

SOVIET LITERARY CRITICISM

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Fyodor
DOSTOYEVSKY

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INTRODUCTION

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, that great Russian writer the might of whose artistic talent Gorky considered equal to that of Shakespeare alone, gave expression in his writings to the boundless suffering of a humiliated and insulted mankind and the boundless anguish that suffering caused him. At the same time, however, he was violently opposed to any attempts to find a way to liberate mankind from humiliation and insult.

This dualism tormented Dostoyevsky; for him and his heroes it became a source of an exquisite, peculiar and vengeful delight—a morbid recognition of the hopelessness of human suffering.

He himself was deeply humiliated and insulted by the shocking conditions of life he saw around him, conditions which turned his heroes into warped and twisted personalities. The path Dostoyevsky travelled through life and literature is one of the most sombre versions of the tragedy of the suppression and mutilation of the human soul by conditions inimical to genius, freedom, art and beauty. The works of this most subjective of writers, works that are always his personal confession, with their gloomy apprehension, their feverish vacillation and wavering, their unabating fear of the chaos and darkness of life, are a record of a great but diseased spirit that has sickened from human suffering, the spirit of one who has

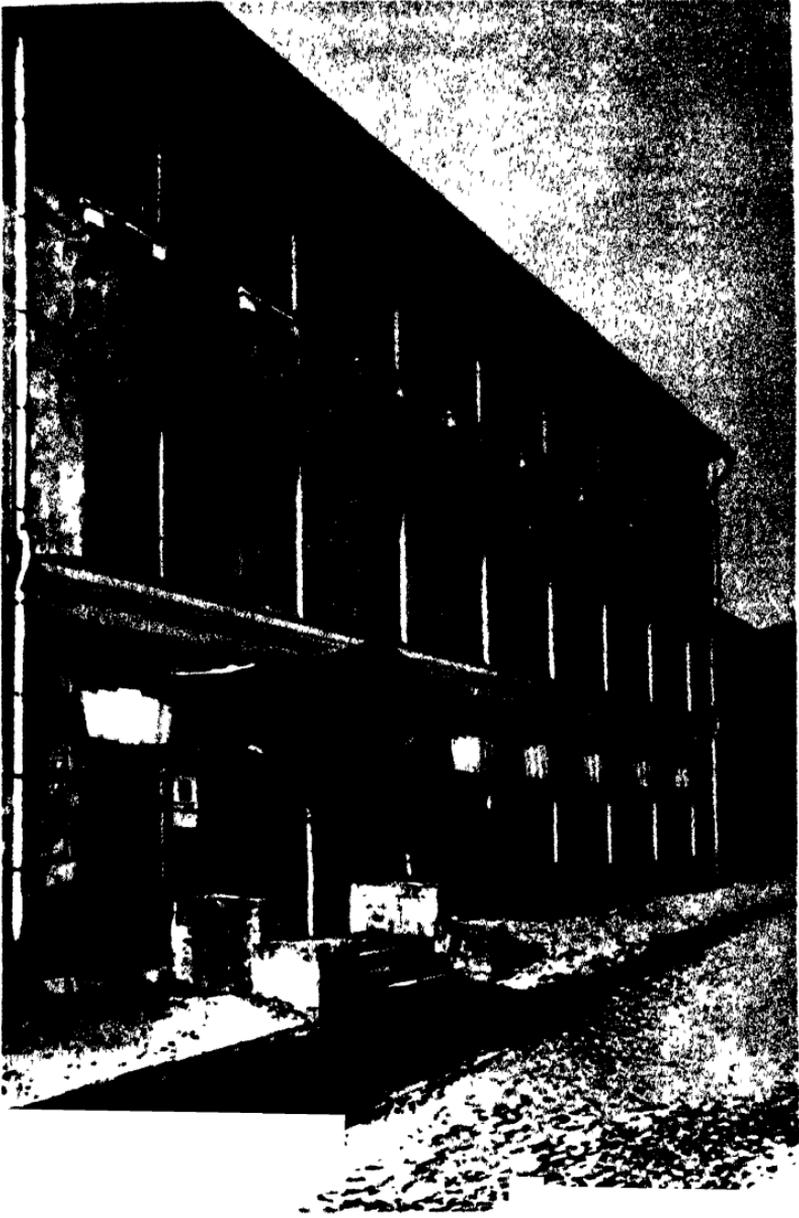
reached the *ultima Thule* of despair, has lost all its aspirations, its dreams and its hopes, a soul that has come to love anguish because it has nothing else to live for but this anguish.

The writings of Dostoyevsky were the product of an epoch of transition and crisis, when feudal serfowning relations in Russia were yielding place to new, capitalist relations. The foundations of the old patriarchal Russia, built on serfdom, were being riven asunder.

The new social order that was arising evoked a feeling of horror in Dostoyevsky's hero, whom it threatened with impoverishment, with being driven to the wall, but at the same time it held out the tempting prospect of advancement, of rising above others. It allured and always cruelly deceived its victim. "Slavery or mastery"—such are the pregnant words we meet in Dostoyevsky's notes of a novel he planned under the title of *The Life of a Great Sinner*. These words might perhaps be an epigraph to all his works. They express that which tormented his hero: you are either a slave-owner or a slave yourself; either you oppress others or they oppress you. Dostoyevsky's hero selects the second of these alternatives. Rather be the victim but not the hangman! Rather be suppressed, but do not suppress others!

Dostoyevsky saw no other alternatives. The ulcer of "proletarianization" seemed as horrible to him as capitalism itself: he identified "proletarianization" now with the bourgeoisie, now with the lumpen-proletariat. The way of revolutionary struggle as the only solution of the problem was rejected by the writer.

Dostoyevsky began his literary career as a disciple and continuator of the finest traditions of Gogol, and as an ally of Belinsky. His spiritual and literary development might have gone on in the same direction despite the very serious contradictions he displayed in his early works, had not this development been interrupted by the savage-



Dostoyevsky Museum in writer's apartment in Moscow

ly criminal dishonour he suffered. For the space of ten years he was driven beyond the social pale by that very regime of Nicholas I that had murdered Pushkin and Lermontov, and persecuted and baited Gogol. He rather was cut off from them by the walls of the Omsk prison.

These mortifying ten years exercised a lasting influence on him, on his morbidly impressionable and receptive soul. Indeed this was a soul that was morbid in the literal sense of the word; in his youth he was on the verge of insanity, and the term of penal servitude he served worsened his epilepsy. He was a changed man when he returned to social and literary life. No longer did he believe that it was possible through struggle to improve the existing social conditions; he had lost faith in human nature itself, in man's ability to rebuild life by his own efforts, through his reason and will power. He turned to religion for succour, but religion found an uneasy home in his soul, which was so prone to revolt and wrath, and was now obliged to suppress its rebellious and atheistic leanings. He was stating the truth when he wrote in a letter to N.D. Von-Vizina in Feb. 1854, after he had left the camp of revolution:

"I am till now a child of the times, a child of disbelief and doubt, and I know that I shall remain such till the grave. What fearful torment has this thirst to believe cost me, which is the stronger in my soul, the more arguments to the contrary arise in me."

On his return to St. Petersburg after ten years of complete solitude, a solitude hardly anyone had experienced with such intensity, he felt the full impact of the life of a big city that was rapidly becoming capitalistic, with all its crying contradictions, its ulcers, and its temptations. Later, to this swarm of impressions, the chaotic character of which was so brilliantly portrayed in *The Hobbledehoy*, were added impressions of his journey abroad, where he saw a more advanced capitalism. All this confirmed him more and more in his conviction that only

through suffering could man purify himself of selfishness, of the temptations of the satanic power of money—a teaching capable only of magnifying the oppression in the life of the humiliated and insulted.

His heart heavy with the sufferings of mankind, Dostoyevsky, as it were, bowed to the ground before them as Raskolnikov might do, expressing thereby his compassion for their boundlessness, which he considered beyond the comprehension of the human mind and heart. He arrived at that Christian suffering love, regarding which Herzen said the following severe but truthful words: “Suffering love can be very strong. It sheds tears, does talking, then wipes its tears, but the chief thing is that it does nothing.”

Dostoyevsky never concealed that self-restraint was foreign to his character. In a letter to A. N. Maikov,* one of his closest friends, in 1867 he wrote: “. . .the worst thing is that my nature is ignoble and too passionate. I go to the ultimate limit everywhere and in everything; all my life long I have always approached the limit!” After his death, S. Yanovsky, another of his friends, recalled that “. . . in his very character there was something prone to exaggeration. . . .”

Another of his characteristics was that the greater his doubt, the more feverishly did he convince himself that he believed in what he doubted, believing in that truth with all the improbable and even impossible conclusions that it might entail. This *subjectivity*, which bordered on insanity, left its mark on all his writings; in this way, a trait peculiar to Dostoyevsky as an individual found untrammelled expression in all his literary activities, thus socially voicing the views of a reactionary utopianism,

* Maikov, Apollon Nikolayevich (1821-1897)—Russian poet whose best works were devoted to nature. In fifties and sixties of last century joined reactionary adherents of theory of pure art and was enemy of revolutionary-democratic poetry.

views that ran counter to the objective course of history. His attempts to defend himself against the march of time, which meant to him merely the triumph of unbridled *Smerdyakovism*, rapaciousness and violence against man, and *bourgeoisness*, turned him into an ardent adherent of "Orthodoxy, autocracy and the people." Of course it was only the impact of despair and gloom, combined with a naive belief in the invulnerability and permanency of the autocracy, the fanatic and idyllic belief that the tsar stood above politics and was the father of the people that could lead the writer to so reactionary a quixotism. Indeed, Dostoyevsky himself considered that his Prince Mishkin, the hero of *The Idiot*, a helpless idealist so close in spirit to the writer, was highly akin to Don Quixote. In his heart of hearts he was well aware of the utopian character of his "programme," to defend which he was obliged to turn a blind eye to many things in the life around him and soothe his conscience time and again. It might well be said that there has hardly been another writer who has suffered so much as Dostoyevsky did from the clash of contradictions within him.

In one of his articles, K. Leontyev, notorious for his reactionary publicist writings, said that he thought Dostoyevsky's *Diary of a Writer* immeasurably superior to all his other works. This is an invaluable admission from the enemy's camp. Indeed, Dostoyevsky voiced his reactionary views in his *Diary*, his literary works revealing quite another aspect of his make-up—his soul and his world outlook with all their contradictions. As a rule, the writer's publicist writings give expression only to certain aspects of his world outlook, in which the inner contradictions have been smoothed over or even ironed out; as Dobrolyubov once pointed out and proved in his analysis of Dostoyevsky's works, the writer's world outlook should be appraised from his literary characters.

Towards the end of his life Dostoyevsky was welcome at the tsar's court and was patronized by the grand dukes, among them the future Alexander III. He was on terms of intimacy with K. Pobedonostsev,* the leader of the reactionary nobility, Chief Prosecutor of the Synod and bitter enemy of all that was progressive in the country. It was this man who inspired the writing of *The Karamazov Brothers*, Dostoyevsky's last novel, and boasted in a letter to a correspondent that in it the figure of the monk Zosima had been created at his suggestion. The target of *The Karamazov Brothers* was the camp of revolution, "nihilism,"** so abominable in the eyes of the Lord. What this arch-reactionary did not foresee was that the novel would contain vile figures like that of Fyodor Karamazov, that embodiment of the moral putrefaction of the land-owning class, and that of Smerdyakov, the quintessence of fawning toadyism as the spawn and reflection of that class.

Such considerations are alone sufficient for an understanding of people like K. Leontyev preferring Dostoyevsky's publicist writings to his works of fiction. Reaction is afraid of art, for it fears the truth. Since it is incompatible with falsehood, genuine art *cannot* be the handmaiden of reaction.

Dostoyevsky's literary works are the field of constant strife between truth and untruth. His heroes are rent by the struggle within their souls between the hypnotic influence of bourgeois rapaciousness on the one hand, and, on the other, loathing for the temptations of the bourgeois world, this constant struggle being transposed to another

* Pobedonostsev, Konstantin Petrovich (1827-1907)—Russian statesman and reactionary. From 1880 till 1905 Chief Prosecutor of the Synod. Exerted tremendous influence over Alexander III. Fanatical adherent of autocracy, and arch-bigot.

** The name used by reactionary publicists of this period to designate those working in the democratic revolutionary movement.

plane and shown as the age-old conflict between Satan and God for the soul of man. This dualism is treated as a never-ending and, in essence, static struggle between "good" and "evil" in man, something that cannot be resolved by the limited and "earth-bound" mind and emotions of human beings. Herein lies the Karamazov "contemplation of two abysses at one and the same time," the anguish of a single soul containing "the ideal of the Madonna and the ideal of Sodom," a "fatal" and "insurmountable" contradiction.

The struggle between *good* and *evil* in the heart of man was a source of exquisite torment for Dostoyevsky and his heroes, and played so important a part in his works, for it was indissolubly bound up with a theme that permeated all his writings—the disintegration of the old moral and social ties taking place in a society going through a period of change, and fear of bourgeois amorality and cynicism, of the soulless selfishness that marks the bourgeois. He saw in the period of transition nothing but an appalling abandonment of moral criteria, the assertion of the "right" to crime, the desecration of everything sacred. This and only this is the objective reason and significance of the problems built up around Raskolnikov, Dmitry and Ivan Karamazov and a host of other characters.

This very definite theme often appeared in Dostoyevsky's works in a guise that could only mystify the reader, and found expression in the jumbling of what might be described as "social addresses," so that the writer's shafts would speed towards the wrong destination. To confound the "nihilists" he so detested he would forcibly fit his characters to the Procrustean bed of his preconceived social and psychological ideas, and moreover did his utmost to clad in the cloak of atheists and revolutionaries cynics and amoral renegades, social cast-offs like Stavrogin and people who, like Raskolnikov, had yielded to the temptation of bourgeois individualistic arbitrariness. In attri-

buting to the revolutionary camp ideas, acts and motives that were most reactionary in nature and hostile to revolutionary democracy and socialism, Dostoyevsky confused the issues by what we have called the jumbling of "social addresses."

Dostoyevsky completely and indiscriminately rejected capitalism in the sense that, together with its horrors and injustice, he denied what was progressive in it and what it had brought to take the place of the old order of things. This attitude towards the new social system that was coming to the fore, together with a feeling of despair, the seeking of comfort in religion, a hopeless clinging to idealized but outmoded ways of life, doubts and vacillations—all these were peculiar not to Dostoyevsky alone but were features of more or less broad sections of the population during a period of social transition. As Lenin pointed out:

"Pessimism, non-resistance and an appeal to the 'Spirit' is an ideology that inevitably appears in an epoch when the whole old system has been 'upset,' and when the mass, brought up under that old system, and from birth steeped in the principles, habits, traditions and beliefs of that system, does not and cannot see *what kind* of new system is emerging, *what* social forces are bringing it into being and in *what way*, and what social forces are *capable* of bringing deliverance from the innumerable and acute calamities peculiar to epochs of radical change."

It was Dostoyevsky himself who rejected any opportunity of gaining an understanding of the social forces capable of bringing relief to the Marmeladov family, for instance, those pitiful victims of social injustice, whose fate is described with such power and poignancy in *Crime and Punishment*. His protest against the capitalistic avalanche that was sweeping over the country contained much that was detrimental to real social progress, but in it there was much that was true to life, boundless com-

passion and sympathy for the insulted and humiliated. His social conscience made him describe wrongs and evil, and the sufferings of masses of the population, matters that were studiously avoided by other writers of the "loyalist" camp.

Dostoyevsky's works and labours gave him the moral right to say: "*I do not like what is going on in this world*" as a formula that sums up the essence of all he wrote.

The spirit of alarm and turmoil, boundless human agony and torment, cankerous dissatisfaction with life, searchings and vacillations, morbidity in human relations, solitude and despair, helplessness and hopelessness, horror at the inability to distinguish between good and evil, the disintegration of morality and moral norms, infinite humiliation—all these features of Dostoyevsky's writings cry out to the skies that human life is but a sea of troubles, afflictions and adversities.

In an article entitled "On Literature" (1930) Gorky wrote regarding Dostoyevsky's growing influence in Western Europe: "I would prefer the 'cultured world' to be united not by Dostoyevsky but by Pushkin, for the latter's colossal and universal talent is one that is wholesome and health-giving. At the same time I have no objections to the influence exerted by Dostoyevsky's poisonous talent, because I am convinced of its destructive influence on the 'spiritual balance' of the European petty bourgeois."

Dostoyevsky was *unsparing* and *caustic* in unmasking baseness of soul and selfishness in man. He had a scathing contempt for the smug and priggish disinclination of the prosperous philistine to let himself be bothered with a conscience. His bitter opposition to the philistine's soulless and smugly self-satisfied singleness of purpose, a singleness born of narrow-mindedness, developed into suspicion of any singleness of purpose in man, even were it born of integrity.

Dostoyevsky thought that the torment of duality of mind can be justified as testifying to the workings of a conscience. Such idealizing of *duality* means in effect the idealizing of everything that hinders the triumph of conscience and tends to drown its voice. This can be seen in his endowing with a certain charm such split, desolated and altogether loathsome personalities as Stavrogin and Versilov.

Dostoyevsky could not admit the possibility of single-ness of purpose and firmness of character being blended with delicacy of feeling and obedience to conscience. That is why he so embellishes that *splitting and splintering* of the soul, about which Gorky wrote:

“Complexity is the sad and ugly result of extreme splitting and splintering of the ‘soul’ by the day-by-day conditions of petty-bourgeois society, the ceaseless and mean struggle for an advantageous and assured place in life. This ‘complexity’ is the explanation of the fact why, among hundreds of millions, we see so few outstanding people, incisive characters and people swayed by a single passion—in a word, great people.”

Here, for instance, is the conviction the hero of *Notes from Underground* has arrived at after forty years of life: “Yes, a man of the nineteenth century must and is morally obliged to be in the main a spineless creature, while a man of character and action must and is morally obliged to be a narrow-minded creature.”

To Dostoyevsky “a man of action” meant a bourgeois man of business, as exemplified in Luzhin in *Crime and Punishment*, Mr. Bykov in *Poor Folk*, Prince Valkovsky in *The Insulted and Humiliated*, ambition-crazed men striving to imitate Napoleon, or, finally, fantastic “nihilists” like Pyotr Verkhovensky in *The Possessed*, a man who says of himself that, far from being a socialist, he is simply a political impostor.



The Alexei Ravelin of the Fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul,
where Dostoyevsky was imprisoned in 1849

Dostoyevsky held that *incisiveness* of character goes hand in hand with callousness. That is why, writing of Alyosha Karamazov, one of the characters he really loved, he exclaimed: "It would be strange in a time like ours to demand that people should be marked by clarity of purpose."

We repeat that these ideas were a reflection of Dostoyevsky's forebodings, his acute sensitiveness to the character of the time, a period of change and, as he felt, of transition to something new, chaotic, dark and evil.

To him the period had a quality of *duality* and he thought that a man of the time could not but bear the stigma of that quality.

Lev Tolstoi wrote to N. Strakhov* about the erroneous-ness of a "false and wrong attitude towards Dostoyevsky," and an "exaggeration of his significance . . . the elevation to the rank of prophet and saint of a man who died in the thick of the struggle between good and evil. He is moving and interesting, but a man who is all struggle should not be placed on a pedestal for the edification of posterity." What Tolstoi had in mind here was a duality that hovered between good and evil, the lack of a sharp line of division between them, the relishing of evil things and at the same time disgust for them—qualities peculiar to the atmosphere of Dostoyevsky's work. Tolstoi's "non-resistance" belonged to the sphere of politics, not of morals.

* Strakhov, Nikolai Nikolayevich (1828-1896)—Russian critic, publicist and idealist philosopher. Contributed to *Epokha* and *Vremya* (1861), magazines published by F. M. and M. M. Dostoyevsky. His articles were directed against philosophy of materialism and revolutionary democracy, against ideas of Chernishevsky and Pisarev. Considered himself adherent of Hegel's absolute idealism. Was opposed to Darwinism.

Saltikov-Shchedrin* once said of Dostoyevsky: "On the one hand he presents personages instinct with life and truth, but on the other—puppets that are mysterious and seem to be running riot in a dream and to have been made by hands that were trembling with anger..." Gorky, too, spoke of the arbitrary imposition upon Dostoyevsky's characters of thoughts, feelings and acts that were not justified by the nature of their make-up. He emphasized in this connection that Dostoyevsky's reactionary tendencies led to "terrible distortion that could be forgiven in nobody else..."

Dostoyevsky often rendered his genius a disservice by bowing to the vanity and falseness of reactionary subjectivist tendentiousness, and creating types and characters that lack the hallmark of truth to life.

It was once said by Gogol that any falseness in the treatment of character evoked a feeling of disgust in him, as though he were viewing a corpse or a skeleton. That is why he burnt his manuscript of the second part of *Dead Souls*. The self-coercion imposed on him by the forces of reaction was one of the main causes of Gogol's mental disease, which ended in his suicide. His mentality precluded any compromise with the demands of art, so that though he was able to turn reactionary in his publicist writings, he could not be false to the moral norms of genuine art.

His reactionary fanaticism sometimes blinded the creative artist in Dostoyevsky, so that he failed to realize the artificiality and unnaturalness of the characters he had

* Saltikov-Shchedrin, Mikhail Yevgrafovich (1826-1889)—great Russian satirist and revolutionary democrat. Developed under influence of Belinsky. In forties joined Petrashevsky's circle; his utopian socialist sympathies were reflected in his earlier works, for which he was exiled to Vyatka (1848-55). Was one of the editors of the *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* from 1868 till it was closed in 1884. His satirical works played an important part in development of revolutionary movement and progressive literature in Russia. Continued traditions of Gogol and created style of political satire.

brought forth. Moreover, in a number of cases the same reason made him deliberately abandon the path of faithfulness to art. It may well be said that Dostoyevsky's mighty creative power was in certain measure weakened by his subjectiveness.

With his exceptional impressionability and vulnerability, his duality of thought and feeling, the whole tenor of his psychology, Dostoyevsky proved exceedingly susceptible to the atmosphere of his environment, the impact of the life around him and influences which he felt to be predominant. During the forties he fell under the sway of anti-feudal, democratic ideas that were interlarded with conceptions of utopian socialism, especially of Fourier. This stemmed from the influence of Belinsky's and Petrashevsky's* circles, the latter being the principal centre of the revolutionary movement in the second half of the forties.

The ruthless exploitation of the peasantry by the landowners with the resultant growth of the peasant movement, the sharpening of the class struggle, the crying need of the abolition of serfdom and the development of social consciousness and revolutionary thought—all these exerted a powerful influence on the young Dostoyevsky, who had a keen perception of the general situation and breathed the air of the times. Such things found full expression in his works of the period.

He possessed neither overriding revolutionary passion, a stable belief in the strength of the revolutionary movement nor a consistent revolutionary, democratic mode of thought. His democratism was of the emotional and

* Petrashevsky, M. V. (1821-1866)—leader of a circle of progressive Russian intellectuals (1845-49) named after him. Was active fighter for liberation, especially for the emancipation of the serfs. There were two wings in the circle: 1) a revolutionary and democratic, including Petrashevsky himself; 2) a liberal wing, which included Dostoyevsky. In 1849 the entire group was arrested and Petrashevsky was exiled to Siberia. Was opposed to the autocracy till the end of his life.

dreamy type, as was his socialism, and he was torn between Belinsky's atheism and his own leanings towards "Christian socialism." He had a love of *the poor*, dreamed of the abolition of serfdom, and wanted full freedom for literature and the press.

Such aspirations were "crimes" in the eyes of the tsarist government, and in 1849 he was sentenced to penal servitude.

This dweller in a world of dreams and images underwent a shock he never recovered from, and which left an indelible impression on all his works, as can be seen in the description of the feelings and thoughts of a man sentenced to death, given in *The Idiot*.

On December 22, 1849, the tsarist government staged a sadistically brutal and cold-blooded near-execution of 21 members of Petrashevsky's circle. This was aimed at breaking their will and bringing them to their knees. The condemned were dressed in white shrouds, blindfolded and tied to stakes prior to being shot. The roll of drums resounded through the drill-ground the execution was being staged in, and the condemned were preparing to meet their fate when at the last moment an imperial A.D.C. came galloping into the square with a rescript from the tsar ordering the commutation of the death sentence to penal servitude, and then exile.

Dostoyevsky's life had been spared, but the sentence had been carried out on the dreams and aspirations of his youth, hopes that died a lingering death during the agony of prison life.

The blow which had descended on him was unexpected and brutal; his only crime had been the reading aloud of Belinsky's letter to Gogol. The horror of convict life that he was thrown into, he who had already won a literary reputation and had so many creative plans, was so overwhelming that he proved unable to stand up to the shock. The might of the autocracy seemed to him insuperable and everlasting, and in the depth of his prison Gol-

gotha he could hear the fierce roar of the beast of reaction which seemed the more "triumphant" the more the regime of Nicholas I felt the approach of impending doom.

What tormented Dostoyevsky more than anything else during his years of penal servitude was his feeling of intense solitude, the isolation of a small band of intellectuals among the mass of prison inmates who hated them so. This hatred became fused in Dostoyevsky's mind with a sense of the rift between the mass of the people and the handful of intellectuals who at the time carried the banner of freedom. It was this distance between the people and those who were fighting for freedom that Dostoyevsky came to consider the strongest proof of the unpractical and unreal nature of the struggle for freedom.

The conviction developed in him that *the people* stood opposed to the atheism and "free-thinking" of the "gentle-folk," and that any attempt to come closer to the people called for rejection of all "non-popular" and "lordly" ideas.

The humiliation inflicted on his proud and unbowing nature by the agony of prison life and the ensuing term of military service in the conscript army could let him go on living, that is to say, keep his self-respect, on either of two conditions: he could retain his devotion to the ideals that had brought him to prison and proudly bear the agony he was going through, or he could justify in his own eyes what had fallen to his lot and regard it as a blessing in disguise sent from on high. He chose the second of these alternatives.

Christian meekness and humility proved a highly facile way of finding relief from the pangs of wounded pride, which are capable of bursting the soul asunder if they do not find any outlet or solution.

In his works Dostoyevsky revealed most forcefully the psychology of *the humility that is greater than pride*, and

showed in magnificent pictures how much repressed wrath and irreconcilable offence, pride and thirst of vengeance may lie concealed under the outward guise of such humility! However that may be, repressed protest has its limits and can be nothing more than a protest that is *repressed*.

For Dostoyevsky the atmosphere of the first half of the fifties both within the country and in Western Europe, where the revolution had been defeated, was just the same as within his prison walls. He was isolated from the revolutionary upsurge of the second half of the fifties, following the long-awaited downfall of Nicholas I's regime, both by his prison solitude and then by the new views he had developed.

He returned to the capital in the thick of a revolutionary situation which he, with his conviction that the autocracy was for all time, could not understand. The outcome was that the works he wrote during the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties bear the impress of transitoriness and neutrality. They had lost the protest that marked the works of the young Dostoyevsky, but did not as yet contain the reactionarily utopian ideas which, interlaced with a furious criticism of capitalism and overwhelming compassion for the unfortunate and disinherited majority of mankind, were to come in his later writings.

Dostoyevsky's belief in the unshakable stability of tsarism was reinforced by the advent of a new wave of reaction that followed the recess of the revolutionary onslaught.

It will thus be seen that his writings were all coloured by the various stages in the social and political developments of the times. There is, however, one feature in them that is never missing, despite all the artificial constructions, the distortions and errors brought into them by the impact of reactionary tendencies, and that is the piercing and not-to-be-silenced outcry of a tormented

mankind clamouring that it could *no longer tolerate the conditions of its life!* The false teaching of humility and the hypocritical justification of mankind's sufferings is *outweighed* by the *single unavenged tear of a tortured child* for which the writer, through Ivan Karamazov, rejects the idea of "divine harmony."

While ruthlessly rejecting the reactionary falseness and the idealization of suffering and duality, all the *Dostoyevskyism* contained in the works of this great writer, we pay homage to his stern truthfulness in depicting life in a society based on exploitation, expressed with such passion and anguish, in writings that are so contradictory, now rebellious, now submissive, amazing in their artistic force but at times departing from the truth of art, thrilling, searching and suffering.

Dostoyevsky occupies a place of honour in the Pantheon of Russian and world literature.

THE YOUNG DOSTOYEVSKY

In the year that saw Nekrasov,* the friend of his youth, lying on his death-bed, Dostoyevsky made an entry in his *Diary of a Writer*, describing a certain white night in St. Petersburg. This entry, which refers to the winter of 1877, is of so poetical a nature that I cannot refrain from quoting the well-known story in full. It will never fail to move those that hold in high esteem devotion to one's calling, sincere joy at inspiration that has come upon a

* Nekrasov, Nikolai Alexeyevich (1821-1877)—great Russian poet and revolutionary democrat. In forties became close friend of Belinsky, who exerted strong ideological influence on him. In 1847 headed *Sovremennik* magazine and induced leading literary figures to work for it. In fifties Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov began working with Nekrasov in *Sovremennik*, which became militant organ of revolutionary democrats. Bard of revolutionary peasant movement, Nekrasov displayed with forceful art life of serfs and their ruthless exploitation by landowners. He also wrote of lot of workers, chiefly of such who had recently come from villages. In his satirical works Nekrasov created gallery of types of enemies of the people—liberals from nobility, serf-owning landlords and rapacious capitalists. Nekrasov's poetry is full of revolutionary patriotism, love of the people, confidence in its strength, and has close ties with folk poetry. The poet was held very high by Lenin, who pointed out that despite his vacillations all his sympathies lay with revolutionary democrats. Nekrasov's heritage has played tremendous part in development of progressive Russian literature and formation of realistic style of Soviet poetry.

colleague, which one shares as though it were one's own, and fervid love of mankind.

Recalling the spring of 1845, Dostoyevsky wrote:

"Strange things happen to people. We rarely saw each other (Dostoyevsky is speaking of Nekrasov.—V.Y.); we had misunderstandings too, but an event took place in our lives, which I shall never forget, to wit, our first meeting. And imagine, recently I called on Nekrasov,* and he, the ailing and the jaded, told me from the very outset that he remembered those days. Then—this was thirty years ago!—there happened something so youthful, so fresh and good, which is for ever preserved in the hearts of those who have lived through this experience. We were both slightly over twenty years old. I was then living in St. Petersburg; a year before I had resigned from the engineers' corps, not knowing why, full of vague and uncertain aspirations. This was in May, 1845. Early in the winter I started writing *Poor Folk*, my first tale; prior to that I had never written anything. After finishing this story, I did not know what to do with it, and to whom it should be submitted. I had no literary acquaintances whatever, save D. V. Grigorovich;** but in those days he, too, had written nothing except a short article entitled 'St. Petersburg Hurdy-Gurdy Men' for one of the almanacs. If I am not mistaken, he was about to leave for his estate for the summer, meanwhile living in Nekrasov's apartment. When he called on me, he said, 'Bring your manuscript (he had not read it as yet): Nekrasov intends to publish an almanac for the coming year; I will show

*Relations were resumed between Dostoyevsky and Nekrasov in connection with the publication (in 1875) of *The Hobbledehoy* in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, which was edited by Nekrasov and Saltikov-Shchedrin.

** D. Grigorovich recalled the impression produced on him and Nekrasov on reading *Poor Folk*: "I did the reading. On the last page, the scene in which Devushkin parts with Varenka, I could control myself no longer and began to sob; I glanced at Nekrasov; tears were streaming down his face."

it to him.' I brought my manuscript. I saw Nekrasov but for a moment; we shook hands. I felt confusion at the thought that I had come with my composition, and I quickly left, with scarcely a word to Nekrasov. I gave little thought to success and I was afraid of *the party of the Otechestvenniye Zapiski* as people used to call it in those days. I had been reading Belinsky with admiration for several years, but he seemed awe-inspiring and dreadful, and, at times, I would say to myself, 'He will ridicule my *Poor Folk!*'—but this was only at times. I had written the story with passion, almost with tears. 'Is it possible that all this, all these minutes through which I have lived with pen in hand, working on this story—can it be that all this is a lie, a mirage, a false sentiment?'—But, of course, it was only now and then that I thought in this vein, and doubt forthwith returned to me.

"In the evening of the same day that I submitted the manuscript, I went far off to visit a former friend of mine. All night we spoke about *Dead Souls* and read the book, for which time—I don't remember. In those days it used to be this way among young men, two or three of them would get together. 'Gentlemen, shall we read Gogol?' They would sit down and read, sometimes, all night. There were many among the youth then, who, as it were, were permeated with a something and were awaiting something.

"I returned home at four o'clock on a white St. Petersburg night. It was as light as broad daylight. The weather was beautiful and warm, and upon entering my apartment I did not go to bed, but opened the window and seated myself in front of it. Suddenly I heard the door bell ring. This surprised me very much. Presently Grigovich and Nekrasov rushed upon me and in a perfect transport started embracing me; both were almost in tears.

"The evening before they had come home early, had taken my manuscript and begun to read it, just for a test.

'We shall be able to judge from the first ten pages,' they thought. But after reading ten pages, they had decided to read another ten, and thereupon, without interruption, they had sat up all night till morning, reading aloud and taking turns when one of them had grown tired. 'He was reading about the student's death,' Grigorovich later told me, when we were alone, 'and suddenly I noticed, at that place where the father runs behind the coffin, Nekrasov's voice began to falter, once, then a second time, and then, losing control over himself, he struck the manuscript with the palm of his hand, exclaiming, "The rascal!"—meaning you. And thus all night.'

"After they had finished reading (112 pages in all), they had unanimously decided to call on me at once: 'What does it matter that he is sleeping! We'll wake him up. *This* is more important than sleep!' Subsequently, when I had a better knowledge of Nekrasov's disposition, I often wondered about this event: his is a reserved, almost suspicious character, cautious and uncommunicative. At least, this is what I always felt, so that the minute of our first meeting was in truth the manifestation of a most profound feeling.

"They stayed with me half an hour, or so, and during that time we managed to discuss God knows how many topics, understanding one another from the first syllable, in a hurry, with exclamations. We spoke about poetry and the truth and 'the existing situation,' and, it goes without saying, about Gogol, quoting from *The Inspector-General* and *Dead Souls*, but principally—about Belinsky. 'I will give him your story today, and you will see—what a man! What a man! When you get acquainted, you will see what a soul he has!' Nekrasov said to me enthusiastically, shaking me by my shoulders with both hands. 'Well, now sleep, sleep! We are leaving you, and tomorrow—come to us!' How could I sleep after their visit! What ecstasy! What a success! And, most important, the emotion they had felt was dear to me, as I remember distinct-

ly. 'A man may be a success; he may be praised, people may congratulate him when they meet him; but these came running with tears in their eyes, at four o'clock in the morning, to wake me up because this was more important than sleep. . . . Ah, how wonderful!' This is what came into my mind. How could I sleep!

"That same day Nekrasov took the manuscript to Belinsky. He worshipped Belinsky, and, I think, loved him more than anyone else in his life. At that time Nekrasov had not yet written anything as important as what he wrote shortly thereafter—one year thence. As far as I know, Nekrasov came to St. Petersburg, all alone, at the age of sixteen. It was almost at that age that he started writing. I know little about his acquaintance with Belinsky, but the latter discovered him at the very outset and, perhaps, has exercised a strong influence upon the mood of his poetry. Notwithstanding Nekrasov's youthfulness in those days, and the difference in age between them, such moments must have arrived and such words been uttered that have a lasting effect and bind people with indissoluble ties.

" 'A new Gogol has appeared!' Nekrasov exclaimed when he entered Belinsky's apartment with my *Poor Folk*. 'You seem to discover Gogols at every step,' Belinsky remarked severely but nevertheless he took the manuscript. When Nekrasov again called on him in the evening, he found him in a state of real agitation: 'Bring him, bring him along as soon as possible.'

"And now (this, then, was already the third day) I was brought to Belinsky. I recall that at first I was struck by his appearance, his nose, his forehead. For some reason I imagined him—'this awe-inspiring, this dreadful critic'—as being quite different. He met me very gravely and with reserve. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'this is how it should be.' However, I think that a minute had not passed when the picture radically changed: it was not the gravity of an individual, of a great critic, on meeting a twenty-

two-year-old author*—a beginner, but, so to speak, grāv-ity coming from his respect for those feelings which he sought to convey to me as quickly as possible. He began to speak ardently, with burning eyes. 'But do you understand,' he repeated to me several times in a loud tone, as was his habit, 'what you have written!' He always spoke at the top of his voice when he was in a state of great agitation. 'You may have written, guided by immediate instinct, as an artist, but did you yourself rationalize all this dreadful truth which you have pointed out to us? It is impossible that at your age of twenty you could have understood it. Now, this unfortunate official of yours—why, he has so long and desperately sweated in service, he has reduced himself to such a state that he does not even dare to consider himself unlucky—from humility, and he is almost inclined to treat the slightest complaint as an act of free-thinking; he does not even dare claim his right to misfortune, and when a kind man, his chief, a high-ranking official, gives him that hundred rubles, he is crushed, annihilated by amazement that one like himself could be pitied by "Their Excellency"—not "His Excellency" but "Their Excellency" as he expresses himself in your novel! And that torn-off button! That minute when he kisses His Excellency's hand—why, this is no longer compassion for this unfortunate man—this is horror, horror! In this very gratitude is his horror! This is tragedy! You have touched upon the very essence of the matter; by one stroke of the pen you have indicated the main thing. We, publicists and critics, we merely deliberate; we try to explain this with words, but you, an artist, set forth the very essence with one trait, with one stroke, in an image, so that one can feel it with one's own hand, so as to enable the least reasoning reader to grasp everything at once! This is the mystery of art! This is the truth of

* Inaccurate. Dostoyevsky was born on October 30 (Nov. 11, New Style) 1821.

art! This is the artist's service to truth! To you, as an artist, truth is revealed and declared; it came to you as a gift. Treasure, then, your gift, be faithful to it, and you will become a great writer!

"This is what he told me then. Later he repeated the same to many others who are still alive and who can corroborate my words. I left him in a state of ecstasy. I stopped at the corner of his house, looked at the sky, at the bright day, at passers-by, and with my whole being I felt that a solemn moment had occurred in my life, a decisive turning-point; that something altogether new had begun, something I had not anticipated even in my most impassioned dreams. (And in those days I was an awful dreamer.) 'And am I in truth so great?' I timidly asked myself in a state of bashful ecstasy. Oh, don't you laugh! Never again did I think that I was great, but at that time it was too overwhelming. 'Oh, I shall prove worthy of this praise. And what men! What men! It is here that one finds men! I shall justify this praise! I shall endeavour to become as wonderful as they are! I shall remain "faithful"! How frivolous I am! And if only Belinsky knew what nasty, shameful thoughts dwell within me! And yet people keep saying that these men of letters are haughty and ambitious. True, such men are to be found only in Russia; they are lone, but only they possess the truth, and truth, goodness, veracity always conquer and triumph over vice and evil. We shall triumph! Oh, I long for them! I long to be with them!'

"I was thinking all this; I recall that moment with the fullest lucidity. I could never thereafter forget it. This was the most delightful minute in my whole life. When I was serving my term of hard labour, it fortified me spiritually every time I recalled it. Even now invariably I recall it with ecstasy.

"And now, after thirty years, as I recently sat at the bed of the sick Nekrasov, I recalled that moment, relived it. I did not remind him of it in detail; I reminded him

only of the fact that those moments had actually happened, and I could see that he too remembered them. I knew that he did remember them. When I returned from Siberia, he showed me a poem in his book. 'At that time, I wrote this about you,' he said. Yet we have lived our whole lives apart. On his sick-bed he recalled his friends who are no longer with us.

*Their prophetic songs have been silenced:
They fell victims of treason and spite
In the blossom of youth; and their portraits
Look on me with reproach and with blight.*

“‘With reproach’—indeed, these are painful words. Have we remained ‘faithful’? Have we? Let everyone answer the question according to his own judgement, his own conscience. But do read these songs of suffering yourselves, and let our beloved and passionate poet be revived in your hearts! A poet with a passion for suffering!...”

A remarkable document of the times and an inspired memorial to two of our country's greatest sons, this passage is a precious legacy which shows us the workings of the writer's soul. It reveals many a trait of his make-up which, small as they might seem at first glance, are of the greatest significance.

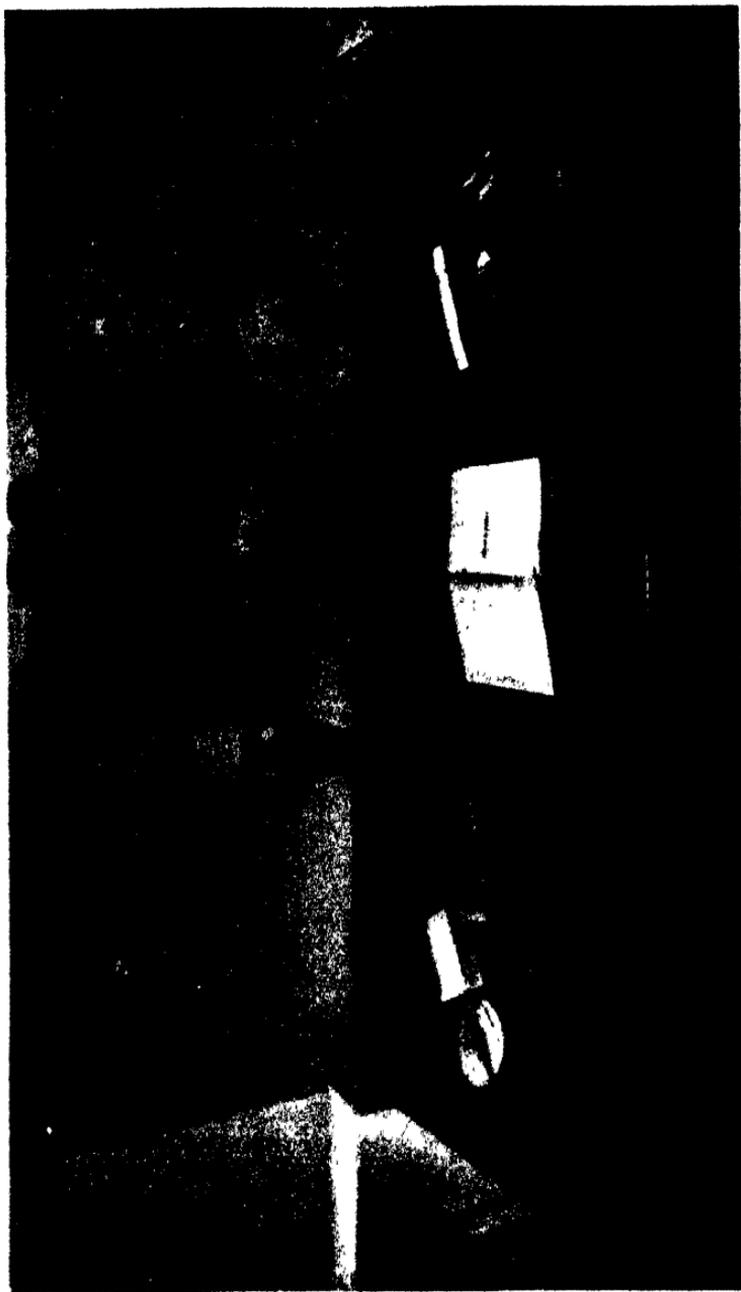
It should never be forgotten that these lines were penned at a time when Dostoyevsky had already succumbed to the fanatic bigotry that had found vent in *The Possessed*, and that he had already called Belinsky the most pestilent phenomenon in Russian history. Is it not clear that, by expressing thoughts such as the above, the writer in fact erases the smirch he has administered to these two great men, pays the homage due to the dying Nekrasov and hearkens to the voice of his own conscience? In what a noble light does Belinsky appear in these inspired lines, despite the spate of slander let loose against him

during his lifetime and after his death. In the extract quoted above, the epoch itself is bathed in a poetic refulgence, not only because of the youth of those concerned but also because it was the springtime of vague hopes and expectations . . . perhaps the end of serfdom and the advent of liberty. This atmosphere and the tremendous influence exerted by Gogol and Belinsky must be borne in mind for a proper appraisal of the background against which *Poor Folk* emerged. It can easily be seen that Dostoyevsky's whole being was caught up by the mood of the times.

In these reminiscences, he speaks of the influence that Belinsky had on the mood of Nekrasov's poetry. Is it not clear that Belinsky's writings influenced the mood of the young Dostoyevsky's works, and that the author of *Poor Folk* was grateful to the critic not only for the latter's unstinted support for his first effort, but also for the aid given during its creation. It was held by Dobrolyubov that *Poor Folk* was written under the influence of Gogol. That is so; Dostoyevsky was of course a pupil and follower of Gogol, the great writer and creator of the "natural" school, who had been so extolled by Belinsky. That is why Belinsky had to become, in even greater measure, Dostoyevsky's teacher; the one who moulded him as a writer, and whose articles were a source of inspiration to the young Dostoyevsky even before they met.

The author of "preservatory" novels, aimed at furthering the struggle against ideas that Belinsky had been one of the first to champion in Russia, Dostoyevsky publicly admitted on the pages of a reactionary publication that his contacts with two representatives of the camp of revolution—with Belinsky and Nekrasov—had been the finest moments of his life.

It is not fortuitous that Dostoyevsky speaks with pain of the words "with reproach," since it is clear that they are addressed *towards himself*. There was a time when his name, together with the names of the political prison-



Fyodor Dostoyevsky's writing-table

ers who had shared his fate after the Petrashevsky trial, was a standing reproach to the conscience of Nekrasov, since it posed to that conscience the question as to whether the poet was doing his duty by the people as these men had done, thereby sacrificing all for the public weal. It was in this light that Nekrasov regarded Dostoyevsky during the decade that saw the writing of *Poor Folk*, when the novelist was being badgered and persecuted by the tsar's government. The time had now come when the name of Nekrasov was a standing reproach to Dostoyevsky's conscience; it was not by chance that he wrote, "‘With reproach’—these are painful words," and went on to ask himself, "Have we remained faithful?"—faithful to the fresh and youthful ideals that were so indissolubly linked up with the name of Belinsky?

Dostoyevsky, of course, tried to convince himself that till the end of his days he *remained faithful* to his ideals of love of man, compassion for him in his sufferings. It is true that in this sense he was indeed faithful to these ideals, but there is a great deal of perturbation in the tone of his recollections, as well as in the repetition of the question "Have we remained faithful? Have we?" and in his calling the words "with reproach" painful.

In what light could the camp of the Pobedonostsevs and the Katkovs regard these reminiscences? For these dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries it was important that Dostoyevsky should retain his reputation of an independently minded man of letters; his earlier friendship with Nekrasov and Belinsky could give Dostoyevsky's name a big build-up among the youth, and also enhance the weight of the political views he voiced in his *Diary of a Writer*. It stands to reason that Dostoyevsky did not and could not in any way support Nekrasov in the main feature of his poetry—its revolutionary character. Most true of Dostoyevsky himself are the words he used with reference to

Nekrasov—a poet with a passion for suffering. The latter's passion was in fact a feeling of wrath at the sufferings of the people. It is obvious that Dostoyevsky's "new" reactionary friends did not relish everything they read in his reminiscences.

Belinsky could not but rejoice at the appearance of *Poor Folk*, which was a continuation of the Gogol school, proof of its vitality, of the fact that the banner of realism and humanism in Russian literature was in strong and dependable hands.

While it was manifest that *Poor Folk* was the spiritual child of *The Cloak* and that its style bore the imprint of Gogol's influence, yet it marked a definite step forward. Gogol's *Cloak* was a sombre and indignant protest against the humiliation of man; it was a voice raised in defence of man, and as such stands to the lasting credit of our literature. However meagre and mutilated the spiritual make-up of the main character in this story, he is humanly far superior to the higher-ups that make mock of him. However, we are told little or nothing of his inner life; indeed, all that can be learnt is that his interests pivot on the problem of obtaining a new cloak. The author voices the ire and grief he feels at the fact that a human being can be humiliated to such a degree.

Makar Devushkin is also a deeply humiliated man, so much so that, in the words of Belinsky, he dares not even consider himself unfortunate. In his behaviour and his outlook on life he seems for all the world a replica of Gogol's Akaky Akakiyevich. The difference lies in the fact that in *Poor Folk* the last have indeed become the first, that those who stand on the lowest rung of "society" are spiritually the finest people of that society. For the first time in literature the spiritual life of the unfortunate and the disinherited was lit up from within; for the first time the wealth, beauty, delicacy of that life were depicted with such realistic conviction. All this was of course the out-

come of the entire previous development of Russian literature. Dostoyevsky himself spoke of this when he said that *Poor Folk* stemmed from Pushkin's *Post-Master* and Gogol's *Cloak*. He, however, gave such an impetus to the humanist and realistic traditions of his predecessors that he won immediate recognition as a writer in his own right, one with something new to say.

The novelty of *Poor Folk* lay in its approach to the "little man." Not only was his soul laid bare; the reader was led not only to sympathize with him, but to achieve a feeling of fusion with him. In the two stories mentioned above, Pushkin and Gogol taught love of the "younger brother," i.e., the weak and the downtrodden. For Dostoyevsky Makar Devushkin was a particle of his soul, and not merely in the sense that any artistic image is a particle of the author's soul. This was a profound social and psychological affinity. Dostoyevsky felt himself one of the *poor folk*. Indeed, from early childhood his life was full of the most arduous labour and anxiety, the pangs of wounded pride, the crushing pressure of debts, so that at times he stood on the brink of virtual beggary. Dostoyevsky was the first Russian writer to deal with the life of a great city and acquaint his reader with the world of the "lower depths" of St. Petersburg. True, the writings of Pushkin in his *Bronze Horseman* and Gogol in his *Nevsky Prospekt* had sketched the contours of the soulless conglomeration of buildings that crushed and obliterated the lives of *poor folk*, but it was Dostoyevsky that brought into literature the city as the mainspring and foreground of human activity.

Makar Devushkin's moral stature is shown through his love of Varenka Dobroselova.

Love is one of the most important criteria of a man's humanness. The love that came into Devushkin's life brought out the best that was in him, straightened his back, and caused a veritable revolution in his being.

The author called his book a *novel* and had every reason to do so, since the full novel differs from the short novel in its emphasis on the formation and development of character.

It was this feeling of love that made Devushkin able to raise his head, forget that he had considered himself only fit for people to wipe their feet on, and good for nothing in this life.

Dostoyevsky had the gift of depicting in poignant detail the humiliation inflicted on a human being, as for instance Devushkin's account of his desire to give himself a brush up when he reached the office one day, "but Snegiryov, the janitor, would not let me. He was afraid I might spoil the brush, and the brush, after all, belongs to the office. And so you see, my darling, they are ready to wipe their feet on me."

And it was this downtrodden man who came to realize his *human worth and dignity*. For the first time in his life he knew that the fate of another depended on him and moreover the life of so angelic a woman. He felt capable of something quite unlike his quondam abject submission to anybody in the least stronger than he; he had discovered within himself a treasure dearer than pearls—a love that was genuine and selfless. In the words of Belinsky, "It was not for himself that he loved her, but for her sake, and it was his supreme happiness to sacrifice all for her." He was deeply grateful to Varenka for having made his life richer. He was used to regarding himself as "something of no consequence, quite unbecoming and even indecent. And as soon as I had lost my self-respect I could not help denying all my virtues and my worthiness, and this inevitably brought about my downfall. It was preordained by fate, you know. . . ." "I know how indebted to you I am, my darling. When I came to know you, I came to know myself better and to love you, and before that, my angel, I was so alone in the world and slept rather than lived. In those days the villains used to say that even my

figure was all wrong and were so contemptuous of me that I finally grew contemptuous of myself. They used to say that I was a fool, and I came to think so too. But when you appeared to me like a vision from above, you brought light into that dark existence of mine, brought light into my heart and soul and there was peace at last and I knew that I was no worse than others. The polish was missing perhaps, and the tone and brilliance too, but I was a man at heart and in mind."

A man at heart and in mind! These words were a new declaration of faith in humanism in Russian literature, whose *little men*, prior to Devushkin, had never risen to such heights of dignity. One of Devushkin's predecessors, namely Gogol's Akaky Akakiyevich (*The Cloak*), was called *a man* by the great poet and humanist who created him, but Akaky Akakiyevich himself was very far removed from the very possibility of the thoughts and sentiments that Devushkin was able to discover and comprehend within himself. This formula—*a man at heart and in mind*—is contrasted in the novel to Mr. Bykov and his like, who did not consider the Devushkins of this world to be human beings at all; in fact it was the Bykovs that were not decent human beings. As Devushkin says, "What sort of a man is it who can offend an orphan? A piece of trash and not a man! A man in semblance only! I am sure of it."

Such were the thoughts that love evoked in Devushkin. It was love, too, that led and raised him to thoughts about social inequality.

"There are so many carriages; how can the roadway carry them all? And what luxurious vehicles they are, with their shining windows, their silk and velvet, and lackeys with swords and epaulettes. I looked into each of them as they passed, and wondered if the lady inside was a countess or a princess. . . . I thought of you too and how it pained me, my poor dear darling! Why is it that you are so unhappy, Varenka? My dearest little angel, in what

way are you worse than the others? You are so kind, beautiful and learned. Why should your lot in life be so hard? Why should a good man live in need and neglect, while happiness comes to the others uninvited? Of course, my darling, I know that I should not have such thoughts, because it savours of free thought. But in all fairness, why is it that fate should smile upon one while he is still in his mother's womb and croak at another only because he was born an orphan? It is sinful, of course, to think this way, but then there are some sins which steal into the heart before one knows it. Why couldn't you be riding about in one of those carriages, my darling own, with generals, not our small fry, eager for your sweet smile? You would be wearing gold and silver then, and not poor, worn frocks of linen. And would you be as wan and frail as you are now? Nothing of the sort! You would be like a little ginger doll, so sweet, fresh and plump. To peep into your blazing windows, to see your shadow and to know that you are happy and joyous; ah, how delightful that would be, my darling little bird!"

It was with every reason that Belinsky called Dostoyevsky Gogol's offspring, with the explanation that this meant not merely literary continuity but that the former was a writer in his own right. It was pointed out by Belinsky that Dostoyevsky's Devushkin, the old man Pokrovsky, Golyadkin Senior in *The Double* were closely related to Gogol's Akaky Akakiyevich Bashmachkin and Poprishchin. The difference between Devushkin and Bashmachkin was summed up in the remark made by Belinsky: "It may be thought by many that in Devushkin the author wished to depict a man whose intellect and abilities have been crushed by his life. To think so would be a mistake. The author's idea is far deeper and humane. In Makar Alexeyevich (Devushkin) he shows how much that is beautiful, noble and sacred lies in the most limited human nature." It was this feature that was a further

development of the humanism of Gogol, who voiced a burning indignation at the fact that life could so cruelly *crush and tread a man underfoot*.

Devushkin's heart embraced all the human sufferings he saw around him. This is how Varenka, the heroine of the novel, described him:

"What a strange character you have, Makar Alexeyevich! How deeply you take things to heart! This will always make you the unhappiest of men. . . . Other people will say that you have a kind heart, but I will add that it is too kind. . . . If you take other people's troubles to heart as you do, and feel so much sympathy for others, it is no wonder that you are the unhappiest man in the world."

Varenka, too, was made of the same stuff.

The step forward made by the novel consisted, *inter alia*, in the fact that it was not a *downtrodden individual* that the reader met, but a synthetic image of a *mass* of such crushed and oppressed people. The lives of the two heroes of the story were closely linked up with those of a multitude of people equally forlorn and comfortless. In bringing into literature a whole *world* of the urban lower classes, Dostoyevsky, even in the very title of the book, emphasized that he was depicting not certain poor folk but *all poor folk*, that all around were griefs just as poignant as theirs, fates no less appalling. Being driven into the streets to sell their bodies was the fate that threatened many girls besides Varenka and her cousin; all around one saw starvation, poverty, the unbridled authority of the Bykovs and the utter helplessness of such as Varenka and Devushkin. This gift of expressing in the very texture of a novel the typicality of the scenes and persons portrayed was evidence of the young writer's humanistic and democratic sympathies.

The story, in which the fate of many people unfolds before our eyes, pivots on the great-hearted nature of Makar Devushkin. This quality is important for the construc-

tion of the novel—the epistolary form selected by the author as the vehicle best suited to show events, characters and individual fates as reflected subjectively through the two principal characters. It follows that these two people must be capable of adequately reflecting these events, characters and fates. And indeed they are in the highest degree endowed with *the gift of love and compassion*. Varenka in every way bears out her own description of herself: “I know how to love, and can love.” It so happens however that nobody wants this precious gift, least of all those who would buy her youth and beauty.

With an equal capacity for love is Makar Devushkin, whose soul can encompass all the grief of mankind. Here, for instance, is what he writes of the impoverished Gorshkov family, who are his neighbours:

“But they are poor, God, how poor! There is never a sound from their room, as though not a soul lived there. Even the children can’t be heard. I have never seen them frisk about or play. A bad sign! As I passed their door one evening when the house was unusually still, I heard a sob, then a whisper, and then another sob. Someone seemed to be weeping in such a subdued and pitiful way that it wrung my heart. I kept thinking about them all night and could not fall asleep.”

When Gorshkov’s little son died, another child, a girl of six, “his daughter, stood near the coffin, so wan, poor thing, and thoughtful. I don’t like to see a child lost in thought, Varenka, somehow, it is unpleasant. Her rag doll lay neglected on the floor. Fingering her lips, she stood there so forgotten, so very still. Our landlady offered her a sweet, and she took it, but didn’t eat it. This is grief, Varenka, isn’t it?”

Dostoyevsky, too, had a heart that was open to all the anguish and grief in the world, full of compassion for all the suffering around him. It was *his* heart that was full to bursting from the ocean of sorrow it witnessed, which

had made him the most unfortunate of men. It was *his* conscience that was tortured all his life by the unrelenting memory of the sufferings of a child, until that moment towards the end of his life when—though it might have seemed that the protest in his soul had ebbed completely—this memory was to revive in the world-significant and heart-rending image of the tortured infant in the climax of *The Karamazov Brothers*.

Dostoyevsky makes extensive use of the most convincing psychological details to show Devushkin's spiritual growth and inner development. One of these poignant details is given in one of his letters to Varenka: "My style is just taking shape now." It should be remembered that he had been upset by his lack of style in writing.

This detail is of especial importance for the epistolary form of the novel, giving as it does concrete expression to the development of Devushkin's personality. The same detail is repeated towards the close of the novel, this time with the greatest tragicalness. When Varenka leaves the capital with her husband and oppressor, leaves Devushkin for the bleak and comfortless life that awaits her in the distant steppes, leaves her only friend for ever, the latter is left with the knowledge that he no longer has a friend to write to, that he is alone and friendless. "My style is just taking shape now. . . . What style? I hardly know what I am saying and what I am writing about; I am not attending to the style and I am writing only to keep on writing and writing to you. . . ."

The novel ends with a cry of lone anguish, and we clearly see that Devushkin is doomed to fall from the spiritual height that he has reached. Of course, his words that his style is taking shape should be understood in the sense that his soul has become more and more human! At one blow all this has become superfluous, and he is no longer concerned with his "style," his soul or with such things; all is finished. He will not revert to his for-

mer solitude with its habitual grind and humiliation, but will topple to complete downfall.

Here we have a tragedy of two loving souls that have found each other in the dark, two souls with a tremendous capacity for universal love, who have grasped hands on a shaky bridge across an abyss, and who go hurtling to their doom when this bridge collapses with the inexorability of fate.

The author cannot hide a bitter smile at the idyllic colouring of the novel which commences on a note that is almost pastoral:

"I was so happy last night, so impossibly happy!" such are the opening words of Devushkin's first letter to Varenka. This is what made him happy: "So you understood what I wanted, what my heart desired. The corner of your curtain was caught back and fastened to a pot of balsam, just as I had suggested. . . ." All this smacks so much of the idyllic, something for all the world like Gogol's *Old-time Landowners*. It might seem that *Poor Folk* savours greatly of sentimentality.

By no means a sentimental writer, the young Dostoyevsky resorted in this story to sentimentality of style, since this quality in some measure enters the make-up of Makar Devushkin, and indeed could not but form part of his psychology.

With sharp irony the author contrasts Devushkin's idyllic aspirations with the harsh facts of life. Illustrative of this is the transition from the pots of balsam and geranium he sends Varenka to the atmosphere of misfortune and disaster that permeates the story, the sense that the main characters are walking along the brink of an abyss that yawns at their feet ready to swallow them. The novel is full of this foreboding of impending evil. No, the young Dostoyevsky was not sentimental.

All this is highly characteristic of Dostoyevsky: the higher, the keener and the more thrilling the note of joy, the

more ominous and inexorable the imminence of grief, disaster and the wreck of naive hopes for a better life.

It is just on so high a note that *Poor Folk* commences, in the spring, with "tender feelings, rosy fancies and what not," to quote Varenka's opinion of a letter from Devushkin. And indeed, sorrow is not too far away. From the carefree tone of the letter Varenka feels "that there is something wrong—there is too much of paradise, and spring, and fragrance, and singing birds. I was sure that there would be poetry too. You should have written some verses, Makar Alexeyevich. The rest was all there—the tender feelings, the rosy fancies and what not! As for the curtain, I had never given it a thought. It probably got caught when I set the plant down. So there!"

The letter expresses concern for Devushkin, who denies himself the barest of necessities to help Varenka, and conceals this behind a tone of joy. It also voices a mild reproach, which he is quick to understand, and in his next letter he hastens to assure the girl that she is mistaken. "Let me say," he writes, "that you have mistaken my feelings; you have misunderstood them altogether. It was fatherly affection, pure fatherly affection. . . . In your orphanhood I have taken the place of your father. I say this in all sincerity, as a true relative should. . . ." We thus see that the girl's letter has brought Devushkin back to harsh reality.

Very typical are the two central figures of the story: one is a poverty-stricken petty official who cannot even afford buttons for his threadbare clothes. The other is a "fallen" girl, who has been seduced by a scoundrel. She is unable to earn a livelihood as a sempstress and has no prospects of marriage, since her poverty and her past stand in the way. The only real prospect before her is either of two alternatives—the street or a marriage to Bykov, the very man who has ruined her life. It is obvious that for a girl of her dreamy, delicate and sickly type a marriage to Bykov can lead only to an early grave. This

hopelessness, which cannot be comforted, this sense of inescapable doom is most characteristic of Dostoyevsky.

Of great importance in his work is the following motif, one, if the adjective might be used, highly *Dostoyevsky-like* in its character.

"Poor people are cranky. That is the way they are born, I suppose. I have felt this even before," Devushkin writes. "A poor man is always suspicious. He is constantly watching from the corner of his eye everything and all who pass, wondering constantly what they are saying of him—perhaps they are saying: 'What a poor wretch! What can he be thinking of? What a sorry figure he cuts from this side or that.' And as everyone knows, Varenka, a poor man is worth less than rubbish and can be respected by no one—no matter what the scribblers say—everything will continue as of old. And why? Because they expect a poor man to wear everything inside out for all to see; to have nothing innermost, nothing that is sacred to him. As to self-respect—not for him! . . . we are sure to see some gentleman on his way to his café saying to himself, 'Now I wonder what that shabby clerk will be having for dinner today? I'll have *sautée papillotte* and he will eat porridge without butter most likely.' Why should he care what I eat? There really are gentlemen like that, Varenka. They are nasty scribblers, constantly watching you to see whether you put your foot down gingerly or not, or whether some poor clerk of such and such a department is down at the heels, with his toes sticking out, or whether he is out at the elbows—and then he goes home and writes it all down and gets this trash printed. Now, my dear sir, what business is it of yours if I am out at the elbows? Forgive my indelicacy, Varenka, but a poor man is as much bashful as a maiden. You would not disrobe—excuse my rudeness—before strangers, and similarly a poor man does not like to have anyone poking into his lair, into his family relations. And that is just the trouble! That is exactly why I was so much hurt by

my enemies who have sullied my good name and self-esteem."

This passage contains some very keen social-psychological observations of the vulnerable and easily wounded pride of the poor; their suspicion, brought about by constant expectation of insult and contempt; their resentment of any attempt to invade their private lives; their obsession with looking like *all other folk*, with not standing out against the background of decent "society" in the way toes protrude from a pair of broken boots. Devushkin dreamed of a pair of new boots not so much for his own comfort as for the sake of "decency," of appearances. This most complex yet understandable mentality, depicted with such understanding in *Poor Folk*, was developed to new heights of psychological and even psychopathological analysis in Dostoyevsky's later works. There is no psychopathological morbidity in *Poor Folk*, but in the writer's creative mind *The Double* was already taking shape.

In the excerpts we have just quoted motifs that might be called *Gogolian* stand out very vividly. We can realize the reasons why Devushkin is shocked and hurt when he reads Gogol's *Cloak*. He has been convinced that all that is ridiculous and humiliating in his private life lies concealed and therefore safe from the public eye. However, he cannot but identify himself completely with the hero of Gogol's story, also a petty out-at-elbow official, and he sees himself too held up to ridicule, naked and defenceless, with everything that he would conceal in shame glaringly exposed to the public gaze. He fears nothing in the world so much as this ruthless uncovering of his low estate and social insignificance, and now here he is, in the person of Akaky Akakiyevich, personally insulted and humiliated, trodden in the mud, so that he cannot but call the author of this *obnoxious* book a scurrilous scribbler. His taking exception to what the author of *The Cloak* has said is vivid expression of poor folk's "suspi-

ciousness," and "crankiness," their touchy sense of dignity.

This polemic between Devushkin and Gogol reveals with great force and clarity the significance to Dostoyevsky of this great work, with its ruthless and scathing revelation of the bitter truth of life and its protest against the order of things. Dostoyevsky had a most ardent admiration for this story, which for its time was a programme of humanism and realism in Russian literature. Devushkin's reaction to *The Cloak* is also important to us in its testifying to the magnitude of the impression produced by the story upon readers of the time. It should be remembered that a period of only three years separated the two books.

Reminiscent of Gogol too is the mention by Devushkin of the gentleman that is sure to be somewhere near a poor man, noting with sarcasm how he is dressed and what he is about to have for his meal. This figure obviously stems from Gogol's *Nevsky Prospekt*, in which we read:

"Goodness gracious, what strange figures are to be met on Nevsky Prospekt! There are many there who, when they meet you, are sure to gaze at your boots, and, when you have passed, look back to scrutinize your coat-tails. I really can't make out why this is so. I used to think that they were shoemakers, but that is not the case. In most cases they are civil servants employed at various ministries; many of them are fully qualified to send official papers from one institution to another; among them are such that stroll about and read the papers at one coffee-house or another—in a word, most of them are respectable people."

It is these *respectable people* that are always at the side of a poor man, who is ready to shrink back under their shamelessly piercing gaze, that the narrator in *Nevsky Prospekt* speaks of so scathingly. Of course, Dostoyevsky is fully aware of the profoundly paradoxical nature

of the situation he has created, in which the hero of his *Poor Folk* identifies the author of *The Cloak* with these *respectable people*. It is to such surprising conclusions that the suspicions of lonely and poor people can sometimes lead!

In Devushkin's indignation against the "scribbler" that has created the figure of the unfortunate petty clerk in *The Cloak* there is an important note which reveals that it is not only the hero of *Poor Folk* but its author as well who is engaged in a polemic with Gogol. This note can be found in the following words from Devushkin's pen:

"And, as everybody knows, Varenka, a poor man is worth less than rubbish and can be respected by no one—no matter what the scribblers say—everything will continue as of old. And why? Because they expect a poor man to wear everything inside out, for all to see; to have nothing innermost, nothing that is sacred to him. As to self-respect—not for him!"

The idea underlying the above passage is that things should not be allowed to go on as they are, that a poor man is entitled to turn at last against the way of things, against his humiliation. "I am a meek man; meek today, meek tomorrow," as Mr. Prokharchin was to say, "and then comes a time when I lose my meekness and turn tough." This promise of things to come, of a poor man's refusing to eat humble pie, of his putting his foot down—something that was already taking shape in the young Dostoyevsky—was totally absent in the meek and lowly Akaky Akakiyevich. It was, however, present in the atmosphere of Gogol's story as a kind of portent, a warning to those in high places.

Mention of this limitation in Gogol's hero, and consequently of the insufficiency of Gogol's humanism for the needs of the new times, was made by N. G. Chernishevsky in an article entitled "Is This the Beginning of a Change?" (1861): "He (Akaky Akakiyevich) is unable

to do anything for himself; let us then influence others in his favour. . . .

“Such was the attitude of our former writers towards the people, which was personified in Akaky Akakiyevich, a man who could be only pitied, who could benefit only from our compassion. They wrote about the people in the same way as Gogol wrote about Akaky Akakiyevich. . . . They only emphasized that the people were unfortunate, very, very unfortunate. See how meek and humble he is, how uncomplainingly he endures insult and suffering! How he must deny himself everything that a man is entitled to! How modest are his desires! . . .”

It was just this humbleness, this resigned submissiveness which, as we know, evoked dissatisfaction and even indignation in Devushkin, indignation for all poor folk. His protest against charity derived from the same source.

Rooted in democratic ideas, the young Dostoyevsky's protest against this humiliation of the people was no superficial one. This was revolutionism and socialism of the feelings, of emotion, but of deep feelings and deep emotions.

Poor Folk shows the inimitable might of Dostoyevsky's talent when it is fused with a clearly expressed social theme and inspired by a social content. The following extract re-creates a specifically Dostoyevsky situation of humiliation and awkwardness, one with an inexhaustible wealth of psychological detail, built up at such high pressure, with such irresistible impact upon the heart and nerves of the reader as to become almost unbearable, and at the same time a situation that is wholly social in significance. The scene of the hunt after the fallen button has a piercing poignancy that leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

Here is what takes place after Devushkin has been called into the presence of His Excellency for an error he has made in copying a document.

“There was His Excellency and all the others! I'm afraid

I forgot even to bow. I stood there with trembling lips and shaking knees, and with good reason, my darling own: firstly, I happened to glance at a mirror to the right and what I saw there was enough to drive a man stark mad! And secondly, I had always behaved as if I had never existed and how should His Excellency know that I existed at all? . . . He began angrily. . . . Several times I opened my mouth—to apologize, but no sound came. I should have liked to run away, but dared not. And then came the worst, something so awful, my darling, that my pen trembles for shame! A button on my coat, the devil take it, a button that was hanging by a single thread suddenly broke off and hopped and skipped, jingling and rolling to the very feet of His Excellency. And this amid the general silence. That is what came instead of an apology. This was my only answer to His Excellency. The consequences are too horrible to describe. His Excellency turned his eyes upon me, noting the details of my figure and my dress. I remembered what I had seen in the mirror, and—stooped to capture that button.”

The situation is a most awkward one as it is, one that cannot but evoke a forced smile of shame. Indeed, Devushkin's only reaction to His Excellency's anger is the unfortunate button which has rolled to the feet of Jupiter, as it were. Among the general silence the sound of the button falling seems like a peal of thunder. As if this were not enough, Dostoyevsky builds up the tension with more detail. Instead of pulling himself together so as to distract the general attention from his miserable button, Devushkin, for some reason or other, makes another attempt to salvage it, one even more awkward than the first. The storm-clouds gather still heavier.

However, even this is not enough. Devushkin might now finally give up his pursuit of the button, and now attend to his superiors. Dostoyevsky will not allow such a *dénouement*. For him and his heroes that would be too easy and simple a solution.

"What possessed me to do it! I snatched at it, but the thing kept rolling and spinning; and so you see, I also distinguished myself by my gracefulness. I felt my senses leaving me. All was lost: my reputation and all, irretrievably lost. . . . Finally, I overtook the button, arose and stiffened. I should have stood perfectly still with my hands at my sides. But no!"

This exclamation "but no" is a most pregnant one. Of course, it would be too simple and commonplace for Dostoyevsky to leave the situation at that. The suspense has to be built up even more agonizingly. ". . . I had to fiddle with that button, push it on to the broken threads as though it could stick on again. And all the time I was smiling. Yes, just smiling."

There it is, Dostoyevsky's almost tangible smile, expressive of his intolerable sense of shame that man can be so humiliated.

Highly characteristic of Dostoyevsky is the accumulation of situations, this piling of Ossa on Pelion, when one unpleasant situation forms the basis of another, followed by a third and fourth, each more painful than the preceding, so that the reader is lost in amazement. The tension keeps on mounting until it becomes pure tragedy. Indeed, this peculiar *Dostoyevsky* awkwardness tells us how uncomfortable and shameful life can be in a world where man can find himself in so undignified a situation, one entirely unworthy of a human being.

When we consider the importance of a writer and try to appraise his value to humanity, we ask ourselves: Is what he has to say essential to mankind and should this be said in exactly the way it has been set forth? If we can answer in the positive, then the appearance of such a writer has been inevitable and what he has to say has been just as inevitable; this means that he has filled a gap that existed prior to him, that he has discovered and explained to us some truth of life, some truth of the hu-

man soul that lay unknown before his advent. All this means that the writer is a great artist.

Poor Folk showed the author's predilection for the *tragic*. This social novel is at the same time a social tragedy. The reader's heart will always be moved by the poignancy of the tragic dénouement which foreshadows the end of the two heroes, both of such nobility of soul. How rich is this dénouement in masterly psychological detail expressing with such force the boundlessness of the cold and hostile world they both live in.

"But how can you leave now? The idea! You cannot go now. It is impossible, absolutely impossible! There are so many things to buy, and a carriage too! And the weather is bad; see how it is raining, coming down in buckets. And such wet rain, too! And besides. . . . You will be cold. Your heart will be cold!"

The cold life that awaits Varenka becomes almost tangible as we read these words. It is noteworthy that the words: "But how can you leave now? It is impossible, absolutely impossible," are not merely an expression of Devushkin's bewilderment, but of the truth that Varenka should not leave with Mr. Bykov, since her very life is at stake.

From sheer force of habit Devushkin goes about town on Varenka's errands, buying her finery for her wedding. In the letters of these two friends the names of all these articles carry a tragic implication, which can hardly be translated into the language of logic. There are things in the language of art that escape translation, but the sense and significance of what is implied reach the reader's heart without the medium of mere words.

"P. S. I'm ashamed to trouble you with my errands. The day before yesterday too you were running about all morning. But I can't help it, really! There is not even a semblance of order here and I am ill. So do not be angry with me, Makar Alexeyevich. I am so depressed. What is to become of me, my dear, my kind Makar Alexeye-

vich! I am afraid to look into the future. I am troubled by forebodings and am living in a maze.

“P.P.S. Please do not forget what I have asked you. I am afraid that you may make a mistake. Do not forget: in tambour, and not satin stitch.”

This fear that Devushkin may make some mistake—as though this would make the least difference in the world—is an expression of Varenka’s bewilderment, something that is so much like a man walking to his death on the scaffold trying to occupy his mind during his last moments of life with impressions of things he sees around him. Varenka has a premonition that her end is approaching and she is afraid to look into the future. That is why the words “do not forget: in tambour, and not satin stitch,” written at a moment of anguish, express more forcibly than any direct statement her hopelessness and her irrevocable farewell. This detail—a transition from some kind of life, but life nevertheless, to something that is death or worse than death—is for all the world reminiscent of a detail given by Chekhov in his *Uncle Vanya*, namely a map of Africa. In a letter to Chekhov Gorky wrote that mention of this map of Africa was something that compressed the very heart of the reader and clutched at his heart-strings. In this very same way, the reader of *Poor Folk* is profoundly moved by details like “in tambour, and not satin stitch,” and also by the “arguments” Devushkin brings forward against Varenka’s leaving with Mr. Bykov—such as that the carriage roof is sure to leak or that the carriage will surely break down on the way because carriage makers turn out abominable work, or *falbala*, the name of some detail of finery for Varenka—

We have said that all these intangibles are untranslatable, but the author himself fills this gap with all that is implied in the following excerpt:

“And why do you need Mr. Bykov? How has he endeared himself to you? Surely not because of falbala! What

is falbala anyway? Why even mention falbala? It is nonsense, darling. Here it is a matter of life and death and not of falbala. Falbala is only a piece of cloth; falbala is only a worthless rag. Just wait until I receive my salary and I'll buy all the falbala you want, my darling. In that shop, you remember? Just wait until I receive my salary, my sweetest cherub! Oh Varenka, good God! And so you must go away with Mr. Bykov? For ever? Oh Varenka!"

This bewilderment reminds one of a drowning man clutching at a straw. This is indeed the *ultima Thule* of despair. Devushkin is well aware that it is not for falbala that Varenka is marrying Mr. Bykov, but because she sees no other way out, and he himself wrote to Varenka, on learning that Mr. Bykov had made a proposal of marriage, that the latter was behaving in a very noble fashion. No, falbala is the embodiment of the monstrous fact that mere tinsel, finery and money, are important, whilst human life is of no value at all. The very word falbala acquires a sardonic meaning, one that is strangely foreign to the things of human life. *Falbala*, it seems, is the important thing, while everything human, all tender care, the power to love and to feel with people in their grief—everything that has bloomed so fragrantly in the lives of our two heroes—all this has proved so much trash.

The humility that permeates the style of Devushkin's letters seems to colour the entire novel. This, however, is only the first impression one might gain, since it is the external form, which is exploded by the tragedy in the story and by the author's ironical attitude towards Devushkin's humbleness of mind. An example of this pungent irony is the wording of the pious thoughts expressed by Devushkin about some good deed performed by Varenka, who is given to such acts: "You are very kind. And for this God will bless you. Good deeds never go unrewarded, and virtue never fails to win the halo of divine justice." We know very well how the Lord "blessed"

Varenka, and what "halo of divine justice" she was awarded. . . . Yes, the author of this novel was very far from the teaching of humility that was to exert so negative an influence on his later work.

The theme of a *little man's* complete inability to meet the demands presented by society, and—in a broader sense—the theme of this man's incapacity to keep to the jungle rules of this society have acquired profound expression in *Poor Folk*.

Here is what Devushkin has to say of the evil people who have trodden him underfoot:

"And so, Varenka, do you know what that bad man did to me? I am ashamed to say—you had better ask why he did it. Only because I am timid, because I am quiet, because I am soft-hearted. I was not to his taste, that's why. It began with little things: 'Makar Alexeyevich is this, and Makar Alexeyevich is that.' Then it came to: 'Now what can you expect of Makar Alexeyevich?' And finally: 'Who is to blame? Why, Makar Alexeyevich, of course!' And so you see, my darling, it was always Makar Alexeyevich's fault. That is all they did: make Makar Alexeyevich a byword in the whole ministry. But this was not enough for them. Soon there were remarks about the boots I wore, about my service coat, my hair and even my figure: it was all wrong and had to be changed. And this has gone on for years, every blessed day, as long as I can remember. I'm used to it by now, I can get used to anything because I'm only a little man of no account. Yet, why should I put up with it all? What wrong have I done? Have I snatched another man's promotion out of turn? Whom have I ever denounced to our superiors? Have I ever wrangled for a rise? Have I ever intrigued against anyone? You should be ashamed even to imagine such a thing! What need had I for all that? And just consider, my darling, am I sufficiently gifted to be ambitious and deceitful? God forgive me, but what have I done to deserve all this? In your eyes I am a

worthy man, am I not? And you, my darling, are far better than all the others. And, after all, what is the greatest civic virtue? Yevstafy Ivanovich in a private talk yesterday said that the greatest civic virtue was to make money hand over fist. Yevstafy Ivanovich was joking, of course (I'm sure Yevstafy Ivanovich was joking), but the moral is that one should not be a burden to anyone, and I am a burden to nobody! I have my crust of bread, stale perhaps, but honestly earned and very lawfully consumed."

A man who is constantly being told that he is a doormat for people to wipe their feet on cannot but come to consider himself of no consequence, a mere nonentity, unless he has something to lean on. The miracle that entered Devushkin's life consists in the fact that Makar Devushkin actually finds something to lean on, that this leads to moral fibre developing in him. If such a pure creature as Varenka can come to consider him a worthy man, then this in his eyes is the supreme verdict. The esteem Varenka holds him in opens his eyes to what is going on and shows him that those who would tread him underfoot are completely in the wrong. He realizes that all those who fawn upon their superiors, try to gain promotion, carry on intrigue and make money, those who are lucky and have made good—such people are in no way better than he is; in fact they are far worse.

Dostoyevsky shows that under an integument of meekness and humility there can boil feelings of dignity, wounded pride, and human protest, side by side with horror at the life of the socially disinherited. If one can imagine a man placed socially one rung higher than Makar Devushkin, one with a greater sense of personal dignity, a man as lonely and defenceless as Devushkin is but without the moral support the latter has in Varenka; a man who not only despises his superiors, who are capable of double-dealing and ambition, but also envies them their weight, respectability and independent posi-

tion in society—then we get Dostoyevsky's Mr. Golyadkin, the principal character in *The Double*, "a poem of St. Petersburg."

Golyadkin is a man of different qualities, whose aim is to make good, find a worthy niche in society, not so much because he is ambitious, but because he is afraid of life, and born of this fear is an aspiration to become independent, at least in some small way. Devushkin stands so far away from the world of those who have made good, of the pillars of society, that it does not even enter his head to play their game, compete with them, and try to be like them. Mr. Golyadkin, on the contrary, with all his awkwardness and complete incapacity to wage intrigue, is so much obsessed with this feeling of self-love that on one occasion he even intended to win the hand of the daughter of Civil Councillor Berendeyev, his benefactor.

The difference between Devushkin and Golyadkin stems from the fact that Mr. Golyadkin's character is distorted and blurred, split by the envy he feels for adroit masters of intrigue, an envy which, we repeat, is born not of an aspiration to rise in the world, but derives from a constant feeling that the surrounding world is hostile to him, that all around him think and speak evilly and contemptuously of him, that they are ready to torment and persecute him, deprive him of his modest status in life, his very existence.

All this evokes in him a desire to be as successful as all those who possess the enviable gift of making money, men who are self-assured, resourceful, ruthless, unscrupulous and perfidious. In his day-dreams he sees himself just as dexterous and cunning, able to insinuate himself into the graces of the great, to be affable to equals and inferiors alike, in a word to be everything that he, Mr. Golyadkin, is not. He has no desire to engage in intrigue in the sense that Devushkin uses the expression; his conception of waging intrigue comes from a feeling of self-defence, from a sense that the whole world is against

him, against the defenceless Golyadkin, who is quite alone in the Stygian darkness of this mocking, hateful and cruel world. He has to defend himself as best he can. Indeed, what can be more horrible for a man than a feeling that he is spurned by his environment, that it is not his petty failings and errors that are made the butt of jibes and jokes, but his very existence, his boots, clothes, hair, and figure which are rejected and denied by a world which mocks him with repugnance and malicious gloating. This can either crush a man completely, or weigh him down in a way that will evoke in him a self-love that is morbidly sensitive, warped, bordering on the maniacal. A heightened self-love and at the same time a fear of his surroundings—such are the two main features in Mr. Golyadkin's psychology. What he wants more than anything else is to command respect—such a natural desire in a man! He wants to feel independent at least in his private life, to be himself, to possess his own personality and to enjoy the rights of a personality.

He knows very well, and has abundant proof of the fact, that it is only the adroit masters of intrigue that command esteem and independence in society.

That is why his imagination brings forth a *typical* image of a successful man of affairs, one respected by society and the hero of that society. This image is for all the world like Chichikov in Gogol's *Dead Souls* with his remarkable ability to bow and scrape, make himself generally agreeable and at the same time feather his nest.

What could be more natural in a man than Golyadkin's dream to become a society lion? It is no fault of his that gentlemen like Chichikov are the general favourites and the heroes in the society he was born and brought up in. He would like nothing more than to become just that kind of respected gentleman, urbanely courteous, able to flatter while maintaining his dignity, to become what today would be called "a good mixer,"

So strong was this desire to become a leading member of society that in his day-dreams he has come to see himself a perfect embodiment of that type, has begun to live a double life, and acquired a dual personality. At times, he is simply Mr. Golyadkin, a feather in the wind, who nevertheless wishes for better things, an aspiring nonentity; at other times he is a very knowing and shrewd Mr. Golyadkin, a man whom nobody can get round, one able to hit back hard and therefore the more to be avoided, a sharp-tongued and even dangerous Mr. Golyadkin, a man well fitted to conduct his affairs to his own advantage. Thus there arises in his morbid imagination a new Mr. Golyadkin, an image so complete that it begins to live an absolutely independent life.

Dostoyevsky builds up a subtle and delicate study of the development of an obsession that assumes the proportions of mental aberration. The gist of the matter is that on the one hand Golyadkin is afraid of being so unequipped for the battle of life, so defenceless, so unfortunate and ridiculous, so open to the whips and scorns of his time and surroundings. That is why he dreams of being clad in armour, impervious to the buffets he has suffered, a Mr. Golyadkin full of a new dignity, one who knows his worth. On the other hand, he is totally lacking in the qualities required for this transformation.

The double created by his imagination—a shrewd and calculating go-getter—evokes in him both envy and disgust.

Indeed, the new Mr. Golyadkin, whom we might call Golyadkin Junior, behaves in a very strange and cruel fashion towards Golyadkin Senior. At the beginning he pretended to be a true friend to his host, so that Golyadkin Senior thought that he had found somebody he could lean on, a man who would help him to weave his intrigues. Mr. Golyadkin Senior now bethinks himself immune to the attacks of his enemies, so safe

does he feel with his reliable protector, his best and only friend. Together they will make good in society, snap their fingers at things around them, these two, so keen-minded, urbane, witty and irresistible. In the dreams and effusions of the two Golyadkins, Dostoyevsky subtly parodies the relations existent between Manilov and Chichikov in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

Highly reminiscent of Manilov are Mr. Golyadkin Senior's day-dreams that he will achieve success side by side with Mr. Golyadkin Junior, in other words, his dreams of becoming a new and unconquerable Mr. Golyadkin.

There comes a time when Mr. Golyadkin Junior suddenly lays aside his mask of hail-well-met *bonhomie* and, to the horror of Mr. Golyadkin Senior, shows his true colours—an evil and repulsive cynicism that rides roughshod over all that is sacred; in a word, the new Golyadkin makes a butt of the trustfulness of the senior Golyadkin; he taunts and jeers at the latter's naive aspirations to happiness. With horrid glee he tramples his progenitor's soul underfoot.

This sudden change of face is indeed terrifying. At first Mr. Golyadkin Junior seemed so modest and sincere, so sympathetic and dependable. When he throws off the mask, it is a shock to Mr. Golyadkin Senior to discover his double's dulcet assurances of friendship have yielded to a profound contempt for him, to a complete negation of his very existence. This betrayal, this abscondence to his bitter enemies, is a staggering blow to Mr. Golyadkin Senior.

This transformation, a figment of Golyadkin's diseased mind, is highly significant, speaking in terms of social values. A harsh awakening to the realities of the jungle rules of society follows hard on the heels of Golyadkin's day-dreaming, his lotus-eating, his escapist aspirations, his delusions that he can become tough, self-assertive, and successful.

There exist, too, other and most instructive features of Golyadkin's disease, which is a social as well as a mental ailment.

After placing himself at the head of Golyadkin Senior's countless foes, Golyadkin Junior begins to elbow him out of life itself so as to take his place. This is one of Golyadkin's most painful hallucinations. With every fibre in his being he senses that someone very much like him has become his substitute, is acting and speaking for him as though this were he himself, but what he says and does is foreign to the real Golyadkin, hostile to him, and the trouble is that people around him believe that monster, and nobody wants to listen to him, the *real* Golyadkin! He, the real, the authentic Golyadkin wants to protest against this monstrous falsification, and make the truth known to all, but his cries go unheeded. He appeals to all and sundry but those around pay no heed to the real Golyadkin. He himself is well aware of his own existence, but they either do not know this, or artfully pretend complete ignorance. The trouble is that whatever he says or does he cannot make himself seen or heard.

"No, I have no more strength to put up with it. Oh God! What are they doing to me. . . . They neither heed, see nor hear me."

In this nightmare is concentrated the horror felt by a living and existent human being at a realization that nobody cares a rap if he exists at all, at being shouldered out of life, being supplanted by somebody else. However horrible, this nightmare is a reflection of real conditions in a world in which the struggle for existence consists in some people ousting others and supplanting them. The passage quoted above shows how much Golyadkin has in common with Gogol's Poprishchin, both being crushed by their utter solitude.

Golyadkin is tempted by the prospect of becoming one of the worth-while members of the society he lives in. At the same time, he is sickened by the moral standards

and the behaviour of the gentlemen that personify the way of life, the ethical norms and the very structure of that society with its boundless opportunities for men without honour, swindlers and rascals.

The real Golyadkin prides himself on his honesty, his inability to lie and use cunning, his reluctance to walk in the footsteps of liars and swindlers, his independence. This motif is developed right through the story.

"Yes, I stand on my own feet and only on my feet. I want dealings with none and, in my integrity, I despise my enemies. I am no schemer and I am proud of it. I am honest, straightforward, clean, agreeable and good-natured."

Mr. Golyadkin explains this principle of his to the world at large, from the doctor down to the junior clerks, that is, to people quite undeserving of his confidence. At the same time he is afraid of everything, and sees all around him slanderers, enemies, or potential myrmidons of his enemies.

"Mr. Golyadkin compressed his lips and looked importantly at the clerks, who again winked to one another.

"'Until this time, gentlemen, you did not know me. . . . There are people, gentlemen, who eschew devious paths and don masks only at carnivals. There are people who do not see that man was created in order to learn to bow and scrape. There are also such people, gentlemen, who will not say they are happy and are enjoying life if, for example, their trousers fit them to a nicety. And finally, gentlemen, there are people, who dislike currying favour, ingratiating themselves into the good graces of others and toadying to them and, most important, gentlemen, poking their noses uninvited into other people's affairs. . . . Gentlemen, I have said almost everything I wanted to; permit me, therefore, to withdraw. . . .'"

The clerks' jibes at the unfortunate madman are coarse and inhuman. In the bombastic outpourings of Mr. Golyadkin there is, however, a pathetic humour, which lies

both in the inappropriateness of his flowery and high-flown style, and in his extremely exaggerated opinion of his own importance, a trait so often to be met in the mentally unsound, whose disease is an extreme expression of egotism. And, most important, Mr. Golyadkin lacks the real firmness needed to achieve the principles he has so proudly proclaimed. Perhaps he is proud of his honesty, straightforwardness, his inability to scheme, and scrape and bow, or, perhaps, he is seeking comfort from a sense of his innocence. There is nothing else to do for him but to seek comfort, since he is totally unequipped to win success in society.

Herein with crystal clarity lies the difference between Golyadkin and Makar Devushkin. Unlike Mr. Golyadkin, the latter is a mentally sound and whole personality, sincerely proud of being simple and honest.

Mr. Golyadkin's personality is morbidly split between his aversion for schemers and crafty people on the one hand and, on the other, his urge to become one of these people.

Thus, the content of *The Double* is the starting point of a theme of the greatest importance for Dostoyevsky—the split in a man's personality, born of the gap between the demands presented to him by his human qualities and those presented by the inhuman laws of an unjust social system. The alternatives are the old ones—either run with the hare or hunt with the hounds, in other words, being either slave or master. Dostoyevsky's hero sees no other alternative facing him, and both are enclosed, as it were, within his soul. Raskolnikov, too, like the unfortunate Golyadkin, applies to his own soul the yardstick measuring those who stand at the top of bourgeois society, those who have won through and made good in that society, with their amorality, their supreme contempt for others and their total absence of scruples in achieving their aims. This duality in Dostoyevsky's heroes is, of course, the outcome of their social disloca-

tion. However, the objective significance of the theme of *The Double* is much broader—the inhumanity of a society that tramples underfoot and crushes human personality.

Dostoyevsky attaches great importance to the image of Golyadkin. In 1877 he wrote of this novel: "I have accomplished in literature nothing more serious than the idea in this book." The importance of this story in his work can be gauged from the fact that he continued at it even after he had returned from exile in Siberia. In 1862 he made a number of notes that were to enrich the story with many new ideas. When *The Double* was published with corrections in 1866, the notes the author had made in 1862 were not included, thus remaining still-born, but the very fact that the author returned to the story shows its importance to him. He considered Golyadkin a *colossal type*. In this story Dostoyevsky depicts a man who both *wants* and *does not want* to become a Rastignac—or a Chichikov—or at all events, a man whose nature prevents him from becoming such a figure. There is no duality in Rastignac. After gauging and taking measure of the norms and rules of the society that established itself in France at the turn of the last century, after a brief spasm of protest and repugnance, Rastignac ultimately fully accepted these norms and rules and became quite at home in that predatory society. Dostoyevsky's hero is never at home. He always feels beyond the pale, and this leads to his acute sense of being a misfit. Such is the path travelled by Mr. Golyadkin, who ends up in a madhouse.

The notes that Dostoyevsky made for *The Double* show that he planned to extend the intellectual possibilities and the significance of his hero without departing from the general tragi-comic tone and colour of the story or changing Golyadkin's character.

It is of interest to remark that in these notes Dostoyevsky developed the Napoleonic motif, which was to reach full proportion in his *Crime and Punishment*. Like

Pushkin, Gogol and Lev Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky considered Napoleon the embodiment of the typical bourgeois, with his cynicism, his soulless self-centredness, his worship of violence and his contempt for human life. The essence of Raskolnikov's horrible "experiment" consists in his trying to imitate the Napoleonic model so as to discover whether he, Raskolnikov, can become a man of the Napoleonic type.

In Dostoyevsky's notes of 1862 we meet mention of Mr. Golyadkin's dream of becoming a Napoleon. Of course, it was together with Mr. Golyadkin Junior that he dreamt of such things.

The Double cries out to the skies that a dual personality is a most distressing ailment, which makes life impossible and can lead only to insanity.

Well aware of the dross in his soul, Golyadkin gives it substance in the shape of a second Golyadkin who exists outside his own ego; at the same time he is prepared to make concessions to the paltriness within his soul and indeed is intimidated by this evil quality. This is a quality in Dostoyevsky's heroes that N. Mikhailovsky* neatly and bitinglly called *emotional hermaphroditism*.

The junior Golyadkins are those who murder the senior Golyadkins, take their places, oust them from life, and at the same time are the type of men the senior Golyadkins would like to become. It might otherwise be said that the personality of Mr. Golyadkin contains at one and the same time both a killer and his victim—a tragic dualism peculiar to those belonging to intermediate social strata.

In very great measure this important theme has been transferred by the author of *The Double* from the social sphere to the province of psychopathology, which is the

* N. Mikhailovsky (1842-1904) —prominent sociologist, publicist, and liberal Narodnik.

province of the clinician, not the artist. In *The Double* this aspect has been brought to the fore and is treated in its own right, which has weakened both the artistic and the social value of the work and is a serious departure from realism, from the Gogol traditions and Belinsky's ideological and aesthetic views. Indeed, so considerable are the psychopathological distortions in *The Double* that it could not but hamper contemporaries from realizing the objective social basis of this *poem of St. Petersburg*. This gave rise to anxiety and alarm among all those who had such a high opinion of the author of *Poor Folk*.

Belinsky, who paid such high tribute to one "whose Muse feels so deeply for those who dwell in attics and cellars" considered *The Double* a work of tremendous artistic force. At the same time, however, he was much distressed by the shortcomings revealed in Dostoyevsky's second book, much to the surprise of contemporaries. As Belinsky put it, these weak points lowered the artistic value of the story. The critical review of *The Double* given in Belinsky's article entitled "A Petersburg Symposium" was both objective and subtle, but it was not yet a final opinion of the specific dangers to the writer revealed in his writings. It was in connection with Dostoyevsky's *Mistress* that Belinsky's opinion in this matter was later to take final shape.

"Anyone who has some inkling of the secrets of art," Belinsky wrote, "will see at first glance that *The Double* reveals more creative talent and deeper thought than *Poor Folk*. However, most St. Petersburg readers have decided that this novel is intolerably prolix and therefore terribly dull, leading to the conclusion that too much noise has been raised about the author and that there is nothing extraordinary about his talents!... Is such a conclusion right? We shall say point-blank that on the one hand it is quite false, but on the other there is some ground for it, as is always the case in the judgement of a crowd that does not understand itself.

“We shall begin by saying that *The Double* is not at all a rambling story, although it cannot be said that it has not been fatiguing to any reader, however deeply and correctly he understands and values the author’s talent. The thing is that so-called prolixity can be of two kinds. It may derive from paucity of talent, which is real prolixity; the second kind stems from wealth, especially in a young talent which has not yet reached maturity, and this should be called not prolixity, but excessive fecundity. If the author of *The Double* gave us the absolute right to delete from the manuscript of the story everything we considered prolix and superfluous we would not touch a single particular passage because every single passage in this novel is the acme of perfection. The trouble is that there are too many such superb passages in *The Double*, and too much of the same thing, however excellent, must become tiring and boring....

“In general *The Double* bears the impress of a tremendous talent, but one as yet young and inexperienced: hence all its shortcomings, and at the same time all its merits. The author narrates the adventures of his hero in the third person, but makes use of his hero’s language with impeccable artistry. On the one hand, this shows an excess of humour in his talent, an infinitely powerful ability to contemplate objectively the phenomena of life, an ability, so to say, to don the personality of a creature absolutely foreign to him. On the other hand, this has rendered many places in the novel obscure; for instance: any reader is entitled to understand or not to understand that the letters penned by Vakhrameyev and Mr. Golyadkin Junior were written by Mr. Golyadkin Senior to himself, and were the product of a diseased imagination.... And, in general, it is not every reader that is able to realize at an early stage that Golyadkin is a lunatic. All these are shortcomings, although they are closely linked up with the merits and beauty of the whole work.”

Although the success of Dostoyevsky's first book paved the way for a favourable reception for his second story, *Belinsky*, in the opinion just quoted, displayed clear discernment of the alarming symptoms revealed in *The Double*. The monotony that marks the latter work, a quality which creates an impression of prolixity, is without doubt a result of the author's interest in the course of development of mental disease, something which lies outside the province of art. A precise description of the course of a disease is not the writer's affair, and in a sense is a departure from realism to naturalism; there can be no doubt that *The Double* shows the strong influence of a psychopathological naturalism. A comparison of Gogol's *Notes of a Madman* with Dostoyevsky's *Double* will show why the former is a finished model of pure poetry, while certain aspects of the latter work draw it away from poetry and bring it into the clinic, translate it from realism to psychiatric naturalism. It was not without reason that contemporary critics called it the "story of a lunatic, analyzed to an extreme degree, but nevertheless as repulsive as a corpse."

In Gogol's story, Poprishchin's madness and all the symptoms of his unbalanced imagination are fully social, replete with social tragedy. The author does not lay undue stress on the clinical aspect of the disease, realizing that this is not his province. Dostoyevsky, on the contrary, was incapable of drawing a hard and fast line between art and psychopathology. It was with good reason that Apollon Grigoryev* said that *Notes of a Madman* instils in the reader a feeling of noble melancholy, while *The Double* creates an impression of man's humiliation.

* Grigoryev, Apollon Alexandrovich (1822-1864)—Russian critic and poet. Headed "young editorial board" of *Moskvitianin* magazine (1851-56), and later worked in reactionary magazines *Vremya* and *Epokha*. Extremely hostile to revolutionary democrats and their leaders Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov.

Of particular importance is a remark made by Belinsky, which can be summed up as follows: the author has become so fused with the hero that it is hard to say where real life—which should always be represented by the artist—ends, and ravings born of a diseased mind begin. The critic put his finger on the principal and the basic shortcoming of all Dostoyevsky's writings, but at that time was not yet able fully to understand and define that shortcoming, since to do so required a knowledge of works he was yet to write. What Belinsky meant by these words lies in what he said about Dostoyevsky's subjectivism. However, at that time Belinsky still thought that Dostoyevsky was in full measure carrying on the Gogol tradition of "an objective contemplation of the phenomena of life," that is to say, a realistic reproduction of life. It seemed to Belinsky that the fusion between the author and the hero of *The Double* was merely an artistic error on the part of the young writer, and that, in essence, this poem revealed the author's ability to merge his personality with that of a complete stranger. This fusion, in which the author as such has disappeared, and we stand confronting a madman, is a revelation of that quality in Dostoyevsky which gave reason for critics of all camps to call him a most subjective of writers.

If in a story we are fully aware of the hero's standpoint, but cannot discern the independent standpoint of the author; if the hero's subjectiveness pushes objective reality into the background and ultimately takes its place; if chimeras and phantoms which follow their own pathological laws of development make us lose our sense of living reality, so that we are unable to distinguish between spectres and the facts of real life, cannot tell when the hero is actually talking or writing to living beings and when these contacts take place only in his diseased imagination, then we are facing not merely an external, stylistic amalgamation of the hero and the narrator, but an inner union that is far deeper.

In Gogol's *Notes of a Madman* the story is told in the first person. This should have made it harder for the author to step beyond the hero's subjective consciousness. Gogol, however, is able to do so to perfection, so that we feel the pulse of real life and the beauty of sheer poetry and not only the hero's morbid emotion. This poetry mourns for the sick soul of a *little man* who ponders over the question of the origin of the crying injustices that exist in this world.

Dostoyevsky's story is told in the third person, and the author spares no irony in telling the story of the hero. Yet we descend into the gloomy and bottomless pit of a sick soul for which there is no escape, and we have no sensation of the existence of another life, which is real and healthy. We lose the sensation of *poetry* and at times feel that we are present in some kind of anatomical theatre.

However poetical the fusion of the real with the fantastic may be, this fusion presupposes that there exists between them some kind of line of division, even if it is very faint. This holds true for all works of art, from the most cheerful to those that are mournful and tragic. In Gogol the fusion of the fantastic and the real is blithe and natively graceful in his *Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka*, and gloomy and sad in his *Notes of a Madman*. In both works, however, there is a distinct border-line between the fantastic and the real. In *Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka* this border-line is marked by a cheerful, friendly and even deferential smile at the naive wisdom of a fairy-tale; in *Notes of a Madman* it lies in the inspired and lyrical tension of the story which reaches forceful climax and, as is characteristic of Gogol, ends up in poignancy: "What have I done to them? Why are they torturing me? What do they want of poor me? What can I give them if I have nothing. I have not the strength to bear all the torture they are inflicting upon me, my brain is afire and my mind is in a whirl. Save

me, take me, give me a *troika* of fleet and fiery horses, to carry me away from this world, farther and farther away so that I shall see nothing, absolutely nothing. Before me is the vault of heaven, a star is twinkling from afar, a dark moonlit forest is rushing towards me; below me floats a bluish mist and I can hear the jangling of a string. On one side is the sea and on the other Italy; there I can see some Russian cottages. Is that my little house in the distance, is that my mother sitting at the window? Mother, dear Mother, save your unfortunate son! Drop a tear on his poor sick head, see how he is being tortured. Press your unhappy orphan to your heart! There is no place on this earth for him, he is being driven on and on! Oh Mother, pity your sick child. . . .”

These powerful lines, with their poetry of melancholy and anguish, their cry for salvation, voiced the sufferings of all those who were oppressed in this world, the unprotected and defenceless against the persecution of the wealthy and the mighty. Poprishchin, that poor madman, had a purer and more humane heart than the gilded riff-raff around him, the world represented by “Their Excellencies,” the pampered daughters of tsarist generals, and by courtiers. It was sheer purity of soul that led to Poprishchin’s derangement, and when we read *Notes of a Madman*, we ascend into the ether of pure poetry, since it is a tragedy not only of anguish, but of hope.

Despite the author’s leaning to the tragic and the presence in the story of the tragic element, *The Double*, unlike *Poor Folk*, cannot be called a tragedy.

That is because tragedy lies not in the manifestations of an illness, but in the *causes* that give rise to it, in the circumstances and emotions that accompany disease.

Its tendency to depart from the social motif and to substitute the psychopathological for the social militated against this story achieving real tragedy.

This was because its hero lacked that inner light and

the story itself is devoid of that insistence on man's nobility that shine in *Notes of a Madman*.

The emotion called forth by Dostoyevsky in *The Double* is not only one of bitterness and sadness at the humiliation of man in society, but also at his mortification, the lowering of his dignity in the book itself.

This, of course, is not the outcome of the author's discovery of a theme tragical in its essence, namely, the split in a man's personality caused by his social dislocation, but stems from the fact that he, the author, himself has proved incapable of rising superior to the dualism of a deranged mind and has fused his hero's mentality with his own.

Yes, Mr. Golyadkin perished because he was not adapted to baseness, could not live by baseness and dishonour; herein lay his human dignity. But this human dignity in him was so much undermined by the split in his personality that he proved powerless to cope with the turpitude that was mounting in his soul.

In his "Survey of Russian Literature in 1846," Belinsky developed his previous estimation of *The Double*, again emphasizing that Dostoyevsky "has displayed immense power of creative genius, and the character of his hero is one of the most profound and daring conceptions that Russian literature can boast of; the work shows a world of truth and intellect and a wealth of artistic skill as well; it reveals a signal inability to master and handle with economy the overflow of the writer's own powers."

In this article, however, Belinsky spoke much more sharply of the gravity of the artistic errors made by Dostoyevsky. "All the shortcomings of *Poor Folk*, which were pardonable in a first essay, have appeared in *The Double* in enormities." The following sums up what Belinsky added to his previous opinion: "But *The Double* suffers from another important defect—its fantastic setting. In our days the fantastic can have a place only in madhouses,

but not in literature, being the business of doctors, not poets."

This estimation may lead to the impression that Belinsky was opposed in general to the fantastic in literature. However, his attitude towards this quality in the works of Pushkin and Gogol is well known, so that we must come to the conclusion that he was referring to its specific reflection in the works of Dostoyevsky, which makes it impossible to distinguish between a madman's ravings and the facts of real life. When he said that "the fantastic must have a place only in madhouses and not in literature, being the business of doctors, not poets," Belinsky was referring to Dostoyevsky's tendency to let psychopathology take the place of art.

Contemporaries were fully aware of this unhealthy tendency. In his literary survey for 1848 Annenkov numbered the author of *The Double* and *The Mistress* among those writers who, in the main, describe the psychological form of insanity, who *love madness for its own sake*. Dostoyevsky was considered by Annenkov the creator of this tendency in literature.

The Double reveals the author's delight in analyzing a dual personality, a morbid relish in this disorder, something that renders the work not tragic, but gloomily pessimistic. The most forceful passages in *The Double* are the scenes depicting Golyadkin's ridiculous and humiliating predicament in a milieu absolutely foreign to him. For instance, we see him cold and miserable, standing on the backstairs of a mansion, surrounded by all sort of junk and old furniture, hesitating whether or not he should enter the hall where a ball is in progress in honour of Klara Olsufyevna, whose hand he once wished to win. This constant vacillation is the main feature of his make-up, one that is socially conditioned and ultimately develops into schizophrenia. Just when he has decided that he should not enter the ballroom, Golyad-



Fyodor Dostoyevsky. 1860 (Photograph)

kin, acting on an impulse so characteristic of him, goes in, with consequences that might be expected.

“As luck would have it no one was dancing.” (How like Dostoyevsky it is to choose the best moment to place his hero in the most awkward or ridiculous and heart-rending predicaments.) “The ladies were promenading up and down the hall in picturesque groups . . . but he had eyes and ears for none . . . and, moved by the same impulse that had sent him dashing into the midst of a ball he had not been invited to, he kept moving forward more and more; on the way he jostled into a councillor and trod on his foot and incidentally on the dress of a venerable old lady, tearing it a little, pushed against a servant carrying a tray, then ran into somebody else, and, without noticing all this, or rather noticing it but moving on and on without paying any attention to anyone, until he suddenly confronted Klara Olsufyevna. There can be no doubt that he, with the greatest delight and without the least hesitation, would have willingly had the floor open beneath his feet; however, what has been done cannot be undone! What course of behaviour could he follow. . . . All those who had been strolling, talking and laughing suddenly stopped and fell silent as though at the wave of a conductor’s baton, and gradually gathered in a group about Mr. Golyadkin. . . .” And Mr. Golyadkin, who for shame had given himself his word that he would “somehow commit suicide that very night” suddenly, to his own amazement, begins to speak. As is always the case with Dostoyevsky, an embarrassing situation develops at headlong speed; it seems as though the very columns in the hall blushed for Mr. Golyadkin. And he, so “modest, bashful and retiring,” suddenly becomes the general cynosure; he makes desperate attempts to escape to some quiet nook, casting pitiful glances around him to find amongst the staring crowd some kindred portion that might afford him refuge, that he might fit into, socially speaking.

There is much that is highly symbolic in this scene; his observation of the fête from his point of vantage on the backstairs; his ridiculous behaviour at the ball; the clash between his desire to escape notice and the urge to become the general cynosure; and most important, his total inability to realize his own social standing—this constant problem—all these form a concentrated manifestation of Golyadkin's social dislocation, of his being a social misfit.

An artist's ability to select and depict situations that bring out in the sharpest relief the essence of a hero's character and his stand in life is a primary prerequisite for the creation of the typical in literature. In the finest passages of *The Double* Dostoyevsky was able to create an *almost* genuine social type, but was prevented from completely achieving this aim by factors that spelt a retreat from realism. In this connection, Dobrolyubov wrote: "With due work put into the subject, Mr. Golyadkin might have developed not into an exceptional and strange creature but into a type with many features to be found in many of us." The *singular* and the *strange* do not lie in Golyadkin's madness. Indeed Dobrolyubov emphasized that in people like the hero of *The Double* "there is a decisive tendency towards the madhouse; give them more opportunity for dreaminess and melancholy and this prospect is not far off. . . ." The *singular* and the *strange* lie in that fusion of the fantastic with reality, in which the reader is also invited to look on life through the eyes of a madman, from *within* the deranged mind of the hero.

The humiliating situations that Golyadkin gets into are the logical outcome of his mental state. Illustrative of this is the scene at the ball. The fantasticality of the story, which Belinsky and Dobrolyubov considered artistic shortcomings, lies however in the fact that we are not carried beyond the world of the hero's diseased imagination. This does not create the gloominess and bitterness

in the depiction of life, for which Dobrolyubov praised Dostoyevsky, seeing in these qualities a counterweight to official optimism; no, we get a morbid despondency that can only prevent the reader from getting at the social significance of the story.

Dobrolyubov's analysis of *The Double* is a splendid example of penetration into the core of a literary work.

"If you, for instance, had the patience to at least glance through the endless story of Mr. Golyadkin, you would see that he suffered and went mad for the very same general causes—as a consequence of the conflict between the remnants of his human qualities and the official requirements of his position. Golyadkin was not so poor and downtrodden as Devushkin; he could allow himself even a certain comfort; even in his own circle he met people whom he could officially consider his inferiors, since he held some minor post in a ministerial department. As a result, he enjoyed a certain conventional respect and had a vague notion of his 'rights.' Here, however, the threads got ravelled. Circumstances arose which called for something lying without the province of his conventional concepts—he fell in love. He was discarded as an ineligible suitor, which led to all his notions being overturned. Devushkin was able to satisfy the urge of his kind-heartedness by becoming of service to the woman he loved and that was why his humaneness, his sense of human dignity developed more and more." With Golyadkin "his ideas become completely deranged; he no longer knew what he might or might not do. The only thing he felt was that something was not as it should be, but was completely wrong. He wanted to explain things to those around him, both friends and foes, but failed in this because of his lack of character. . . . That led him to the obsession that one can live only by scheming, that only cunning, knavery and harming others can make life worth living. . . . And the resolution took shape in his mind that he too must live by cunning and scheming. . . .

But this was something beyond his capacity. He had not been prepared for such things by his previous life; his character would not allow of it. . . . 'Such is your nature: you are a truthful soul,' he argues with himself. 'No, we shall put up with things, Mr. Golyadkin, we'll wait and be patient.'" Emphasizing these contradictions, the author goes on to say, "He could not allow himself to be insulted, or, still less, to let himself be trodden on like a rag and that by a profligate. . . . We shall not argue on this point: if anyone had had the desire, if for instance someone had made up his mind to turn Mr. Golyadkin into a rag he would have done so without meeting the least resistance and with impunity (there were times when Mr. Golyadkin felt this himself), and the outcome would be a rag, and not Mr. Golyadkin—a humble dirty rag, but that rag would be no ordinary one; no, it would be a rag with pretensions, with aspirations and feelings *albeit with humble pretensions, humble aspirations and humble feelings; these feelings might be concealed deep in the folds of this rag, but still they would be feelings.*" I think it would be hard better to describe the position of such downtrodden folk as Golyadkin, people who have indeed been turned into rags, the dirty folds of which preserve the remnants of something human, if inaudible and meek, but yet making itself felt at times. The time comes when this makes itself felt in Golyadkin, and the most distressing doubts and problems descend upon his sick mind and imagination. 'So that's the way it is. It is not everybody that is acting in a proper way. Aims are achieved here through dirty scheming! Well, if that is the way things are, I shall follow suit. . . . But is it for me to scheme and intrigue? I am so stupidly truthful, I can never follow devious paths. . . . But others do so, so as not to be crushed underfoot, and I cannot allow myself to be crushed underfoot. . . .'" A man given to melancholy and dreaminess, Mr. Golyadkin begins to stir himself up with gloomy surmises and unreal ambitions,

excites himself to activities foreign to his nature. This brings about a split in his personality, and he comes to see himself in a double light. . . . In one corner of his diseased mind he musters all that is vile and artful, all the shameless and successful things that his imagination can assemble; but his timidity in practical affairs and, partly, the remnants of some moral ideals concealed deep in his mind, prevent him from accepting all the guile and scheming that he has thought up for himself. In order to bear the burden, his imagination creates another Mr. Golyadkin—his *Double*. That is the cause of his madness. . . . Mr. Golyadkin Junior behaves with a knavery and a duplicity that can exist only in the imagination; he fawns and flatters, dashes to carry His Excellency's portfolio and performs various other acts, all of which lead Mr. Golyadkin Senior to believe that his Junior is a knowing fellow. . . . Mr. Golyadkin Junior always manages to be right, evade responsibility for his actions and can turn aside or flatter just at the right moment; he is even capable of making another pay for the food he has eaten. Despite all this, he is a most affable person, who maintains his presence of mind at moments when Golyadkin Senior would be totally embarrassed. . . . Needless to say, it is himself that Mr. Golyadkin depicts in the person of his double. When he invents all these fantastic exploits, he really thinks that were he to behave in such a fashion (as *certain people* do), he would make a career and not be made the butt of his colleagues' jokes or be pushed aside by some *parvenu*. . . . But, instead of admiring such acts, Mr. Golyadkin is revolted by them, revolted in that part of his poor persecuted mind that has survived the pressure he has been subjected to for so many years. Even in his diseased imaginings he is repelled by the acts and the means *certain people* make use of to get on in the world; with unabating fear he has placed all his ambitions upon his double and at the same time hates and despises that person."

Dobrolyubov has given a most precise social diagnosis of the derangement Mr. Golyadkin has suffered as a result of the contradiction between his leaning to humanness and the inhuman demands presented by society. The necessity for an activity that is *alien* to one's character can of itself be the cause of mental derangement, even if that activity is fortuitous and brief. But when a man who does not wish to be trodden underfoot aspires to independence and a definite place in life and comes up against society's demand that he deny his own human nature, constantly contradict it and engage in activities foreign to his character, then, if that man is unable to obey the dictate of society and does not know how to preserve his human qualities, distortion or complete destruction of his personality becomes inevitable.

Mr. Golyadkin Senior asks himself why he should not follow the example of others and achieve success and independence by engaging in knavery and by acting despicably.

The crux of the matter is that Mr. Golyadkin Senior *cannot* turn into Mr. Golyadkin Junior.

The alternatives confronting Dostoyevsky's hero are becoming a man who is allowed to do what he will or one against whom others can do what they will. This theme first found expression in *The Double*.

Dostoyevsky's *Mistress* was unreservedly condemned by Belinsky for the author's tendency to depict madness for the sake of madness, which finds unqualified expression in this story. In *The Double* this propensity is weakened by a significant social theme, while *The Mistress* lacks social content, being completely submerged in the psychopathological. In the latter book, with its total absence of balance between form and content and its violent dissonance, real life has merged with the fantastic outpourings of a diseased imagination. In form and style *The Mistress* is romantic, Belinsky considering it an imitation of Marlinsky, with its varnish of Russian folk style,

its traditionally mysterious magician who has laid a spell on a Russian beauty, and its black magic. . . . However, the romantic form is in place when we have strong and wholehearted characters, when life is depicted in alluring and mysterious colours as, for instance, in Lermontov's *Taman*. . . . In *The Mistress* romantic form is linked with the sickly character of a weak-willed if idealized heroine, and also with emotional impotence. The contradiction was sufficient to make the story a total failure.

There can be no doubt that Dostoyevsky wrote *The Mistress* under the influence of Gogol's *Terrible Revenge*. This is borne out by the three principal characters and their relations and behaviour; by the poetical significance the author would imbue them with; by the attempt to imitate the poetical style of folk epic, as distinct from Gogol, who never imitates, but *writes* folk poetry; by the *romantic situations* and many other features. The relations between the old magician and *the mistress* are reminiscent of those between the old wizard and Katerina in Gogol's story, in which the wizard appears to her now in the shape of her father, now in that of her crime-steeped lover. Incidentally, it is only the influence of *Terrible Revenge* that can account for the incursion of the romantic-epic style into Dostoyevsky's work, which with this sole exception always eschewed romantic and folk style. So compelling was Gogol's influence on the young Dostoyevsky and so strong was the latter's love of Gogol, that the young writer made this attempt to imitate the folk-epic style of Gogol's story. However, epic poetry calls for heroic and single-hearted character, as exemplified by Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, and is totally unsuited for the portrayal of such weak-willed and vacillating characters as Ordinov. This was the chief reason of the setback suffered by *The Mistress*, which was not a development of the Gogol tradition but a piece of epigonous writing. To imitate epic poetry in the total ab-

sence of epic fabric means to deprive a work of any artistic value. Gogol's *Terrible Revenge* certainly contains a profoundly epic theme—the heroism of a war of liberation, and love of country as opposed to treachery.

It may be that Dostoyevsky attached symbolical significance to the principal character of *The Mistress*. Perhaps he saw in her some kind of embodiment of Russia, which is why he tried to imbue the heroine with a kind of poetry peculiar to folk songs. This surmise finds some confirmation in the fact that in his *Hobbledehoy* he makes symbolical of Russia a former serf woman who has become the “unlawful” wife of the landowner Versilov. How pale is the image of Russia given in *The Mistress*, if we are to suppose that in some measure the author meant the heroine of this story to symbolize the country! Perhaps Dostoyevsky wanted to say that such a bookish man as Ordinov was powerless to break the spell fettering this beautiful woman and save her from the evil magician. . . . Many decades later another poet was to say of Russia:

*I shall not slight you with my pity,
But will my cross with patience bear.
Though you may give your brigand beauty
To any charmer whom you care!*

*Though he ensnare you and deceive you,
You will not wane, you will not fade,
Nought but a trace of anxious feeling
Your lovely face will overshadow.*

Although this poem by Alexander Blok is alien to Soviet people, the image it creates of Russia is far more vigorous and poetical than the “Russian” woman depicted in Dostoyevsky's story, who totally lacks the genuinely Russian, everything that is peculiar to Russian folk tradition, a woman who vanished in thin air under the

spell of the evil wizard. The author evidently wanted to have her released from her "spell," something that was beyond Ordinov's powers.

The relations in the triangle described in *The Mistress* are pathological in nature. It stands to reason that there can be nothing aesthetic in a blend of the psychopathological and the romantic.

These three works—*Poor Folk*, *The Double* and *The Mistress*—show with the utmost clarity the alternatives Dostoyevsky had to choose between when he entered upon his career as a writer. On the one hand stood realism, acuteness of social theme and genuine humanism; on the other, a departure from realism into subjectivism, from the social theme into subjectivist psychologism, developing, at times into psychopathology and the humiliation of man. Either of these two courses could be encouraged by the realities of life and the impact of ideas, and the tug of war between these two tendencies went on throughout Dostoyevsky's life as a writer. His abandonment of realism in *The Mistress* led to a complete aesthetic setback for the young writer. More such failures and reverses were yet to come as, for instance, in *The Eternal Husband*. True, *total* failures, affecting works in their entirety, were to be rare exceptions, but even within works of rare merit there were reverses that came from the same anti-realistic tendency which later was to be magnified by false reactionary ideas. In such outstanding realistic works by the young Dostoyevsky as his highly poetical *White Nights* and his stories *A Weak Heart* and *Mr. Prokharchin* the social motif is very strong.

The poetical atmosphere of dreams of happiness in *White Nights*; the fantastic nature of that dream, magic and shadowy as the white nights themselves; this true poem with its yearning for the good life that people have been deprived of, to receive in its stead the vain dreams of lonely individuals; this theme of the profound abnor-

mality of such empty dreaming, the destruction of life and the impossibility for the lonely dreamer to return to real life; the wonderful image of a charming girl full of love and life, which remains a mere magic and momentary phantom; the pictures of St. Petersburg, full of a mournful poetry—all these spoke of the delicacy and the subtlety of Dostoyevsky's lyrical gift.

In a letter written in November 1846 to his beloved elder brother Mikhail, Dostoyevsky wrote of the kind of life he would like to live: "Then come independence, and finally work in art, work that is sacred, pure, in the simpleness of my heart. . . ."

Yes, if life had given Dostoyevsky opportunity for such work, *sacred and pure, in the simpleness of his heart*, work for the poor folk he loved so well, without rendering service to ideas that were pernicious and false and destructive to art; if life had only helped him to heal the anguish of a split soul; if it had not crushed him so cruelly, him, with his mental vulnerability and susceptibility; if only . . . if only! . . .

Independence was always the ambition of Dostoyevsky, who lived in constant need. However, this dream went much further than personal independence; it voiced the thoughts of many, of very many *little people* living in constant dread of want, their defencelessness and constant fear of death.

It was this kind of fear that brought the dear, kind-hearted Vasya Shumkov, the hero of *A Weak Heart*, to the madhouse. Vasya Shumkov had not been able to copy out some papers for his master in time and decided that his "benefactor" would punish him by sending him, his serf, into the army. He was driven to lunacy not only by this fear, but also by the sufferings of a meek and overkindly heart. He thought that by spending his time with the girl he wanted to marry and therefore not finishing the job in time, he was showing monstrous ingratitude to one he considered his "benefactor." His mind failed

under the impact of so many forces—the happiness of first love, the pangs of self-reproach for his ingratitude, his efforts to make up for lost time, his constant fear of life, so strong in him and in many like him, a fear which, due to the aggravation of his nervous state, developed with peculiar force. How pathetic is the irony of the fact that the job that led to insanity was not at all urgent, and the *important personage* would not even have noticed any delay!

It was in this way that the poor lad perished *for no reason at all*. After bidding farewell to Vasya Shumkov who had been taken to the madhouse, his friend and roommate Arkady Ivanovich returned home to his cold and empty room. At the end of the story there is a description, staggering in its poetical force, of the way a big city crushes *little people* under its stone heel.

“Dusk had already fallen as Arkady was returning home. On approaching the Neva, he paused for a moment to cast a piercing glance along the river into the frostily dim distance, which had suddenly turned crimson as the blood-red sun sank into the misty horizon. Night was descending upon the city and the boundless expanse of the snow-covered river reflected myriads of multi-coloured spangles as the rays of the setting sun lit up the hoarfrost. It was 20 degrees below zero.* Frozen vapour ascended from the hard-driven horses and hastening people. The rarified air seemed to tremble at the least sound, and from the roof-tops on both sides of the river columns of smoke from the countless chimney-pots plumed into the frosty air, now mixing, now separating to form in the sky above the city another fantastic city of clouds. . . . It seemed as if all this world, with all its inhabitants both strong and weak, with all their dwellings, from the beggarly to the gilded palaces of the great, looked at that hour of dusk like some fantastic and magic

* About 14°F --Tr

dream, which in its turn would vanish into nothing in the blue-black sky. A strange thought came into the mind of poor Vasya's friend. He startled and his heart filled almost to bursting as a powerful sensation he had never before experienced entered it. Only now he seemed to realize all the emotions that had driven to madness his poor friend, who had been unable to withstand the impact of so much happiness. His lips trembled, he turned pale and felt that at that moment a new quality had sprung up in his being. . . . He turned gloomy, losing all his former gaiety."

Splendid, ominously majestic and menacing is the image of this great city with its fantastic contrast between the miserable hovels of the poor and the magnificent mansions of the rich, an image of the chimeric *impossibility* and the unnaturalness of a life in which good, honest folk perish for no reason at all. How significant is every line in this extract, which is a solemn and poetical indictment of this city and the rule of the rich. An image of *this* St. Petersburg, which crushed and trampled underfoot so many *little people*, had already appeared in literature, in Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman*. The link connecting Vasya Shumkov whose bride, too, lived in Kolomna, with the image of Yevgeny, the link between the St. Petersburg of Pushkin and that of Dostoyevsky leaves no room for doubt.

Arkady Ivanovich suddenly realized the reason of his friend's misfortune; there it was, lying before him in all its cold splendour, St. Petersburg, the embodiment of the Russia of Tsar Nicholas I, which had mutilated, trampled underfoot, murdered and sent to rot in exile so many *little people*, including the author of *A Weak Heart*, who, too, had suffered imprisonment and exile and gone through the Golgotha of military service in the tsar's army. The story cried out in anguish and protest against the fate of these *little people*, love for them and pity for their sufferings.

Mr. Prokharchin presents considerable interest in the profoundness and novelty of its social motifs. The scene is laid in a slum atmosphere so typical of Dostoyevsky's works, the same conditions that Devushkin or the Marmeladov family shared with so many other poverty-stricken people. Amongst these is Mr. Prokharchin, a man constantly complaining to all and sundry of his poverty, one who cannot afford himself even the luxury of weak tea. He perishes on account of his extreme timidity and his fear of life. When Prokharchin falls dangerously ill, his neighbours, who used to make fun of his queer ways, fears and niggardliness, gather in sympathy at his bedside, trying to comfort this poor man, whose fears have driven him out of his wits.

"They addressed him in a most friendly way, asking why he had grown so timid." Mr. Prokharchin's replies were so strange that his neighbours realized that this man's timidity had developed into mania. "All fell silent since they saw that Semyon Ivanovich (Prokharchin—*Tr.*) was timid of everything, and this time their very sympathy yielded to timidity..."

Prokharchin was afraid of everything, afraid, for instance, that his office would be closed down, and when told that this could not happen because it was a necessary institution he retorted, "Yes, of course, it's necessary; necessary today and tomorrow, but perhaps it won't be necessary the day after tomorrow. That's how it is." He was afraid that thieves would come and steal his salary, afraid that he might stop being humble, become rude and be declared a free-thinker. There was nothing on earth that failed to instil fear in him.

This boundless and self-centred fear evoked a feeling of anger in Prokharchin's neighbours, a very complex sentiment born of Prokharchin's outspoken and morbid fear, which aggravated their own dread of life, something that lurks in the hearts of all downtrodden people.

“‘What is the matter with you?’ Mark Ivanovich shouted, finally, jumping up from the chair he was sitting on and running up to the bed, excited, enraged, trembling with vexation and fury. ‘What is the matter with you? You are an imbecile! You haven’t even a coat on your back! Do you imagine you are the only person in this world? Do you think the world was made especially for you? Do you consider that you are some kind of Napoleon? What are you? Who are you? Are you a Napoleon or not?! Speak up, sir! Are you a Napoleon or not?’

“But Mr Prokharchun did not answer this question. Perhaps he was ashamed to admit that he was a Napoleon or afraid to assume such responsibility—but no, he could no longer argue or even talk sense. A morbid crisis had set in . . .

“. . . All present oh’d and ah’d. They felt sorry for the poor man and at the same time astonished at the fact that timidity had reduced a man to such a state. He had not been able to realize that life was hard for all! ‘If he had only taken this into account,’ Okeyanov said later, ‘if he had realized that life is hard for so many of us, he would have saved his reason, stopped playing the fool and would have behaved like all the others.’”

Again we meet the Napoleonic motif in Dostoyevsky and in so unexpectedly a manner that it seems completely out of place in reference to such small fry as Mr. Prokharchun. This motif in Dostoyevsky calls for special attention since it is of *capital* importance in his work, to use an expression that he himself frequently used in his notes to describe certain of his plans.

Dostoyevsky, as it were, explored various variants or possibilities of his hero’s salvation from his bitter fate, from his dependence on the pranks of chance and the whims of the great.

Among these variants is the *Napoleonic* or, what is very close to the former—the *Rothschild* variant. This com-

plex was to become a source of exquisite temptation and mortification for Raskolnikov and the Hobbledohy, the latter's ambition being to become a *Rothschild*, to *accumulate a million*

This solution of the crushing problem confronting all these downtrodden people—the Napoleon-Rothschild solution—was, however, one that could be of avail only to the individual as such, being the very embodiment of narrow-minded selfishness and self-interest.

Prokharchin's neighbours considered his particular case of timidity, one that was concerned exclusively with his own fears and problems—a demonstration of a Napoleonic egotism, an expression of complete indifference to the fate of all those about him, whose lives were in no ways easier than his.

These people hit the mark when they reproached Mr. Prokharchin with his being a Napoleon and nothing more.

When Prokharchin lay dying in his miserable hovel, a large sum of money was discovered in the filthy mattress of this man, who had always complained that he did not possess a single kopek in the world! "At first glance one might have been deceived by the size of the heap of coins into thinking that it totalled a million; in fact the sum proved quite considerable—to be precise, 2,497 rubles 50 kopeks . . ." And on his deathbed Mr. Prokharchin looked "like a selfish old man, like a thieving sparrow."

It would seem that this most retiring and drab Mr. Prokharchin was an anticipation of motifs that were to play such an important role in Dostoyevsky's works. It was not adventitious that the word *million* came up in the story of Mr. Prokharchin. This concept was of great importance in Dostoyevsky's writings, serving to specify the *Rothschild* variant.

Mr. Prokharchin was regarded with pity mingled with disdain by his creator, who felt such sorrow that the dread of life experienced by so many lonely and down-

trodden people could lead to such distortion of human character.

Highly significant is the idea expressed in this story by one of the personages: "He could not understand that we all have a hard life! If he had only realized this, understood that life is hard for all of us, he would not have perished so uselessly and senselessly!" These words hint at the necessity of some kind of unity amongst *little people*, this idea stemming of course from Dostoyevsky's political frame of mind at that time. In all his works Dostoyevsky was opposed to selfishness and self-centredness, and sought for ways and means to eradicate these qualities from the souls of men.

Anxiety and even anguish for the fate of *little people* and their bitter life, a mounting protest against the arbitrary oppression of the poor by the great; the tragic atmosphere of destitution and want; the dreary, soul-destroying solitude of *little people*, and their dread of life; the splitting of human personality; the crushing influence of a great city and its hostility to all this world of poverty; the struggle between realism and humanism on the one hand and social pessimism and despair on the other; love of the oppressed and belief in the good in them, and at the same time a gnawing doubt of that quality and a leaning towards the humiliation of man, towards a lack of faith in him; the struggle between genuine art and aspirations opposed to it; the struggle between the social approach and escapism into the sphere of the psychopathological—all these are the components that go to make up the atmosphere of the works of the young Dostoyevsky. The fate of the heroes of these books is always tragic: they lose their reason, or perish. However, the abundance of persons who either stand on the brink of madness or have crossed the border-line cannot, of course, be explained by the writer's predilection for the psychopathological. Dostoyevsky had a keen sense of the

fantastic madness of the reality around him, which drove people out of their minds.

In his article entitled "Downtrodden People" Dobrolyubov wrote:

"In the works of Mr. Dostoyevsky we find a common feature more or less perceptible in everything he has written: anguish for those who considered themselves unable or unentitled to be real, full-blooded, independent people, each standing on his own legs. 'Each man must be humane to his fellows and behave towards others like one man should to another.' Such is the ideal that has developed in the writer's soul regardless of all the conventional and party sympathies professed by him probably against his own will and consciousness, in some *a priori* way, as an innate component of his nature. At the same time, when he examines life and looks around, he sees that the attempts made by men to preserve their personality and remain themselves are never successful and those seekers who do not die young of consumption or some other wasting disease, become hardened, lose their taste for human company, go out of their minds, or simply fall into torpor, suppress their human qualities and ultimately come to regard themselves as sub-human. . . . What is the cause of this degeneration, this abnormality in human relations? How does all this take place? What are the typical features that mark such phenomena? What results do they lead to? Such are the questions that arise naturally and of necessity from reading Mr. Dostoyevsky's books. True, he does not provide a solution of all the problems he raises. . . . In great talents, however, the creative process is so pervaded by the truth of life that a solution follows from the facts and relations depicted by the artist. Mr. Dostoyevsky's gift is not sufficient for the task; his stories need addenda and comment. Nevertheless he has raised the problem, and not a single of his readers will be able to shake it off after reading his stories. The very tone of each

story, gloomy and morbid, tears the irritating question out of your heart, evokes a kind of nervous pain in you. . . .”

Dobrolyubov had high praise for Dostoyevsky for the latter's "discovery and demonstration of the fact that even in a downtrodden and submissive nature there exist living and unextinguishable aspirations and needs," for his bringing up from "the depth of his soul the hidden protest of the individual against external and forcible pressure, presenting this protest for our judgement and sympathy."

WORKS WRITTEN IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE SIXTIES

It is with the utmost clarity that Dostoyevsky's *Letters from a Dead House* display his epic gift, his superb talent of objective and realistic depiction of life. In this work the writer shows no signs of subjectivist-reactionary prejudices, striving as he does towards the precise and the concrete. So immeasurable are the tribulations of prison life that it would lack convincingness to emphasize it and to fall into horror in describing it. The more matter-of-fact and accurate the writer, the greater the relief in which the nightmare of reality is made to stand out. Years later the author of another famous book was to give a truthful and factual description of prison and convict life. We have in view Chekhov's *Trip to Sakhalin*.

Dostoyevsky was confronted by the hard facts of a dreadful existence, and his powerful intuition told him that to introduce the least subjectivism into the book would mean disparaging the very convicts whose portraits he depicted with such compassion.

This book showed the finest traits of Dostoyevsky's genius. Immediate contact with ordinary folk, most of whom, as can be gathered from the truthful pictures we get in the story, were victims of a monstrous serf-owning society, evoked in the artist all that was noble and humane in his soul. It did not even enter his mind to prop-

agate the idea, later to become so insistent in his works, of the innate wickedness of human nature. The closer Dostoyevsky approached the realities of life, the clearer, purer and deeper the humanism he voiced. The essence of his *Letters from a Dead House* consists not in a horror at the congenital wickedness of human nature but in what can be summed up in the following words: "It is hard to realize to what degree human nature can be distorted."

The writer shows us examples of the complete perversion of human nature which has reduced man to dehumanized monsters.

Here is an instance. "This Gazin was a horrible creature. He produced upon all a frightful and revolting impression. It always seemed to me that there could be nothing more monstrous or fiercer than he. I sometimes imagined that what I saw before me was a gigantic man-size spider." It was said of him that in the past "he used to like to cut up little children for the sheer pleasure it gave him; he would induce a child to follow him to some convenient spot, then would curdle its blood with horror, and after he had had his full of glee at the terror he inspired in his poor little victim, he would proceed methodically to cut the child to pieces with the utmost enjoyment." The spider image, so frequently to be met in Dostoyevsky's works as the embodiment of the bourgeois spirit, appeared for the first time in connection with mention of this sadistic brute.

However, monsters like Gazin were the exception among the people depicted in the book. Examination of Dostoyevsky's remarkable portraits of prisoners will convince us that most of them were sent to prison for various acts that in essence were a form of *protest against despotism and cruelty*. Let us take the example of one of these men, Sirotkin by name.

"I often asked myself why this meek and simple-hearted man was sent to jail. On one occasion I was in the

prison hospital, with Sirotkin in a cot close to mine. One evening we fell into conversation. He livened up a little and told me how he had been recruited, how his mother had wept when she saw him off and how hard he had found conscript life. He added that he had been quite unable to get used to a soldier's life because all around were hard-hearted and harsh people. . . . 'Our commander took a dislike to me and came down on me for everything and actually for no reason at all. I obeyed all my superiors, kept myself to myself, drank no vodka and made no debts. You know, Alexander Petrovich, it's bad when you make debts. All around were cruel people; there was nowhere to have a good cry. Sometimes I was able to find some quiet spot and shed a tear to ease my heart.' " He attempted to commit suicide in a way soldiers used to in those times. While on sentry duty at night, he put the muzzle to his heart and pulled the trigger with his big toe. Twice the gun missed fire! " 'No luck,' I thought. I put on my boot, refixed the bayonet and began marching up and down. It was then that I made up my mind to get out of the army come what may. Half an hour later our commander came along, making his round. He came right up to me and said, 'Is that the way you stand on sentry duty?' I took my gun and pushed the bayonet into him to the muzzle. I had to run the gauntlet to the tune of four thousand strokes and was then sent here. . . . "

We cannot but recollect the words spoken by another man: "I am a meek man, meek today, meek tomorrow and then comes a time when I lose my meekness and turn tough!" It is such stories of various human fates that predominate in this story and lend it colour. These fates all point to one conclusion: *people went to prison to find refuge from a life that was worse even than prison.* The author emphasized that many prison inmates had committed murder "in defence of the honour of a bride, sister or daughter from a lecherous tyrant"; others had killed while being pursued as vagrants by troops of

police; "these men had defended their lives and liberty, sometimes even dying of starvation. . . . There are also cases when men commit crimes on purpose so as to get into prison, thus finding shelter from the infinitely harder life outside, where he had tasted humiliation to the dregs, gone hungry and laboured from morn till night for a miserable pittance to enrich the factory-owner; prison life was easier; there was plenty of bread."

Such parallels between life in prison and outside, and the multitude of life stories told with such tact, sympathy and deep understanding of character and the causes that brought these men to prison—all these made the book a tragic picture of the life of the people under the Romanovs and the host of lesser tyrants under them. This impression was heightened by the portraits of common folk who had been sent to penal servitude, as well as by portraits of the prison staff which depicted not only jailers as such, but the rulers as a class in the Russia of Nicholas I. The gallery of victims of the tsarist regime can be described succinctly in the following words: "The most outstanding feature of our people is a feeling of justice and a thirst of justice."

Exemplifying the regime of Nicholas I were such figures as the drill-sergeant, or Lieutenant Zherebyatnikov. The former was a horrible man, "just because such a man had almost unlimited power over 200 other men. By nature he was simply a slovenly and spiteful man, nothing more. He looked upon the prisoners as his natural enemies. . . . He had some abilities but everything in him, even his good points, had been warped and distorted. Irascible and cantankerous, he would descend upon the prison even in the evening and if, for instance, he would notice a prisoner sleeping on his left side or on his back he would order the man to sleep on his right side and in no other way. He was hated and feared in the prison. His face was livid and pugnacious."

Dostoyevsky emphasizes the fact that by nature the drill-sergeant was not a cruel man, but simply slovenly and rancorous. However, unlimited power over others had turned him into a monster and sadist. This idea is no chance one and runs through the whole book; the oppression and despotism that reigned throughout the country, as well as the consciousness of unlimited power in the servants of the state, had turned men who were "simply" cantankerous into monsters and sadists. For instance, Lieutenant Zherebyatnikov "passionately enjoyed the flogging he administered when appointed to supervise punishment . . . he was a kind of gourmet in such matters. He loved being charged with the execution of punishments, loved it for its own sake. He was for all the world like a blasé patrician of the times of the Roman Empire who would engage in various immoral refinements and unnatural vices to tickle his blunted faculties." The following is an example of how this man practised refined cruelty upon others. When a prisoner had to run the gauntlet for some offence, it was usual for him to beg the officer in charge to make the punishment somewhat easier. The lieutenant loved to enter into conversation with such offenders, and would explain that he was well aware that *humanly speaking* he should exercise clemency and lenity. However, it was not he but the law that was meting out punishment. Ultimately he would agree to temper justice with mercy.

"Look here, I have mercy on you because you are an orphan. You are an orphan, aren't you?"

"I am, Your Honour, quite alone in the world. . . ."

"All right. I'll make things easier for you, but this will be the last time. . . . Take him away,' he would add in such a mild voice that the prisoner would call down blessings on his benefactor's head. The dread procession would start, the drums would begin to roll and the first rods begin to descend. 'Let him have it!' Zherebyatnikov would yell at the top of his voice. 'Pitch it in good and

strong! Put your hearts into the work, my men, let the orphan feel what's what.' And the soldiers would put their all into the blows that were raining on the back of the poor prisoner, who would cry out in anguish, shedding tears of blood, while Zherebyatnikov would keep pace with him along the line, holding his sides in glee, almost collapsing with laughter till he was fit to fall from exhaustion towards the close of the ceremony, so that one felt almost sorry for him. He was both pleased and amused and at times his shrill roll of laughter would resound, as well as his 'Let him have it, the rascal, let the orphan get it good and strong!'"

It might seem that convicts like Gazin and those who were in authority over him should be poles apart. Nothing of the kind; they were men of the same stuff, all marked by violence and a complete absence of all that is human, an inordinate craving for unbounded authority over others, and hence a craving to inflict suffering. A society ruled by despots, tyrants and butchers cannot but bring forth such men as Gazin and those who were over him, who were selfsame Gazins, only in uniform.

"... Tyranny is a habit which grows on a man until it becomes a disease. I insist that the best of men can turn coarse and obtuse from force of habit until he becomes a brute. Blood and power intoxicate: they lead to coarseness and perversity; the most abnormal qualities develop in the mind and the senses until they become indispensable and even sweet. The man and citizen vanish for ever in the tyrant, and a return to human dignity, repentance and regeneration becomes almost impossible for him. Besides, the possibility of such perversion infects all society: such power is tempting. A society which looks upon such things with indifference is contaminated at its roots."

It was in such scathing words that Dostoyevsky accused the whole contemporary social structure of tyranny and despotism. True, he forthwith toned down this accusation by limiting the issue to the question of corporal punish-



**Fyodor Dostoyevsky in exile. Sculpture by S. Konenkov
(Wood, 1956)**

ment, the right to use which cannot but pervert people. It is, however, perfectly obvious that Dostoyevsky raised the whole problem to a far greater height. The figure of the sadistic brute, who has been corrupted by his yielding unlimited power over human beings and is bereft of the least traces of humanity, acquired typicality and social significance in this book. Another image that Dostoyevsky gave an extended meaning to was that of the hangman with polished manners, an image which includes the factory-owner who exploits the labour of his workers.

"If a hangman is despised in society, a hangman with polished manners is not... even a factory-owner is certain to feel satisfaction from the consciousness that the worker and his entire family are completely dependent on him."

Such outspoken ideas were not at variance with Dostoyevsky's subjective views both before and after his term of penal servitude. His negative attitude towards the landowner and the bourgeois, to the exploiting classes, was a characteristic feature of his convictions and his writings. Such negative figures of those in authority as the drill-sergeant and Lieutenant Zherebyatnikov cannot be considered proper to this story exclusively. To regard this book as an exception in his writings would mean to simplify to a degree the complexity and the contradictions in Dostoyevsky's views and works.

Dostoyevsky's negative appraisal of prison officers, given in *Letters from a Dead House*, is always accompanied by mitigating reservations to the effect that a given officer was an exception to a rule, or that what was described referred to the recent past and that things had changed probably considerably since he wrote the book. However, such reservations could not change the essence: the logic of what the artist has depicted overrides them, and this logic as revealed in *Letters from a Dead House* lays bare the social relations existent in the Russia of Nicholas I.

It is distinctive of the story that even the prison hangman's gentlemanly manners are emphasized: "He was of medium height, lean and muscular, about forty years old, with pleasant features, an intelligent look, and curly hair. His demeanour was extremely calm and important; his behaviour was gentlemanly, his replies brief, sensible and even courteous, but in some way arrogant as if he would stress his superiority over me. The officers of the guard would often address him in my presence and did so with even a certain respect. He realized this and doubled his courtesy, dryness and sense of dignity when talking to an officer. The more politely he was addressed by a superior, the more austere he seemed to become, and although his excessive courtesy prevented him from displaying it, he felt himself vastly superior to the officer he was talking to. All this was written large on his face."

Dostoyevsky was well aware that gentlemanly manners only too often serve to disguise baseness. An instance of this is his portrait of Totsky, a most polished gentleman, in his novel *The Idiot*.

Most forceful is the generalized image, given in *Letters from a Dead House*, of the oppressed and enslaved people groaning under the rule of hangmen of all ranks, one that creates the noble, truthful and pure atmosphere of the whole book. We see a people whose character has been warped by anguish and humiliation; despite the shortcomings, weaknesses and even vices of the individuals depicted in the story, we see the people as a whole in its wisdom, strength and talent, destined for a quite different lot, for a just and reasonable life. In its humanistic significance this book is second to no other work of Russian literature devoted to a description of the noble character of the people. The artistic difficulty of the first order confronting the author lay in the fact that all these most attractive features of the people had to be shown against the background that tended to crush all that was human.

The chapters describing the skill and industry of simple folk, their sharp and pungent sense of humour with a wisdom of its own, the splendid scenes of what today might be called amateur art presented by the prisoners, their rich sincerity of heart—all these make us feel what a mighty giant was held in thrall by social conditions of the times. The contents of the book lead us to the inescapable conclusion brought forward by the author: "How much youth, how much power has been buried without use, has perished within these walls! And it should be said that these people were not of ordinary stuff, but perhaps the most gifted and the most vigorous elements of all our people. These mighty forces perished in vain, abnormally, unlawfully and irrevocably. Who is to blame? Yes, who is to blame?"

This last question rings out like an accusation. It is the voice of Russia groaning under the yoke of the autocracy, the voice of a gifted and strong people whose mighty force perished *abnormally, unlawfully, and irrevocably*. Of these three epithets perhaps of greatest importance is the word *unlawfully*, which protests against the despotism and tyranny of the times. Another significant statement by the author reads as follows: "Whatever is done to him a living man cannot be turned into a corpse: his feelings, his thirst for vengeance and life, his passions and the need to satisfy them will always remain." This was indeed a living voice from the *Letters from a Dead House*. These remarkable words are re-echoed by what Dobrolyubov had to say of the chief feature in Dostoyevsky: "People with sufficient initiative should find it useful to get an understanding of the state of affairs; they should know that most of these downtrodden people whom they consider lost to society, morally dead, have preserved in their souls most tenaciously, but perhaps unknown to themselves, a living soul and indestructible and eternal consciousness of their human right to life and happiness."

Despite the humanistic atmosphere of the story, which is optimistic, though the life depicted is desperately drab and gloomy, there are in this work certain notes that show that in his heart of hearts Dostoyevsky had a growing *mistrust of mankind*. "I have spoken of the hangman. In an embryonic state the qualities of a hangman exist in every modern man."

Why is it that motifs of this kind did not reach any development in Dostoyevsky's *Letters from a Dead House* and the work as a whole is full of light and faith?

This must have been the result of Dostoyevsky's closeness to the suffering people, his first contact with them, if we discount his hazy childhood recollections. Sight should not be lost of the immediately revolutionary historical situation in which Dostoyevsky wrote his *Letters* (1859-60-61). This background left a powerful impress on the developments of social thought and literature, so that a writer like Dostoyevsky could not but reflect the mainstream in the social current of the time. Another important trait of his mentality at that time was his concern with the preservation of his individuality as an artist, despite all the oppression and humiliation he suffered. The stronger the pressure of prison life, the more he strove to preserve himself for creative work. To use a paradoxical statement, it might be said that during his prison years Dostoyevsky did his utmost to eschew all the traits that were later to become so closely associated with his name. In this he achieved a large measure of success and proved able to get rid of his fits of "mystic horror" and his "hypochondria." This was a genius's urge towards self-preservation, a feature characteristic of genius. His fertile imagination brought forth a host of images despite his solitude amidst a crowd, and he bent all his moral force to the task of preventing his mighty creative power from perishing *abnormally, unlawfully and irrevocably*. His anxiety to preserve his soul for creative work is to be seen in many of his letters, especially

to his brother Mikhail. Even while in solitary confinement in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, he kept on writing. True, this yielded only an incidental story entitled *A Little Hero*, but his ability to write in prison while awaiting a sentence that was to decide his fate speaks of the creative urge in him. To save his talent from extinction during his years of prison life Dostoyevsky subjected himself to a stern moral discipline which perhaps is the source of the restraint, objectivity and preciseness of the impressions described in his *Letters from a Dead House*, a work that testifies to its author's inner discipline. When he returned to the capital, Dostoyevsky brought with him intact and undiluted his prison impressions, which reached the reader couched in a faultlessly severe, finished and epic form.

Nevertheless, his years of prison life could not but affect his world outlook. By degrees and as yet expressed only in letters, notes and loyalist verse, there developed in him a conviction that life could not be changed or improved through revolutionary struggle, and also a deep mistrust of human nature. He tried to prove that, although there is much that is admirable in the souls of common men and women, their protest can be only in vain and will lead nowhere.

His impressions of the criminals around him and the officers who ruled these prisoners accumulated in the farthest recesses of his soul, developed there, merging with all that was morbid in him and had already been expressed in his earlier years in *The Double* and *The Mistress*. These impressions prevented his feeling in touch with the new spirit he now met on his return from Siberia, the general sentiment that a new epoch was approaching and that freedom was now quite possible. Contemporaries who knew his frame of mind testified to the fact that his readings from the book at various gatherings weighed heavily upon him, though he was everywhere enthusiastically greeted by the youth, who consid-

ered that he had been in the thick of the fight for freedom. Dostoyevsky himself felt that he was not living up to his reputation of a political fighter, since his convictions had led him away from the youth.

His notebook entries of the time, his drafts of articles for the journals *Vremya* and *Epokha*, as well as the testimony of contemporaries all show that he returned to St. Petersburg with a mature reactionary Slavophile ideology and with no faith in his former democratic ideals. However, the revolutionary situation that had arisen did not favour an open and direct expression of his convictions. Perhaps he was merely manoeuvring, forced to do so by the "liberal," democratic and revolutionary sentiments of the reading public, especially the youth; it may perhaps be that the new temper of society did in fact leave its impress upon him. Both reasons probably played a part in the matter. However, the fact that he could write such a profoundly pessimistic story as *Most Unfortunate*, in which he made mock of pink liberalism and Their Excellencies, "but at the same time depicted *little people* in gloomy and misanthropic colour, a story that opened the offensive against the progressive revolutionary and democratic press of the time, such as the *Iskra* magazine and "accusatory" literature, is evidence that at that period reactionary sentiments had gained an ascendancy over Dostoyevsky. In *Most Unfortunate* all the persons depicted, from Their Excellencies down to the least of their subordinates, are tarred with the same brush.

Such denigration of *little people* never again appeared in Dostoyevsky's works, but the very possibility of such a story was highly characteristic.

Dostoyevsky's *Letters from a Dead House* contains an indirect admission of the author's having revised his former ideals during his years in prison. "Solitary in spirit, I reviewed all my former life, recalled everything down to the last detail, reconsidered my past, passed remorse-

less judgement on myself, and at times blessed fate for having sent me this solitude, without which this self-judgement could not have taken place nor this strict review of my previous life."

In itself, this confession might of course be regarded in a personal and not a political light. However, it coincides with a number of direct statements to the effect that it was in prison that he realized the "wrongness" of his former ideals, their "alienness" to the people who, he thought, would never support revolutionaries and atheists, and that he was even "grateful to fate" for "the lesson" provided by prison life which, he said, had returned him to a faith in God and the people.

Dostoyevsky's articles and works of this period are marked by transitoriness and uncertainty. His works of the time, the *Village of Stepanchikovo* and *My Uncle's Dream* bear the stamp of *neutralism*. Without inspiration of any kind, these stories cannot be said to have been written with the blood of his heart, although they are not lacking in talent. For instance, the former contains an unforgettable image of Foma Opiskin, a stupid and selfish man who used to sponge on others and toady to them but has now turned into an oppressor, a refined oppressor of his own kith and kin. Highly colourful is the grotesque image of an aging but still foppish aristocrat, with his pitiful if repellent aping of youthfulness, provided by the hero of *My Uncle's Dream*, which is a caricature of the moral degeneration of the aristocracy. Equally colourful are the scenes of provincial life given in the story, with the ladies of the town vying with each other to win the favour of so eligible a man as the old rake. With all their merits these two works do not measure up to Dostoyevsky's talent.

The same imprint of transitoriness lies on a work of immeasurably greater significance, the novel *The Insulted and Humiliated*. This novel flowed from the author's pen at a speed which might be called feverish, Dostoyev-

sky penning as much as forty to fifty pages a day. This speed came from his urge to make up for the setback he had suffered with his *Village of Stepanchikovo*, on which he had placed such high hopes. The reverse the latter book suffered was inevitable, since it was lacking in any social message at a time when society was going through a period of upheaval and upsurge. Cut off by his prison life from the current of public life, hopelessly lagging behind the march of events (both books we have just mentioned were written and printed prior to his return to the capital, and were published in magazines in 1859), Dostoyevsky did not even realize society's new frame of mind.

When the failure of the *Village of Stepanchikovo* became obvious, Mikhail Dostoyevsky wrote to his brother that the latter should come out with a book that would attract and hold public attention. The writer himself was well aware of the importance of such a come-back, since after an absence of about a decade it was essential that he should remind the public of his reputation as a writer.

Dostoyevsky did not consider *The Insulted and Humiliated* a work of genuine art. As he himself said, "What has emerged is simply an untidy book, but it contains about fifty pages I can be proud of." In his opinion there were two noteworthy characters in the story. We make so bold as to say that he meant Nellie and Prince Valkovsky. The former belongs to the gallery of proud, shy, morbidly self-tormenting natures, kind in the depth of their hearts, that find a kind of pleasure in self-torment as the only way to achieve vengeance and voice their protest. It is to this gallery of Dostoyevsky women that Netochka Nezvanova and Nastasya Filippovna belong, the latter the highest expression of this type of women in the writer's works. Prince Valkovsky opens a gallery of Dostoyevsky's villains, amoral, cloyed and internally desolated men of "the predatory type," as Dostoyevsky wrote in his notes to *The Hobbledohoy*.

Prince Valkovsky is Dostoyevsky's first fully complete portrait of a nobleman turned bourgeois, hard, grasping and cynical, devoid of any feeling of honour, curbed by no qualms of conscience, a man guided by the "everything is permitted" principle proclaimed with such revulsion and jubilation by Ivan Karamazov. Dostoyevsky is horrified by the boundless individualism of such men, their brutal selfishness. Asked to say what he does not consider rubbish, Prince Valkovsky replies:

"Personality, I, myself—that isn't nonsense. All is for me, the whole world has been created for me. . . . I, for one, have long since freed myself of all shackles, and even obligations. I recognize obligations only when I see I have something to gain by them. . . . Love yourself—that is the one rule I recognize. . . . Life is a commercial transaction. . . . I have no ideals and don't want to have them. . . . I love consequence, rank, a mansion, huge stakes at cards (I'm awfully fond of cards). But best of all, best of all—women. . . . Nothing has ever made me feel conscience-stricken. I'll agree to anything so long as I'm comfortable. . . ."

The social protest voiced in *The Insulted and Humiliated* is directed against the masters of life like Valkovsky, against their omnipotence and the yoke of oppression and the absolute defencelessness of *The Insulted and Humiliated*. The attempt made by the unfortunate Ikhmenev to stand up for his dishonoured daughter and defend himself against slander by Valkovsky, who has reduced the honest old man and his family to penury, ends in exactly the same way as Devushkin's attempt to defend Varenka from being insulted by an officer: he is simply thrown out of the house. Besides, we learn from the story that Prince Valkovsky has it in his power to grind the old man into dust.

We see Nellie, Valkovsky's illegitimate and deserted daughter, against a background of slums, poverty and the world of oppression and cruelty depicted in Dosto-

yevsky's earlier works. In *The Insulted and Humiliated* this motif is presented less forcefully than in *Poor Folk*; it is toned down by a melodrama, something that never before existed in Dostoyevsky's works. The story centres round the love relations between Natasha, Ikhmenev's daughter, and Alyosha, Valkovsky's son.

Herein is revealed the basic weakness of the novel—an attempt to replace a significant *social theme* by one reflecting *individual psychology* and lacking in serious social and artistic content.

The scene is laid for a social tragedy or drama. Natasha has fallen deeply in love with Alyosha, a vain, dissolute young man of society, who has seduced the daughter of a man ruined by his father. The girl leaves her family, trusting in Alyosha's promise to marry her, a sore blow to her father. The intentions of the young couple are upset by the prince, who forces his son to marry for wealth. Deceived by her lover, the dishonoured girl returns to her father's home, another blow at the unfortunate old man dealt by the Valkovskies.

It might seem that the story provides ample material for a socially acute and truthful drama. This possibility, however, is not developed, as the drama is diluted by the psychological content brought in by the author.

In the first place, the image of Alyosha is palliated by Dostoyevsky. This worthless young man is regarded with the fondest affection not only by everybody in the story but by the narrator himself, Ivan Petrovich, a man who was to have married Natasha, but lost her to Alyosha. Not only is the least ill feeling for his rival absent in Ivan Petrovich but, instead of this sentiment, so natural in view of the circumstances, we see a deep admiration, bordering on fascination. He considers Alyosha's peccadillos charming foibles that simply cannot evoke censure or anger. Alyosha's treachery to Natasha in taking her away from her family, which had been ruined by his father, his false promise to marry her and his turn-

ing her into a kept woman, without having the means to support her—in a word this aristocratic coxcomb's actions are all regarded as manifestations of an irresistible and youthful charm. Moreover, Alyosha is expected to evoke the reader's compassion, because he never realizes what he is doing. "All Alyosha's impulses and decisions," the author explains through the medium of Ivan Petrovich, "were the result of an excessive, nervous impressionability, a warm heart, and an irresponsibility which at times almost approached inanity, an extreme susceptibility to every kind of external influence and a complete absence of will."

In ordinary language, this should sound disparaging, but the narrator makes it all sound like a vindication. In just the same way Natasha justifies Alyosha in her outpourings to her unfortunate confidant Ivan Petrovich.

"'Don't blame him, Vanya,' Natasha interrupted him, 'don't jeer at him. He can't be judged like other people. Be fair. He's not like you or me for instance. He's a child: he's been brought up like that. Does he realize what he's doing? The first impression, the influence of the first person he meets can turn him away from what he has been swearing allegiance to a minute before. He has no strength of character. He'll vow to be true to you, and the very same day he will just as truthfully, just as sincerely devote himself to someone else; and what's worse, he'll come and tell you about it himself. He may even do something bad, but yet one can't blame him for it, and can only feel sorry for him. He's even capable of self-sacrifice, and if you knew what sacrifice! But only till the next new impression; then he'll forget it all. So he'll forget me if I'm not continually with him. That's what he's like!'"

The final words are pronounced almost with pride.

The traits in Alyosha that Natasha describes to Ivan Petrovich with such love are characteristic of a whole gallery of Dostoyevsky types.

In his *Throbbing Life* V. Veresayev* had the following to say of this trait:

"To be himself, to give free rein to his wishes was something Dostoyevsky desired more than anything else in the world, but this was a most impossible and wild dream. Imagine a camp-fire burning and a block of ice on the fire. Say, to this commixtion, 'Be yourself!' The fire will melt the ice, the melting ice will extinguish the fire, and what we shall get will be neither fire nor ice, but evil-smelling, smoking slush. We shall get Svidrigailov, Versilov, Dmitry Karamazov." For our part we shall add, Alyosha Valkovsky too.

Alyosha feels wretched at times—inasmuch as he is capable of torment or feeling anything in earnest—because he would like to be himself, but cannot do so. He does not even know what he is and is not even sure which of the two girls he really loves, Natasha or Katya. This dilemma is a source of torment to him, and he asks Ivan Petrovich to help him solve the problem. Indeed, can one say to this young man, to this *commixtion*, "Be yourself." "Don't blame him; he has no character," as Natasha says.

Dobrolyubov called Alyosha a *noxious insect*. Ivan Petrovich, on the contrary, lauds the young man as though the latter were an angel from heaven. To quote him:

"The full crimson lips of his small, exquisitely modelled mouth almost always had a grave expression, and this gave a peculiarly unexpected and fascinating charm to the smile which suddenly appeared on them, and it was so naive and ingenuous that, whatever mood you were in, you felt you at once . . . simply had to respond to it with a similar smile. . . .

* Veresayev—pen-name of Vikenty Smidovich (1863-1945), Russian Soviet writer. Besides numerous stories and reminiscences wrote book on Dostoyevsky and Lev Tolstoi (*Throbbing Life*, 1911) and collection of biographical materials *Pushkin in Life* (1926-27).

"It is true that he had some bad traits in him too, some of the disagreeable habits characteristic of aristocratic society: frivolity, self-complacency, and polite insolence. But he was so candid and simple at heart that he was the first to blame himself for these defects, to confess to them and laugh at them. I fancy that this boy could never have told a lie even in jest, or if he did I'm sure he would have had no suspicion of its being wrong. Even egoism itself was rather attractive in him, perhaps just because it was open and not concealed. There was nothing reserved about him. He was weak, trusting, and timid of heart; he had no will whatever. . . . I think there is no one who could help getting to love him: he would have cuddled up to you like a child."

In his novel *The Life of Klim Samgin* Gorky called a man very much like Alyosha a *blissful louse*.

The narrator is of the opinion that the reader should pity the poor young man for his fluttering between two girls, the naiveness and sincerity of his repentance, and his being so defenceless.

We can thus see that one of the links in the chain comprising the social drama in the play is a very weak one: what we have in the story is not a society profligate who does wrong, but one who has himself been wronged and suffers as a result of his dual personality. Alyosha proves faithless to Natasha, whom he had promised to marry, abandoning her for Katya—and does so in tears and anguish.

It appears that all this should deepen our pity for Alyosha, still more so because Natasha keeps on loving him!

Of course, Alyosha has had no easy time with Natasha, an exacting, jealous, serious sort of person who is too grown-up for him. Alyosha has far more in common with Katya, an adorable child, lovable and as pure as an angel, generous and intelligent, and full of the finest ideals, who would pour benefits upon mankind through

the *million* she is heiress to. Yes, Alyosha will be far happier with Katya, who will surely change and reform him.

We thus see diluted and toned down another act in the social drama that was to have been—the marriage to a *million*, arranged by the cunning intrigues of Prince Valkovsky, that demoniacal incarnation of evil. It is *for love* that Alyosha marries Katya, despite his vacillating between two young girls. He realizes that it is with Katya that he will be happy, and not with Natasha. It follows that the story is concerned not so much with the perfidy of the prince, who makes his son marry for money, but with the question as to which of these two girls will make Alyosha happy. We have before us two fine young women of equal worth, differing only inasmuch as one of them is perfectly suited to Alyosha, while, despite all her merits, the other is not.

All this renders highly doubtful the third link in the drama, a link insisted on by poor Natasha and her devoted Ivan Petrovich—namely the perfidy displayed by the prince. This quality lies in the latter's subjective intentions, in the motives behind his actions, and not in their objective consequences.

Well aware of his son's weak character, Valkovsky decides that his forbidding Alyosha's marriage to Natasha will only stiffen the young man's determination to follow his own course, and thus turn him away from the girl chosen by his father. If the prince consents to his son's marriage to Natasha, Alyosha will soon find his pledged word irksome, all the more so if the prince reproaches his son for being fickle and lacking in consideration for his promised bride.

Then the son will soon become bored and weighed down by aversion for *responsibility*, something he cannot tolerate. He will feel a calm assuredness that nobody will take Natasha from him and that she will be his for all time. Since Alyosha will be sure that there is nothing

sinful in seeing Katya, as this is only for a minute or so and he is almost husband to Natasha, he will feel drawn more and more to Katya. Things work out exactly as foreseen by the prince. With her intelligence and knowledge of human nature, Natasha has no difficulty in seeing through the prince's crafty schemes and unmasks him in a forceful and telling retort made to her remorseless and cold-hearted enemy's face.

In this situation there is a comic element that has escaped the author's attention. It lies in the fact that a father who is supposed to be his son's worst enemy, who would separate Alyosha and his betrothed so as to make the former marry a fortune, in effect proves his son's benefactor. Alyosha will find happiness with the pure, charming and noble-hearted Katya, which would not be the case with Natasha. The father, it appears, has been acting in his son's best interests, while the magnificent dowry he marries is something quite incidental.

The prince voices quite a number of sentiments that any feeling father would express to a flighty and frivolous son, and to the girl he wants to marry. Here is an instance:

"Love alone is not enough; love shows itself in deeds, but your belief in 'live with me even if you have to suffer with me'—that's not humane, you know, not honourable! To talk of love for all humanity, to go into raptures over the problems of the universe, and at the same time to sin against love without noticing it—it's incomprehensible!"

These are noble words coming from an ignoble man, and the only objection they can evoke is that they come from such a source.

The reader will find it hard to sympathize with Natasha: love for a nonentity cannot command genuine sympathy. To love a nonentity only for his sincerity, to love such a man for exactly what he is, cannot command

esteem, for it is meaningless. Dostoyevsky, however, would have us consider Natasha a serious and deep nature.

Her acts and behaviour could be justified only if they were based on highly moral considerations. She has deserted her old parents, who are already on the verge of ruin; she has dealt them a blow more cruel than the one they have already suffered from Valkovsky—she has gone over to her father's bitterest enemy, providing the latter with such a trump-card as the shameful liaison between the young Valkovsky and old Ikhmenev's daughter. It should be remembered that the prince brought about the old man's ruin on the pretext that rumours had reached him that Ikhmenev was intriguing to make the prince's son marry his daughter.

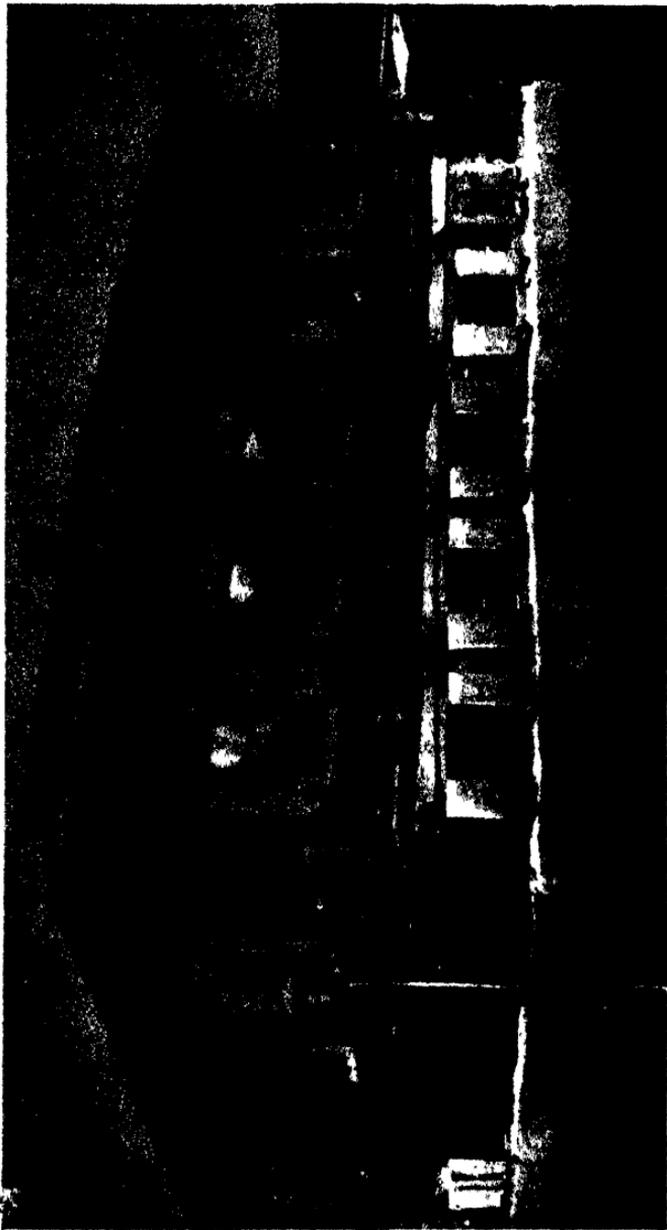
It stands to reason that literature can deal with the theme of love for a nonentity, but one would expect that one who loves in the real sense of the word would strain every effort to make a worth-while human being out of that nonentity. Such a love may end in tragedy, since a woman's struggle to make a nonentity find his soul calls for a kind of heroism and may sap her strength. She will not, however, be able to admire a nonentity just for being one.

It is just Alyosha's nonentity that Natasha admires. She dreams of becoming Alyosha's devoted slave. She admits to Ivan Petrovich that Alyosha "lacks character . . . is not very clever and is just like a child. That is what I love in him most of all, do you believe me?" She goes on to say, "'Do you know, Vanya, I'll confess something to you: do you remember we had a quarrel three months ago when he'd been to that—what's her name—that Minna. . . I found it out by following him, and, would you believe it, it hurt me horribly, and yet I was somehow pleased too. I don't know why . . . I thought that he was amusing himself—or no, it's not that—that he too, like a grown-up man together with

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House in Semipalatinsk, in which Dostoyevsky lived in 1854

other grown-ups, visited the lovely ladies, that he too went to Minna's. I . . . what bliss I got out of that quarrel; and then forgiving him. . . . Oh, my beloved! I forgave him . . . ah, the dear boy!

"She looked into my face and laughed strangely. Then she seemed to fall into a reverie as though still remembering, and she sat like that for a long time with a smile on her face, thinking of the past."

Again we see that one of Natasha's most treasured recollections is that of how *her* boy visited a society courtesan.

There can be no doubt that the story of Natasha's and Alyosha's feeling for each other is the beginning of the Dostoyevsky theme of demoniacal love. Natasha finds pleasure in bitterly reproaching Alyosha, to derive more exquisite pleasure in forgiving him; she thinks that there can be no equality in love, and so on and so forth. Thus we have in this novel certain appendages of the theme of demoniacal love that was destined to reach full development in Dostoyevsky's later works.

The social theme of the humiliated and insulted is overshadowed by that of a lack-lustre love for a drab and dull creature. When Natasha exclaims, "Oh Vanya, how much sufferings there is in life!" we can hardly refrain from smiling at the lack of conviction in these sententious words. The heroes of *Poor Folk* have the moral right to speak of anguish and suffering, since the theme of love appears in this story in the light of a social tragedy. Natasha's suffering stems from a commonplace love. The story of the heroine's pathological love for a noxious insect, pushes into the background the far more significant theme of the way a simple girl has been trodden in the mud by two aristocrats, father and son.

All the good people in the story are insipid, pitiful, and positive in a drab kind of way; these are people who do not show to advantage compared with Prince Val-

kovsky, for instance. The only intelligent person in the novel is a villain. The *humanism* of *Poor Folk* has yielded place to Christian *sentimentalism*.

The anguish suffered by the heroes in *Poor Folk* does not derive from purely private causes. In *The Insulted and Humiliated* the heroes' sufferings come from their private, intimate, one might almost say chamber love. Natasha's entire life is hemmed in by her love of Alyosha. Obsessed by this emotion to the exclusion of all other ideas and feelings, she shadows Alyosha when he pays his visits to his *demi-mondaine* ladies, or to Katya, and even makes Ivan Petrovich gather information for her. Her love has not opened her eyes to the world around her, but has only led her away from life and people.

Of course, the novel contains elements of humanism and social protest, but these qualities look sere and faded compared with the atmosphere of *Poor Folk*.

Poor Folk is a clear, direct and well-balanced unity, compared to which *The Insulted and Humiliated* seems ill-balanced and disproportioned. In the course of the narrative the social theme is whittled down and reduced to a shred.

Though Dobrolyubov had a low opinion of the novel, considering it undeserving of analysis, he nevertheless gave a profound evaluation of the work.

"Take for instance," he wrote, "the vehicle chosen by the author: the story of Natasha's love for Alyosha is told by a man who is deeply in love with the girl and has decided to sacrifice himself for her happiness. I must confess that I have no liking at all for all these gentlemen who are capable of rising to such heights of magnanimity as to kiss his fiancée's lover and run on his errands. Such people are either incapable of real love or else their love comes from the mind. If these self-abnegant romantic gentlemen are able to love, then what rag-stuffed hearts and what chicken-like feelings they must have!"

However the critic considered the depiction of such romantic self-abnegation justified from the aesthetic point of view, since literature should deal with everything pertaining to human feelings. All that is true, but if a writer has tackled such a problem, he should be able to solve it. "In whatever way we regard the moral value of Ivan Petrovich's behaviour, we would find it of interest to gain an insight into his chicken-like psychology, all the more so that Dostoyevsky is celebrated for his love of psychologism.

"In actual fact however the novel is not only lacking in the slightest description of Ivan Petrovich's state of mind, but we fail to discern the least sign of the writer's concern with this. On the contrary, he avoids everything that might serve to reveal the working of the heart of a man in love, jealous and suffering . . . we do not know what is on his mind, though we do see that he is having a bad time. In a word we have not before us a man who loves selflessly and to distraction, who tells us of the errors and sufferings of his beloved one, of the anguish inflicted upon his heart and the desecration of all he holds sacred; no, we have before us an author who has not been happy in the choice of form and has not realized the obligations imposed by that form. That is why the tone of the story is false and lacks conviction."

Indeed the author's error of judgement is patent: Ivan Petrovich is not a man of flesh and blood but a literary device. But in that case, why should he be brought into the novel as a living personage, as Natasha's former fiancé, whom she once promised to marry. If a writer has brought a personage into a story, he should have something to say about him and get the reader to learn something about him. We learn nothing about Ivan Petrovich, except that he is pathetic, consumptive and unfortunate. What we know of him does not derive from any portrayal of character in the story, but is something incidental. He presents no interest to the author, but is needed simply

as a person to whom all the other characters in the novel, among them Prince Valkovsky, can pour out their thoughts.

Ivan Petrovich is the bearer of a dramatic theme, but the author has not evinced the least desire to develop it. What has emerged is a lack-lustre kind of person, neither fish, nor flesh, nor good red herring, as the saying goes. It was with good reason that Dobrolyubov said that Ivan Petrovich's presence in the novel makes it sound spurious. He does indeed suffer, but his sufferings do not spring from some worth-while cause, as is the case with Devushkin, Mr. Golyadkin, Vasya Shumkov or other heroes of the earlier Dostoyevsky, but from an ethereal, fleshless and cramped love for Natasha, and a boundless devotion to the worthless Alyosha. He is always bustling about, taking care of the affairs of others. This is not bad when he looks after the interests of the unfortunate Nellie, but it is different when he acts as a go-between for Natasha and Alyosha, and shares their sorrow and distress. The disconsolate and painful atmosphere of the novel is heightened by the fact that it is told in the first person by Ivan Petrovich. However the sufferings of the heroes are drab and unconvincing: without a social theme and profound psychological content suffering cannot evoke the reader's sympathy.

Dobrolyubov is of the opinion that the author has not been able to reply to the following basic question: "How can a noxious insect like Alyosha inspire a feeling of love in a decent girl. . . . We trustfully address ourselves to him and ask, 'How could this have happened?' And he replies, 'Well, it just happened, that's all.'" The critic emphasizes that he has no objections to the theme as such; dramas like this do occur in life. However, the writer should give a psychological explanation of what has happened in real life, and Dostoyevsky, in Dobrolyubov's opinion, is not concerned with revealing the psychological roots of Natasha's love for Alyosha.

Furthermore, he thinks that the writer has been negligent in his depiction of most of the characters in the story. For instance, there is so little difference between Natasha and Katya as individuals that they sometimes seem almost duplicates of each other. Since these two characters are hardly distinguishable, we can find little of interest in the story of Alyosha's vacillating between them. The writer's interest focuses upon the figure of Prince Valkovsky. "The action of the novel," Dobrolyubov writes, "is split in a very strange and unnecessary fashion between the story of Natasha and the story of little Nellie, which only serve to impair the unity of the impression. But since both these stories revolve round the person of Prince Valkovsky, it may be supposed that the essence of the novel, its gist, lies in the presentation of this man's character. When you scrutinize this character, you will discover that baseness and corruption, an assortment of villainous and cynical traits, have been described with the greatest love, but you will fail to find a human being. In the depiction of the prince's personality you will not find the least trace of that conciliatory and resolving force that operates so powerfully in art, placing a man before you in full stature and making you discern his human nature through the crust of malignity that covers him. That is why you cannot feel compassion for this person, or hate him with that higher hate that has as its object not a given person, but a type, a certain category."

Dobrolyubov draws a comparison between the portrayal of Prince Valkovsky and that of Chichikov and Oblomov, with the observation that Gogol and Goncharov have given a *social* explanation of the characters, a genuinely realistic typification, which Dostoyevsky has been unable to do. Dobrolyubov reveals in a most penetrating fashion the *duality* of Dostoyevsky's attitude towards his negative personages, his feeling of disgust for them and at the same time his relish for their "sins."

These shortcomings in the novel, which the author considered not so much a work of art but a piece of magazine writing, cannot detract from its good points—its protest against the tyranny of scoundrels and cynics, against the humiliation and insults inflicted upon people. However the story is not marked by the passionate force inherent in Dostoyevsky's best works.

Winter Notes on Summer Impressions (1863) marked the appearance of a developed *anti-capitalistic* theme, which was henceforward to colour the whole of Dostoyevsky's writings. At the same time, these *Notes* revealed no less markedly the reactionary and utopian nature of the criticism of capitalism that Dostoyevsky now launched. His furious attacks on bourgeois society went hand in hand with an equally furious criticism of democracy, utopian socialism and the working class. It is incumbent on us to sift very carefully the chaff from the wheat, the vital from the inessential, the truthful from the false in these *Notes*.

It is in the same way that we must examine the criticism of capitalism given in all of Dostoyevsky's novels.

As the starting point of a basic theme in the writer's works *Winter Notes* is of great significance. It contains much that is forceful, undeniable and pungent in its criticism of a social order that the author hated from the bottom of his heart. An instance of this attitude is the following masterly excerpt, terse and telling, taken from this book:

"What is *liberté*? It means freedom. What kind of freedom? Equal freedom for all to do whatever they wish, within the framework of the law? When may one do whatever one wishes? When one possesses a million. Does freedom provide each man with a million? No. What is man without a million? A man without a million is not one that does whatever he pleases, but one who is treated in any way it pleases others."

This passage contains the subjects and characters of Dostoyevsky's later works. The problem tormenting Ras-kolnikov lies in the fact that society confronts him with a choice of either becoming a man that can do as he pleases, or one that is treated in a way it pleases others: you are either a slave-owner or a slave. This formula is equally applicable to the novel *The Hobbledehoy*, whose hero dreams of owning a million so as not to be one of those others can treat just as they like.

Winter Notes unmasks in highly caustic tones the bourgeoisie's denial of its ideals of the revolutionary period, and the mockery it has made of its former slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity. The contemporary bourgeois "is prepared to forget everything in its past," to quote Dostoyevsky, in other words, to throw by the board all its democratic and revolutionary qualities of the time of its rise to power. The only thing the present-day bourgeois believes in, as the writer says, is the motto *après nous le déluge*. Dostoyevsky accounts for the bourgeoisie's readiness "to forget everything in its past" by its fear of the working class, the threat of the proletarian revolution, which poisons its whole life, despite all its desperate efforts to seem calm and confident in the strength and durability of the existing order of things.

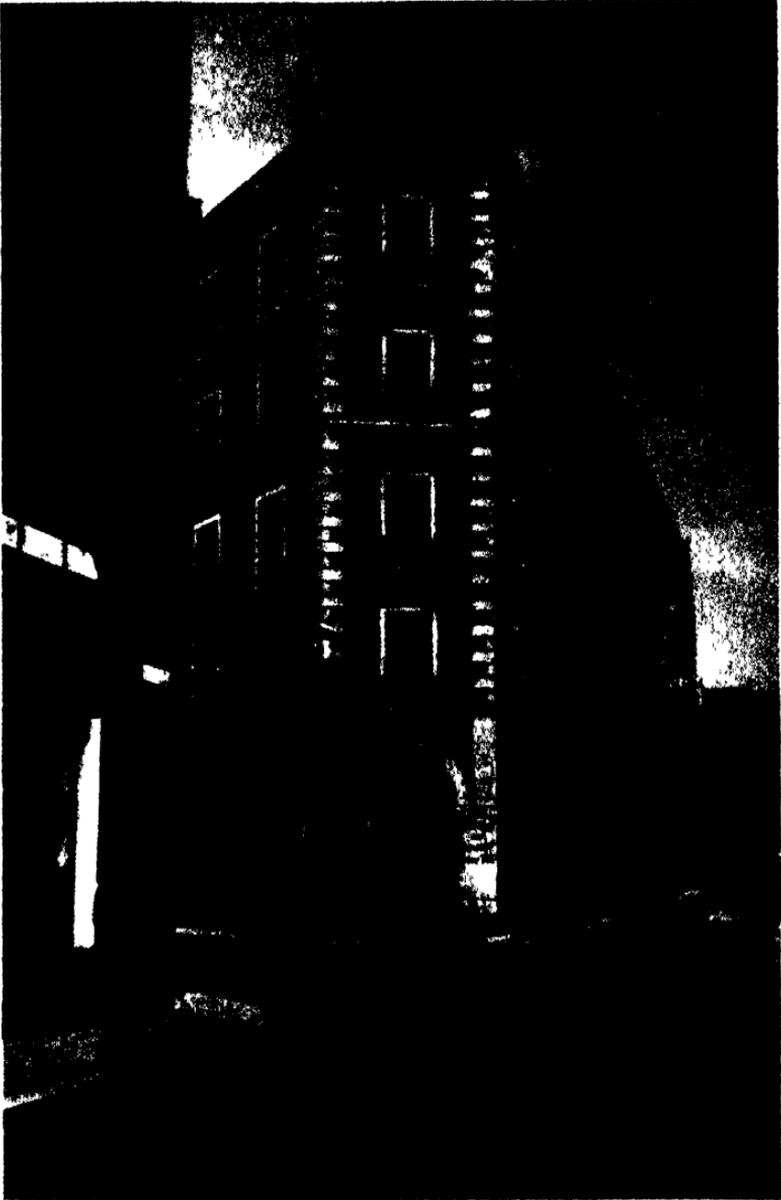
The writer expresses his scathing contempt for the vulgarity and the chicken-heartedness of the bourgeois, whom he hates with a kind of personal hatred. "In general the bourgeois is quite nimble-witted, but his intelligence is somehow limited, patchy. He has an impressive stock of ready-to-hand notions, stacked up like logs in a wood pile, and he has every intention of living with them at least a thousand years. . . ." "Why are there so many lackeys among the bourgeois, and with such a noble presence too? Please do not accuse me, do not vociferate that I am exaggerating, or slandering, or that it is hate that is speaking in me. Hate of what, of whom? Why should I feel hate? There is simply an abundance of lackeys, and

that is the case. Flunkeyism is more and more becoming part and parcel of the bourgeois make-up, and is more and more coming to be regarded as a virtue. That is how it should be in the present state of affairs. It is a natural consequence. And the chief thing is that their nature helps in this. I pass over the fact, for instance, that the bourgeois has a congenital love of eavesdropping and spying." This inordinate love of spying, "not ordinary spying, but high-class spying, spying as a vocation, perfected to the degree of an art, with its own scientific method, derives in them from their congenital flunkeyism."

These words provide us with the origins of Smerdyakov, the toady and spy *par excellence*, whose dream it is to become a respectable bourgeois in St. Petersburg or Paris.

In his vitriolic attack on hypocritical bourgeois virtue, the author of *Winter Notes* stresses that in bourgeois society petty theft resulting from hunger and want is a punishable offence, while large-scale theft "as a virtue," with the purpose of building a career or gaining a position in society, is encouraged. "To steal is abominable, despicable, and leads to the galleys; the bourgeois is prepared to forgive very much, but not theft, even if you or your children are dying of hunger. But if you steal out of virtue, oh, then everything is completely forgiven you. You, it follows, are out to make a fortune, amass a lot of things, that is to say, do your duty to nature and mankind. That is why the criminal code contains explicit points referring to theft for base motives, that is to say for a crust of bread, and to theft resulting from virtue. The latter is guaranteed in the highest degree, is encouraged, and extremely well organized."

Powerful scenes of poverty and slavery against a background of dazzling luxury are contained in the chapter entitled "Baal." The theme of a gigantic city which crushes *little people* underfoot and is so cruel and hostile to them, a theme that already appeared in Dostoyevsky's



Geneva. Fyodor Dostoyevsky lived in this house in 1868

earlier writings, is developed with even greater force in the description of London and Paris.

“What wide and depressing scenes!” the author exclaims. “This city, boundless as the sea, with its seething bustle that ceases neither by day nor by night, the jangle and roar of machinery, the elevated railways laid above the house-tops (and soon to be built underground), the boldness of enterprise, the seeming chaos which is bourgeois order in the highest degree, the foul Thames, the coal-steeped air, the splendid parks, gardens and squares, the frightful corners of the city like Whitechapel with its hungry, savage and ill-clad inhabitants, the City with its millions and its world-wide trade, the Crystal Palace and the World Exhibition. . . . Yes, the Exhibition is magnificent. You sense the frightful force that has brought together unnumerable people coming from all corners of the earth to form a single herd; you are conscious of a gigantic thought; you feel that something has already been achieved here, that this is a scene of victory, of triumph. You even seem to be afraid of something. However independent you are, something fills you with horror. Can this be the achievement of an ideal, you ask yourself? Is this the end? Is this indeed a single flock? Will you have to accept all this as the ultimate truth and fall utterly silent? All this is so proud, victorious and triumphant that you stand with bated breath. You look at these hundreds of thousands, at these millions of people, who have come here submissively from all parts of the globe, come here with but a single thought, and throng this tremendous palace in stubborn silence, and you have a feeling that something has been finally achieved, has been completed. This is like some Biblical scene, some Babylon, some prophecy from the Apocalypse which has come true. You feel that boundless spiritual resistance and steadfastness are needed to withstand the impact of your impressions, not to bow to the facts and worship Baal—that is to say, not to accept all this as your ideal.

"You will say that all this is morbid nonsense, nerves, exaggeration. No one will stop at this; no one will accept this as his ideal. Besides, hunger and slavery will prompt the right answer and will lead to denial and give birth to scepticism. . . .

"But if you saw the pride of the mighty spirit, the genie that has created this colossal scene, and how proud this genie is of its victory and its triumph, you would shudder at its vainglory, stubbornness and its blindness, you would shudder for those that live under the shadow of this spirit. The colossal scale and the boundless pride of the reigning spirit, the triumphant completeness of its creations may send the meek and humble reeling from a sense of their nonentity, and make them bow in submission, seek salvation in gin and in vice, and begin to think that all is as it should be. The facts press down upon all, and the masses are benumbed. . . . And in London you will see the masses in numbers and in conditions you will never see elsewhere. I was told, for instance, that on Saturday nights half a million men and women workers and their children flood the city like a tide, clustering in certain areas, and celebrate till the morning, squandering their hard-earned wages and savings. Gas-lights burn all night in the windows of butchers' and grocers' shops, lighting up the streets. It seems as though a carnival has been arranged for these white slaves. . . . All are drunk, but without the least gaiety; all is gloomy, oppressive and strangely silent. . . . Looking at these pariahs, you feel that the prophecy will not come true for a long time to come, that palm leaves and white robes will not fall to their lot so soon. . . .

"I saw another such scene in London, one to be seen only in this city, a kind of *décor* in its way. One who has visited London will certainly have been to the Haymarket at night. In the vicinity of this area thousands of street-walkers throng certain streets. The streets here are lit up by gas standards, something unknown in our coun-

try. At every step there are splendid coffee-houses replete with mirrors and gilt furniture, where people gather and spend their time. Mixing with this crowd is an uncomfortable experience, so motley is it in make-up, with old women, and young beauties that arouse your admiration. In all the world you will not find a more beautiful type of woman than in England. The streets swarm with women who fill the pavements and even the roadway, searching for prey and falling upon the first-comer with shameless cynicism. . . . Curses, quarrels, calls and the timid advances of the as yet young and shy beauties fill the air. And what beautiful faces are sometimes to be seen, faces straight from a cameo. I recollect entering a Casino on one occasion. The place was crowded and dances were in progress to the strains of loud music. . . . On the gallery above I saw a girl whose remarkable beauty held my eye; never before had I seen such ideal beauty. She was seated at a table in the company of a young man, who seemed to be a rich gentleman and evidently new to the place. . . . He spoke little and abruptly, and evidently on subjects other than those they wished to speak on. The conversation was frequently punctuated by long periods of silence. She, too, was very sad. Her features were regular and refined and there was an expression of restrained pensiveness on her fair and somewhat proud face that spoke of thought and melancholy. I suppose she was consumptive. She was, she must have been, far superior in intellect to that crowd of unfortunate women; otherwise what could a human face mean? Yet she was drinking gin the young man had paid for. Finally he rose, pressed her hand and left, and she, her face flushed with liquor, with red spots on her pale cheeks, passed on and was lost in the crowd of fallen women. In the Haymarket I saw mothers who had brought their little daughters to follow their shameful trade. Girls of 12 would catch you by the hand and ask you to follow them. I remember once seeing in the midst of a crowd a girl who could not have

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been more than six, clad in rags, barefoot and dirty, drunken and in bruises, which showed through her tatters. She walked on unhurriedly as though in a dream; perhaps she was hungry. Nobody paid the least attention to her. What amazed me was the look of utter grief and despair on her face; to see this little creature with so heavy a burden of suffering and grief was most unnatural and painful. Her dishevelled head rocked from side to side as though she was considering something; she would stretch out her arms, then bring them together and press them to her bare breast. I turned back and gave her sixpence. She took the coin, and then, after looking me in the face with fearful amazement, dashed off as though afraid that I might take it back. . . . In general, all this was most engrossing.

“One night, amidst this crowd of fallen women and debauchees, I was stopped by a woman who was hastily making her way through the throng. She was dressed in black with a hat that almost entirely concealed her face. I hardly had time to make out her features, but I remember her fixed gaze. She said something in broken French that I could not make out, thrust a slip of paper into my hand and rapidly walked off. I examined the paper in the light of a coffee-shop window. On one side was printed: ‘*Crois-tu cela?*’ on the other, also in French, were the words: ‘I am the Life and Resurrection. . .’ and more of the well-known lines. You will agree that all this was most original. I was told later that this was Catholic propaganda, which penetrates everywhere, ceaseless and indefatigable.

“English clergymen are rich and proud. . . . They . . . have a profound faith in their dull and pompous dignity, their right to moralize others in the calmest and most confident of tones, to grow fat and cater for the rich. This is undisguisedly a religion of and for the wealthy. . . .

“When night passes and day arrives, the same proud and gloomy spirit descends regally upon the huge city.

Why should it be concerned with the happenings of the night; why should it be concerned with what it sees about it during the day? Baal reigns supreme without even demanding obedience, convinced that this is merely his due. His faith in himself knows no bounds; he calmly and contemptuously distributes official charity so as to avoid being importuned, and there is nothing that can move him. Poverty, suffering and the degradation of the masses leave him cold."

We have ventured to cite so lengthy an excerpt because we have not felt equal to the task of retelling these pages in our own words. This passage is among the finest pages in world literature, devoted to the exposure of the inhumanity of capitalist society.

When we read of Baal, that dread and evil spirit that sucks the life out of human beings, and of a dreary host of disinherited men and women, we cannot but recollect Gorky's *City of the Yellow Devil*. How telling is the comparison between the progress of science and civilization on the one hand, and, on the other, the millions of *white slaves* spurned and cast off by that civilization! How repellent is the humiliation inflicted on the human dignity of women, girls and children! The image of desecrated feminine beauty produces an impression similar to that we would get were we to see the Sistine Madonna in a crowd of fallen women. The fact that the author saw a beggar aged six and a prostitute of the same age in the immediate vicinity of the London World Exhibition of 1851, with all its wealth and luxury and its Crystal Palace as the embodiment of technical achievement, epitomizes the *price* paid for the achievements of bourgeois civilization. Here, speaking metaphorically, was the tear of a tormented child, for which Ivan Karamazov was to deny the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we have Dostoyevsky's words of scorn for the cant and hypocrisy of the church, which battens on the suffering of people.

When we read these pages in *Winter Notes*, we call to

mind Engels's inspired words in his *Conditions of the Working Class in England*:

"Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on the one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together."

In their *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels speak of the necessity of making use, in the interests of the working class and mankind, of all forms of criticism of capitalism coming from the *Right*, taking care to winnow out the truth from lies and distortion.

It is to be regretted that *Winter Notes* contains lies and distortion in no less degree than truth.

Withholding the truth is in itself the equivalent of a *lie*. While ridiculing the French bourgeois, the author of *Winter Notes* says nothing of the positive significance of bourgeois democracy compared with the *ancien régime*. The inner sense of this book consists in its complete negation and denial of everything connected with capitalist development, including bourgeois democracy. This absolute negation of the bourgeois republic, especially while in Russia the autocracy was oppressing the people, was profoundly reactionary.

Here is what Lenin said in this connection:

"The bourgeois republic, parliament, universal suffrage—all represent great progress from the standpoint of the world development of society. Mankind was moving towards capitalism, and it was capitalism alone which, thanks to urban culture, enabled the oppressed proletarian class to learn to know itself and to create the world working-class movement, the millions of workers organized all over the world in parties—the socialist parties which are consciously leading the struggle of the masses. Without par-

liamentarism, without an electoral system, this development of the working class would have been impossible. That is why all these things have acquired such great importance in the eyes of the broad masses of people."

Dostoyevsky completely denies all the relatively progressive institutions that the bourgeois system brought in its train when it supplanted feudalism. His mockery of the way the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity are implemented in bourgeois society proves mockery of the slogans themselves. An inevitable consequence of this reactionary criticism of capitalism was an extreme social pessimism, a complete absence of any social basis or any hope of progress in the objective development of history.

In *Winter Notes* criticism of capitalism goes hand in glove with criticism of the working class and socialism. This has resulted in errors in the otherwise very powerful presentation of Baal. It stands to reason that Dostoyevsky's depiction of the workers as a sombre and crushed host that drown their troubles in drink was wholly wrong. The British working class had already given many an example of devoted struggle against Baal. Dostoyevsky's description of the mass of French workmen was in a somewhat different tone, but this was couched in a way that made them seem unprepossessing and very *bourgeois* in their nature and aspirations. It is worth-while comparing this estimation with what Marx had to say of the French socialist workers: "...in their mouths the fraternity of men is not a phrase, but the truth, and on their toil-worn faces lies the imprint of human beauty."

Dostoyevsky held the opinion that in the West people lacked the faculty of fraternity, since they were imbued to the last man with the spirit of individualism and self-interest.

Winter Notes openly declared that the *troisieme état* and the *quatrieme état* were equally *bourgeois* in character. The author maintained most insistently that in the West "all are men of property or wish to become such"

and that the proletarians were just as bourgeois as the rest. In his attack on the French bourgeois the author extended his critical observations to the entire nation! He spoke not of the French bourgeois, but of "the Parisian in general" or "the Frenchman in general." If we are to believe Dostoyevsky, a whole nation can be bourgeois in character. Citing an instance of gross flattery of the emperor featured in a French paper, Dostoyevsky declared that such flattery was "in the spirit of the nation"! To quote him: "Where except France can you find such flattery in the press? That is why I speak of the spirit of the nation. . . ." These words came from the pen of a writer who was well aware that a stream of similar or even more repulsive flattery covered the pages of the loyalist press in Russia! Dostoyevsky himself had many words of flattery to say of Tsar Alexander II, the *Liberator*. This malicious, disgusting and bigoted slander against the glorious French nation, which has played so important a part in the history of mankind, cannot but evoke feelings of indignation, and could not but anger every Russian progressive. Belinsky, that great son of the Russian people, declared that the aristocracy and the upper middle class, which were alien to the people, should never be identified with the great French people. In an article that appeared sixteen years prior to *Winter Notes*, namely his "Survey of Russian Literature in 1846," Belinsky wrote: ". . . The French nation would cut a pretty figure were it to be judged only by the depraved *noblesse* of Louis XV's time. This instance shows that the minority is more apt to be an expression of the bad rather than the good side of the national character, because it lives an artificial life when it opposes itself to the majority as something separate from and alien to the latter. We see this in contemporary France too in the person of the bourgeoisie, the dominant class there." The great democratic writers of Russia always drew a line between the selfish privileged sections and the mass of the people.

What was it that could have led the great writer to such an unworthy and spiteful chauvinism?

The answer lies in the fact that *Winter Notes* was written with a special purpose in view, namely to convince the reader that everything connected with the development of capitalism, including the advent of political forms more progressive than the previous, was monstrous and breathed the most inordinate selfishness, and that even entire nations living under the vitiating yoke of bourgeois society become depraved and degenerate. Dostoyevsky could not think otherwise, since he could discern no social forces capable of standing up to the omnipotence of Baal. Where the bourgeoisie is in power, everything turns *bourgeois* and *selfish*. Such were the ideas that the writer wished to inculcate upon the reader. It seemed to him that in Russia capitalism could be prevented, thus precluding the appearance of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He believed that the possibility existed in Russia of the *spiritual unity* of all classes, which he considered the antidote to the thirst for personal aggrandizement and the cult of self-interest that reigned in the West. He held the opinion that, unlike the West, with its individualistic tradition, Russia possessed its tradition of Orthodox community life, which tradition, as he saw it, was personified in the tsar, who had already liberated the peasants from the shackles of serfdom and would prove the father of his subjects, capable of securing them against the calamities that capitalism brought in its train.

With the passage of years, Dostoyevsky could not but realize how idyllic and unreal were his hopes of the non-capitalistic development of his country. He could not but realize the howling contradiction between his utopian ideals and the triumphant march of capitalism that he described in his works. After he had developed in his *Diary of a Writer* the theme of a peaceful Orthodox Russia that knew neither the bourgeoisie nor the proletariat and was fully capable of bringing about the peaceable

unification of all classes under the shadow of the throne, he wrote in the bitterness of disappointment to L. Grigoryev in 1878: "Time has passed since the peasants were liberated, and what do we see? The abuse of power by the local authorities, a fall in morals, oceans of vodka, the appearance of pauperism and the kulaks, in other words European proletarianization, the bourgeoisie and so on and so forth. That's how it all looks to me."

These lines are the most bitter ever written by him, amounting as they did to an admission of the fruitlessness and utopian nature of all his dreams of Russia's own way of life.

When *Winter Notes* were being written, two years after the peasant reform, Dostoyevsky still had a deep belief that Russia could avoid the path of "European *proletarianization* and the bourgeoisie." That is why in his polemic and unworthy fervour he fell into the grossest chauvinism. We know that Dostoyevsky was the author of utterances diametrically opposite to the above, about the love of the Russian people for the *sacred stones* of Europe, for all peoples, especially those of Western Europe. At the same time we know of his maniacal exaggeration, his obsessions, when it came to saving Russia from capitalism and *proletarianization*.

The logic of Dostoyevsky's support of the autocracy, no matter what subjective reasons it sprang from, could not but lead to chauvinism. Even today to read what the writer had to say about Poles, Germans, Americans and Jews is a source of pain and indignation for Soviet people; it is painful to us to feel shame for a Russian writer. The only relief we can get when we think of this feature in Dostoyevsky, one of the most gloomy in his make-up, is to realize the profound tragicness of all the mistakes the writer made in his endeavours to *save mankind* from ignorance and chaos, endeavours that were doomed to failure.

"The bourgeois period of history," Karl Marx wrote, "has to create the material basis of the new world. . . . When a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch. . . then only will human progress cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol which would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain."

All genuine men of art of the 19th century, which was marked by outstanding achievements and great discoveries in science and the technical fields, did not wish to drink the nectar of civilization out of the skulls of the millions of people that had been murdered by capitalism. That was why the achievements of bourgeois civilization could never serve them as an inspiring source of poetry and beauty. Many of them tried to find salvation in a call to return to the *simplicity* and *patriarchalism* of idealized pre-capitalistic social systems; others lost all faith in the aspirations of the human mind, realizing that reason and the mind, unless impregnated with love of one's fellow creatures, can serve only to ruthlessly exploit people and annihilate them. Such is the tragedy of the artist in bourgeois society.

It is noteworthy that Gorky, a writer brought forward by the working class, found words to describe the progressive part played by the bourgeoisie in the early stages of its historical development. He saw that the material basis of a new world was being laid down, that the working class was being created, which was destined to be the grave-digger of capitalism.

After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution Lenin wrote: "In the past all of man's intellect, all his genius, created in order to provide some with all the blessings of technology and culture while depriving others of that which is most necessary—education and progress. All the wonders of technology and all the achievements of culture will now become the property of the people, and from now on man's intellect and genius will nev-

er be turned into means of violence, into means of exploitation. We know that, and is it not worth working for, is it not worth devoting all our forces to the fulfilment of this historic task?"

Dostoyevsky expressed his horror of *human thought* serving to crush people, his opposition to thought that was not leavened by love of people. Moreover, he extended his fear and abomination of the Baal-serving human mind to the human mind in general! He sought comfort in religion because it seemed to him that everything created by the human mind without the Divine blessing and not sanctified by a Christian love of mankind was but a form of worship of the selfsame Baal.

The question will arise: how does all this fit in with his criticism of religious cant in *Winter Notes*? The answer is simple: Dostoyevsky found a suitable formula, namely, that Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism and the like were religions *for the rich—bourgeois* religions so to say, permeated by the spirit of the Devil and devoted to the service of Baal. His attacks against Catholicism were especially bitter. On the contrary, the Orthodox faith was not only non-bourgeois but *anti-bourgeois* in spirit, the true Christian faith, with roots in the people. It was the religion of Russia, a country that knew not capitalism!

For us today all religions are the same in the sense that at bottom they are all opposed to progress, to the true happiness of mankind. At the same time we are committed to complete freedom of religion. In the Soviet Union believers of all faiths, whether Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Moslem, Jewish or any other, are free to form congregations and attend places of worship. From our point of view, Dostoyevsky's fanatic call for the suppression of all religions except the Orthodox is the height of bigotry.

The Balzac theme of *lost illusions* was one of the central themes in world literature in the 19th century. In place of the slogans of *liberty, equality and fraternity*,

proclaimed by the French Revolution of 1789-93, and the ideals of good, justice and humanity produced by the French Enlighteners, mankind could see the *practice* of bourgeois society, which was such a gross mockery of the *theory*.

It was this contradiction that provided food for Dostoyevsky's conclusion regarding the bankruptcy of reason. The following excerpt from *Winter Notes* will throw some light on the matter: "Reason has proved bankrupt in the face of reality, and besides, the most wise and learned of men are beginning to teach that pure reason is devoid of arguments, that pure reason does not exist at all, that abstract logic is inapplicable to mankind, that there exists the reason of the Ivans, the Pyotrs and the Gustavs, but not pure reason, and all this is a groundless fabrication of the 18th century."

Dostoyevsky is out to prove that *reason* has led to a most *unreasonable* of social systems, to an offensive chaos and the unbridled play of evil passions; it is reason that has driven a child of six to the pedestal of Baal. As Dostoyevsky sees it, reason merely pretends to be virtuous; in actual fact it is evil and selfish, and spreads the chaos of general decay, disunity and isolationism; reason is undisguised *self-interest*. It was in this way that the beginnings of a peculiar nihilistic *criticism of reason* in Dostoyevsky's works were laid down.

Dostoyevsky waged a polemic against the ideas of the French Enlighteners of the 18th century, against utopian socialism, against the ideas of the Russian enlighteners Belinsky, Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov. He considered all these ideas a vindication of abstract reason. After its promising and portentous *début* in the 18th century, reason, with its ideas of justice and humanity, fell bankrupt in the 19th century with the creation of bourgeois society, which by its very nature is a mockery of all and any reason. It was in this distorted fashion that Dostoyevsky tried to portray the course of history!

By his denial of bourgeois enlightenment, utopian socialism and the ideas of Belinsky and Chernishevsky, the principal point in this argument being the injustice and irrationality of capitalist society, one built *on the basis of the demands of reason*, Dostoyevsky cut himself off from the march of progressive human thought. This could lead only to complete hopelessness.

In his *Winter Notes* Dostoyevsky attempted to prove that reason had turned evil and donned the mask of the Devil; bourgeois society had become the kingdom of Smerdyakov, the embodiment of the real essence of the *triumph of reason* that had once so proudly announced its advent. Dostoyevsky wished to inculcate in his readers the conviction that any new attempt to organize society on the basis of reason could lead only to fresh mistakes and tragedies. Such attempts could merely display ever more glaringly the gap between *theory* and *practice*, and emphasize again and again the bankruptcy of reason in the face of reality. As the facts of bourgeois society had shown, reason meant the triumph of *hatred of mankind*, the trampling of others underfoot for the satisfaction of one's selfish ends.

What alternative remained? How could life be arranged on the basis of mutual *love*? These searchings brought Dostoyevsky to his false thesis of the necessity of the Lord God as a panacea from all evils and afflictions.

Such was the outcome of his impressions of two visits abroad, combined with the impact of his impressions of St. Petersburg of the early sixties and of his prison years, which had thrown him into close contact with so many people in the grip of brutal passions, people, that "knew not the yoke of reason. . . ."

The principle of brotherhood is absent in the make-up of "Westerners," it was asserted by Dostoyevsky, who maintained that in its stead is "the principle of the individual, the personal, of infinite isolationism, one that demands its rights with sword in hand." Dostoyevsky's viewpoint—expressed in the formula

that the brotherhood of man cannot be built on the basis of reason, that the individual will never agree to a brotherhood based on the principle of reasonable justice, since the spirit of brotherhood is absent in his mentality and that only Orthodoxy can bring about that brotherhood—was not as yet fully expressed in *Winter Notes* or in *Notes from Underground* which followed.

At that time, the writer was not yet an ardent propagandist of the Orthodox Church. That was to come later. His *Notes from Underground* merely hints at the religious solution as the only possible way of overcoming the bane of individualism. With our knowledge of the writer's future stand in this question, we have every reason to say that this future stand was already contained in all the implications of his *Winter Notes* and *Notes from Underground*.

Dostoyevsky had no knowledge of scientific socialism, being acquainted only with the works of the utopian socialists. These latter he distorted in the most flagrant manner, attributing to thinkers inspired by a love of mankind, a desire to vindicate Reason bereft of love of men. Of course, the utopian socialists had a naive faith in the power of reason, which they thought capable in itself of refashioning the life of mankind on the basis of good, if only due consideration were given to it. It was this weakness of utopian socialism that Dostoyevsky endeavoured to exploit to confirm his disbelief in human reason and to deny the very possibility of a reasonable arrangement of human life without the agency of religion. He lost sight of the fact that Christ's call upon men to love one another had sounded for hundreds of years from pulpits of all denominations, that this teaching had served only as a screen for the most horrible cruelties and crimes committed against humanity by the ruling classes. An interesting illustration of this is provided by Lucretius, who wrote in reply to those who asserted that morality is impossible without religion: "... *Quod contra sae-*

pius illa Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta." ("Religion has itself given birth to impious and criminal acts.") Incidentally Dostoyevsky's works provide a retort to this objection. He would have answered: that may be so, but in the first place that does not refer to the Orthodox Church (as if that church played no part in the crimes of the exploiting classes, like any other church!); in the second place Dostoyevsky held that the Orthodox Church was destined to replace the state (this is especially emphasized in *The Karamazov Brothers*), which would lead to the establishment of real brotherhood on earth! . . .

In this connection a most interesting question arises—that of Dostoyevsky's *individualism*. Quite a number of intellectuals all over the world consider the writer a bard of individualism, some lauding him for this quality, others censuring him for it. This problem, however, is immeasurably more complex than is thought by many students of the works of so contradictory a writer.

The gist of the matter lies in the fact that bourgeois individualism both allured the writer and intimidated him to the verge of physical repulsion. For him *Smerdyakov* was the very embodiment of individualism, but prior to his appearance Dostoyevsky had created a gallery of individualistic social renegades, beginning with the hero of *Letters from Underground*. Raskolnikov was to test upon himself bourgeois individualism *in action* and in full manifestation, and just as Ivan Karamazov was to see the logical outcome of his complete individualism in the person of his odious double Smerdyakov, Raskolnikov was to see the same outcome in the person of his loathsome double Svidrigailov.

Can we call by the name of a bard of individualism a writer whose characters are set against a *personal*, disuniting, *Raskolnikov-like*,* clutching individualism? And,

* The surname *Raskolnikov* is formed from the Russian word *raskol* which means "schism, split, disunity."—Tr.

at the same time, can it be asserted that the creator of these characters was a stranger to the individualistic, which he revealed with such insight in all the sufferings, vacillations, doubts, crimes and punishments of his heroes? A positive answer can be given to neither of these questions.

The fact that Dostoyevsky, who during all his life as a writer waged a struggle against the false allurements of the bourgeois individualism that surrounded his hero, can hardly be called an apologist of individualism gives rise to another question, namely: can the writer be considered a bard of human *personality*, a defender of the rights of the *individual*?

It stands to reason that, in the final analysis, Dostoyevsky is among those great artists that have defended the human personality against the yoke of unjust social conditions. Herein lies one of the great services he rendered to mankind.

There is, however, another profound contradiction in Dostoyevsky that should be clearly seen. In his apprehension of the unbridled self-will of the amoral bourgeois individual, Dostoyevsky, in fact, gravitated towards a negation of the individual, and for that reason considered sinful the struggle that the "Western" individual had been waging for his rights. As we have already noted, the main objection implied against the "Western principle" in *Winter Notes* is summed up in the following excerpt: "It (brotherhood—V. Y.) has proved totally absent in the French nature and in general in the West; what is to be found there is the private and the individualistic principle, the principle of a heightened self-preservation, self-interest, self-determination in one's own *I*, the contrasting of this *I* to all nature and all other people as a fully independent individual principle, absolutely equivalent and equal to all that exists besides it. Brotherhood could never spring from such self-assertion. Why not? Because in brotherhood, in genuine brotherhood, it is not

the individual, not the *I*, that should be concerned with the establishment of his equivalency and equiponderance with *others*, but these *others* that should come to this individual, this *I* that demands its rights, and without waiting for him to present his demand should recognize him as equivalent and equal in his rights to themselves, i.e., to everything else that exists in the world. Moreover, this rebellious and exigent individual should in the first place sacrifice himself, his entire *I*, to the cause of society, and not only refrain from demanding his rights, but give them to society without imposing any conditions. But the Western individual is not accustomed to such things; he demands his rights in a most intransigent manner."

In these words is expressed Dostoyevsky's real *credo*, to the defence of which he dedicated himself for almost two decades, both in his publicist writings and his works of fiction (beginning with *Winter Notes* and right down to *The Karamazov Brothers* and his address on Pushkin). If we consider the meaning of the passage quoted above, we shall realize that Dostoyevsky has, as it were, thrown out the child along with the bath, that he is against not only bourgeois individualism, but against the personal principle, against the right of the individual to independence. In his fear of untrammelled selfishness he goes to the other extreme to deny to the individual the right to struggle for his personal rights.

Herein is expressed the ideology of Christian self-sacrifice and self-denial. In Dostoyevsky's opinion, the individual should *sacrifice* himself completely to society, and not only refrain from demanding his rights, but give them up without any conditions. Dostoyevsky would erase from the memory of mankind all that had been done by the Renaissance to elevate the individual, everything the French Revolution had done to achieve the rights of man. All this, he thought, was from the Devil. If freedom was necessary to man, it should be freedom from his own self, from his personality, his soul, from his evil, treacherous

and selfish mind. It were better for each man to give up his personality, since in the soul of each man there develop the evil and predatory instincts of the spider. The growth of the individual's consciousness was identified by Dostoyevsky with the development of individualism. In *The Karamazov Brothers* he was to preach the blessings of a denial of one's own individuality, one's soul! In this novel he was to approve in the most unctuous terms the supreme delight of retirement to a monastery in one's old age. To quote from the novel:

"And so, what is a *starets*?* He is one who takes your soul and your will into his soul and his will. When you select a *starets*, you deny your own will and place yourself into complete submission, with full denial of self. This test, this stern school of life, is assumed voluntarily, in the hope that you will conquer yourself, become your master, so that by life-long submission, you will achieve absolute freedom, that is, freedom from yourself."

These words were the summary of a whole life, the conclusion arrived at by a soul that was weary unto death as a result of the ceaseless struggle of two principles within it. Full self-renunciation—such was the meaning of the call—one that had already sounded in *Winter Notes*—that one should *sacrifice oneself completely to society*, and not demand one's rights.

This came from a writer who asserted that socialism stood for the suppression of the individual!

Soviet people take pride in the fact that their constitution, the fundamental law of the Soviet socialist state, protects the individual and gives a clear definition of the rights and duties of the citizen. As distinct from bourgeois constitutions, the rights of the citizen in a socialist society are not merely predicated but are secured by the

* A *starets* is a monk, sometimes a non-monk, usually advanced in years, who has retired to a monastery and is held in awe and esteem by mystically-minded believers for his so-called sanctity and good works.

state. Socialism means not the suppression, but the unprecedented efflorescence of the individual. It was with the greatest truthfulness that Dostoyevsky revealed the suppression, the levelling and the standardization of the individual in bourgeois society, but he addressed the same reproach to the socialist society of the future! And what is more significant, Dostoyevsky preached, under the appearance of Christian humility, so complete a depersonalization of man, so frank a conversion of man into a genuflected *trembling creature*, to quote Raskolnikov, compared to which all the chimeras of the *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* and *Shigalevism* pale into insignificance (see *The Possessed*).

If freedom of the individual means freedom from all moral norms, it is better to give up such freedom, and better still to give up one's individuality—such is the gist of Dostoyevsky's argument. Thus, under the guise of a struggle against *bourgeois individualism*, he in fact arrived at a *negation of individuality*. This was the inescapable outcome of his reactionarily utopian criticism of the bourgeois period of history. It was in a denial of individuality and its sinful reason that Dostoyevsky saw salvation from the abomination of selfishness and individualism, from passions born of self-interest and the anarchist, *Karamazov* approach to life.

That is the reason why the polemic against socialism waged in Dostoyevsky's books is so contradictory. On the one hand, he accused socialism of the repression of the individual; on the other, he accused it of creating a new, or rather, from his point of view, the identical selfishness, grounded in the same cold calculations that the bourgeois had started with.

We repeat that this was a polemic waged by the writer against utopian socialism or, to speak more precisely, against his distorted conception of utopian socialism. He knew Marx and the International only by hearsay, but in his nihilistic criticism of reason and his polemic

against the "reasonable selfishness" of Chernishevsky, Dostoyevsky displayed a *fear of reason and freedom of the individual* that precluded an understanding of the way scientific socialism can solve problems of the role of reason, of the individual and society. Dostoyevsky's struggle against *individualism* actually turned into a struggle against *individuality*, which testifies to his fear of the boundless sinful potentialities of the individualistic soul that he could discern.

As he saw it, *freedom of the individual* was the equivalent of freedom from all and any ethical norms and bonds. Standing on the border-line between feudal and bourgeois society, he could see only the unbridled and amoral individual that bourgeois society had brought in its train; he failed to see the *development of the individual* brought about by democracy, a development made possible by the feudal order yielding place to the bourgeois.

There are two extremes in Dostoyevsky's gloomy inner world. In the close and foul confines of each man's soul there lurks a loathsome spider, as the writer calls all that is grasping and evil in a man's character; if you would exorcise the spider in your soul you must *free yourself* of your individuality wherein the spider dwells! *Your individuality cannot be trusted* if it harbours evil passion that urges you to devour your fellow-men! If "a murderous hangman dwells in the soul of every contemporary man," then that soul should be mortified. Only one kind of freedom should be allowed—*freedom from oneself!* That is the appalling conclusion that Dostoyevsky arrives at, together with his hero.

Gorky waged a struggle against Dostoyevsky for *the freedom of the human individual, for trust in him, for the untrammelled expression of all the forces within him*. Gorky was a herald of a new renaissance of mankind, the epoch of democracy and socialism that is to bring humanity genuine freedom of the individual, guaranteed by the

power of a society which serves the cause of the happiness, the full efflorescence of man's spiritual forces.

Better complete absence of individuality—such is the logic objectively expressed in Dostoyevsky's works of fiction and publicist writings. This is but a variant of the old theme: *mastery or slavery*. Dostoyevsky's hero "chooses" slavery, considering it better than mastery; he chooses depersonalization since it is preferable to selfishness in the individual. These variants of one and the same theme are inextricably linked up with Dostoyevsky's criticism of capitalism from the Right.

Of course this stand could not but weaken his exposure of the negative and the evil in contemporary society; neither could it avoid leading to an exaggerated appraisal of the forces of evil. In the very picture of Baal, which shows most faithfully how man is trampled underfoot in a society held in thrall by a new idol—the bourgeoisie—we can see a gloomy recognition of man's helplessness in the face of the new apocalyptic monster. Baal is omnipotent and brooks no resistance! Besides, one can neither see nor envisage any force capable of battling with him. In exactly the same way, Dostoyevsky thought that the *spider or hangman* that batted on the soul of each "contemporary man" was unconquerable, and in his horror he felt that the human soul should deny any independence which could lead only to the chaos of devastation. He dreamed of placing in dependable hands the fate of this unhappy soul, so incapable of coping with its dark passions! Just as Alyosha placed his *Karamazov* soul into the hands of Father Zosima, the author of *The Karamazov Brothers* wished to place the defenceless soul of man into the keeping of a God he had invented in his frenzied fear of the hideous abyss of the Svidrigailov and the Smerdyakov "soul."

Meanwhile, contemporary mankind was making rapid strides forward, gaining ever fresh victories, establishing genuine democracy and humanism in the battle against

the Smerdyakov forces of evil. The devoted struggle of the heroic working class brought about the victory of real brotherhood, genuine human beauty. However, the great writer who called curses upon the evil *spider* in the soul of man, upon greed, the disunity of mankind and the cynical rule of the money-bag, who denied the face of this world, dreamed of the brotherhood of man and rendered such services to mankind by helping it to realize how impossible life is in a society based on violence—this writer failed to understand that contemporary mankind was advancing towards the triumph of real brotherhood.

In some measure, *Notes from Underground* was anticipated by *Winter Notes*. The theme of the former work is contained in that part of *Winter Notes* in which the author wages a polemic against all attempts to arrange the life of society on a reasonable basis, and attempts to prove that the force of reason and the mind cannot hope to overcome selfishness and individualism, since reason is the beginning of selfishness and cynicism. Reason that is not permeated by love of man comes from the Devil, who has created the luxuries of civilization for the few and cynically tramples the rest of mankind underfoot. As Dostoyevsky saw him, the man of today is a *bourgeois*, lacking in all moral norms. From what source, asked the writer, can love of man spring in such a man? Only with the help of the Lord. . . .

The content of *Notes from Underground* is determined by a profoundly reactionary struggle against the free, atheistic mind of man which the author identifies with self-interest and individualism.

Dostoyevsky came up against an event in the spiritual life of the country which disturbed him not a little and seemed to be aimed directly against the views set forth in *Winter Notes*. The year 1863 saw the appearance of *What Is To Be Done?*, the novel N. G. Chernishevsky had written in prison. *Notes from Underground* appeared the following year.

In his *Winter Notes* Dostoyevsky had just waged a battle against the idea of the fraternal reshaping of society on the basis of reason, when a work appeared that tried to prove the mighty force of the free and atheistic human mind, fully capable of refashioning life on this planet following its own laws, by the blending of personal interests with those of society.

Lenin pointed out that Chernishevsky was a utopian socialist who dreamed of a transition to socialism via the old semi-feudal, peasant commune. At the same time, Lenin stressed that "Chernishevsky was not only a utopian socialist. He was also a revolutionary democrat; he knew how to influence all the political events of his time in a revolutionary spirit, conducting—through all the obstacles and obstructions created by the censorship—the idea of the peasant revolution, the idea of the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of all the old authorities." "His works," Lenin went on to say of Chernishevsky, "breathe the spirit of the class struggle." Furthermore, Lenin wrote that Chernishevsky "did not and could not see in the sixties of the last century that only the development of capitalism and the proletariat is capable of creating the material conditions and the social force for the realization of socialism." At the same time Lenin's definition of the ideological heritage of the sixties, given in his *What Heritage Do We Deny?* is fully applicable to Chernishevsky. In this work Lenin emphasized *the fervent faith of the Enlighteners in the given social development, their historical optimism and their cheerfulness of spirit.*

It is self-evident that only the Marxist, the Leninist scientific understanding of the objective laws of the development of society and knowledge of these laws give the working class and all toiling humanity the strength for the revolutionary reshaping of society, the creation of a most reasonable, advanced and just social system. As a utopian socialist Chernishevsky could not but share the



Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 1879 (Photograph)

Enlighteners' faith in abstract human reason, but in this fervent assertion there was an historical optimism, *an ardent belief in the given social development*, a close link with the advance of history.

In his *Notes from Underground* Dostoyevsky contrasted to Chernishevsky's historical optimism his boundless pessimism, his nihilistic distrust of the reason of progressive mankind, and the struggle for a reasoned and just ordering of society. The author of *Notes* declared his hostility to revolution, and attempted to oppose to the revolutionary movement of his time a nihilistic criticism of reason, the maliciously reactionary nature of which is hardly less than that of *The Possessed*. He "replied" to the author of *What Is To Be Done?* by a spiteful exposure of all the dross to be found in a social renegade's soul, corroded by abstract rationalism, laid desolate by endless "reflection," and poisoned by egotism.

Reporting to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, Maxim Gorky said: "To Dostoyevsky belongs the glory of a man who, in the person of the hero of *Notes from Underground*, created with the consummate skill of a master in the field of letters the type of an egoist, the type of a social degenerate. With the glee of an insatiable avenger for his own misfortunes and sufferings, for the beliefs of his youth, Dostoyevsky showed, through the medium of his hero, how wolfish a howl could emanate from the throat of an individualist typifying young people of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, who had lost contact with life. This man of his contains the most characteristic features of Friedrich Nietzsche and of the Marquis des Esseintes; the hero of *A Rebours* by Huysmans; *Le Disciple* by Bourget, and Boris Savinkov, the author and hero of his work; Oscar Wilde and Artsibashev's Sanin, and many other social degenerates, born of the anarchistic influence of the inhuman conditions of the capitalistic state."

To this list of social degenerates might be added the name of Bardamut, the hero of Louis Céline's *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*. This author, so prone to attitudinizing in his utter despair and cynicism, played a most dastardly role during the nazi occupation of France, when he became a Hitlerite paid agent. This development was foretold by Gorky in his estimation of Louis Céline's novel, when he said it was but a single step from nihilistic despair to fascism.

In his address Gorky spoke of the links between Dostoyevsky and the literary decadents who were to come later, "Vera Figner said that Savinkov's ideas were replicas of the decadents: 'There is no morality; there exists only beauty. And beauty means the free development of personality, the unfettered unfolding of everything implicit in the soul.'

"We know very well how corrupt is the human soul in bourgeois society!

"In a state based on the senseless and humiliating sufferings of the vast majority of people, the call for the arbitrary self-will of the individual in word and deed ought to have, and indeed did have, a dominant and self-justified significance. Capital encouraged and justified ideas like the following: man is a despot by nature; man likes to inflict pain; he passionately loves suffering; he perceives the sense of life and his own happiness in wilfulness, in an unlimited freedom of action, and only in this wilfulness is 'the most advantageous of advantages' for him; 'let the whole world perish that I may have my tea.'"

Dostoyevsky's stand in his *Notes from Underground* can be briefly summed up as follows. "You assert," he says to his opponents, and in the first place to Chernishovsky, "that human reason, free and atheistic, is capable of reshaping life on the basis of justice, freedom and love of people. But reason is selfish; one who lives by reason, with his mind, is incapable of love of people. Reason is powerless to curb the evil and destructive forces

of the human soul. Man is irrational by nature, and he can be curbed only by a higher power, not by his reason!"

The author of *Notes from Underground* portrays an effete egotist whose mind and feelings are in constant conflict; it is his purpose to prove by extension that in all men the mind and feelings are irreconcilable, and that only religion is capable of bridging this gap.

World literature will hardly show pages more dismal and gloomy than those in *Notes from Underground* of the relations between the hero and Liza, the unfortunate girl he met in a brothel. The following lines from Nekrasov form the epigraph to the chapter that tells us how the two met:

*When from its tragic aberration
By words of passionate persuasion
To light your spirit I returned,
You wrung your hands in deep affliction
And cursed with fervent malediction
The hell in which your soul had burned.
Your conscience which till then had slumbered
Awoke in mortal agony
As you recalled the ills unnumbered
Which filled your life ere you met me.
Then of a sudden, wrought with horror,
You hid from me your tortured face
And wept with tears of shame and sorrow,
Aghast and shocked at your disgrace. . .*

The epigraph breaks off at this place in Nekrasov's poem. The story itself follows the poem just up to this very spot, whence the story follows a quite different line of development. . . .

Notes from Underground is the story of a moral crime. A human soul anxious to forget its slow death has been resuscitated with one purpose in view, to make it die not in the apathetic fashion it has instinctively taught itself

to await, but in the most exquisite agony. Raskolnikov murdered his victim before the latter had time even to realize her doom; the hero of *Notes from Underground* subjects his victim to slow and prolonged anguish.

The conscience of mankind cannot but recognize that Dostoyevsky carries a heavy responsibility for this moral crime. This is not because he has told us one of the cruellest stories in world literature. If it is to be worthy of the name, literature can and must tell the truth, however bitter that truth may be. The crux of the matter lies in the manner in which the horrible and shameful truth is revealed in this story.

Of course, Dostoyevsky stands aghast at what his hero has done, at his inhumanity and the mock that has been made of Nekrasov's poem. There cannot be the least doubt, however, that he shares much of the hero's viewpoint, and in the first place his sombre malice against the finest men of his time—Belinsky and Chernishevsky; he is attuned to his hero's general frame of mind, one that Gorky so fittingly called *the anarchism of the defeated*.

The story of a crime should not be told with exultation. To do so means to refrain from condemning that crime, to take relish in villainy. The gleeful exultation shown in the *Notes* is the unworthy exultation of vengeance. The story of a crime is made use of as "proof" of the viciousness of human nature itself and of the impossibility for man to overcome this besetting sin through *human means*, through his reason.

The author is out to prove not only the impotence of man's reason in the face of the evil in his soul, which drives him into the slough of abomination. His aim is to establish the absolute impossibility of any change for the better through the amelioration of social conditions, unless man, in despair at the realization of his own incorrigibility, turns to God, who will take the soul of man—that frail vessel that makes life so hard—under the shadow of his throne and deprive it of the right to have

any desires of its own. Besides, if one is to believe the hero of *Notes from Underground*, the individual has no desires of his own; neither has he volition based on reason. He is in full subjection to the play of evil forces.

There is hardly a line in the story that is not directed against Chernishevsky's *What Is To Be Done?*

She that appears in the dreams of Vera Pavlovna (the heroine of the novel) calling herself *the bride of those who have betrothed her*, and *the sister of her sisters*, she that asks Vera Pavlovna to call her by the name of *love of people*, the embodiment of the wisdom of life, says to the heroine of the story:

"When the good grow strong, I shall have no need of evil men. That time will soon come, Verochka. Then the wicked will see that they cannot remain as they are, and those evil men who are indeed men will become good. They turned to wickedness because it was harmful for them to be good, and they know that goodness is better than evil, and they will love goodness when it can be loved without harm."

These wise and simple words, like the whole novel, breathe a profoundly humanist and materialist faith in man, whose finest *human* qualities will emerge in a social system that will allow love of good without harm to his life.

This in essence is exactly what Gorky said in an article on Chekhov's story *In the Gully*, the central theme of which he considered the clash between man's aspiration to *live* better and his aspiration to *be* better, a contradiction that cannot be removed in a society based on exploitation, one in which the *worst* members enjoy the *best* life.

To the wise and noble words spoken during the dream of Vera Pavlovna, the hero of *Notes from Underground* replies that very often people act in a way that is opposite to their conscious will and their advantage, that perhaps "the most advantageous of advantages" would be

to act against one's advantage, simply for the sake of *waywardness*. That is how Dostoyevsky's hero simplifies and distorts his opponent's ideas.

As has already been mentioned, certain features of the Enlighteners' rationalism could not but be reflected in Chernishevsky's views. In his introduction to the 1954 edition of *What Is To Be Done?* B. S. Rurikov, the Soviet critic, very correctly pointed out that the emphasis laid on the word *advantage* stems from the influence the Enlighteners' rationalism had on Chernishevsky. The great revolutionary democrat, however, invested this word with the most lofty of meanings. It is to man's *advantage* to be honest, pure and good, to love mankind and feel concern for its cares, sorrows and joys. Such an attitude will only endow man's nature with qualities making it richer, deeper and broader. The welfare of mankind brings happiness to the individual, so that when the latter performs an act that brings good to many he does so for *himself*, his own happiness; such concern for oneself does not call for gratitude. What could be more humane than selfishness of *this* kind?

"The personal advantage of the new men (i.e., the new type of citizen appearing in society at the time.—*Tr.*) falls in with the general advantage, and their selfishness comprises within itself the widest love of mankind," D. Pisarev* wrote.

Of course, the term used by Chernishevsky was not a very precise one, but the idea underlying his *rational selfishness* was of the highest order. It meant that the individual's supreme happiness lies in the revolutionary struggle for the common weal. It did not follow, Chernishevsky went on to explain, that this struggle demanded that the individual give up his individuality and sacri-

* D. I. Pisarev (1840-1868)—outstanding Russian critic, materialistic philosopher and revolutionary democrat. In his philosophic and publicist writings followed the traditions of Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov.

fice it to the common cause. On the contrary! Individuality will flourish and display all its latent qualities as a result of its participation in the struggle for the happiness of mankind and thereby for its own happiness. It was to fully express the idea that participation in the revolutionary struggle enriches individuality, and to disprove the ascetic and false conception that the individual should immolate himself for the common cause that Chernishevsky brought forth the formula of a *rational selfishness*. As he saw it, the society of the future, based on justice, would be built on a foundation of *rational selfishness*, in other words, on the harmonious blending of the interests of society with those of the individual. In propounding this formula, Chernishevsky rose to a moral and ideological stature that cannot but command homage from us who have lived to see the triumph of scientific socialism. We are proud to number among our teachers and predecessors a man of such genius, so noble a soul, one so instinct with love of mankind. His concept of *rational selfishness* was a negation of *levellers'* socialism that would reduce all to one low standard of impoverished and lowly individuality, in other words a negation of all that Dostoyevsky later wished to impose upon the revolutionary camp in the form of *Shigalevism*.

Chernishevsky's lofty humanism was, of course, beyond the comprehension of the Christian "humanism" Dostoyevsky began to preach during the second period of his career as a writer. The Christian teaching of self-denial, humility, and self-abnegation is incapable of grasping and understanding genuine, revolutionary humanism, which defends the liberty and full development of individuality. Whether he did so sincerely or half-sincerely is immaterial, but Dostoyevsky identified bourgeois selfishness with Chernishevsky's *rational selfishness*, synonymized them, and waged war on them at one and the same time.

The hero of *Notes from Underground* reproaches his opponent for his rationalistic separation of *reason* and man's

entire *nature*. This, too, was a quite groundless accusation.

In his novel Chernishevsky stressed that reason, taken separately from man's entire nature as a whole, his passions and inclinations, is sterile. In the words of Lopukhov: "What is done by calculation, from a sense of duty, by an effort of the will, and not from inclination, is lifeless . . . through this means one can only kill . . . but cannot create something living." Rakhmetov explains Lopukhov's behaviour to Vera Pavlovna as follows: "Of course, he acted unconsciously, but one's nature is expressed just in things that are done unconsciously." Vera Pavlovna says much the same thing: "Clever people say that only such things are well done that people themselves wish to do," in other words, that which people do not in obedience to the abstract dictates of the mind, but from their nature, with all their reason, inclinations and passions.

We meet the following words in Gorky's play *Yakov Bogomolov*: "It was a clever thing a fisherman just said: 'If you do everything from wit that will be very stupid too.'"

Gorky constantly said that reason unleavened by love of mankind is hostile to people.

Of course, Dostoyevsky's horror of bourgeois *reason*, which is capable of serving only the assertion of predatory individuality at the expense of others, was not merely a figment of his imagination, but a reflection of some fraction of the truth—the horrible truth of a society based on outrage and violence. However, through the medium of the hero of *Notes from Underground*, Dostoyevsky asserted that consciousness should be eschewed like the plague. Gorky, on the contrary, stood for reason based on love, individuality rich and strong in its love of mankind, and grounded in reason.

Chernishevsky was Gorky's precursor along the road to such a humanism, which is the only genuine humanism.

Through his novel *What Is To Be Done?* Chernishevsky strove for the emergence of a type of man who would consider the struggle for human happiness the cause of his entire being, a profoundly personal matter based on a voluntary, and not an abstract and intellectual, sense of duty. That is why the novel ridicules *elevated* talk of *self-denial* and *self-sacrifice*. If a man does not derive a sense of *personal* happiness and enrichment from his taking part in the struggle for human happiness, but on the contrary feels that this entails sacrifice of his individuality, then such a man is not a very dependable fighter for the common cause.

In a review of Ogarev's poems Chernishevsky wrote that the time called for the appearance of a type of man "who, accustomed to the truth since his childhood, would regard it not with trembling ecstasy but with joyful love; we look forward to such a man and his speech, cheerful, calm and resolute, in which will be heard not the timidity of theory in the face of life, but proof that reason can rule over life, that man can conform his life to his convictions."

Man can conform his life to his convictions only when his reason and will, his reason and passions, his reason and inclinations are amalgamated and fused.

The greatness of *What Is To Be Done?* lies in the fact that in it *reason* is so permeated with *love of people* that these two qualities have become fused, that a work written with purely propagandist aims in view, as the author himself made it known, acquired a new significance as a work of art. Reason, which appeared as love of people, now emerged as genuine human beauty.

The polemical logic of the hero of *Notes from Underground* is based on the thesis of man's non-desire to subordinate his will or even his whim to anything. This logic is confuted in Chernishevsky's novel by one single factor—the transposing of the whole problem to a plane

of human feelings and thoughts immeasurably higher than that of the hero of the *Notes*.

"Yes, I shall always do only what I want to do," says Chernishevsky's hero. "For the sake of that which I will not do, I shall indeed sacrifice nothing, not even a whim. But with all my being I want to bring happiness to people, and in this lies *my* happiness. *My happiness*; do you hear me in your subterranean burrows?"

The polemic waged by Dostoyevsky's hero against Chernishevsky proved a dead failure. It might seem that Chernishevsky foresaw all the arguments that Dostoyevsky's hero would bring forward.

The latter cries out to the heavens that the society of the future, based on reason, threatens to deprive his individuality of its freedom. However, the content of *Notes from Underground*, this confession of individualism, speaks for the fact that individuality as such is not in mention here. Individuality is marked by *independence*. Is the word applicable to a miserable egotist, whose behaviour and acts are not under his own control? Individuality is marked by *freedom*. Can the word be applied to the main character of *Notes*, if he is a slave? He is the slave of uncontrollable impulses, which continually put him in all kinds of humiliating situations that are especially disturbing to him with his peculiar sensitiveness to anything that can wound his pride; he is the slave of a society which he hates and fears, but which irresistibly attracts him, although he has to put up with ever new humiliations. In the force with which the hero's psychology and the very essence of his relations with other people are laid bare, the climax of the story is the restaurant scene. He has wheedled an invitation against the desire of all those present and even against his own will. Despised by the whole company, he himself despises them and fawns upon at one and the same time. To drive this contempt home, he bursts into laughter when the guests, who, of course, are far less educated than he, begin dis-

cussing Shakespeare. "I sniggered so ostentatiously and derisively that they all fell silent and with the greatest gravity watched me pacing the room along the wall, from the table to the stove, without paying the least attention to them."

He draws the guests' attention to the fact that he does not pay the least attention to them. What a manifestation of what might be called *Dostoyevskyism*! He, the hero of the *Notes*, the proud individualist, makes up to those he looks down on—such is his stand in society. His freedom of individuality, in the final analysis, expresses itself in ceaseless self-torment for his ridiculous psychological uncouthness, his isolation from society, and at the same time his dependence on society. What talk can there be of the suppression of individuality, when the latter is non-existent and what we see is a kind of psychological jelly-fish!

Those who would eulogize Dostoyevsky as the bard of *self-sufficient individuality* cannot be congratulated on their choice. The egotist who is the main character of *Notes from Underground* cannot be self-sufficient for the simple reason that he does not exist as an individuality with a will, desires and aspirations of his own, in other words with definitive lines of psychological demarcation.

- It follows that *extreme individualism* is nothing but *extreme impersonality* or rather de-personality. One that places himself without the pale of humanity and aspires only to self-sufficiency warps his individuality to such a degree that it becomes nothing more than a shrivelled and malicious travesty.

If the main character of the *Notes* is much concerned with maintaining his freedom of individuality, it might be thought that while, as it were, it is *free*, he should feel pleasure and contentedness. One can hardly refrain from smiling at the thought, when one thinks of this ever agitated, suffering and tormented person, who is ever writhing under the flagellation of his self-contempt. What a

contrast to the characters in Chernishevsky's novel, these opponents of individualism, who are indeed happy people. Every line of this novel, the first in world literature to be written about such that are really happy, breathes this spirit of happiness, thus enhancing the aesthetic force of the story. This spirit springs from a love of mankind, a feeling so strong that it turned into an *artist* one who was savant, humanist and revolutionary at one and the same time, a poet of Reason that is synonymous with *love* of men.

The objection might be brought forward by the main character of *Notes* that man does not stand in need of happiness, that he loves suffering. . . . This of course is an argument that is unanswerable in its cogency! One can only shrug one's shoulders and leave to their sufferings those who are enamoured of suffering.

Despite its reactionary nature, there is, however, an important and tragic theme in the story. The author, through its main character, conducts a polemic with those who "affirm, for instance, following Buckle, that civilization has made mankind milder, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less given to warfare. Logically speaking, that does seem to follow from his argument. However, man has so strong a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is prepared to deliberately distort the truth and turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to everything in order to justify his logic. Just look around you: blood is being shed in torrents and in most merry a fashion, as though it were champagne. There you have the 19th century in which Buckle lived. There you have Napoleon—both the Great and the present one. There you have North America (i.e., the U.S.A.—*Tr.*), the Union everlasting. There you have the farce of Schleswig-Holstein. What is it that civilization mildens in us? Civilization develops in man only a greater capacity for varied sensations . . . and absolutely nothing else. And through the development of this versatility man may even come

to derive enjoyment from bloodshed. In fact, that is what has already happened to him. Have you noted that it is the most highly civilized gentlemen that have been the most refined shedders of blood . . . and if they are not so conspicuous . . . it is just because they are so often to be met, so ordinary, so commonplace. At all events if civilization has not made man more bloodthirsty, it has at least made him more vilely and more loathsomely bloodthirsty."

In this passage is summed up a problem of the greatest concern to Dostoyevsky: the advance of civilization and the concomitant growth of brutal morals and relations. This problem, as we have already pointed out, alarmed not only Dostoyevsky but a number of 19th century writers.

It was asserted by bourgeois progressivists and liberal gradualists that civilization tended to make morals milder and ennobled people by degrees. This problem was later to perturb Chekhov, who in his *My Life* controverted, through the agency of his main character, the liberal-bourgeois concept of *gradualism*.

"The conversation turned on gradualism. I said that . . . gradualism cut both ways. Parallel to the process of the gradual development of humane ideas one can observe the gradual growth of ideas of another kind. Serfdom has been abolished, but then capitalism is developing. And at the very height of the movement for liberation, just as in the times of Batu, the majority clothe, feed and defend the minority, while they themselves remain hungry, naked and defenceless. This state of affairs exists alongside of all sorts of new ideas and tendencies, because the art of enslavement also develops by degrees."

Great writers of the past placed no trust in bourgeois civilization, but sought after new paths.

Dostoyevsky could see very well that bourgeois civilization can neither ennoble nor milder man, and that it not only exists alongside of brutality but brings in its

train ever greater savagery and bloodthirstiness. From this he drew his hopeless conclusion that no change of social conditions is capable of making man nobler or milder. The only course left open to him was flight from this dreadful civilization into the sanctuary of the Orthodox Church.

As he saw it, the only influence civilization has on man is a "greater capacity for varied sensations . . . and absolutely nothing else." In other words, it develops in people the capacity to harbour simultaneously *the ideal of the Madonna* and *the ideal of Sodom*, the qualities of Svidrigailov and of Stavrogin, the power to be swayed by the loftiest of ideas and the most abominable.

The narrator in *Notes from Underground*—the story is told in the first person—is, in Dostoyevsky's opinion, a product of present-day civilization, with its individualism and rationalism, with that ominous *capacity for varied sensations* that leads man to be able to react to all that is lofty and beautiful and at the same time insult and injure an unfortunate and fallen woman. For the author the narrator is the embodiment of the very *spirit* of that civilization which corrupts people and deprives them of their social sense. As usual, Dostoyevsky takes modern civilization as a whole, lumping together bourgeois individualistic self-will and the struggle of the individual for his rights, liberty and independence, and invoking a curse on everything connected with the individual as such. He attacks bourgeois civilization as well as revolution and socialism. Moreover, he endeavours to use his protest against the ulcers of capitalism as a shield for his attacks against the camp of democracy. The spirit of reaction, of malice against the progressive forces of the times is predominant in *Notes from Underground*, driving into the background the important theme reflected in the observations on bourgeois civilization that we have referred to above.

We would like to draw attention to another feature characteristic of Dostoyevsky.

The narrator in *Notes from Underground* is violently opposed to nihilism. A bitter enemy of revolution, he speaks of the burgeoning within him of quite a different ideal, a religious one, judging by his hints.

Ippolit, depicted in *The Idiot*, is, in terms of psychology, the very spit of the narrator in *Notes from Underground*. The former's *confession* reads like a mere sequel to the latter's, but the author would have us consider Ippolit a *nihilist*, an atheist, representative of the new type of youth.

These two figures are much of a muchness, but their creator has *supplied* two personages who are identical socially and psychologically with ideologies that are *antipodal*.

This is evidence of Dostoyevsky's departure from the realistic principles of social typification, the subjectivism of his creative method, and his arbitrary treatment of his images. It would be a flight of fancy, for instance, to *supply* Tolstoi's Bezukhov with the ideas of Nikolai Rostov, or Levin with the ideas of Oblonsky, or Gorky's Klim Samgin with the ideas of Kutuzov. That, of course, is inconceivable without changing these people's psychology. With realists the *ideology* of their heroes are so much *fused* with their *psychology* that they cannot be separated without destroying the organic unity presented by a *social type*. With Dostoyevsky this not infrequently becomes possible. Indeed, in his works we often have before us in the capacity of a character rejected by the author that selfsame character with features that smack of Golyadkin and the innermost recesses of the Karamazovs, of Stavrogin and Versilov. This selfsame character is insufficiently objectivated, has not separated itself in sufficient degree from the author; it has not had breathed into it a life of its own, life that is organically independent. In some cases the author supplies him with the label of a nihilist, in others with that of an anti-nihilist,

but under these two different labels we meet the identical social renegade we have seen in *Notes from Underground*, a character that is cursed by the author and torments him. The fact that a character who, in *The Idiot* or *The Possessed*, is forcibly linked by Dostoyevsky with nihilism appears in *Notes from Underground* in the capacity of an anti-nihilist, a sworn enemy of revolution, as he should be with his objective social make-up, completely reveals Dostoyevsky's far-fetched, unreal and unnatural attempts to present the Ippolits, the Stavrogins and their like as men of the revolutionary camp.

The narrator in *Notes from Underground* has become so cankered and crabbed by his rationalism and by the play of his *reason*, which is out of touch with the realities of life, that he has lost the very capacity of whole and sane feeling. He is devoid of *spontaneity of feeling*. His *mind* and his *emotions* are mortal enemies. Thought has cankered feeling, placing doubt upon all and every emotion. He has lost the power to react to attempts made by others to establish some kind of relations with him. In spirit he is blind, deaf and dumb. Herein lies the cause of his inhuman behaviour towards Liza.

Notes from Underground may be called an anti-individualistic work that is infected with the disease of individualism. The alternatives of *individualism* or *loss of individuality* led Dostoyevsky into a *cul-de-sac*. The book shows that the author is disposed towards mistrust of any kind of freedom for the individual. This emphasizes and enhances the general reactionary significance of *Notes from Underground*.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

One of the most powerful works in world literature dealing with the inhumanity of capitalist society, *Crime and Punishment*, voices the author's anguish for human sufferings. A realization that a decent way out of the impasse cannot be found if mankind remains in fact and spirit within the framework of capitalism forms the objective content of the novel. It would seem that all the grief and torment that rack mankind look out of the agonizing scenes of wretched poverty, contumely and outrage, solitude and drab squalor that fill the pages of the novel. *Man cannot live in such a society*—this is the main conclusion to be drawn from the novel, one that determines its atmosphere, characters and situations.

Although he tried to prove that crime does not spring from social causes, the author, it might seem, spared no effort in tracing all the social causes of crimes committed in capitalist society.

Hopelessness is the basic theme, the leit-motif of the novel. At each step we are confronted by dead ends, blind alleys, in which men and women perish. These are not figurative or spiritual dead ends, but material, tangible and social, the consequences of which are blind alleys of the spirit. In no other work by Dostoyevsky, with the possible exception of *A Hobbledehoy* and *Poor Folk*, are social circumstances so prominently in the foreground.

A scrutiny of the loathsome blind alleys depicted in the novel will convince us that in each and any of them man comes within the shadow of crime, including the moral crime he commits against himself.

Crushed by poverty, Raskolnikov has to leave the University because he cannot afford to pay the fees. His mother and sister are faced with starvation, so that the only prospect awaiting his sister Dunechka is the fate of Sonya Marmeladova, a streetwalker forced to follow her miserable trade so as to support her consumptive mother and her little sisters. To save her beloved brother Dunechka consents to make the same sacrifice as Sonya, the only difference being that she agrees to marry Luzhin, whom she abhors. Luzhin is a classical figure of a bourgeois man of business; scoundrel, self-centred and vulgar tyrant, climber, miser and coward who has slandered the defenceless Sonya. Dunechka and her mother are prepared to turn a blind eye to all the despicable qualities in this man, so as to enable Raskolnikov to take his degree. However, pride does not allow this loving son and brother to accept the sacrifice.

He well knows his sister's character. "There's no denying," he reflects bitterly, on reading his mother's letter informing him of his sister's consent to marry Luzhin, "the Svidrigailovs are an affliction. It's a bitter lot to drudge all your life as a governess in the provinces for a miserable pittance, but I know that my sister would rather be a planter's negro slave than besmirch her soul and her moral dignity by marrying a man she neither respects nor has anything in common with, and that for ever, for the sake of some advantage. She would never consent to become Mr. Luzhin's lawful concubine were he made of the purest gold or of one huge diamond. Why is she consenting, then? What's the reason? Why? What's the answer? It's clear enough! She would never sell herself for her own comfort, not even to save her life, but she will do so for someone else! She will sell herself

for one she loves, one she adores. Yes, that's the reason why: she is willing to sell herself for her brother or her mother, to sell everything. That is her way of thinking: 'If necessary I shall crush my moral sense, my freedom, my peace of soul and even my conscience. It will all go into the market, even my life, if only it will make my dear ones happy. Moreover, I shall invent a casuistry of my own, learn from the Jesuits, and for a time gain some calm of soul by persuading myself that all this is necessary for a noble purpose.' It's obvious that in this matter Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is the reason why, and stands in the centre of the picture. Of course, she will ensure his happiness, keep him at the University, get him a partnership, make his future secure, and probably make him a rich man later, honoured and respected, one who may even end up as a famous man. It's the same with my mother! It's Rodya all the time, her precious Rodya, her first-born! For such a son who would not sacrifice even such a daughter! Oh, dear hearts, so unjust in your love! Why, for my sake you would not shrink even from Sonya's fate. Sonechka, Sonechka Marmeladova, the eternal victim while the earth stands! Have you taken the full measure of the sacrifice, both of you? . . . And do you know, Dunechka, that Sonya's lot is no worse than your lot would be with Mr. Luzhin? 'There can be no talk of love,' mother writes. And what if, besides love, there can be no respect either, but on the contrary revulsion, contempt and disgust? What then?"

"That's the reason why!"—these words show why in capitalist society even such fair, proud and romantic creatures as Dunechka Raskolnikova are forced to make morally frightful compromises. Like Sonya Marmeladova, Dunechka would never have sold herself for anything in the world, would have preferred even suicide to moral degradation, but, as the critic D. Pisarev said so well in a review of *Crime and Punishment* entitled "The Struggle for Life," there are occasions when even suicide is a

luxury for a poor man: "Perhaps Sofia Semyonovna (i. e., Sonya—*Tr.*) would also be able to throw herself into the Neva, but if she were to do so she would not be able to put thirty rubles on the table before her mother, a sum that formed the whole sense and justification of her immoral act.

"There are situations in life which bring the impartial observer to the conclusion that suicide is a luxury which is within the reach of, and permissible to, wealthy people."

A hopeless situation, a dead end, from which even suicide provides a poor man with no solution, often drives people to committing moral crimes that operate against themselves and place them on the horns of a dilemma: *to infringe* the laws of morality is a crime; *not* to infringe them is a crime too, this time against one's kith and kin. If Sonya Marmeladova had not committed so flagrant a crime against morality, her family would have starved to death. Dunechka Raskolnikova too is confronted with a moral impasse.

"Sonechka Marmeladova, the eternal victim as long as the world stands!" What a cry of despair for the fate of humanity, for the eternal victims, the eternal legion of outcasts that are contemptuously dashed into the mire, for ever despised and rejected.

Raskolnikov is tortured by a sense of complete futility. "I won't have your sacrifice, Dunechka, I won't, Mother, that shall not be as long as I'm alive. It shall never be! I won't accept it!"

"He suddenly paused in his reflections, and halted.

"It shall never be? But what will you do to prevent it? You'll forbid it? What right have you got to do so? What can you promise them on your part so as to have that right? You will dedicate your whole life, your whole future to them *when you have graduated and obtained a post?* We've heard all that before, and it's all problematic. What about the present moment? Something has got

to be done now, at once, don't you understand? And what are you doing now? You are living on them. . . . How are you going to save them, you future millionaire, you Jupiter, who would order their lives for them? In another ten years? In ten years Mother will have lost her sight from knitting shawls, perhaps from tears too. She'll wear herself to a shadow with fasting; and my sister? Imagine for a moment what will become of your sister in ten years, or in these ten years! Do you realize that?

"It was in this fashion that he tormented himself with questions such as these, even with a kind of vindictive enjoyment. Incidentally, all these were no new questions, but old familiar aches. His present anguish had taken its beginnings long, long ago; it had grown and grown, and of late had matured and become concentrated until it had taken the shape of a fearful, frenzied and fantastic question that tortured his heart and mind, demanding a solution. Now his mother's letter had struck him like a thunderclap. It was clear that the time had passed for passive suffering, for mere worrying over insoluble problems; something had to be done, and that at once, without the least delay. Something had to be decided on at all cost, or else. . . .

"'Or give up life altogether!' he cried in sudden frenzy, 'bow meekly to my lot, such as it is, once and for all, and stifle everything in myself, denying the right to act, live and love!'

"'Do you understand, sir, do you understand what it means when one has absolutely nowhere to turn?' the question Marmeladov had asked the previous day suddenly came into his mind, 'for every man must have at least some place to turn to. . . .'

These words form the basic idea, the kernel of the whole novel: *one has absolutely nowhere to turn!* No other work in world literature gives expression with such force to man's solitude in a rapacious society:

This solitude marks the lives of Marmeladov, Kate-
rina Ivanovna, Sonya, Dunya, as well as Raskolnikov
himself, who is faced with a pressing problem. It is a
question of *giving up life altogether*, of giving up the
right to love his sister and his mother, of accepting his
sister's sacrifice, of trampling all his human sentiments
underfoot, of accepting Mr. Luzhin's benefactions, be-
coming his confidant and making a career as a lawyer
under his patronage; in other words, he has to *kill the
human being within him*, in the same way as his sister
would by selling herself to Luzhin. They would both have
to *sell themselves to Luzhin*. The latter looms large in
the story as the embodiment of the bourgeois *business
world*, which buys up people for a song, crushing all
that is human and worth-while in them, things that com-
mand no credit in the world of business.

To consent to selling himself and his sister to such a
man would have meant committing moral suicide and
murder.

All this is an expression of a most characteristic fea-
ture of the writer's whole mode of thinking, his work and
his mentality: an agonizing urge to reveal *blind alleys*
to the utmost degree, all this with a kind of vindictive
enjoyment, and at the same time bitterness from the
realization that no ray of hope exists to light up the
murky and leaden horizon: "It was in this fashion that
he tormented himself with questions such as these, even
with a kind of vindictive enjoyment."

This *vindictive enjoyment* of hopelessness is directed in
Crime and Punishment against the laws of a society that
confronts the characters in the novel with a choice of
roads all leading to the immolation of decency and hu-
manity. An inhuman society demands of man that he
deny his humanity—such is the truth that Raskolnikov
has come to realize, and the entire novel, in the final
analysis, is the story of a man forced to make a choice
between various brands of inhumanity. This is summed

up in Raskolnikov's words to his sister: "... and you will reach a point, to pass which will make you unfortunate and not to pass which will make you perhaps even more unfortunate . . ." *Not passing the point* means in essence becoming reconciled to the miserable life you have been doomed to and that spells misfortune; passing that point means to try to change your slave's life by methods that are used by the sharks of this world. For those incapable of suppressing their moral worth as men this is an immeasurably greater misfortune.

A vista unfolds itself in the novel of ever new scenes of sordid squalor, the social *cul-de-sacs* we have mentioned, scenes of man's utter and hopeless solitude. The atmosphere is stifling to suffocation. The words spoken by Marmeladov in the scene in which Raskolnikov first meets him form the keynote of the whole book: "*A man has absolutely nowhere to turn to!*" raise the scene in the tavern, the figure of the speaker and the entire theme of the novel to the pitch of a tragic saga of the fate of mankind. All this is set forth in the very ordinary and pedestrian words spoken by Marmeladov: "And now I shall address you, my dear sir, on my own account, with a private question," he says in his somewhat high-flown and at the same time somewhat formal style, with its admixture of vague and pointless sarcasm and accusation, since he accuses no one, with the possible exception of himself or perhaps the kind of life nobody is responsible for; "Do you think that a poor but respectable girl can earn much by honest work? She won't make as much as fifteen kopeks a day if she is respectable and has no special talent, and that by working without the least respite. Moreover, Ivan Ivanovich Klopstock, the civic councillor—you may have heard the name—has not only refused her payment for half a dozen linen shirts she made him, but has even driven her roughly from his door, stamping his feet and reviling her, on the pretext that the shirt collars were of the wrong size and not sewn on properly. And at home

the children are starving... And Katerina Ivanovna pacing the room, wringing her hands, her face covered with red blotches as they always are with that 'disease; 'You live with us,' she says, 'you drone; you eat and drink, and are kept warm.' What can one eat and drink when even the children do not see a crust of bread for three days sometimes."

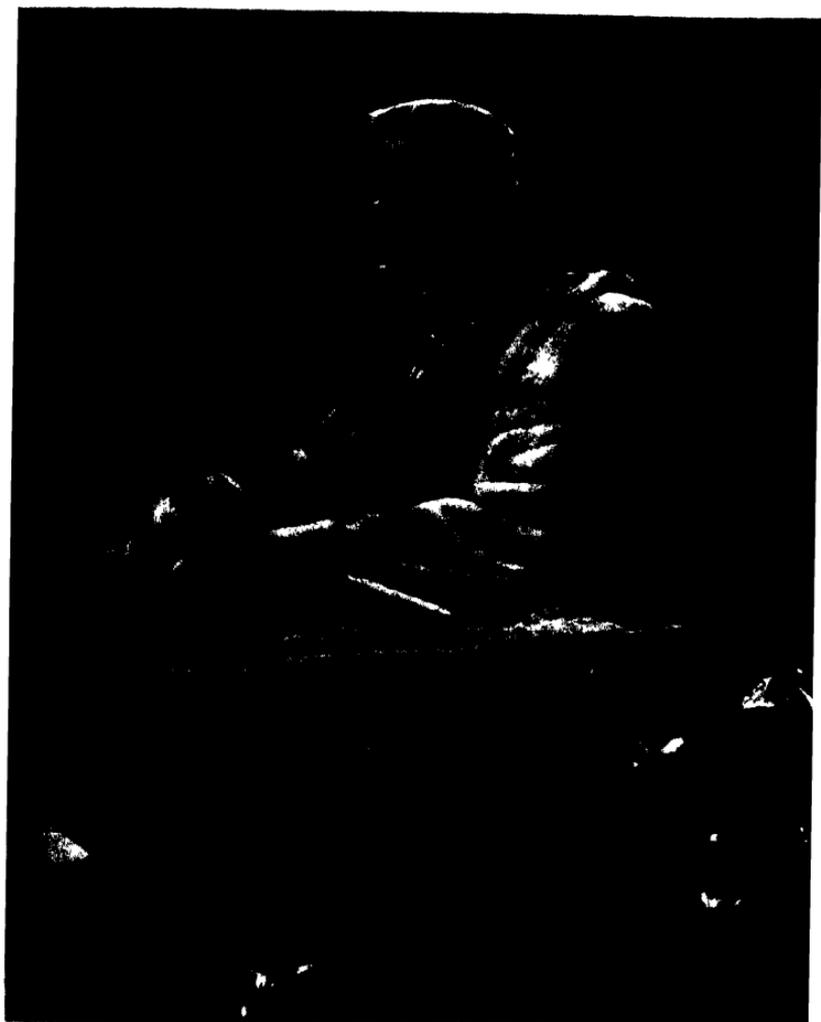
To let a father explain to the world why his daughter had been forced to become a streetwalker—how like Dostoyevsky, with his bitter and vindictive talent for laying bare the inescapable truth, the dreary torment of hopelessness, his anguish for the sufferings of man. World of grief, suffering, shame and horror at the lives people live. Such scenes and characters could be created only by one who felt deeply for the grief of the destitute and the suffering.

Each word spoken by the unfortunate father cannot but evoke a response in Raskolnikov's heart. He might well have asked, with his own sister in mind, "Do you think that a poor but respectable girl can earn much by honest work?" And if Sonya has been injured by Klopstock, his sister has been injured by men like Svidrigailov.

The book goes on to tell us of the misery and want, the utter hopelessness, endured by the Marmeladov family, with Katerina Ivanovna as the embodiment of all that are *insulted and humiliated*. Each new scene of the humiliation and suffering inflicted on man brings up another throb of pain in the depth of Raskolnikov's soul.

He meets a drunken girl, who cannot be more than fifteen or sixteen, on the boulevard in broad daylight: "...There is no telling who she is and from what kind of family, and she doesn't look like a professional. It's more likely somebody has made her drunk somewhere, and deceived her ... for the first time ... you understand? And they've put her out into the street like that. . . ."

"'Hey, you, Svidrigailov! What do you want here?' Raskolnikov shouted, walking up to the fat dandy that was



**Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. Sculpture by S. Konenkov
(Wood, 1956)**

hanging about the girl, clenching his fists and laughing with foaming lips."

It is not fortuitous that he calls the dandy a Svidrigailov. Svidrigailov is hovering over Dunechka's life in the same way. This chance encounter on the boulevard develops beyond the bounds of what has actually taken place, assuming a general significance, one especially painful to Raskolnikov: it is his *sisters* that daily tread the path to Golgotha along the boulevards, along the drab streets and at the entrances to taverns and places of entertainment; it is his *sisters* that are daily downtrodden by all kinds of Svidrigailovs, his sisters, his beloved Dunyas and Sonyas, Sonechka, the eternal victim as long as the world stands!

In all the appalling scenes he depicts, the author tries to draw the broadest possible conclusions and generalizations. For instance, we have Raskolnikov's train of thoughts in connection with his encounter on the boulevard:

"That's the way it's got to be, they say. Every year a certain percentage has got to go . . . somewhere . . . to the devil, I suppose, to keep the rest clean and not to interfere with them. A percentage! What fine-sounding words they have, so soothing and scientific. Once they've said *percentage* there's nothing to get alarmed about. If it were another word, it might perhaps be more troubling. But what if Dunechka gets into the percentage! Into one or the other?"

Dostoyevsky was horrified by the callous indifference of bourgeois objectivist science, which at best limits itself to stating the bare facts. The apologists of capitalism, those who would consider it an *eternal* social system, try merely to minimize the *percentage* of the socially disinherited, but the necessity and the special wisdom of that *percentage* evokes no doubt in them. Raskolnikov is frightened by all these blind alleys and endeavours to escape from them; through its percentages bourgeois sci-

ence endeavours to preserve them. Again he thinks of Dunechka whom he associates with all his *sisters*.

A horror at the dreary, drab daily life of a big city and its all too familiar nightmares fill the pages of the novel. Now it is Marmeladov who has lost his life under the wheels of a carriage; now a woman who has thrown herself into the dark waters of a canal that Raskolnikov has just decided to drown himself in; now Katerina Ivanovna, who when Luzhin has slandered Sonya, waits in the ante-rooms of high-ranking officials in search of protection and is driven out ignominiously by one of them, a general whose dinner she has interrupted; now the selfsame Katerina Ivanovna, who, driven out of her senses by insult and humiliation, arranges a kind of *poverty parade* in the streets of the capital, making her children cut capers to amuse the crowd. Just as in Dostoyevsky's other works, we have before us the image of a great city, fantastically beautiful and at the same time fantastically foreign and hostile to the poor and the destitute.

The nightmare Raskolnikov sees of the way a wretched and overworked nag is brutally beaten to death, beaten even over the eyes, is one of the most poignant and tragic incidents in the novel and at the same time a kind of generalization. Its morbid and heart-breaking forcefulness, the *Dostoyevsky* character of which was justified by the unbearable truth of life, seems to sum up the fate of all the stricken and ill-used people who inhabit the pages of *Crime and Punishment*. Katerina Ivanovna's dying words: "They have driven the old nag to death! I'm done for, broken!" are an echo of Raskolnikov's nightmare which, if the reader remembers, ends as follows: "He awoke, wet with sweat, his hair soaked with perspiration, gasping for breath, and raised himself in horror.

"Thank God, that was only a dream!" he said . . . drawing deep breaths. "What can it be? Perhaps some fever is coming on? What a hideous dream!" "

These are the hideous dreams of sombre reality.

Another scene shows us Raskolnikov asking Sonya a question he finds incontestable: "Is Luzhin to go on living and commit his villainies, or is Katerina Ivanovna to die? What would you decide, I ask you?"

Katerina Ivanovna's mortal enemy, Luzhin is, as it were, the *Mikolka* of Raskolnikov's nightmare, *who beat the poor old nag to death*. If Luzhin is to go on living, Katerina Ivanovna must die. In exactly the same sense, the life of the old woman-usurer spells death to many other people. What then is to be done? Raskolnikov sees no solution to this problem.

Another scene shows Luzhin publicly denouncing Sonya for committing a theft, threatening her with the police if she does not *confess*. It is only the accident of a certain Lebezyatnikov having noticed the scoundrel planting the money on Sonya that saves the latter. As Raskolnikov says to the girl, what would have happened but for this adventitious circumstance. She would end up in prison, since Luzhin's complaint would have won credence, for nobody would believe the unfortunate girl. Sonya's imprisonment would mean Katerina Ivanovna and the children dying of starvation. If that fate did not fall upon little Polenka, Sonya's lot awaits her.

The very fact that the children are saved only through the intervention of Svidrigailov, who before he commits suicide makes a bequest to them in his will, underlines with special emphasis that it is only by sheer accident that the children escape from their bitter fate.

This powerful and unsparing canvas from the brush of a master, depicting as it does life in all its stark reality, reveals the social causes fostering the growth of crime, particularly like the one committed by Raskolnikov. The *ideas* that sway Raskolnikov fill the air of bourgeois society, and the author stresses that such ideas and moods are characteristic of the atmosphere of the time the novel is set in. Porphiry, the investigating attorney in charge

of the case, calls Raskolnikov's act fantastic, but gives quite a realistic explanation of the possibility of such acts and moods, as well as the ideas that lie at their root. In his words: "This is a fantastic and gloomy business, a modern case, an incident of our times, when the human heart has grown coarse; when the phrase is quoted that blood *invigorates* . . . when comfort is preached as the aim of life."

It is on the basis of bourgeois society and bourgeois mentality that ideas like that of Raskolnikov can arise—murder is justifiable, since the masters of life, the Napoleons, those who make good in that society, the wealthy, the men of business, the lucky ones (like Mr. Golyadkin Jr.), in other words those who are respected and eulogized, have no scruples in striving to achieve their aims. If such is the guiding principle of your society, then why should not I, named so-and-so, try to become of the number of those who have no scruples at committing foul deeds, when it is a matter of asserting their *ego*, their right to rule others. Another alternative is the murder of a miserable, evil and old woman-usurer, who like some loathsome spider, sucks the life out of her victims, so that by that murder the happiness of unfortunate people may be ensured. These alternative motives of Raskolnikov's crime are in equal measure variants of individualistic, bourgeois-anarchic *logic*.

The first alternative, which preponderates in the novel in the analysis of Raskolnikov's motives, fully coincides with the *idea* of the bourgeois *superman*, who stands above the ordinary concepts of *good* and *evil*, above the dictates of moral sense, a superman called upon to exercise power and authority over others. In placing these ideas, associated in the novel with the name of Napoleon, into Raskolnikov's mind, in denouncing them with all the impassioned logic of the novel and invoking a curse on them with all the force of his horror and revulsion at the *spate of individualism and amorality that had swept over*

society, Dostoyevsky displayed a rare foresight. He anticipated and branded the revolting super-individualism that was to find expression in the philosophy of Nietzsche.

The second alternative—the murder of an evil and worthless creature for the benefit of thousands of others—is a typical form of bourgeois-anarchic protest against bourgeois society, a protest that is as rotten, amoral and criminal as the first. Both alternatives may be motivated by various causes, the second often stemming from a sense of bitterness, injury, humiliation, hatred, scorned dignity, despair, as well as by the conditions of an unbearable life. In all cases, however, whatever motives they may spring from, both ways of escape from the facts of life are in equal measure rooted in bourgeois society and bourgeois consciousness.

In all its forms, bourgeois anarchic protest has always brought harm to the insulted and humiliated. Very significant is the fact that Raskolnikov commits a second crime, unpremeditated and ancillary to the first, namely, the murder of the meek Lizaveta. If the murdered woman is an evil thing, Lizaveta is but a victim, one of the destitute. Whatever the subjective motives of the writer in bringing in this second murder, he objectively introduces another important consideration into the picture, which boils down to the fact that any anarchic and individualistic *revolt* can bring only misfortune to the socially disinherited.

Such is the objective truth expressed in Dostoyevsky's most profound and realistic novel, in which the author has given a superbly truthful picture of mankind's sufferings under the yoke of a rapacious society and shown what ugly, anti-humanistic ideas and moods are brought forth by that society.

The *Napoleonic* theme and that of a *déclassé's* revolt born of despair are intertwined in the motives that lead Raskolnikov to commit murder. Whilst working on this novel the author experienced the greatest indecision be-

tween the two alternatives and motivations of Raskolnikov's crime. It stands to reason that this dilemma confronted the writer in a subjective understanding that differs greatly from our estimation of the *objective* social meaning of the novel. Does Raskolnikov commit a crime so as to become a *Napoleon*, "a spider that sucks the blood of mankind," or because he wishes thereby to benefit mankind?—such was the dilemma in Dostoyevsky's mind. The writer realized the necessity of making a decisive choice, but in the final analysis he inclined towards the Napoleonic alternative, although the novel contains much of the second element. Raskolnikov sets forth the first to Sonya Marmeladova, and the second to his sister.

"'Yes, that's what it was! I wanted to become a Napoleon and that's why I murdered her . . . that is the law of their nature, Sonya . . . that's how it is! And now I know, Sonya, that whoever is strong in mind and spirit will be their ruler. He who dares much is right in their eyes. He who can spurn most things is a lawgiver among them, and he that dares most will be most in the right! That's how it has been till now and how it always will be. One must be blind not to see it!'

"Though Raskolnikov looked at Sonya while saying this, he no longer cared whether she would understand or not. The fever had come over him completely. He was in a gloomy ecstasy (indeed he had been too long without talking to anyone). Sonya realized that this sombre creed had become his faith and code.

"'I divined then,' he went on eagerly, 'that power is granted to him that dares to stoop and pick it up. The only thing needed, the only thing, is the courage to dare!'

An important feature of Raskolnikov's entire *theory* is the idea that "all people . . . are divided into *ordinary* and *extraordinary* men." The former should live in submission and have no right to transgress the law because they are ordinary; the latter have the right to commit crime and

transgress the law in any way they see fit because they are *extraordinary*. It is in this way that Porphyry sums up Raskolnikov's idea. The latter admits that the examining attorney has stated the gist of his (Raskolnikov's) article quite correctly, and goes on to define his *leading idea* in more precise terms: "It lies in the fact that by a law of nature people in general are divided into two categories, inferior (ordinary), that is to say, material that serves only to reproduce its kind, and people proper. . . ." All this coincides with Nietzsche's later *superman*.

The second alternative, that of a bourgeois-anarchic protest against the laws of bourgeois society, a variant, which, if we are to use Dostoyevsky's expression, refers to the acts of *a benefactor of humanity*, is set forth by Raskolnikov in a talk to his sister.

"'Brother, brother, what are you saying? Why, you have shed blood!' cried Dunya in despair.

"'Which all men spill!' he put in almost frantically. 'Which flows and has always flowed in this world like a torrent, which is spilt like champagne, for which men are crowned in the Capitol and are afterwards called benefactors of mankind! Look into it more searchingly and understand it! I too wanted to do good to men and would have done hundreds and thousands of good deeds. . . . I only wanted to gain an independent position, to take the first step, to get the means, and then everything would have been smoothed over by benefits immeasurable by comparison. . . . I can't in the least understand in what way bombarding people or waging a regular siege of a city is more honourable.' "

Dostoyevsky saw *Napoleon* in two aspects simultaneously: one was the embodiment of the bourgeois-individualistic *everything-is-permitted-me* attitude; the other—in a *patriarchal* and at the same time petty-bourgeois sense—the symbol of *godlessness* and *revolt* against tradition. In Raskolnikov's mind, the desire to become a Napoleon is fantastically interwoven with a protest against

the laws of a society in which, at the orders of a Napoleon, cities are wiped out, people are bombarded and little children suffer.

Dostoyevsky felt that this duality was a contradiction, something that was wrong and false and should be removed.

However, this mixture of *Napoleonic* and *anti-Napoleonic* sentiment in Raskolnikov's revolt, despite its innate contradiction, is in effect a reflection of social truth: both Napoleonism and Raskolnikov's bourgeois-anarchic protest are but different kinds of *individualistic wilfulness*, something that always horrified Dostoyevsky: objectively speaking, his novel is a reflection of the truth that bourgeois society itself brings forth bourgeois forms of protest born of hopelessness. Dostoyevsky not only declined to recognize any other forms of social protest or revolutionary struggle, but tried to defame these by his novel.

Raskolnikov conducts a monstrous experiment, the purpose of which is to supply answers to a number of questions: what he himself is; whether he is able to transgress the law; whether he is an *extraordinary* man, one of the élite, able without the least compunction to do whatever is necessary to achieve mastery and success in the society he lives in, including any form of crime; whether he is made of the same stuff as the real masters and rulers of the world? The murder of the old woman-usurer is meant to supply the answers he seeks.

Dostoyevsky linked up Raskolnikov's *idea* with his own conceptions of the bourgeoisie and the nature of their leaders. After committing the crime, Raskolnikov realizes that he is not made of the proper stuff, and says of the *real rulers* of society: " 'No, those men are made differently: a real ruler of men to whom everything is permitted . . . places a good battery of guns across a street and lets up at all and sundry, without condescending to give any explanation. Obey, trembling brutes, and forego your desires, since that is no matter for you! ' "

Dostoyevsky's draft notes of the novel contain the following about Raskolnikov: "This character expresses in the novel the ideas of overweening pride, haughtiness and contempt for this society. His idea is to obtain control of society (for its benefit—these words have been crossed out.—V.Y.). Despotism is his feature." "He wishes to rule, but knows no means. Obtain power quicker and become rich. Idea of murder came ready to him."

The draft notes also contain the following: "Whatever I have been and whatever I have done later, whether I have been a benefactor of mankind or, like a spider, have sucked its juices—that is no concern of mine. I know that I want to rule, and that is enough."

This entry is highly interesting in the sense that it underlines the equally individualistic self-will of *both alternatives*, that of the spider that sucks people's blood and that of mankind's benefactor: if that be my will I shall be a benefactor; if I wish so, I shall be a spider. The important thing is *my* desire, *my* will.

It thus follows that the real theme of the novel—the definition of what is meant by the laws of bourgeois society and what they demand of man—in its turn determines the content of Raskolnikov's experiment, which is to find out whether he is fitted for the role of one of the masters of the bourgeois world, whom millions obey. The entire novel is built up around the development of this frightful experiment.

"Man—that is what has to be overcome!" says Nietzsche's Zarathustra. The objective sense, the core, of *Crime and Punishment*, can be summed up in the words: No, man, his human qualities, cannot be overcome. It is not because he is weak in the *Golyadkin* sense that Raskolnikov cannot become one of the rulers of this world. His character is marked by strength, according to Dostoyevsky, who emphasizes that both Raskolnikov and his sister, whose characters have so much in common, are people who will not swerve from a course they have em-

barked on, but will follow it fixedly and devotedly, whatever the sacrifice entailed. Raskolnikov confesses to his crime because he has lost faith in his *idea*, this disillusionment coming from his nature, though not from his intellect. Dostoyevsky wrote to Katkov* that Raskolnikov was "forced to confess. Even if it leads to his death in a convict prison, he is forced to confess because of an overpowering urge to re-establish contact with mankind. He is sorely tormented by the feeling, which came over him after he committed his crime, that he has completely lost touch with humanity."

A parallel might be in place here with one of Gorky's fanciful tales, that in which Izergil, the old woman, tells the legend of Larra, son of the eagle. When the latter killed a girl who would not love him, the inhabitants of the village "talked to him for a long time and at last realized that he regarded himself as the first in the land and had no thought for anybody but himself. They were all horrified by the isolation to which he had doomed himself. He belonged to no tribe, he had no mother ... nor wife, and he wanted nothing of the kind."

In the same way Raskolnikov goes through the most bitter solitude after his crime, for he has abandoned all that is human. The realization that he has cut himself off from all and everything pierces his very being like the cold breath of death. When Razumikhin realizes what Raskolnikov has lived through while bidding farewell to his mother and sister, he becomes afraid for him, since Raskolnikov, who loves his sister and his mother above anything in the world, is beginning to feel disgust for himself and them, and hatred of them is welling up in his heart. He sees with horror that he is losing the very right and the ability to harbour human feelings.

* Katkov, M. N. (1818-1887)—Russian reactionary publicist. Virulently opposed to progressive ideas in Russian literature and public life. During the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century was a symbol of monarchist reaction.

Through the predatory figure of Larra, which stems from folk sources, the young Gorky debunked the arrogant renegade that spurns society and is idealized by the reactionary ideologists of bourgeois individualism. Spengler, on the contrary, lauded *primitive man*, solitary as a vulture and without the least human or social sentiment.

"I have murdered a principle," says Raskolnikov. That is very true; it is the principle of *humanism* that he would kill. Indeed, all of Dostoyevsky's characters reveal the truth that the wolfish laws and morals of bourgeois society not only deny humanism, but deal it a death-blow.

It has been pointed out by Pisarev that Raskolnikov's intention to give up the idea of his crime "was . . . a man's last shudder in the face of a crime that was quite contrary to his nature."

This thought might be expanded in the sense that *Crime and Punishment* as a whole is an expression of horror at the laws of life that are so hostile to mankind and man.

A number of bourgeois men of letters, who have attempted to make Dostoyevsky an exponent of anti-humanistic and individualistic ideas later to be preached by Nietzsche, Spengler and other ideologists of social degeneration, have made the assertion that *Crime and Punishment* is the story of a crime, but not of punishment. As they see it, the novel does not condemn Raskolnikov's *superman and Napoleonic idea*; Raskolnikov's repentance lies not in the fact that his *idea* was wrong and inhuman, but in his not being made of the right stuff, that of which real *supermen* are made, human vultures that stand above ordinary concepts. In other words, he regrets only that he is too weak. Such is the idea developed, for instance, in *Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche* by the decadent writer L. Shestov, whom Lev Tolstoi called a *fashionable hairdresser*. This statement presents interest as a sign that it does not even occur to apologists of the bourgeois

sie to link up Raskolnikov in some way or other with the camp of revolution.

The first assertion, namely, that the novel is a story of a crime, cannot of course be argued against. The second, to the effect that the element of punishment is absent is merely a decadent flight of fancy. From the first line to the last, the novel, subjectively and objectively, is a scathing indictment of bourgeois selfishness and self-centredness.

It is true that to the very end of the novel Raskolnikov is unable to logically understand in what way his idea is wrong; to him it seems precise in the highest degree. It is his *nature*, however, that saps his faith in his concept, and he undergoes punishment in every emotion and thought after his crime. The entire development of the plot, which externally appears to be a struggle between two powerful minds, between Raskolnikov and Porphyry, between the criminal and the investigator, is an expression of the anguish that Raskolnikov is living through, the torment of the renegade who has put himself beyond the pale, the agony of solitude. We see the human mind's horror at the empty shell of individualism, of man's divorce from mankind, which can only end in the death of the human soul. This process is revealed in the novel step by step, with remorseless consecutiveness, and by the hand of a master.

After he has carried out his crime, Raskolnikov seizes at the least hope so as to go on living and feel a human being. After Marmeladov's death it seems to him that the opportunity has come and he derives some comfort from his assumption of some kind of responsibility for the dead man's family. As the story tells us, he is descending the stairs from the apartment Marmeladov has died in "slowly and deliberately, feverish without being aware of the fact, full of a single, new and overwhelming sensation of surging life that suddenly welled up within him. This sensation might be compared to that of

a man who has been condemned to death and has suddenly and unexpectedly been reprieved. . . .” During his talk with little Polenka, Sonya’s sister, who weeps softly on his shoulder, her thin arms holding him tightly, he feels even more keenly that he can go on living.

“‘Enough,’ he exclaimed resolutely and triumphantly. ‘Away with mirages, imaginary terrors and phantoms. . . . Life exists. Wasn’t I alive just now? My life has not yet died together with that old woman! May she rest in peace—and leave me alone. And now for the reign of reason and light! And . . . of will and of strength. . . . And now we shall see! We’ll measure our strength!’ he added defiantly, as though challenging some power of darkness.

“..Pride and self-confidence mounted in him with every minute; with each new minute he was a different man from what he was in the preceding. What had taken place within him to work this inner revolution? He himself did not know; like a man clutching at a straw he suddenly felt that he, too, ‘could live, that life existed, that his life had not died with the old woman.’ Perhaps he was in too great a hurry with his conclusion, but he did not think of that.”

This conclusion was indeed made in too great a hurry, for when he came home he found that his mother and sister had come to St. Petersburg.

“A cry of joy and ecstasy greeted Raskolnikov’s appearance. Both rushed to him. But he stood as one dead; a sudden and intolerable feeling struck him like a thunderbolt. His hands did not rise to embrace them; they could not. His mother and his sister held him in their arms, kissed him, laughing and crying. He took a step, tottered and fell on the floor in a swoon.”

Reality brought with it consciousness that his hopes of life, with a murder on his conscience, were illusory. Then followed the agony of his talk with his mother and his sister, every word of which was a pang of pain as though from a bleeding wound. We see Raskolnikov’s

life turn into a veritable hell, his struggle to achieve a sense of human self-respect resembling the attempts of a drowning man to catch at a straw, since in fact it was a struggle against himself, his own conscience. Herein lies the punishment for the crime he has committed, punishment far harsher than prison.

Besides attempting to regain contact with the decencies of life by assuming responsibility for the Marmeladov family, Raskolnikov makes another attempt in the reverse direction, through asserting his right to crime, thereby living in a way opposed to human decency and based on amorality. This is the meaning of his being attracted in some obscure way to Svidrigailov, of his vague and unreasoned hope that intimacy with that man will lead him somewhere and be a source of moral—in essence amoral—strength. In his turn, Svidrigailov tells him that they have much in common, a dark hint that they are both murderers. A closer acquaintance with this cesspool of iniquity, this eviscerated figure, whom civilization has taught only the capacity of receiving a variety of sensations and a love of crime, makes Raskolnikov realize that he cannot follow the path of amorality. It is thus that the best reply is given to “fashionable hairdressers” of all kinds.

The cloud of hopelessness gathers ever thicker over Raskolnikov’s head. Unable even before his crime to live in human fashion, he now discovers that he is unable to do so after his crime, the only difference being the addition of an anguish compared with which all his previous sufferings pale into insignificance. . . .

Thus Raskolnikov proves unable to *kill principle and overcome his human qualities*. That is again borne out by one of his dreams, in which the butt-end of his axe again and again descends on the old woman’s head without the least effect, his victim grinning maliciously all the time, perhaps at his weakness or at his not being made of the right stuff. That is what Raskolnikov may

have thought, but the novel itself speaks for the fact that the principle of humanism *cannot be killed*. In this connection, another contradiction characteristic of Dostoyevsky might be mentioned. The reader is aware of Dostoyevsky's conviction that humanity in the sense of humanness is impossible without God. His heroes—Raskolnikov and Ivan Karamazov—however, experience all the anguish of repentance, all the torment of the transgression of the principle of humanity without in any way turning to God.

Of course, the *true masters* of the world of force and violence are made of quite different stuff, but this novel stresses their absolute *inhumanity*, the absence in them of that which has caused such suffering to Raskolnikov, namely *conscience*.

Numerous are the pictures of horror and human suffering depicted in *Crime and Punishment*, but the novel contains something that is even more horrifying, something that refers not to its scenes of human sufferings, but to the novel itself. We have in view the total absence of anything in the least resembling Aristotle's *catharsis* in the tragedy created by Dostoyevsky, the absence of the dimmest ray of hope. Mankind is shown in a dead-end, in a moral *impasse*. That can never be true. Man could never have been, and never has been, in an *impasse*. He may have been in fetters, but those fetters have always been shattered.

In condemning Raskolnikov's revolt, Dostoyevsky thereby wished to condemn all and any social protest.

If Dostoyevsky's contemporary reader was ideologically unprepared and prone to vacillation, he proved unable to escape from the *blind alley* the author had led him into. If, on the contrary, he was prepared ideologically, he absorbed with eagerness the criticism of the world of oppression depicted with such force and faithfulness by Dostoyevsky, and, while rejecting Raskolnikov's criminal revolt, that of a *déclassé* and born of despair and weariness.

ness, he, this reader, continued with greater courage and persistence the search for *real* ways of struggle against that world of violence and cruelty.

The most significant and ominous *cul-de-sac* of the novel lies in the logic, the conclusion, the reader is led to by the author, namely that there is no real way out from the immeasurable sufferings of mankind!

An agonizing and remorseless logic which lays bare to the last shred the hopelessness of each situation and emotion, and, in a broader sense, the hopelessness of mankind's life on earth—such is the leading feature of Dostoyevsky's profoundly decadent and reactionary ideology.

Raskolnikov's character is presented by the author in such a way as to orientate the reader towards associating Raskolnikov with the revolutionary, "nihilist" camp. From the very logic of the story, the picture of society presented in it and in the alignment of forces therein, it follows that he is the sole representative of a protest against the laws of that society. He is depicted as typical of the youth, with a number of attractive features—a deep sympathy for the destitute, straightforwardness, boldness, pride, and contempt for vulgarity and baseness. This is an expression of the author's striving to ascribe Raskolnikov to the revolutionaries, his desire to gain the confidence of the youth, display his *objectiveness*, his respect for their noble qualities and thus the more effectively to divert them from the *ruinous* path of revolt.

His attempt to depict a social self-outcast as representing the youth of Russia, and in the first place her university youth, is, of course, a piece of slander. The very presentation of the leading character of the novel is intolerably misleading and false. Dostoyevsky would have us see a charming and attractive murderer whose crime is extenuated by a number of circumstances. Shown on the verge of insanity, as one who has run amuck because of his intense solitude, he seems to be acting in

a dream when committing murder. In general, dreams play a most important part in the novel, just as in *The Double*. We have before us a close interlacing of delirium and reality, dreams and fantasy that renders it difficult to draw any kind of line of division between them. The ultimate impression is that the author does not insist that a crime has been committed. What is important to him is that Raskolnikov has committed a crime in thought, that he has transgressed a principle.

Dostoyevsky felt an irresistible urge to humble the pride of the progressive intelligentsia, their rationalism, their divorce from *living nature*, from the sphere of feeling and emotion. As he put it, reason alone, unleavened by Christian love of one's fellow-men, the love preached by Sonya Marmeladova, can lead into a spiritual wilderness.

However, the writer's realism and the truth of life clashed with his fallacious attempt to link Raskolnikov with the "nihilist" camp. It proved impossible for the writer to distort the truth of life and art. He was obliged to steer his hero away from the camp of socialism and revolution, so that Raskolnikov comes to contrast himself to the socialists.

"Why was that fool of a Razumikhin abusing the socialists? They are hard-working and business people, concerned with the general weal. . . . No, my life has been granted me only once and will not reoccur. I have no wish to await the coming of happiness for all." These words, spoken by Raskolnikov, bring out his anarchic individualism in sharp contrast.

Of interest for an understanding of Dostoyevsky's unending ideological vacillations is a variant found in the author's notes, which was not used in the novel, but points to Dostoyevsky having realized the incompatibility of Raskolnikov's criminal individualistic revolt with socialist ideas. According to this entry, Raskolnikov decided to give himself up because he realized that his

crime was hostile to human happiness, to the *golden age*, an expression Dostoyevsky often used in the sense of *socialism*. The following is the text of Raskolnikov's reasoning, which however did not find its way into the novel: "N.B. Why are not all happy? Picture of golden age. It has already found its way into hearts and minds. How can it fail to come, etc. N.B. But what right have I, a vile murderer, to wish people happiness and dream of a golden age.

"I wish to have that right.

"And in consequence of this (chapter) he confesses."

Such were the thoughts that caused Dostoyevsky's vacillation. Had this motive been brought into the novel as the cause of Raskolnikov's confession, the gloomy and hopeless atmosphere might have been lit up by some hint at the existence of some forms of social protest other than Raskolnikov's individualistic revolt; there might have been some suggestions that effective ways existed of improving the lot of mankind. . . .

Dostoyevsky, however, wished at any cost to create an impression of some link, albeit indirect, between Raskolnikov and the camp of revolution. The purpose is obvious. If the adherents of revolution recognized violence, they could in no way raise objections to the Raskolnikov-Karamazov brand of unbridled self-will. However, even reactionary critics, who of course would like to label Raskolnikov as a mouthpiece of the revolutionary sympathies of the democratic youth and call him a nihilist, have had to reckon with the facts of the case. For instance, N. Strakhov, one of Dostoyevsky's political partisans, who devoted a great deal of effort to proving that Raskolnikov was a nihilist, ultimately had to contradict himself by acknowledging that Raskolnikov was neither a nihilist nor a modification of the "real nihilist type." The critic stressed Raskolnikov's *immaturity*, his indefiniteness as a social type which had but recently appeared, and linked his *fantastic* act—to use Porphyry's expres-

sion—with this indeterminate quality. Thus, most unwillingly, Strakhov was obliged to count Raskolnikov outside the camp of revolution.

It goes without saying that progressive and democratic critics were emphatic in stating that Raskolnikov and his *idea* were completely alien to the progressive youth and their aspirations. To quote Pisarev: "Raskolnikov could have borrowed his ideas neither from his talks with his friends nor from the books that have been meeting with approval among reading and thinking young people."

The critic most emphatically rejected Raskolnikov's theory of the right of "extraordinary people" to violence and bloodshed if that should be required by what they considered the truth. He went on to emphasize that "those who are to blame for bloodshed are always and everywhere not representatives of reason and truth, but upholders of ignorance, stagnation and lawlessness." Very pointed is his remark that "Raskolnikov would turn all great men into criminal offenders and all criminal offenders into great men."

Pisarev was perfectly right in saying that violence and bloodshed come from representatives of reaction. Engels wrote in this connection:

"When there is no reactionary violence that has to be fought against, the question of revolutionary violence does not arise."

"The reactionary classes are usually the first to resort to violence, to civil war, and 'put the bayonet on the agenda,'" Lenin pointed out.

Reactionaries are fond of attributing to revolutionaries criminal leanings and a love of violence and arbitrariness. They ascribe to their opponents their own qualities, their ignorant subjectivist concepts of the course of history, which, they assert, depends on the arbitrary acts of individuals. This assumption was made use of by Dosto-

evsky both in *Crime and Punishment* and his following works.

The truth, however, always remains the truth, invariably and inescapably. What remains indisputable is the fact that the author of *Crime and Punishment* created a social type of an egotist alien to the people and hostile to the progressive ideas of his time, a type that foreshadowed the idea of the bourgeois "superman." It is also beyond argument that, true to his aversion for bourgeois individualism, the author condemned this type.

In *Crime and Punishment* Dostoyevsky continued his attempt to wage a polemic, already begun in *Notes from Underground*, against the ideas of utopian socialism and Chernishevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?* This polemic proved just as feeble and unconvincing as the grotesque figure of Lebezyatnikov, who at the author's behest utters the most ridiculous statements about the "socialist" society of the future with its "community of wives" and other absurdities, which to this day are spread by the more witless of bourgeois propagandists.

Dostoyevsky envisaged Raskolnikov and Sonya Marmeladova as the personification of two opposing concepts—*intellect* and *emotion*, *the mind* and *the heart*. Raskolnikov is supposed to have followed the dictates of his mind, and the author points with horror to what he has been led to by obeying the voice of reason. Dostoyevsky has developed the opinion, expressed in *Notes from Underground*, that the rule of the mind is like a disease. Sonya is important to Dostoyevsky because she is ruled by her heart, by her love of people. Though she is guilty of a crime against herself, it has not been dictated by the mind, but stems from her loving heart, since she has sacrificed herself for those she loves too well.

Once again we return to Dostoyevsky's idea that it is better to be a slave than a master, that one should rather use violence upon oneself than upon others. Such is the significance of the contrasting of Sonya Marmela-

dova and Raskolnikov, of the heart and the mind. The mind can lead only to the victory of arbitrary force and violence!

The relations that develop between Raskolnikov and Sonya are, according to Dostoyevsky, a denial of the mind in favour of the heart, and thereby the triumph of real reason. . . . Despite all the cant and reactionary nature of this Christian conception, this nihilist and decadent criticism of reason, his hate of bourgeois selfishness turned Dostoyevsky into a remarkably keen-sighted, pungent and unerring critic of bourgeois morals. For instance, the character of Luzhin is a splendid piece of anti-bourgeois satire; this man, a typical hard-hearted and grasping money-grubber, tries to impress a group of young people—Raskolnikov, Razumikhin and Zamestov—with his enlightened attitude to progressive ideas, and in doing so propounds an entire credo of bourgeois egoism. He begins with criticizing the former moral standards, which he considers obsolete: "If, in the past, I was told, 'Love thy neighbour,' and I did so, what came of it? . . . It led to my tearing my coat in half to share with my neighbour, so that we were both left half-naked. . . . Science now tells us, 'Love yourself in the first place, yourself alone, since everything in the world rests on self-interest.' You love yourself, manage your interests properly, and your coat remains intact. Economic truth adds to this that the better private affairs are taken care of in society, the more whole coats exist, so to say, the firmer are its foundations, and the better the common weal is organized too. Consequently, in acquiring wealth solely and exclusively for myself, I am, so to speak, acquiring for all, and am paving the way for my neighbour's getting a little more than a torn coat, and that not from private and individual generosity, but as a consequence of the general advance."

So typical is this sophistry—typical with the possible exception of its mild criticism of Christian teachings—

that it might seem that Mr. Luzhin is expounding Bentham. Karl Marx ridiculed this apologist of bourgeois prosperity when he wrote in his *Capital* that in the exchange of commodities, including the purchase and sale of labour, everything is done "after Bentham." "Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all."

Luzhin and Bentham are alike as two peas, typical representatives of so-called *enlightened egoism*.

One can realize the murky twilight of Dostoyevsky's spiritual life, if Luzhin's philosophy embodies what the writer understood by progressive science and the progressive development of reason. He actually saw Chernishovsky's conceptions as a kind of subtle modification of Luzhin's theories! All this cut him completely off from the really scientific and progressive developments of the times. His attitude towards reason was conditioned by his horror at the way casuistry and sophistry could unconscionably be used to justify all kinds of abominable acts, such as the unleashing of bloody wars and the annihilation of the human race under the pretext of enlightened egoism.

Misanthropic theories, such as the teaching of Malthus, intensified his fear of reason divorced from love, his distaste for bourgeois reason and science. He had no knowledge of any other kind of science.

Sonya Marmeladova, the embodiment of love of others was the only ray of sunshine in the gloomy atmosphere of hopelessness he dwelt in. It was because of this quality that she was able to preserve her purity of soul in the mire her fate had cast her into. Sonya is the embodiment of *all human suffering*. In her person we see the fusion of *suffering* and *love*—which for Dostoyevsky was

the supreme wisdom, actually a Christian idealizing of suffering.

The image of Sonya Marmeladova provides the writer's sombre answer to the question: *what* is a tormented mankind to do? Man's *reason* is so frail and undependable, the writer thinks, his sufferings are so boundless, life is arranged so unreasonably and cruelly that *reason* is incapable of understanding this suffering and this reasonless existence. This idea was later developed in connection with Ivan Karamazov's *revolt*.

Mankind's only hope lies in a suffering love of and for all, Dostoyevsky says, and in his works mankind's boundless anguish is used as an argument against reason, against the struggle for the overthrow of a social system based on human suffering.

Crime and Punishment is not merely one of the most sorrowful books in world literature; it is a book of utter and inconsolable sorrow.

Despite all this, the decisive feature of this novel is its profound truthfulness in revealing the intolerable nature of life in a society rooted in violence, one that is ruled by the Luzhins, with their malice, crassitude and selfishness. What remains in our hearts after reading this novel is not an idealization of suffering, not a loss of hope, but an ineradicable hatred for the whole world of exploitation.

THE IDIOT

In the very title of this novel and in the portrait of its main character Dostoyevsky lays polemic stress on the conflict between reason and the heart. Prince Mishkin, the hero of the story, a frail and sickly epileptic without the least education, proves wiser than others who have every worldly advantage over him in wealth and education and are proudly aware of this advantage. He finds no difficulty in solving the most complex problems of human relations, in which his "betters" are helpless since they are guided only by their selfishness. It may be that the author associated this character with the figure of *Ivanushka Durachok* in Russian folk-lore, Ivan the Fool, who by his simplicity outwits the wisdom of the wise. Indeed, from the viewpoint of pedestrian common-sense, Prince Mishkin is, to say the least, a crank. He is selfless, so much so that all egoistic passions, and, above all, the lust for money, are alien to his character; he is sincere and truthful, and he has a genuine love of people. He is charmingly naive. Sensitive to a degree, he is always ready to sacrifice himself, without the least reserve, for others. If thought or consciousness is a disease, then Prince Mishkin is the personification of a healthy spirit. It is paradoxical in the most *Dostoyevskian* of senses, that his ailment does not hamper his serenity of spirit, but, on the contrary, enhances it, making him

the superior of those who, speaking conventionally, are *healthy*, since the latter—morally speaking—are sick people poisoned by overriding selfishness, lust for money, and a striving to wallow in the sordid interests of this world. He has the pure faith of a child; his soul is childlike, and it is this that makes him wiser than all around him. Unlike Dostoyevsky's rationalistic characters, with their morbid and painful dualism, Mishkin knows no conflict between the mind and the soul, between *good* and *evil*.

"The principal idea of the novel," Dostoyevsky wrote to his niece Ivanova when he began work on the book—incidentally the first edition was dedicated to her—"is the depiction of a positive hero. There is nothing in the world more difficult than that, especially today. All writers, not only in our country but even in Europe, who have tackled the problem of the depiction of the *positively* beautiful, have met with failure, because this is an immense task. The beautiful is an ideal, and an ideal has been brought forward neither here nor in Europe."

In his reflections on the character of his positive hero Dostoyevsky compared him with Don Quixote and attributed the fascination both of Cervantes' hero and his own to the fact that they are both the embodiment of a *beauty that is not aware of its own worth*.

Dostoyevsky's keen analysis of Don Quixote's universal fascination may indeed be applicable to Prince Mishkin. This however is not the sole reason for a comparison of these two characters. They also have in common their dis severance from the realities of life, their *utopianism* . . .

Prince Mishkin is a universal appeaser, who preaches the idea that all "estates" and hostile groups should be united, and is opposed to the *corruption of society*, which Dostoyevsky considered the principal feature of his time. (He defined the theme of his novel *The Hobbledehoy* as that of the *decay of society*).

There is a figure of vastly greater importance to Dostoyevsky than that of Don Quixote, namely the figure of Christ, with whom Mishkin is compared in the deepest undercurrent of the story. In his notes prior to the writing of the novel, Dostoyevsky wrote: "Prince Mishkin is Christ." Mishkin's very "appearance" after an absence of many years spent in solitude in the mountains is meant to resemble Christ's descending to the sons of men, with their evil passions and the diabolical complexity of life. Purity is trampled underfoot in this world and Beauty is defiled and desecrated.

What is it, then, that this modernized Christ has brought with his coming? Will he be able to calm seething passions, salve suffering and unite people in a feeling of love? In what actions and which relations with others is the character and mission of this positive hero displayed?

The Idiot is first and foremost the tragedy of Nastasya Filippovna. The plot of this novel is built up round her tragic fate. Mishkin plays a most important part in her fate, but despite this, it is she, and not Mishkin, who provides the impetus in the development of the story. Various lines in the plot meet in Prince Mishkin, but he stands aloof from them, since his mission precludes his meddling in the sinful struggle of earthly passions.

The description of these passions displays the rebellious force innate in Dostoyevsky, which he suppressed at the behest of his unctuous and reactionary philosophy. The story of Nastasya Filippovna's life and ruin, told so lovingly and pathetically, voices the powerful social protest and the wrath aroused in a great writer by the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie and by the laws governing that society. We see at once the tragic, the lyrical and the satirical aspects of Dostoyevsky's genius.

Russian literature, indeed world literature, can boast of few portraits of women so powerful as that of Nastasya Filippovna. Inspired by love for a beautiful woman

created by his imagination, Dostoyevsky was able to endow her with such convincingly plastic and glowingly loving qualities, that we visualize her gait, her every gesture, every change of expression of the face of a woman so delightful, gifted and graceful, so lovely in looks and nature, so *queenly*, to quote the novel. Proud, uncontaminated by the mire that she has been flung into by her life, she stands high above the crowd of denizens of Vanity Fair, who would make her a plaything of their lust, a thing to be bought and sold; she stands out as the only human being in a loathsome pit of twisting and squirming reptiles locked in a never-ending war of extermination.

We get our first knowledge of this woman from a portrait, which has produced a life-long impression on Prince Mishkin. "The portrait was that of a woman of rare beauty. She had been photographed in a black silk dress of an extremely simple and elegant cut; her hair, which seemed of a chestnut shade, was arranged in a severe and simple style; her eyes were deep and velvety, her brow pensive, her expression passionate and, as it were, disdainful. Her face was somewhat thin, and perhaps pale."

"Her brow *pensive*"—these words come from a writer with a keen sense of beauty. "Her brow *pensive*"—the epithet, sudden and tender, expresses a boundless respect for woman and is remarkably appropriate to Nastasya Filippovna's portrait and her appearance in general. Her eyes are lit up by deep thought, for she has been accustomed to thinking much from her early years. Her seducer, Totsky, a subtle and elegant connoisseur of beauty in women, a man who purchased her when she was a lonely orphan, a mere child, could never have imagined that she did so much and so profound thinking. "Her expression is passionate and, as it were, disdainful." She is a woman with great and tragic passions, who presents high and humane demands to others and to herself,

which, in itself, intensifies the striking contrast between her and her vile environment. Her disdain is her defence against scoundrels and bores; in her heart of hearts she is simple, shy and retiring.

"It's a wonderful face," the prince says, "and I feel sure that her story is no ordinary one. Her expression is buoyant, but she has gone through terrible suffering, hasn't she? Her eyes show that; the cheek-bones, those two points under her eyes, where the cheeks begin. It's a proud face, terribly proud, and I can't tell whether her heart is kind. Ah, if it only were! That would redeem everything!"

Events that follow show that she is not only proud, but kind-hearted too, but nevertheless nothing is redeemed!

Later in the story, together with the prince, we again scrutinize the portrait, and again receive an impression of deep tragedy.

"He felt an urge to delve into the secret of the face that had so recently evoked his amazement. That impression had hardly left him, and he now hastened to verify something that had welled up in him. This face, of such rare beauty and some other intangible quality, now engrossed him even more. It seemed that it bore the imprint of some boundless pride and disdain, almost hatred, but at the same time it had something trustful, something surprisingly simple-hearted. This contrast, when one looked at these features, aroused a kind of compassion. The dazzling beauty was almost unbearable—the beauty of that pale face, its slightly hollow cheeks, the blazing eyes; a strange beauty!"

What we have here is the poetical and tragic theme of Nastasya Filippovna, a theme of beauty aware that it has been insulted and blasphemed, a beauty that is tremulous and restless, proud—as beauty always is, but charged with contempt, almost hatred. This qualifying *almost* is of importance in understanding this character,

for, despite her pride, she is incapable of utter hatred: this woman is anxious to forgive and love.

The theme of Nastasya Filippovna is that of beauty outraged, a beauty that has travelled the road to Calvary, one that appeals for protection, for it cannot live in this money-crazed world; at the same time there is a core of defiance, disdain and even hatred in it. It both invites and rejects compassion, and might be called rebellious beauty, though it has not that relentless hatred that marks the real rebel. It is, perhaps, entreaty concealed by pride, which is a living reproach to the prince and so deeply affects the reader.

Prince Mishkin is swayed by the idea that the world will be redeemed by Beauty. Like so many of his ideals, it is disproved and rejected by the hard realities of life. Far from saving the world, it is itself destroyed by that world.

Such are the motifs that unfold in the tragic story of Nastasya Filippovna, a beautiful woman blighted by a world blind and deaf to beauty, a world that looks upon beauty with vileness, lechery and greed. This woman's *revolt*, expressed in her attempt to avenge herself on that society by making a quietus in the fashion so favoured by Dostoyevsky's heroes, is futile and therefore to be pitied. Nevertheless, the theme of *rebellious beauty* rings out strong and passionate in the novel.

In the end, Nastasya Filippovna loses her reason, for even beauty is driven mad in this hatred-ridden society. The combination of *beauty* and *insanity* given in this character is almost unbearable, and rends the heart of Prince Mishkin, and the reader's too. Nastasya Filippovna is driven mad and then murdered by those around her, the process being begun by the rich landowner Totsky, and then completed in the physical sense by the merchant Rogozhin.

Rogozhin's murder of this fair woman is raised by the author to the tragic theme of beauty destroyed by a vile

spider-world. Significant is the dream seen by Ippolit, in which the image of Rogozhin merges into that of a tarantula.

Everything in the story which bears upon the theme of Nastasya Filippovna and her fate is replete with a profound social significance, breathes the very truth of life and a lofty art, the social types created in it displaying the author's genius. The persons involved in the intrigue that engulfs Nastasya Filippovna are depicted by a master hand. Each and every individual character is a social type; taken together, they provide a remarkably accurate picture of the aristocratic-bourgeois society that emerged after the peasant reform of 1861.

Let us consider those in the story who lay claim to the beauty of Nastasya Filippovna.

An admirer and connoisseur of beauty, the rich landowner Totsky, every inch a gentleman of breeding, is respectability incarnate. During a brief visit to one of his estates, he once noticed a charming little girl of twelve, an orphan with promise of exceptional beauty. "In this respect Afanasy Ivanovich (Totsky—*Tr.*) was an unerring connoisseur," to quote the author. His keen sense of beauty prompted him to ensure in a business-like and well-planned fashion his future enjoyment of this child's promise. He had the girl instructed by governesses and, when she reached the age of sixteen, had her installed in a specially built detached house with appointments in the most exquisite taste, complete with "musical instruments, a library with a choice selection of books for a young girl, pictures, engravings, paints and pencils and a most delightful lap-dog. . . ." For four years Totsky was a constant visitor to this corner of Paradise, a sanctuary of his purely artistic pleasures.

The rumour reaches the girl that Totsky is about to contract a St. Petersburg marriage to a rich heiress of good family, as befits such a gentleman. At this stage, Totsky makes the surprising discovery that a girl he has

turned into a plaything, something like the numerous *objets d'art* that surround him, has during these four years, never had for him "any feeling in her heart except the deepest contempt, a loathing that came upon her immediately after her first surprise."

And now this girl has come to the capital in search of vengeance—to prevent his respectable marriage and make his life as troubled as she can. What a shock to the formal and correct Totsky!

He now sees before him not a lovely doll, but a "fantastic woman," who is not to be bought by money or the prospect of a good marriage, the outcome being that Totsky finds that he will have to give the matter his most serious consideration.

"The thing is that Afanasy Ivanovich (Totsky) had already turned fifty and that he was a man with established habits and tastes. He had achieved a certain position and reputation in society; as befits a real gentleman he loved his person, his peace of mind and his comfort more than anything in the world. . . . Of course, with his wealth and connections, he could have found no difficulty in getting rid of the annoyance through some trifling and quite pardonable piece of villainy. On the other hand, it was quite evident that Nastasya Filippovna was hardly in a position to do much harm in a legal sense. She could not even create a disturbance of any consequence, since she could easily be circumvented. That however was feasible, only should Nastasya Filippovna decide to act as people in general act in such cases, without any eccentric departure from the usual course. It was here that Totsky's keen eye served him well, enabling him to realize that Nastasya Filippovna was fully cognizant of the fact that she was harmless to him in the legal sense, and besides that there was something quite different in her mind . . . and in her flashing eyes. As she valued nothing, herself least of all (much insight and intelligence were needed for a sceptical and worldly cynic

such as he to realize that she had long ceased caring what became of her, and to believe the serious nature of this feeling), Nastasya Filippovna was fully capable of facing irrevocable ruin and disgrace, prison and Siberia, if only she could be even with a man she harboured such an aversion against. Afanasy Ivanovich never concealed the fact that he was something of a coward or, to use a happier term, a conservative."

This time, Totsky refrains from marriage, partly because Nastasya Filippovna has grown so dazzlingly beautiful. "Fascinated by a sense of novelty, Afanasy Ivanovich even imagined that he might again exploit this woman." *Exploit*—the verb is most significant, since Dostoyevsky is writing of the exploitation of woman's beauty, as of all human beauty, by the smooth vileness of the old world.

Dostoyevsky has a whole-hearted loathing for the self-lover Totsky, with his respectability and his imperturbable decorum. The writer really enjoys any discomfiture that gentleman suffers, and has the greatest sympathy for Nastasya Filippovna's feeling of contempt and hatred.

Another participant in the web of intrigue woven round Nastasya Filippovna is Yepanchin, a general of the post-reform type, a personification of vulgarity and commonplace mediocrity.

The third is Ivolgin, Yepanchin's private secretary, whose ambition it is to achieve wealth and influence at any cost, and the only difference between Yepanchin and his secretary being that in the latter prosiness is blended with a wounded vanity. He has none of the smug complacency that marks the general. Nastasya Filippovna calls Ivolgin an "importunate beggar."

Ivolgin is the key to an understanding of several important features of Dostoyevsky's works. This character is the embodiment of the power of money over mankind in "diabolical" bourgeois society; closely linked with this

theme is another, also important in Dostoyevsky, that of the *power of mediocrity* in this society. The indissoluble nexus between the omnipotence of money and the power of ineptitude is reflected by Ivolgin himself in a frank talk with Mishkin. His plans and ambitions are characteristic of a man climbing the ladder in a country that has but recently embarked on the course of capitalist development. The dowry of 75,000 rubles that Totsky has settled upon Nastasya Filippovna has prompted him to get this sum through marriage. " 'It is not from mercenary motives that I am seeking this marriage, prince,' he continued, letting out the secret in the manner young people do when their vanity is hurt. 'Were I to do so, I would be making a mistake, because my mind and character are not yet mature. I am following my inclinations and my passions, for I have a vital purpose in view. You probably think that as soon as I get the seventy-five thousand, I shall immediately buy a carriage. No, I shall go on wearing my frock-coat of the year before last and drop all my club acquaintances. Though all around are money-grubbers, there are few people among us with tenacity of purpose, and I want to make my way in life. The great thing is to be thorough-going—yes, that's the problem. A certain Ptitsin was homeless for seventeen years, began from scratch by peddling penknives, and today he is worth sixty thousand, but only after all that scramble. What I want is to skip the scrambling stage and start with some capital. . . . You say that I am not original. . . . When I have made money, I can tell you, I shall be a most original man. What is vile and hateful about money is the fact that it even creates talents.' "

In his hatred of the laws of capitalist society, Dostoyevsky achieves remarkable generalizations, placing his finger on the very essence of the power of money, which, in bourgeois society, provides originality, intel-

ligence, beauty and love, indeed substituting for all human qualities.

The fourth character in the novel with designs on Nastasya Filippovna is the merchant Rogozhin. His father's craze for money has become in the son a passion for women, but both feelings are marked by the same morose possessiveness. Indeed, this man is the very incarnation of the mad urge of possessiveness, his character symbolized by his gloomy and sinister house, his world of warehouses with their massive padlocks, his bleak world of buying and selling. Only a great writer could make the reader so keenly aware that Rogozhin's love reeks of lucre. He actually bids a hundred thousand for Nastasya Filippovna against Totsky's seventy-five thousand, as though that woman has come under the hammer. Unforgettable is the "heavy roll of notes, five inches thick, stoutly and tightly wrapped in a copy of the *Birzheviye Vedomosti* (*The Bourse News—Tr.*) and well tied round and round and twice diagonally with string, like the kind used to tie up loaves of sugar"—that greasy roll of 100,000, the price he is offering for Nastasya Filippovna. We are made to sense the very smell of the money, the very appearance of Rogozhin's bleak "money-chest" of a house and his sullen and gloomy passion, smoldering with the selfsame dully-sinister glow of the power of money, which blights everything living, beautiful and human.

The foul and evil-smelling maelstrom of a money-crazed society threatens to engulf Nastasya Filippovna: intent on marrying one of General Yepanchin's daughters—a former attempt to contract a marriage was simply forestalled by Nastasya Filippovna's threat of a terrific scene in public—Totsky wants to make assurance double sure by marrying her off as the only way to quiet her down.

Totsky and Yepanchin work out a plan to buy off Nastasya Filippovna for 75,000, and get her married to

Ivolgin, Yepanchin's subordinate. This arrangement suits Totsky down to the ground, since his marriage to Yepanchin's daughter will bring him a far larger sum. The general also finds the scheme to his taste: he is out to kill two birds with one stone, namely to get a highly eligible husband for his daughter and provide himself with so desirable a mistress as Nastasya Filippovna. He feels confident that a nonentity like Ivolgin, who is dependent on him, will consider this even an honour. Yepanchin goes so far as to make Nastasya Filippovna a birthday gift of pearls as an earnest of favours to come.

At first Ivolgin really likes Nastasya Filippovna who finds him not entirely displeasing. However, as soon as his attitude towards her forms part of a bargain it becomes *pecuniary* and their relations develop into mutual dislike and contempt brought about by *money*. Such is the respectable marriage awaiting Nastasya Filippovna.

The description of a *petit jeu* at Nastasya Filippovna's birthday party is one of the finest achievements of Dostoyevsky's genius, one in which his gift of biting satire gleams and glitters like a sword-blade of the rarest workmanship, with his polite contempt for and deep-rooted animosity against the self-satisfied baseness inherent in the upper ten thousand. In this game each of the guests is called upon to tell "something that he himself in all honesty considers the worst of all the evil actions of his life, with the condition that it is to be done sincerely—that is the chief point, in all sincerity, without any concealment." That is how the rules of the game are laid down by the ridiculous Ferdishchenko, who likes to play the crude jester in society, and is admitted to Nastasya Filippovna's *salon* because of his caustic, if coarse, wit. The guests enter the spirit of the game, and in content, style, tone and manner of speech each story is the brilliant expression of the essence of the narrator's character. The naive Ferdishchenko, who describes his

theft of three rubles, proves the only sincere, if disgusting participant in the game. He actually thought that the others would keep to the rules of the game as strictly as he. Nothing of the kind! The general brings up a typical barrack-room story of his youth: on one occasion he had roundly berated an old and very sick lady in the richest drill-ground language, unaware of the fact that she was passing away to the accompaniment of his oaths. Of course, he was a hot-tempered ensign in those days and it never entered his mind that the old lady was in such a state. The general had never been able to forgive himself for this act and had had no peace of mind until fifteen years ago when he "endowed an almshouse with accommodation for two invalid old women to provide them with comfortable surroundings till the end of their days. I am thinking of making the endowment permanent by making a suitable bequest. I repeat, I may have done a lot of wrong in my time, but I honestly consider this incident my worst act."

"'But instead of the worst, Your Excellency has described one of the good acts of his life. He has let Ferdishchenko down,' concluded Ferdishchenko.

"'Indeed, general, I never imagined you had such a kind heart after all. It's even a pity,' Nastasya Filippovna commented casually.

"'Pity? But why?' asked the general with an affable laugh, and sipped his champagne not without complacency."

This complacency is really splendid! The general is quite sincere when he considers himself one of the kindest and most decent of men. He really has a *kind heart*! It's even a pity, as Nastasya Filippovna remarks. His kindness of heart only serves to emphasize his cheapness. However, his self-virtuous story acquires a peculiar satirical pungency from the undertones that accompany the description of the game: this man is present at the party because he wishes to effect a business deal—to get

Nastasya Filippovna married to his subordinate, so as to make her his mistress. This, as he thinks, is not his very worst act; he does not even see anything reprehensible in it, since it is part of the pattern of life in the society he moves in.

Now for Totsky, whose turn has come, and "he too had prepared himself . . . for certain reasons his story was awaited with special curiosity, and all eyes were fixed on Nastasya Filippovna. With the utmost dignity, fully in keeping with his stately demeanour, Afanasy Ivanovich begins telling one of his 'charming anecdotes' in his subdued and courteous voice (incidentally, he was an imposing-looking and stately man, tall, somewhat bald and turning grey, and rather corpulent, with round, pink and somewhat flabby cheeks, and false teeth. His attire was elegant and on generous lines, his linen most dazzling. His plump white hands always attracted attention. An expensive diamond ring glittered on the index finger of his right hand.) During the whole time the story is being told, Nastasya Filippovna keeps her eyes fixed on a lace frill on her sleeve, pinching it between two fingers of her left hand, so that she does not even once glance at the speaker.

"'What renders my task all the easier,' the latter began, 'is the absolute obligation to describe nothing but the very worst act of my life. In that case, of course, there can be no hesitation: conscience and the prompting of my heart will at once dictate just what has to be said. I confess with bitterness that among all the innumerable frivolous, perhaps, and thoughtless acts of my life there is one the recollection of which has lain almost too heavily on my mind. . . .'"

He goes on, in that inimitable graceful manner which has given him the reputation in society of being a skilful and charming raconteur, to describe an absolutely vapour and innocent incident, the telling of which is in itself highly characteristic of the man. If the general's story

has been, so to say, redolent of guard-room parlance with its highly spiced epithets, Totsky's account is full of bouquets, ladies of fashion and their husbands, admirers and flirtations—everything in the most elegant taste, worthy of the best society, quite *comme il faut*, as a matter of fact. If the yarn spun by His Excellency was full of barrack-room vulgarity, the story told by Totsky is the most elegant vulgarity of high-class society.

There is much more in Totsky's story than first meets the eye, and it is this undercurrent and all that it implies that enhances the satirical force of his words, which is just as evident to the reader as it is to Totsky's listeners. That is the reason why "his story was awaited with special curiosity, and all eyes were fixed on Nastasya Filippovna," since all are aware of one of Totsky's *worst acts*, his liaison with her, and if no one present expects a confession concerning the affair, all feel that there is a particular flavour in a situation in which Totsky is about to speak of the worst act in his life in the presence of a woman he has wronged. The latter's agitation while the story is being told and her contempt for the narrator are a lively reminder to the reader that this is not merely an anecdote, told by a society *causeur* and with nothing in common with the action of the novel, but something that links together the teller of the story and one of his listeners. This is made clear through the use of only one small detail—the fact that all the time Nastasya Filippovna keeps her eyes fixed on the lace frill on her sleeve, pinching it the while between two fingers of her left hand "so that she did not even once glance at the speaker." This detail is most apt. It is as though she had no time to glance at the narrator, being too much engrossed in her lace frill. This patently untrue and oblique explanation of Nastasya Filippovna's behaviour during the telling of the story, its very obliqueness, bring out in sharper relief her self-restraint, her disinclination to reveal her real feelings towards the

speaker. Overcome by a sense of injury and wrathful mockery of his assumed propriety, she knows only too well one of his really evil deeds, one of those that lie on the conscience of so many "enlightened egoists." The full measure of his paltriness is seen in the contrast between the insipidity of his story and the dignified and pompous wording of the introduction. How unctuous are his words to the effect that the difficult business of telling the guests of the worst act in his life is made easier by the fact that his conscience and the prompting of his heart—splendid words these—cannot but dictate what he should say. It is his conscience that prompts him to speak of such empty trifles in the company of a woman he has ruined!

There is a classical touch in the reserve that marks the sentence following Totsky's story:

"Afanasy Ivanovich fell silent with the same imposing dignity with which he had begun the story. The company noticed that there was a peculiar gleam in Nastasya Filippovna's eyes, and even her lips quivered as he concluded."

This story is a fresh insult, and Nastasya Filippovna finds it impossible to check her anger. Nevertheless, she attempts to exercise the greatest self-control, and remarks in a casual manner that the game has been very boring.

This is an expression of the same disdain that Prince Mishkin discerned in her portrait. Her contempt for all these nonentities is sincere and unassumed; she hates and despises Yepanchin and Totsky, and these feelings are so overwhelming that she cannot remain calm to the end.

She rebels in her strained and morbid manner. The reader will do well to note the fact that Dostoyevsky qualifies the word "hatred" with the adverb "almost." This reservation is significant, since it expresses a kind of heart-ache, Nastasya Filippovna's womanliness, her

weakness, solitude and defencelessness, her reluctance to hate. . . . Yet she hurls a challenge to society, with its falseness and hypocrisy, its vileness, concealed behind a mask of respectability. This is a revolt against the omnipotence of money in a monstrous world, a revolt of beauty taunted, of humanity dragged through the mud, of womanhood held in contempt, a revolt that Dostoyevsky himself shares in.

The climax is reached when Nastasya Filippovna flings Rogozhin's packet of bank-notes into the fire. At the same time this is the acme of the anti-capitalist theme in Dostoyevsky's works.

If one gives due consideration to the entire content of the novel and the historical background of the plot, the full significance of this scene will be the better realized; in an almost physical sense the reader will feel the flames licking at the bank-notes. By this act Nastasya Filippovna spurns the money-corrupted society around her, a typical representative of which is the very correct young gentleman Ivogin, who is so splendidly humiliated by Nastasya Filippovna: " 'Could you really marry me with the knowledge that he is giving me such pearls almost on the eve of your marriage and that I am accepting them? And what about Rogozhin? Why, he was bidding for me in your very home, in the presence of your mother and your sister, and you were able to come here after that to claim my hand, and almost brought your sister with you! Could Rogozhin have been right when he said that for three rubles you would crawl to the other end of St. Petersburg?'

" 'He would, indeed,' Rogozhin said suddenly in a quiet tone, but with an air of deep conviction.

" 'It would be different if you were starving, but they say you get a good salary. And, besides the disgrace and everything else, how could you bring a wife you hate into your house (for I know that you do hate me)! Yes, now I know that a man like that would commit

murder for money. Such greed has developed nowadays, people are so crazed about money that they all seem to have gone mad! The very children are taking to money-lending. Why, I read some time ago of a man who wound silk thread round his razor handle to have a better grip, and slashed his friend's throat as though he were slaughtering a sheep. . . ."

Enthroned in triumph, money is rampant throughout the land, all and sundry rendering homage to it. "The very children are taking to money-lending"—these words form the theme of Dostoyevsky's *Hobbledehoy*. Money breeds crime, and buys and sells everything—honour and virtue, good name and beauty.

Here is a fair woman in the coils of this evil force, yet bravely challenging it by tossing so large a sum into the flames, thus saying to the world: Beauty is incorruptible; it can neither be bought nor sold! Beauty will redeem the world!

World literature can hardly produce anything to rival the incomparable scene of the humiliation of a sordid money-grubber, who is ruled by a lust of money, an insane urge to pile up capital. Nastasya Filippovna gives Ivolgin permission to snatch the packet of notes out of the flames on condition that he does so only when the entire packet has begun to burn. Ivolgin is put to the test: he has to show whether his pride or his greed will gain the upper hand. To plunge his hand into the flames for the money would make him cut a sorry figure and injure his Napoleonic pride. The desperate struggle within him at the sight of the flames creeping up to that which he values above all in life, his spasmodic restraint, his swooning—the collapse of a strong and healthy young man rent by internal conflict—that is humiliation indeed! Here is an instance of one of the laws of art, formulated by Stanislavsky: to make an evil man convincing, his good points should be shown up so as to make the evil in him stand out in sharper relief; *vice versa*,

showing a kind-hearted man's negative features will emphasize what is good in him. Dostoyevsky has shown us a covetous man on the rack; this man has resisted temptation and stood the test, but in such a way that the torment he has gone through and the driving urge within him are brought out far more powerfully than if he had really made a grab at the money.

His ability to suffer so keenly, of displaying so much hesitation when confronted by this test of character is proof of a basic truth—that he is capable of murder for money. He has proved incapable of humiliating himself by flinging his pride into the flames to retrieve the 100,000—but that is another matter, for otherwise he would not be a man with Napoleonic pride and ambition.

Like Dostoyevsky's other works, *The Idiot* is marked by utter despair and hopelessness. The novel is dominated by a single theme—that everything beautiful is doomed, that Nature is callously cruel and fiendishly mocking creating the finest of human beings only to destroy them. Three splendid creatures in the story provide instances: Nastasya Filippovna, Prince Mishkin, and Aglaya, Yepanchin's third daughter, who loves Mishkin but is not loved by him, a woman who ultimately sinks into the mire. Nature and society are personified in the vile and voracious insect of Ippolit's dream, which devours all that is beautiful. Devour one another—such is the law governing both Nature and society, which are under the sway of the horrible monster in Rogozhin's heart, as well as in Ivolgin, Ippolit and similar egoists. Even Mishkin does not escape the common fate, for Rogozhin murders not only Nastasya Filippovna, but Mishkin's very soul, by hurling him, this time for ever, into the bottomless pit of insanity, so that in the literal sense of the word he becomes an idiot, on a par with the beasts. In this novel Dostoyevsky identifies the savage laws governing nature with the equally savage laws governing society, a realization of this equation being a

source of the most agonizing suffering to the writer. To express this anguish he even brings into the story Holbein's painting of Christ being lowered from the cross, the more to enhance the idea of the cruel and senseless manner in which the finest creatures are destroyed by Nature, and the overruling omnipotence of the fantastic and loathsome monster that rules the world. In the novel the deepest social pessimism emerges on a cosmic scale.

In the same way as in *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* Christ's descent upon earth is shown to have been in vain, the beautiful and the positive—as exemplified in the person of Dostoyevsky's Prince Mishkin—are incapable of bringing about any change in society. Surely there is cruel derision of Dostoyevsky himself in the fact that Mishkin is capable only of bringing about the downfall of people he is dear to.

Nastasya Filippovna goes mad when he asks her to marry him. She has decided to become Rogozhin's mistress so as to avenge herself in the best way she can, to show her contempt for the hypocrisy around her. Better become Rogozhin's acknowledged mistress, to be bought openly and frankly, than to be bought under the hypocritical guise of a marriage blessed by society. The meanness and falseness of society, disguised behind flowers, are revealed through Totsky and the marriage to Ivolgin that he and Yepanchin are pressing for. Flowers to mask a lie—that is vulgarity. Rogozhin, on the contrary, stands for the crude but undisguised truth of society. Nastasya Filippovna prefers crudity to frank baseness, for tragedy is incompatible with vulgarity.

It is at this stage that the prince, the only pure man she has ever met, the only one to understand and respect her, makes his unexpected proposal.

With her pride she cannot, however, accept a love so replete with pity. Indeed, genuine beauty, which is always proud, is incapable of accepting pity!

Love tinged with pity, love imbued with suffering—a feeling so dear to Dostoyevsky's heart—proves morally bankrupt and totally powerless with regard to Nastasya Filippovna, for the pity the prince displays only emphasizes the degree of her humiliation.

The tragic lies in the fact that he is incapable of offering her, or anybody else for that matter, a simple, earthly, human love. It might seem that his feeling for Aglaya approaches the human and the earthly. But again he plays a fatal part in another's life, this time in the fate of a pure and charming girl who is seeking for some ideal, some way out of her vulgar environment, and loves Mishkin in an earthly and human way, this feeling leading to her ruin.

In his relations with these two women, as well as with other people, Mishkin proves utterly incapable of bringing any light into the life of others or of opposing, in even the slightest degree, the general lust for wealth and the power of blind and overwhelming passions. On the contrary, he himself falls victim to the play of the passions of others. In the entire course of the novel, the author is forced to admit the total and miserable failure of his best beloved character. He translates the whole moral problem into the sphere of metaphysics by his assertion that the kingdom of truth and justice is not of this world. Herein lies the key to the defeat suffered by Mishkin, a man who is the highest embodiment of morals and relations that cannot strike root and flourish on this sinful earth.

Dostoyevsky's horror and loathing for the social reality around him was closely interlinked with an abhorrence of nature, which in his eyes seemed to be a kind of snake-pit.

Despite a certain refulgence in which this story is bathed, much more than *Crime and Punishment* and his following novels, and the large number of really attractive and fine people that inhabit the pages of this book—

Aglaya and Kolya, Vera Lebedeva and Lizaveta Prokofyevna (Yepanchina—*Tr.*)—despite the humour that surrounds that inveterate liar, the general, and the mild humour of Dostoyevsky's attitude towards his hero, *The Idiot* is a book of despair and hopelessness.

Regarded in any light, *The Idiot* would have been a complete work even had it remained a novel of the tragic fate of Nastasya Filippovna; of Mishkin, who with such sympathy and understanding, such simplicity and purity of heart, takes up her protest against society; of the delightful Aglaya and her unhappy love for the strange Mishkin; of Totsky, General Yepanchin, and all such little men and imperials, and the merchant Rogozhin. In other words, even if the novel had remained merely the profound social tragedy that it really is in content and significance, it could be qualified as a pessimistic novel with a leaning to mysticism and a number of other ideological and other shortcomings. However, there is more than merely this in the novel, it is, in fact, a double-barreled novel, or, more precisely, two novels, a novel within a novel, another expression of the dualism within the author himself.

The principal novel has already been discussed. Its fabric has been woven following the canons of art; the warp and the weft constitute a definite design, a certain pattern that exposes a vicious and unjust social system. The second "novel" is an artificial construction, a pamphlet that defies all the canons of art, a pamphlet in defence of the very society that has been unmasked in the first novel.

This could happen only with a man who wrote *The Double!* The writer's own sympathies lie with those who have risen in protest against the vile and corrupt world of the nobility and the bourgeoisie, but his reactionary leanings make him defend that very world. His social dualism is shown in the way he contrasts the selfsame characters in the "first" and "second" novels.

The latter emerges with the introduction of a supplementary story, one that is superimposed on the mainstream of the novel: it is that of the "nihilistic" group of Burdovsky, Ippolit and the rest of the ridiculous gang of stiff-jointed puppets. These people are wholly superfluous to the real subject of the novel and do not exert the slightest influence on the fate of the characters in the story. There is inner irony in the fact that Burdovsky, who claimed recognition of his being Pavlishchev's natural son, did not prove to be even an illegitimate son. More than anything else they are like a pernicious tumour in the healthy tissue of a work of art. Their intrusion deprives the novel of balance, has warped all the characters, made them hard to recognize, and has shed a new and unnatural light on familiar faces.

The intrusion of the "anti-nihilistic" pamphlet has shifted the point of balance of the entire fabric. The basic novel shows Nastasya Filippovna in opposition to society; the secondary novel shows the "nihilists" in that role. The basic novel reflects the author's sympathy for Nastasya Filippovna and her struggle, and his condemnation of society; the secondary theme is an "exposure" of the "nihilists," while expressing sympathy with society. So engrossed is the author in his attack on the nihilists that he fails to notice that his "society people" take on a new look; they become quite respectable and worthy people, compared with the malevolent and uncouth ruffians the author has concocted. In the second theme General Yepanchin has donned the toga of virtue, and has become even worthy of a certain respect; we see him voicing his righteous indignation at the outrageous behaviour of certain young people. His outward observance of the "decencies" of society, which is used to conceal an innate heartlessness and vulgarity; everything in this man that Dostoyevsky hates and despises in the main novel (where he takes his stand by the side of the beautiful woman Yepanchin and Totsky have ruined)—all this

is presented in a favourable and even positive light in the secondary theme. The author now even considers the general a kindly man. Referring to a libellous article about Prince Mishkin, the general remarks that it seems "as though fifty lackeys had got together to compose it, and had composed it," a statement that evokes the author's approval. But, in siding with the general, Dostoyevsky seems to have forgotten that this man is himself a personification of fifty lackeys. The question is bound to arise in the reader's mind: when has the author been speaking in earnest? Which of the two aspects of the general's character is to be believed? A similar question arises with regard to each character from the upper classes, presented in the story. This should be expected, for someone in the story has to feel indignant, outraged by the "nihilists" that the author has clutched out of thin air, and counter them with "decent" people, in other words with people from *society*. Hence we have the vulgar Yepanchin presented in the "second" novel as an agreeable kind of man, perhaps somewhat prone to "a bit of fun," but at bottom a worthy and good citizen.

Of course, all this makes Yepanchin double repulsive, but in a new way. In the "first" novel the reader is in alliance with the author in despising Yepanchin; in the "second," he despises both Yepanchin and the light in which he is presented.

Similarly, the foppish Yevgeny Pavlovich, a shallow man with a disreputable past, to judge by the "first" novel, is entrusted by the author to speak for him in the "second," and moreover to say things that the author considers very clever and profound.

In the same way, Ivogin assumes a new stature in the second novel; here we see a modest, well-bred gentleman standing up for Prince Mishkin, defending him against the outrageous and malicious attacks of Burdovsky and his friends, but fair-minded enough to stress that, in a subjective sense, Burdovsky is a decent kind

of man. The Ivolgin who is ready to commit murder for money now appears as a worthy, fair-minded and decent person. One might come to think that, if Totsky had not dropped out of the story at the time Burdovsky and his friends appear, he too might be shown as quite an honourable man.

The incisive and socially conditioned typification to be seen in the first novel has yielded to a loose and unconvincing hotch-potch, a kind of benign amnesty for those we have learnt to despise in the first novel, together with the author. Of course, this does not lead to our losing our contempt for them, but we cannot but modify our own attitude towards the author, for the link between him and the reader has snapped.

It is strange to see Dostoyevsky in the capacity of a tolerant and forgiving observer of the corrupt morals of the world of the "upper ten thousand," but that is the logic of a false stand. The reactionary tendency has not been tagged on to the novel; it is an inherent part of the tissue, corroding it like a cancer.

If those we have come to despise in the first novel are granted remission of sins in the second, a different fate awaits those we loved in the first novel. What is astonishing is that the author has failed to take cognizance of this.

For instance the first novel makes us believe that a certain estrangement exists between the general and his wife, a sweet and sincere woman, childlike in her simplicity, spiritually akin to the lovely Aglaya. She is certainly not attuned to the spirit of her environment. The second novel however gives us idyllic sweetness and accord between a couple of cooing, if elderly, doves. The very tone of the author's description of this happy couple has become bland and tender, so that the writing has acquired a new colouring. After a quarrel between the Yepanchins, which has ended in the good lady almost making up her mind to break with the general, we read

that "Ivan Fyodorovich (Yepanchin) promptly made his escape, and Lizaveta Prokofyevna (his wife) calmed down after her *explosion*. The very same evening, of course, she would invariably be especially gentle and affectionate with her husband, to her 'boorish boor,' to her kind, dear and adored Ivan Fyodorovich, for she loved him and, indeed, had been in love with him all her life, a fact that Ivan Fyodorovich was well aware of, and for which he had a boundless respect for Lizaveta Prokofyevna."

How mawkishly sentimental is this gentle irony at these quarrels and the inevitable reconciliation, the intonation and the inflated epithets! And what a moralizing tirade is uttered by the good lady against all nihilists and the "woman's question"; what sympathy the author feels with these pronouncements! The irony that must arise at these sentiments is noticed neither by Madame Yepanchina nor by the author.

Here is what this lady has to say in reply to a statement that morals have become corrupt, all this in connection with her condemnation of Burdovsky and his friends: "Lunatics! They think society is cruel and inhuman when it places obloquy on a girl who has lost her virtue. But if you call society inhuman, you will agree that such a girl will suffer from the public censure. That being so, why is it that you expose her to shame in the press and expect her not to suffer! Lunatics! Vain creatures! You have lost faith in God and in Christ! You are so eaten up with vanity and pride, that you will end up by devouring one another, I foretell that. Isn't all that chaos and infamy?"

And so we have this lady accusing the youth of her time of loose morals, of getting married in the fashion they think fit and proper. That is chaos, an outrage. At the same time this moralizing woman is perfectly aware of the fact that her dear, kind Ivan Fyodorovich has made a gift of pearls to Totsky's former mistress, that

he intends to get her married to his secretary so as to make that woman his own mistress. She knows all this and yet forgives her husband "for she loved him and indeed had been in love with him all her life, a fact that Ivan Fyodorovich was well aware of, and for which he had a boundless respect for Lizaveta Prokofyevna." She sees nothing wrong in this way of thinking, which she evidently considers better and nobler than the behaviour of young people of her time.

Again we have an undercurrent, but a different one. In the scene of the *petit jeu* Dostoyevsky was fully cognizant of the undercurrent, of the fact that Nastasya Filippovna was a living reproach to the amoral members of high society. In the extract we have just discussed it is only the reader who discerns the implication, and sees that the author has lost sight of Nastasya Filippovna. Indeed, she is now a living reproach to Dostoyevsky himself, who does not realize the cant and hypocrisy in Madame Yepanchina's words, which in essence are a defence of the right of the general and his like to commit any crime and outrage with impunity, so long as they are committed in a discreet and clandestine fashion. And God forbid it coming to the public notice through the agency of the Left-wing press that someone like her dear, kind Ivan Fyodorovich or the elegant Totsky has seduced some girl or another! To write of such matters shows no sense of the fitness of things and will only bring dishonour upon the poor girl. Men like Totsky may seduce all the girls they wish; such things should, however, be glossed over because otherwise the reputation of the victims may suffer. Such is the sophistry practised by this pillar of bourgeois society.

Nastasya Filippovna has passed completely beyond the author's ken; moreover, Dostoyevsky himself has joined those who tread this woman underfoot. Even Mishkin, her only support, has come to look upon her

through the eyes of society, as we learn from the scene at the railway station, where the prince is horror-struck by her outburst and regards her as insane. His stand is with Yepanchin and Totsky, with all that is decent and fashionable, while she is the spurned and the out-cast.

Convinced that she is unworthy of Mishkin's purity and love, she decides to make him happy through a marriage to Aglaya. Since Totsky is seeking this girl's hand in marriage, she decides to make a scene in front of all these most respectable people so as to compromise her former lover, about whom she has received information that is not entirely to his credit. There is a feature in the scene at the railway station which seems reminiscent of the atmosphere of the "first" novel.

"The officer, who was a great friend of Yevgeny Pavlovich's and had been talking to Aglaya, was most indignant.

"'A hunting-crop is what is needed here; that's the only way to deal with such a hussy!' he exclaimed almost loudly. (He had apparently been in Yevgeny Pavlovich's confidence in the past.)

"Nastasya Filippovna instantly turned on him. Her eyes flashed; she ran up to a young man, a complete stranger, who was standing a couple of paces away from her, snatched a thin-plaited riding-whip out of his hand and struck the offender right across the face with all her might."

This act cannot but win our approval, and we see all the force and logic of the parenthetical statement: the officer is Totsky's confidant, who knows all the latter's secrets and is therefore aware that Nastasya Filippovna's insulting words to Totsky are the truth. This makes his show of indignation and his remark about the hunting-crop all the viler.

This might seem a return to the spirit of the "first" novel, where the author and the reader understand each

other and see eye to eye, where we sympathize with the tragic and lonely revolt of Nastasya Filippovna against all these polished and smooth cads. But how changed everything is! Mishkin is not at Nastasya Filippovna's side, but stands with her enemies. He has become their mouthpiece and anti-nihilist ideologist. The reader loses all his previous liking for a man who has become part and parcel of society.

Dostoyevsky set out to depict a sweet and pure man in opposition to the evil power of money. He fails to notice that in the "second" novel he has made this man turn guardian and defender of the very things he has scorified in the "first" novel.

Thus in the "second" novel the author has taken the sting out of the "first," trying as it were to convince the reader that all these people, the Yepanchins, Ivolgins and others are not so bad as they might seem and that after all their failings are human and forgivable.

The author has achieved this by bringing into the story a group of absurd people, whom he wishes at all and any cost to pass off as "nihilists." We have already spoken of Dostoyevsky's highly subjective and arbitrary treatment of his characters. A typical instance is Ippolit and his "confession," who, like the hero of *Notes from Underground*, is afflicted with a fatal disease. These two characters are much of a muchness: there is the same boundless egoism in these two people who are convinced that the whole world dies with their own passing; they are people who, before their death, squirm like worms that have been cut in two by a spade. "Let the whole world perish, but I will have my tea," says the hero of *Notes from Underground*; "*Après moi le déluge*" is the epigraph to Ippolit's "confession." The former asserts that man by nature is despotic and loves to inflict suffering; the latter writes: "People have been created to torment one another." The only differ-

ence between these two men is that the first is an anti-nihilist, while the second, at the author's behest, is one of the "nihilist" youth. We thus see the arbitrary way in which the author attaches political and ideological labels to his characters. His polemic with the revolutionary-democratic camp has brought Dostoyevsky nothing but the greatest detriment to the artistic, moral and ideological value of his work.

In *The Idiot* Dostoyevsky's social dualism and the dualism in his soul and his world-outlook are all the more tangible for its having found expression through the medium of literary images, and this quite unnoticed by the author. This is related to what happened to Mr. Golyadkin. In him there were two individuals; here we have two novels in one, both diametrically opposed in idea and artistic value. One deals with a solitary revolt against a money-obsessed society; the other is an idyll about the worthiness of that very society. Despite its no few decadent and mystical passages, the first is a great book in idea and artistic significance; the second is shallow, cheap and devoid of artistic merit.

Dostoyevsky has both elevated and humiliated Nastasya Filippovna. On the one hand, he has raised her high over the vulgarity and baseness of the society about her. Without noticing the fact, he has, if not forgiven that society, then at least made allowances for it, thereby unwittingly casting a slur on Nastasya Filippovna. If society is not so evil after all, then she begins to look merely like a brawling and insane woman. That indeed is what she looks like in the eyes of the respectable crowd at the railway station, part of which Prince Mishkin has become. Witness his apologizing to the fop for Nastasya Filippovna, pleading insanity on her part. A humiliation bordering on treachery!

The Idiot contains and preaches a double standard, something that is just as intolerable in art as it is in morals, politics and life itself. It leads nowhere, since

its two tendencies cancel each other. It is like a river that disappears in the sands of a desert.

Dostoyevsky's dualism led to extraordinary things that would be unthinkable in any other writer of world stature—sudden and unexpected distortion of character and the shifting of the entire ideological and artistic foundation of a work, and all this unnoticed by the writer.

In a letter to N. Strakhov, Tolstoi compared Dostoyevsky to a trotting racehorse whose gait has been broken. "A trotter that won't take you very far," he wrote. "He will probably end up by overturning you into a ditch!"

A pungent and truthful comparison!

THE POSSESSED

This book differs from Dostoyevsky's realistic novels in the fact that in it the theme of suffering, so vital in his writings, is totally absent. There are no *insulted and humiliated* in this story, in which the social alignment is similar to that in the "second" novel in *The Idiot—society* and the *nihilists*. In *The Possessed*, the author stands in defence of the existing social order, and the powers that be come in for criticism for the tolerance displayed towards "liberal" ideas. Sneering at the popularity of "liberal" ideas in the sixties, the narrator of *The Possessed* uses a style which creates the impression "as though fifty lackeys had got together to compose . . . and had done so." The following quotation is typical in this respect: "The finest of our minds are amazed at themselves: how could they have made such a blunder then? What our troubled time consisted in and from what and to what it was a transition—this is something that I do not know, and, I think, nobody knows, with the possible exception of outsiders. The most rubbishy kind of people suddenly got the upper hand, began criticizing everything that was sacred, people that previously had not dared even to open their mouths; those who had stood first suddenly began obeying the newcomers, while others took to sniggering in the most shamefully sycophantic manner. Certain Lyamshins,

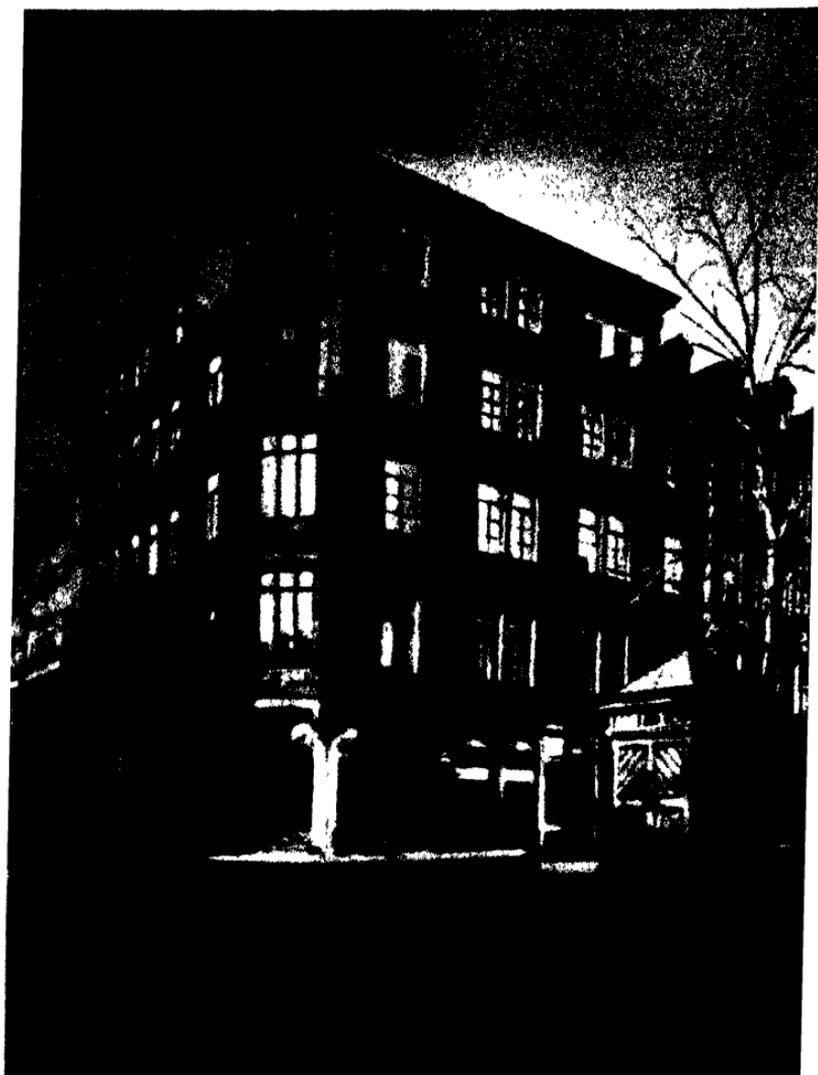
Telyatnikovs, and the landowning Tentetnikovs ... innumerable seminarists, and women that are living depictions of the women's question—all these have suddenly gained the upper hand, and over whom? Over the club, over honoured dignitaries, generals with wooden legs, and our most strict and exclusive ladies' society."

Here we have wit that smacks of the lackey, snobbish contempt of democratic elements with independence of thought, flunkey-like surprise at the emergence of the democratic, "nihilistic" *sansculotterie* and their victory over the pillars of society.

Of course the author should not be identified with the narrator; he does not, however, make the least attempt to check or correct the latter, or to disavow the stand taken by him. He is unable to do so because of his own social convictions, his contrasting of society and the "nihilists."

The main character of *The Possessed* belongs to the type represented by the hero of *Notes from Underground* and by Svidrigailov, a type that is the bearer of one and the same theme: the only quality society is able to develop in man is *multiplicity of sensation*, and nothing more. In *The Possessed* Dostoyevsky comes out as a clerical, who, citing the example of Stavrogin and his like, strives to prove that atheism can lead only to loss of morality, the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Stavrogin has lost the faculty of being repelled by filth; his "spirit" exults in equal measure at the sight of villainy and magnanimity. He experiments on himself to ascertain the degree of moral turpitude he can descend to, and sees that this is boundless. The only human feature in him is fear at his latent criminal propensities, and self-disgust; for such as he suicide is the only way to prove that they have not yet begun to rot alive.

The author would like very much to make Stavrogin out to be a "nihilist"; he even goes so far as to speak of



Dresden. Fyodor Dostoyevsky worked on *The Possessed*
in this house in 1870

his past connections, true in some haphazard manner, with some mysterious political "centres." However, by no stretch of the imagination can this man be considered a revolutionary. He is a nobleman without any roots in the people, in his country, or, for that matter, in mankind. His extreme boredom and his morbid urge to experiment on himself make him take part in the activities of certain sadistic groups, or rather gangs, where depraved and dehumanized men made a hobby of preying on young children. This scion of a "noble" family sinks so low as to fall in with the dregs of St. Petersburg, with low clowns like Lebyadkin, with drunkards, criminals and even murderers. However hard he tries to escape from his futility, he is always confronted by it, for he has no ideas to live for, or any living links with people around him.

Whatever the subjective reasons that led Dostoyevsky to create this character, whatever reactionary tendencies he breathed into it, he does reflect an objective social reality: Stavrogin is a product of a degenerate nobility that is living through a period of transition. People such as he or Svidrigailov are marked by an inner turmoil and restlessness born of critical times that are, indeed, out of joint. Stavrogin is quite aware of the devastation within his soul and the total absence of moral standards in him. Can religion cement society, or is the latter doomed to fall to pieces and disintegrate?—such is the problem comprising the objective reason of the fact that "... all his life Stavrogin has been tormented by God." Ravaged by *moral nihilism*, people like Stavrogin always think that if they are perishing because of the dry rot within them, then the whole world is perishing too.

Dostoyevsky forced himself to believe in God in the same way as Shatov, one of the characters in the story, does, but the very thought that mankind is incapable of living without a God would probably have made him smile.

One of the leading figures of the book, Pyotr Verkho-
vensky tells Stavrogin that a certain captain who has
been shocked by some atheistic talk exclaims, "If there
is no God, then what sort of captain am I?" To which
Stavrogin mockingly replies, "He has voiced quite a com-
plete thought." Could Dostoyevsky thus have parodied an
idea he really held sacred? His central theme is: "If there
is no God, then what sort of man am I?" Similar strains
of travesty are to be heard in other works by Dostoyev-
sky. For instance, in *The Idiot* Keller, a prize-fighter, tells
Prince Mishkin that he has taken to theft because he has
lost his faith in the Almighty. In Dostoyevsky's notes
to *The Double*, Golyadkin dreams that belief in God
has been abolished, and people go in for free fights in
the streets. This can be understood only as Dostoyevsky's
irony at his own teachings, but the thing is that it
was only in this false teaching that the writer saw
salvation from the Svidrigailovs, the Stavrogins, and all
they stood for.

By nature Stavrogin is an *agent provocateur*. If people
such as he do, by some play of chance, take part in some
distortion of revolutionary activity—they cannot become
genuine revolutionaries—they do so only as *agents pro-
vocateurs*.

In Dostoyevsky's notes to *The Double* he made mention
of his impression that *dualism* may lead to *treachery*. He
even had the intention—never carried into effect—to
have Golyadkin Senior warn Petrashevsky that Golyad-
kin Junior was about to inform the police of his activities.
Noticing Petrashevsky's surprise, Golyadkin explained,
"You see, there are two of us." Petrashevsky, the notes
go on to say, replied that he, Mr. Golyadkin Senior,
would be the one to do the informing.

Dostoyevsky could not place such a burden on the
shoulders of poor Mr. Golyadkin, since that would destroy
what sympathy the reader could have for that pitiful gen-
tleman.

With regard to Stavrogin the author was not hampered by such considerations, since in that gentleman the reader sees a hangman, not a victim. It is true that Stavrogin is tormented by the realization that he has lost the faculty to suffer moral anguish; it is no less true that there exist degenerates unable to suffer even such qualms of conscience. Some scoundrels are capable of suffering torment; others are not. It is hard to say which are the better.

Stavrogin's dualism tells even in his activities as an *agent provocateur*. He inculcates in his followers, Kirillov and Shatov, principles that mutually exclude each other. He cannot resist the urge to treachery. A feature of the book is the plenitude of hints that the "nihilists" worked hand in glove with the political police. They call one another either actual or prospective spies. For instance, Pyotr Verkhovensky says of another character in the story, "Liputin is a Fourierist with a big leaning towards police work..." Stavrogin is generally considered a police informer. The following confidential talk is held between Stavrogin and Verkhovensky:

"Listen, Verkhovensky, aren't you from the higher police?"

"Those who have such questions in their minds do not always pronounce them aloud."

"I understand, but we are alone."

"No, for the time being I am not from the higher police."

This dialogue speaks for itself.

By hinting at the possibility of his heroes being connected with the police, the author himself seems to take the sting out of his anti-revolutionary political pamphlet; he emphasizes thereby that Stavrogin and Verkhovensky are hostile towards socialism. Indeed, the latter says to Stavrogin, "I am a scoundrel and no socialist, ha-ha!" After listening to Verkhovensky setting forth his "theory," which smacks of political gangsterism, Stavrogin

asks, "‘I suppose you are no socialist, but some kind of political . . . climber?’" and gets the answer: "‘I myself am a scoundrel, a scoundrel. . . . What is there in socialism, after all: it has destroyed the old forces, and created nothing new. . . .’"

What remains of the pamphlet directed against socialists and revolutionaries?

The "theory" set forth by Verkhovensky—after hearing which Stavrogin arrives at the conclusion that the former is no socialist, but merely a political adventurer—boils down to the following: mankind consists of "masters" and the common herd. He plans to make a leader of Stavrogin, aloof and mysterious—a *beautiful god*—while he—Verkhovensky—is to be armour-bearer to a leader who is as *proud as a god*. He becomes an enthusiastic supporter of the "theory" propounded by Shigalev, a man with thick and long ears, a theory which sums up Verkhovensky's own ambitions in a nutshell. Here is what Shigalev proposes: ". . . as a final solution of the problem a division of humanity into two unequal parts: one-tenth is to get freedom of the individual and unlimited rights over the other nine-tenths. The latter are to lose their individualities and become a herd, as it were, and through absolute obedience and a series of transformations achieve primeval innocence." These ideas are developed with gusto by Verkhovensky: "The first necessity is to lower the level of culture, science and talent Cicero's tongue must be cut out, Copernicus' eyes must be blinded, Shakespeare must be stoned to death. That is *Shigalevism*."

The Nietzschean division of mankind into supermen and the common herd was to form the kernel of fascism. Indeed, totalitarianism is the logical outcome of bourgeois individualism, a totalitarian system being nothing else but absolute freedom for a caste of "masters" or supermen to rule over the overwhelming majority of mankind. This is the contradiction inherent in Shigalev,

who asserts that his "system" provides for absolute freedom, although in actual fact it leads to unlimited despotism.

As for the general lowering of talent—"Cicero's tongue must be cut out, Copernicus' eyes must be blinded, Shakespeare must be stoned to death"—mankind was fated to face this monstrous situation with the advent of fascism.

In his works Dostoyevsky developed the idea, a very true one, that bourgeois society means the rule of mediocrity, that the rule of money reduces people to one humdrum level and brings a general lowering of talent in its train. He also showed that in bourgeois society *liberty* has become in effect liberty for those possessing a *million* to do whatever they please. The majority, i.e., those who do not possess a million, are made up of such to whom anything in the world may be done. That is *Shigalevism*.

Soviet scholars have brought forward the idea, one that has been developed with great skill and knowledge by Professor L. Grossman, that in a certain degree the anarchist Bakunin* was the prototype of Dostoyevsky's Stavrogin. That is highly probable. It should however be remembered that Stavrogin is merely another variant, or perhaps a duplicate, of the leading character of *Notes from Underground*, of Svidrigailov, and partly of Versilov.

For the subject of the novel Dostoyevsky availed him-

* Bakunin, Mikhail Alexandrovich (1814-1876)—an ideologist of anarchism, was violently opposed to Marxism. Denied the state, including that of the proletarian dictatorship. Lived abroad as a political emigrant, so that his activities were conducted outside Russia. A petty-bourgeois revolutionary, had wide recourse to pseudo-reactionary phraseology. Waged a struggle against the creation of a party of the proletariat, and attempted to disrupt from within the work of the First International. Unmasked by Marx and Engels, was expelled from the International in 1872. Bakuninism, as an anarchist movement, played the part of agent of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement

self of certain facts from the activities of anarchist, Bakunin-Nechayev* elements, and tried to convey the impression that it was of such elements that the camp of Russian revolution was made up!

The Possessed is a malicious and libellous lampoon because the author, through the medium of his Stavrogins, Verkhovensky, Liputins and the like, attempted in an oblique and cowardly fashion to denigrate all that was progressive and honest in the Russia of the time. To avert criticism by the youth and readers in general to the effect that he was distorting the truth in too intolerable a way, Dostoyevsky kept his personages aloof from socialism and democracy; however he took advantage of every opportunity to draw some kind of links between Pyotr Verkhovensky and progressive currents in the liberation movement in Russia and throughout the world.

Dostoyevsky's political stand is reflected in particular in the fanatic and chauvinistic opinions voiced by Shatov in *The Possessed*, which in full measure coincide with the author's publicist writings in his *Diary of a Writer*. Here is a specimen of Shatov's pronouncements: "Any people is a people while it has its own particular god, and rejects all the other gods in this world without the least compunction; it should believe that through its god it will conquer and drive all other gods from the earth. . . . A really great people cannot get reconciled to a secondary role in mankind or even to a primary, but absolutely and exclusively to the very first role. . . . There is only one truth, so therefore only one of the peoples can possess the true god. . . ."

* Nechayev, Sergei Gennadyevich (1847-1882)—Russian revolutionary and conspirator. Took part in student disorders in 1868-1869. In 1869 formed an illegal conspiratorial group in Moscow, known as the *People's Vengeance*. Marx, Engels and Russian revolutionaries sharply condemned methods and unprincipled terrorism practised by Nechayev. Was arrested in Switzerland, deported to Russia and sentenced to 20 years' penal servitude. Died in the fortress of St Peter and St. Paul.

These repulsive theories of the right to intervene in the life of other peoples, this malicious and insane call to drive out all gods except one, this call for the banning of all religions with the exception of the Russian Orthodox, and this preaching of national exclusiveness—all these meant in fact unstinted support of tsarism's national policy, its forcible imposition of Orthodoxy and Russification on others. The author of *The Possessed* showed himself as one of the bitterest enemies of Russian national and democratic traditions, which were always opposed to chauvinism of all and any kind.

THE HOBBLEDEHOY

This novel marks a return to themes of vital importance for the times Dostoyevsky lived in. The main quality of the story—its distinct anti-capitalistic tenor is frank and direct, with few or no traces of Dostoyevsky's mysticism, and the writer is concerned with an analysis of the distinctive features of the times. Compared with the main theme, Dostoyevsky's polemic with the revolutionary movement has receded into the background.

At bottom, little has changed in this polemic: Dostoyevsky still asserts that without God there can be no morals, and in the same old way he still attributes the most ridiculous and absurd "theories" to the youth. True, this novel is different in the fact that the youthful members of a revolutionary circle are depicted as clean and decent people, and there is none of that spate of malice that marks *The Possessed*, but these young people are shown to be very narrow-minded in their ideals, not very far removed in spirit from bourgeois men of affairs. Themselves very honest, they are prone to justify men of trade "in theory," and regard the latter in a light far more favourable than they deserve.

If Dostoyevsky once harboured the illusion that Russia could escape from the capitalistic path of development, the seventies put an end to all such hopes, and he was

overcome by anxiety for the country and its moral condition.

The Hobbledehoy does not present such vivid and salient characters as are to be met in *Crime and Punishment*, or *The Idiot*; it is a panorama of a definite social scene with a multitude of features typical of the new bourgeois order.

The fact that *The Hobbledehoy* is marked by far less mysticism and less fanaticism in the author's polemic with the "nihilists" is largely due to its having been published in the journal *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (*The Domestic Records*), which was run by Saltikov-Shchedrin and Nekrasov. This led to relations between Dostoyevsky and Nekrasov being resumed and greatly improved. The latter had a high regard for the theme and the content of this novel with its faithful presentation of the poverty-stricken white-collar proletariat of the capital. He was profoundly moved by the story of the girl who published a pathetic and naive advertisement revealing her poverty and despair to Versilov, and by her suicide. This is what A. G. Dostoyevskaya, the writer's wife, wrote in her recollections:

"It was with the most heartfelt satisfaction that my husband informed me in his letters of the 6th and 9th of Feb. (1875—V.Y.) of his friendly meeting with Nekrasov and of the latter calling to express his admiration after reading the first part (*The Hobbledehoy*). 'I sat up all night reading the story, I was so greatly absorbed in it, something I should not do at my age with my health.' 'What freshness there is in your writing.' (Most of all he liked the last scene with Liza.) 'We don't meet such freshness nowadays; no other writer has it. . . .' He considered the suicide scene and the story (of the girl—V. Y.) the acme of perfection. 'Weakest of all,' he said, 'is the eighth chapter, which has a lot of extraneous happenings,' and what do you think? When I reread the

proofs, I did not like the eighth chapter myself, and deleted quite a lot from it."

Once united in the past by their love of *poor folk*, and now separated by their political opinions, Nekrasov and Dostoyevsky were again drawn together, thirty years later, by that selfsame love. We see that Dostoyevsky still had the same high regard for Nekrasov's views and critical remarks, and there can be no doubt that, as far as his world outlook and political convictions allowed, the writer took Nekrasov's and Shchedrin's opinions into account, which could not, but exert a definite influence on the novel.

It was Gorky who drew attention to something that linked Shchedrin and Dostoyevsky together—their appraisal of the seventies in the social development of Russia and the theme of bourgeois rapacity during that period of the country's rapid transition to capitalism.

Discussing the seventies in his *History of Russian Literature*, Gorky extensively quoted the works of Saltikov-Shchedrin, who in Gorky's opinion "gave a splendid characterization of the times." In particular, he quoted the satirist's *Signs of the Times*, and said in conclusion, "This wail of one of the cleverest men of the seventies and the eighties of the last century merges in its strength with Dostoyevsky's hysterical, shrill protest.

"Two men with sharply conflicting opinions... both raise an outcry when they see rapacity, brutality and savagery around them, when they see that all this—inasmuch as it is brutal—is encouraged by the government, and—inasmuch as it is human—is persecuted by it."

The Hobbledehoy is a striking description of certain features of the times—the craze to float companies and concerns, the gold fever, the spread of the spirit of adventurism and the disappearance of any border-line between commerce, speculation and criminal practice.

In his notes Dostoyevsky himself characterized the idea of the novel as follows: "The chief thing—the idea of general disintegration... disintegration is the chief obvious theme of the novel. Everything is falling apart—even the children.... Society is disintegrating in the chemical sense...."

Educated at a private boarding school in Moscow, where he went through all sorts of humiliation as the illegitimate son of a wealthy man, the hero of the novel, an impressionable young man of nineteen with a frank and open heart, comes to St. Petersburg. Here he suffers the full impact of life in a huge bourgeois city with its temptations, vice, corruption and the endless war of each against all, and all against each. "I'm a miserable hobbledehoy and at times I simply can't distinguish between right and wrong"—these words, spoken by the hero of the story, emphasize his absolute *defencelessness*. He falls into the company of greedy and rapacious men, both petty and important, and himself begins to feel growing in him the *soul of a spider, carnivorously* (this word is twice underscored by the writer) gloating over its prey. The young man's ambition epitomizes the times: he wishes to become a Rothschild. Like Raskolnikov, he would like to amass a million, slowly, methodically and through various speculations, which would lead to the rupture of all social and human ties. "I understand only too clearly that by becoming a Rothschild or desiring to become one, *not in play* but in all earnest I thereby make my immediate exit from society."

Just as with Raskolnikov the Hobbledehoy's idea is linked up with his feeling of humiliation, his need to defend himself against the mortal hostility of society. In exactly the same way his protest against the laws and norms of bourgeois society is channelled in a definite direction—that of individualism: if you are all made of such stuff, if the laws of your life are all so cruel and evil, then I, too, shall be cruel and evil!

This young man, however, is not attracted by the prospect of actually ruling over others; what he wants is the *consciousness* of that power, born of possession of a million. As with Pushkin's *Covetous Knight*, that consciousness will suffice. He wishes to live away from people and enjoy isolation. This desire serves to stress the underlying idea of the novel—the feeling of general disunity and social disintegration. The main character regards solitude not as a curse, but as a blessing.

In this novel, too, Dostoyevsky has remained true to the leading themes and dominant ideas in all his works; he raises the problem of extreme individualism and ways of overcoming it. He meets the challenge of socialism and democracy with exactly the same arguments as were brought forward by the hero of *Notes from Underground* in the polemic against Chernishevsky and his followers. At the same time, the impossibility for the individualist and egotist to put up with his individuality and remain alone with himself is emphasized with acute anguish. Any man with the mark of self-centredness undergoes a kind of fission of personality, and loses the very capacity for human feelings, and it is this that leads to Versilov's going mad. It is only thorough-going and unscrupulous bourgeois money-grubbers like Lambert that appear in the novel as complete and self-sufficient personalities. Just as in Dostoyevsky's other works, the ways and means offered for the surmounting of individualism are illusive.

In this novel Dostoyevsky has given a personification of Russia and her people through the character of Makar Ivanovich, with his teaching of universal conciliation, and the former serf woman, who in the story is simply called *Mother*—Makar Ivanovich's lawful wife and at the same time Versilov's mistress and the Hobbled-hoy's mother. The poetical light in which this woman is bathed seems to anticipate the imagery of the Symbolists. The image of *Mother*, that of Russia, exists in the story not as a figure of flesh and blood, but rather symbol-



Fyodor Dostoyevsky's room in Staraya Russa, where he worked on his novel *The Hobbles* (1874)

ically, and we are asked to see all the time her "real essence," the one concealed in her. The changes and variations in Versilov's relations with Mother, his comings and goings, his abandoning her under the influence of foreign countries and his return to her, his love, which is pity and his pity which is love—all these should be understood as a reflection of the relations between the "disrooted" intelligentsia of the nobility, so much under the influence of Herzen's* ideas, and the Russian homeland. It is obvious that Versilov is innocent of Herzen's ideas, and what we have is the usual dualistic Dostoyevsky type with the characteristic split in his thoughts and feelings. "It very often happens that I begin to develop a thought I believe in, and almost always end up by ceasing to believe in what I have said." These words, spoken by Versilov, might have come just as well from Stavrogin.

Analyzing the evil, *spider* instincts that he feels mounting in him, the Hobbledehoy says of himself: "I had in the highest degree that inner striving towards seemliness, but it remains a mystery to me how it would combine with other urges, God knows of what kind."

In trying to make Makar Ivanovich a character that would stand out in contrast to the corruption of socie-

* Herzen, Alexander Ivanovich (1812-1870)—great Russian revolutionary democrat, materialistic philosopher, writer and publicist. Arrested in 1834 for organizing a revolutionary circle and exiled in following year. Returned from exile in early forties and brought out series of brilliant philosophical, publicist and literary works. Official persecution forced Herzen to emigrate abroad, where he continued his political and literary work. Founded "Free Russian Printshop" in London in 1853, where he published the *Polar Star* magazine (1855-69) and the political newspaper *Kokol* (*The Bell*) which called for abolition of serfdom and autocracy. After vacillating towards liberalism, evoking criticism from Chernishevsky and Dobrolyubov, returned to fearless platform of revolutionary democracy in sixties. Exerted powerful influence on progressive thought in Russia.

ty, Dostoyevsky was able to bring forth merely an animated platitude.

From Pushkin to Chekhov, critical realism in Russian literature was able, through its truth to life, its placing reliance on the people and its progressive elements, to create powerful images of the positive hero. "How rich Russia is in fine people!"—Chekhov wrote in a letter to his sister during his visit to Sakhalin, and this exclamation, while epitomizing the writer's observations of the Russian peasant life, was at the same time an appraisal of the path travelled by Russian literature in the 19th century, and expressed a quality handed down to the literature of socialist realism.

The absence in Dostoyevsky's works following *Poor Folk* of any convincing positive hero was one of his widest departures from the traditions of Russian literature. One of the reasons of his failure to create such a positive figure was the fact that Makar Ivanovich, Zosima and Alyosha—his attempts to achieve this aim—lack personality, so that they have nothing to oppose to individualism. They are so impersonal—or rather depersonalized—that they cannot become living and individual characters.

The criticism Dostoyevsky directed against bourgeois individualism has value only in its negations, but its value is indisputable.

The Hobbled Hero is a denial, a negation, of bourgeois individualistic amorality.

Although the central figure of this novel is ruled by the ambition to become a Rothschild and then live in isolation, he nevertheless feels drawn towards people and, it might seem, would like to love them. Anyway, his gloomy ambition, born of ratiocination, very soon loses all attraction for him, since it has been merely a reflex of self-defence against a hostile society.

Perplexity at the new laws of life, the horror and dis-

gust these laws evoke, a search after seamliness and a total ignorance of how it can be achieved—these motifs, common to all Dostoyevsky's works, are accentuated in this novel by the fact that the realities of life are presented through the perception of a lonely, helpless and unstable adolescent, whose character is particularly susceptible to the anarchizing influences of the new society. He is both horrified by and drawn to the temptations and the coarseness of the life seething and swirling all around him, which has subjected his inexperienced soul to such a maze of conflicting, staggering and variegated impressions.

It was on purpose that Dostoyevsky chose a raw and inexperienced lad as the hero of his novel, the better to emphasize the acute and unbearable novelty of the catastrophe that was descending on his country, for it was in this light that he saw the appearance of the new capitalist relations in Russia. Standing at the meeting of two epochs this lad, like the Prince of Denmark, might well say, "The times are out of joint," for he too is the victim of the times.

In the novel under review, *dualism of personality*, that constant theme in all of Dostoyevsky's works, fully reveals its social roots. It is peculiar to intermediate social strata in general, and, at the same time, it is a feature of the transition from one epoch to another, when "the times are out of joint." In *The Hobbledehoy* dualism of personality appears in living, concrete and immediate fusion with the ground it springs from—the anarchization of personality by the chaos of capitalist society.

In his other novels Dostoyevsky describes the *spider soul* in a metaphysical fashion, as the diabolical in the human soul; he makes no effort to give any social motivation of its appearance. In *The Hobbledehoy* this *spider soul* is linked up with the influence of the univer-

sal spirit of rapacity on the principal character of the story.

After becoming the chance possessor of a document that can be a source of considerable embarrassment to a society beauty, the Hobbledohoy gets in touch with a gang of blackmailers headed by a scoundrel named Lambert, who once went to school with him. What he sees going on around him makes him realize that the world is run by venality and universal corruption. The scions of ancient and noble houses are so eager to amass wealth that they have taken to crime: Prince Sokolsky, for instance, forges railway stocks; prominent members of society and proud society beauties are openly bought and sold. Very forceful and convincing is the ominous figure of Lambert, the very incarnation of bourgeois self-centredness and bestial blackguardism, in whom the author has concentrated everything that horrifies and repels him in the *bourgeois*.

Though the following notes have not entered the novel, they became part of the character of one of the most negative types depicted in the story: "Lambert says that when he gets rich, it will be his greatest pleasure to feed his dogs on bread and meat, while poor children are starving. And, when they have nothing to heat their homes with, he will buy a tremendous stock of firewood and burn it in public in the frost, without giving a single stick to the poor. Let them curse me . . . it will give me the greater pleasure. (N. B. All his whims are in this vein.)"

Dostoyevsky gives a kind of review of the horrors and abominations that surround the Hobbledohoy, and, in his opinion, form the backbone of the new order of things. The lad is struck by the ugliness of the new social order, its feverish clutching at the things of today and its reckless disregard of what the morrow may bring. "*Après nous le déluge*" is a pronouncement re-



Dostoyevsky Museum in writer's apartment in Moscow. Furniture from Dostoyevsky's room in Staraya Russa

markably fitting to the whole novel, for in it all the characters are engrossed in gaining possession of the spoils of the day, of today and not tomorrow. Kraft, one of the figures in the story, voices thoughts that perturbed Dostoyevsky himself. In a conversation with the Hobbledohy, this man, so tendentiously made to commit suicide in the story, says the following:

"There are no moral ideas nowadays; they all seem to have disappeared suddenly, and what is striking is that it seems as though they never even existed.

"The present time is one of the golden mean in everything, of insensibility, ignorance, sloth, incapacity and the need to get everything ready-made. Nobody cares to bother about thinking, and those who could produce some kind of idea are very rare....

"Russia is being disafforested, its soil is being exhausted and turned into barren steppeland.... If a hopeful man should come and plant a tree, he would be ridiculed and asked, 'Do you think you will live to see it?' There is no common and uniting idea. All seem to be living in an inn and preparing to leave the country tomorrow; all are ruled by the interests of the moment." It was in this light that Dostoyevsky saw the new capitalist society that had come into being!

Comparing the previous order of things with the new, Dostoyevsky says in *The Hobbledohy* that both are bad, but in the old way of life there was at least some kind of order, a certain sense of honour and duty among the nobility that "held the land together." The new times brought in their train disorder and the chaos of disunity. Dostoyevsky even intended to entitle the novel *Disorder*. The author's opinion in the matter is expressed through the medium of Versilov, who says that in the old times, when the nobility were in power, society was held together by certain links. In those conditions, however, "slaves have a bad time of it, that is to say all those that are not of the proper 'state.' To do away

with certain people having a bad time of it, all have been granted equal rights. That is what has been done in our country, and all that is fine. Experience has shown, however that till now a levelling of rights has everywhere (in Europe, that is to say) led to a decline in the sense of honour, and consequently of duty. Selfishness has taken the place of the former cementing idea, and everything has disintegrated into freedom for individuals. The liberated, left without any cementing idea, have finally lost any higher links in such measure that they have even ceased to defend the freedom they have received."

The above is an expression of Dostoyevsky's profoundly reactionary criticism of capitalism, for he associates the very *principle of individual liberty* with disunion and disintegration in society and the triumph of egoism. It is in the Orthodoxy "of and for the peasantry," preached by Makar Ivanovich, that the author of *The Hobbledehoy* would seek his "cementing idea." Versilov's imagination brings up a picture of a golden age in which men can live in a spirit of love without any God, but that love is depicted in such drab colours as to seem dreary and hopeless.

We thus see that when it comes to constructive and positive thinking, to the assertion of definite ideals that will stand opposed to bourgeois individualism and egocentrism, Dostoyevsky is weak, helpless, and mawkishly sentimental as usual. However, in his criticism of capitalist society, the writer at times achieves exceptional force and amazing depth of depiction and analysis in *The Hobbledehoy*.

It will be remembered that the author of *The Possessed* tried to ascribe to socialism an urge towards the despotism of nonentities and the general lowering of education and talent: "Cicero's tongue must be cut out; Copernicus' eyes must be blinded, Shakespeare must be stoned to death." The author of *The Hobbledehoy*, on

the contrary, argues against this violent stand. In the latter book the despotism of nonentities is linked up not with any particular socialist utopia, but with the essence of capitalist society. In developing the theme begun in *The Idiot*—the triumph of mediocrity in a society run by the power of money—the author makes the hero of *The Hobbledohy* his mouthpiece.

“Therein lies my ‘idea,’ therein lies its strength—that money is the royal road that brings even nonentity to the forefront. Perhaps I am no nonentity, but I, for instance, know from the looking-glass that my appearance operates against me, because my face is a very ordinary one. But if I were as rich as a Rothschild, who would be concerned with my face? If I troubled only to whistle, thousands of women would come flocking to me with all their beauty. I am even convinced that, in the long run, they would quite sincerely come to consider me a handsome fellow. It may be that I am clever, but even were I a Solomon of wisdom some man could be found who could go one better, and then I would be lost. Were I a Rothschild, however, that man would be worth nothing compared to me. He wouldn’t even be allowed to open his mouth in my presence. It may be that I am witty, but I would eclipse in the presence of Talleyrand or Pyrrho; the moment I became a Rothschild, where would Pyrrho be, or, for that matter, Talleyrand himself? Of course, money is a despotic power, but at the same time it is the highest equality, and in this lies its main strength. Money levels out all inequality.”

This is real Shigalevism! The levelling of talent and nonentity on the basis of the depersonalizing power of money—such is the truth of capitalist society! *The Hobbledohy* is indeed of particular significance in the works of Dostoyevsky: everything falls into its own pigeon-hole, and we see the objective social meaning of the mystification provided in the writer’s other works.

The Hobbledehoy goes on to say in connection with the levelling power of money: "People will say that all this is sheer fakirism, the poetry of nonentity and impotence, the triumph of incompetence and mediocrity. I can agree in part regarding the triumph of both incompetence and mediocrity, but hardly when it comes to impotence. I like to think of a creature without talent and mediocre, standing before the world and saying to it with a smile, 'You are the Galileis and the Copernicuses, the Charlemagnes and Napoleons; you are the Pushkins and the Shakespeares, the field marshals and court marshals; I am ungifted and illegitimate but I stand above you, nevertheless, because you yourselves have bowed to this!...' I think it would be even better if such a man were grossly uneducated."

Pyotr Verkhovensky speaks of the humiliation, the mutilation and the stoning of the Copernicuses and the Shakespeares; the Hobbledehoy speaks of great men such as these being placed under the yoke of nonentities.

A comparison of *The Possessed* and *The Hobbledehoy* will convince us that there is always a certain social reality behind all of Dostoyevsky's mystifications—his horror of capitalism and the amorality it breeds, the levelling of personality born of the rule of money and so hostile to man, and the like. While striving to strike down those he considers political "nihilists," Dostoyevsky in actual fact falls upon the bourgeois moral nihilists who are so inimical to mankind. In essence, Verkhovensky and Lambert do not in any way differ from each other.

The novel does not tell us all there is to know about the Hobbledehoy's search of the truth both in the sphere of ideas and that of morals. There is a description of the lad's search of *seemliness* in life during which he takes to Makar Ivanovich. While admiring the latter's simplicity and purity of heart, he cannot help asking himself:

is such a man possible?—in other words, can such a man and his teaching be followed? is all this vital and significant, and can it give satisfaction? The author does not use too insistent a note with regard to Makar Ivanovich and his teaching, which is hardly the case with the old monk Zosima and all he stands for, for the latter is simply imposed upon the reader with the inexorability of a dictate. *The Hobbledehoy* brings a vague kind of message to the effect that the truth should be sought in the people, in Russia, in the “dark roots” as represented by Makar Ivanovich and *Mother*.

In his reminiscences entitled *The Russian Worker in the Revolutionary Movement*, written in the seventies, G. V. Plekhanov spoke of the morally pernicious influence of the capitalist city, and raised the general problem of morals in the critical period of transition from one social formation to another. It is highly characteristic that, in connection with this theme, he had to bring in Dostoyevsky, and indeed he made certain remarks with a direct bearing on the main feature of the social and psychological problems in Dostoyevsky's works.

“I have not the least intention,” Plekhanov wrote, “to idealize the conditions of modern city life; we have done enough of that false idealization. I have seen and know the negative sides of that life. When he comes to the city from his village, the worker sometimes does kick over the traces. In his village he followed his father's traditions and accepted the age-old customs. In the city, all these customs immediately lose all sense. For a man not to lose his moral yardstick, these customs must be replaced by new customs and new outlooks. This replacement does actually take place by degrees, since the inevitable daily struggle against the employer of itself imposes certain mutual moral obligations upon the workers. But meanwhile, until the worker has become imbued with the new morality, he does go through a moral

crisis, which sometimes finds expression in rather objectionable behaviour. This is a repetition of what any social class goes through during a transition from a restrictive patriarchal order of things to a broader, but more complex and therefore confusing order. The worker's reasoning powers come into their own, and, rejecting all control, often lead him to wrong and anti-social conclusions. The intellect is capable in general of making bigger mistakes than 'objective reason' of custom. That is why it is cursed by the guardians of the existing order. But, while people march onwards, the periodical rupture of custom is inevitable. Whatever pranks the intellect may play during a period of violent change, the mistakes it makes cannot be corrected by the preservation of an obsolete order. The further development of life itself usually corrects these mistakes. The more the new order develops, the clearer the new moral demands become to all and sundry, these demands gradually acquiring the force of custom and then restraining any excesses the intellect may prove capable of. In this way, the negative aspects of development are eliminated by its own positive achievements, and the role of man as a thinking creature inevitably asserts itself.

"I once knew a young factory worker, who was quite an honest fellow until he was affected by revolutionary propaganda. When he became aware of the socialists' attacks against the exploiters, he began to turn tough, considering it proper to deceive and even rob members of the upper classes. 'All that has been stolen from us,' he would reply to the reproaches of his comrades, to whom he always showed his spoils, offering them a fair share of the total. If this case had come to the notice of the late Dostoyevsky, he would not have failed to make use of it against the revolutionaries either in *The Karamazov Brothers*, where a fellow like the one I have mentioned would have been depicted next to Smerdyas-

kov, that victim of 'intellectual' free thought, or in *The Possessed*, a book in which, as is well known, there is horror at every step. It is interesting that this fellow's mates, who could hardly have read Dostoyevsky, called him the 'Devil,'* but they did not lay the blame for his deeds at the door of the intelligentsia in general, nor of socialist propaganda in particular. They tried to use their influence to make him see things in the proper light, and teach him to wage the struggle against the upper classes not as a swindler and thief, but as a revolutionary agitator. I soon lost sight of the 'Devil' and do not know whether the moral crisis he was going through found the right solution. This was quite possible, since the disapproval his exploits met from the revolutionary workers around him militated in favour of such a development."

Dostoyevsky could not discern what was obvious to Plekhanov and other revolutionary leaders of the mounting working-class movement—the manner in which "the negative aspects of development are eliminated by its own positive achievements," in other words, the way in which a morality is emerging which is infinitely loftier than any other in the history of mankind, the morality of a real and not an illusive struggle against the anarchy and viciousness of capitalistic society, the great revolutionary struggle for the most moral and just arrangement of human life. Dostoyevsky did not know what ways exist of waging a struggle against the evil of capitalism, and, like his Versilov, could reply to the questions put by the youth (what is to be done; how are we to live; how are we to struggle against the corrupt-

* The usual English translation of the title of the novel is *The Possessed*, which has been used in the present work. The Russian title is *Devils*, the explanation of which is to be found in the 8th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.—Tr.

ing influence of society?) only in well-worn morals expressed in the Ten Commandments. He replied in just the same fashion as Versilov, with hidden mockery at the naive simplicity of the questions and the emptiness of his own replies.

In the work already mentioned, Plekhanov gives a character study of an itinerant preacher of the people, whom he met in the seventies.

"I knew a former Old Believer who, at the age of 50, joined the revolutionary party. All his life long this man had 'visited all kinds of beliefs,' had even been to Turkey in search of 'real people' and the 'real truth' among Old Believers living there, and had finally found the truth in socialism, thereby parting for ever with the King of Heaven and developing a healthy hatred of the tsar on earth. I never met a more passionate or tireless preacher. He frequently recalled a certain teacher of the Old Belief, who seemed to have exerted considerable influence over him in the past. 'If I could only meet him now,' he would exclaim, 'I would explain to him what the truth is!' He was the heart and soul of the workers' circle . . . and no persecution could intimidate him. From his early years he knew it was good to suffer for his convictions. He ended up in Siberia."

Makar Ivanovich, too, has spent all his life in search of "real people" and the "real truth," but he teaches resignation to the realities of life, for he thinks the secret of the Lord is all around us and this is good, for the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. The Elder Zosima will continue in the same strain: If your reason begins to ask questions, and think of the chaos and horror that reigns on earth, that will surely lead to amorality, crime, and Smerdyakov's "everything is permitted." Therefore bow to the inevitable and accept what is granted, if you do not wish to follow in the footsteps of Ivan Karamazov or Raskolnikov, who seem to personify the pranks of the intelligence Plekhanov mentions.

Makar Ivanovich not only preaches an unctuous resignation to reality, but also dreams of the brotherhood of man and the reign of love on earth. Dostoyevsky even mentions Makar Ivanovich brightening up at the mention of communism and displaying a profound interest in the question of the kind of people that teach the ideas of communism and asks for an explanation of the essence of this teaching.

It may be that the seeker after truth mentioned by Plekhanov began his evolution with questions such as these. . . .

THE KARAMAZOV BROTHERS

The Karamazov Brothers, *Notes from Underground* and *The Possessed* are the most tendentious of Dostoyevsky's works, the ones most conditioned by his reactionary leanings. Of these *The Karamazov Brothers* is in the highest degree imbued with the spirit of a definite period, and bears the imprint of a struggle against progressive features of the time, especially and most bitterly against such new-fangled institutions as public trial and the jury system. In particular, the court proceedings against Dmitry Karamazov, described in such scrupulous detail, are aimed at proving the inefficacy of such innovations. The purpose of the first part of the novel is to prove the superiority of ecclesiastical courts, which alone are capable of entering the criminal's heart and bringing about his repentance, thus removing the shortcomings inherent in civic courts. The progressive press is denigrated, and the entire novel is an expression of jingoist ideas, of the school of thought fostered by the notorious Pobedonostsev. Indeed, *The Karamazov Brothers* was written to order, and inspired by government circles. Professor Leonid Grossman's invaluable study shows the close ties between Dostoyevsky and the tsar's court and the upper bureaucracy, and reveals the reasons why the author brought certain motifs into the story.

In this novel, more than in any other of his works, Dostoyevsky is tied down to the burning problems confronting the camp of reaction; what he calls for in actual fact is the establishment of a theocracy. This is a novel of and for the Church, the author asserting that the salvation of man lies with the Orthodox Church, which alone is capable of guarding humanity against the triumph of Smerdyakovism. Just as in *The Possessed*, Dostoyevsky bent every effort in the struggle against the camp of revolution, this struggle objectively missing its target and recoiling against the amorality of the bourgeoisie and the landowning classes.

The Snegiryovs have taken the place of the Marmeladov family; instead of the urgent facts of life, social tragedy and the naked truth, we have maudlin sentimentality and cloying pitifulness in the description of the Snegiryovs, an approach that blunts the edge of the tragedy of the Snegiryovs, father and little son.

Instead of Nastasya Filippovna, we have the figure of Grushenka, who, with all her attractions, is far pettier and more commonplace. The former is the embodiment of a tragic theme; the latter does not stand in opposition to society, but merges into it. A worthy disciple of her "benefactor," a millionaire merchant, clever at amassing money, a parsimonious and quick-witted philistine with a share of good looks, very much in love with her dashing Dmitry Karamazov for whom she is prepared to go all lengths—can this woman bear comparison with Nastasya Filippovna, who contemptuously throws so much wealth into the flames?

Alyosha Karamazov, too, unctuous bearer of an unctuous sacerdotalism is far pettier than Prince Mishkin, that symbol of purity and love, crucified in this money world. With no individuality of his own, Alyosha does not stand for any significant theme. From morn till night he is busy gadding about on the petty and disreputable affairs of the Karamazovs and is able to breathe with

comfort the atmosphere of spiritual impurity and corruption:

All the characters created in this novel are seen in a false light by Dostoyevsky, who has fallen victim of grievous self-deception.

Professor Grossman is quite right when he speaks of a waning of Dostoyevsky's talent displayed in *The Karamazov Brothers*. Of course, the writer's creative genius lives on, and in the climax of the novel stands at the pinnacle of world literature. This, however, refers only to the splendid highlights, the rest of the book, while reflecting the writer's depictive talent Gorky mentions, being marked by an insincerity and hypocrisy that distort the entire fabric and cannot be glossed over by a wealth of convincing detail. In speaking of a decline in Dostoyevsky's genius, we should note that this was an outcome of his false tendentiousness, his mounting reactionary subjectivism and active Pobedonostsev-inspired sacerdotalism. The Saturday evening talks, during which the sanctimonious and bigoted Pobedonostsev, that clever and fanatic inquisitor, was able to worm his way into the writer's heart and exploit his fear of the spread of greed, corruption and low morals, yielded the results desired and led to the shadow of the teacher falling over the writer and *The Karamazov Brothers*.

It seems to the author that he has succeeded in rendering Grushenka and Dmitry Karamazov, his favourite character, attractive to the reader. However, all that can stand to the credit of Grushenka is her love for Dmitry, a love that cannot be sufficient, since Dmitry himself is insufficient.

The structure of the novel is designed to show Dmitry's innocent sufferings, so that the reader should follow the court proceedings, which incidentally take up the whole of the second volume, with feelings of heartfelt sympathy for a good man fallen victim to circumstantial evidence. Indeed, at the first reading the reader is gripped

by the narrative and the brilliant counterpoising of two mutually exclusive logics—the truth of the law and that of man.

In the madness of his passions Dmitry Karamazov is capable of murdering anybody who stands in his way. Throughout the novel we hear him asserting that he will kill his father or this or that character in the story, a continual string of murderous threats that in no way enhance his attractiveness. The author, however is bent on presenting him in the light of a man who has suffered through no fault of his own, and the novel has been written with the express purpose of evoking sympathy for all the torment this man is going through and indignation at the heartlessness and injustice of the investigating lawyers, the prosecutor and the members of the jury. We are called upon to pity a poor man, helpless in the grip of passions he cannot cope with, since what we are witnessing is a struggle between the Devil and God taking part in man's unprotected heart.

We repeat, at first reading many may fall under the hypnotic influence of the author's genius and are prone to accept his platform, though usually with certain mental reservations. The reader, especially if he is young and inexperienced, does not immediately realize the reason of these reservations and the consequent inner protest. Only time and repeated reading of the story bring realization of the real causes behind this dissent.

The author insists on the existence of *two truths*—the *juridical* and the *human*, and does all he can to reveal the *inherent falseness* of the former. He makes full use of his talent so as to bring the tension up to breaking point, provide the opposite side with the most cogent arguments, the better and more forcefully to prove his own point of view. He builds up the case against Dmitry Karamazov with such sparkling and amazing skill, the evidence against the latter is so damning that the read-

er can have no grounds to complain of the unfairness of the criminal investigation and the trial. This faultless presentation of the juridical aspect of the matter is important to Dostoyevsky the more efficaciously to bring the reader to the ineluctable conclusion: however perfect, the truth of the law is not, humanly speaking, the real truth. The human truth is the province of the Orthodox Church and its ecclesiastical courts, and it is this church that is the custodian of morality in a world in which all morals have gone by the board. In a word, what the author is out to prove is that what may be important from the viewpoint of secular law may be quite insignificant from the viewpoint of human truth, the only genuine truth.

If that is so, then why should the reader be called upon to feel sympathy for Dmitry Karamazov? He is guilty from any point of view, be it the juridical or the human. We have already mentioned that threats of murder were constantly on this man's lips. For instance, in Chapter IX—"The Sensualists"—we read of this man bursting into his father's house and murderously attacking the old family servant Grigory, who is trying to defend his master. "Seeing this, Dmitry uttered a scream rather than a shout, and rushed at Grigory. . . . Beside himself with fury, Dmitry struck out, and hit Grigory with all his might. The old man fell like a log, and Dmitry, leaping over him, broke the door." Then follows a struggle between father and son. "Dmitry threw up both hands and suddenly clutched the old man by the two tufts of hair that remained on his temples, tugged at them, and flung him on the floor with a crash. He was able to kick him two or three times in the face with his heel. The old man moaned shrilly. . . .

"'Madman! You've murdered him!' cried Ivan.

"'Serve him right,' Dmitry exclaimed breathlessly. 'If I haven't killed him now, I'll come again and kill him! You won't be able to protect him!'"

The fact that Dmitry has not murdered his father is important from the legal point of view. He has *almost* committed murder, being prevented from doing so by circumstances beyond his control. In that case, why should the reader condone his behaviour by a feeling of pity or sympathy? What emerges is that Dostoyevsky himself has taken the juridical stand that he has held up to contempt and ridicule. In the final analysis, Dmitry has not committed murder. Therefore, despite Dostoyevsky, what we have in actual fact is not the contrasting of the legal viewpoint to the human, but the contrasting of the more just legal viewpoint to the less just legal viewpoint as expressed in the court sentence. In that case the contrasting of two truths and two logics that Dostoyevsky has indulged in loses all significance and what we have is a miscarriage of justice. Has this theme been treated in *The Karamazov Brothers* in a way befitting an important novel by a great writer?

In Tolstoi's *Resurrection* the story of a miscarriage of justice is permeated with tremendous content, which reveals the soulless operation of the judicial machine in a society based on exploitation. The sufferings experienced by Dmitry Karamazov, who has almost murdered his own father for reasons of jealousy, fade into insignificance in comparison with all that the unfortunate Katyu-sha Maslova has to go through. Only a genuinely worthwhile social and psychological theme can command the reader's sympathy.

The contradiction within *The Karamazov Brothers* that we are at present discussing brings forward a very important problem, that of a decline in moral criteria and the limits of moral tolerance, since it is extreme moral tolerance that has led Dostoyevsky, that finest of psychologists, to be lacking in psychological cogency.

Indeed, no psychological explanation of Dmitry's behaviour is given in the chapter entitled "In the Dark," in which he strikes Grigory on the head with a brass pestle.

Dmitry had come to murder his father. "His personal loathing was becoming unbearable. Mitya was beside himself; he suddenly pulled the brass pestle out of his pocket. . . ."

At this point Dostoyevsky breaks off the narrative and leaves a gap, returning to the story in retrospective, through Dmitry's later recollections. "'God was watching over me then?' Mitya himself said afterwards. 'At that very moment Grigory waked up on his bed of sickness!'"

This can be understood only as follows: on hearing the old man getting up and going out on the steps, Dmitry grows afraid, abandons the thought of murder and rushes to the garden fence with the intention of climbing over it and getting away from Grigory. All this however cannot be the reason why at the last moment Dmitry does not commit the crime.

He has pulled the brass pestle out of his pocket so as to climb through the open window and fall upon his father. It is a matter of seconds before the crime will be committed. Grigory wakes up on his bed of sickness during these very seconds. He has time to sit up in bed, deliberate again, dress and leave the house. This is very illogical, since such operations should take up minutes, not seconds, and Dmitry has had ample opportunity to carry out his plans.

Why is it then that Dostoyevsky makes special mention of God's watching over Dmitry, with the connotation that this should be linked up with Grigory's awakening. The implication seems to be that Dmitry dashes off towards the fence because he has been frightened by the old man. This is the angle that might suit the investigation and the court; in actual fact Grigory could in no way evoke fear in the formidable Dmitry.

From the chapter "The Third Ordeal" in which Dmitry undergoes cross-examination, we learn that Grigory's



Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky. 1880 (Photograph)

awakening could in no way restrain Dmitry from the crime.

"Mitya lowered his eyes and was silent for a while.

"'As I see it, gentlemen, it was like this,' he began quietly. 'Whether it was someone's tears, or my mother praying to God, or some good angel kissed me at that instant, I do not know, but the devil in me was vanquished. I dashed from the window and ran to the fence. . . . My father was alarmed, and for the first time saw me, cried out and sprang back from the window. I remember that very well. I ran through the garden to the fence . . . and it was then that Grigory caught me when I was sitting on the fence. . . .'"

Here we have a would-be murderer being held back by some supernatural force or perhaps by some other motive in his make-up. In that case, why is it that in the chapter entitled "In the Dark" Grigory's awakening is brought forward as the reason? It cannot be that both forces influenced him, for the simple reason that one could only exclude the other. If, as he puts it, some good angel kissed him at that instant or his better nature came to the surface, this can only serve to exclude the motive of fear of having a witness to the crime.

Why then did Dmitry have to dash to the fence if he did *not* commit murder? He could not have done this for fear of his father, who had sprung back from the window and could in no way be a threat to his son, a man far from a coward. He may have been driven by an insane desire to find out Grushenka's whereabouts. This alternative has been eliminated by the author who tells us that for Dmitry it was a question of "either he, Mitya, or Fyodor Pavlovich" (the father). Dmitry's only purpose under his father's window could be to ascertain whether the woman he loved was there. When he found out that she was not at his father's place, he could not but recover in some measure from the state of wrath and exasperation his jealous passion had thrown him into.

It was only of his father that he could be jealous. Since his fear had proved groundless, his savage Karamazov jealousy could only cool down.

Why is it then that he acted as though the reason still remained? Why did he have to rush from the window, climb the fence, attack Grigory, and appear before others in a state of intense rage, rare even for Dmitry Karamazov, with his hands steeped in blood? Perhaps it was a feeling of revulsion at the horrible crime he had contemplated? This version does not fit in with Dmitry's attack on Grigory. The latter might have been feasible if he had been seething with the evil Karamazov passions, but this man was incapable of such behaviour after cooling down. He was no cold-blooded killer. Thus, his motive in attacking Grigory is not given by the author. Raskolnikov had a motive in committing his second crime, which was the logical outcome of the first. Dmitry had no motive for his attack on Grigory, since there was no "first" crime psychologically to justify the second.

The gist of the matter is that Dmitry acted as though he was indeed a parricide. This follows the scheme laid down by the author, who has failed to notice that in doing so he has fallen into a psychological untruth: he has confronted himself with a difficult problem—that of depicting a man who, though no parricide, behaves as though he were one. Dostoyevsky has not noticed that at a certain point—a most important one—he has crossed the delicate border-line which, as he himself insists, must separate a character's external behaviour from his inner feelings. Neither has he noticed that in the chapter under discussion Dmitry not only behaves as though he has murdered his father; his behaviour can be explained only if he feels himself a parricide.

Dostoyevsky's attempt to make Dmitry's dark and evil soul appear better than it really is stands in contradiction to the objective character he has depicted. The evil

ebullition of the Karamazov passions has exerted such an influence over the author that he has been carried away by his own creation. Dmitry is fully capable of crime—such is the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from his character. Despite all his idealization of Dmitry, Dostoyevsky *feels* that his hero is a criminal, and does not notice that in this case he makes the latter behave as though he really were his father's murderer, this being reflected in all his acts in the garden, winding up with his attack on Grigory. He carries on in much the same vein after he has got away from his father's house and again all this is not explained.

What can the reason of all this be?

Without realizing it, Dostoyevsky is himself *divided* between two images of Dmitry: his own conception of his hero and the concrete Dmitry who stands in the dock facing trial—and this man is a murderer. Dostoyevsky has grown so merged with the second Dmitry that at times he does not feel any line of demarcation between the two images. On the one hand, we have a manifestation of the criminal Karamazov spirit, and on the other the writer's scheme or preconception which leads him to build up a perfect case against Dmitry, the better to disprove the justice of the secular court.

This dualism in Dostoyevsky, already discussed by us in connection with *The Idiot*, has again found expression in the writer's attitude towards Dmitry Karamazov, and speaks for a certain unsoundness of Dostoyevsky's mentality, his reactionary subjectivist tendentiousness, which led him away from real life, aggravated all that was pathological in him, and damaged the artistic value of his writings.

The psychologically unconvincing explanation of Dmitry's attack on Grigory is linked up with an idealization of the former throughout the novel. Dostoyevsky fails to see very much in this character, and besides is far too lenient towards him.

We know very definitely that Rodion Raskolnikov was capable of committing a crime only once in his lifetime, and then only due to the influence of a baneful "idea." It can in no way be said of Dmitry Karamazov that only once in his lifetime did he prove capable of kicking in the face a man lying prone on the ground, that only once in his lifetime did he prove capable of pulling about by the beard the father of a family or striking an old man on the head with a brass pestle.

The author has presented Dmitry in a very favourable light: he is the unfortunate victim of circumstances, a miserable sinner, but to be forgiven, for he is swayed by passions beyond his human control. It is for sins born of these passions that he, poor victim, must tread the road to Calvary with the whole of mankind. According to the Christian moral teaching, all men are equally in fault to one another, so that though he is not guilty Dmitry must accept his punishment: "Christ suffered and taught us to suffer." This readiness to suffer for the sins of others gives Dmitry, as Dostoyevsky sees it, the halo of a martyr.

However affecting all this may be, the role of scapegoat, of a tragic victim sacrificed for the sins of mankind, is not suited to this man, who, far from being a victim, is always prepared to do violence to others. So overwhelming is the atmosphere of sympathy created by the author that all Dmitry's misdeeds, including his near-murders, fade into insignificance, sink into oblivion. The fact that he did not commit murder in the physical sense turns out to be the morally decisive factor. His moral guilt yields place to the sins of all mankind. If we were not aware of Dostoyevsky's proneness at times to turn a blind eye to the distortions in his writings, we might have been forced to the conclusion that he consciously strives to have his hero's personal and private iniquities swallowed up in the sins of mankind as a whole, and moreover crowns him with a martyr's halo for those sins.

Again we see that, against his own will, Dostoyevsky in actual fact considers the juridical aspect more important than the human. Dmitry's innocence of parricide in the legal sense proves of greater consequence than his guilt as a man in a number of near-murders, his constant readiness to commit murder. What is surprising is that this has come from a writer with such keen psychological insight as Dostoyevsky. His stand in this matter testifies to the falseness of the entire conception the figure of Dmitry Karamazov has been built on.

During the investigation and the trial the author makes the figure of Dmitry Karamazov tower high above the crowd of coarse and stupid lawyers, prosecutors and judges around him. The question will no doubt arise as to the moral foundation that, in the author's eyes, justifies this glorification of a would-be killer.

The Christian conception of the grace of suffering for the sins of others has very conveniently enabled Dostoyevsky to submerge Dmitry's moral downfall in the ocean of mankind's sins.

The Karamazov Brothers is convincing testimony to the extreme moral opportunism of Christian ethics and to the baneful effect sacerdotal ideology can exert on art.

Dmitry Karamazov is not without his good points. He is totally devoid of cunning and pettiness; he is frank, kind and truthful, and the voice of conscience is not silent within him. These features, however, may be inherent in people who are on the whole quite negative in character. The worst villain in the world is usually not without certain virtues.

The crux of the matter is that within each person is a quality that determines the whole tenor of his make-up, despite the host of other traits in him. A man should be judged by his actions—this is a truth that Gorky always insisted on, for it is only in his acts and deeds that a man displays his essence and his real worth. These are

also revealed in his mistakes, their nature, his ability to condemn them, and in actions taken to correct them.

The opportunism of Christian ethics lies in the fact that it confines itself to the sphere of the intentions, and the urges of qualms of conscience; in the moral appraisal of a man it uses the criterion of "sincerity" in love and repentance, in other words the subjective and psychological sphere. Despite the scriptural statement that "faith without deeds is dead," deeds in view boil down in actual practice to passive love, compassion and suffering.

If we lose sight of the necessity of discovering the main feature in each man against the background of the inner struggle between good and evil; if we forget that a man's leading feature is revealed and assessed first and foremost in his actions, then we get an immobile and changeless co-existence of good and evil in a man's soul. Dostoyevsky cursed duality as a calamity for the human soul; *Dostoyevskyism*, in other words the worst in Dostoyevsky, is synonymous with a frozen or unchangeable duality, a repudiation of any appraisal of the chief quality in man, a renunciation of the only worth-while criterion of a man's moral value—the criterion of behaviour, action.

With all his individual features, Dmitry Karamazov is, in the final analysis, a variant of a constant figure in Dostoyevsky's works—that of a man capable of feeling satisfaction and joy in either of two extremes—the greatest generosity or the vilest villainy. In the same way as Stavrogin, Dmitry Karamazov calls himself a *spider*, an abominable and predatory insect. Like Stavrogin, Dmitry admits that he is not only vicious, but loves vice and the shame of vice; he has not only been cruel but derives enjoyment in cruelty. With this similarity in the main features of these two men's characters, their individual differences and peculiarities pale into insignificance.

Why is it then that Stavrogin, Versilov and the like, despite a certain idealization, are condemned by Dosto-

yevsky, while Dmitry Karamazov emerges with a nimbus of martyrdom?

This, in the first place, stems from Dostoyevsky's view that Dmitry is a typical man of the day in whom evil exists side by side with noble impulses. As typified by Dmitry Karamazov, man is helpless in the grip of evil impulses, whose cat's-paw he becomes. Cruel to little children and the cause of little Ilyusha's death; himself but a grown-up child, at once kind and cruel—such is Dmitry Karamazov as seen by Dostoyevsky, and at the same time such is modern man—just like a hobbledohoy who cannot distinguish between good and evil. If man were not to be curbed by some external force—Dmitry frankly acknowledges that it was only some external force that turned him from his evil practices—he would run berserk and work woe all around him. This external force is *religion, the church*, which alone is capable of holding in check modern man who, by nature, is an anarchist.

This profoundly pessimistic and anti-humanistic conception of the evil nature of man "in general," or "modern man," lies at the root of the idealistic nimbus around the head of Dmitry Karamazov, and determines the basic falsity in this figure, the indulgence granted for all sins and transgressions, as well as the blindness and deafness the author displays towards his hero's real character. Dmitry's very essence as a creation of literary art disproves Dostoyevsky's attempt to show him as a "typical" or "ordinary" man. No, his criminal proclivities are not peculiar to man "in general," but spring from the anarchic, destructive Karamazov spirit, that dark soul of a social renegade so often depicted by Dostoyevsky.

There is another reason for the writer's idealization of Dmitry. If Stavrogin represents "nihilism," Versilov the camp of the liberal nobles, and the hero of *Notes from Underground* extreme rationalism and a cognate extreme egotism, Dmitry Karamazov, despite all his crimes and escapades, stands for a devout Orthodox Christianity.

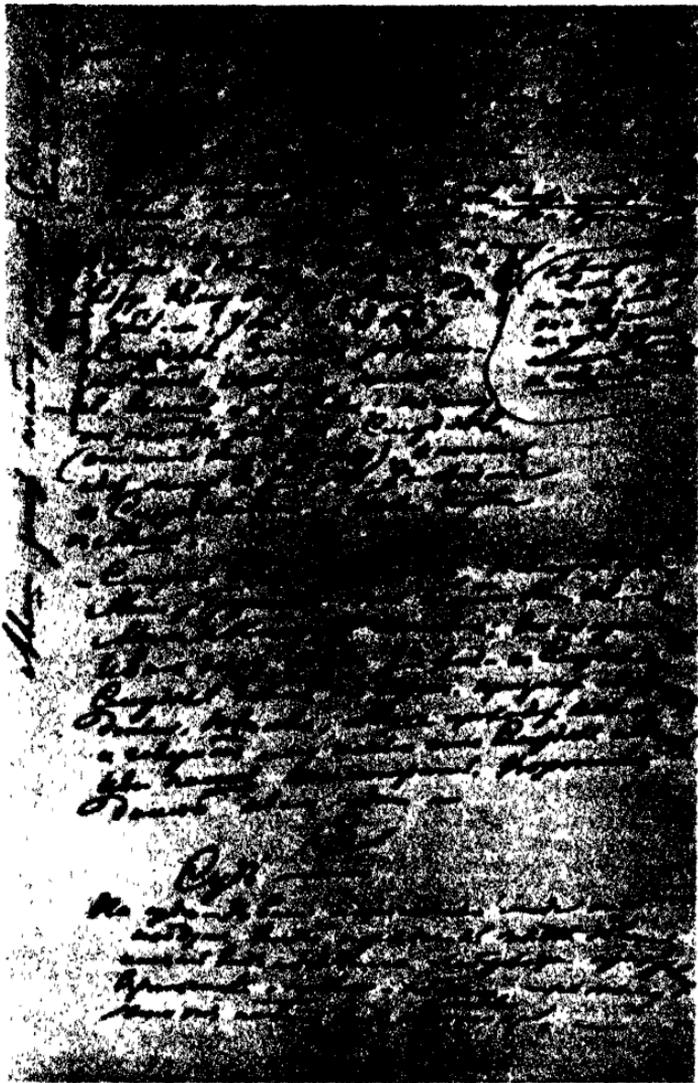
This has been well brought out by D. Ovsiannikov-Kulikovsky,* who wrote: "This is an inhumane, exasperated and malevolent religiousness. . . . The heroes of the novel repent, and, in their repentance, become embittered; their suffering consciences have created animosity in them. They are most bitter against such that do not believe in the immortality of the soul and in retribution beyond the grave. In the anger he displays towards this negation, Dostoyevsky engages in a kind of self-flagellation; in scourging the deniers, Dostoyevsky has scourged himself, or rather that part of his dualist mind that is full of doubt, does not wish to believe, and denies."

Dmitry Karamazov hates science, knowledge, atheism and atheists. He says to his brother Alyosha during their prison interview, "Then, if He does not exist, man is the chief of the earth, of the universe. Magnificent! Only how is he going to be virtuous without God? That's the question! That is what I want to know! For whom is man going to love then? Whom will he be grateful to and sing hymns to? Rakitin laughs. Rakitin says that God is not needed in order to love mankind. Well, only a snivelling and shrivelled idiot can maintain that. I can't understand it."

Dmitry's question: "How is he going to be virtuous without God?" might well be countered with another question: How could Dmitry Karamazov be so lacking in virtue with his faith in God?

It has been pointed out in literature on Dostoyevsky that the concept that virtue is impossible without faith in God, one so assiduously propagated by Dostoyevsky, is exploded by its being stated by such men as Dmitry

* Ovsiannikov-Kulikovsky, Dmitry Nikolayevich (1853-1920)—Russian literary critic and linguist, representative of idealistic psychological method in philology. Author of many studies on Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Tolstoi, Chekhov, etc. Wrote *inter alia* three-volume *History of Russian Intelligentsia*.



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Karamazov. People of this kind find it hard to be "virtuous" without the mainstay of some external authority, since they are lacking in social ties and in moral fibre of their own.

Dmitry Karamazov's Christianity follows the pattern of the precept: "Unless you sin, you will not repent; unless you repent, you shall not be saved." From this point of view virtue cannot be achieved without sin; the greater the sin, the more efficacious the repentance and consequently the resulting virtue. *The Karamazov Brothers*, this sacerdotal novel, is permeated with this moral approach, which is the reason why Dmitry Karamazov reaches such stature in the story. He is a sinner, but a sinner who believes in the Lord. Therefore all the vice in him, which would have evoked Dostoyevsky's fury and condemnation had they belonged to a "nihilist," is pardoned and glossed over.

In this connection Repin* wrote to I. Kramskoi** in

* Repin, Ilya Yefimovich (1844-1930)—great Russian painter of realist school. Developed under influence of revolutionary democrats of sixties. Together with Surikov stood at the apex of Russian realist art in second half of 19th century. His highly optimistic art was based in the democratic current in social life of Russia after emancipation of serfs (1861). His paintings, reflecting the exploitation of the people under tsarism and their struggle for liberation, comprise scenes from everyday life, landscapes, portraits, historical scenes and illustrations, and are marked by remarkable insight into life, tremendous power of expression, colour and composition, brilliant drawing. Their humanist content and realism make his art prominent contribution to Russian and world art, as well as precious heritage for Soviet art.

** Kramskoi, Ivan Nikolayevich (1837-1887)—prominent Russian painter and teacher. Was leader of group of democratic painters of realistic convictions who formed the *Peredvizhniki*. His important contribution to Russian art lies in series of portraits of Russian peasants, marked by profound social and psychological treatment and also of prominent writers, poets and artists. His articles and letters which contain profound progressive thoughts on art, played an important part in the development of national democratic and realistic art.

1881: "Dostoyevsky is a great talent in art, a profound thinker, and a warm heart, but he is a broken and down-cast man, one who is afraid to tackle the vital problems of human life and looks backwards the whole time. (What is there to learn from such a man—that monasteries are the ideal?) And is it from such that the salvation of Russia will come! And human knowledge is of the Devil and gives birth to sceptics like Ivan Karamazov, abominable Rakitins and homuncular-like Smerdyakovs!

"Of quite different stuff are the believers, like Alyosha Karamazov, and even Dmitry, despite all his evil actions and violent morals, is liked by the author. . . ."

As a progressive Russian, Repin voiced his indignation at the inclusion in the novel of "coarse attacks against the Poles," "hatred of the West," "mockery of Catholicism and glorification of Orthodoxy," "priest-inspired imprecations against atheism and the allegedly resultant general demoralization, selfishness and the like. All these are gross exaggerations worthy of our Moscow thinkers and publicists headed by Katkov. . . ."

It was just Dmitry's devotion to the Orthodox Church that led to Dostoyevsky's simply not noticing the fact that all the fulmination he has indulged in and the *cause célèbre* he has arranged around the problem of whether Dmitry is a parricide or a would-be parricide do not deserve the efforts a great writer has spent on them. With all his shortcomings, Dmitry is an attractive if not positive figure for Dostoyevsky because of his devout attachment to the church as the only salvation from amorality.

It is surely not without significance that the only figure Russian clerical reaction could bring forward in opposition to atheism, democracy and revolution was the non-social Dmitry Karamazov.

His brother Ivan Karamazov is another embodiment of amorality, rent by the most overpowering temptations,

a man drawn to a slogan later to be raised high by Nietzsche: "Everything is permitted!" "Down with all moral norms, rules and principles!" As was to be expected, Dostoyevsky links up this amorality with Ivan's revolt against religion. We thus have two of the Karamazov brothers opposed to each other; the elder, Dmitry, is a man of evil passions, capable of committing crime, but since he has an unshakable faith in God, he will be saved. Ivan is ruled by reason and stands very far from sinful passions and crime, but since he rises up against religion and the church he will inevitably end up as a criminal, although crime is foreign to his nature. *Pereat mundus, fiat tendential* might well be said in this connection. Let truth and logic go by the board, if only the writer's scheme be maintained and loyalist platitudes be triumphant! The moral Dostoyevsky would insist on is that the atheist and the doubter in the church of Christ must end up as criminals. There is no other path they can travel. If you have no belief in God, you will surely murder your father, even if you do so through the agency of a servant you have tempted. Such and only such is the fate of the unbelieving!

The unfortunate father of this family, Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov, who has been so much put to shame in the story for his "nihilism" and latitudinarianism, becomes a kind of guinea-pig for his sons' experiments in the sphere of ideology and even murder. Dmitry is fully capable of murder, but has not killed; Ivan is incapable of murder, but kills through Smerdyakov, whom he had taught godlessness. This has come to be because at the decisive moment the grace of God falls upon Dmitry, while Ivan has not been thus blessed, for he knows not the fear of the Lord. He has merely incited Smerdyakov to commit murder so as to provide proof of the author's theory that an atheist or a doubter in God cannot but be criminal.

Despite all its shaky foundation and unconvincing construction, *The Karamazov Brothers* testifies to the

might of Dostoyevsky's genius. In the chapter entitled "Rebellion" he seems to have concentrated the feelings of protest and indignation scattered in his writings, thus revealing all the rebelliousness that seethed within him. Despite the clerical prejudices that warped both his art and his conscience, he has in this chapter torn asunder the bonds about him and together with Ivan has rendered battle against this clericalism, drawing the pious Alyosha into the conflict. Each word in this chapter has indeed been written with the blood of the author's heart, for he has opened his heart for all to see and hear, and asks his unquenchable conscience radical questions that brook no equivocation.

Genuine literature, one worthy of the name, is always written with the blood of the author's heart!

Humanity will never forget Dostoyevsky's rebellion, or the fact that this protest against the falseness of religion comes in the pages of a clerical novel. Literature means the truth, and as the saying goes: truth will out!

In this chapter, Dostoyevsky deals in the most powerful and poignant tones with the theme of children's sufferings. Can one ever forget the poor child driven to death by a rich general, a landowner, who sets a pack of hounds on the child. The hounds catch him and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes! Dostoyevsky has created the collective image of children who suffer in this world and is not afraid to place scathing words into the mouth of Ivan Karamazov with his revolt against the Christian legend of "divine harmony," a harmony that is not worth the tear of a single tormented child!

A feature of Ivan's revolt is that he seems to accept and bow to all the precepts of Christianity: God is omnipotent; He has created the heaven and the earth; the day of divine harmony will surely come; the offended will turn the other cheek; all people have been born in sin:

they have tasted of the apple from the tree of wisdom and are steeped in iniquity. That is why suffering is the common lot. Ivan consents to accept these ridiculous Christian dogmas, which for centuries have been used by the privileged minority in a society based on exploitation in order to keep the overwhelming majority in a state of subjection. Let us suppose that all these things are true, he seems to say, but what about the sufferings of the children?

“‘I repeat for the hundredth time,’ Ivan says to Alyosha, ‘there are a multitude of questions, but I have taken only the children, for here what I mean to say is unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for eternal harmony, what has that to do with the children, I ask you? It’s beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should have to pay for that harmony? Why should they too become material to manure the soil for some sort of future harmony. Solidarity in iniquity among men is something I can understand, and also solidarity in retribution, but there can be no solidarity in sin with little children. And if the truth lies in their sharing responsibility with their fathers for the sins those fathers have committed, such truth is not of this world and I don’t understand it. Some jester will say that this child will grow up anyway and will commit sins, but the fact is that he did not grow up and when he was eight was torn to pieces by hounds. Oh, Alyosha, I am not blaspheming! I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth will blend in one single voice of praise, and all living things will cry out, ‘Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!’ But when the mother will embrace the tormentor who had her child torn to pieces by hounds, and all three cry aloud in tears: ‘Thou art just, O Lord!’ then of course the summit of knowledge will be reached and all will be explained. But the trouble is that I can’t accept that harmony! And

while I am on this earth, I hasten to take my own measures. You see, Alyosha, it may indeed happen that if I live to see the day, or rise from the dead to see it, then I too may utter with all the rest, at the sight of the mother embracing the child's tormentor: 'Thou art just, O Lord!' But I do not want to be among those who will cry out then. While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself, and I renounce the higher harmony completely. It's not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat its breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears, to 'dear, kind God!' It's not worth it, because those tears have not been atoned for. Atoned for they must be, for otherwise there can be no harmony. But how, how will you expiate them? Is that possible? Can it be done through vengeance. Why should I avenge them; what do I care for Hell for the tormentors? What can Hell alter, when those children have already been tortured to death?... And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of suffering necessary for the purchase of the truth, then I assert in advance that the truth is not worth that price. I do not want that mother to embrace the tormentor who hurled her son to the hounds! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she so wishes; let her forgive the tormentor for the boundless anguish of her heart of a mother. But she has no right to forgive the sufferings of her tortured child; she dare not forgive the tormentor, even were the child to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being that could and had the right to forgive? I don't want harmony; I don't want it because of my love of mankind. I prefer to remain with the unavenged sufferings.... Yes, too high a price has been asked for harmony; and the entrance fee is beyond our means. That is why I hasten to return my entrance ticket. If I am an honest man, it is my duty to return it at the earliest opportunity. That is what I

am doing. It is not God that I do not accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket.'

"'That's rebellion,' murmured Alyosha, looking down."

Indeed, this is a rebellion against the very foundations of religion, despite Ivan's asserting, "It is not God that I do not accept," but only the world God has created and His divine "harmony." Ivan reveals the falseness and deception not only of Christianity, but of all and any religious morality which calls upon man to bow to suffering and the crimes committed against mankind in the name of the future celestial "harmony." Let us imagine, says Ivan, that this harmony will arrive. In that case will it be moral for the mother to forgive the author of her child's sufferings? She has not the *moral* right to forgive! Let us imagine that under that divine harmony some other kind of reason will rule, not the ordinary, earthly, Euclidean reason peculiar to man. Let us further imagine that with that "higher" reason we shall be able to understand that these sufferings are for the good of man, since they are the price to be paid for the truth, for the expiation of sins, and the like. But I, as a man, Ivan goes on to say, with my earthly reason, granted, as you assert from your religious standpoint, from on high, cannot reconcile myself with mankind's unbearable sufferings, and in the first place with the sufferings of little children, whose only fault it is that they have been born on this earth.

Religion asserts that no one is to blame for mankind's sufferings, that whatever takes place is preordained from above. It goes on to claim that all the wrong done on earth, all the blood shed and all the anguish suffered must be put up with, and in another and better world everything will be made clear: why the general had to have a little child torn to pieces by his pack of hounds; why a little girl of five should be locked up all night in the cold and frost in a privy and have her face smeared with excrement; why it was necessary that little Ilyu-

shechka should die, cut to the heart by the humiliation Dmitry Karamazov inflicted on his father; why the crying of hungry children should be heard all over the earth, and why the earth should be soaked in human tears from its crust to the very centre. Religion teaches that all this results from the divine will, that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable and that our sufferings bring us nearer to God. Ivan unmasks the essential falsehood that lies at the root of religion: mankind's sufferings are necessary because they are the price of future bliss, and that therefore everything that takes place, including the most monstrous humiliation and degradation of man, is a blessing. The reason of man, his conscience, cannot bow to insult and humiliation, or the torment that little children undergo, and it is this and only this human morality that is sacred. In his own rebellion Dostoyevsky achieves a new moral stature in his assertion that consenting to human suffering is *immoral*. Surely this is genuinely human and the only humane morality. And it is this morality that Dostoyevsky forces the pious and meek Alyosha to accept. When Ivan asks Alyosha, who shares his anguish for the sufferings of mankind, what should be done to the general who had a little child torn to pieces by hounds: "Well, what did he deserve? To be shot? For the satisfaction of our moral feelings—to be shot? Speak up, Alyosha!"—it seems as though Alyosha's answer is being awaited not only by Ivan, but, in the ensuing silence that can be sensed all over the world, by millions of people. That is because, though Alyosha's answer is scarcely audible, it resounds like a thunderclap in all corners of the earth, for the reply actually comes from Dostoyevsky himself: "He should be shot," murmured Alyosha, lifting his eyes to Ivan, a pale, twisted smile on his face."

Whether this particular general should be shot or not is beside the point. The question is one of humanity's *moral memory*, whether it has the right to forget such



Fyodor Dostoyevsky's study in St. Petersburg. 1871-81

crimes, whether the conscience of mankind can allow even the thought that a "harmony" is possible under which such crimes can be forgiven. Can the conscience of mankind forget or condone the tear of a single tormented child? For our part, we can add to these words: can mankind's conscience today attempt to justify the drenching of the whole earth in a new ocean of children's tears? Has mankind that moral right?

Such is the moral essence of the problem raised by Dostoyevsky.

The chapter "Rebellion" bears irrefutable testimony to the fact that nothing can still humanity's conscience—and that of Russian literature. With all his departures from the traditions and principles of that literature, Dostoyevsky developed in its spiritual atmosphere. He began his career as a pupil of Gogol and Belinsky, and revered Pushkin and Lermontov, Griboyedov, Nekrasov and Tolstoi. It is their voices that join *Dostoyevsky's* in "Rebellion," the voices of those who have given expression to the conscience of the Russian people and that of mankind.

Ivan's revolt and the revolt raised by the hero of *Notes from Underground* stand at opposite poles. The latter rose up against everything the Crystal Palace stood for, against the harmony offered by utopian socialism and set forth in *What Is To Be Done?* Ivan Karamazov rebelled against the false "harmony" that tried to justify the ills and wrongs on this earth. Dostoyevsky looks upon the mean, petty and selfish "revolt" of the hero of *Notes from Underground* with loathing and contempt. Ivan towers above this man in moral stature, for his revolt is for, and in the name of, all humanity, and Dostoyevsky finds for him worthy words and thoughts that sound like a clarion call all over the world.

A contemporary critic said of Ivan Karamazov's revolt that it "shakes the reader like the cry of Prometheus, chained to the rock, who sees the sufferings and the

injustice inflicted on mankind without being able to take a step to help it." Indeed, Dostoyevsky was torn by anguish for the sufferings of mankind, without being able to do anything to help it.

To the religious-minded the question put by Ivan—whether the "divine harmony" of the future is worth the tear of a single tormented child—requires no answer, since religion calls for a positive reply. According to the teachings of religion, the universe is the handiwork of the Lord, and everything that goes on in the world does so at his bidding. Consequently, everything is for the best; even the tears shed by little children. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable, and it is not the business of man, whose very essence is sinful and earthbound, to ask why children's sufferings are necessary. Of course, these sufferings should be alleviated as much as possible in the name of Christian love, but all that goes beyond that is from the Evil One. The answer supplied by religion therefore calls for blind and mute submission to the divine will, and this fits in with the amorality of Christian "morals" which both attracted and horrified Rodion Raskolnikov, and is revealed so forcefully by Ivan Karamazov and his question.

Of course, Dostoyevsky introduced this *rebellion* into the story the better to counter it with more cogent counter-arguments. It was his purpose to confute his opponents in his strongest defences, for he realized that there was no other way to distract his readers, particularly the youth, from the "ruinous" path of indignation and rebellion. Rebellion was brought into the novel only to be ultimately crushed, but to bring such protest into being called for the writer's soul being able to rise up in rebellion and indignation, his ability to feel responsibility to the insulted and humiliated, and a conscience in him that could not grow blunted.

Although Dostoyevsky bent every effort to crush the rebellion he had brought about in his novel, he himself

acknowledged in his private correspondence that Ivan Karamazov's argument against the falseness of religion—the argument of the children's tears—was irrefutable. Dostoyevsky has emerged in the role of a kind of Frankenstein who cannot control the monster he has created.

All this caused great alarm in Russian reactionary circles. With his keen mind and unflinching instinct for all that smacked of revolution, Pobedonostsev felt serious apprehension on reading the fifth book of the novel, entitled *Pro and Contra*, and waited with anxiety to see how Dostoyevsky would be able to controvert Ivan. He admitted that the latter's arguments were marked by "force and energy" and put a "most necessary question" to Dostoyevsky, namely, whether "objections will be forthcoming?" Dostoyevsky considered that Book Six, *The Russian Monk*, which centres about Father Zosima, his chief reply, and indeed worked on it for over three months, which was exceedingly long for him. Dissatisfied with what he had written, he wrote to Pobedonostsev on August 24, 1879: "I fear and tremble for it; will it prove adequate? That is the crux of the whole matter, and therein lies my care and my concern: Will I be understood? Will I achieve my aim in some small measure?"

The writer could not make up his mind to give a direct answer to Ivan, preferring to do so indirectly and obliquely. In the same letter he wrote to Pobedonostsev that "the thoughts previously expressed (in the Grand Inquisitor and earlier*) remain undenied and what has been presented is something diametrically opposed to the world outlook expressed above, and again not point by point, but, in a manner of speaking, in an artistic picture." In the last words of the dying Zosima Dostoyevsky saw the denial he sought. "I have arrived at what is for

* I. e., in the chapter "Rebellion."—*Tr.*

me the climax of the novel. I must cope well with my task," he wrote to another correspondent on April 30, 1879, regarding the first half of *Pro and Contra*, which includes "Rebellion." Writing on May 10 to the same correspondent, he said, "Side by side with blasphemy and anarchy is their refutation, now being prepared by me in the dying Zosima's last words," and further in the same letter: "...The chief anarchists were in many cases people with *sincere convictions*. My hero takes a theme that, in my opinion, is incontrovertible: the senselessness of children's suffering, and deduces from it the absurdity of all historical reality."

It is thus that Dostoyevsky emphasized that Ivan's arguments were irresistible but nevertheless he immediately took himself in hand and went on to say, "My hero's blasphemy will be solemnly refuted in the next (June) book, which I am now working on with fear, trepidation and reverence, considering my task (the routing of anarchism) my civic duty."

The doubt and hesitation he experienced in connection with the ideological struggle he was waging against himself, are shown in the following: the scale that Ivan's revolt had assumed and the force of his arguments filled Dostoyevsky with such apprehension that on May 19, 1879, he wrote to Pobedonostsev about his fear that what he had written might not be published. It may well be that this was written to ensure Pobedonostsev's backing should the censors raise any obstacles to publication. What is obvious is that Dostoyevsky felt it incumbent to develop the theme of Ivan's revolt with much the same force as he deemed it necessary to wage his attack on anarchism. In the same letter to Pobedonostsev the admission is made that the theme of rebellion is more powerful in the novel than the counter-theme of the extinction of that rebellion. Pobedonostsev was forewarned by the author: "...blasphemy has been treated, as I myself have felt and understood, more convincingly-

ly. . ." and the writer went on to say that "even in so abstract a theme" he did not wish "to be faithless to realism."

A most valuable admission! Indeed the victory was won by realism, for Dosloyevsky's counter-arguments can bear no comparison with the force and extent of Ivan's revolt. Let us examine briefly the considerable efforts made by Dostoyevsky to cope with the revolt under discussion.

In the first place, he tried to denigrate it *from within*, to reveal its false and vicious foundation, and, with this end in view, he presented the dilemma: *acceptance or non-acceptance of this world?* If divine Providence is recognized in all things, if the cause of all life is declared beyond human understanding, including therein the reason of the sufferings undergone by men and even little children, then comes the joy of the acceptance of God's world, with all the beauties of Nature and everything the world has to give. If the sense and justification of human suffering is not seen in the workings of divine Providence and the future "divine harmony," then, the only thing remaining is sheer voidness and the black abyss of non-acceptance of the world, chaos and discord. This, in its turn, is the source and fount of the philosophy of "everything is permitted" and Smerdyakovism, which is the truth and practice of this "philosophy."

Ivan Karamazov's "philosophy," which allegedly follows from his "rebellion," is anarchic and profoundly decadent, for the only kind of protest Dostoyevsky's heroes know is anarchic in character. Ivan Karamazov does not raise the question of a struggle against the tormentors of the downtrodden majority of mankind and against the butchers of little children; for him the thesis of the senseless sufferings of humanity is at the same time a recognition of the absurdity of all human history, of all reality. This is nothing but bourgeois anarchism,

nihilism in ideas and morals. Of course, Ivan Karamazov is in no way a revolutionary, since to Dostoyevsky, as well as to the entire camp of the Pobedonostsevs and the Katkovs, with their gross ignorance of ideology, the concepts *revolutionary* and *anarchist* were synonymous. In the *conclusions* he draws from his rebellion, Ivan is an anarchist.

But can his anarchistic *non-acceptance of the world* in the least degree belittle the protest contained in his revolt, a protest against the cynical acceptance of the torment undergone by mankind and the sufferings of little children? Can there be any denial of the disclosure of the cynical lie contained in the justification of evil on earth by arguing that "divine harmony" awaits man in the world to come?

It may be that from this protest and disclosure pessimistic and decadent conclusions are drawn by Ivan Karamazov. His non-acceptance of the world shows with special force that in none of his works did Dostoyevsky ever create a single type of genuine revolutionary; what he did create under the guise of revolutionaries was bourgeois anarchists and decadent individualists. But the infamy of indifference to the suffering of little children remains in full measure.

Of course Dostoyevsky is unable to prove that any protest against moral justification of the tormenting of little children must lead to recognition of the senselessness of the universe, and hence to the chaos of the "everything-is-permitted" philosophy. The unprovable can never be proved!

Instead of discussing the essence of Ivan's words regarding the cynicism of any attempt to justify the tormenting of little children, Dostoyevsky prefers to discredit Ivan himself.

It is not against the idea brought forward by his opponent—Ivan is at one and the same time his opponent and part of his own soul—that Dostoyevsky is waging a

polemic, but against the discretionary and non-obligatory conclusions his opponent has drawn from that idea. What results is a polemic conducted on two, non-intersecting planes.

Dostoyevsky can produce no direct argument against the thesis that to justify human suffering is immoral, because he is afraid to give utterance to that fearful thought. Were he to do so, he would have to say: if you wish to deny Ivan Karamazov's non-acceptance of God's world and the chaos that entails, then you must accept the sufferings of the little children as part of divine dispensation; you dare not doubt the inscrutable workings of Providence, and must blindly believe in the advent of divine harmony. Otherwise, if your mind and conscience rise up in protest against man's sufferings, you will fall into the bottomless pit of complete loss of reason, the slough of madness, the end of the road travelled by Ivan Karamazov.

Dostoyevsky was afraid openly and directly to give this reply to Ivan's thesis, for the simple reason that it was his love of suffering mankind that led to the rebellion in the *The Karamazov Brothers*. Consequently he could not make up his mind to say openly that tacit agreement to children's sufferings is a condition necessary for the "acceptance of God's world," and decided instead to give indirect and roundabout expression to that thought.

This was done in Dmitry Karamazov's dream about the starving child and its weeping, which could be heard all over the earth—a most forceful image of great artistic value, sharing so much in common with Nekrasov's moving and poignant sympathy with the grief in starving villages. The conclusion drawn, however, is that of the necessity of sharing the child's grief, of co-crucifixion with it, which cannot be qualified otherwise than sanctimonious reconciliation with the sufferings of men and little children.

Another expression of the same idea is given in the teachings of Father Zosima, in which the author's only reply to Ivan's revolt boils down in essence to the most ordinary Kantism. Zosima teaches that only on high, in the future "divine harmony," will man, with his sinful and abominable nature, "see everything in the proper light and cease from argument. On earth we seem indeed to be wandering. . . . Much on earth 'is concealed from us, but instead we have granted unto us the sacramental and precious feeling of our living links with another world, the world of celestial bliss and glory, and besides, our thoughts and feelings are not rooted here, but in other worlds. That is why philosophers say that the essence of things cannot be realized on earth."

No more is said! The essence of things is beyond human understanding, so that man should live humbly, comfort the children as well as he can, and not try to find out why they should suffer torment. Such is the cynicism of the religion preached by the reverend Father Zosima, a cynicism that would hallow the torment of children!

It might be added that there is great similarity between the stands held by Father Zosima and Ivan Karamazov. They both start with the assumption of the non-cognizability of things-in-themselves on this earth, only one of them stands in devout admiration of this mystery, while the other is angered by it. This is additional proof that, in the person of Ivan and in the anarchic conclusions he draws from his revolt, Dostoyevsky dealt a blow not at materialism and atheism but at one of the forms of idealism. He could not disprove this kind of idealism, because what he opposed to it was merely another form of idealism. What, however, interests us in Ivan's revolt is not its idealistic character, but its living realism, its mighty protest against human suffering and against deafness to it. Dostoyevsky's only reply to this protest is the thesis that the world is incognizable.

Other efforts were made by Dostoyevsky to find a reply to Ivan's protest and counter it. He made Ivan tell his younger brother "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" with the purpose of derogating Ivan's love of man and mankind. We shall not analyze the Legend, since it repeats in essence the contents of *Shigalevism*, the selfsame conception, so attractive to Dostoyevsky's heroes, of the unlimited power of the *select* over the mass of depersonalized slaves. The ideal and the programme brought forward by the Grand Inquisitor would create millions of servile slaves supervised by hundreds of thousands of the élite, who would deprive them of all will and understanding, leaving to them only the right to unquestioning obedience. Of course "everything is permitted" to the *select*, who would rule their underlings on absolutely authoritarian principles. The difference between the Shigalev Utopia and that of Ivan Karamazov is that in the Legend Dostoyevsky has added to his polemic against "nihilism" another polemic directed against Catholicism, confusing and fusing the two with a fantastic obsession that borders on the maniacal.

Due credit should be given to Dostoyevsky's discernment, which enabled him to foresee both in Raskolnikov's "idea" and the utopias envisaged by Shigalev and the Grand Inquisitor the very real social danger of the future Nietzschean philosophy. It might incidentally be mentioned that even that most reactionary apologist of Dostoyevsky's most reactionary ideas, S. Bulgakov,* was forced to admit the identity of the Grand Inquisitor's theory of a higher breed of man and Nietzsche's *Uebermensch*. So striking is this coincidence that even the most reactionary publicists have had to give up any

* Bulgakov, Sergei Nikolayevich (1871-1927)—Russian reactionary bourgeois economist and philosopher. In nineties stood on platform of "legal Marxism," but later went over to idealism and clericalism. Emigrated during Great October Socialist Revolution. Bitter enemy of Soviet power.

attempt to ascribe the Inquisitor's teaching to the revolutionary camp, however hard Dostoyevsky tried to do so. In his striving to achieve this purpose we see the same medley and confusion of social and ideological conceptions that mark Dostoyevsky's other works. However, even "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" can in no way belittle the protest in *The Karamazov Brothers* against mankind's sufferings and the teaching of indifference to them.

Finally, there is another argument that Dostoyevsky was able to bring forward against the protest he placed into Ivan's mouth, an argument he considered the most powerful of all—the appeal to Christ. When Ivan, in developing his idea of the inhumanity of the forgiveness of torment caused to children, asks, "Is there in the whole world a being that could and had the right to forgive?" Alyosha answers, "There is such a Being, and He can forgive everything, all, and for all, for He gave His innocent blood for all and for everything. You have forgotten Him, but on Him is built the edifice, and it is to Him they will cry aloud, 'Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed!'"

"Ivan's formula: 'I accept God, but I do not accept His world' is without doubt confutation of God, for it is only through the medium of the world that God can be known," wrote A. Lunacharsky.* "God the creator, who made this world of suffering, in which Dostoyevsky's soul

* Lunacharsky, Anatoly Vasilyevich (1875-1933)—Soviet statesman and public figure, prominent leader of Soviet culture. Member of the Academy of Science from 1930. Joined Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1897. Adhered to Bolsheviks at Second Party Congress (1903) and took part in revolution of 1905. Joined Bolsheviks in 1917. Was first People's Commissar for Education (1917-29). Outstanding publicist, orator and historian of art and literature. Was not always consistent in aesthetic views which led to ideological errors. Author of historical dramas *Oliver Cromwell* (1920), *Thomas Campanella* (1922), etc., and numerous articles on Russian literature, music, theatre and dramaturgy.

moves with such exquisite torment and tears of blood, cannot be accepted by him as the fount of Justice. What does Dostoyevsky take refuge behind to evade his own criticism, which he has placed into Ivan's mouth? He does so behind the Christ brought forward by Alyosha, the Christ who also went through anguish. Dostoyevsky thus makes recourse to the absurdity, inherent in the Christian teaching, that God Himself is imperfect, that He too suffered anguish. Christ's deeds assert in fact that God was in error when He created the world, when He created Adam, and that to rectify His mistake He had to send His only son, which really means Himself, to die a shameful death. It is behind this Christian absurdity that Dostoyevsky has taken refuge!"

To this should be added that the use of Christ as a moral authority entitled, as Alyosha points out, to forgive everything, all and for all, including in that case even the general who had a child torn to pieces by his hounds in the presence of its mother, stresses with special force the amorality of religion. To use the myth of the innocent blood shed to redeem all sins so as to justify torrents of innocent blood and oceans of children's tears—such is the pious fraud of Christianity. It is through Christ that the right to torture little children has been bought, for he has redeemed all the sins of all; here we have a cynical fusion of the high conception of *redemption* and the base concept of *purchase*!

Whatever reference is made to Christ, it cannot override the protest voiced by the author through Ivan Karamazov. Were the latter genuinely consistent, he would have to say, following the logic of his revolt and his premises: "With my Euclidean and human understanding I cannot comprehend this mystery; I cannot make out how the justification of children's anguish can be bought by the mystical blood of Him who is blameless. I prefer to remain with my suffering unredeemed, with my earthly, perhaps limited non-understanding, but the only one

within the reach of my mind. . . ." Instead of this, Ivan, in compliance with the author's behest, tells "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," which has no direct bearing on the subject of his argument with Alyosha . . . or on the author's argument with himself.

Dostoyevsky's mind was hemmed in by two kinds of idealistic philosophy and two kinds of amorality and cruelty. On the one hand there was the amorality and cruelty of bourgeois individualism, the idea of the *Uebermensch*, which he had anticipated; on the other, there was the cruelty and amorality of religion with its justification of all the evil in life. We see that the writer realized the cynicism in both kinds of amorality. This must be why he put so much of his own passion into Ivan's revolt, which the sin of amorality laid at the door of religion.

Dostoyevsky was unable to disprove what was objectively true and valuable in Ivan's revolt, because he himself had left the mainstream of his argument and become involved in side issues. Indeed, whence does it follow that the principle "everything is permitted" is the logical consequence of Ivan's revolt? On the contrary, the positive kernel of that protest contains much that is *not* permitted! The tormenting of little children, the anguish of mankind, the moral justification of that torment and anguish, the forgiving of those who cause all that suffering—all these are not permitted in Ivan's protest, and Dostoyevsky proved helpless to do anything against all that is objectively valuable and undeniable in it . . . for it was his own revolt. He showed that religion turns a blind eye on oceans of evil, cruelty, violence and inhumanity; he showed, too, the cynicism in religion's use of the image of Christ to justify that evil on earth, and, petrified by horror at the tenor of his own thoughts, began to exorcise these thoughts and ideas with bell, book and candle, identifying his Ivan, i. e., his own thinking, with the Evil One in the Legend, throwing in Smerdya-

kov into the bargain. But truth, if it be really the truth, will out!

The contradictions within the writer's mind, the inner conflict of ideas that so tormented him and the inner controversy that rent him—all these could not but be reflected in the fitful vacillations, the psychological and literary inconsistencies and the artificialness of the image and character of Ivan Karamazov. Unlike Raskolnikov, Ivan did not even have a motive for the crime he committed through Smerdyakov. He could in no way be interested in Smerdyakov's arguments about the money he would inherit after his father's death and the advantages that death would bring him. Covetousness was foreign to his nature. He induced Smerdyakov to bring about the death of the Karamazovs' father only because such was the will of the author. The latter was interested in this outcome because he had to follow up the scheme he had created: one who is a revolutionary, an atheist, a "nihilist" must be lacking in all moral shackles. Unlike Dmitry, Ivan harboured no feeling of hatred towards his father; he merely despised him. Ivan's acts find no explanation in the novel; they are the outcome not of his character, but only of an "ideological" abstraction. That is why Ivan Karamazov is not a *type*, not a living and real literary character, but only the pedestal for a thesis, the product of the seething and conflicting ebb and flow of the author's own doubts and inner struggle.

The burden of life was a crushing one for Dostoyevsky with his unceasing anguish for the suffering of mankind and his realization that in no way could he ease that suffering. He bore within him an intolerable feeling of the boundlessness of human torment, which overrode all other feeling in him and kept him on the verge of insanity. With his ignorance of any solution of the problem, he had a frightful dilemma confronting him: complete acceptance of this world or complete non-

acceptance of it. Both of these solutions were inhuman and fruitless, and neither could satisfy Dostoyevsky.

That is why all his writings are imbued with the gloomiest pessimism, despite all the mellifluous outpourings of Father Zosima and Makar Ivanovich, and Dostoyevsky's own efforts to express joy at "God's world." But could Dostoyevsky go on living—he, with his unremitting anguish for mankind—with the cynicism of the Zosima reconciliation to the evils of life? That he could not do, and the fact that towards the end of his life he, the friend of Pobedonostsev, raised a revolt against the unctuous Christian teaching of forgiveness and resignation, against his own idealization of suffering, and developed this theme with immeasurably greater artistic force than everything he undertook to counter that revolt—all this goes to show that he found it impossible to live in the spirit of humility demanded by the church. His nature was not like Zosima's. From his youth, he always felt drawn to the idea of rebellion and indignation, and this spirit still was ebullient in him even during his latter days. It is not fortuitous that in the very composition of the novel the principle of revolt is invariably on the offensive, while the principle of reaction stands on the defensive. The following words will provide the psychological explanation of his turning to religion for comfort and salvation:

"And so is it possible for the atheist to remain calm and not kill himself? Only he can live who believes, and cannot but believe, that God is always right, even though he thinks all the time that there is falsehood in the world. Regard this as temptation, and believe." These words are an admission that he could not go on living with a constant feeling of falsehood and evil in the world. Only those who wage an active social struggle for the common weal can go on living in the face of the boundless suffering that beset mankind. It is this only

struggle that can bring relief from the agony Dostoyevsky was constantly steeped in.

As was usual with Dostoyevsky, his polemic brought together and fused principles that could not go together and moreover mutually excluded each other. In Ivan Karamazov's revolt, for instance, Dostoyevsky fused indignation at the evil that reigns in this world and at any attempt to justify that evil with a bourgeois-anarchic "revolt" against morals and social ethics. Behind all this reactionary smoke-screen one can without great difficulty discern the real and vital theme of *The Karamazov Brothers*, the theme of horror at the decline and disintegration of the old moral standards during a period of change and crisis, the author's conviction that the advent of such a period spelt the end of all and any morals.

Dostoyevsky's revolt against religion's justification of children's suffering has been a source of annoyance and distress to the entire camp of reaction, which has always been disappointed by the way the novel has replied to this revolt. The measure of this distress and disappointment may be gauged from the fact that, despite the years that have elapsed since the writer's scathing and irrefutable protest sounded from the pages of the novel through Ivan Karamazov, reactionary publicists and philosophers have been straining every nerve to find counter-arguments to meet the challenge of Ivan's rebellion. These attempts go to show up the Smerdyakov-like essence of those who would defend Dostoyevsky's reactionary ideas and the morality of religion. Like Ivan Karamazov, Dostoyevsky, too, has found his own Smerdyakovs, who complete what he has left unsaid regarding the cynicism of religion's call for reconciliation with human suffering and the tormenting of children, things that horrified Dostoyevsky no less than did Ivan Karamazov's "everything-is-permitted" philosophy. One of these Smer-

dyakovs is V. Rozanov,* that bigot, reactionary and "expert on sex problems."

In his book *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* (1906) Rozanov acknowledged that Ivan Karamazov's thesis that the sufferings of little children cannot be justified is a most powerful argument against religion, or, as he saw it, the only powerful argument, and called upon reactionary religious leaders the world over to spare no effort to meet this challenge, insisting on the exceptional importance and urgency of this problem. In his book he tried to provide some sort of reply, but, realizing its inadequacy, warned the reader that what he had written was merely an attempt to pave the way for some future work that would meet the case. With staggering brazenness this Orthodox fanatic called children's sufferings a manifestation of God's justice. Here is what he wrote of Ivan's "dialectics":

"To build up a refutation of this dialectic, which will be just as deep and orderly as the latter, will no doubt be one of the most difficult problems confronting our philosophical and theological literature, if of course that literature ever realizes that it is in duty bound to resolve the doubts that are simmering in our society, and not only to certify to the pedantic erudition of a small number of people really obliged to be familiar with that dialectic. We shall not attempt to build up such a refutation, but only give expression . . . to certain remarks."

Here we have direct criticism of hide-bound idealistic and theological literature for its inability to "resolve the doubts that are simmering in our society!" What kind

* Rozanov, Vasily Vasilyevich (1856-1919)—Russian critic, publicist and idealist philosopher. Hostile to materialism and revolution, ardent supporter of religion and autocracy. His writings were imbued with idealism and mysticism and expressed Decadence of nineties and earlier years of present century. His *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor and F. M. Dostoyevsky* (1894) lauded all that was reactionary in Dostoyevsky, and distorted Gogol's heritage.



**F. M. Dostoyevsky's grave in the cemetery of the
Alexandro-Nevesky Monastery in St. Petersburg**

of contribution did Rozanov himself intend to make to the defence of the cause of Orthodoxy? His aim was to teach Dostoyevsky, of course from the Orthodox platform, that not only can human conscience be reconciled with children's sufferings but also that they are even quite just and beneficial. "The sufferings of children," he wrote, "which seem to be so incompatible with the workings of a higher justice, may be understood, given a stricter view of original sin, the nature of the human soul and the act of birth."

The suggestion is thus made that Dostoyevsky should have been guided by stricter church views, which would have made him understand the reason why children should go through suffering, that reason being "the sinfulness of human nature." It follows that Dostoyevsky failed to understand in full that from the viewpoint of Christianity children are conceived in sin and are therefore sinful from the moment they are born, and consequently he was wrong in insisting on the innocence of little children. To quote this Smerdyakov of theology: "The impeccability of children and consequently their innocence is a factitious argument; they conceal the sins of the fathers and, together with these, their own guilt. The thing is that this guilt does not reveal or express itself in destructive acts, that is to say, does not bring about new sin, but the old sin, inasmuch as it has not been expiated, is already in them. This expiation comes through suffering."

The children get no more than their deserts—such is the logic of this argument, which stands in glaring contrast to the anguish Dostoyevsky went through at the thought of their sufferings. As Rozanov puts it: "A trespass by the father may be so grievous that it cannot be expiated even by death. . . . Generations come and go, and retribution comes through suffering which may be misunderstood and seem to destroy the law of truth. In actual fact it only complements it."

And so children's sufferings are the triumph of truth and justice! Rozanov, it must be admitted, is perfectly consistent from the viewpoint of religion, for he simply extended to children the dogma of original sin. Dostoyevsky too realized that this enters the teachings of religion, but he was shocked by the cynicism and cruelty of religious ethics, and rose up against its inhumanity. When he did speak of the necessity of reconciliation to suffering, it was in the most ambiguous terms. He could not bring himself to act differently. The thought was developed to its logical conclusion by the Smerdyakovs who clustered around him—not of the fantastic “nihilist” brand, but the real Smerdyakovs of religion. The sophisms emanating from the pious V. Rozanov regarding the sins of the fathers being visited upon the sons are a perfect replica of the vile reasoning of the lackey Smerdyakov. Alas, Dostoyevsky might have said of himself what he said of Ivan Karamazov: “In his soul was the lackey Smerdyakov . . . and it was just that man that his soul could not tolerate.” In the sophistry of Father Zosima one can discern V. Rozanov. . . .

“A certain profound phenomenon in the spiritual life of man,” said V. Rozanov in developing his sophistry with truly Smerdyakov-like self-satisfaction, “finds its explanation here: this is *the purifying meaning of all suffering*. We bear within ourselves a mass of criminality, and together with it a terrible guilt which has yet in no way expiated; and though we do not know it to be in us and do not sense it distinctly, it is a heavy burden on us, filling our soul with inexplicable gloom. And each time we experience any suffering part of our guilt is expiated, something that is iniquitous leaves us and we feel light and joy, become loftier and pure. Man should bless any affliction because in it we are visited by God. On the contrary, those who have an easy life should feel alarm at the retribution in store for them.

“The possibility of such an explanation could never

have entered Dostoyevsky's mind; he thought that children's suffering was something absolute, which had come into the world without any antecedent guilt. Hence his question: who can forgive the author of this suffering?"

It seems from V. Rozanov that Dostoyevsky simply never reached the stature required for an understanding of children's responsibility for sins from the moment they are born! V. Rozanov, it can easily be understood, did reach that stature, and from the point of view of clericals the world over was far more consistent than Dostoyevsky ever was, just in the same way, we shall add, that Smerdyakov is far more consistent than Ivan Karamazov.

What V. Rozanov had to say about *the purifying significance of all suffering* is contained in the ideas expressed in Dostoyevsky's works, the difference being that what was a cause of anguish to Dostoyevsky was turned into smug sophistry by Rozanov and his like. If Dostoyevsky shared the torment suffered by mankind, *his Smerdyakovs*—the Rozanovs, Bulgakovs, Merezhkovskys and other champions of the true faith—were *bureaucrats in the world of suffering*, cold-blooded accountants of the "simultaneous contemplation of two abysses," of the "thrilling criminality of the human spirit" and so on. What was living thought, living passion and living anguish in Dostoyevsky became a collection of cut-and-dried *clichés* in the fanatics, bigots and decadents that have had something to say on the problem.

Can it be said that this servile vulgarity was foreseen by Dostoyevsky?

The following extract would seem to provide a positive answer to this question: "I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too, but what solidarity can there be in sin when it comes to the children? And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for their fathers' crimes such

a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension. Some jester will say perhaps that the child would have grown up and have sinned, but you see he did not grow up and was torn to pieces by the dogs, at eight years old."

It thus emerges that this "philosopher" and "thinker," who would teach consistency to Dostoyevsky was, besides other things, an ignoramus with regard to the writer whom he fawned upon in Smerdyakov-like fashion and at the same time patronizingly reproached for his "naivety." "The possibility of such an explanation (children's responsibility for the sins of their fathers—V.Y.) could never have entered Dostoyevsky's mind," Rozanov asserted. However, the possibility of such an explanation is flatly rejected by Ivan Karamazov, who declares that this truth—the solidarity of children in their fathers' sins—is beyond man's comprehension. "Jesters" like Rozanov were foreseen by Dostoyevsky with contempt and distaste for their corrupt sophistry. . . .

The truth objectively revealed in Dostoyevsky's works should be cleansed of the falsehood, distortion and everything else that made the great writer a captive of the old world, and was so inimical to his genius. The truth always remains the truth! Mankind cannot pass by a writer whose soul throbbed with all the anguish and sufferings of people and, despite the lies of the established order of things and the reactionary tendentiousness in his own world outlook, found within himself the strength to protest against the humiliation and injury of man.

The truth in Dostoyevsky's works was warped by reaction, black pessimism, the cult of suffering, the idealizing of "age-old" dualism which the writer attributed to "man in general," unbelief in the possibility of victory over the evil forces in real life, and horror at this evil—things capable of weakening the will to win in unstable and hesitant social strata. The writer's links with reactionary circles exerted a pernicious influence

both on the truth and the humanistic character of his writings, for unbelief in human reason and the ultimate victory of the toiling majority over the exploiters and oppressors, the negation of the very necessity of a struggle against the evil and the untruth in life—all these are profoundly hostile to genuine humanism.

To winnow the true from the false in Dostoyevsky's writings we must be able to distinguish and remorsefully enucleate *Dostoyevskyism* from Dostoyevsky's works, his entire psychology and ideology of pessimism and despair, his morbid tendency to take relish in evil, everything that led him away from the progressive forces of the time.

Soviet people take pride in the continuity of their ideological ties with progressive Russian writers and thinkers of the past, including the great revolutionary democrats. They are proud, too, of their indissoluble links with all progressive thinkers and artists of all times and peoples. However high their appreciation of Dostoyevsky's genius, they cannot forget his malice towards the finest democratic elements of his time, as expressed in the tendentiousness of his more reactionary writings. Neither can they lose sight of the fact that today attempts are being made by reactionaries and clericals to make use of Dostoyevsky's works in their own nefarious ends.

However, Soviet people are not lacking in appreciation of everything in the works of this great writer that reveals his boundless love of people who have been crushed by a society based on exploitation. Though Dostoyevsky was powerless to guide them out of their intolerable conditions, but on the contrary tried to lead them away from the path of revolutionary struggle and salvation, his passionate love of the humiliated and rejected made him create characters and types that were a challenge to repellent hypocrisy and reconciliation with oppression.

To idealize Dostoyevsky means in effect to hamper an understanding of everything that is precious, vital and truthful in his works and should resound in the halls of human culture. The highest honour is due to the ruthless truth of man's life under the yoke of exploitation, which has been revealed in Dostoyevsky's tragic themes and images of grief, hardship and injury. These are a reflection of the wrath and protest of the disinherited majority of mankind, themes and images which are among the *eternal* creations of world literature.

What Dostoyevsky feared was the prospect of chaos, violence and Smerdyakovism coming to reign supreme in the world under a mask of "enlightenment," the danger of enmity, hatred, selfishness and cynicism riding roughshod over mankind, and of a handful of oppressors gaining unbridled control over the overwhelming majority. He was full of apprehension that mankind would lack the strength to cope with this menace and that the law of mutual annihilation would be triumphant.

Who can deny that Dostoyevsky's recoiling in horror from the inhuman laws of society was a reflection of the truth?

We are confident that the time will come when not a single tear of a single child will fall in suffering in the whole world, for the evil forces of chaos, destruction and brutal self-interest shall be swept from the face of the earth. Final victory will go to those who are waging the devoted struggle against all and every humiliation and insult to man!

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