he incorporates all his previous scholarship on the subject.

Professor Ivask emphasizes Leontiev's aestheticism. In Leontiev's view the value of any given phenomenon was commensurate with the beauty he detected in it. He referred to this criterion as the aesthetics of life. With respect to societies, the more heterogeneous their inhabitants the more beautiful; the more homogeneous the uglier he considered them. The epitome of ugliness was the European civilization whose inhabitants Leontiev contemptuously called «average Europeans». By contrast, he found much attraction in the areas of the Ottoman Empire where he served during the period 1864-1874. He spent most of this decade among the Greeks of Turkey with assignments to Crete, Adrianople, Ioannina, and Salonika. The diversity of these people —geographically distributed on islands, mountains, and in plains, and historically subject to Byzantine, Venetian, Turkish, and western influence—strongly appealed to Leontiev's aesthetic criterion. And thus he became an aesthetic phil-

hellene, expressing his attraction in a series of novels, stories, and memoirs in which he described life among these «Christians of Turkey». All critics who have reviewed these works, including antagonistic critics, agree that they constitute a remarkably objective and artistic picture of the Balkan peoples on the eve of their rebellion against the Turks in 1875. Professor Ivask expertly analyzes them from the literary point of view but does not deal with their political or ethnographical significance.

The goal of all Leontiev's articles was to convince his readers that Russia's cultural identity was threatened by the penetration of European influence and that Russia must strengthen her native institutions, especially the autocracy and the church, to cope with this threat. Since he traced the roots of these institutions to Russia's Byzantine heritage, Leontiev called his philosophy «Byzantinism». Leontiev arrived in Turkey a Slavophile but actual contact with the Bulgarians and Serbians soon convinced him that these peoples possessed no cultural originality and therefore had nothing to offer Russia in the struggle with the West. To the contrary, the leaders of these peoples had assimilated western values to the point where they constituted a danger to Russia. Thus Leontiev passionately opposed Panslavism which he considered a mere variant of European Liberal nationalism which, if realized, would only undermine genuine Russian institutions and values. Instead, he turned to the Greeks as Russia's indispensable partners in the construction of a new eastern culture designed to provide an alternative to decadent western civilization. Leontiev tried to convince Greeks and Russians alike that this vision was their only worthy destiny. He dismissed the independent Greek state as a pathetic reflection of the latest western fashion and considered the Greeks of Constantinople, the Phanariots, the legitimate heirs of Byzantium. He struggled with all his strength to defend the prerogatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate from the attacks of nationalists, Slavophiles, or Panslavs. The eastern patriarchates, Mount Athos, and the Holy Places were essential cultural pillars in his scheme. Since all of these institutions were in Greek hands, *ipso facto* Leontiev became an ideological philhellene.

It is not surprising that Professor Ivask touches only briefly upon Leontiev's vision of an independent Greco-Russian culture. He is interested primarily in Leontiev within the context of Russian literary history. It is surprising, however, that Leontiev's life and work are virtually unknown in Greece and that Greek literature on the subject is almost nonexistent. The exceptions consist of Mr. Kostas Lassithiotakis' interest in Leontiev which led to an article on him in the journal *Ελληνική Δημιουργία* (vol.13, 1954), an introduction to and translation into Greek of *Khrizo* one of Leontiev's «Greek Stories», and Professor Theofanis G. Stavrou's article on Leontiev in the *Θρησκευτική και 'Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* (vol. 8, 1966). Yet in his fiction Leontiev deals with Crete on the eve of the uprising in 1866, Macedonia and Thrace at the time when tension between Slavs and Greeks became acute and was exploited by the Turks and the Great Powers, and Epirus at the same time. In his articles Leontiev also touches upon such vital issues of Greek historiography as the «Megali Idea».

Professor Ivask's able book does full justice to Leontiev's dramatic personality and destiny, contains a complete list of Leontiev's works and the best bibliography of works about Leontiev, and can be read with the pleasure of fiction with no sacrifice of scholarly standards. It is also a good reminder that there remain many areas of Leontiev's life that merit further investigation.

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