

Konstantin Leont'ev: Conservatism, Byzantinism and Pan-Orthodoxy

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I, James Ivor Day, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Note on text

Translations are my own except where indicated otherwise. Dates are given in the Old Style or Julian calendar, eleven days behind the New Style (Gregorian) calendar in the nineteenth century. Footnotes are given in long form the first time a work is cited, thereafter in short form. Russian names and the titles of Russian publications are transliterated via the Library of Congress system, without the use of diacritical marks.

### Abstract

This thesis considers Konstantin Leont'ev against the background of the growth of interest in Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia, and seeks to explain the political significance of Leont'ev's use of the term 'Byzantinism'. Chapter One deals with the context of the Eastern Question. Chapter Two addresses the study of Byzantine art and architecture in nineteenth-century Russia, and Chapter Three considers the use of Byzantium as a reference point in debates about church-state relations. In Chapter Four the career of Antonin (Kapustin), an Orthodox monk who served as the Russian embassy chaplain in Athens and Constantinople, illustrates the connections between Russia's diplomatic involvement in the Orthodox East, the rediscovery of Byzantine art and architecture, and the debate over the future of the Russian Orthodox Church. The focus of the thesis then turns to Konstantin Leont'ev. Chapter Five briefly considers Leont'ev's early thought, and then addresses his experiences as a consul in the Ottoman Empire, emphasising his relationships with local notables, diaspora peoples from the Russian Empire, and consuls from other great powers. Chapter Six considers how Leont'ev's experiences in the East, as a diplomat and then as a pilgrim on Mount Athos, helped to develop his concept of Byzantinism. Chapter Seven addresses Leont'ev's intellectual development after his return to Russia. Chapter Eight considers his place in the Russian conservative tradition, in light of the ways in which the concepts of conservatism and liberalism assumed a different meaning in Russia than in the West. The conclusion addresses the ways in which the rise of interest in Byzantium formed the context of the development of Leont'ev's political thought, and how the concept of Byzantinism reflected both his explicit anti-liberalism, and his significance as one of the few nineteenth-century Russian conservatives who rejected nationalism as a manifestation of liberalism.

### Impact Statement

The study of Konstantin Leont'ev's writings, and in particular of the concept of Byzantinism, offers to give us a more comprehensive understanding of nineteenth-century Russian conservative thought. It can help us to understand whether conservatism had a different meaning in the Russian context than it did in the West. Furthermore, since the modern-day Russian state has an unofficial ideology of, in Ol'ga Fetisenko's phrase, 'conservative modernisation', the history of Russian conservatism is highly relevant when analysing the condition of Russian politics today. A stronger understanding of it can help us to appreciate the historical roots of contemporary Russian political doctrines, and to expose attempts by the Russian ruling elite to misrepresent Russia's inheritance of conservative thought in order to invoke it for their own purposes.

The study of Leont'ev's writings can also help us to understand the relationship between Russian conservatism, national identity, and Orthodox Christianity. Leont'ev rejected 'tribal nationalism' and instead saw autocracy and Orthodoxy as the basis of Russian statehood. Rather than equating religion with nationality, he favoured ecumenical, trans-national Orthodoxy. The tension between ecumenical and national Orthodoxy remains relevant today, such as, for example, in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church's severing of ties with the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2018, after it recognised the newly formed Orthodox Church of Ukraine. In the present day, Mount Athos has also been characterised by tensions between Orthodox Christians from different nationalities, and has been described as a potential foothold for Russian influence, as it was in the nineteenth century. Leont'ev's writings also shed light on the diplomacy of the Eastern Question, in particular the ways in which consuls in remote postings experienced and influenced it.

Furthermore, the development of Byzantine studies in nineteenth-century Russia illustrates how the writing of history could be deployed as a political tool. For example, the nineteenth-century archaeological exploration of the remnants of the Byzantine presence in the Crimea was motivated in part by the desire to legitimise the region's conquest by Russia. The study of the use of Byzantine imagery in nineteenth-century Russian art and architecture also offers to broaden our knowledge of how the approach to these disciplines associated with the romantic movement, in particular the concept of national culture, could manifest itself. Unlike in many other countries, the development of 'national' art in Russia was directly sponsored by the state. Our understanding of the relationship between the Church and state in Russia can

also benefit from the study of the nineteenth-century effort to produce a distinctively Russian form of Orthodox Christianity, by eradicating Western influences and by drawing on Byzantine sources and precedents. This thesis can therefore contribute to our knowledge of debates about Russian identity and the ways in which Russian intellectuals thought about the cultural distinctions between Russia and the West.

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## Contents

Introduction – 10

Chapter 1: The Eastern Question – 30

The context of the Eastern Question – 30

The diplomatic aftermath of the Crimean War – 34

The ‘Tanzimat’ – 36

The rise of nationalism in the Balkans – 39

Conclusion – 44

Chapter 2: the nineteenth-century Russian study of Byzantine art and architecture – 46

Introduction – 46

Byzantium in Russian culture before the nineteenth century – 47

The nineteenth-century resurgence of Russian interest in Byzantium – 50

The study of Byzantine archaeology in nineteenth-century Russia – 53

The academic study of Byzantine art in nineteenth-century Russia – 56

Nineteenth-century Russian studies of Mount Athos - 61

Conclusion - 65

Chapter 3: Byzantium and Russian church-state relations – 67

The context of nineteenth-century Russian church-state relations – 68

The use of Byzantium as a negative model regarding the schism – 80

The official view of the schism – 88

Byzantine historians on freedom of conscience and the rights of religious minorities – 91

Conclusion – 96

Chapter 4: Byzantine imagery in Antonin (Kapustin)’s ecclesiastical diplomacy and architectural projects – 98

Chapter 5: Leont’ev’s diplomatic career – 111

Introduction – 111

Leont’ev’s early thought – 113

Overview of Leont’ev’s career – 117

Sociability – 122



Diaspora peoples from the Russian Empire –	127
Leont'ev and the 'Tanzimat' reforms –	132
Leont'ev and religious controversies in the Ottoman Empire –	135
Conclusion –	138
Chapter 6: the development of Leont'ev's thought, 1863-1874 –	139
Introduction –	139
The development of Leont'ev's thought during his consular career –	139
The evolution of Leont'ev's thought on Athos and in Constantinople –	146
Conclusion –	159
Chapter 7: Leont'ev's intellectual development after 1874 –	161
Introduction –	161
Leont'ev and the Great Reforms –	163
The National Question –	168
The Eastern Question –	171
Leont'ev and Solov'ev –	177
Conclusion –	179
Chapter 8: Konstantin Leont'ev and the Western and Russian conservative traditions –	181
Introduction –	181
Nineteenth-century conservatism in the West –	182
Nineteenth-century Russian conservatism –	191
Konstantin Leont'ev and the conservative tradition –	202
Contemporary responses to Leont'ev –	209
Conclusion –	217
Conclusion –	221
Bibliography –	226

## Introduction

This thesis considers the role of the concept of Byzantinism in the political thought of Konstantin Nikolaevich Leont'ev, a Russian diplomat and writer who lived from 1831 to 1891. Firstly, it situates Leont'ev in the context of the growth of interest in Byzantine artistic and ecclesiastical history in nineteenth-century Russia. Secondly, it considers the contribution to Leont'ev's intellectual development of his experiences during his diplomatic career in the Ottoman Empire, between 1863 and 1871. Thirdly, it addresses his contribution to the Russian conservative tradition and the ways in which he demarcated conservatism from liberalism, a notoriously difficult line to draw in the Russian context. Leont'ev wrote that only Byzantinism could act as the basis of genuine Russian conservatism: 'Byzantinism in the State means autocracy. In religion it means Christianity with certain features, which distinguish it from Western Churches, from heresies and schisms.'<sup>1</sup> He bemoaned the fact that the Byzantine Empire had traditionally been maligned by historians: 'Byzantium is imagined as something ... dry, tedious, priestly, and not only tedious, but even something wretched and dishonest.'<sup>2</sup> He forms a case study of how the increasing awareness in Russian academic and ecclesiastical circles of Russia's cultural debt to Byzantium could impinge on the views of thinkers who were concerned primarily with contemporary political questions such as the great reforms, the 'national question', and Russian foreign policy in the Orthodox East.

In the years since his death, Leont'ev has been the subject of analysis from numerous different perspectives. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he received attention from Russian conservatives who, for the first time, had to articulate defences of the autocratic state against its liberal and revolutionary opponents. The writer Lev Tikhomirov, himself a revolutionary turned conservative who believed that revolutionary nihilism was the product of the Russian gentry's alienation from its Orthodox roots by 'the restructuring of life in the European manner,' argued in a 1905 essay that Leont'ev's experiences in the East, specifically his encounters with the Orthodox communities of the Ottoman Empire, enabled him to overcome this sense of alienation by exposing him to a way of life in which Orthodoxy was central. As a result, argued Tikhomirov, Leont'ev was able to reject 'alien Europeanism' and return to the 'ancient roots' of Russian culture.<sup>3</sup> Another conservative ideologue whom

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<sup>1</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *K. N. Leont'ev: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvenadtsati tomakh*, eds. V. Kotelnikov et al. (St Petersburg: Vladimir Dal, 2000-), hereinafter *Pss*, vol. 7 part 1, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss*, vol. 7 part 1, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> L. Tikhomirov, 'K. N. Leont'ev: Teni Proshlogo', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, eds. D. Burlaka et al. (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo russkogo khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 1995), pp. 10-13.

Leont'ev influenced was Boris Nikol'skii, one of the founders of the Union of the Russian People, a right-wing nationalist party in the early twentieth century. Nikol'skii followed Leont'ev in seeing autocracy as an essential part of Russian identity, and praised him as an authoritative opponent of both liberalism and nihilism.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Nikol'skii, who shared Tikhomirov's view that the gentry was the source of revolutionary impulses in Russia, wanted the clergy to take its place in society. This put him at odds with Leont'ev's support for the class system, which he ascribed to aesthetic and personal motives, arguing that Leont'ev's aesthetic and religious beliefs were contradictory: many later writers would likewise question whether or not Leont'ev's views formed a coherent whole.<sup>5</sup> Thus, for Russian conservative thinkers in the late imperial period, Leont'ev pointed the way to the restoration of a more authentic Russian identity which would be less prone to revolutionary upheavals.

A second group of Russian thinkers who engaged with Leont'ev before the First World War were the 'neo-Christians,' notably Nikolai Berdiaev, Vasilii Rozanov, and Vladimir Solov'ev, who were characterised by hostility to monasticism, asceticism, traditionalism, and close ties between the Church and the state, all of which they referred to as 'Byzantine' or 'Byzantine-Muscovite' Christianity.<sup>6</sup> For them, Leont'ev was an entirely negative example. Rozanov attacked Leont'ev both for rejecting Christian values in favour of cruelty and egoism, and for submitting to the authority of the Church.<sup>7</sup> Another of the neo-Christians' criticisms of Leont'ev was that he was concerned only with his own spiritual fate rather than that of humanity in general. Solov'ev noted that he was pious 'in the narrowly monastic sense of personal salvation.'<sup>8</sup> Berdiaev, in his 1905 essay on Leont'ev, called him a 'sinful man' who embraced asceticism and monasticism because he 'thirsted for individual salvation.' In fact, Berdiaev went so far as to suggest that he was not a Christian at all, calling him a 'Satanist, dressing himself up with Christian features.'<sup>9</sup> Konstantin Aggeev, the author of the first academic study of Leont'ev, was a member of the Union of Zealots for Church Renovation, which rejected the argument that the Church should be unconcerned with earthly matters, and

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<sup>4</sup> D. Stogov, "'Religiia Leont'eva byla religieiu podviga i chertvi'" (B. V. Nikol'skii o nasledii K. N. Leont'eva)', *Khristianstvo i Russkaia Literatura*, 2012, pp. 234 and 237.

<sup>5</sup> Stogov, 'Religiia Leont'eva byla religieiu podviga i chertvi', pp. 236 and 242.

<sup>6</sup> I. Vorontsova, 'Istoricheskie uroki otritsaniiia vizantizma tserkovnymi reformatorami nachala XX veka', in *Dukhovnoe nasledie Vizantii i Afona v istorii i kul'ture Rossii*, eds. Z. Pankratii et al. (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2016), pp. 50-51.

<sup>7</sup> D. Khanin, 'What was Leont'ev to Rozanov?', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1999, pp. 73 and 84.

<sup>8</sup> V. Solov'ev, 'Leont'ev (Konstantin Nikolaevich, 1831-91)', in *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'*, eds. F. Brokgauz and I. Efron (St Petersburg: universal'noe spravocnoe izdanie, 1896), vol. XVIIa, p. 563.

<sup>9</sup> N. Berdiaev, 'K. N. Leont'ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism', first published in *Voprosy zhizni*, no. 7, 1905, pp. 165-198, trans. S. Janos at 'Berdyaevev Online Bibliotek Library' website, last accessed 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

advocated political participation with the aim of revitalising the Church and organising society in accordance with Christian principles.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Aggeev denounced Leont'ev as a 'monophysite' who saw Heaven and Earth as completely separate, and was strictly pessimistic about life on Earth, believing that entry into Heaven could only be earned through earthly renunciation. Aggeev rebuked Leont'ev for seeing life on Earth simply as a means of earning entry into Heaven, when, he said, the essence of Christianity is 'the unification of Heaven and Earth.'<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he wrote that Leont'ev saw the 'Christianity of the Gospels and the Apostles' as having been replaced by the 'Christianity of the Church', i.e. the authority of the Church hierarchy, which, taken to its logical conclusion, implied submission to the papacy. Aggeev rejected Leont'ev's stated reasons for his religious conversion, arguing that it in fact reflected the dissatisfaction with materialism shared by all ethical Russian society.<sup>12</sup> He was the first of many writers who drew parallels between Leont'ev and Nietzsche: their 'cult of the strong', he argued, was incompatible with Christianity and 'inevitably degenerates into the vulgar prose of petty bourgeois prosperity.'<sup>13</sup>

The neo-Christians also criticised Leont'ev for his aestheticism. Rozanov, writing in 1899, argued that Leont'ev's aesthetic, rather than ethical, approach gave rise to 'the excessive predominance in him of denial over affirmation' and to contemplativeness rather than activity or sacrifice.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the neo-Christians attacked what they saw as Leont'ev's fundamentally naturalistic philosophy of history, embodied by his concept of 'triune' development. This held that societies, like living creatures, grow more complex as they develop from embryos into mature organisms, before their structure becomes more simple again as they decay and ultimately die. Berdiaev and Rozanov argued that this overlooked the religious significance of world history.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, Rozanov held that the Church was immune from the triune process, as demonstrated by the periodic rebirths of Christianity throughout history, and that Russia was about to assume the leading role in the movement of

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<sup>10</sup> J. Hedda, *His Kingdom Come: Orthodox Pastorship and Social Activism in Revolutionary Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008), pp. 164-166 and 205.

<sup>11</sup> K. Aggeev, *Khristianstvo i ego otnoshenie k blagoustroeniiu zemnoi zhizni: Opyt kriticheskogo izucheniia i bogoslovskoi otsenki raskrytago K. N. Leont'evym ponimaniia khristianstva* (Kiev: Petr" Barskij, 1909), pp. v, 152, and 331.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 329-333.

<sup>14</sup> V. Rozanov, 'Pozdnie fazy slavianofil'stva', *V. V. Rozanov: Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow: Terra, 2012), vol. 8, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> Berdiaev, 'K. N. Leont'ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism', accessed at 'Berdyaev Online Bibliotek Library' website.

history towards its ultimate purpose.<sup>16</sup> The neo-Christians were also at pains to show Leont'ev's philosophy as inconsistent: Solov'ev emphasised that there was 'not a single central and commanding principle' in his views, while Rozanov wrote that naturalism, aesthetics, and religion were the elements which shaped him but that they were 'not joined harmoniously in him.'<sup>17</sup> Aggeev said that he combined in himself an atheistic pagan and a pious Orthodox monk, since he wrongly saw aestheticism and religion as opposed to each other, when in fact, argued Aggeev, religion is the 'natural root' of aestheticism.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, these writers depicted Leont'ev as an idiosyncratic, isolated figure: in Rozanov's phrase, 'Westerners push him aside with disgust, the Slavophiles are afraid to acknowledge him as one of them.'<sup>19</sup> Berdiaev called him a philosopher of 'reactionism' and emphasised his 'tragic fate' as a 'strange, solitary writer, full of contradictions and frightening extremes.'<sup>20</sup> Thus, the neo-Christians effectively made Leont'ev the emblem of all that they wished to oppose. At the same time, the early years of the twentieth century also saw more sympathetic studies of Leont'ev, notably A. Konopliantsev's biography, the first attempt to place him within a wider intellectual context.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, many 'neo-Christian' thinkers of this generation drastically revised their views of Leont'ev amid the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Speaking at the meeting of the Moscow religious-philosophical society held to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Leont'ev's death, Sergei Bulgakov, formerly one of the neo-Christians, credited Leont'ev with having anticipated the First World War: 'He clearly heard the approach of the European catastrophe, foresaw the inevitable spontaneous combustion of petty-bourgeois civilisation.' Bulgakov also praised Leont'ev as a 'merciless unmasker of illusions,' including 'the pleasant daydream of Pan-Slavism and Balkan unity.'<sup>22</sup> Leont'ev's opposition to these ideas now appeared prescient due to their role in the outbreak of the First World War. Berdiaev, in his 1926 biography of Leont'ev, credited him with 'an amazing grasp of the universal principles underlying history' and with having predicted the Russian Revolution, the First

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<sup>16</sup> Rozanov, 'Pozdnie fazy slavianofil'stva', *V. V. Rozanov: Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 8, pp. 142-144.

<sup>17</sup> Rozanov, 'Pozdnie fazy slavianofil'stva', *V. V. Rozanov: Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 8, p. 138, and Solov'ev, 'Leont'ev (Konstantin Nikolaevich, 1831-91)', *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'*, vol. XVIIa, p. 562.

<sup>18</sup> Aggeev, *Khristianstvo i ego otnoshenie k blagoustroeniuiu zemnoi zhizni*, p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> Rozanov, 'Pozdnie fazy slavianofil'stva', *V. V. Rozanov: sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> Berdiaev, 'K. N. Leont'ev – Philosopher of a Reactionary Romanticism', accessed at 'Berdyaev Online Bibliotek Library' website.

<sup>21</sup> A. Konopliantsev, 'Zhizn' K. N. Leont'eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniia', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva* (St Petersburg: Literaturnyi Sbornik", 1911), pp. 89 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Rozanov, 'O Konst. Leont'eva', *V. V. Rozanov: Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 8, p. 517.

World War, and the rise of fascism.<sup>23</sup> Berdiaev also noted Leont'ev's belief that Bulgaria, which had sided with Germany in the First World War, would never be a true friend of Russia.<sup>24</sup> Berdiaev continued to criticise Leont'ev's approach to religion, in particular his lack of concern for universal salvation and his emphasis on fear rather than love, which led Berdiaev to call him 'that rare phenomenon, a Nietzschean Christian.'<sup>25</sup> He also persisted in depicting Leont'ev as an isolated figure: 'the first Russian aesthete, in an age when Russian thought was essentially social.'<sup>26</sup> However, in contrast to his earlier denunciations of Leont'ev, Berdiaev now diminished the distinctions between him and the neo-Christians, defending him against the criticisms made by Rozanov in his 1899 article and arguing that Leont'ev had a great deal in common with Solov'ev, such as sympathy for Catholicism and belief in the possibility of a non-European Russian culture.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Rozanov, writing in 1917, praised Leont'ev as the 'capital mind' of nineteenth-century Russia, esteeming him above Mikhail Katkov, Petr Chaadaev, Aleksandr Gertsen, Vladimir Solov'ev, and the Slavophiles.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the upheavals of the early twentieth century led to a partial reassessment of Leont'ev by his critics of the pre-revolutionary generation.

Petr Struve also praised Leont'ev in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, albeit for different reasons than the neo-Christians. Struve wrote in 1926 that Leont'ev understood that 'nature is constructed hierarchically' and so that 'absolute universal equality is impossible and senseless.' He saw Leont'ev as a philosopher rather than a practical political thinker, writing that 'being a genuine teacher for our time in regard to metaphysical and mystical social reality, Leont'ev cannot be such in regard to specific politics and the living history unfolding before our eyes.' Accordingly, he denied that Leont'ev's views were refuted by the spread of democracy or vindicated by the rise of fascism. Furthermore, he argued that Leont'ev wrongly joined politics and aesthetics to religion, giving rise to apocalyptic interpretations of political events.<sup>29</sup> However, he concurred with Leont'ev's rejection of 'Christian politics' and of the 'humanised' or 'roseate' Christianity espoused by many religious thinkers in nineteenth-century Russia, which emphasised the improvement of earthly life rather than anticipation of

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<sup>23</sup> N. Berdiaev, *Leontiev* (Orono: Academic International, 1968), pp. 54 and 103.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-136.

<sup>28</sup> Rozanov, 'O Konst. Leont'ev', *V. V. Rozanov: Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 8, p. 522.

<sup>29</sup> P. Struve, 'Konstantin Leont'ev', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, p. 182.

the afterlife.<sup>30</sup> In particular, Struve defended Leont'ev against Berdiaev's criticisms, arguing that he was correct to understand Christianity as a religion of personal salvation, opposing attempts to create the Kingdom of God on Earth.<sup>31</sup> The theologian Sergei Durylin, writing in 1927, likewise depicted Leont'ev as an opponent of Vladimir Solov'ev's model of 'Christian politics' aimed at the salvation of the whole world: 'Where others perceive morally, Leont'ev contemplates aesthetically.'<sup>32</sup> In his 1937 *Ways of Russian Theology* the historian and theologian Georgii Florovskii depicted Leont'ev more negatively, arguing that he was not a true representative of Orthodoxy or asceticism, but valued only aesthetics, and merely 'wore a thin coat of asceticism.' Leont'ev, said Florovskii, 'utterly lacked any innate moral instinct'. He 'saw no religious meaning in history' and was 'farthest precisely from the traditions of the Holy Fathers.' His Orthodoxy was 'an external and foreign appendage to his untransfigured pagan philosophy – precisely the dead end of romanticism.'<sup>33</sup> Arguably, Florovskii's objection to Leont'ev was the result of Leont'ev's likening societies to living organisms, which Florovskii believed was an error since it overlooked the value of individuals and their role in history.<sup>34</sup> Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s, assessments of Leont'ev were mixed, but he was understood first and foremost as a religious and philosophical thinker, rather than a political one.

Leont'ev received little attention during the middle decades of the twentieth century, but, beginning in the 1960s, émigré scholars who grew up after the Russian Revolution, such as Alexander Obolensky and Iurii Ivask, began to take note of him. They depicted Leont'ev as an aesthetic thinker, whose life, in Obolensky's phrase, 'seems to be a permanent pursuit of Beauty.' This, argued Obolensky, led him to favour a hierarchical society made up of diverse, distinct social groups, since 'only a society founded on variety, inequality, the dissimilarity of its members could be beautiful.' Émigré scholars also acknowledged that Orthodoxy was central to Leont'ev's thought. Obolensky wrote that: 'His reactionary ideas form the counterpart of his religious convictions, because it is in Byzantine theocracy that the principles of the Church and the State merge, that he found the realisation of his political and

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<sup>30</sup> R. Pipes, *Struve: Liberal on the Right, 1905-1944* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 99-100.

<sup>31</sup> P. Struve, 'Konstantin Leont'ev', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> T. Rezvykh, 'Sergei Durylin ob estetike K. N. Leont'eva', *Khristianskoe Chtenie*, 2016, no. 1, p. 68 and p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two*, trans. R. Nichols (Belmont: Nordland, 1984), pp. 71 ff.

<sup>34</sup> P. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 93.

religious ideal.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Ivask argues that Leont'ev saw the Eastern Orthodox Church, created by the Byzantine Greeks, as an 'authority of absolute importance and the sole path of salvation.'<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Ivask depicts Leont'ev as a Pan-Orthodox thinker who valued Orthodoxy over Russian or Pan-Slav nationalism, which he believed would erode cultural originality, and who saw nations as transient historical phenomena, as opposed to the infallible and eternal Church.<sup>37</sup> Unlike the neo-Christians, émigré scholars of the post-revolutionary generation did not acknowledge any inconsistency between Leont'ev's religious and aesthetic views. Instead, Leont'ev's writings appear to have served as an exposition of the need to defend both high culture and religion, which were endangered, from the émigrés' perspective, by Soviet communism.

Unsurprisingly, given his extreme conservatism, Leont'ev was hardly studied at all in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. One exception was a 1982 article by Liudmila Avdeeva, which unconvincingly tried to analyse Leont'ev through a Marxist lens, arguing that he, contrary to the Slavophiles but in accordance with Marxist ideology, understood that Russia was subject to the same laws of historical development as the West. He therefore rejected Slavophile and Pan-Slavist dogmas about the inherent qualities of the Russian people as obsolete, and understood that nationalism would promote cosmopolitan democracy in Russia as it had done in the West, even if he failed to appreciate that this was because 'the grouping and demarcation of political forces takes place not by nationality but by class.'<sup>38</sup>

In the post-Soviet period there has been a flowering of interest in Leont'ev among Russian scholars. Ol'ga Fetisenko, in particular, has contributed to a more developed understanding of his thought through her close study of his correspondence and his relationships with contemporaries, identifying the ways in which he drew on their insights to form his own views. For example, he agreed with the prominent conservative journalist Mikhail Katkov about the need for a strong state, but believed that Katkov had overlooked the need for a higher purpose to animate it.<sup>39</sup> Irina Bergovskaia's biography of Leont'ev

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<sup>35</sup> A. Obolensky, 'Essai critique sur l'esthétique de K. N. Leont'ev', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1973, p. 540.

<sup>36</sup> I. Ivask, 'Konstantin Leont'ev (1831-1891). Zhizn' i tvorchestvo', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, p. 575.

<sup>37</sup> Ivask, 'Konstantin Leont'ev (1831-1891). Zhizn' i tvorchestvo', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2, p. 514 and p. 575.

<sup>38</sup> L. Avdeeva, 'Problema "Rossiia i Evropa" v vozzreniiakh N. I. Danilevskogo i K. N. Leont'eva', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta: Seriia 7: Filosofiia*, 1982, no. 3, pp. 76-86.

<sup>39</sup> O. Fetisenko, *'Geptastilisty': Konstantin Leont'ev, ego sobesedniki i ucheniki* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii dom, 2012), pp. 298 ff.



emphasises how his intellectual development must be understood in the context of his experiences, which shaped his perspective on the debate in late nineteenth-century Russia over the concept of ‘cultural-historical types’.<sup>40</sup> Konstantin Dolgov’s biography depicts Leont’ev as ‘the first and last great Russian aesthete’, who correctly noted that European ‘liberal-egalitarian progress’ could only give rise to the proliferation of ‘the average man’. Dolgov praised Leont’ev as a political prophet, arguing that subsequent Russian and Soviet history vindicated his opposition to the ‘Russification’ of minorities, and that the Western hostility to Russia which he foretold was manifested in the world wars.<sup>41</sup> D. M. Volodkhin argues that Leont’ev should be seen as the forerunner of existentialist thought.<sup>42</sup> Roman Gogolev attempts to locate the antecedents of Leont’ev’s concept of triune development in Christian patristics, although he relies more on assertion than on demonstration.<sup>43</sup> Stanislav Khatuntsev’s intellectual biography of Leont’ev offers a valuable account of the development of his thought from 1850 to 1874, although its efforts to analyse his views from a Marxist standpoint are not entirely convincing, and it leaves the last seventeen years of Leont’ev’s life unaddressed.<sup>44</sup>

However, as Gary Hamburg observes, many Russian scholars of the nineteenth-century Russian conservative tradition are engaged in ‘the task of re-appropriating that legacy for contemporary use.’<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, much of the modern Russian scholarship on Leont’ev is politically charged and anti-Western in tone. For example, A. Slin’ko argued that Leont’ev was a representative of a ‘Russian geopolitical school’, with a ‘rare gift for political foresight.’ He wrote that Leont’ev advocated precepts such as the need for a ‘strategic barrier’ on Russia’s frontiers and the evasion of foreign military entanglements. Leont’ev’s views, said Slin’ko, were the Russian equivalent of those of western ‘geopolitical’ analysts such as Harold Mackinder, who argued that hostility between Russia and the West was the result of inevitable tension between sea and land powers.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, A. Novikov and T. Grigor’eva, writing at

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<sup>40</sup> I. Bergovskaia, *Filosofia K. N. Leont’eva v sotsiokul’turnom kontekste* (Kaluga: Zolotaia alleia, 2012), p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> K. Dolgov, *Voskhozhdenie na Afon: zhizn’ i mirosozertsanie Konstantina Leont’eva* (Moscow: Raritet, 1997), p. 103, p. 216, and p. 224.

<sup>42</sup> D. Volodkhin, *Vysokomernyi strannik: filosofii i zhizn’ Konstantina Leont’eva* (Moskva: Manufaktura, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>43</sup> R. Gogolev, ‘Angel’skii doktor’ russkoi istorii: filosofii istorii K. N. Leont’eva – opyt rekonstruktsii (Moscow: AIRO-XXI, 2007), pp. 56 ff.

<sup>44</sup> S. Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont’ev: intellektual’naia biografii, 1850-1874 gg.* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2007), pp. 119-122.

<sup>45</sup> G. Hamburg, ‘The Revival of Russian Conservatism’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2005, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> A. Slin’ko, ‘Rekonstruktsiia budushchego: Russkii klasicheskii konservatizm o geopolitike’, in *Konservatizm v Rossii i mire*, eds. A. Minakov et al. (Voronezh: Izdatel’stvo Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2001), pp. 22 ff.

the very end of the Soviet era in 1991, said that Leont'ev saw it as Russia's role to serve as 'a distinctive obstacle in the path of fatal technical and egalitarian progress of the Western type', and that he wished to 'freeze' Russia to save it from European influence.<sup>47</sup> A. Kozhurin credits him with foreseeing the rise of 'socialist' rather than 'bourgeois-democratic' development in Russia, with Joseph Stalin fulfilling his prophecy of a 'Russian Tsar in the role of the Emperor Constantine of the socialist movement', but emphasises that rather than advocating class struggle, Leont'ev 'understood socialism as an alternative to the liberal path of development.' He 'interpreted it as a means of averting the collapse of the social-political fabric of Russia at a dangerous historical turning point.'<sup>48</sup> Many scholars, such as K. A. Zhukov in his 2006 book on Leont'ev's approach to the Eastern Question, argue that he should be seen as a forerunner of the 'Eurasianist' school of thought which emerged among Russian émigrés and dissidents in the 1920s.<sup>49</sup> Eurasianists believed that Russia was part of 'Eurasia', which formed a cultural world which was entirely distinct from that of Europe.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, many modern Russian scholars, including Leont'ev's biographers Mikhail Chizhov and Ol'ga Volkogonova, have emphasised that he rejected the idea of Russia as a homogeneous nation-state, instead seeing it as a self-contained civilisation, formed by Asian as well as Slavic influences, which was distinct from Europe and historically fated to clash with the West. In Chizhov's phrase: 'Only Eurasian civilisation was capable of actively resisting the vulgarity and eudaemonism of the liberal West, preserving its own culture.'<sup>51</sup> Volodkhin depicts Leont'ev as a forerunner of the Eurasianist historian Lev Gumilev.<sup>52</sup> However, to show Leont'ev as a precursor of the Eurasianists arguably simplifies his views and equates him with later writers whose preoccupations were essentially different. His 'Byzantinism' reflected his belief that Russian identity was shaped primarily by the cultural influence of Byzantium, rather than by that of the Mongol overlords of medieval Rus', as the Eurasianists, writing in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution and amid the rise of fascism, argued.<sup>53</sup> Thus, many post-Soviet Russian scholars have depicted Leont'ev's thought in such a way as to emphasise its relevance to

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<sup>47</sup> A. Novikov and T. Grigor'eva, 'Konservativnaia utopiia Konstantina Leont'eva', in *Rossia glazami russkogo*, ed. A. Zamaleev (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1991), pp. 299-300.

<sup>48</sup> A. Kozhurin, 'Fenomen russkogo konservatizma', in *Konservatizm: Pro et Contra*, eds. D. Bogatyrev et al. (St Petersburg: Russkoi Khristianskoi Gumanitarnoi Akademii, 2016), pp. 43-44.

<sup>49</sup> K. Zhukov, *Vostochnyi vopros v istoriosofskoi kontseptsii K. N. Leont'eva* (St Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2006), p. 193.

<sup>50</sup> C. Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow* (Yale: New Haven, 2016), p. 55.

<sup>51</sup> M. Chizhov, *Konstantin Leont'ev* (Moscow: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2016), p. 520, and O. Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont'ev* (Moscow: Molodia Gvardiia, 2013), p. 247.

<sup>52</sup> Volodkhin, *Vysokomernyi strannik*, p. 131.

<sup>53</sup> S. Glebov, *From empire to Eurasia* (DeKalb: NIU Press, 2017), pp. 2-6.

contemporary Russian politics, disregarding many of its complexities in doing so. In particular, Leont'ev is depicted in much of the Russian historiography as a prophet of conflict between Russia and the West, overlooking the ways in which he criticised both many of the policies pursued by the Russian government during his lifetime, and the views of other Russian conservative thinkers, including the Slavophiles and Pan-Slavists, the most prominent anti-Western voices in Russia.

Western scholars began to study Leont'ev from the 1960s onwards. Stephen Lukashevich, in the first biography of Leont'ev written by a Westerner, analysed him through a psychological lens, concluding that the key to his thought was the influence of his devoutly Orthodox and royalist mother.<sup>54</sup> This is somewhat unconvincing in view of the fact that Leont'ev wrote that his mother was 'not adequately Orthodox in her convictions' and that: 'In her ... Christianity assumed a somewhat Protestant character.'<sup>55</sup> Unlike many previous studies of Leont'ev, Lukashevich's biography argued that his aesthetic, political, and religious views formed a coherent whole, rather than being at odds with each other.<sup>56</sup> Leont'ev believed, according to Lukashevich, that true as opposed to 'eudaemonic' Christianity would emerge from the creative tension between aesthetics and religion, both of which were endangered by bourgeois liberalism.<sup>57</sup> Leont'ev is thus shown by Lukashevich, and also by Victor Terras, as a 'dialectician' who founded his system on the relationship between 'dynamic opposites' such as aesthetics and religion, and beauty and asceticism.<sup>58</sup> Ascribing the origins of Leont'ev's thought to his own psychological background naturally entails viewing him in isolation. For Terras, Leont'ev was a 'maverick' whose ideas 'were so much out of line with the concerns and thought patterns of his age that they met with little reaction, positive or negative.'<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, at this time Western scholars often viewed Leont'ev as a forerunner of fascism. Terras and Lukashevich argue that with his 'immoralism' and 'aesthetically determined' values, and his cyclical model of history based on the rise and fall of civilisations, he anticipated the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Oswald Spengler.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> S. Lukashevich, *Konstantin Leontev (1831-1891): A Study in Russian 'Heroic Vitalism'* (New York: Pageant Press, 1967), p. xiv.

<sup>55</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi obrashchenie i zhizn' na Sv. Afonskoi Gore', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 794.

<sup>56</sup> Lukashevich, *Konstantin Leontev (1831-1891)*, p. xiii.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-99.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>59</sup> V. Terras, 'Leontiev, Konstantin Nikolaevich', in *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. V. Terras (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 248.

<sup>60</sup> V. Terras, *A History of Russian Literature* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 309-310.

During the Cold War, most Western studies of Leont'ev maintained that he received little official encouragement, that his writings were barely acknowledged in his lifetime, and that he had no meaningful influence on the development of Russian political thought.<sup>61</sup> Dale Nelson, in one of the most incisive studies of Leont'ev's intellectual life, suggests that his advocacy of 'Byzantine' Orthodoxy, which valued the ecumenical Orthodox Church over Russian nationalism, in fact represented a wider trend in Russian ecclesiastical thought, but one which was muzzled by censorship and had no effect on government policy, implicitly likening him to twentieth-century Soviet dissidents.<sup>62</sup> This perspective makes clear that some strands of conservative thought, such as Leont'ev's argument that Russians should be loyal to the international Orthodox Church as well as to the Russian state, were potentially as subversive as liberal ideology. Some more recent scholarship depicts Leont'ev as a leading member of a broader Pan-Orthodox tendency, including figures such as the novelist Fedor Dostoevskii and the statesman Tertii Filippov. This underscores the importance of the study of Leont'ev's thought to a full understanding of nineteenth-century Russian conservatism.<sup>63</sup> In particular, Leont'ev's writings can help to cast light on the subtle but significant differences between Pan-Slavist and Pan-Orthodox views, which are often overlooked. Modern scholars have also acknowledged the importance of drawing connections between different aspects of Leont'ev's thought: the significance of his scientific training for his intellectual development is addressed in Thomas Kitson's study of his early writings.<sup>64</sup> Glenn Cronin's biography of Leont'ev makes a valuable contribution by placing him in his literary and intellectual context, and tracing some examples of his influence on other writers, while concluding that he 'spent his life rowing 'against the current' of ideas in his homeland.'<sup>65</sup> Cronin correctly emphasises the importance of Byzantine culture and religion, rather than Slavic ethnicity, in Leont'ev's political thought.<sup>66</sup> However, Cronin pays relatively little attention either to the role of Leont'ev's experiences as a consul in his intellectual development, or to the political

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<sup>61</sup> G. Cronin, 'Konstantin Leont'ev: creative reaction', in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, p. 99; Terras, 'Leontiev, Konstantin Nikolaevich', in *Handbook of Russian Literature*, p. 248; E. Thaden, *Conservative Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), p. 181.

<sup>62</sup> D. Nelson, *Konstantin Leontiev and the Orthodox East* (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Minnesota, 1975), p. 308.

<sup>63</sup> D. Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: imperial Russia and Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 219 and 222, and O. Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), p. 180.

<sup>64</sup> T. Kitson, *Potential and Idea: Konstantin Nikolaevich Leont'ev adopts physiognomy for literary aesthetics, 1857-1863* (Unpublished PhD thesis: Columbia University, 2009), p. 11 and p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> G. Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer: The Apocalyptic Vision of Konstantin Leontiev* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. 207.

<sup>66</sup> Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, p. 110.

journalism, addressing issues such as the ‘Russification’ of minorities, which he produced after his return from the Ottoman Empire. The latter illustrates how Leont’ev’s ‘Byzantinist’ ideas were not simply theoretical, but shaped his analysis of contemporary political questions.

Studying Leont’ev’s thought raises the question of how to analyse his political writings and in what context to place them. Kenneth Minogue notes the ‘extremely interesting and poorly demarcated frontier’ between the study of political ideas as ‘abstract and universal’ concepts, and that of their use within specific contexts.<sup>67</sup> For example, Minogue argues that the unchanging essence of conservatism consists of ‘hostility to radical social change, particularly social change that is instituted by the force of the state and justified by an appeal to abstract rights or to some utopian aim.’ Furthermore: ‘The only position conservatives cannot take without ceasing to be conservative is the belief that men are fundamentally good and perhaps ultimately perfectible.’<sup>68</sup> Minogue writes that the conservative ‘is prepared to abandon perfection’ and seeks ‘reliable bearings in his political tradition’, whereas the revolutionary ‘attempts to locate his landmarks in the future.’<sup>69</sup> Minogue acknowledges that conservatism can manifest itself in different ways, being rooted, for example, in religious belief or in scepticism: ‘a conservative’s preferences must be determined by his time and situation.’<sup>70</sup> However, he presents conservatism as a distinct and continuous tradition: along with liberalism, it is one of ‘the two lenses through which the European political tradition attains a binocular vision of political reality.’<sup>71</sup>

By contrast, Quentin Skinner argues that we must see political utterances as ‘speech acts’ whose meanings can only be understood in their particular context. He warns that attempting to create a ‘mythology of doctrines’ by tracing the development of political ideas throughout history risks obscuring the purposes with which arguments were made, whether by assuming that there must be a consistent view which underlies all of a writer’s utterances, or by depicting figures from different times and places as members of the same school of thought on the grounds that they happened to use similar terminology.<sup>72</sup> Critics of Skinner’s approach

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<sup>67</sup> K. Minogue, ‘Method in intellectual history’, *Philosophy*, October 1981, vol. 56, no. 218, pp. 543-544.

<sup>68</sup> K. Minogue, ‘Conservatism’, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. P. Edwards (New York and London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 195-196.

<sup>69</sup> K. Minogue, ‘Revolution, Tradition and Political Continuity’, *Politics and Experience*, eds. P. King and B. Parekh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 308.

<sup>70</sup> Minogue, ‘Conservatism’, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 2, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> K. Minogue, ‘On Hyperactivism in Modern British Politics’, *Conservative Essays*, ed. M. Cowling (London: Cassell, 1978), p. 117.

<sup>72</sup> Q. Skinner, ‘Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas’, in *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 59-60 and 82-88.

argue that it assumes that all writings about politics are intended simply to achieve immediate political goals, overlooking the ways in which many writers did attempt to address themes of universal significance. Furthermore, his rejection of attempts to identify broad intellectual tendencies risks succumbing to ‘atomism’, treating every thinker in isolation. It has been argued that a better approach is to develop fruitful ways of categorising thinkers, thereby identifying different schools of political thought.<sup>73</sup> Minogue observes that Skinner’s approach risks obscuring both the ways in which writers did attempt to maintain a consistent approach, and the elements of their writings which were intended as more than a response to the immediate circumstances which they faced.<sup>74</sup> Minogue points out that Skinner himself fails to avoid anachronism and assumes a ‘long-term historical drift towards democracy’, categorising deference to rulers as ‘conservative’ and opposition to their policies as ‘radical’.<sup>75</sup> As we shall see, this is an especially misleading assumption in the Russian context, given the ways in which modernisation was directed from above by the state in nineteenth-century Russia. This thesis adopts a balanced approach, contextualising Leont’ev by considering him against the background of the rise of interest in Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia. At the same time, it aims to identify continuities and distinctions within nineteenth-century conservative thought, and to use Leont’ev’s writings to deepen our understanding of the wider Russian conservative tradition.

Much of the existing scholarship on Leont’ev has made relatively little effort to identify the political implications of his concept of Byzantinism and the ways in which it shaped his understanding of conservatism. With mainly Western thinkers in mind, Michael Freeden has identified the ‘core concept[s]’ of conservatism as those of ‘gradual and organic change’ and of ‘belief in the extra-human origins of social order’, which is held to be rooted in the will of God or in objective facts of nature.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Vanessa Rampton defines conservatism as an ‘organic approach to society that values continuity and tradition’, and which favours ‘slow, gradual change’. She points out the difficulty of identifying a conservative tradition in this sense in Russia, given that the autocracy obstructed even limited and incremental reforms, other than those which it itself directed.<sup>77</sup> One major Russian study of Russian conservatism

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<sup>73</sup> R. Berki and B. Parekh, ‘The history of ideas: a critique of Q. Skinner’s methodology’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1973, p. 180.

<sup>74</sup> Minogue, ‘Method in intellectual history’, p. 537.

<sup>75</sup> Minogue, ‘Method in intellectual history’, p. 543.

<sup>76</sup> M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 333-336.

<sup>77</sup> V. Rampton, ‘The impossibility of conservatism? Insights from Russian history’, *The Monist*, vol. 99, no. 4, 2016, pp. 374-376.

identifies distinguishing features which include the idea of a unique Russian path of development; the maintenance of a strong state; a major role for Orthodox Christianity; the prioritisation of the community over the individual; and the rejection of parliamentarianism.<sup>78</sup> Some Western scholars, such as Richard Pipes, associate pre-revolutionary Russian conservatism primarily with the defence of the autocracy. Pipes writes that the Russian state was absolutist in character from the very beginning, and that from the time of Peter I onwards Russian conservatives defended autocracy on a variety of principled and pragmatic grounds, arguing in essence that it was the only form of government suitable for Russia.<sup>79</sup> Others, such as Paul Robinson, argue that this is too simplistic, since it overlooks both the religious, economic, and cultural aspects of conservative thought, and the fact that some Russian conservatives favoured limits on governmental authority. Robinson argues that conservatism is instead defined by the ‘organic principle’, which holds that each society is different and should develop in accordance with its own character.<sup>80</sup>

However, the distinction between conservatism and liberalism in nineteenth-century Russia is difficult to define. Furthermore, nineteenth-century Russian conservatives often critiqued each other as much as their liberal or revolutionary opponents. The chief point of division was that of whether Russia’s development along the same lines as other European countries, associated in particular with Peter I, represented a deviation from authentic Russian national identity, or part of the legacy of Russian statehood which conservatives ought to defend.<sup>81</sup> The so-called ‘aristocratic opposition’ of the 1860s, who were conservatives in that they unsuccessfully tried to preserve the nobility’s traditional dominant rule after the emancipation of the peasantry, had some common ground with Western liberals in that they favoured a free market in agricultural land and labour in order to create a wealthy landowning class to act as a source of support for the monarchy, which, they argued, was the basis of social stability in Britain.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, Slavophiles believed that Russia’s cultural identity, which they associated in particular with the peasant commune, was unsuited to development along the same lines as the West, and that the Tsar should govern in consultation with the people,

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<sup>78</sup> A. Minakov and A. Repnikov, ‘Konservatizm v Rossii’, in *Russkii Konservatizm serediny XVIII – nachala XX veka*, eds. V. Shelokhaev et al. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2010), p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> R. Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. xi and 184-185.

<sup>80</sup> P. Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), pp. 4-8.

<sup>81</sup> S. Dixon, ‘Rozanov’s Peter’, in *Word and Image in Russian History*, ed. M. Di Salvo et al (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2015), pp. 178 ff., and I. Khristoforov, ‘Nineteenth-Century Russian Conservatism: Problems and Contradictions’, *Russian Studies in History*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2009-2010, p. 56.

<sup>82</sup> I. Khristoforov, ‘Aristokraticheskaia’ oppozitsiia Velikim reformam. Konets 1850 – seredina 1870-kh gg. (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2002), p. 10 and p. 47.

unencumbered either by a state bureaucracy or by legal limits on his power.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, Russian liberals, heavily influenced by Hegel, tended to place less emphasis than did their Western counterparts on individual freedom, and were more inclined to emphasise the state's role in promoting the development of a rationally ordered society.<sup>84</sup> Nineteenth-century Russians thus tended to employ the same political terminology as the West, making use of concepts such as conservatism and liberalism, but to imbue it with different meanings.

Konstantin Leont'ev emerged as a political thinker during a period of intellectual turmoil in Russia. Defeat in the Crimean War provoked the 'Great Reforms', a series of far-reaching measures, including the abolition of serfdom and the introduction of jury trials and elected local councils, intended to promote economic and governmental efficiency and to strengthen the legitimacy of the state. The extensive reorganisation of Russian society and the Russian state called into question the basis of Russian identity and Russia's relationship to the West. In turn, this evoked a spectrum of responses from Russian thinkers. Moderate liberals such as Boris Chicherin hoped that the reforms would pave the way for Russia's eventual development into a constitutional monarchy, although they prioritised the maintenance of order and stability.<sup>85</sup> Chicherin declared his 'love of free institutions' but added that 'I prefer honest autocracy to bankrupt representation.' Revolution, he said, was a 'political evil' and could 'never be the banner of a good citizen.' Illustrating the difficulty of categorising Russian political thinkers in this period, Chicherin saw no contradiction between 'true liberalism', 'conservative liberalism' and 'rational conservatism'.<sup>86</sup> More radical thinkers, such as Aleksandr Gertsen and Nikolai Chernyshevskii, hoped that the peasant commune could form the basis of a distinctively Russian type of socialism.<sup>87</sup> There were also widespread calls for the inclusion of representatives of local councils in the central government. However, the reforms were accompanied by widespread disturbances, notably the 1861-1863 student protests and the Polish uprising of 1863-1864.<sup>88</sup> This convinced figures who had previously supported reform, such as Mikhail Katkov, that strong autocratic government was necessary for the foreseeable future. The outcome of the Crimean War also compelled a re-evaluation of

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<sup>83</sup> G. Hosking, *Russia: People & Empire 1552-1917* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 274.

<sup>84</sup> V. Rampton, *Liberal Ideas in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 16-20.

<sup>85</sup> L. Schapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 95-97.

<sup>86</sup> G. Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 271-287.

<sup>87</sup> Schapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, pp. 82-108.

<sup>88</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 374



Russia's position in the Near East by strengthening British and French influence in the Ottoman Empire, while weakening that of Russia. The questions of Russia's identity and of its international position were brought together by the controversy over the Bulgarian campaign for a national church, independent of the Greek-dominated Ecumenical Patriarchate which administered the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire. This raised the issue of whether Russia should side with its fellow Slavs or with the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities.<sup>89</sup> Leont'ev's Byzantinism formed a distinct conservative response to the questions of how Russian identity should be defined and of what position Russia should take regarding the eastern question. Despite its mystical overtones, it thus informed the way in which he analysed the most pressing issues of his time.

Leont'ev explicitly rejected liberalism, arguing that it was a homogenising force which eroded the distinguishing features of every civilisation and therefore inevitably led to cultural decline.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, he argued astutely that the Slavophiles, usually seen as the main opponents of Westernisation, were really just Western liberals in Russian guise. Leont'ev is therefore often seen as an isolated and eccentric figure who does not readily fit into any of the various taxonomies of Russian conservative thought. Paul Robinson refers to him as an 'eccentric exception', in that he did not accept the necessity of the Great Reforms.<sup>91</sup> Richard Pipes writes that, although he was one of the few Russian thinkers with no foreign influences, he was 'idiosyncratic' and his ideas had little influence in late nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>92</sup> It is true that he did not attract any large number of followers in his lifetime, despite being respected as a thinker, and that his political ideas are difficult to categorise in terms of the main schools of thought which existed within nineteenth-century Russian conservatism. However, the reasons for this are rarely identified with precision. This thesis argues that Leont'ev's rejection of nationalism was the main distinction between him and other anti-liberal Russian conservative thinkers.

Leont'ev's view of nationalism as an essentially liberal phenomenon was the product of the 'Byzantine' ideas which he developed over the course of his career, in particular while he resided in the Ottoman Empire. While he was there, he distanced himself from the liberal assumptions which he seems to have accepted uncritically in his early years, instead arguing

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<sup>89</sup> Maiorova, *From the Shadow of Empire*, pp. 174 ff.

<sup>90</sup> Leont'ev, leading article in *Varshavskii dnevnik*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Robinson, *Russian Conservatism*, p. 97.

<sup>92</sup> Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, p. 144 and p. 150.

that strict authoritarianism was necessary in order to maintain the social complexity which, he now believed, was the basis of original culture.<sup>93</sup> His writings from the period of his diplomatic career also illustrate his growing conviction that Orthodoxy created a bond between Greeks and Russians. His mature thought was overtly set out for the first time in his book *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, which was written on Mount Athos and in Constantinople in 1872-1873, although it was not published until 1875 in the journal of the Imperial Society for History and Russian Antiquities.<sup>94</sup> Ten years later it was reproduced in *The East, Russia and Slavdom*, a collection of Leont'ev's most significant works.<sup>95</sup> *Byzantinism and Slavdom* was naturally included in the editions of Leont'ev's collected works which appeared in 1912-1913 and from 2000 onwards.<sup>96</sup> A translated section appeared in *Against the Current*, a 1967 collection of excerpts from Leont'ev's writings.<sup>97</sup> A French translation of *Byzantinism and Slavdom* was published in 2003.<sup>98</sup> However, the work as a whole was not published in English until 2020.<sup>99</sup> Provoked by the above-mentioned controversy over the Bulgarian campaign for an independent Church, *Byzantinism and Slavdom* set out Leont'ev's views on Russian identity and the eastern question, and also owed a considerable debt to his early scientific interests, purporting to describe how the 'triune' process discussed above governs the rise and fall of civilisations in a manner analogous to the growth, decline and death of living organisms. Leont'ev defined 'Byzantinism', i.e. the combination of autocracy and Orthodoxy, as the organising principle of Russian society, while dismissing nationalism as merely 'liberal democratism'.<sup>100</sup> He argued that the Bulgarian church controversy had brought Byzantinism into conflict with 'tribal Slavism'.<sup>101</sup> In stark contrast to the Pan-Slavists, he warned against 'Great Russian obsequiousness to South Slavic willfulness' and favoured the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire, as the protector of Orthodox Christians, until Russia was in

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<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>94</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Chtenie v Imperatorskom Obshchestve Istorii i Drevnostei Rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom Universitete*, 1875, no. 3, part v, pp. 1-132.

<sup>95</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Vostok, Rossiia i slavianstvo*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Tipo-litografiia I. N. Kushnereva, 1885), pp. 81-192.

<sup>96</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5 (Izdanie V. M. Sablina, 1913), pp. 111-260, and *Pss*, vol. 7 part 2, pp. 300-443.

<sup>97</sup> Leont'ev, 'The triune process of development', *Against the Current: Selections from the novels, essays, notes, and letters of Konstantin Leontiev*, ed. G. Ivask, trans. G. Reavey (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), pp. 147-169.

<sup>98</sup> Leont'ev, 'Byzantinisme et slavisme', *Konstantin N. Léontiev: Écrits Essentiels* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2003), trans. D. Beaune-Gray, pp. 87-173.

<sup>99</sup> Leont'ev, *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, trans. K. Benois (London: Taxiarch Press, 2020).

<sup>100</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* 7 vol. 1, p. 333.

<sup>101</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* 7 vol. 1, p. 343.

a position to take its place.<sup>102</sup> This Pan-Orthodox, as opposed to Pan-Slavist, approach would go on to shape Leont'ev's writings about practical political issues. For example, he opposed the 'Russification' of minorities within the Russian Empire, and argued that Russian diplomats had dealt as effectively as possible with the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, when Russia was forced to relinquish some of the gains which it had made at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>103</sup> Leont'ev's Byzantinism thus led him to arrive at positions which were unusual among Russian conservatives.

This thesis draws mainly on the published versions of Leont'ev's writings, in particular those found in the most recent edition of his collected works.<sup>104</sup> It concentrates mostly on Leont'ev's political journalism rather than on his novels and short stories, which have already been the subject of extensive scholarly study, most notably in Glenn Cronin's biography. It also makes use of Leont'ev's diplomatic dispatches to the Constantinople embassy and the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Ministry, which were unavailable to previous students of Leont'ev's consular career, notably Dale Nelson.<sup>105</sup> The writings of John Blunt, a British vice-consul who served alongside Leont'ev in Adrianople, provide a distinct perspective on his diplomatic activity. The thesis chapters dedicated to the study of Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia draw upon nineteenth-century Russian scholarly works on Byzantine art, architecture, and religious history, particularly those which were produced in ecclesiastical academies, rather than universities. These are contextualised by the secondary literature concerning both the nineteenth-century Russian study of Byzantine art, most notably the work of Gerol'd Vzdornov, and the Russian ecclesiastical academies themselves, in particular Boris Titlinov's two volumes on the subject.<sup>106</sup> The recent editions of the diaries and correspondence of Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin), the Russian embassy chaplain in Athens and Constantinople, illustrate the potential significance of Byzantine imagery to Russian churchmen.<sup>107</sup> These sources help us to understand the image of Byzantium in nineteenth-

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<sup>102</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* 7 vol. 1, pp. 440-441.

<sup>103</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 30-31, and 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 109.

<sup>104</sup> Leont'ev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvenadtsati tomakh*, eds. V. Kotelnikov et al. (St Petersburg: Vladimir Dal, 2000-).

<sup>105</sup> Leont'ev, K. N. *Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, eds. A. Torkunov et al. (Moscow: Mgimo-universitet, 2013).

<sup>106</sup> B. Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vols. 1 and 2 (Vilnius: Tipografiia 'Ruskii Pochin' and Tipografiia 'Artel' Pechatnogo Dela', 1908-1909), and G. Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery and Study of Russian Medieval Painting* (Boston: Brill, 2018).

<sup>107</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: god 1850*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2013), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), *Dnevnik: gody 1856-1860*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2017), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2020), *Doneseniia iz*

century Russia, showing Konstantin Leont'ev in a new light and helping us to reassess his place within Russian conservatism.

As we will see in the first part of this thesis, Russia's involvement in the 'Eastern Question', i.e. the diplomatic manoeuvring of the great powers in response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, prompted increased interest in Byzantium as a source of imagery to legitimise Russian intervention in Ottoman affairs, beginning with Catherine II's 'Greek Project'. The emerging discipline of archaeology gave rise to enhanced awareness of Byzantine cultural influence on early Russian history, while Russian artists increasingly embraced Byzantine symbolism as a source of a distinctively Russian artistic style, amid the Europe-wide Romantic movement, a crucial aspect of which was an emphasis on nationality. Increasing Russian contacts with Greek Orthodox communities in the Ottoman Empire and in independent Greece engendered renewed respect for the Orthodox Church's Byzantine roots. Russian scholars, especially in the Church's ecclesiastical academies, grew interested in the historical Byzantine Church, which, many of them believed, had co-operated with the state rather than being either separated from it or subordinated to it. The Byzantine model of church-state relations therefore offered a precedent for an alternative to the nineteenth-century Russian 'synodal' model, which was frequently invoked in debates about the future of the Russian Church. Set against this background, Leont'ev's views appear less idiosyncratic and the political significance of Byzantinism becomes clearer.

In the second part of this thesis, I will consider the influence on Leont'ev's intellectual development of his career as a diplomat stationed in the Ottoman Empire, where the cultural memory of Byzantium was still strong, and where the Orthodox Church, under the leadership of the Greek Ecumenical Patriarchate, appeared as the bearer of the Byzantine cultural legacy, nowhere more so than on Mount Athos. Leont'ev's diplomatic dispatches illustrate the ways in which his experiences as a consul laid the foundations of the worldview which he expressed in the writings he produced while on Mount Athos and in Constantinople. Leont'ev was not an academic but rather a novelist and a political journalist. He also commented extensively on religious matters, but without any systematic training in theology or ecclesiastical history. He never conducted original research on Byzantium or engaged deeply with Byzantine scholarship. His factual knowledge of it apparently derived from his own eclectic reading,

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*Afin (1851-1860)*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2018), *Doneseniia iz Konstantinopoliia (1860-1865)*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2013).

mainly of western historians such as François Guizot and Amédée Thierry.<sup>108</sup> However, as Glenn Cronin notes, Leont'ev was adept at distilling ideas which were 'in the air', and deploying them for his own purposes.<sup>109</sup> He was thus inspired by the cultural echoes of Byzantium which he encountered in the Ottoman Empire to develop an original intellectual approach to contemporary political questions. In the third part of this thesis, I will trace Leont'ev's intellectual development in the last seventeen years of his life, after his return to Russia, and will assess the ways in which Leont'ev's contemporaries understood his writings and responded to them. I will then draw conclusions about the character of the wider Russian conservative tradition, and Leont'ev's place within it. His writings try to define Russian identity and to answer the question of what differentiated Russia from the West, especially after Alexander II's 'great reforms', which imported many Western legal concepts and administrative structures into Russia. Leont'ev was thus one of the few people who carried Byzantinist ideas out of ecclesiastical and academic discussion and into the arena of politics, where he used them specifically to critique many of the assumptions which underlay the writings of other Russian conservative thinkers. This thesis offers to expand the perspective within which Leont'ev can be situated, combining the study of his political ideas with that of their wider cultural and intellectual context, in the form of the Eastern Question and the growth of interest in Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia.

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<sup>108</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 311.

<sup>109</sup> Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, p. 89 and p. 103.

## Chapter 1: The Eastern Question

### *The context of the Eastern Question*

This chapter addresses the Eastern Question, which both helped to form the context of the growth in interest in Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia, and shaped the background of Konstantin Leont'ev's diplomatic career, during which he emerged as an original thinker. The concept of the 'Eastern Question' refers to the rivalry among the European great powers, principally Russia, Britain, France, and Austria, for influence over the Ottoman Empire, which in the nineteenth century came to be seen as politically backward, economically stagnant, and militarily vulnerable. The early historiography of the Eastern Question, beginning with J. A. R. Marriott's study in 1917, tended to depict it entirely as a struggle between the great powers for control over the strategically and commercially important Black Sea Straits.<sup>110</sup> For the most part, historians tacitly assumed that religion played only a marginal role in the diplomacy of the Eastern Question. They depicted religious rhetoric, whether by Russia concerning the plight of Ottoman Christians, or by the western powers about the need for reform of the Christian hierarchies in the Ottoman Empire, as mere propaganda, intended to justify self-interested intervention in Ottoman affairs. However, more recent scholarship has taken into account that, even if the great powers' motives were not purely altruistic, religion did constitute a major factor in their approach to the Eastern Question.<sup>111</sup> Russia saw the Ottoman Christians as a pillar of its influence in the Ottoman Empire, initiating the Crimean War after the Sultan refused to give a formal guarantee of the Orthodox Church's privileges and independence.<sup>112</sup> In turn, Britain and France promoted religious equality in the Ottoman Empire so that Russia could not use the plight of the Ottoman Christians as a pretext for intervention, and advocated the reduction of their communal autonomy in order to loosen their ties with Russia. Furthermore, the western powers urged the Ottoman Empire to take measures to curb the influence which Russia wielded over Ottoman Christians, in particular via the leadership of the Armenian Gregorian Church, which was based in Russia. They also interfered in clerical appointments, with Britain securing the removal of three Ecumenical Patriarchs deemed anti-British.<sup>113</sup> The ecclesiastical aspect of the Eastern Question therefore merits close attention.

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<sup>110</sup> L. Gerd, *Konstantinopol' i Peterburg* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> L. Frary and M. Kozelsky, 'Introduction', in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, eds. L. Frary and M. Kozelsky (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), p. 16.

<sup>112</sup> J. Fairey, *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 12.

<sup>113</sup> J. Fairey, 'Russia's quest for the Holy Grail: relics, liturgics, and great power politics in the Ottoman Empire', in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands*, pp. 143-145.

Russia and the Ottoman Empire first came into conflict with each other in the sixteenth century, as Muscovy's territorial expansion brought it into competition with the Crimean Tatars, Ottoman vassals, for control of the steppes north of the Black Sea.<sup>114</sup> After more than two centuries of intermittent warfare, the balance of power decisively shifted in Russia's favour as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774. The 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji awarded Russia a foothold on the coast of the Black Sea, extensive commercial concessions, and the right to establish consulates throughout the Ottoman Empire. It also made Crimea independent. Furthermore, the treaty required the Ottoman Empire to extend 'firm protection' to its own Christian subjects, as well as giving Russia a number of narrowly defined rights relating to Christians in the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia), which were Ottoman tributary states. Beginning in the following year, Catherine II claimed, as Russian diplomats intermittently would until the Crimean War, that the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji gave Russia a general right to intervene in Ottoman affairs in defence of Christians, although the Ottoman government never accepted that it did.<sup>115</sup>

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, Catherine II became interested in the idea of a 'Greek Project', in which the Ottoman Empire would be overthrown and replaced with a new Greek Empire. This renewed emphasis on expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire undermined Catherine's commitment to the 'Northern System', the diplomatic strategy put forward by Nikita Panin, her foreign minister in all but name between 1763 and 1781. The rivalry for predominance in Germany between Prussia and the Habsburgs forced Russia to choose between them, and Panin favoured a Prussian alliance which would preserve peace and buy time for Russia to modernise itself, while protecting Russian interests in Poland. Accordingly, a defensive alliance with Prussia was concluded in 1764 and reaffirmed as late as 1777. However, the Russo-Turkish War in 1768-1774 had made clear Russia's need for the Habsburgs as an ally against the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the first partition of Poland in 1772 effectively rendered the Northern System obsolete.<sup>116</sup> In 1780, Catherine's private secretary Aleksandr Bezborodko drew up a set of plans for expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, the most radical of which involved 'the complete destruction of Turkey and

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<sup>114</sup> A. Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question: Army, Government and Society 1815-1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 17.

<sup>115</sup> R. Davison, "'Russian skill and Turkish imbecility': the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered", *Slavic Review*, vol. 35, no. 3, September 1976, pp. 475-482.

<sup>116</sup> D. Griffiths, 'The rise and fall of the Northern System: court politics and foreign policy in the first half of Catherine II's reign', *Canadian Slavic Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1970, pp. 551 ff.

the re-establishment of the ancient Greek empire', which was to be ruled by Catherine's grandson Constantine.

Whether Catherine seriously intended to overthrow the Ottoman Empire is unclear. The first substantive action connected with the 'Greek Project' was the annexation of Crimea in 1783, after it was detached from Ottoman rule during the 1768-1774 Russo-Turkish War. Scholars who argue that the 'Greek Project' was the guiding principle of Russian strategy see the annexation as an attempt to provoke a general war with the Ottoman Empire, which failed due to Ottoman submissiveness. On the other hand, those sceptical about the significance of the Greek Project have pointed out that in 1770, Catherine decided against annexing Crimea, on the grounds that the inhabitants would not be useful as either taxpayers or soldiers. Annexation came only after the independent Crimean state proved not to be viable, with frequent anti-Russian uprisings and Ottoman attempts at interference. Furthermore, the future site of Sevastopol in Crimea had been identified as the only suitable harbour for Russia's planned Black Sea fleet.<sup>117</sup> Arguably, the Greek Project was less a comprehensive diplomatic strategy than a vague aspiration, to be pursued opportunistically.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, it attracted little support from among the Russian elite. The nobility, especially Nikita Panin's allies and clients, were opposed to war with the Ottoman Empire because it absorbed government resources which, the nobles believed, should have been spent on internal improvements of the sort which they had called for in their submissions to Catherine's Legislative Commission. War also forced the nobles to pay higher taxes and hand over more serfs to the army. Perhaps worst of all, escaped serfs were allowed to settle in the newly acquired territories in the south.<sup>119</sup> During the 1780s, Catherine and her erstwhile favourite Prince Grigorii Potemkin were almost alone in supporting the Greek Project, while even Catherine's son and heir, Grand Duke Paul, opposed it.<sup>120</sup> It was abandoned after Paul's accession in 1796.

From the early nineteenth century onwards, Russia adopted the so-called 'weak neighbour' policy, seeking to dictate terms to the Ottoman Empire from a position of strength, but not to dismember it. Russia sometimes assumed the role of the protector of Ottoman

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<sup>117</sup> A. Fisher, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772-1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 134.

<sup>118</sup> S. Dixon, *Catherine the Great* (London: Profile Books, 2010), p. 156.

<sup>119</sup> R. Jones, 'Opposition to War and Expansion in Late Eighteenth Century Russia', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Europas*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1984, pp. 40-45.

<sup>120</sup> H. Ragsdale, 'Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, January 1988, vol. 66, no. 1, p. 114.



Christians in order to gain diplomatic leverage: in particular, the Danubian Principalities became, in effect, Russian protectorates, as did Serbia after Russia secured a guarantee of its autonomy in 1812. However, Russia did not pursue large-scale annexations at Ottoman expense, and acknowledged the Sultan as his subjects' legitimate sovereign.<sup>121</sup> Accordingly, when Britain and Russia, later joined by France, agreed in 1826 to work together in support of autonomy for Greece, which was in rebellion against Ottoman rule, Russia undertook to forgo territorial gains.<sup>122</sup> In 1827, Russia, Britain, and France assisted the Greek rebels by sinking the Ottoman fleet at the battle of Navarino. However, when the Sultan retaliated by revoking Russian ships' right of passage through the Black Sea Straits, and war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire broke out, the Russian declaration of war did not refer to the Greek cause, but rather to the Sultan's infringement of existing treaties and of the rights of Serbia and the Danubian Principalities. Furthermore, Nicholas I explicitly proclaimed to the people of Bulgaria that he was not fighting to liberate them from the Ottomans, but only to uphold Russian treaty rights.<sup>123</sup>

Following the Russian victory, Nicholas's advisors resolved to keep the 'weak neighbour' policy in effect, since any attempt to dismember the Ottoman Empire or to seize control of the Bosphorus would have provoked a confrontation with the other European powers: 'the advantages of the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in Europe are superior to the disadvantages which it presents'.<sup>124</sup> In 1833, Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, which created a defensive alliance between the two states, while Russia secretly stipulated that it would not require Ottoman assistance other than the closure of the Bosphorus to foreign warships. The Treaty's publication gave European statesmen the impression that St Petersburg now saw the Ottoman Empire as a Russian protectorate.<sup>125</sup> An 1851 dispute over access to the Holy Places in Jerusalem between Catholic and Orthodox monks, the former backed by France and the latter by Russia, renewed the question of whether or not the Ottoman Empire was subservient to Russia. After the Ottomans resolved the dispute in favour of the French, St Petersburg attempted to strengthen its influence over the Ottoman Empire by reasserting its claim to a protectorate over the Ottoman Christians based on the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji and by occupying the Danubian Principalities, prompting Britain

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<sup>121</sup> Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186 and 328.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 475.

and France to declare war in defence of the Ottomans.<sup>126</sup> Russia's defeat in the Crimean War complicated the 'weak neighbour' policy from 1856 onwards, as did two additional factors: the beginning of the 'Tanzimat' or reform period in Ottoman history, and the rise of nationalism in the Balkans.

*The diplomatic aftermath of the Crimean War*

The 1856 Treaty of Paris, which brought an end to the Crimean War, required the signatories to 'respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire' and to renounce any right to intervene in its internal affairs, effectively nullifying the protectorate over Ottoman Christians which Russia had intermittently claimed since 1774 on the basis of the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji. Furthermore, the Treaty of Paris undermined Russian influence over the Ottoman Empire by forcing Russia to cede part of Bessarabia to Moldavia, replacing the Russian protectorates over the Ottoman tributary states of Serbia and the Danubian Principalities with collective tutelage by all the European powers, and demilitarising the Black Sea.<sup>127</sup> The last of these in particular was a major blow to Russian prestige.<sup>128</sup> The neutralisation of the Black Sea also meant that the Balkans came to play a more important role as a conduit for Russian influence: in 1862, Russia shipped weapons to Serbia via the Danubian Principalities in order to help the Serbs to expel the Ottoman garrisons on their territory.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, the Sultan's guarantee of equality for Christians in the *Hatt-i Humayun*, a reform decree of 1856 which will be discussed in greater detail below, allowed the Russian government to argue that its main aim in waging the Crimean War had in fact been achieved.<sup>130</sup> If Russia was to regain something of its traditional role as the champion of Ottoman Christians, a Russian diplomatic presence was necessary to monitor the implementation of the *Hatt-i Humayun*, and to ensure that Russia did not lag behind the Western powers in defending persecuted Christians.<sup>131</sup> Accordingly, following the Crimean War, Russia's consular network in the Balkans had to be expanded drastically, and the total number of Russian consulates in

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<sup>126</sup> A. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 49-60.

<sup>127</sup> B. Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 138.

<sup>128</sup> W. Mosse, *The Rise and Fall of the Crimean System 1855-1871* (London: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 32-33.

<sup>129</sup> T. Riker, *The Making of Roumania* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), pp. 385 ff.

<sup>130</sup> Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914*, p. 140.

<sup>131</sup> V. Khevroлина, 'Bor'ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel'nost' rossiiskikh konsul'stv)', in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, eds. S. Tikhvinskii et al. (Moscow: Nauka, 2007), p. 227.

the region rose from eight in the first half of the nineteenth century to 23 in 1872.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Ministry, which managed relations with the Ottoman Empire and Asian countries, assumed a more important role: by the early 1860s, it had 66 officials and its director reported directly to the Emperor.<sup>133</sup> However, financial constraints limited the expansion of the Russian consular network.<sup>134</sup> A second problem was the shortage of qualified personnel. One reason for this was that after the Crimean War the Foreign Ministry attempted to recruit its agents in the Ottoman Empire from among Orthodox Russians, rather than the Greeks and Levantines upon whom it had traditionally relied.<sup>135</sup>

Furthermore, there was no clear consensus regarding what policy Russia should pursue in the aftermath of the Crimean War. Alexander II and Aleksandr Gorchakov, who served as foreign minister from 1856 to 1882, believed that it was necessary to avoid foreign conflicts while the government introduced modernising reforms. They wished to revise the Treaty of Paris in Russia's favour, but aimed to do so while preserving the 'concert of Europe'. For example, in 1866 an uprising against Ottoman rule broke out on Crete, prompting Greece to ask the great powers for permission to annex the island. In early 1867, France and Russia held talks about the possibility of jointly endorsing the annexation, but Russia's failure to back France against Prussia in the diplomatic crisis triggered in April that year by France's attempt to annex Luxembourg meant that France would not support Russia over Crete. Rather than act unilaterally, Gorchakov proposed a declaration of non-involvement in the Cretan affair, to which France agreed.<sup>136</sup> Russian consuls were then directed to cease all support for the rebellion.<sup>137</sup> However, many members of the Russian ruling class were more willing to risk conflict in order to aid the Ottoman Christians and undermine the Treaty of Paris. Among them was Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev, director of the Asiatic Department from 1861 to 1864 and

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<sup>132</sup> E. Kudriavtseva, *Russkie na Bosfore* (Moscow: Nauka, 2010), p. 154, and V. Khevrolina, 'Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossii v period reform (1856-1878 gg.)', in *Ocherki Istorii Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del Rossii*, eds. I. Ivanov et al. (Moscow: Olma-Press, 2002), vol. 1, p. 424.

<sup>133</sup> V. Khevrolina, *Rossiiskii diplomat graf Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, 2004), p. 101, and T. Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>134</sup> Khevrolina, *Rossiiskii diplomat graf Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev*, p. 130.

<sup>135</sup> M. Frolova, 'Russkie konsuly i Bolgarsko-Grecheskoe protivostoianie v tserkovnom voprose i na nive shkol'nogo obrazovaniia (Adrianopol', Varna, Bitola, 50-60-e gody xix v.)', *Slavianskii al'manakh*, 2014, p. 45.

<sup>136</sup> Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, pp. 179-186.

<sup>137</sup> Khevrolina, 'Bor'ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel'nost' rossiiskikh konsul'stv)', in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, p. 246.

ambassador to the Ottoman Empire from 1864 until 1877.<sup>138</sup> When Gorchakov chose Ignat'ev as ambassador he apparently thought that Ignat'ev would share his own cautious approach, telling him that: 'Your appointment itself will be a symbol of Russia's goodwill and desire to follow a conservative, not a revolutionary policy in the East.'<sup>139</sup> However, once Ignat'ev was installed in Constantinople, it soon became clear that he did not share Gorchakov's concern with European concert. As he wrote in his memoirs, his guiding principles as ambassador were to pave the way for the denunciation of the clauses of the Treaty of Paris relating to the partial cession of Bessarabia and the demilitarisation of the Black Sea, to secure Russian control over the Black Sea Straits, and to promote Slavic unity, since, he said, the Austrian and Ottoman Slavs were to be 'the weapons of our policy against the Germans.'<sup>140</sup> Ignat'ev wanted Russia to back Greece in the Cretan crisis; he also supported the efforts of Prince Michael of Serbia to organise the Balkan nations into an anti-Ottoman alliance in 1866-1868, although this initiative was ultimately unsuccessful due to the putative allies' competing territorial claims and Michael's death in 1868.<sup>141</sup>

#### *The 'Tanzimat'*

While Russia tried to ensure that the Ottoman Empire remained a 'weak neighbour', the Ottoman government attempted to adopt reforms which would make it less prone to internal upheavals and less vulnerable to outside interference, as well as securing the goodwill of the Western powers. In return for Western assistance against the Egyptian rebel leader Mehmet Ali, Sultan Abdulmecid inaugurated the 'Tanzimat' era in 1839 with the *Gülhane* decree, or *Hatt-i Sherif*.<sup>142</sup> It guaranteed the life, property, and honour of all Ottoman subjects regardless of religion, the first time that the Ottoman Empire had accepted the principle of equality before the law.<sup>143</sup> A new 'Tanzimat' decree, known as the *Hatt-i Humayun*, was issued in 1856. It reiterated the principle of legal equality, and proclaimed that all subjects of the empire were bound together by 'compatriotism', implicitly promoting a form of secular citizenship, which would become known as *Osmanlilik*.<sup>144</sup> In particular, the *Hatt-i Humayun* affirmed the right of

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<sup>138</sup> D. Shilov, *Gosudarstvennye deiateli rossiiskoi imperii: glavy vyshikh i tsentral'nykh uchrezhdenii 1802-1917* (St Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, 2001), p. 260.

<sup>139</sup> Khevroлина, *Rossiiskii diplomat graf Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev*, p. 188.

<sup>140</sup> A. Onou, 'The Memoirs of Count N. Ignatyev', *The Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 10, vol. 29, December 1931, pp. 387 ff.

<sup>141</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, pp. 64-67, and Onou, 'The Memoirs of Count N. Ignatyev', pp. 393-398.

<sup>142</sup> Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, p. 59.

<sup>143</sup> R. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 36.

<sup>144</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 132.

non-Muslims to hold government office.<sup>145</sup> Historically, scholars generally attributed the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms to pressure from Britain, France, and Austria, who wished to strengthen the Ottoman Empire against Russian influence.<sup>146</sup> More recent scholarship has emphasised the role of domestic pressure for reform. The nineteenth century saw the growth of the Ottoman government’s scribal service, and its evolution into a class of professional bureaucrats, who gradually supplanted traditional military and religious elites.<sup>147</sup> In the aftermath of the Crimean War, they consolidated their grip on the Ottoman government, developing into a new ‘civil-bureaucratic elite’.<sup>148</sup> Repudiating the Ottoman ruling caste’s accustomed sense of superiority over Europe, they pressed for reform in an attempt to emulate European ‘enlightened despotism’ in order to match the fiscal and military capability of European states.<sup>149</sup> Other scholars have presented a mixed picture, in which Ottoman elites attempted to retain their hold on power, despite the Ottoman Empire’s military weakness, by using the language of religious equality and modernisation to win outside support, in particular from the British.<sup>150</sup>

Apart from religious equality, the ‘Tanzimat’ decrees also contained more specific provisions, although many of these proved difficult to implement: tax farming was abolished by the *Hatt-i Sherif*, only to be brought back because the new taxation system actually proved less efficient. Corruption and the lack of a budgeting system also undermined the Ottoman Empire’s revenue.<sup>151</sup> The *Hatt-i Humayun* therefore envisioned the modernisation and strengthening of the state through the establishment of annual budgets, the creation of banks, and the use of European investment.<sup>152</sup> It was also necessary to reform the inefficient system of local administration, and from 1845, provincial councils with non-Muslim members were created.<sup>153</sup> A law of 1864 introduced the vilayet, an administrative unit based on the French departmental system.<sup>154</sup> Each vilayet had an advisory council (*meclis-i idare*) with four elected members, two Muslims and two non-Muslims, although the administration also had the right

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<sup>145</sup> C. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 195.

<sup>146</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 53.

<sup>147</sup> Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>150</sup> C. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 168.

<sup>151</sup> C. Clay, *Gold for the Sultan* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), p. 62.

<sup>152</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 53.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

to appoint members and, in addition, manipulated the elections.<sup>155</sup> In 1858 a new penal code based on the French one of 1810 was introduced. It was implemented by new ‘nizami’ courts of government appointees and elected representatives, which worked alongside the traditional sharia courts.<sup>156</sup> The 1858 land code, and subsequent regulations, introduced individual ownership of land, facilitated its sale, mortgaging, and inheritance, and did away with the traditional distinction between publicly and privately owned land.<sup>157</sup> Thus, the overall thrust of the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms was to guarantee at least overt religious equality and to improve economic and governmental efficiency, removing the pretext for outside intervention or domestic revolt, and making the Ottoman state more capable of controlling its population and mobilising the resources which it needed to defend itself.

The progress of the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms in the late 1850s and 1860s presented a mixed picture. The Ottoman authorities apparently regarded the vilayet system as an effective bulwark against separatism: after its experimental introduction in 1864 in the Danube region, where the governor, Midhat Pasha, carried out an extensive programme of public works and took effective action against banditry, it was extended to the rest of the empire, including Crete after the rebellion there was put down in 1867.<sup>158</sup> However, the economic reforms set out in the *Hatt-i Humayun* largely failed to materialise due to the vested interests which would have been threatened by the adoption of a Western-style budgetary and taxation system: in particular, under the existing arrangements the city of Constantinople was almost entirely untaxed.<sup>159</sup> The Ottoman government continued to borrow heavily from foreign creditors until it finally defaulted on its debt in 1875.<sup>160</sup> The great powers were divided over whether the Ottoman authorities had honoured their commitment to grant equality to Christians. British attitudes became markedly more critical of the Ottomans as a result of the harsh suppression of the Cretan rebellion, even though the reports of British consuls were generally pro-Ottoman.<sup>161</sup> On the other hand, in February 1867 the French government issued a memorandum which praised the Ottoman authorities for having implemented the clauses of the *Hatt-i*

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>156</sup> M. Petrov, ‘Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868’, *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, vol. 46, no. 4, October 2004, p. 741.

<sup>157</sup> E. Aytakin, ‘Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: an analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 6, November 2009, pp. 936-949.

<sup>158</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, pp. 151 ff.

<sup>159</sup> Clay, *Gold for the Sultan*, p. 58.

<sup>160</sup> Clay, *Gold for the Sultan*, p. 1.

<sup>161</sup> A. Pottinger Saab, ‘The Doctors’ Dilemma: Britain and the Cretan Crisis 1866-69’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1977, pp. D1384-D1385.

*Humayun* relating to religious tolerance, while identifying the recruitment of Christian army officers as a means for Christians' further integration into Ottoman society.<sup>162</sup> However, in the following month the Russian government responded with a strongly worded memorandum in which it argued that the provisions of the *Hatt-i Humayun* which guaranteed equality for Christians had in fact not been implemented, that Ottoman Christians continued to face persecution and discrimination, and that it was impossible for the Ottoman Empire, as a Muslim state, to treat Christians as equals.<sup>163</sup> A second Russian memorandum set out an alternative proposal for reform in the Ottoman Empire based on the principle of the 'parallel coexistence' of Christians and Muslims under the Sultan, which was to be achieved through the redrawing of provincial borders based on nationality and the granting of 'administrative autonomy' to the empire's Christian provinces, along the lines of that already enjoyed by Samos, Chios, and Saranda-Choria in Thessaly. These provinces were to be governed by elected indigenous chiefs, and defended by local militias in which Christians and Muslims would serve on equal terms.<sup>164</sup> Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, the two ministers who dominated the Ottoman government in this period, rejected the Russian proposal, Fuad Pasha telling Ignat'ev that it would create the 'Disunited States of Turkey'.<sup>165</sup> Thus, we can see that the centralising, modernising 'Tanzimat' reforms threatened, if they succeeded, to undermine the basis of Russia's 'weak neighbour' policy.

#### *The rise of nationalism in the Balkans*

The rise of nationalism in the Balkans during the mid-nineteenth century further complicated Russia's relations with the Ottoman Empire and its Christian subjects, who were governed on behalf of the Sultan by the leadership of the religious communities or 'millets' to which they belonged, the most important of which was the Greek Orthodox, administered by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Historically, as we have seen, Russia sought to portray itself as the defender of Ottoman Christians, but many Balkan nationalists looked to Britain and France, not Russia, for guidance and protection.<sup>166</sup> This was especially the case in

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<sup>162</sup> French memorandum of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1867, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères*, ed. I. de Testa (Paris, 1864-1911), vol. 7, pp. 418-422.

<sup>163</sup> Russian memorandum of 12<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> March 1867, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères*, vol. 7, pp. 433-441.

<sup>164</sup> Russian memorandum of 18<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *Recueil des traités de la Porte ottomane avec les puissances étrangères*, vol. 7, pp. 446-455.

<sup>165</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 235.

<sup>166</sup> L. Frary, *Russia and the making of modern Greek identity, 1821-1844* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 85.

newly independent Greece, where rival political factions formed around the Russian, British, and French envoys. While the factions were defined more by clientelist relationships than by ideology, the ‘Russian’ party, originally made up of the supporters of the nationalist leader Ioannis Kapodistrias, favoured a strong, centralised government, arguing that Greece was not ready for parliamentary rule, while the ‘British’ and ‘French’ parties favoured a constitutional monarchy, albeit with the former advocating a more powerful monarch than the latter.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, the Orthodox Church in the East appeared to be in danger of fragmenting into separate national churches. As one Russian diplomat reported after the Crimean War: ‘Nationality is no longer brought about by creed as before.’<sup>168</sup> The first sign of this came in 1833, when, despite opposition from Russia, the bishops of independent Greece established an autocephalous Church of Greece, with a Holy Synod appointed by the King as its governing body, both because the Ecumenical Patriarchate was seen as a tool of Ottoman domination and because it had been traditional since Byzantine times for the Orthodox Church to be linked to the state.<sup>169</sup> This was encouraged by Britain and France in order to prevent Russia from exercising influence over Greece via the Ecumenical Patriarchate, given the Ottoman Empire’s weakness relative to Russia at the time.<sup>170</sup> Meanwhile, the ‘Russian’ party emphasised the importance of the religious ties between Russia and Greece, with the Russian consul demanding that the Catholic King Otto convert to Orthodoxy. The Ecumenical Patriarchate continued to claim jurisdiction over Greece, and the situation of the Church of Greece was not regularised until the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognised it as autocephalous in 1850, following a diplomatic rapprochement between Greece and Russia.<sup>171</sup> In Moldavia and Wallachia, which merged in 1862 to form the United Principalities, nationalist politicians turned their attention to the ‘Dedicated Monasteries’, which provided the Ecumenical Patriarchate with much of its revenue. The monasteries’ land was secularised in December 1863; Russia attempted to refer the matter to arbitration, but France vetoed any response by the great powers, in line with Napoleon III’s policy of support for nationalism.<sup>172</sup> Subsequently, the government of the United Principalities banned the use of Greek in Orthodox churches and monasteries in favour

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<sup>167</sup> J. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833-1843* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 111-145.

<sup>168</sup> Nelson, *Konstantin Leontiev and the Orthodox East*, p. 214.

<sup>169</sup> Frary, *Russia and the making of modern Greek identity, 1821-1844*, p. 94.

<sup>170</sup> D. Stamatopoulos, ‘The Orthodox Church of Greece’, in *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. L. Leustean (New York: Fordham University, 2014), p. 34.

<sup>171</sup> Stamatopoulos, ‘The Orthodox Church of Greece’, in *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Southeastern Europe*, pp. 44 ff.

<sup>172</sup> Riker, *The Making of Roumania*, p. 370.



of the vernacular.<sup>173</sup> In January 1865, it declared the Romanian church to be autocephalous, despite Russian efforts to broker a compromise with the Ecumenical Patriarchate.<sup>174</sup>

In the Greek and Romanian cases, Russia's sympathies were almost entirely with the advocates of Orthodox unity. However, the complexities of the tension between religious and national loyalties were made clear to Russian diplomats by the controversy over the Bulgarian campaign for a national church, whose origins can be traced back to the composition in 1762 by Father Paisii of *A Slavic-Bulgarian History*, a paean to the mediaeval Bulgarian Empire inspired by the national chauvinism of Greek and Serbian monks on Mount Athos, which was finally published in 1844.<sup>175</sup> In the nineteenth century, the domination of the Orthodox millet of the Ottoman Empire by Greek-speaking bishops, who conducted almost all services in Greek and imposed heavy taxes on Bulgarian parishioners, generated increasing resentment.<sup>176</sup> The *Hatt-i Humayun* called for reform of the millet system, and a series of laws in the early 1860s gave lay people a greater voice in the administration of the Orthodox millet and introduced salaries for bishops in order to reduce corruption. However, only the Greeks of Constantinople were eligible to serve on the newly created 'mixed council', and junior clergy continued to live on fees extorted from their congregations.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, in the aftermath of the Crimean War the Bulgarian intelligentsia, most of whose members resided in Constantinople, began to press for a separate Bulgarian church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate was initially unreceptive, with the result that Catholic missionaries were able to make a considerable number of converts among the Bulgarians, especially after Pope Pius IX agreed in 1859-1860 that Bulgarian Catholics could retain their own rite, i.e. worship in Slavonic, and preserve an autonomous hierarchy, subject only to the conditions for union with the Catholic Church laid down at the fifteenth-century Council of Florence. In 1861, Josif Sokolski was consecrated as the first Archbishop of the Bulgarian-rite Catholic or 'Uniate' Church.<sup>178</sup> These developments were welcomed by the Ottoman authorities as a counterweight to Russian and Greek influence over Orthodox Christians, and so they recognised Sokolski's appointment and released Bulgarian converts to Catholicism from the jurisdiction of the Orthodox millet. The spread of Catholicism in Bulgaria also furthered French influence, due to the role as the protector of

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 364-365.

<sup>174</sup> Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements 1806-1914*, p. 150.

<sup>175</sup> Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, p. 46.

<sup>176</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 17.

<sup>177</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 129.

<sup>178</sup> C. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 243-245.

Catholic interests in the Ottoman Empire which France had held since the agreement of the ‘Capitulations’ in 1569, whereby the Ottomans granted French merchants and diplomats the right to freedom of worship and to sufficient clergy, and gave French consuls the right to monitor Ottoman officials’ compliance.<sup>179</sup> It was a measure of how seriously Russian diplomats took the threat of widespread conversions away from Orthodoxy that shortly after his appointment, Archbishop Sokolski was abducted by agents of the Russian embassy and held for the rest of his life in a monastery in Kiev.<sup>180</sup> To a lesser extent, Protestant missionaries from the West, many of them American, also made converts in Bulgaria, in large part by distributing the Bible in Bulgarian.<sup>181</sup>

Russia’s official stance on the Bulgarian church question was formulated on the advice of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow.<sup>182</sup> He favoured private mediation between the Greeks and Bulgarians in order to resolve the matter, arguing that the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s failure to act against ecclesiastical corruption had given rise to the crisis, but that the Bulgarians’ grievances did not warrant a schism. He therefore urged the Patriarchate to show leniency to the Bulgarians in order to retain them for Orthodoxy, and the Bulgarians to remain loyal to the Ecumenical Patriarch and to settle for an elected bishop of their own rather than a separate national church, even if not all the territory which they had hoped for was assigned to their jurisdiction.<sup>183</sup> Accordingly, Ignat’ev’s aim as ambassador, as he later wrote, was ‘to procure for the Bulgarians, without breaking with the Greeks, a national form, while defending them from the efforts of Catholic and Protestant propaganda and thus conserving them to Orthodoxy and to our influence.’<sup>184</sup> This brought Ignat’ev into conflict with the so-called ‘extreme’ wing of the Bulgarian movement, led by Stoian Chomakov, who believed in the need to show loyalty to the Ottomans in order to secure permission from the Sultan to form a national church.<sup>185</sup> Chomakov rejected Russian patronage out of fear that without Ottoman protection Bulgaria would be subsumed into a Pan-Slav union or annexed by Greece as it pursued the ‘Great Idea’ of uniting all the territories inhabited by Greek-speakers. Neither of these fears was unfounded:

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<sup>179</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, p. 68.

<sup>180</sup> Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, p. 245.

<sup>181</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 22-24.

<sup>182</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 26.

<sup>183</sup> Filaret, *Sobranie mneniy i otzyvov Filareta, Mitropolita Moskovskogo i Kolomenskogo, po delam pravoslavnoi tserkvi na Vostoke* (St Petersburg: Sinodalnaia tipografiia, 1899), p. 162 and pp. 294-297.

<sup>184</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, pp. 27-28, and Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, p. 79.

<sup>185</sup> Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism*, p. 136.

the ‘Great Idea’ was fully accepted by Greek politicians and educated society.<sup>186</sup> Likewise, Ignat’ev’s scheme for an anti-Ottoman alliance of Balkan states had assigned Bulgaria to be ruled by Serbia on the grounds that, said Ignat’ev, the Bulgarians were ‘raw material without a sufficient framework for building an independent principality’.<sup>187</sup> As Konstantin Leont’ev wrote, Chomakov’s faction instead envisioned a dual monarchy along the lines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the Sultan as Tsar of an autonomous Bulgaria.<sup>188</sup> In 1867 a group of Bulgarian nationalists presented a proposal along these lines to the Ottoman government, but it was turned down as contrary to the government’s efforts to promote *Osmanlilik*.<sup>189</sup> In any case, Chomakov affirmed the Bulgarian people’s allegiance to the Sultan, while opposing all attempts at compromise on the church question.<sup>190</sup>

While Russian consuls were instructed to reconcile Greeks and Bulgarians, they tended to stoke the conflict due to their sympathy for the latter, in particular by promoting the establishment of Bulgarian schools and the use of Slavonic in church.<sup>191</sup> N. D. Stupin, the Russian consul in Adrianople, arranged liturgies in Slavonic for himself and his family, to which he then invited the local Bulgarian community. Aleksandr Rachinskii, the vice-consul in Varna, had been ordered by the Foreign Ministry simply to report on the situation in the city, but managed to organise a Slavonic liturgy in honour of the Russian soldiers who had been killed there in 1828.<sup>192</sup> Naiden Gerov, the Bulgarian-born Russian consul in Philippopolis, refused Ignat’ev’s order to arrange Chomakov’s recall from his position as the representative of the city’s Bulgarian community in Constantinople.<sup>193</sup> Thus, by supporting the Bulgarian movement in the provinces, often to an extent which exceeded their instructions, Russian consuls helped it to put pressure on the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Sultan to make concessions, but also exacerbated the conflict which it was officially their mission to pacify.

In February 1870, due largely to Russian diplomatic pressure, the Ottoman government agreed in principle to the creation of an autonomous Bulgarian Exarchate, notionally subordinate to the Ecumenical Patriarchate but largely self-governing. Ignat’ev now turned his attention to the Bulgarians, pressuring them to negotiate with the Patriarchate in order to bring

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<sup>186</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 14.

<sup>187</sup> Onou, ‘The Memoirs of Count N. Ignatyev’, p. 394.

<sup>188</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Eshche o Greko-Bolgarskoi raspre’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 294.

<sup>189</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>190</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 65 and pp. 87-88.

<sup>191</sup> Frolova, ‘Russkie konsuly i Bolgarsko-Grecheskoe protivostoianie’, pp. 52-57.

<sup>192</sup> Frolova, ‘Russkie konsuly i Bolgarsko-Grecheskoe protivostoianie’, pp. 47-48.

<sup>193</sup> Khevrolina, *Rossiiskii diplomat graf Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat’ev*, p. 167.

the Exarchate into being without triggering a schism. However, the two sides were unable to reach agreement over the territory the Exarchate should cover, with the Bulgarians insisting that it should include Macedonia. Ignat'ev's efforts to secure a compromise were ruined on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1872, when, acting at Chomakov's instigation, three Bulgarian bishops made clear their rejection of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's authority by officiating at the Feast of Theophany in the Church of St Stefan in Constantinople, even though Patriarch Anfim had expressly refused them permission to do so. The Ottoman government then permitted the Bulgarians to proceed with the establishment of the Exarchate and, in February, Bishop Anthimus of Vidin was elected as the first Exarch. When he used the occasion of the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1872 to proclaim the independence of the Bulgarian Exarchate, a local church council summoned by the Ecumenical Patriarch declared the Exarchate to be schismatic, and its followers to be heretics on the grounds that they were guilty of phyletism, i.e. of dividing the Church along ethnic lines.<sup>194</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Therefore, while Russia treated the Ottoman Empire as a client state in the early nineteenth century, this approach largely broke down in the 1850s and 1860s. The aftermath of the Crimean War gave rise to great power competition for influence over the Ottoman Empire, while the Ottoman government was strengthened in some respects by the 'Tanzimat' reforms and by British and French support. The rise of more assertive nationalist movements in the Balkans threatened to provoke conflicts into which Russia might be drawn, and undermined the unity of the Orthodox Church, as the Greeks, Romanians and Bulgarians sought to distance themselves from the influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, as we will see, Russia's connection with the 'Orthodox East' – the Orthodox Christian communities, monasteries, and patriarchates of the Ottoman Empire and the states which had broken away from it – was strengthened in this period by cultural and religious as well as diplomatic ties. Russia's official and unofficial representatives in the region often pursued their own aims, at odds with those of the Russian government. The following chapters will consider the ways in which Russian interest in Byzantium developed against the background of the Eastern Question. We will then turn to Konstantin Leont'ev's consular career, during which he participated in the struggle between the great powers' representatives for influence in the

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<sup>194</sup> Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, pp. 129-130 and 175-189.

Ottoman Empire, and experienced the complexities of the 'Tanzimat' reforms and the Graeco-Bulgarian ecclesiastical controversy, stimulating the development of his political thought.

## Chapter 2: the nineteenth-century Russian study of Byzantine art and architecture

### *Introduction*

This chapter considers the growth of interest in Byzantine art, architecture, and archaeology in nineteenth-century Russia, which helped to form the context of Konstantin Leont'ev's intellectual development and his use of the concept of Byzantinism. The Byzantine legacy offered a range of imagery which could be deployed in different ways, in response to changing political priorities and artistic tendencies. Many nineteenth-century Russian historians of Byzantium emphasised that Byzantine influence had shaped Russian culture and statehood, implicitly arguing that Russia was thereby the cultural equal of western Europe. Leont'ev's writings set out a distinctive understanding of Byzantinism, which in some ways echoed the official nineteenth-century Russian interpretation of Byzantine history, but was at odds with it in certain respects. As we will see, he clearly believed that Byzantium had exercised a defining cultural influence on Russia, in particular by bestowing autocratic monarchy and Orthodox Christianity on it. However, he argued that Byzantinism was defined by Orthodox Christianity as opposed to ethnicity, and that Orthodoxy was the creation of Byzantine Greek civilisation. He therefore viewed Byzantinism as incompatible with Pan-Slavism and with political nationalism in general. As a result, he found himself in disagreement with many other Russian conservative thinkers regarding the basis of Russian identity, even as he shared their aim of promoting a sense of distinctiveness from the West.

Byzantine symbolism had been used to legitimise monarchical power in pre-Petrine Russia, before being largely abandoned in favour of classical imagery under Peter I. It was resurrected in the late eighteenth century in much of the artwork associated with Catherine the Great's Greek Project, her scheme to replace the Ottoman Empire with a Russian client state. The nineteenth century saw the continuation of this linkage of political and cultural ambitions. Russian art participated in the general nineteenth-century movement towards the development of 'national' schools of art, one of the defining aspects of romanticism. In Russia this tendency was sponsored by Nicholas I's government, and Byzantium served as a source of motifs for the creation of a distinctive Russian tradition of art and, in particular, architecture. Byzantine imagery assumed a more profound significance in the aftermath of the Crimean War, as Russia sought to reassert its religious and cultural ties with the Christian communities of the Orthodox East in order to regain its traditional role as their protector. This, in turn, gave rise to in-depth study of the Byzantine artistic and archaeological legacy, in particular on Mount Athos, which

Russian visitors increasingly saw as a surviving remnant of Byzantium. The growth in knowledge of Byzantium, and an influx of Byzantine artefacts, shaped the ways in which, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Russian historians wrote about the importance of the Byzantine cultural legacy for Russia. They argued that the archaeological heritages of Byzantium and Russia could not be understood in isolation from each other, and that Byzantine influence had shaped Russian art in ways which differentiated it from that of the West, in particular through the preservation of the religious character of icon-painting. In turn, this implied both that Russian historians had a special vocation to study Byzantine art and archaeology, being better placed to understand it than their Western counterparts, and that their doing so would strengthen Russian cultural identity.

*Byzantium in Russian culture before the nineteenth century*

From the tenth to the eighteenth centuries, Russian monarchs sought to legitimise their authority in part by portraying themselves as the heirs to Byzantium. The medieval *Primary Chronicle* likens Prince Vladimir, the first Russian ruler to adopt Christianity, to the Emperor Constantine, and Kievan coins showed princes as Byzantine emperors. Ivan III, the fifteenth-century Grand Prince of Moscow, who married the Byzantine princess Sofia Palaeologus, adopted the Byzantine title of ‘Autocrat’, as well as that of ‘Tsar’, which was used in Slavonic chronicles for the Byzantine Emperor.<sup>195</sup> Ivan IV obtained formal recognition of his right to use the title of Tsar from the Patriarch of Constantinople. From the sixteenth century, legend held that the Cap of Monomakh, part of the Muscovite ruler’s regalia, had been donated by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomakh, though in fact it was probably of fourteenth-century Tatar origin. Tsar Alexei, as well as commissioning new Monomakh regalia, took communion at the altar while wearing imperial vestments in the manner of a Byzantine emperor, and introduced a stylised version of the Byzantine ceremony of the Blessing of the Waters.<sup>196</sup> The sixteenth-century monk Filofei depicted Moscow as the ‘Third Rome’, the rightful successor of Byzantium, an impression which was strengthened by Ottoman Christian clergy who sought aid from Russia in return for icons and relics.<sup>197</sup> However, Russia’s cultural

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<sup>195</sup> I. de Madariaga, ‘Tsar into Emperor: the title of Peter the Great’, in *Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>196</sup> R. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 23 ff.

<sup>197</sup> L. Gerd, ‘Russian Imperial Policy in the Orthodox East and its Relation to Byzantine Studies’, in *Imagining Byzantium: Perceptions, Patterns, Problems*, eds. A. Alshanskaya et al. (Mainz: Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus Mainz, 2018), p. 93.

debt to Byzantium should not be overstated. The medieval Russian political theorist Ivan Peresvetov held up Byzantium as a negative example, since its emperors had ceded power to their magnates.<sup>198</sup> From the late fifteenth century onwards, Russian monarchs' chief diplomatic concern, which guided their efforts to shape their international image, was their aspiration to equality of status with the Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>199</sup> The double-headed eagle of Romanov iconography was probably an imitation of the symbol used by the Holy Roman Empire, not that of Byzantium. Tsars such as Ivan IV used more Roman than Byzantine imagery, often claiming to be descended from the brother of Augustus Caesar. Muscovite rulers probably used the title of Tsar in order to assert their position as the rightful overlords of the Tatar Khanates, whose leaders had been referred to in Russian as tsars, rather than to claim descent from Byzantine Emperors.<sup>200</sup> The idea of Moscow as the 'Third Rome' was largely abandoned until the 1860s after being invoked in 1589 in support of Russia's right to its own patriarchate. Peter I largely discontinued the use of Byzantine imagery, replacing it with classical motifs such as statues of Hercules and Mars, and assuming the Westernised title of 'Imperator'.

Catherine II's Greek Project was a scheme to conquer the Ottoman Empire and replace it with a Greek Empire ruled by her grandson Constantine. Catherine's regular correspondent Voltaire attached enormous importance to her wars with the Ottoman Empire, as did Evgenios Voulgaris, a Greek monk who had taken refuge at her court. Both men saw her as waging war against superstition and urged her to drive the Ottomans out of Europe in order to pave the way for a renaissance of Greek culture, Voltaire envisioning the revival of classical Greece while Voulgaris emphasised the plight of Orthodox Christians and the restoration of a Christian monarchy to the former Byzantine Empire.<sup>201</sup> Catherine's own commentary on her wars with the Ottoman Empire, and the artwork which they inspired, combined classical and Byzantine imagery. Towns and regions in the newly acquired territories were given Greek names such as Kherson, Odessa, and Tauris. As early as the 1770s, Catherine's summer palace at Tsarskoe Selo included a church reminiscent of Hagia Sophia.<sup>202</sup> In 1779, a medal was issued to mark the birth of Catherine's grandson Constantine, showing the three graces overlooking

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<sup>198</sup> S. Ivanov, 'The Second Rome as Seen by the Third: Russian debates on the "Byzantine Legacy"', in *The Reception of Byzantium in European Culture since 1500*, eds. P. Marciniak and D. Smythe (Routledge: New York, 2016), pp. 56-57.

<sup>199</sup> de Madariaga, 'Tsar into Emperor: the title of Peter the Great', p. 25.

<sup>200</sup> I. de Madariaga, 'Autocracy and Sovereignty', in *Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 41.

<sup>201</sup> E. McBurney, 'Picturing the Greek Project: Catherine II's iconography of conquest and culture', *Russian Literature*, vol. 75, January-May 2014, p. 417.

<sup>202</sup> Dixon, *Catherine the Great*, p. 166.



Constantinople, one holding Constantine, one holding a cross, and one pointing to a star in the East. Constantine went on to be educated in Greek. Richard Brompton's 1781 portrait of Constantine and his older brother Alexander showed them dressed as Emperor Constantine and Alexander the Great, clearly suggesting that Catherine saw them as destined to rule a new empire in the East.<sup>203</sup> Likewise, a 1791 poem by Gavrila Derzhavin likened Catherine's grandsons to their classical namesakes: 'This one will take thunder to the Persians, That one will again build Rome.'<sup>204</sup> In 1782, Catherine created the Order of St Vladimir, named after the Prince of Kiev who accepted Christianity from Byzantium, for civilian service to the fatherland. All the recipients were men involved in the implementation of the Greek Project.<sup>205</sup> An especially noteworthy manifestation of the use of cultural activity in support of the Greek Project was Catherine's opera *The Beginning of Oleg's Reign*, first performed in 1790, which depicts an attack on Byzantium by Oleg, the tenth-century Prince of Novgorod. The performance culminated with a lavish ceremony of reconciliation between the Russians and Byzantines, featuring ancient Greek games, a scene from a play by Euripides, and the signing of a treaty by Oleg and the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI.<sup>206</sup> However, the historical accuracy of the play's depiction of Byzantium is dubious. The Byzantium depicted on stage was, in the words of one historian, 'a capricious mixture of ancient Greece, modern Russia and ancient Rus'.<sup>207</sup> Historians differ over the significance of the art associated with the Greek Project. Zorin argues that it formed a carefully structured narrative, intended to demonstrate that Russia, rather than the West, was the true inheritor of ancient Greek civilisation via Byzantium: 'Russia's role as the single heir to the Byzantine church also made her the only indisputably legitimate heir to classical Greek culture.'<sup>208</sup> By contrast, Ivanov argues that the haphazard combination of classical and Byzantine allusions indicates that Catherine and her court lacked any real knowledge of Byzantium.<sup>209</sup> In any case, it is clear that artistic depictions of Byzantium were used for political purposes. However, the Greek Project did not leave any lasting mark on Russian cultural life after the death of Catherine II.

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<sup>203</sup> McBurney, 'Picturing the Greek Project: Catherine II's iconography of conquest and culture', p. 420.

<sup>204</sup> A. Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth – Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2014), p. 129.

<sup>205</sup> McBurney, 'Picturing the Greek Project: Catherine II's iconography of conquest and culture', p. 424.

<sup>206</sup> R. Wortman, *Visual Texts, Ceremonial Texts, Texts of Exploration* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), p. 127.

<sup>207</sup> S. Ivanov, 'Vizantiia Ekateriny velikoi', *Quaestio Rossica*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2021, pp. 674-675.

<sup>208</sup> A. Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth – Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2014), p. 27.

<sup>209</sup> Ivanov, 'Vizantiia Ekateriny velikoi', p. 675.

*The nineteenth-century resurgence of Russian interest in Byzantium*

The early nineteenth century was marked by the rise of romanticism in European cultural and intellectual life. Romanticism was a broad and multifarious movement, but its essence was a shift away from the rationalism of Enlightenment thinkers and their confidence in humans' ability to understand, control, and improve the material world, in favour of greater emphasis on emotion, mysticism, and subjectivity.<sup>210</sup> Furthermore, romantics reacted against the neo-classical style in art and literature, which Enlightenment thinkers had equated with universal laws of aesthetics, instead valuing particularism and tradition. The political ramifications of romanticism varied between countries: British romantic writers such as Wordsworth and Shelley championed revolution and democracy, whereas in France romanticism was linked with royalism and clericalism, and in Greece, Italy, and Bohemia it was associated with resistance to Ottoman or Habsburg imperial rule. German romanticism in particular was linked with cultural relativism, rejecting the use of French, which had become a universal language among elites, in favour of German. Johann Gottfried Herder, writing in the 1770s, argued that art inevitably expressed the whole nature of the artist and of the culture from which the artist emerged, since people could only create in terms of the symbols with which they were brought up. He went on to argue that every national culture had innate value and deserved to be understood on its own terms, and that culture was defined by common people, not elites.<sup>211</sup> One of romanticism's main legacies to Russian thought and culture was the concept of nationality or *narodnost'*, after contact with Europe during the Napoleonic Wars led Russian thinkers to occupy themselves with the question of their country's relationship with the West, and to ask whether European culture ought to be emulated uncritically, as the Russian ruling class largely had done since the time of Peter I.<sup>212</sup> The Russian Slavophile school embraced the romantics' love of tradition, veneration of the masses, and rejection of universal artistic laws in favour of the 'authentic' and local. Accordingly, the Slavophile thinker Aleksei Khomiakov wrote in 1847: 'Art does not arise from the mind alone. It is not the product of a lone individual and his egoistic rationality ... The artist does not create by his own strength: the spiritual strength of the people creates in the artist. Therefore, it is apparent that any art must be and cannot fail to be national.'<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> T. Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution* (London: Phoenix, 2011), pp. 7-9.

<sup>211</sup> I. Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp. 58-64.

<sup>212</sup> L. Leighton, *Russian Romanticism: Two Essays* (Mouton: 1975, The Hague), p. 95.

<sup>213</sup> A. Khomiakov, 'O vozmozhnosti Russkoi khudozhestvennoi shkole', *Sochineniia A. S Khomiakova*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1900), p. 75.

This emphasis on nationality as an important aspect of cultural creativity helped to pave the way for the rehabilitation of Byzantium in Russian thought. Russian distinctiveness from the West was ascribed to Byzantine influence, but this was cast in a positive light. However, in Russia the concept of nationality was co-opted by the autocracy, with the proclamation of the triad of ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, *Narodnost*’ as Russia’s ruling ideology.<sup>214</sup> Despite his marked differences with the Slavophile movement, Nicholas I shared its enthusiasm for the idea of national art, as did Aleksei Olenin, who served under him as director of the Academy of Arts and the Imperial Public Library, and who had formerly been a supporter of the Greek Project. Olenin asserted a link between ancient Greek and Russian culture, and claimed that after their conversion to Christianity, Russians had dressed like Normans and Byzantines, on the grounds that dominant cultures always inspired imitation. In 1835, under his close supervision, his protégé Fedor Solntsev painted Prince Sviatoslav Igorevich meeting the Byzantine Emperor John I Tzimiskes. The painting depicts Olenin and Solntsev’s shared belief in the Byzantine roots of the Russian monarchy: the prince respectfully defers to the emperor, while a reproduction of an eleventh-century manuscript attached to the frame shows Sviatoslav Igorevich’s grandson, Sviatoslav Iaroslavich, in Byzantine dress. Likewise, Solntsev’s designs for the 1837 renovation of the Terem Palace and for a new Kremlin dinner service used the effect of *kovrovost*, the covering of every surface with motifs, which has been ascribed to Byzantine influence, and which evoked the interior of an early Russian church.<sup>215</sup> Solntsev was also the driving force behind a renaissance of traditional icon-painting in Russia. Historically, Russian icon-painters had passed on their traditions in closed workshops, but from the fifteenth century western influences grew stronger and were dominant by around 1800.<sup>216</sup> After the 1830 Polish revolt, the Holy Synod, fearing the growth of Catholicism, tried to restore traditional icon-painting, which was incorporated into the St Petersburg seminary curriculum from 1844, with Solntsev as the instructor. He emphasised the importance of copying originals borrowed from monasteries, and called for an expedition to Mount Athos to record the icons and frescoes there. Under his influence, in 1856 the Academy of Arts introduced an icon-painting course, ‘in which artistic norms would be merged with archaeological correctness and church tradition.’<sup>217</sup> When eleventh-century frescoes were discovered in St Sophia’s Cathedral in Kiev

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<sup>214</sup> V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 73 ff.

<sup>215</sup> R. Wortman, ‘Solntsev, Olenin, and the development of a Russian national aesthetic’, in *Visualizing Russia: Fedor Solntsev and crafting a national past*, ed. C. Whittaker (Boston: Brill, 2010), p. 28.

<sup>216</sup> M. Evtushenko, ‘Solntsev and the reform of icon painting’, in *Visualizing Russia*, p. 75.

<sup>217</sup> Evtushenko, ‘Solntsev and the reform of icon painting’, in *Visualizing Russia*, p. 82.

in 1843, Nicholas I ordered them to be displayed, with restorations carried out under Solntsev's direction, on the grounds that it was right to venerate ancient times, even though Metropolitan Filaret worried that they provided evidence that practices associated with the Old Believers dated to the era of Kievan Rus'.<sup>218</sup> Solntsev's *Antiquities of the Russian State*, published between 1849 and 1853, defended the dubious Byzantine origin stories of various royal regalia.<sup>219</sup> Byzantine imagery could thus be invoked to glorify both the Russian past, and absolute monarchy.

The use of Byzantine imagery in 'official' art also extended to architecture. In 1827, Nicholas I began seeking a new design for the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the long-delayed church intended to commemorate Russia's victory in the Napoleonic Wars. The architect Aleksandr Vitberg had initially submitted a neoclassical design, but Nicholas disliked 'the Roman style' and wished for a more 'national' design that would 'attest to compatriots as well as to foreigners the zeal of Russians for the Orthodox faith.' Olenin recommended the architect Konstantin Ton, and instructed him to draw on sketches by Solntsev for guidance. Ton drew up a design with five cupolas, one large and four small, inspired by the medieval Assumption Cathedrals in Moscow and Vladimir. Nicholas I designated this 'Byzantine' or 'Ton' style as Russia's official architectural style in his 1841 Building Ordinance.<sup>220</sup> In fact, even if the vast interior of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour recalled that of Hagia Sophia, many features of Ton's churches were neoclassical, such as their proportions, symmetrical arcades, and large oblong naves. Even the large cupola of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour was neoclassical in design, while the small ones were false and purely decorative.<sup>221</sup> Likewise, Ton's Grand Kremlin Palace was designed in a neoclassical style reminiscent of the St Petersburg Winter Palace, with exterior motifs that complemented the nearby Terem Palace. However, contemporaries were at pains to depict Ton's churches as authentically Byzantine. Ton himself wrote that: 'The Byzantine style, linked since ancient times with elements of our *narodnost*', formed our ecclesiastical architecture, the patterns of which we do not find in other

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<sup>218</sup> G. Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery and Study of Russian Medieval Painting* (Brill: Boston, 2018), p. 26.

<sup>219</sup> Wortman, 'Solntsev, Olenin, and the development of a Russian national aesthetic', in *Visualizing Russia*, pp. 19-32.

<sup>220</sup> Wortman, 'Solntsev, Olenin, and the development of a Russian national aesthetic', p. 20.

<sup>221</sup> R. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 383.

countries.’<sup>222</sup> According to a biographical note of 1883, Ton introduced this style because he thought the western Catholic style was incompatible with the Russian climate, and with the Orthodox tradition ‘which was transferred to us directly from Byzantium’. Ton was therefore described as the first to ‘realise the idea of nationality in Russian architecture.’<sup>223</sup> Likewise, the architect Ivan Sviiazhev, in his introduction to the 1845 publication of Ton’s sketches for the Church of the Entry into the Temple of the Mother of God in St Petersburg, depicted Ton as the restorer of an architectural tradition that could be traced back to Byzantium in the time of Emperor Constantine. Sviiazhev wrote that Byzantine architects brought their style to Russia, where cupolas and arches became pointed due to rain and snow. Meanwhile, in Europe the renaissance gave rise to unsuccessful combinations of Byzantine and classical styles. Later, the Tsars embraced Italian architecture, which, wrote Sviiazhev, was unsuited to Russia, giving rise to disharmony of buildings with their surroundings. Subsequently, as the spirit of nationality arose in Europe, each people ‘demanded its own home-grown architecture’, inspiring Ton with ‘the thought of expressing the idea of the Orthodox Church in architectural language’. Sviiazhev wrote that Ton was the ‘Pushkin’ of Russian architecture, reconstructing it with materials from Rus’, which he ‘liberated ... from extraneous, borrowed admixtures’ and ‘developed according to ancient forms purified by the influence of modern education’. He added that Ton’s churches were to medieval Russian architecture what Pushkin’s poetry was to the medieval *Tale of Igor’s Campaign*, and that his style was immediately embraced by the Tsar and people.<sup>224</sup>

#### *The study of Byzantine archaeology in nineteenth-century Russia*

Another area in which the new emphasis on nationality came to the fore was archaeology. From the late 1840s onwards, Russian scholars, including archaeologists, increasingly turned against the perceived dominance of Russian intellectual life by foreign, especially German, influence.<sup>225</sup> Aleksei Khomiakov wrote in 1852 that archaeology was important for strengthening national sentiment: ‘archaeological studies, which throw so much light on ancient history and the history of medieval Europe, and have shown so much benefit for the

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<sup>222</sup> K. Ton, *Tserkvi, sochinennye arkhitektorom Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva professorom arkhitektury Imperatorskoi Akademii khudozhestv i chlenom raznykh Inostrannykh Akademii Konstantinom Tonom* (St Petersburg: 1838), unnumbered page

<sup>223</sup> A. Ialozo, ‘Konstantin Andreevich Ton. Biograficheskii ocherk’, *Zodchii*, vol. 12, 1883, p. 2 and p. 8.

<sup>224</sup> I. Sviiazhev, introduction, in K. Ton, *Prakticheskie chertezhi po ustroistvu tserkvi Vvedeniia vo khram presviatyiya Bogoroditsy v Semenovskom polku v S. Peterburge* (Moscow: Tipografiia A. Semena, 1845), pp. 1-5.

<sup>225</sup> N. Veselovskii, *Istoriia imperatorskago russkago arkhelogicheskago obshchestva* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Glavonogo Upravleniia Udelov, 1900), p. 60.

Slavic lands, in which they strengthened the weakest nationality, must and will be more beneficial for us than anywhere.’<sup>226</sup> The study of Russia’s links to Byzantium appeared to Russian archaeologists as a task to which they in particular were suited, and they often presented their findings in such a way as to promote a sense of national distinctiveness derived from Byzantine influence. Prince G. G. Gagarin, who became assistant to the chairman of the Archaeological Society in 1864, steered the Society in the direction of Byzantine studies, seeing Byzantine monuments as ‘a guarantee of the development of our native art’.<sup>227</sup> The St Petersburg Numismatic Society was founded in 1846 by Aleksei Uvarov, whose father Sergei was the minister of education who coined the slogan ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, *Narodnost*’.<sup>228</sup> Aleksei Uvarov’s research emphasised Byzantine cultural influence on Russia, and the ways in which it had differentiated Russia from the West. His 1862 study of coins from the time of the Kievan Princes Iaroslav and Vladimir found that they were based on Byzantine, not western, patterns. He noted that Byzantine iconography was distinguished from the western style by its ‘semi-theological’ character and lack of deviations. For example, depictions of angels disappeared from Byzantine but not western art after being prohibited by the Trullan Council of 691. Likewise, Byzantine iconography always showed doves with their heads upwards as a sign of the Holy Spirit, as did Rus’ from the twelfth century, while countries not under Byzantine influence showed doves with their heads facing downwards. Vladimir and Iaroslav’s coins also show them with a symbol Uvarov identified as a *dikanikion*, the apex of a Byzantine empress’s sceptre, which, he believed, had probably been brought to Rus’ by Vladimir’s Byzantine consort, Princess Anna. He argued that Russian princes put this symbol, rather than ones which were unique to the Byzantine Emperor, on their coins as a sign of power granted by the Emperor and to preserve good relations with Byzantium.<sup>229</sup>

In particular, the Crimea was imbued with enormous significance by nineteenth-century students of the Byzantine cultural legacy to Russia. Archaeological explorations on the site of the ancient Crimean city of Chersonesus began in 1827, partly with the aim of finding historical evidence to justify Russia’s possession of what was a predominantly Muslim region at the time. This soon appeared, in the form of the ruins of four Byzantine churches. Innokentii (Borisov),

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<sup>226</sup> A. Khomiakov, ‘Predislovie k russkim pesniam – Iz sobrannye P. V. Kireevskii – Osobennoe znachenie Russkoi arkheologii’, *Sochineniia A. S. Khomiakova*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1900), p. 163.

<sup>227</sup> Veselovskii, *Istoriia imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva*, p. 420.

<sup>228</sup> M. Kozelsky, ‘Ruins into Relics: The Monument to Saint Vladimir on the Excavations of Chersonesos, 1827-57’, *The Russian Review*, vol. 63, no. 4, October 2004, p. 668.

<sup>229</sup> A. Uvarov, *Razyskaniia o slaviano-vizantiiskikh monetakh* (St Petersburg, 1862), pp. 8-25.

Bishop of Kherson and Tauride from 1848 to 1857, conducted extensive research into the history of the Church in Crimea, with the aim of restoring sites of particular importance to Crimea's Christian heritage. He reported that the rediscovered Byzantine churches were attracting many pilgrims: 'Crimea is perfectly designed to be our Russian Athos.'<sup>230</sup> He advocated rebuilding what was believed to be the Byzantine church in which St Vladimir had been baptised. The architect's design for what became the St Vladimir Cathedral incorporated the ruins of the original church, and was based on the study of Byzantine churches of the fifth to tenth centuries.<sup>231</sup> This use of the Byzantine legacy to enhance the prestige of the Church did not preclude genuine historical study of it. In 1853, Aleksei Uvarov received permission from the bishop to excavate a church on the northern coast of Chersonesus. He noted that its construction, like that of churches in Constantinople, was modelled on a classical basilica, and that it seemed to be built over the remains of a pagan temple, while the iconostasis was similar to ones used throughout the Greek world until the reign of Justinian. Uvarov also discovered Byzantine coins, a glass mosaic, and evidence that the church had been destroyed in the tenth century. He noted that it was hard to identify the church with any mentioned in ancient chronicles, and that it was in the wrong place to be where St Vladimir was supposedly baptised, not being in the middle of the city. Nonetheless, he wrote that it was important for showing 'the plan of a Byzantine church with all its architectural parts.'<sup>232</sup>

Later in the nineteenth century, Russian scholars began focusing their attention on Constantinople, where extensive remains of the Byzantine city survived. The historian Nikolai Pokrovskii wrote in 1889 that Ottoman rule had preserved traces of Byzantium for future study, just as Vesuvius had preserved Pompeii.<sup>233</sup> In 1884, recognising the inadequacy of existing archaeological knowledge of Constantinople, the preparatory committee of the sixth Russian Archaeological Congress organised a visit by a group of Russian scholars including Nikodim Kondakov, with the aim of surveying the remnants of ancient Constantinople. Kondakov wrote that until then, archaeology had limited itself to the preservation of written texts and had played a subservient role to history, rather than producing an 'original system' through the study of monuments themselves. He argued that it was necessary to combine the two disciplines,

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<sup>230</sup> Kozelsky, 'Ruins into Relics', pp. 656 ff.

<sup>231</sup> Kozelsky, 'Ruins into Relics', p. 667.

<sup>232</sup> A. Uvarov, *Neskol'ko slov o arkheologicheskikh razyskaniakh bliz Simferopolia i Sevastopolia* (Moscow, 1854), pp. 9-12.

<sup>233</sup> N. Pokrovskii, 'O nekotorykh pamiatnakh drevnosti v Turtsii i Gretsii', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1889, nos. 9-10, p. 440.

studying both ‘artistic form and religious content’, as had already been done for Roman art, in order to do justice to the history of Byzantine art, refuting western historians’ negative views of it. He added that the successful study of Byzantine archaeology depended on ‘the requirements and questions developed by the study of Russian antiquity’, and in turn was necessary to establish a ‘comparative scientific method’ that could inform understanding of the Russian past.<sup>234</sup> Likewise, the Archaeological Society’s 1885 congress resolved that ‘Russian Christian monuments of the most ancient era, as a part of Byzantine antiquity, can be understood and explained only with the help of their comparison with complete Byzantine types’. Furthermore, it noted that the study of Byzantine ecclesiastical archaeology was first and foremost the task of Russian scholars, since western scholars paid little attention to the subject and struggled to understand it due to ‘the remoteness of the western-catholic way of life from Byzantium, with which all the enlightenment brought from there links us’.<sup>235</sup> In 1894, the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople was established, to examine the city’s Byzantine ruins. Its creation was advocated by the Russian embassy, as a means of promoting knowledge of the history of Eastern Christianity, which had hitherto been addressed only from a western perspective. It was thought that this would strengthen Russian influence over the Orthodox peoples of the Balkans.<sup>236</sup> Thus, Russian archaeological research into Byzantine history was imbued with the idea that it was a means of strengthening a sense of Russian identity, and was a task specifically for Russian scholars.

*The academic study of Byzantine art in nineteenth-century Russia*

Mid-nineteenth century Russia witnessed a resurgence of interest in the Byzantine artistic legacy, and, in turn, the emergence of the study of Byzantine art as an academic discipline. Russian scholars frequently depicted Byzantium as the originator of a unique tradition of religious art, in many ways distinct from that of the West, which Russia had inherited. In 1838 the architect and archaeologist Aleksei Martynov declared that the Byzantines were ‘our first instructors in architecture and painting, or strictly icon-painting.’<sup>237</sup> Ivan Snegirev produced the first academic study of Byzantine influence on Russian art in 1834. Snegirev wrote that in the aftermath of the iconoclast controversy, which did away with religious sculpture, religious

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<sup>234</sup> N. Kondakov, *Vizantiiskii tserkvi i pamiatniki Konstantinopolia* (Odessa: Tipografiia A. Pul'tse, 1886), pp. i-v.

<sup>235</sup> Veselovskii, *Istoriia imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva*, p. 160.

<sup>236</sup> E. Basargina, ‘Russkii arkheologicheskii institut v Konstantinopole: arkhivnye fondy’, in *Arkhivy russkikh vizantinistov v Sankt-Peterburge*, ed. I. Medvedev (St Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1995), p. 74.

<sup>237</sup> A. Martynov, ‘Khudozhestva v Rossii do Petra Velikogo’, *Khudozhestvennaia gazeta*, 1838, vol. 10, p. 311.



painting in the East developed a formal, impersonal style that later spread to Russia.<sup>238</sup> The Byzantine style, wrote Snegirev, aimed not at external beauty but at promoting faith and reverence. One source of Byzantine influence identified by Snegirev was Mount Athos, where monks produced paintings for Menologions which were copied in Russia, Serbia, and Bulgaria. He also believed that there was probably an icon-painting establishment of Byzantine refugees in Cherson. Snegirev argued that the Byzantine style, known in Russia as Greek or Chersonese, had survived the Tatar invasion, whereas in the west it was altered by classical and pagan admixtures. However, the capture of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204 had given rise to the dissemination of the westernised 'fiazhskoe' style in the Greek world. From the fifteenth century onwards, having until then been thought of as inappropriate for sacred themes, it was spread in Russia by Italian artists. From the early seventeenth century the Strogonovskii style, halfway between Byzantine and Italian, emerged. Nonetheless, Snegirev argued that the Byzantine style of icon-painting retained 'life-giving force and profound significance'.<sup>239</sup>

Ivan Sakharov wrote a detailed study of the Russian icon in the 1840s, in which he acknowledged that the Russian school of icon-painting could only be understood with reference to its Byzantine predecessor.<sup>240</sup> He defended the artistic merit of Byzantine icons on the grounds that the darkness of colours for which modern critics attacked them was actually the product of eighteenth-century renovations. Furthermore, he argued that 'in Byzantine icons the whole doctrine of the Church is expressed', and that 'icon-painting should exist invariably in subordination to the Church'. Russian icon-painting, he argued, should follow the Byzantine rather than the western pattern, 'because it, and not western painting, gave us prototypes for holy faces, because Byzantine icons alone are truly holy for the spirit of a Christian, and not the pictures of the Correggios, Rafaels and their pupils.'<sup>241</sup> However, he warned that icon-painting was in decline due to the influence of the western 'fiazhskoe' style and the disappearance of the traditional workshops which had upheld the laws of Byzantine art. He called for strict adherence to icon-painting originals, the traditional manuals for the production of icons, in order to preserve these laws and protect artists from the modern and western deviations that had corrupted Russian icon-painting since the sixteenth century. In particular

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<sup>238</sup> I. Snegirev, 'O stile vizantiiskogo khudozhestva, osobenno vaianii i zhivopisi, v otnoshenii k russkomu', in *Uchenye zapiski imperatorskago Moskovskogo universiteta*, part 6 (Moscow: Moscow University, 1834), pp. 283-285.

<sup>239</sup> Snegirev, 'O stile vizantiiskogo khudozhestva', p. 449.

<sup>240</sup> Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery and Study of Russian Medieval Painting*, p. 68.

<sup>241</sup> K. Maslov, 'Proekt I. P. Sakharova po vozrozhdeniiu ikonopisaniia', *Izvestiia Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta: Seriya 2, Gumanitarnie nauki*, no. 3 (142), 2015, p. 251.

he opposed the division of labour in icon-painting, which threatened to reduce it from an art and science to a mechanical process. Instead, he advocated the creation of specialised schools where students would learn the history of Byzantine and Russian icon-painting, as well as technical skills. He believed that this historical knowledge was necessary in order to understand icon-painting originals in their proper context.<sup>242</sup> A passionate Russian patriot who published a work on Russian popular sayings, Sakharov 'was distinguished by uncontrolled hatred for everything foreign.'<sup>243</sup> He was also an admirer of Emperor Nicholas I, crediting him with the fact that: 'The Russian *narodnost*' is being proclaimed in a bold and magnificent fashion.'<sup>244</sup> Writing in 1864, I. Sreznevskii praised Sakharov for promoting Russian *narodnost*' among the reading public.<sup>245</sup> The critic Emmanuil Dmitriev-Mamonov was another Russian defender of Byzantine art. Writing in 1859 in *Russkaia Beseda*, he conceded its lack of artistic merit but argued that Western critics had been unfairly harsh towards it. He argued that Byzantine art had preserved techniques and ideal types which would later be developed by various national schools, and had brought about 'the final, inner liberation of art from paganism' by introducing the depiction of suffering into Christian art, which had previously maintained the pagan depiction of idealised deities.<sup>246</sup> Nineteenth-century Russian scholars thus saw the study of Byzantine art as a means both of religious renewal, and of the reassertion of an authentically Russian artistic tradition, free from Western influences.

Writing between the mid-1850s and the early 1880s, Fedor Buslaev analysed the Byzantine influence on Russian art along the same lines as Snegirev but in much greater detail. Like Snegirev, Buslaev took a positive view of the iconoclast controversy, crediting it with having purified the icon-painting tradition and subordinated it to the Church. According to Buslaev, this process culminated in the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which approved of icon-painting but rejected sculpture, after which innovation was forbidden. Catholic and Orthodox art then separated from each other in the twelfth century. Buslaev wrote that Catholicism, which permitted much greater artistic freedom and the mixing of secular and religious subjects, had reduced the icon to an object of art, while the Orthodox Church preserved its religious

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<sup>242</sup> Maslov, 'Proekt I. P. Sakharova po vozrozhdeniiu ikonopisaniia', pp. 252-253.

<sup>243</sup> Veselovskii, *Istoriia imperatorskago russkago arkheologicheskago obshchestva*, p. 62.

<sup>244</sup> Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery and Study of Russian Medieval Painting*, p. 65.

<sup>245</sup> I. Sreznevskii, 'Vospominanie ob I. P. Sakharove', *Zapiski imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, vol. 4 part 2, 1864, p. 239.

<sup>246</sup> Emmanuil Dmitriev-Mamonov, 'Znachenie Vizantiiskoi zhivopisi v istorii isskustva', *Russkaia beseda*, 1859, no. 4, pp. 77-95.

significance.<sup>247</sup> Buslaev dismissed Protestant religious art as an ‘idle game of fantasy’. The greatest contribution of Byzantine art, he believed, was the development of specific styles to depict each biblical person and event.<sup>248</sup> However, he wrote that from the twelfth century onwards Byzantine art became mechanical and repetitive, and submitted to censorship, which killed it, due to exhaustion.<sup>249</sup> Buslaev wrote that Russian ecclesiastical art branched off from its Byzantine counterpart in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and had preserved the religious character which art had lost at an early stage of development among other peoples, because the backwardness and isolation of Russia meant that the concept of art for art’s sake did not emerge.<sup>250</sup> Russian ecclesiastical art’s models and subjects were unchanged, while only ‘technical’ execution evolved. It retained certain ancient motifs such as personification of the sea, rivers, and land, and the ‘confusion of elegant with inelegant forms’, from Byzantium.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, wrote Buslaev, from the eleventh century onwards, Patericons translated from Greek had enormous influence in Rus’. The Kiev Patericon, for example, reproduces a story from the Sinai Patericon.<sup>252</sup> Buslaev believed that Russian art had a ‘predominantly Byzantine’ character from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries.<sup>253</sup> Russian icon-painting had then flowered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Novgorod, Strogonovskii and Moscow schools, which took the Byzantine tradition as their foundation.<sup>254</sup> He emphasised the importance of miniatures for writing the history of icon-painting and its transfer to Rus’, especially those of the Ostromir Gospel of 1056-1057 and the 1073 Sviatoslav Anthology, which, he said, showed how Rus’ inherited the Byzantine tradition of icon-painting.<sup>255</sup> Elsewhere he explained that miniatures, being on manuscripts, could be dated, while miniature painters had more freedom than icon painters and so revealed more about the development of Byzantine art. Miniatures were also useful for depictions of architecture.<sup>256</sup> Likewise, Nikodim

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<sup>247</sup> F. Buslaev, ‘Obshchiiia poniatiiia o russkoi ikonopisi’, in F. Buslaev, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1908), p. 191.

<sup>248</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast’ianova)’, in F. Buslaev, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, pp. 380-381.

<sup>249</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast’ianova)’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 371.

<sup>250</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obshchiiia poniatiiia o russkoi ikonopisi’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 3

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142 and 164.

<sup>252</sup> Buslaev, ‘O narodnoi poezii v drevne-russkoi literature’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 2, p. 52.

<sup>253</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obshchiiia poniatiiia o russkoi ikonopisi’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>256</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast’ianova)’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, pp. 370 ff.

Kondakov's 1876 history of Byzantine art stated that miniatures formed an uninterrupted tradition throughout Byzantine history and were 'an immutably national phenomenon in art'.<sup>257</sup>

Nikolai Pokrovskii, an archaeologist and historian affiliated to the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy who became the director of the Imperial Archaeological Institute, developed Buslaev's ideas about the link of Byzantine and Russian art. He argued that Byzantium had developed ancient Christian art into a distinctive new form, which adapted the legacy of ancient Greek civilisation to serve Christianity: 'The main creating role in the art of the Orthodox East belongs to Byzantium (in the broad sense of the word).'<sup>258</sup> Byzantium's greatest contribution, he wrote, was the development of a range of iconographic types on biblical and ecclesiastical themes.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, Byzantine theologians saw art as a 'subject of reference and a means of instructing the people', and Byzantine iconography preserved a uniform style due to 'the general principle of conservatism of the Eastern Church.' Pokrovskii wrote that Byzantine art found its highest expression in illuminated gospels, which had assumed their fundamental form by the sixth century and thereafter remained unchanged.<sup>260</sup> It was only in the era of Byzantium's decline that Byzantine religious art assumed a didactic character, and aesthetic standards declined: 'nature is forgotten and sacrificed to the theological principle.'<sup>261</sup> Furthermore, Pokrovskii wrote that Byzantine art was 'predominant in ancient Russia.'<sup>262</sup> He argued that Russian church architecture emulated the Byzantine style because, unlike Europe, Russia had no pre-Christian tradition of religious architecture.<sup>263</sup> Pokrovskii pointed out that many Russian churches had been decorated by Greek masters, wall-paintings in Russian churches were copied from originals in Byzantium or on Mount Athos, and a fifteenth-century Slavonic gospel found in a church in Elisavetograd was identical to an eleventh-century Byzantine one held in Paris, proving the strength of Byzantine cultural influence over the Slavic world.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, the sixteenth-century Stoglav Council had prohibited any innovation in Russian icon-painting, entrenching Byzantine influence. Pokrovskii argued that 'Byzantine-Russian iconography is entirely different from western.' It

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<sup>257</sup> N. Kondakov, *Istoriia vizantiiskago iskusstva i ikonografii po miniatiuram" grecheskikh" rukopisei* (Odessa: Tip. Ul'rikha i Shul'tse, 1876), pp. 2-3.

<sup>258</sup> N. Pokrovskii, 'Litsevoi ikonopisnyi podlinnik i ego znachenie dlia sovremennogo tserkovnogo iskusstva', *Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti i iskusstva*, no. 134, 1899, p. 13.

<sup>259</sup> N. Pokrovskii, *Ocherki pamiatnikov khristianskoi ikonografii i iskusstva* (St Petersburg: 1900), p. 111.

<sup>260</sup> N. Pokrovskii, 'Pamiatniki vizantiiskoi ikonografii i iskusstva', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1894, no. 1-2, p. 44.

<sup>261</sup> N. Pokrovskii, *Ocherki pamiatnikov khristianskoi ikonografii i iskusstva* (St Petersburg: 1900), p. 115.

<sup>262</sup> Pokrovskii, *Ocherki pamiatnikov khristianskoi ikonografii i iskusstva*, p. 272.

<sup>263</sup> N. Pokrovskii, *Pamiatniki khristianskoi arkhitektury osobenno vizantiiskie i russkie* (St Petersburg, 1901), p. 60.

<sup>264</sup> Pokrovskii, 'Pamiatniki vizantiiskoi ikonografii i iskusstva', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1894, no. 1-2, p. 64.

was marked by a clear distinction between secular and ecclesiastical painting, with the latter not permitting any deviation from tradition in the production of icons, which were intended as objects of reverence. By contrast, from the thirteenth century onwards, western art did away with the distinction between secular and ecclesiastical art, with individualism unrestrained by tradition predominating in both; the icon was treated like ‘any picture intended for the salon.’<sup>265</sup> Byzantine influence had thus saved Russian art from ‘that triviality and dissoluteness which once distinguished ecclesiastical art in the West.’<sup>266</sup> Russia only moved away from Byzantine influence in the seventeenth century, as a result of ‘the transition from the era of “faith in simplicity of the heart” to the era of inquisitive knowledge.’<sup>267</sup> Therefore, wrote Pokrovskii, the study of Byzantine forerunners was necessary to understand Russian ecclesiastical relics, and ‘many questions of Russian archaeology find their resolution in, for example, Byzantine archaeology’.<sup>268</sup>

#### *Nineteenth-century Russian studies of Mount Athos*

Russian scholars often referred to Mount Athos in particular as a source of living Byzantinism. A. N. Murav’ev, a Russian writer and ecclesiastical envoy who travelled extensively in the Ottoman Empire, wrote in an 1850 dispatch to the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, Nikolai Protasov, that: ‘This monastic region ... is as if a fragment of the Byzantine Empire, which has remained intact with all its ancient customs from the time of the Komnenoi and Palaeologues.’ Therefore, he wrote, it was the best place to ‘study Byzantine architecture and in particular the ancient art of icon-painting’, which in Russia had been ‘corrupted by an admixture of the western’.<sup>269</sup> Murav’ev believed that this western influence could be thrown off if the link of Russian and Byzantine painting was restored via Mount Athos.<sup>270</sup> However, he warned that the current generation of monks on Athos did not appreciate the value of their artistic heritage and had forgotten the art of painting, although in their icon-painting school the technique of making paints with lime was still preserved. He also recounted that many of the icons on Athos from the early centuries of Christianity were decomposing. In an 1849 letter to Grand Duke

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<sup>265</sup> N. Pokrovskii, *Evangelie v pamiatnikh ikonografii, preimushchestvenno vizantiiskikh i russkikh* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia departamenta udelov, 1892), p. v.

<sup>266</sup> Pokrovskii, *Ocherki pamiatnikov khristianskoi ikonografii i iskusstva*, p. 274.

<sup>267</sup> Pokrovskii, *Evangelie v pamiatnikh ikonografii, preimushchestvenno vizantiiskikh i russkikh*, p. ii.

<sup>268</sup> N. Pokrovskii, ‘Noveishiia vozzreniia na predmet i zadachi arkheologii’, in *Sbornik arkheologicheskogo instituta*, vol. 4, 1880, p. 24.

<sup>269</sup> A. Murav’ev, ‘Zapiska ob ikonopisanii afonskom’, in *Andrei Nikolaevich Murav’ev i rossiiskaia diplomatiia na Pravoslavnom Vostoke: Diplomaticheskie zapiski i perepiska*, ed. I. Smirnova (Moscow: Indrik, 2019), p. 131.

<sup>270</sup> Murav’ev, ‘Zapiska ob ikonopisanii afonskom’, in *Andrei Nikolaevich Murav’ev i rossiiskaia diplomatiia na Pravoslavnom Vostoke*, p. 134.

Konstantin Nikolaevich, Murav'ev urged the dispatch of a team of artists led by the icon-painting instructor Fedor Solntsev to make copies of the ancient art on Athos, since the priors of the monasteries found his request to preserve it strange, preferring brightly coloured, 'barbarically renovated churches.' However, Murav'ev remained confident that it was possible for Russians to learn the principles of ancient Byzantine painting on Athos, in order to found a school of genuine icon-painting, with no western admixtures.<sup>271</sup>

A rigorous scholarly approach to the study of Byzantine history was pioneered by Archimandrite Porfirii (Uspenskii), a monk from Kiev who visited Athos in 1845 and subsequently between 1858 and 1861. It had initially been intended that Porfirii would lead the Holy Synod's long-planned expedition to Mount Athos, but after it was decided that the expedition would be funded jointly by the Synod and the Academy of Arts, the leadership of it instead fell to Petr Sevast'ianov (see below). Porfirii still persuaded the Synod to fund his travel in the East, though his vision of becoming Russia's representative on Athos was not fulfilled.<sup>272</sup> In 1858, at the request of Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna, the president of the Academy of Arts, Porfirii wrote a set of 'Instructions for Russian artists visiting Athos' in which he emphasised that Athos had preserved the icon-painting forms dictated by the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 788: 'On Athos the dogmatic immutability of icon-painting is strictly observed.'<sup>273</sup> Porfirii's research on Mount Athos itself was essential to undermining preconceptions about the history of the peninsula's monastic communities. Porfirii wrote that in the past, 'hasty visitors' had fallen into the trap of uncritically accepting the monks' oral traditions, when it was necessary to examine the monasteries' archives, and to cross-check the documents they contained against each other and outside sources in order to identify forgeries.<sup>274</sup> He also learned a great deal by visiting and investigating sites on Mount Athos. In particular, Porfirii rejected the claim that the Protaton Church in Karyes had been burned by Julian the Apostate, concluding from his examination of the church that it had 'grown dark from the sediment of heat and soot' rather than from having been set on fire, and that it dated from the time of Nikephoros II Phokas.<sup>275</sup> Rejecting the traditional view that Constantine the

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<sup>271</sup> Murav'ev, letter to Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, September 1849, in *Andrei Nikolaevich Murav'ev i rossiiskaia diplomatiia na Pravoslavnom Vostoke*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>272</sup> I. Piatnitskii, *Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii) i ego uchastie v eskpeditсииakh P. I. Sevast'ianova na Afon v 1858-1860 godakh* (Moscow: Indrik, 2020), pp. 116-122, 284, and 397.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289 and pp. 628-629.

<sup>274</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Istoriia Afona chast' I: Afon' iazychesky* (Kiev: Tipografiia Gubernskogo upravleniia, 1871), p. 1.

<sup>275</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Istoriia Afona chast' II: Afon' khristianskii, mirskii* (Kiev: Tipografiia Gubernskogo upravleniia, 1871), p. 48.

Great had reserved Mount Athos for Orthodox monasteries, Porfirii determined that it had been left deserted following the Byzantine war with the Arabs in 670-676, in the aftermath of which the Emperor Constantine Pogonatos repopulated the peninsula with monks who had been evicted from their former residences by the war.<sup>276</sup> In general, concluded Porfirii, oral traditions about the history of Athos were based on truth but with embellishments, making it difficult to tell which was which. Porfirii's concern for accurate knowledge of Athos can be understood in the context of the trend in nineteenth-century Russia for more realistic depictions of the Holy Mountain, free from extraneous mythical or Biblical imagery, intended in particular to help pilgrims to plan their journeys, and to serve as an alternative to visiting Athos for those who could not make the pilgrimage themselves.<sup>277</sup>

Perhaps the single greatest contribution in this period to awareness of Mount Athos as a repository of Byzantine culture was made by the antiquarian Petr Sevast'ianov, who visited the Holy Mountain five times between 1851 and 1860, documenting the monasteries' icons, mosaics, frescoes, and manuscripts, in particular through the use of photography.<sup>278</sup> From the late 1850s, the Holy Synod and the Academy of Arts financed Sevast'ianov's work.<sup>279</sup> He also received financial support from the imperial couple for his final visit to Athos.<sup>280</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii), although present on Athos during Sevast'ianov's 1859-1860 expedition there, took no part in its work and subsequently tried to discredit Sevast'ianov, casting doubt on the value of his collection.<sup>281</sup> In 1859, Sevast'ianov's drawings and photographs were exhibited in Moscow University and then in the Holy Synod building in St Petersburg. In March 1861, the materials from his final expedition to Athos were put on display, first for the imperial family in the Winter Palace, and then, on Alexander II's instructions, for the public in the Academy of Arts. Sevast'ianov then placed his collection in the Moscow Public Museum, also called the Rumiantsev Museum, in Pashkov House.<sup>282</sup> Curiously, although the Academy is recorded

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<sup>276</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Istoriia Afona chast' III: Afon' monasheskii, otdelenie I* (Kiev, 1871), p. 3.

<sup>277</sup> V. della Dora, *Imagining Mount Athos* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), pp. 115-117.

<sup>278</sup> I. Piatnitskii, 'An Imperial Eye to the Past: Byzantine exhibitions in the State Hermitage Museum, 1861-2006', *Tyragetia*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2011, p. 71.

<sup>279</sup> Piatnitskii, *Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii) i ego uchastie v eskpeditsiakh P. I. Sevast'ianova na Afon v 1858-1860 godakh*, p. 122.

<sup>280</sup> Piatnitskii, 'An Imperial Eye to the Past', p. 73.

<sup>281</sup> Piatnitskii, *Episkop Porfirii (Uspenskii) i ego uchastie v eskpeditsiakh P. I. Sevast'ianova na Afon v 1858-1860 godakh*, pp. 401-406 and p. 484.

<sup>282</sup> Piatnitskii, 'An Imperial Eye to the Past', pp. 72-75; G. Dovgallo, 'P. I. Sevast'ianov – arkheolog, puteshestvennik, sobiratel', *Moskovskii zhurnal*, vol. 1, 1993, p. 15; O. Etinhof, 'Pyotr Ivanovich Sevastianov and his activity in collecting Byzantine objects in Russia', in *Through the Looking Glass: Byzantium through British Eyes*, eds. R. McCormack and E. Jeffreys (Ashgate: Burlington, 2000), p. 214.

as having kept the artefacts which Sevast'ianov displayed there, Fedor Buslaev wrote in *Moskovskie vedomosti* that Sevast'ianov's collection in Pashkov House was 'significantly increased' since its earlier exhibition in Moscow.<sup>283</sup>

Sevast'ianov received praise from many scholars for his use of photography to document the fragile and inaccessible artefacts to be found on Mount Athos.<sup>284</sup> However, Nikodim Kondakov wrote that Sevast'ianov's collections attracted little attention, due largely to the fact that there was not much contextualisation of the photographs, whose provenance had mostly not been recorded. Furthermore, they had faded due to not being properly preserved, in addition to being retouched by graphic artists, distorting their original appearance. In any case, Kondakov noted, the most interesting manuscripts were already gone from Athos, or were equalled by those in European codexes.<sup>285</sup> Nevertheless, Buslaev argued that the exhibition, in particular the illuminated bible which Sevast'ianov brought back from the Vatopedi monastery, could provide useful patterns for Russian icon-painters.<sup>286</sup> He also credited Athos with having given rise to the rebirth of the Byzantine style of manuscript ornamentation, with architectural motifs, in Russia between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>287</sup> He called for a survey of the ancient gold and silver church utensils on Mount Athos, in order to establish their role in the development of the Russian style in production of church utensils.<sup>288</sup> Buslaev wrote that Athos had kept alive the tradition of Byzantine painting after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, noting that Dionysios of Fournas's eighteenth-century treatise on Byzantine art, which had been published after being discovered by Porfirii (Uspenskii) in an Athos library, was based on the artwork found on the Holy Mountain.<sup>289</sup>

Likewise, Nikolai Pokrovskii described Athos as 'an inexhaustible treasure house not only of ecclesiastical-archaeological, but generally theological material.' All categories of Byzantine art and architecture, he wrote, were represented there.<sup>290</sup> A particular topic of interest

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<sup>283</sup> Buslaev, 'Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast'ianova)', *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 370.

<sup>284</sup> Piatnitskii, 'An Imperial Eye to the Past', p. 72.

<sup>285</sup> N. Kondakov, *Pamiatniki khristianskogo isskustva na Afone* (St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1902), pp. 8-10.

<sup>286</sup> Buslaev, 'Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast'ianova)', *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 378 and p. 381.

<sup>287</sup> Buslaev, 'Russkoe iskusstvo v otsenke frantsuzkago uchenago', *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 3, p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> Buslaev, 'Obshchiia poniatii o russkoi ikonopisi', in F. Buslaev, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>289</sup> Buslaev, 'Literatura russkikh ikonopysnikh podlinnikov', *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 2, p. 357.

<sup>290</sup> N. Pokrovskii, 'O nekotorykh pamiatnakh drevnosti v Turtsii i Gretsii', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1889, nos. 9-10, p. 446.



for Russian scholars of Athos was the mysterious figure of Manuel Panselinos, the painter traditionally credited with the frescoes in the Protaton Church in Karyes, whose very existence has been called into question by modern scholarship.<sup>291</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii) believed that Panselinos had painted the Protaton Church, but argued that he had lived and worked in the sixteenth century, rather than, as was more commonly believed, the fourteenth. He credited Panselinos with ‘icon-painting’s turn to naturalness’.<sup>292</sup> Murav’ev believed that there had been three Byzantine painters named Panselinos, in the fifth, eleventh, and thirteenth centuries, but that renovations at the Pantokrator monastery had destroyed much of a fresco by the third one, which was partly saved only due to the intervention of a ‘passing pilgrim’, probably Uspenskii. Pokrovskii, who dated Panselinos to the sixteenth century, credited him with the renewal of Byzantine art following a period of decline in which it succumbed to a ‘didactic tendency’. Pokrovskii wrote that Panselinos had restored ‘external beauty’ to the ecclesiastical art of Eastern Christianity, while preserving its traditional types and subjects, in contrast to the creativity of western art. The Protaton Church, said Pokrovskii, ‘harmoniously unites beauty and greatness in one whole.’<sup>293</sup> Nineteenth-century Russian historians thus saw Mount Athos as a repository of the Byzantine artistic legacy, which could help to reacquaint Russian art with the principles by which it had historically been distinguished from its Western counterpart.

### *Conclusion*

The nineteenth century saw Russian scholars devote enormous attention to the hitherto neglected subject of the Byzantine Empire. Furthermore, they asserted the existence of a national Russian artistic tradition, derived from Byzantium and distinct from that of the West. Nikolai Pokrovskii wrote that: ‘since Russian iconography, architecture, and church music were, at the early stages of Russia’s Christianisation, a more or less accurate repetition of Byzantine artistic forms, it will be necessary, when judging Russian art, to turn to Byzantium for elucidation.’<sup>294</sup> Byzantine traits which were often said to have influenced Russian art included the prohibition on sculpture, the distinction of sacred and secular art, and the formation of fixed iconographic types. Furthermore, many nineteenth-century Russian

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<sup>291</sup> M. Milliner, ‘Man or Metaphor? Manuel Panselinos and the Protaton Frescoes’, in *Approaches to Byzantine Architecture and its Decoration*, eds. M. Johnson et al. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), p. 221.

<sup>292</sup> Porfirii (Uspenskii), *Pis’ma o preslovutom’ zhivopis’ Panseline k nastoiateliu posol’skoi tserkvi nashei v Konstantinopole, Arkhimandritu Antoninu* (Kiev: Tipografiia Kievopecherskoi Lavry, 1867), pp. i-10.

<sup>293</sup> N. Pokrovskii, ‘O nekotorykh pamiatnakh drevnosti v Turtsii i Gretsii’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1889, nos. 9-10, p. 465.

<sup>294</sup> Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery and Study of Russian Medieval Painting*, p. 389.

scholars associated the study of Byzantine art with the recovery of a sense of Russian identity. Buslaev bemoaned the fact that ordinary people in the fifteenth century had understood the ancient Christian artistic forms relayed to Russia by Byzantine manuscripts better than nineteenth-century educated Russians.<sup>295</sup> He also complained that many Russians were ignorant of, or hostile to, Byzantine art because they confused it with ‘mechanical’ Russian painting, and due to the poor condition of many icons.<sup>296</sup> He argued that this disdainful view of Byzantine art could be corrected by the study of Byzantine miniatures, such as those in the Moscow Synodal Library.<sup>297</sup> Echoing Slavophile arguments that the Europeanised nobility needed to immerse itself in the culture of the Russian peasantry, Buslaev wrote that even as contemporary Russian painters were indifferent to Sevast’ianov’s collection of relics from Athos, ‘bearded men in poddyovkas’ thronged to the exhibition and icon-painters took photographs of the collection’s best examples, while Sevast’ianov himself noted that the most intelligent questions and observations came from ‘common people’.<sup>298</sup> Moreover, Buslaev argued that the study of icon-painting was the best way to promote reconciliation between the Orthodox Church and the Old Believers, since it indicated that both traditions were equally valid. He noted that there was no precedent in ancient ecclesiastical art for preferring the eightfold cross to the fourfold one, as did the Old Believers. Similarly, he argued that the Orthodox *imenoslovnoe* blessing and the Old Believer blessing with extended fingers both had precedents in Byzantine miniatures.<sup>299</sup> Buslaev accordingly noted that Sevast’ianov’s collection was of ‘essential interest for enormous masses of the literate simple people, especially Old Believers and schismatics generally.’ He concluded that icon-painting was one of Russia’s essential traditions: ‘Under its holy banner the Russian *narodnost*’ still goes along its path of intellectual development.’<sup>300</sup> Thus, the academic study of the Byzantine artistic legacy strengthened rather than weakened the idea that Byzantium was a source of authentic Russian identity. Furthermore, the concept of a Byzantine past shared by all Orthodox nations, but inherited in particular by Russia, was politically useful for promoting Russian influence in the nineteenth-century Orthodox East.

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<sup>295</sup> Buslaev, ‘Vizantiiskaia i drevne-russkaia simbolika po rukopisiam ot XV do kontsa XVI v.’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 2, p. 203.

<sup>296</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obshchiiia poniatiia o russkoi ikonopisi’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 147.

<sup>297</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast’ianova)’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 373.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>299</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obshchiiia poniatiia o russkoi ikonopisi’, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 148.

<sup>300</sup> Buslaev, ‘Obraztsy ikonopisi v publichnom muzee (v sobranii P. I. Sevast’ianova)’, in F. Buslaev, *Sochineniia F. I. Buslaeva*, vol. 1, p. 386.

### Chapter 3: Byzantium and Russian church-state relations

This chapter considers the politically charged use of Byzantine imagery in the debates about church-state relations which unfolded in nineteenth-century Russia. It is often assumed that Byzantium was irrelevant to Russian religious thought in the nineteenth century, since references to Russia as the ‘Third Rome’ had largely disappeared by then, while secular historians in universities concentrated largely on Byzantium’s influence on the development of Russian statehood and the ways in which it had connected medieval Rus’ to European civilisation.<sup>301</sup> However, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, efforts to create a distinctive Russian Orthodox theological tradition, free from dependence on Western thought, gave rise to renewed interest in Byzantine religious history, especially in the Russian Church’s ecclesiastical academies. Ecclesiastical writers within and outside the academies were concerned in particular with the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, the extent to which the Church should be subject to the authority of the state, and the rights of religious minorities.<sup>302</sup> The general consensus among nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical historians was that Byzantium was characterised by the close union of Church and state. This, in turn, gave rise to the division of the Eastern Church from the Western, the involvement of the state in ecclesiastical politics, and the use of state power to suppress heretics, schismatics, and religious minorities. All of these tendencies represented a clear departure from ecclesiastical practice in the early Church, prior to the conversion of Constantine. However, nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical historians were divided as to whether Byzantium offered a positive or negative example. This chapter will consider how both admirers and critics of the Byzantine model of church-state relations described it in such a way as to make implicit criticisms of the ‘synodal’ system bequeathed by Peter I, whereby the Russian Orthodox Church was administered by the Holy Synod, a committee of bishops overseen by a lay official known as the Ober-Procurator. Furthermore, they debated whether Byzantium had distorted the character of the Church as it had existed prior to Constantine or had established a system capable of protecting it from internal and external threats. This invocation of Byzantium as a relevant precedent in debates about church-state relations would form the

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<sup>301</sup> A. Alshanskaya, ‘The Reception of Byzantium in Russian Church Historiography’, in *Imagining Byzantium: Perceptions, Patterns, Problems*, eds. A. Alshanskaya et al. (Mainz: Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus Mainz, 2018), pp. 62 ff.

<sup>302</sup> G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two* (Belmont: 1984), pp. 105 ff.; G. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 11 ff.; I. Smolich, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi 1700-1917: chast’ pervaiia* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo spaso-preobrazhenskogo valaamskogo monastyrnia, 1996), pp. 140 ff.

background of the development of Konstantin Leont'ev's own conception of 'ecclesiastical Byzantinism.'<sup>303</sup>

*The context of nineteenth-century Russian church-state relations*

Until recently, many historians accepted the arguments of nineteenth-century Russian critics of the synodal system, who wrote that it had reduced the Church to a department of the government with no institutional voice of its own.<sup>304</sup> However, in some respects the nineteenth-century Church was capable of defending its institutional autonomy. Although since the secularisation of the monasteries in 1764 it had depended on an allowance from the state for revenue, it decided for itself how the money would be spent. The Church also maintained a system of ecclesiastical courts with jurisdiction over the clergy, and over the laity with regard to marriage and divorce.<sup>305</sup> The bishops did strongly resent Nikolai Protasov, the Ober-Procurator from 1836 to 1855, whose tendency to marginalise the Holy Synod in favour of the lay bureaucracy which reported directly to him provoked complaints that he had 'made himself a serf-master over the bishops, who have all become servile slaves of the chief procurator and his suite.'<sup>306</sup> However, after his death the bishops quickly reasserted themselves. In 1873, their opposition forced the Ober-Procurator, Count Dmitrii Tolstoi, to abandon a proposal to do away with the ecclesiastical courts' jurisdiction over the laity.<sup>307</sup> Tolstoi was himself a staunch defender of the Church's prerogatives, fending off attempts to undermine its fiscal autonomy.<sup>308</sup> Arguably the true dilemma of church-state relations in nineteenth-century Russia was not that the Church was completely subordinated to the government, but rather that it retained its own agenda despite being entangled with the state bureaucracy, giving rise to overlapping jurisdictions and conflicting approaches. In particular, the bishops tended to advocate more repressive measures than the government in dealing with Old Believers and other schismatics who rejected the legitimacy of the official Church, as well as apostates from Orthodoxy and people who illegally proselytised for minority religions.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slaviansvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 443.

<sup>304</sup> G. Freeze, 'Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 36, no. 1, January 1985, p. 82.

<sup>305</sup> Freeze, 'Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered', p. 89.

<sup>306</sup> Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, p. 11.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>309</sup> Freeze, 'Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered', p. 93.

By the mid-nineteenth century, it was widely accepted that the moral authority of the Church was in decline: the historian Mikhail Pogodin remarked that, if apostasy were permitted, half the peasants would join the schismatics while half the aristocracy converted to Catholicism.<sup>310</sup> The civil judicial reform of 1864, and the above-mentioned failure of attempts to reform the ecclesiastical courts, made the latter appear antiquated. Furthermore, tensions were mounting between the ‘white’ (parish) and ‘black’ (monastic) clergy, the former resenting the latter’s monopoly on high office in the Church. The ‘white’ clergy’s organisation as a hereditary class, who lived on fees and gifts from their parishioners, was increasingly seen as obsolete. Many ‘white’ clergy also lamented the nominally Orthodox peasantry’s ignorance of their faith, and criticised the Church for having succumbed to ‘ritualistic Byzantinism’ or ‘externalism’.<sup>311</sup> Likewise, the religious writer Nikolai Leskov depicted ‘sumptuous Byzantinism’ as a Greek innovation which was unsuited to the Russian Church and which had distorted the simplicity of ‘true’ Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>312</sup> The number of Old Believers continued to grow throughout the nineteenth century, and many peasants who did not actively adhere to the Old Belief seem to have tacitly admired it as a purer form of Orthodoxy than the official Church.<sup>313</sup> The nineteenth-century Church has been described as little more than ‘a kind of welfare office for its underpaid and insecure clerics.’<sup>314</sup>

Another pressing issue to confront the Church in this period was that of the rights of religious minorities such as Catholics, Lutherans, and Muslims, given the religious diversity of the Russian Empire, the historically close ties between the Orthodox Church and the state, and the prevailing assumption that ‘to be Russian was to be Orthodox.’<sup>315</sup> By 1897, religious minorities accounted for around 30% of the Russian Empire’s population.<sup>316</sup> The ‘essential dilemma of tsarist religious policy’ was that of ‘how to regulate a multiconfessional empire in which one faith—Orthodoxy—was not only privileged, but a state-sponsored national church.’<sup>317</sup> Having acquired large numbers of Catholic subjects with the annexation of much of Poland, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Russian government created

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<sup>310</sup> G. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 237.

<sup>311</sup> Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, pp. 194 ff.

<sup>312</sup> N. McLean, *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and his Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 306 and 344-345.

<sup>313</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, p. 73.

<sup>314</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, p. 236.

<sup>315</sup> L. Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (Yale: New Haven, 1998), p. 332.

<sup>316</sup> P. Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4.

<sup>317</sup> N. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia’s Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 18.

a system of officially recognised minority religions, overseen by the Directorate of Foreign Confessions. Religious minorities' subordinate position was underscored by the conservative Orthodox backlash to Alexander I's brief attempt to merge the Holy Synod and the Directorate of Foreign Confessions into a 'Dual Ministry'. The official Dmitrii Runich recalled that the 'union of Orthodox administration with the administration of schismatic churches and with Mohammedan and idolatrous beliefs was regarded as a monstrosity offensive to the dignity of the ruling church.'<sup>318</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, the authorities began attempting to exclude foreign influences on religious life from the Russian Empire. Early indications of this were the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1820 and the compelled 'reunion' of the Uniates with the Orthodox Church in 1839.<sup>319</sup>

In part, this was because the Russian government felt threatened by the rise of an increasingly assertive and centralised Catholic Church, in which 'ultramontane' activists championed the rights of the papacy over those of local and national churches.<sup>320</sup> Pope Pius IX called for the Eastern Church to return to unity with the papacy in 1848 (*In suprema Petri Apostoli Sede*) and again in 1868 (*Arcano Divinae Providentiae consilio*), only to be rejected by the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchs on both occasions.<sup>321</sup> In 1870, the First Vatican Council proclaimed the doctrine of papal infallibility, explicitly claiming the authority which, the Eastern Church believed, was vested collectively in the patriarchs and ecumenical councils. Russian authorities believed that the Catholic clergy had provoked the Polish uprising of 1863, and Emperor Alexander II complained to Pope Pius IX that 'this union of the servitors of religion with the instigators of disorders, a threat to society, is among the most scandalous facts of our time.' The late 1860s saw the severing of Russia's official relations with the Holy See, and the forced conversion of large numbers of Catholics and the remaining Uniates in the Russian Empire to Orthodoxy.<sup>322</sup> Furthermore, in 1880 Pope Leo XIII directed that the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius be celebrated by the whole Catholic Church, in a clear attempt to strengthen Catholic influence among the Slavs. The Russian government's system of qualified tolerance for recognised religious minorities was also challenged in the mid-nineteenth century

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<sup>318</sup> Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, pp. 49-56.

<sup>319</sup> S. Dixon, 'The Orthodox Church in imperial Russia 1721-1917', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5, ed. M. Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 329.

<sup>320</sup> C. Clark, 'The New Catholicism and the European culture wars', in *Culture Wars: Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. C. Clark and W. Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 19

<sup>321</sup> B. Stasiewski, 'Papal Hopes for Unification', in *History of the Church*, vol. 9, eds. H. Jedin and J. Dolan (London: Burns & Oates, 1981), p. 335.

<sup>322</sup> Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, pp. 154-156.

by the emergence in Russian religious thought of the concept of freedom of conscience, which implied that individuals should be free to choose their own faith at will. To some extent, Russian discourse about freedom of conscience echoed Western liberal thought. The liberal intellectual Boris Chicherin argued in 1857 that freedom of conscience was ‘the first and most sacred right of a citizen’ because the proper purpose of the law was to define citizens’ rights and duties, and so ‘the means a person considers best for the salvation of his soul is no concern of the state.’<sup>323</sup> However, some Slavophile thinkers defended freedom of conscience on the grounds that the Orthodox Church formed a community based on voluntary co-operation, as opposed to Catholic coercion or Protestant radical individualism.<sup>324</sup> During the Crimean War the concept of freedom of conscience was popularised by calls for the defence of the rights of Ottoman Christians.<sup>325</sup> The increasing involvement of lay people in religious life also helped to promote the idea that religion ought to be a matter of personal choice.<sup>326</sup> The idea of freedom of conscience was often invoked by religious minorities in their disputes with the authorities. In particular, it was used to challenge the prohibition on conversion from Orthodoxy to other faiths, and the requirement that the children of mixed marriages had to be raised as Orthodox. The former was resented by people who had adopted Orthodoxy and now wished to revert to their former religion, such as Baltic Lutherans who had converted to Orthodoxy in the 1840s after a series of crop failures, apparently in the belief that belonging to ‘the Tsar’s faith’ would help them to obtain assistance.<sup>327</sup> However, the Orthodox Church’s position as the official religion of the Russian state meant that, despite its institutional shortcomings, demands for religious freedom could not easily be granted.

Conservatives defended the privileged position of the Orthodox Church on the grounds that conversions away from Orthodoxy posed a challenge to the authority of the state, since they were, as one writer put it, ‘a direct loss for the state’s core nationality.’<sup>328</sup> Konstantin Pobedonostsev, Ober-Procurator from 1880 to 1905, feared that calls for freedom of conscience in fact represented an attempt by the Lutheran, German-speaking aristocracy of the Baltic

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<sup>323</sup> B. Chicherin, ‘Contemporary Tasks of Russian Life’, in *Liberty, Equality, and the Market: Essays by B. N. Chicherin*, ed. G. Hamburg (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 134.

<sup>324</sup> J. White, ‘“The Free Sale of Opium”: The Reaction of Russian Orthodox Churchmen to Freedom of Conscience, 1864-1905’, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2019, p. 209.

<sup>325</sup> P. Michelson, ‘Freedom of conscience in the clerical imagination of Russian Orthodox thought, 1801-1865’, in *Religious Freedom in Modern Russia*, eds. R. Poole and P. Werth (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), p. 90.

<sup>326</sup> Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths*, p. 179.

<sup>327</sup> P. Werth, ‘The emergence of ‘freedom of conscience’ in imperial Russia’, *Kritika*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2012, pp. 594 ff.

<sup>328</sup> Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths*, p. 172.

provinces to secure dominance over the region's Orthodox inhabitants.<sup>329</sup> We should not assume that the rejection of religious freedom by officials such as Pobedonostsev simply reflects their view of non-Orthodox faiths as politically subversive. John Basil has convincingly argued that Pobedonostsev was a 'pious Orthodox layman' who saw the Russian Orthodox Church as a community of believers embodying a distinctive national style of worship.<sup>330</sup> Pobedonostsev equated faith with nationality, writing that it was a 'herd feeling' (*chuvstvo stadnoe*). He argued that advocates of 'freedom of religion' were 'idealists' whose arguments were 'in essence true' but would 'disintegrate in contact with reality, like the word of proponents of peace about the lawlessness and sinfulness of war.' In practice, freedom of religion would result in 'our enemies cutting off masses of Russian people and making them Germans, Catholics, Mohammedans and similar – and we will lose them forever for the Church and for the fatherland.' The Church was 'one with the people' and the state was 'obliged to protect it and obliged to defend it.'<sup>331</sup> In accordance with his aim of preserving the Russian Orthodox Church as a distinctively national religion, Pobedonostsev not only rejected the right to convert away from Orthodoxy, but, after the First Vatican Council, also turned down proposals for a union with the Old Catholics, who rejected papal infallibility, even though this might have helped the government to undercut the prestige of the Catholic Church in Russian Poland. The relationship of the Church and state in Russia, in particular the rights of religious minorities, the role of the government in upholding Orthodoxy, and the split between the Eastern and Western Churches, would remain a contentious issue into the twentieth century.

In turn, these questions were echoed in the writing of ecclesiastical history in nineteenth-century Russia. It has been widely argued that the nineteenth-century Russian academic community was caught between the French model of specialist schools providing training for state service, and the German 'Humboldtian' approach based on the autonomous university and freedom of thought and scholarship.<sup>332</sup> This gave rise to an oscillation between liberalisation and state control. Scholarly historical research first began in Russia in the eighteenth century, with the formation of the Academy of Sciences in 1725. Its early activity focused on the development of Russian statehood in the ninth and tenth centuries, which

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<sup>329</sup> Werth, 'The emergence of 'freedom of conscience' in imperial Russia', p. 601.

<sup>330</sup> J. Basil, 'Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: An Argument for a Russian State Church', *Church History*, March 1995, vol. 64, no. 1, p. 48.

<sup>331</sup> K. Pobedonostsev, letter to E. Tiutcheva, 20<sup>th</sup> December 1881, quoted in A. Polunov, 'K. P. Pobedonostsev v 1881 godu (Pis'ma k E. F. Tiutchevoi)', *Reka vremeni: kniga istorii i kul'tury*, vol. 1, 1995, p. 185.

<sup>332</sup> F. Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia: Scholarship and the Literary Canon* (Bloomsbury: London, 2019), p. 25.



necessitated the use of Byzantine sources. Gottlieb Bayer and August Schlözer were among the historians associated with the Academy who specialised in gathering them.<sup>333</sup> Under Catherine II, numerous historical societies sprang up among the nobility, dedicated to collecting ancient documents, although they were ultimately closed down under her successor Paul I. Nikolai Karamzin, early nineteenth-century Russia's pre-eminent historian, emerged from one of them, the Friendly Learned Society.<sup>334</sup> His *History of the Russian State*, published between 1816 and 1826, was intended to refute constitutionalist and democratic ideas, and depicted autocracy as the basis of Russian greatness.<sup>335</sup> Likewise, in 1833 the education minister Sergei Uvarov drew up a new university charter, designed to support Russia's development in line with the principles of 'official nationality': Orthodoxy, autocracy, and *narodnost*.<sup>336</sup> His aim, he said, was 'to direct the new generation away from a blind, unthinking predilection for the superficial and the foreign, propagating in young minds a hearty respect for what is native.'<sup>337</sup>

Many of the Russian historians who received professorships in this period, such as Mikhail Pogodin and Stepan Shevyrev, were champions of 'official nationality' who lionised the Russian state and absolute monarchy.<sup>338</sup> They used early chronicles to emphasise that Rus' had received Christianity from Byzantium, thereby arguing that Russia was the cultural equal of the West, despite not tracing its inheritance back to classical Greece and Rome. Other historians, most notably Timofei Granovskii, who taught medieval history at Moscow University from 1845 to 1855, were strongly influenced by German 'scientific' history, which emphasised objectivity, the critique of sources, and the study of causation. Granovskii was an originator of the 'juridical-statist' school of Russian historians who depicted the state as the instrument of modernisation.<sup>339</sup> In his writings and lectures on medieval France, he argued that Russia owed an enormous debt of gratitude to Europe, for achieving civilisation through painful experience before offering it as a gift to Russia.<sup>340</sup> He also depicted the monarchical

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<sup>333</sup> I. Medvedev, *Peterburgskoe vizantinovedenie: Stranitsy istorii* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2006), p. 10.

<sup>334</sup> V. Kaplan, *Historians and Historical Societies in the Public Life of Imperial Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), p. 62.

<sup>335</sup> G. Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 719, and Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 58.

<sup>336</sup> Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 21.

<sup>337</sup> C. Whittaker, 'The ideology of Sergei Uvarov', *The Russian Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, April 1978, p. 172

<sup>338</sup> Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 22; V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 52; A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), p. 110.

<sup>339</sup> Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 4.

<sup>340</sup> P. Annenkov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1983), p. 202.

principle as human rather than divine in origin. This ‘oppositional’ and pro-Western tone challenged the government’s moral authority.<sup>341</sup> After the Europe-wide revolutions of 1848, the Ministry of Education directed that history was to be written ‘in the Russian spirit’, with praise for the Roman Empire instead of for ancient republics. Most classical writers and the potentially subversive themes associated with them, such as democracy, were prohibited, helping to steer Russian historians towards Byzantine studies.<sup>342</sup>

It was widely argued by Russian historians that they had a special aptitude and responsibility for rehabilitating the image of Byzantium. Timofei Granovskii wrote in 1850 that some western historians had shed light on specific aspects of Byzantine history, but none had been able to ‘resolve the main, one can say, living questions about its existence.’ This, he said, was because their history had no ‘organic link’ with that of Byzantium. By contrast, he argued that the Slavs had derived their culture from Byzantium in the same way that the Germans in the West did from Rome.<sup>343</sup> Likewise, in 1853 the now-forgotten historian Arist Kunik wrote that Byzantium remained ‘an enigma in world history’. Russia alone, he argued, had the potential to produce a ‘genuine universal’ history of Byzantium, by gathering, publishing, and surveying the large quantities of Byzantine sources which existed in manuscript, and using them to assemble a chronology of Byzantine history.<sup>344</sup> Furthermore, Russian historians claimed that analysing Byzantine ecclesiastical history was their special task. Granovskii wrote that ‘Russian and generally Slavic scholars’ were better equipped for the study of the Byzantine Church, ‘because it is linked with the history of their own tribe and demands knowledge of those areas of ecclesiastical history and theology which are less accessible than others to western scholars.’ Kunik argued that western historians struggled to understand the ‘eastern element’ of Byzantine history, and in particular the Byzantine system of church-state relations, since ‘ancient prejudices and inherited beliefs prevented them from understanding and impartially assessing’ it. In particular, they were accustomed to studying ‘the church of the medieval west, which had an independent sovereign of all western Europe at its head’, whereas ‘the church in Byzantium occupied in regard to the state an entirely different position’. As a result, according to Kunik, western historians overlooked the

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<sup>341</sup> T. Sanders, ‘Introduction’, in *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State*, ed. T. Sanders (M. E. Sharpe: New York, 1999), p. 5, Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 38.

<sup>342</sup> Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 26.

<sup>343</sup> T. Granovskii, ‘Latinskaia imperiia’, in *Sochineniia T. N. Granovskago* (Moscow, 1900), pp. 377-379.

<sup>344</sup> A. Kunik, ‘Pochemu Vizantiia donyne ostaetsia zagadkoi vo vsermirnoi istorii?’, *Uchenye zapiski Akademii nauk*, vol. 2, 1853, p. 442.

contributions of the Byzantine Church, which had united the diverse peoples of the Byzantine Empire and enabled it to sustain its struggle with the Islamic world. He argued that it was Russia's task to make up for this lack of understanding, since Russians were indebted to Byzantium for their Orthodox faith.<sup>345</sup>

Though less prominent than Granovskii, Kunik was known as the leader of the 'Russian party' in the Academy of Sciences.<sup>346</sup> Many of his pupils, such as Vasili Vasilevskii, taught at St Petersburg University, where they emphasised the centrality of Byzantium to European history, echoing Kunik's observation that the 'world-historical significance' of Byzantium and the Slavs, and 'their inner link with the rest of Europe', had often been overlooked.<sup>347</sup> Vasilevskii derived the same conclusion from his study of the 'Varangians' who made up the elite of the Byzantine army. He argued that the Varangians had been Russian until the late eleventh century, when they were supplanted by Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians.<sup>348</sup> He depicted this as proof of 'the existence of a constant, living and tangible link between Rus' and Byzantium, and via it, with the Asiatic East and European West throughout the whole eleventh century.'<sup>349</sup> In 1888, the Byzantinist Fedor Uspenskii gave a speech to the Odessa Slavic Philanthropic Society in which he credited Byzantium with having spread 'faith, literature and civilisation' to the Slavs, Bulgarians, and Hungarians, making them 'historical peoples', just as Rome did for France and Germany. Uspenskii wrote that Rus' had embraced Christianity in the form of Byzantine Orthodoxy in order to become a European state, implying that it was Byzantium which connected Russia to the rest of Europe.<sup>350</sup> However, he added that not enough material had yet been gathered for it to be possible to assess the influence of Byzantium on Russian life.<sup>351</sup> He argued that the study of Byzantine history was 'the moral duty of the Russian people' and would be seen in the future as having enriched 'Russian science' with 'national substance'.<sup>352</sup> Russian university historians' writings about Byzantium thus tended to emphasise the view associated with the 'official nationalists' that Russia's Byzantine heritage

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<sup>345</sup> A. Kunik, 'Pochemu Vizantiia donyne ostaetsia zagadkoi vo vsermirnoi istorii?', *Uchenye zapiski Akademii nauk*, vol. 2, 1853, p. 441.

<sup>346</sup> I. Medvedev, *Peterburgskoe vizantinovedenie: Stranitsy istorii* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2006), pp. 29-30.

<sup>347</sup> A. Kunik, 'Pochemu Vizantiia donyne ostaetsia zagadkoi vo vsermirnoi istorii?', *Uchenye zapiski Akademii nauk*, vol. 2, 1853, p. 428, and Medvedev, *Peterburgskoe vizantinovedenie*, p. 119.

<sup>348</sup> V. Vasilevskii, 'O variago-russkakh', *Trudy V. G. Vasilevskogo: Tom Perviy* (St Petersburg: Izdanie imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1908), p. 379.

<sup>349</sup> Vasilevskii, 'Variago-ruskaia i variago-angliiskaia družhina v konstantinopole XI i XX vekov', *Trudy V. G. Vasilevskogo: Tom Perviy*, p. 376.

<sup>350</sup> F. I. Uspenskii, *Rus' i Vizantiia v X veke* (Odessa: Tipografiia A. Shul'tse, 1888), pp. 22-24.

<sup>351</sup> Uspenskii, *Rus' i Vizantiia v X veke*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>352</sup> Uspenskii, *Rus' i Vizantiia v X veke*, p. 38.

was a source of national greatness, the equivalent of the classical Greek and Roman legacy in the West, and also proof that Russia had always been part of European civilisation.

A different approach to Byzantine studies was evident in the ecclesiastical academies, where scholars focused on the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. The four ecclesiastical academies in Kiev, St Petersburg, Moscow, and Kazan, originally founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, had an almost complete monopoly on academic theology, which did not have a dedicated faculty in any secular university apart from Vilnius. Traditionally, the Moscow and Kiev Academies concentrated narrowly on theology. The St Petersburg Academy was the most secular in outlook, with Western philosophers well-represented in its library, while the Kazan Academy specialised in training missionaries, in particular to counter the schism with the Old Believers.<sup>353</sup> Historically, the academies were governed by their local archbishops and did not have a single curriculum. Since the secularisation of the monasteries in 1764 they had suffered from a chronic shortage of funds.<sup>354</sup> In the early nineteenth century, a set of reforms overseen by Alexander I's minister Mikhail Speranskii established the academies as the pinnacle of an ecclesiastical educational system, which also comprised parish and *uyezd* schools and seminaries, designed to train priests' children to join the clergy themselves. However, in the early nineteenth century the ecclesiastical academies seem to have been generally viewed as intellectual backwaters. Scholarship in the academies remained 'dry and scholastic', with classes which largely repeated the material which students had covered in the seminaries. There was a very rapid turnover of instructors, many of whom apparently did not welcome being appointed to the academies.<sup>355</sup> Under the Ober-Procurator Nikolai Protasov, all deviations from the official course were prohibited, and strict censorship stifled original research.<sup>356</sup> All the subjects on the curriculum, including physics, mathematics, French, and German, were made compulsory for all academy students. In turn, this meant that academy instructors were required to cover multiple subjects, further reducing the quality of teaching.<sup>357</sup>

However, in 1869, during the partial liberalisation of Russian society known as the 'Great Reforms', Alexander II issued a new regulation on the ecclesiastical academies, which,

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<sup>353</sup> V. Fedorov, *Ruskaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i gosudarstvo* (Moscow: Russkaia panorama, 2013), p. 98.

<sup>354</sup> B. Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Tipografiia 'Ruskii Pochin', 1908), p. 14.

<sup>355</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 1, pp. 252-257.

<sup>356</sup> B. Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 2 (Vilnius: Tipografiia 'Artel' Pechatnogo Dela', 1909), p. 88.

<sup>357</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 2, p. 52 and p. 92.

like the university charter of 1863, was intended to promote academic freedom and specialisation. The academies were allowed to elect their rectors and professors, and were opened to seminary or gymnasium graduates whether or not they came from clergy families, while specialist departments of theology, ecclesiastical history, and ecclesiastical practice were created.<sup>358</sup> Historians have credited these reforms with helping to give rise to a flowering of academic theology.<sup>359</sup> On the other hand, conservatives such as Pobedonostsev criticised them for prioritising academic study over the training of clergy, and feared that the emerging class of ‘educated monks’ would pose a challenge to the authority of the Holy Synod.<sup>360</sup> Furthermore, the hierarchy vetoed reforms which were deemed excessively ‘liberal’.<sup>361</sup> Counter-reforms under Alexander III, partly provoked by the involvement of academy students in the populist movement, reduced the academies’ autonomy and the students’ freedom to choose their own courses, with the aim of ensuring that the academies produced reliable personnel for the Church. In particular, degree dissertations were prohibited from challenging church doctrine or ‘the actuality of events that church tradition and popular belief are accustomed to regard as genuine.’ Neither could they address potentially sensitive topics such as the Old Belief or Peter I’s reforms of the Church.<sup>362</sup> The historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii’s complaint that the government aimed to reduce university students to ‘morally and intellectually castrated servants of the tsar and country’ was also true of the ecclesiastical academies.<sup>363</sup> The academies did not prepare their students for any career other than in the Church, and most academy graduates held administrative posts or became instructors either in the academies themselves or in seminaries.<sup>364</sup> After priests’ sons were allowed to leave the clergy in 1869, large numbers of seminarians enrolled in universities in order to be able to pursue secular careers, until the ban on them entering universities was renewed in 1871.<sup>365</sup> Thanks to the academies’ lack of intellectual dynamism, much of the ecclesiastical history written in nineteenth-century Russia consisted of ‘myopic diocesan histories, fatuous accounts of the local seminary, or hagiographic paeans devoted to some prominent clergyman.’<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Fedorov, *Ruskaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i gosudarstvo*, p. 110, and N. Sukhova, “‘Ideia universiteta” v dukhovnykh akademiiakh Rossii (xix – nachalo xx veka)”, *Slovene*, 2017, no. 2, p. 406.

<sup>359</sup> Smolich, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi 1700-1917*, vol. 2, p. 469.

<sup>360</sup> Smolich, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi 1700-1917*, vol. 2, p. 464.

<sup>361</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 2, p. 388.

<sup>362</sup> G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two* (Belmont: 1984), pp. 193-194.

<sup>363</sup> Nethercott, *Writing History in Late Imperial Russia*, p. 28.

<sup>364</sup> Fedorov, *Ruskaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i gosudarstvo*, p. 98.

<sup>365</sup> Fedorov, *Ruskaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i gosudarstvo*, p. 109, and Smolich, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi 1700-1917: chast' pervaiia*, pp. 469-470.

<sup>366</sup> Freeze, ‘Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered’, p. 82.

The academy curriculum also evolved drastically over the nineteenth century, in ways which reflected the Russian ecclesiastical authorities' efforts to forge a 'national' faith. Eighteenth-century ecclesiastical education had drawn heavily on the Western tradition: Aleksandr Radishchsev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow* observed that 'Aristotle and the scholastics reign supreme in the seminaries.' The twentieth-century Russian Orthodox theologian Georgii Florovskii described Russian theology in the eighteenth century as 'a superstructure erected in a desert'.<sup>367</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the curriculum was shaped by Westerners like Ignatius Fesler, appointed by Speranskii to reform the St Petersburg Academy in accordance with the Christian mysticism which was in fashion at the Tsar's court at the time. A regulation of 1814, strengthened in 1838, stated that the purpose of the 'philosophy of history' taught in the academies was to reveal divine providence at work. However, the standard history textbook, by Johann Matthias Schröckh, was an 'extremely dry ... mass of facts' and displayed considerable Protestant bias.<sup>368</sup> Many theology textbooks, though written by Russian clergymen, were in Latin.<sup>369</sup> However, the installation of Filaret (Drozdov) as rector of the St Petersburg Academy in 1812 marked the beginning of efforts to create a distinctively Russian theological tradition. Filaret, after languishing in obscurity for many years after his death, has more recently been acknowledged as 'a veritable giant in the modern history of the Russian Orthodox Church.' Sceptical about Alexander II's great reforms and opposed to concessions to religious minorities, he was 'first and foremost devoted to defending the interests of the Church.'<sup>370</sup> However, scholars have increasingly accepted that he did not simply reject change, but rather aimed to purge Russian Orthodoxy of Western influence, in particular by championing a Russian translation of the Bible, in a process which has been described as 'spiritual Russification'.<sup>371</sup> Filaret declared that: 'Russian religious learning, which is now being stimulated and which has borrowed so much that is foreign ... should now show its face in the true spirit of the Apostolic church.'<sup>372</sup> In particular, Filaret called for theology to be taught in Russian, arguing that: 'Teaching in Russian has the advantage in order and clarity of exposition.' By contrast, he said, Latin lacked 'the force of

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<sup>367</sup> R. Nichols, 'Orthodoxy and Russia's Enlightenment, 1762-1825', in *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime*, eds. R. Nichols and T. Stavrou (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), pp. 78-79.

<sup>368</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 1, pp. 179-184.

<sup>369</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 1, p. 135.

<sup>370</sup> G. Freeze, 'Sceptical Reformer, Staunch Tserkovnik: Metropolitan Philaret and The Great Reforms', in *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, ed. V. Tsurikov (The Variable Press: Jordanville, 2003), p. 151 and p. 191.

<sup>371</sup> N. Racheotes, *The Life and Thought of Filaret Drozdov* (Lexington Books: New York, 2018), p. xvi and p. 55.

<sup>372</sup> Nichols, 'Orthodoxy and Russia's Enlightenment, 1762-1825', in *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime*, p. 84.

truth which is comprehensible and beneficial to all.’ In 1834 he wrote that ‘the dominance in theological teaching of Latin, a formerly pagan and now papist and Protestant language, is not adequately compatible with the spirit and aim of the ecclesiastical schools of the Eastern Church.’<sup>373</sup> Accordingly, Protasov as Ober-Procurator promoted the use of Russian rather than Latin as the language of instruction.<sup>374</sup>

An essential aspect of the development of a distinctively Russian school of theology was the ‘patristic revolution’, in which the writings of the ancient and early medieval Church Fathers were translated into Russian, and published along with commentaries. Orthodox clergymen saw this undertaking as a way to restore true Orthodoxy and fend off both the materialism of the revolutionary movement, and the Catholic and Protestant mysticism which was fashionable among the Russian elite in the early nineteenth century.<sup>375</sup> Chairs of patristics were established in the ecclesiastical academies in 1841.<sup>376</sup> Patristics flourished in particular at the St Petersburg Academy.<sup>377</sup> The Russian Church’s first patristics textbook, written in 1859 by Archbishop Filaret (Gumilevskii), depicted the fourth century, after the conversion of Constantine, as ‘the century of the greatest luminaries of the Church’, when ‘the state gave freedom to the Church and high enlightenment was revealed as the consequence of the struggle of paganism with Christianity’. Subsequent Church Fathers, wrote Filaret, had defended Orthodoxy against Islam, heresies such as iconoclasm, and ‘the self-willedness of Rome’. The fall of Byzantium, he noted, was due to its conflicts with both Catholicism and Islam: it ‘was weakened as much by the military successes of Islamism as by the hostile activities of the papacy.’<sup>378</sup> In the late 1850s and early 1860s, at the direction of Metropolitan Grigorii (Postnikov) of St Petersburg, the St Petersburg Academy began translating and publishing sources on Byzantine history and the Eastern Church from the eighth to fifteenth centuries. An 1889 history of the Academy noted that: ‘The importance of this period is that in the course of it the separation of the Latins from unity with the Eastern Church took place; the light of Orthodoxy was disseminated in Slavic lands; the Eastern Greek Church underwent many highly severe trials from the artifices and intrigues of the Latins and from the external enemies

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<sup>373</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 1, pp. 140-142.

<sup>374</sup> Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, p. 129.

<sup>375</sup> P. Michelson, ‘Russian Orthodox Thought in the Church’s Clerical Academies’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, eds. C. Emerson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 102.

<sup>376</sup> Titlinov, *Dukhovnaia shkola v Rossii v XIX stoletii*, vol. 2, p. 26.

<sup>377</sup> Fedorov, *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov’ i gosudarstvo*, p. 98, and G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two* (Belmont: 1984), p. 151.

<sup>378</sup> Filaret (Gumilevskii), *Istoricheskoe uchenie ob ottsakh tserkvi*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Tipografiia 2-go Otd-niia sobst. Ego. Imper. Vel. Kantseliarii, 1859), p. xxv.

of the Empire – from the Slavs until their conversion to the Christian faith, the Saracens, and the Turks.’<sup>379</sup>

It is therefore clear that ecclesiastical history was understood in the Academies as a means of presenting the history of the Orthodox Church in a positive light, with emphasis on its confrontations with Catholicism and Islam, while its fortunes were understood to be connected with those of the Byzantine Empire. However, given that the patristic sources differed among themselves on many points, it was difficult to form them into a coherent whole or to reconcile them with the widespread acceptance among Russian churchmen in this period that all doctrinal questions had been settled. In 1840, the Synod official and ecclesiastical writer Andrei Murav’ev went so far as to tell the British theologian William Palmer that, whereas much was ‘indeterminate’ in the early Church, in the nineteenth century ‘all things have been decided and catalogued ... We do not live now in the age of the Councils when ... things could be changed.’<sup>380</sup> Pobedonostsev in particular believed that there was no room for intellectual discovery in the Church and that ecclesiastical education should be limited to the study of apologetics.<sup>381</sup> However, the assumption that doctrinal questions had already been settled, and by implication that the Russian Church was above criticism in this regard, called into question the state’s right to interfere in its governance, and so had the ironic result that Russian ecclesiastical historians devoted less of their attention to doctrine than to the more politically charged subject of relations between the Church and the state.

*The use of Byzantium as a negative model regarding the schism*

Nineteenth-century Russian writers saw the schism of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches as an event of tremendous importance. Discord between the two first emerged in the ninth century, when Patriarch Photius of Constantinople refused to accept the Pope’s judgment concerning the legitimacy of his disputed election, and rejected the Western doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeded from God the Son as well as God the Father. A formal schism took place in 1054, when a dispute over ecclesiastical authority resulted in Patriarch Michael I Cerularius and the legates of Pope Leo IX excommunicating each other. Tensions between

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<sup>379</sup> I. Chistovich, *S.-Petersburgskaia Dukhovnaia Akademiia za posledniia 30 let (1858-1888 gg.)* (St Petersburg: Sinodal’naia tipografiia, 1889), p. 66.

<sup>380</sup> S. Dixon, ‘The Orthodox Church in imperial Russia 1721-1917’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 5, ed. M. Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 334.

<sup>381</sup> Basil, ‘Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev: An Argument for a Russian State Church’, p. 50.



Byzantium and the crusaders, culminating in the Fourth Crusade's attack on Constantinople, further deepened the rift.

Many nineteenth-century Russian religious writers opposed the ecclesiastical nationalism of figures such as Filaret (Drozdov) and lamented the split between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, hoping that it could be reversed in order to restore the 'Universal Church'. Often, representatives of this tendency made use of Byzantium as a negative example. Russian thinkers' use of Byzantium as a reference point in discussions of church-state relations originated with Petr Chaadaev, whose *First Philosophical Letter*, written as early as 1828 though not published until 1836, bemoaned what he saw as Russia's alienation from Europe and failure to contribute to human progress, which he blamed in part on the fact that 'we proceeded to seek the moral code which was to constitute our education in miserable Byzantium'. Shortly before this happened, he wrote, Photius had 'removed this Christian family from the universal fraternity'. Chaadaev argued that the early period of the history of the Church had been its 'golden age', and that subsequent splits within it endangered the 'mysterious unity which contains the whole divine idea of Christianity and all its power.' Furthermore, he wrote that the papacy deserved to have 'precedence over all Christian society', implicitly calling for the reunification of the Eastern and Western Churches to take place on the West's terms.<sup>382</sup> In a subsequent letter of 1846, Chaadaev reiterated that Russia was the only country which had accepted Christianity unchanged from Byzantium. He wrote that Byzantine Christianity had been shaped by the 'oriental despotism' of the Roman Emperor Constantine, whereas the Western Church had developed a greater degree of independence from the state. While Russia inherited 'dogmatic integrity and primitive purity' from Byzantium, 'the religious system of the West was much more favourable to the social development of the people than that which fell to our lot.' As a result, Russia could not develop other than by emulation of Europe: 'the initiative for our movement still belongs to foreign ideas just as the initiative has always belonged to them.'<sup>383</sup> These arguments anticipated those which would be made by many subsequent Russian critics of the Byzantine legacy in ecclesiastical matters.

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<sup>382</sup> P. Chaadaev, 'First Philosophical Letter', in *Philosophical Works of Petr Chaadaev*, eds. R. McNally and R. Tempest (Sovietica, 1991), p. 25 and p. 83.

<sup>383</sup> Chaadaev, Letter to Adolphe de Circourt, 15<sup>th</sup> June 1846, in *Philosophical Works of Petr Chaadaev*, pp. 200 ff.

Chaadaev's views on Byzantium were developed into a programme for the future of the Russian Church by one of his pupils, Prince Ivan Gagarin, who was acquainted with him in the 1830s. Gagarin, a Foreign Ministry official, converted to Catholicism in 1842 while stationed in Paris, having concluded that the West was more intellectually and politically sophisticated than Russia due to the influence of the Catholic Church, which was 'the animating spirit and the intellectual property of all Europe.'<sup>384</sup> In 1848 he was ordained as a Jesuit priest.<sup>385</sup> Gagarin is the subject of a considerable amount of recent scholarship, which variously emphasises his championship of Catholicism in Russia, his advocacy of reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Churches, and his defence of the right of individuals to choose their own faith through his repudiation of Orthodoxy in favour of Catholicism.<sup>386</sup> However, he also did much to establish the use of Byzantine imagery in Russian religious discourse. Gagarin's religious thought began with the premise that the true Church, founded by Jesus Christ, was universal and independent of any earthly authority.<sup>387</sup> In his 1856 book *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, he coined the term 'Byzantinism' to describe the subordination of the Church to the state, which, he believed, had been the fatal error of the Byzantine Empire: 'To transfer into the Church the national spirit in order to oppose it there to the catholic spirit, to tend to concentrate the government of this national church in the hands of a prelate or an assembly of prelates who are obedient to the influences of the political government, and at the same time to loosen as far as possible the links which attach this Church to the universal Church, here is the collection of tendencies which occurred for the first time in Byzantium and which, for this reason, I refer to as Byzantinism.'<sup>388</sup> Byzantinism, wrote Gagarin, had ruined the Orthodox Church within the former borders of the Byzantine Empire, reducing it to a small and shrinking remnant, in contrast to the worldwide flourishing of Catholicism. Byzantinism subsequently took root in Russia via the abolition of the Patriarchate and the establishment of the Holy Synod.<sup>389</sup> Gagarin echoed many of the widespread contemporary criticisms of the Russian Church: 'the ignorance of the clergy, its depravity, its

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<sup>384</sup> J. Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin: The Search for Orthodox-Catholic Union* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 30.

<sup>385</sup> T. Kselman, *Conscience and Conversion* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 142.

<sup>386</sup> J. Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin: The Search for Orthodox-Catholic Union* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), pp. 139-142; T. Kselman, *Conscience and Conversion* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2018), p. 123; A. Walicki, 'The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin', in *The Cultural Gradient: the transmission of ideas in Europe, 1789-1991*, eds. C. Evtuhov and S. Kotkin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 46.

<sup>387</sup> I. Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?* (Paris: Charles Duniol, 1856), p. 23.

<sup>388</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 29.

<sup>389</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 38.

debasement pass all measure.’<sup>390</sup> However, he went on to say that, while the Russian Church lacked the authority to reform itself, if the state tried to reform the Church it would ‘obviously transgress the limits of its sphere and trespass on the rights of the Church.’ Thus, the only cure for the Church’s ills was ‘outside herself and outside the government’, i.e. submission to the Pope as head of the universal Church.<sup>391</sup> Gagarin therefore emphasised the close connection between the schism and the continued subordination of the Church to the state in the East: ‘Suppress despotism, the church recovers its independence, and there no longer exists any motive for maintaining the schism.’<sup>392</sup> In calling for the Church to be freed from state control, he had some common ground with the Slavophiles, writing that nothing in their ideas was ‘essentially opposed to Catholicism’ and that it was only ‘misunderstandings’ which prevented their party from becoming ‘the most ardent promoter of union.’<sup>393</sup>

If the Russian Church was united with Rome, argued Gagarin, the Pope would defend its independence, while the Tsar acted as an advocate for the maintenance of its traditions.<sup>394</sup> Gagarin wrote that the reunification of the Eastern and Western Churches would not require any major doctrinal concessions on Russia’s part, since the main Catholic dogmas which the Orthodox did not accept, concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Pope, had not been definitively condemned by the Orthodox Church and the differences between the two sides could therefore be settled by another Ecumenical Council.<sup>395</sup> Neither was there any obstacle to the Russian Church, once reconciled with Rome, retaining its own traditions such as the Slavonic liturgy, communion under both kinds, the use of leavened bread, and married clergy.<sup>396</sup> Gagarin wrote that such a union would restore the authority of the Russian clergy, enabling it to refute revolutionary atheism and to spread Christianity into Asia. The union would also reconcile the division in Russia between the ‘western’ and ‘national’ parties.<sup>397</sup> Thus, despite his being a Jesuit priest, Gagarin was essentially a secular thinker who depicted both the causes of the schism and the benefits of reversing it as primarily political, not spiritual. As the Slavophile writer Aleksei Khomiakov noted of Gagarin’s vision: ‘It is not about the schism or heresy, tradition or faith ... it is about a secular war of the Russian

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<sup>390</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 90.

<sup>391</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 164.

<sup>392</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 167.

<sup>393</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 120.

<sup>394</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 49.

<sup>395</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 54.

<sup>396</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 19.

<sup>397</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, pp. 80 ff.

Church against the Holy See and the signature of an honourable and advantageous peace for all. It is not about conversions, preachers or apostles: it is about negotiations and plenipotentiaries.<sup>398</sup> Later, Gagarin came to see the idea of reuniting the Churches through an agreement between the Tsar and Pope as unrealistic, and instead advocated strengthening the Byzantine-rite Catholic Churches in order to reassure the Orthodox that their traditions would be respected within a reunited Church. He may have had some influence on Pope Pius IX, whose 1862 encyclical *Amantissimus* condemned 'Latinisation' and affirmed that the Church benefitted from a diversity of rites.<sup>399</sup> However, the Russian authorities rejected overtures from Gagarin and his fellow Russian Jesuits, fearing that they would reverse the integration of the Uniates into the Orthodox Church. In 1859, the Russian ecclesiastical leadership emphatically refused a proposal from Gagarin and his collaborator August von Haxthausen to create a society in Russia to pray for church reunification, of the kind which Gagarin had already set up in Germany.<sup>400</sup> Metropolitan Filaret warned that 'Jesuits wish to cripple us.'<sup>401</sup> Ultimately, Gagarin was unable to persuade the Eastern Orthodox to accept papal authority or to set aside their theological disputes with the West, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that he was naïve about his chances of success.<sup>402</sup>

Writing in the 1880s and 1890s, the religious thinker Vladimir Solov'ev echoed Chaadaev and Gagarin in arguing that the schism between East and West had undermined true Christianity in the East. Solov'ev's philosophy centred around the idea of 'all-unity' (*vseedinstvo*).<sup>403</sup> Accordingly, he depicted the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches as unfounded, arguing that it 'follows not from their church principles as such, but only from their temporal negative attitude which has to do merely with historical manifestations of the Church and not with its true religious essence.'<sup>404</sup> He maintained that: 'The Church as ecumenical or universal can be realised only by world history.'<sup>405</sup> This unity of faith and truth had to reside in a single individual, i.e. the Pope, who was therefore the

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<sup>398</sup> A. Khomiakov, *L'Église latine et le protestantisme au point de vue de l'église d'Orient* (Lausanne et Vevey, 1872), p. 205.

<sup>399</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, pp. 142 ff.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>402</sup> Kselman, *Conscience and Conversion*, p. 152.

<sup>403</sup> R. Poole, 'The Greatness of Vladimir Solov'ev', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 50, nos. 1-2, 2008, p. 203

<sup>404</sup> T. Obolovitch, 'The metaphysical foundations of the ecumenical project of Vladimir Solovyov', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, vol. 67, nos. 1-2, p. 34.

<sup>405</sup> V. Solov'ev, 'Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika', in *Sobranie sochinenii Vladimira Sergeevicha Solov'eva*, eds. S. Solov'ev and E. Radlov, vol. 4 (St Petersburg: Prosveshchenie, 1914), p. 65.

rightful head of the Universal Church.<sup>406</sup> Accordingly, Solov'ev called for the reunification of the Churches, with the Pope as their spiritual leader and the Tsar as their temporal protector.<sup>407</sup> Like Gagarin, he saw Byzantium as a negative example, but he went into much greater detail in explaining how Byzantine influence had deformed Eastern Christianity. He wrote that Byzantium was only a 'nominally Christian state', whose laws and institutions remained essentially pagan even after the emperors adopted Christianity. The 'intrinsic, spiritual reason for the fall of Byzantium' was that, for its rulers, Orthodoxy was 'only a subject of their intellectual avowal and ritualistic reverence, but not the motivating principle of life.'<sup>408</sup> As a result, the imperial court undermined Christianity by sponsoring various heresies, all of which in some way rejected the divinity of Christ and the equality of God the Son with God the Father: Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Monothelitism, which was 'an indirect denial of human freedom', and finally Iconoclasm, 'an implied rejection of the divine phenomenality.'<sup>409</sup> In each case, wrote Solov'ev, monks and 'the mass of devout believers' defended Orthodoxy. However, the dominant faction, comprising the majority of the senior clergy, formed what Solov'ev termed the 'semi-Orthodox' or 'Orthodox anti-Catholic' party, who were orthodox in doctrine but who 'preferred the Byzantine Cæsaropapism to the Roman Papacy.'<sup>410</sup> Ultimately, after all of the various heresies had been defeated by the time of the ecumenical council of 787, the 'Orthodox anti-Catholic' party provoked a schism. Subsequently in Byzantium, the functions of the Church and the state were 'confused' without being 'united' due to the combination of the blind obedience to authority inculcated by the Monophysite heresy, and an 'exaggerated asceticism' derived from Iconoclasm's rejection of corporeality. As a result, Byzantine Orthodoxy 'was in fact nothing but ingrown heresy.'<sup>411</sup> In turn, Solov'ev blamed the rise of Islam and the fall of Constantinople on the separation of the East from 'all-European life': 'Byzantium died from its isolation and solitude'.<sup>412</sup> Solov'ev wrote that this illustrated that a truly Christian state had to recognise the authority of the Universal Church: attempting to form a national church under state control would give rise to 'anti-Christian despotism.'<sup>413</sup> Thus, for Solov'ev, the schism was not the product of doctrinal differences but

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<sup>406</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, trans. H. Rees (London: The Centenary Press, 1948), p. 96.

<sup>407</sup> T. Obolevitch, 'The metaphysical foundations of the ecumenical project of Vladimir Solovyov', *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, vol. 67, nos. 1-2, 2015, p. 36.

<sup>408</sup> Solov'ev, 'Byzantinism and Russia', in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, ed. V. Wozniuk (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), p. 192.

<sup>409</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 14 and p. 24.

<sup>410</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 17.

<sup>411</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 23.

<sup>412</sup> Solov'ev, 'Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika', p. 63.

<sup>413</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, pp. 71-73.

rather of ‘the ancient cultural and political antagonism of East and West’, which came to the fore once all major doctrinal issues were settled. He argued that the Eastern Church concentrated on the preservation of tradition, and the Western Church on ‘the means of achieving the Kingdom of God on Earth.’<sup>414</sup> This emphasised the case for reunification by implying that the two were complementary.

Solov’ev’s thought therefore echoed Gagarin’s regarding the need for reunification of the Churches and the culpability of the East for the schism. Like Gagarin, he argued that the doctrinal differences between Orthodoxy and Catholicism were of secondary importance, Russian clergy and theologians having accepted the distortions introduced by Byzantine Patriarchs and rejected certain Catholic dogmas simply as ‘a national protest against the universal power of the Pope.’<sup>415</sup> Also like Gagarin, Solov’ev seemingly never grasped the impracticability of church reunification: Pope Leo XIII remarked that his ideas were ‘beautiful’ but ‘impossible without a miracle.’<sup>416</sup> However, there were some profound differences between Gagarin and Solov’ev. Gagarin believed that Russia had a Catholic tradition from prior to the schism, citing evidence of mixed Orthodox-Catholic marriages without conversions.<sup>417</sup> He praised Patriarch Nikon as a champion of the independence of the Church from the state until he was betrayed ‘for gold’ by the other Eastern Patriarchs, writing that Nikon was ‘perhaps the greatest man Russia has ever produced.’<sup>418</sup> Gagarin also admired the Old Believers, arguing that they represented ‘the Russian people’s opposition to the official church.’<sup>419</sup> By contrast, Solov’ev followed Chaadaev in arguing that, because Russia had been converted to Christianity by Byzantium after the schism of Photius, it had inherited the failings of Byzantine Christianity from the outset: ‘the pearl of the Gospel purchased by the Russian people in the person of St Vladimir was all covered with the dust of Byzantium.’<sup>420</sup> Solov’ev wrote that, just as Byzantine Christianity had been deformed by being cut off from the universal Church, the Russian Church was ‘destitute of all vitality’, being characterised by ‘the imperial clericalism of Byzantium modified by the easy-going good nature of our own people and the Teutonic bureaucracy of our administration.’<sup>421</sup> Furthermore, he argued that Russia had

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<sup>414</sup> Solov’ev, ‘Velikii spor i khristianskaia politika’, p. 47.

<sup>415</sup> Solov’ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 46.

<sup>416</sup> Obolevitch, ‘The metaphysical foundations of the ecumenical project of Vladimir Solovyov’, p. 37.

<sup>417</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 20.

<sup>418</sup> Gagarin, *La Russie sera-t-elle Catholique?*, p. 38.

<sup>419</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 92.

<sup>420</sup> Solov’ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 45.

<sup>421</sup> Solov’ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 49.

inherited Byzantium's tendency to confuse its own ecclesiastical customs with the expression of true Christianity: 'A supplemental detail of ceremony is taken as the essential condition of the sacrament, and the general obligation of an ecumenical tradition is ascribed to the particulars of a local custom.'<sup>422</sup> As a result, Patriarch Nikon's attempt to impose Greek ecclesiastical traditions gave rise to the schism between the official Church and the Old Believers. Solov'ev criticised both sides for clinging to the 'insignificant particulars' of church customs, thereby indicating that they had succumbed to 'the fundamental error of Byzantinism'.<sup>423</sup>

Likewise, Gagarin criticised Peter I for importing what he saw as the negative and superficial aspects of Western culture into Russia, arguing in particular that Peter's ecclesiastical adviser Feofan Prokopovich had steered the Russian Church away from its Catholic roots towards Protestantism, and going so far as to question whether post-Petrine Russian bishops were validly appointed.<sup>424</sup> While Chaadaev defended Peter I's reforms on the grounds that Russia had no history to violate, Gagarin argued that they were a continuation of the Byzantine tendency to subordinate the Church to the state.<sup>425</sup> However, Solov'ev praised Peter I for rejecting the 'self-satisfied quietism' of Byzantium and bringing Russia into contact with Europe and therefore with the ideas of human dignity and freedom which made possible a truly Christian kingdom. He may have been influenced by his father, the historian Sergei Solov'ev, who admired Peter for introducing Russia into the European family of nations.<sup>426</sup> Vladimir Solov'ev wrote that Peter, wrongly accused of enslaving the Russian Church, in fact recognised the need for it to be independent, seeking the guidance of the clergy regarding whether he had the right to punish his son for supposedly plotting a coup. However, the clerics declined to offer advice and instead deferred to Peter's judgment. Solov'ev therefore argued that Peter's abolition of the Patriarchate and integration of the Church into the state administration was merely an acknowledgment of reality: 'The ecclesiastical administration had already in fact been transformed into a branch of the state before it was officially declared

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<sup>422</sup> Solov'ev, 'Byzantinism and Russia', in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, ed. V. Wozniuk (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), pp. 191-227.

<sup>423</sup> Solov'ev, 'Byzantinism and Russia', in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, ed. V. Wozniuk (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), p. 225.

<sup>424</sup> Beshoner, *Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin*, p. 91 and pp. 165 ff.

<sup>425</sup> A. Walicki, 'The Religious Westernism of Ivan Gagarin', in *The Cultural Gradient: the transmission of ideas in Europe, 1789-1991*, eds. C. Evtuhov and S. Kotkin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 40-41.

<sup>426</sup> G. Hamburg, 'Inventing the "state school" of Historians, 1840-1995', in *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State*, ed. T. Sanders (M. E. Sharpe: New York, 1999), p. 107.

in this capacity.<sup>427</sup> Nevertheless, Solov'ev was optimistic about the future, arguing that the Russian people's national sentiment and religious and monarchical instincts indicated that their destiny was to reconcile Eastern and Western Christianity and so 'to provide the Universal Church with the political power which it requires for the salvation and regeneration of Europe and of the world.'<sup>428</sup> Thus, the use of Byzantium as a negative example by Russian religious thinkers was associated with the rejection of the development of a national form of Christianity in favour of the realisation of the vision of a universal Church.

*The official view of the schism*

Many nineteenth-century Russian scholars, especially those associated with the ecclesiastical academies, wrote about the schism between East and West in a way which presented Byzantium in a positive light. In accordance with the worsening relations between the Catholic Church and the Russian authorities in the mid-nineteenth century, an anti-Western tone was frequently evident. Andrei Murav'ev's 1853 *Question religieuse d'Orient et d'Occident* set out the Russian Orthodox Church's official position on the schism between East and West: the Pope was only one of the five equal patriarchs by whom the Church was rightfully governed, but the West was guilty of promoting 'the Pope's sovereignty over the whole Church' and of attempting 'to impose an illegitimate supremacy on the Easterners and to divert them from the constitution practiced and sanctioned by the councils.' By contrast, wrote Murav'ev, the 'patriarchs of the Orient' had 'preserved in their integrity all the dogmas and canons of the primitive Church'.<sup>429</sup> The contemporary Russian Church, he wrote, was the 'daughter of the Byzantine Church'.<sup>430</sup> Murav'ev concluded that the reunification of the Churches, while desirable, was impossible while Rome persisted in error. Many Russian scholars in the ecclesiastical academies analysed the schism along the same lines. They began to write in detail about this subject in the mid-1850s, strongly suggesting that their interest was provoked not only by the emergence of an ultramontanist papacy, but also by British and French support for the Ottoman Empire against Russia during the Crimean War and afterwards, which required Russia to call into question whether the West was truly Christian in order to be able to portray itself as the defender of Christianity against the Ottomans.

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<sup>427</sup> Solov'ev, 'Byzantinism and Russia', in *Freedom, Faith, and Dogma*, p. 212 and p. 227.

<sup>428</sup> Solov'ev, *Russia and the Universal Church*, p. 29.

<sup>429</sup> A. Murav'ev, *Question religieuse d'Orient et d'Occident. Parole de l'orthodoxie catholique au catholicisme romain*, trad. A. Popovitski (Paris: A. Franck, 1853), p. 6 and p. 25.

<sup>430</sup> Murav'ev, *Question religieuse d'Orient et d'Occident*, p. 41.



Academy scholars tended to blame the schism on the West and to praise the Byzantine Patriarchs under whom it took place, Photius and Michael I Cerularius. Their general tendency was to attribute the schism to the papacy's greed for power and animus towards the Eastern Church. One of the first scholarly treatments of the schism was by Protopresbyter Ioann Ianyshv, later the rector of the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy. Writing in 1854, Ianyshv blamed Rome for adopting a theologically flawed view concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit, seeking superiority over Constantinople, and refusing to be corrected when the Eastern Church defended the true faith.<sup>431</sup> Likewise, Ivan Chel'tsov, also a professor of the St Petersburg Academy, accused the Pope of using the crusades as a weapon to attack and subordinate the Greek Church in an article of 1857.<sup>432</sup> A more extensive work on the schism was that of Ivan Dobrotvorskii, Kazan University Professor of Ecclesiastical History, in 1868. He wrote that doctrinal differences emerged with the late seventh-century 'Quinisext' council, which the West rejected. The final split came in the mid-eleventh century when Bishop Leo of Orhid sent a letter to the Pope condemning several Roman customs, in particular the use of unleavened bread, provoking a dispute over whether the Church should be governed by the Pope or by five equal patriarchs and by ecumenical councils.<sup>433</sup> Dobrotvorskii blamed Western intransigence and illegality for the ultimate failure to reach an agreement. Likewise, Nikolai Skabalanovich, also a professor of the St Petersburg Academy, wrote in 1884 that the schism was due to the East being closer to the ancient church and having better theological training, while the Pope's insistence on superiority over the Ecumenical Patriarch made the peaceful resolution of differences impossible: the schism was a 'general struggle for power' and the bread controversy merely a pretext.<sup>434</sup> In addition to blaming the schism on the West, academy scholars tended to depict it as irreversible, in stark contrast to Gagarin and Solov'ev. A. L. Katanskii, another professor of the St Petersburg Academy, wrote in 1868 about the history of attempts to repair the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, and concluded that these had failed because: 'It was impossible that the true principle which animated Orthodoxy and the one-sided and false one which percolates Catholicism, could be reconciled without

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<sup>431</sup> I. Ianyshv, 'Istoricheskii vzgliad na postepennoe otdelenie zapadnoi tserkvi ot pravoslavnoi-vostochnoi', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1854, part 2, p. 244.

<sup>432</sup> I. Chel'tsov, 'Vneshnee sostoianie grecheskoi tserkvi s 1054 do 1204', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1857, part 2, p. 377.

<sup>433</sup> I. Dobrotvorskii, 'Bor'ba i razdelenie tserkvei v polovine XI veka', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1868, no. 11, pp. 698 ff.

<sup>434</sup> N. Skabalanovich, 'Razdelenie tserkvei pri patriarkhe Mikhaile Kellurarie', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1884, no. 11-12, pp. 626 ff.

destroying each other.<sup>435</sup> This focus on the medieval origins of the schism implicitly dismissed the overtures about Church reunion which the West had made recently, beginning with the 1755 encyclical *Allatae sunt*, which emphasised that Eastern Christians who wished to enter into communion with the Catholic Church were required only to renounce heresy, not to give up their own rites.

The Russian Church's view of the continuing relevance of the schism was clearly expressed by Aleksandr Lopukhin, a professor at the St Petersburg Academy from 1882 onwards. For Lopukhin, Orthodoxy was based on 'Godmanhood', or 'perfect equilibrium between the divine and human'.<sup>436</sup> He argued that the East was 'the region of the spirit', where the Church developed its theological thought and 'independence of social units lay at the foundation of the administrative structure of the Church, preserved until now in the form of the separate independent Patriarchates.' However, in the West, 'the region of practical sense', 'crude practical reason ... perceived the very idea of Christianity only from the external, practical side accessible to it.' This, in turn, gave rise to the West's 'demand for universal mastery'.<sup>437</sup> Therefore, argued Lopukhin, Western Christianity was divided between Catholicism, which was Christianity 'perceived only from one side, from the side of external legality', and Protestantism, which, he said, 'rejects any law' and was based on 'subjective speculation'.<sup>438</sup> Lopukhin's emphasis on 'Godmanhood', and on the contrast between Eastern abstraction and Western practicality, suggests that he may have been influenced by Solov'ev, though unlike Solov'ev he assessed the East more favourably than the West. Therefore, we can see that the ecclesiastical academies' scholarship on the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, while analytically rigorous and strongly based on the relevant primary sources, was at pains to absolve Byzantium and Orthodoxy of responsibility for the schism, and to blame it on the arrogance of the papacy and the Western Church in general. This can be understood in the light of the academies' efforts to promote a distinctive Russian tradition of theology.

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<sup>435</sup> I. Sokolov, 'Vizantologicheskaja traditsiia v S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1904, no. 1, p. 150.

<sup>436</sup> A. Lopukhin, 'Sovremennyi Zapad v religiozno-nravnennom otnoshenii', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1885, no. 11-12, p. 654.

<sup>437</sup> A. Lopukhin, 'Sovremennyi Zapad v religiozno-nravnennom otnoshenii', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1885, no. 9-10, pp. 455-456.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 466-468.

*Byzantine historians on freedom of conscience and the rights of religious minorities*

Besides the schism, another aspect of Byzantine ecclesiastical history which commanded the attention of nineteenth-century Russian historians was the relationship between Byzantine Emperors and the Church. Many scholars in the ecclesiastical academies portrayed Byzantium positively as a society where the state enforced the Church's decisions on doctrinal matters, while acknowledging its right to self-government. Writing in 1877, Timofei Barsov, a professor of canon law at the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy, clearly connected the historiography of Byzantine church-state relations to 'contemporary discussions about freedom of conscience', in which 'the question about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of external measures of state power in the matter of the protection of the church and its faith appears as essential.' Barsov acknowledged that 'defenders of freedom of conscience' saw the state's involvement in ecclesiastical matters as a legacy of paganism. However, he countered that Christ 'did not at all desire that His doctrine would remain a theory without application to life, and His church would be only a gathering of believers, and not a society, founded on firm and definite principles of outward order and organisation.' It was, he wrote, 'not liable to doubt that the ecumenical councils acknowledged as necessary the support of the state power for the matter of the protection of the Church and at the same time the establishment of its faith.' He held up Byzantium as the model of a system in which, in accordance with Christ's wish that the Church would form an actual community, state power was used to suppress instability within the Church or attacks on it by its external enemies. 'For the restraint of such people the moral forces of the Church itself are inadequate, and only decisive measures of state power, acting coercively, are necessary and effective.'<sup>439</sup> In particular, wrote Barsov, Byzantine emperors granted privileges to the clergy, and promulgated laws against 'non-believers, heretics, and schismatics.'<sup>440</sup> Likewise, Fedor Kurganov, a professor of church history at the Kazan Ecclesiastical Academy, argued in his 1880 history of church-state relations in the Byzantine Empire that Constantine the Great, having launched a religious war to free the Eastern Roman Empire from the persecutions of the pagan Emperor Licinius, created a new Christian state, and 'used repressive measures against paganism, shameful pagan customs, cults and temples.'<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> T. Barsov, 'Ob uchastii gosudarstvennoi vlasti v dele okhraneniia drevnei vselenskoii tserkvi i ee very', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1877, no. 5-6, p. 788.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 820.

<sup>441</sup> F. Kurganov, *Otnosheniia mezhdou tserkovnoiu i grazhdanskoiu vlast'iu v vizantiiskoi imperii* (Kazan: Tipografiia Imperatorskogo Universiteta, 1880), p. 24.

At the same time, Barsov wrote that Byzantine Emperors' involvement in ecclesiastical matters was limited to the 'external sides of the existence of the church' and not internal church governance.<sup>442</sup> Likewise, Kurganov argued that Byzantine Emperors acknowledged the secular and spiritual authorities as two separate powers within the state which ought to aspire to harmony with each other, and that they accepted that the laws of the Church took precedence over those of the government.<sup>443</sup> They chose patriarchs and summoned church councils, whose resolutions of doctrinal disputes they then enforced, but otherwise generally did not meddle in ecclesiastical affairs. While emperors occasionally persecuted their opponents in doctrinal disputes, he said, the truly Orthodox side always prevailed against heresies, which were Satan's attempts to damage the Ecumenical Church.<sup>444</sup> Kurganov wrote that the Byzantine Empire's diversity made it a favourable environment for the development of Christian principles: the 'renunciation of the idea of nationality and tribalness' allowed Byzantium 'to entrust itself more freely and wholly to the service of the Christian idea' and to make use of 'the forms and tools of thought developed by the ancient Greeks' to develop Christian doctrine.<sup>445</sup> Kurganov therefore argued that Byzantine ecclesiastical history discredited the concept of the separation of Church and state: 'The motto of modern people without a faith, 'a free church in a free state', was developed not long ago, and besides in practice it is unrealisable and therefore represents a pure word without significance.'<sup>446</sup> However, Barsov admitted that, although Byzantine Emperors understood the limits of their role in religious affairs, 'in their actual instructions they overstepped the borders of legal moderation.'<sup>447</sup> This can be seen as an implicit admission that Barsov's depiction of Byzantine church-state relations was intended less as an unbiased depiction of the Byzantine Empire than as a defence of the state's role in enforcing religious orthodoxy. Kurganov also acknowledged that Byzantine historians had recorded many instances of the 'violation of the depicted theory of the relationship of the church to the state', but argued that these were only 'exceptional cases' and so that western historians were wrong to invoke them in order to depict the Byzantine Church as lifeless and oppressed by the state.<sup>448</sup> Historians of this school therefore played down the significance of

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<sup>442</sup> T. Barsov, 'Ob uchastii gosudarstvennoi vlasti v dele okhraneniia drevnei vselenskoii tserkvi i ee very', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1877, no. 11-12, p. 555.

<sup>443</sup> Kurganov, *Otnosheniia mezhdou tserkovnoiu i grazhdanskoiu vlast'iu v vizantiiskoi imperii*, p. 73.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>447</sup> T. Barsov, 'Ob uchastii gosudarstvennoi vlasti v dele okhraneniia drevnei vselenskoii tserkvi i ee very', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1877, no. 11-12, p. 555.

<sup>448</sup> Kurganov, *Otnosheniia mezhdou tserkovnoiu i grazhdanskoiu vlast'iu v vizantiiskoi imperii*, p. 93.

the doctrinal disputes which were frequent in Byzantium, in order to use the Byzantine Empire as a model of co-operation between the Orthodox Church and the state and to criticise the concepts of freedom of conscience and the secular state.

However, some Russian ecclesiastical historians argued that Byzantine influence had distorted rather than preserved true Christianity. Nikita Giliarov-Platonov, a lecturer at the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy until he was removed for what was deemed to be an excessively sympathetic attitude towards the schismatics, argued that true Orthodoxy arose in the pre-Constantinian Church rather than in Byzantium, rhetorically asking in an article of 1872: ‘Was the organisation of the church in the first three centuries less in conformity with Christianity, than the one established under Constantine?’<sup>449</sup> He wrote that the dominance of the Church by Rome in the West and Constantinople in the East was the product of its adaptation to the structure of the Roman Empire, and had come to be associated with ‘particularism, elevated to universal significance, with violation of Christian freedom, with disdain for Christian love, with subordination of life to form and with sacrifice of the spirit of faith to the hierarchical principle, taken abstractly.’<sup>450</sup> Likewise, Giliarov-Platonov argued against the re-establishment of the Patriarchate in Russia on the grounds that the title of patriarch had not been used in the early Church and had come to be conferred on certain bishops ‘under the influence of temporary political circumstances’.<sup>451</sup> His views contrasted with the admirers of Byzantium such as Murav’ev who argued that the title of patriarch dated back to the early Church and formed the basis of ecclesiastical governance. Giliarov-Platonov rejected the contemporary relevance of Byzantine precedents: ‘to seek the future in the preservation of everything which has been developed in the outward structure of the church under the influence of Byzantine, partly pagan statehood, is a mistake.’<sup>452</sup>

Other Russian historians drew direct parallels between Byzantine and Russian church-state relations. Ivan Troitskii, a professor of church history at the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy, depicted Byzantine ecclesiastical history as the struggle between *akrivia*, or strict adherence to canon law, and *economy*, which allowed some departure from the letter of canon

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<sup>449</sup> N. Giliarov-Platonov, ‘Znachenie religioznogo voprosa dlia Chekhov i Bolgar’, in *Voprosy very i tserkvi*, vol. 1, ed. N. Shakhovskoi (Moscow: Sinodal’naia Tipografiia, 1905), p. 404.

<sup>450</sup> N. Giliarov-Platonov, ‘O greko-bolgarskoi tserkovnoi raspre’, in *Voprosy very i tserkvi*, vol. 1, p. 413.

<sup>451</sup> N. Giliarov-Platonov, ‘O patriarshestve’, in *Voprosy very i tserkvi*, vol. 2, p. 175.

<sup>452</sup> N. Giliarov-Platonov, ‘O pervom tome sbornika statei K. N. Leont’eva “Vostok, Rossiia i slavianstvo”’, in *Nikita Petrovich Giliarov-Platonov: issledovaniia, materialy, bibliografiia, retsenzii*, ed. A. Dmitriev (St Petersburg: Rostok, 2013), p. 652.

law in order to adhere to its spirit.<sup>453</sup> In his articles of the early 1870s on the schism led by the Byzantine Patriarch Arsenios, who was deposed for opposing the usurpation of the throne by Michael VIII Palaiologos, Troitskii argued that medieval Byzantium ultimately died because of ‘lawlessness’. ‘Arbitrary rule from the centre of the system passed by numberless radii to its extreme peripheries’ and every Byzantine in a position of authority emulated ‘the unlimited despot who sat on the Byzantine throne’. Troitskii wrote that calls for ‘precise obedience of laws and canons’ were in fact demands for ‘radical reform of all ecclesiastical, political, and social orders and relations’, since ‘canons are closely linked with laws and ... by the breach of either of them the state authority gives a bad example to subjects and thus undermines the legal soil on which it rests.’ ‘Precise fulfilment of the laws and canons’ would have been the Byzantine Empire’s only hope of salvation, but the Byzantines failed to act because they believed that their system was perfect and the problem lay with individuals. In a clear contrast with pro-Byzantine historians such as Kurganov, Troitskii favourably invoked modern secularist language to argue that ecclesiastical reform was impossible without wider social reform: ‘The church could be free only in a free state.’<sup>454</sup> Troitskii’s arguments about Byzantine ecclesiastical politics were thus clearly intended as a commentary on contemporary debates in Russia about the authority of the government over the Church and, more generally, about whether the autocratic monarchy should be bound by its own laws.

Some Russian ecclesiastical historians went still further in portraying Byzantium negatively. Aleksei Lebedev, an Orthodox clergyman who taught at the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy and then at Moscow University, argued that the early Church had been based on religious toleration until it was corrupted by the Roman Emperors, who introduced the persecution of heretics.<sup>455</sup> Lebedev accused Byzantine Emperors of undermining ecclesiastical independence: ‘Desiring to be unlimited authorities in the church, they deliberately chose silent and obedient people as patriarchs.’ According to Lebedev, many emperors also interfered in doctrinal matters, such as when Manuel I Comnenus forced a church council to ratify his view that Christ’s saying that ‘my Father is greater than I’ should be interpreted as meaning

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<sup>453</sup> I. Sokolov, ‘Vizantologicheskaiia traditsiia v S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1904, no. 2, p. 313.

<sup>454</sup> I. Troitskii, ‘Arsenii, Patriarkh Nikeiskii i Konstantinopol’skii, i arsenity’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1872, no. 12, pp. 657 ff.

<sup>455</sup> J. White, ‘“The Free Sale of Opium”: The Reaction of Russian Orthodox Churchmen to Freedom of Conscience, 1864-1905’, *European History Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2019, p. 212.

that God the Son was lesser than God the Father.<sup>456</sup> Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, said Lebedev, curbed the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate after Patriarch Arsenios excommunicated him for blinding his predecessor, John IV Laskaris. Lebedev concluded that ‘the Byzantine church was greatly weakened by the despotism of the Emperors.’ He went on to add that the fall of Byzantium was ‘tragi-comic’: Constantine XI, a ‘traitor to Orthodoxy’, agreed a union with Rome in a desperate attempt to save his empire, giving rise to petty infighting among the Byzantines between supporters and opponents of the union. The Byzantines, ‘devoid of a sense of patriotism’ according to Lebedev, were thus unable to defend themselves against the Turks. Lebedev concluded that the Orthodox Church was in fact better off under Ottoman rule, since the Sultans invested the Orthodox patriarchs and archbishops with secular as well as religious authority.<sup>457</sup> Lebedev’s writings thus amounted to an implicit argument that a nominally Orthodox state could not be relied upon as a guardian of Orthodoxy.

Other critics of the Byzantine system of church-state relations argued that the policing of religious orthodoxy by the state was not only dangerous in practice, but undesirable in theory. Bishop Ioann (Sokolov), who held teaching and administrative posts at both the Kazan and St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academies, wrote a series of articles in 1864-65 on the topic of ‘freedom of conscience’ in which he used the Byzantine Emperors’ efforts to enforce religious orthodoxy as a negative example. However, he did not mean to advocate unfettered freedom of conscience, which, he believed, had no foundation in the Bible or the Church Fathers.<sup>458</sup> Rather, he idealised the first three centuries of the Church’s existence, when it was governed by ‘living apostolic tradition.’<sup>459</sup> At this time, he wrote, ecclesiastical law had contained ‘nothing resembling freedom of conscience’, which was rejected by the Church as incompatible with the preservation of truth: ‘a true Christian ... is obliged to restrain critical impulses of his reason in religion.’<sup>460</sup> Early Christians were free, he said, in that they willingly submitted their hearts and minds to the Church: ‘Christians had conviction in faith and their conviction was entirely free.’<sup>461</sup> He wrote that only a Church whose members joined it

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<sup>456</sup> A. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie ocherki Vizantiisko-vostochnoi tserkvi ot kontsa XI-go do poloviny XV-go veka* (Moscow: Tipografiia M. G. Bolchaninova, 1892), p. 241.

<sup>457</sup> A. Lebedev, *Istoria Greko-vostochnoi tserkvi pod vlast’iu turok* (St Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo Olega Abyshko, 2012), p. 88.

<sup>458</sup> White, ‘“The Free Sale of Opium”: The Reaction of Russian Orthodox Churchmen to Freedom of Conscience, 1864-1905’, pp. 212 ff.

<sup>459</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), ‘O svobode sovesti’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, October 1864, p. 116.

<sup>460</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), ‘O svobode sovesti’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, October 1864, p. 131.

<sup>461</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), ‘O svobode sovesti’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, October 1864, p. 139 and p. 144.

voluntarily could have produced the martyrs of early Christian history.<sup>462</sup> Ioann argued that the Church went into decline from the fourth century, due to the state's intervention in dogmatic disputes and its introduction of worldliness and corruption into the hierarchy. State interference, he wrote, had undermined the Church more effectively than repression, so that the Church was actually worse off from the fourth century onwards than when it was being persecuted by pagan emperors. The period of persecution was the 'greatest spiritual triumph of Christianity', whereas the state's 'embraces' had 'strangled' the Church.<sup>463</sup> This was because while Constantine notionally limited himself to protecting the Church, leaving spiritual questions to the bishops, any involvement by the state in ecclesiastical affairs inevitably led to 'despotism' over the Church.<sup>464</sup> Furthermore, he wrote, Constantine's successors were 'clear enemies of the Church' who sympathised with various heresies.<sup>465</sup> Ioann therefore rejected the model of church-state relations put forward by pro-Byzantine historians, who claimed that the state deferred to the Church on doctrinal matters while enforcing its decisions. Instead, he invoked Byzantine precedent to argue against the control of the Church by the state. However, it is noteworthy that writers such as Giliarov-Platonov, Troitskii, Lebedev, and Ioann (Sokolov), who regarded the Byzantine system of church-state relations as oppressive, reproached Byzantine Emperors for excessive interference in the life of the Orthodox Church, rather than for the persecution of minorities. Their disagreement with historians who admired Byzantium for suppressing heretics and schismatics was therefore essentially one of emphasis.

### *Conclusion*

Nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical historians therefore discussed Byzantium differently than did secular academics in universities. The latter, influenced by the tenets of 'official nationality', tended to credit Byzantium with bringing civilisation to Russia, thereby staking Russia's claim to parity with West European states which identified themselves with classical Greece and Rome. Nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical historians were more concerned with the Byzantine system of church-state relations. Those of them who admired Byzantium were frequently associated with the ecclesiastical academies run by the Church, and their views accordingly reflected the idea that it was the state's duty to promote the Church's institutional interests. They generally depicted Byzantium as a society in which the Church and the state

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<sup>462</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), 'O svobode sovesti', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, November 1864, p. 247.

<sup>463</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), 'O svobode sovesti', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1865, part 1, pp. 278-285, and part 2, p. 462.

<sup>464</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), 'O svobode sovesti', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, November 1864, p. 236 and p. 268.

<sup>465</sup> Ioann (Sokolov), 'O svobode sovesti', *Khristianskoe chtenie*, November 1864, p. 252.



harmoniously co-operated with one another, the latter protecting the former from heresies and schisms while respecting its jurisdiction over doctrinal matters, in what Timofei Barsov referred to as the ‘ecclesiasticised’ (*otserkovlennyi*) state.<sup>466</sup> They also saw the ‘great schism’ between Catholicism and Orthodoxy as a necessary break with an overbearing papacy. Historians of this school probably diminished or explained away the extent to which Byzantine Emperors actually did interfere in Church governance to advance their own political interests or views on doctrinal questions. The essential argument of ecclesiastical historians who criticised Byzantium was that the Byzantine Empire had distorted the true faith as it had been practised by the early Church, placing the Eastern Church under state control and so both oppressing it, and severing it from the rest of Christendom. Critics of the Byzantine system of church-state relations argued that the distinction between internal matters, regarding which the Church was sovereign, and external ones, in which its decisions were enforced by the state, could not be upheld in practice, giving rise to state interference in purely religious questions. Byzantium was also accused of valuing the institutional Church and the preservation of outward forms at the expense of sincere Christianity, practical engagement with the world, or fidelity to doctrine. These criticisms echoed many of those which were made about the nineteenth-century Russian Church. Thus, Byzantium could be mobilised politically in nineteenth-century Russia in connection with the involvement of the state in ecclesiastical matters, the rights of religious minorities, and the division between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Arguably, nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical historians’ ambivalent views on Byzantium reflected the position of the Russian Church, which depended on state support to contain the influence of foreign and minority religions, even as its senior clergy wished for greater autonomy from state control.

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<sup>466</sup> I. Sokolov, ‘Vizantologicheskaja traditsiia v S.-Peterburgskoi dukhovnoi akademii’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 1904, no. 1, p. 155.

Chapter 4: Byzantine imagery in Antonin (Kapustin)'s ecclesiastical diplomacy and architectural projects

It is clear that knowledge and understanding of Byzantium increased tremendously in Russia during the nineteenth century, especially regarding the study of Byzantine art and architecture, and of Byzantine ecclesiastical history. A common theme in the writings of Russian Byzantinists was that Russia had been shaped and differentiated from the West by Byzantine cultural influence. As we have seen, this view of Byzantium developed against the background of efforts by figures associated with the court of Nicholas I to define a distinctively Russian tradition in art, both as part of the attempt to form a new conservative ideology of 'Official Nationality' to legitimise the imperial state, and, more generally, in response to the rise of the romantic movement with its embrace of national particularism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the study of Byzantine art developed into an academic discipline, but the underlying view of Russia as the inheritor of the Byzantine legacy remained unchanged. At the same time, the Church drew on Byzantine precedents in the course of its efforts to develop a national form of Orthodoxy, and to repudiate foreign, particularly Catholic, ecclesiastical influence. The study of Byzantine archaeology, art, and ecclesiastical history proved complementary, with an influx of artefacts from Mount Athos giving rise to the view among Russian art historians that Russia, in contrast to the West, had inherited the Byzantine tradition of a clear distinction between secular and religious art. Furthermore, Russian diplomatic and Church officials in the Orthodox East invoked Russia's supposed connection with Byzantium to assert the existence of a religious identity which linked all Orthodox Christians. After Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, the promotion of a shared Orthodox identity became even more important as the Russian government struggled to maintain its standing as the protector of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. As the foreign minister, Aleksandr Gorchakov, wrote to the Emperor in 1857: 'We must establish our 'presence' in the East not politically but through the Church ... While our influence was strong we could afford to conceal our activities and thus avoid envy, but now that our influence in the East has weakened we, on the contrary, must try to display ourselves so that we do not sink in the estimation of the Orthodox population who still believe in us as of old.'<sup>467</sup> However, the use of Byzantine imagery could challenge, rather than strengthen, efforts to promote a sense of Russian national distinctiveness and of

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<sup>467</sup> D. Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 51.

Russian leadership of the Orthodox world, since it could cast light on the vitality of aspects of the Orthodox tradition which were relatively alien to nineteenth-century Russians.

The connections between Russia's diplomatic involvement in the Orthodox East, the rediscovery of Byzantine art and architecture, and the use of Byzantine precedents in the debate over the future of the Russian Orthodox Church are illustrated by the career of Archimandrite Antonin (Kapustin), who served as the Russian embassy chaplain in Athens from 1850 to 1860 and then in Constantinople until 1865. After graduating from the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, Antonin taught moral theology, biblical hermeneutics, and comparative theology there from 1846 to 1850 before being appointed to head the Russian embassy church in Athens, where the Holy Synod had decided that a 'young, energetic and original hieromonk' was required.<sup>468</sup> He may have sought the position after being passed over for the role of inspector of the Academy.<sup>469</sup> Disillusionment with life in the ecclesiastical academies might have inspired a proposal which Antonin wrote in 1861 for their reform, calling for the raising of academic standards in order to refute the charge that they were indistinguishable from the seminaries which their students had already attended.<sup>470</sup> On first receiving news of his assignment, Antonin was apparently more excited about being relatively near to the Holy Land than about seeing the remains of Byzantine Athens, recording in his diary: 'Thus, I will decidedly be in the East! In Egypt! In Jerusalem!' On his way to take up his posting, after his ship left Constantinople, he wrote: 'Goodbye, Rus' and Byzantium!'<sup>471</sup> However, after arriving in Athens, Antonin appears to have been struck by the Byzantine legacy which was evident not just in the city's buildings but also in its present-day inhabitants. In an article for the *Journal of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment* in 1854, Antonin wrote that most western Europeans equated Greece with its pre-Christian, classical past, when in fact: 'that Greece has not existed for a long time, and its memory is effaced from popular feeling as is all ancient mythology.' On the contrary: 'The present-day Greek is a Byzantine, not a Hellenic Greek' and the 'first, main and essential feature of the present-day Greek is that he is an *Orthodox* Christian.'<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> L. Gerd, "'Atticheskie nochi" arhimandrita Antonina Kapustina' in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: god 1850*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2013), p. 135.

<sup>469</sup> L. Gerd and K. Vakh, 'Ot sostavitelei', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: god 1850*, p. 13.

<sup>470</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to A. P. Tolstoi, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1861, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2018), pp. 212 ff.

<sup>471</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: god 1850*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2013), p. 35 and p. 82.

<sup>472</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), 'Khristianskie drevnosti gretsii', part 1, *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1854, p. 3.

Antonin observed that Athens contained many Byzantine churches which had not yet been fully explored by archaeologists. He wrote that ‘the abundance of Christian monuments from Byzantine times in Athens and its environs’ demonstrated that the city had played a much longer and more significant role in the history of the Church than was widely assumed.<sup>473</sup> He identified the quintessentially Byzantine style of church architecture, as opposed to converted pagan temples or churches built later under the influence of the crusaders, as a quadrilateral building, with a cupola in the centre surrounded by four arches which, seen from above, formed a cross with arms of equal length. The iconostasis was built between two of the columns supporting the cupola. Antonin noted twelve churches of this style, pointing out ‘their small and dark dimensions, although mostly they redeem this latter inadequacy with harmony and beauty of plan.’<sup>474</sup> The finest examples of ecclesiastical architecture in Athens, he wrote, were the Daphni Monastery and the Nikodim Church, the latter of which, he suspected, was the Hagia Sophia Church known to have existed in Athens in the Byzantine period. He found inscriptions in the Nikodim Church which proved that it had already been built at the beginning of the second millennium.<sup>475</sup> Antonin would go on to compile two studies of the Christian inscriptions of Athens.<sup>476</sup> He was also interested in classical archaeology, excavating the ruins of a Roman bath which were discovered beneath the foundations of the Nikodim Church.<sup>477</sup> The Nikodim Church’s original layout appears to have been a three-quarter-sized copy of the *katholikon* of the Hosios Loukas monastery, which Antonin visited in 1852, enthusing: ‘In its walls the Byzantine Empire has not ceased.’<sup>478</sup> Antonin noted that the Nikodim Church was distinguished by ‘the bringing together of the whole building in the central cupola, the brilliant and most fortunate result of Byzantine taste’. Accordingly, on entering the church ‘from the very entrance you are quickly drawn to the centre’, where, ‘standing under the cupola, everything is converted into a vision, into admiration, into complete satisfaction.’ It was, he wrote, the ‘very best monument of Christian antiquity in Athens.’<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>473</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), ‘Khristianskie drevnosti gretsii’, part 2, *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1854, p. 1.

<sup>474</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), ‘Khristianskie drevnosti gretsii’, part 1, p. 7.

<sup>475</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), ‘Khristianskie drevnosti gretsii’, part 1, pp. 32-35.

<sup>476</sup> A. Limberger, ‘Arkheologicheskaiia deiatel’nost’ Arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustina) v Afinakh, 1850-1860 gg.’, *Ierusalimskii pravoslavnyi seminar*, no. 6, 2015, p. 110.

<sup>477</sup> L. Gerd, ‘Tserkovno-politicheskaiia deiatel’nost’ arkhimandrita Antonina (Kapustina) v Afinakh (1850-1860 gg.)’, *Khristianskoe chtenie*, 2015, no. 6, p. 89.

<sup>478</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), p. 211, and C. Bouras, ‘The Soteira Lykodemou at Athens’, *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society*, 2004, pp. 11 ff.

<sup>479</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), ‘Khristianskie drevnosti gretsii’, part 1, p. 15.

However, Antonin observed that the Nikodim Church seemed to have been damaged and then hastily and clumsily repaired at some point in its early history, before the onset of Ottoman rule. During the Greek rebels' siege of Athens in 1821 it was hit by two shells which demolished a third of the cupola and three of the pillars supporting it, and left the northern wall at risk of collapsing. When King Otto's government renovated Athens, demolishing all but seven of the forty Byzantine churches in the city, the authorities talked of converting the Nikodim Church into a barracks or magazine, and a planned road would have severed its eastern side. The church was saved after being donated to the Russian embassy. Archimandrite Polikarp, the Russian embassy chaplain between 1843 and 1850, had the idea of constructing an embassy church in order not to have to rely on local churches. Previously, the Russian embassy had made use of the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, but it was shared with the local Greeks, and an embassy official noted that it was too small to display the Russian liturgy to advantage. Antonin described it as a 'cramped and dark church', and in 1852 he was unable to hold an Easter service because it was in use by the Greeks.<sup>480</sup> Meanwhile, he wrote, Catholics and Anglicans impressed the Greeks with 'the order and grandeur of their service', with the result that the Greeks 'do not believe in the greatness of Russia and aspire to France as children to a mother'. He wrote to Konstantin Serbinovich, the secretary of the Holy Synod, that an embassy church was needed to 'display the Orthodox Church in all its divine grandeur' and 'defend and glorify the merit of the poor and disparaged Greek Church'. The city government agreed to transfer the Nikodim Church, which was chosen due its closeness to both the Russian embassy and the royal palace, to the embassy in March 1847. However, reconstruction faced opposition from Catholics and Protestants, who tried to influence the King of Greece to prevent its being realised. The Russian mission was invited to build a new church on another site, outside the city, but Antonin wrote that in the time it would have taken to do so the West would have undermined Greece's religious ties to Russia.<sup>481</sup> Ultimately, the proposal for a new church was dropped because the cost to the Russian government of helping to suppress the Hungarian uprising in 1848 meant that the necessary funds were unavailable.<sup>482</sup>

The Russian foreign ministry officially approved the reconstruction of the Nikodim Church in June 1852, by which time Antonin had replaced Polikarp. Antonin was so

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<sup>480</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: god 1850*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2013), p. 85.

<sup>481</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to K. Serbinovich, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1851, in *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2018), pp. 52-55.

<sup>482</sup> M. Shkarovskii and I. Zhalnina-Vasil'iotti, *Russkaia Sviato-Troitskaia Tserkov' v Afinakh* (St Petersburg: Rodnik, 2017), p. 52.

enthusiastic about the project that before official funding for it became available, he planned to pay for it from his own salary.<sup>483</sup> The Nikodim Church was reconsecrated in December 1855. However, the historical accuracy of the rebuilding is dubious. The west wall, dome, and interior walls were removed, with the result that the wall-paintings were lost. Those in the dome seem to have dated to the eleventh century.<sup>484</sup> Antonin was more enthusiastic than the rest of the embassy staff about Byzantine art, and his choice of painter, Konstantin Prinopulo, was rejected in favour of the Lutheran Ludwig Tirsch, who disdained the Byzantine saints' portraits on the walls as 'mummies' and whom the chargé d'affaires, I. E. Persiani, instructed to work in a style 'pas trop byzantine'. However, Antonin was ultimately pleased with his work, apart from an 'unexpressive' face of the Mother of God.<sup>485</sup> The bell tower, built from scratch, was a copy of the one in Byzantine Mystras, the Palaeologues' capital. Antonin envisioned the Nikodim Church as a 'legacy ... of the ecclesiastical magnificence of the Byzantine era to modern times'.<sup>486</sup> The aim of its restoration was 'the resurrection of the Byzantine era in the east'.<sup>487</sup> This was an idea which resonated with the local population. One Russian visitor to Athens remarked on Antonin's popularity: 'People, whom he did not even know, would stop him on the street, and express their concerns about the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire.'<sup>488</sup> The Greek newspaper *Eon* likened the restoration of the Nikodim Church to the salvation of the Holy Places in Palestine.<sup>489</sup> In 1857, Antonin oversaw the restoration of another Byzantine church in Athens, that of the Holy Girdle of the Mother of God in Patisia, at the request of Ambassador Ozerov, who wanted to be a churchwarden in a Greek church.<sup>490</sup> Kapustin tried to rebuild it as 'a little Nikodim.'<sup>491</sup> The Western press in turn acknowledged the rebuilding of the Nikodim Church, which was completed while Russia was at war with Britain and France, as a display of Russian influence. The British *Morning Post*, which strongly supported the anti-Russian Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, commented on the lavish rewards bestowed on the workmen who restored the church: 'The Russian system is

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<sup>483</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), p. 68.

<sup>484</sup> C. Bouras, 'The Soteira Lykodemou at Athens', *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society*, 2004, p. 14 and p. 21.

<sup>485</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, p. 351.

<sup>486</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to Serbinovich, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1854, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 95.

<sup>487</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, p. 132.

<sup>488</sup> L. Frary, 'Russian Missions to the Orthodox East: Antonin Kapustin (1817-1894) and his world', *Russian History*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2013, p. 142.

<sup>489</sup> Shkarovskii and Zhalnina-Vasil'ioti, *Russkaia Sviato-Troitskaia Tserkov' v Afinakh*, p. 57.

<sup>490</sup> Gerd, 'Arkhimandrit Antonin Kapustin v Afinakh (1850-1860)', in Kapustin, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 24.

<sup>491</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1856-1860*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2017), p. 142.

to make even its humblest supporter feel that *his* exertions and devotion *are not overlooked* by the Emperor; and *this* is Russian influence in the East.’ When the King and Queen of Greece visited the church on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1855, the *Morning Post* reported that it was ‘a regal demonstration in favour of Russia, and a public setting at defiance of the Anglo-French alliance.’<sup>492</sup> Ironically, Antonin’s diary indicates that the service held in the Nikodim Church for the King and Queen, which the *Morning Post* saw as proof of the visit being prearranged as a display of sympathy for Russia, was in fact his own last-minute suggestion.<sup>493</sup>

Antonin expressed the same view of the importance of the embassy church when he was stationed in Constantinople, writing to Ambassador Ignat’ev that it ‘should not be the domestic church (*chapelle*) of the mission’ but should ‘show Orthodox liturgy in all the fullness of its splendour.’ This ‘daring appearance before the eyes of Islam’, he wrote, would help the local Orthodox to secure their rights. The church for the Russian ambassador’s summer residence, he added, should ‘be built in a strictly Byzantine style.’<sup>494</sup> Likewise, A. N. Murav’ev also believed firmly that the importance of ecumenical Orthodoxy extended to the diplomatic sphere. He advocated the strengthening of ties between Russia and the churches of the Orthodox East in order to enhance Russian influence, since ‘in the East all political life is found in the Church’. He wrote that in the seventeenth century, Russia had cultivated influence in the East via subsidies to Orthodox monasteries, but had made the mistake of neglecting the importance of the Church in recent years, allowing rival powers to win it over.<sup>495</sup> In particular, he called for the construction of an embassy church in Constantinople in the Byzantine style, to which Greek clergy would be invited to accustom them to the Russian liturgy, and for Russian clergy to tour the East in order to remedy the ignorance about each other of Orthodox clergy on both sides. Russian clergymen and church officials in the Orthodox East clearly understood the Orthodox Church as an important channel of unofficial Russian influence, as were the Catholic and Protestant churches for the Western powers.

Antonin therefore occupied an important role as a representative of the Russian Church in the Orthodox East, especially since relations between the Russian and Greek Churches had been strained by the Greek Church’s 1833 declaration of autocephaly without the approval of

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<sup>492</sup> *The Morning Post*, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1855, p. 6.

<sup>493</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1851-1855*, eds. L. Gerd and K. Vakh (Moscow: Indrik, 2015), p. 399.

<sup>494</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), letter to N. Ignat’ev, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1864, in *Doneseniia iz Konstantinopoliia (1860-1865)*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2013), p. 186.

<sup>495</sup> Murav’ev, ‘Zapiska o vazhnosti Patriarshei kafedry Tsar’grada dlia sobornogo edinstva Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi’, in *Andrei Nikolaevich Murav’ev i rossiiskaia diplomatiia na Pravoslavnom Vostoke*, pp. 182-190.

the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which the Russian Church regarded as uncanonical. The two Churches formally restored their relations only after the Ecumenical Patriarch recognised the Greek Church's autocephaly in 1850. This recent history further enhanced the significance of Antonin's task as the representative of Russian Orthodoxy in Greece. In addition, the Crimean War led to the expulsion of the Russian embassy in Constantinople and its chaplain, as well as the Russian ecclesiastical mission in Jerusalem, leaving Antonin as the main Russian ecclesiastical representative in the East.<sup>496</sup> Ecclesiastical tensions were further inflamed by seemingly trivial differences between the two Churches' rituals and traditions. Antonin noted that, due to 'blind attachment to all forms of his liturgy, the Greek is sometimes disposed to look at us Russians with distrust. Not to burn incense, bow, turn around as the Greeks do means to incur suspicion of non-Orthodoxy.'<sup>497</sup> An important step in promoting reconciliation between the Greek and Russian Churches was Antonin's elevation to the rank of Archimandrite, carried out by the Metropolitan of Athens, Neophytos V, in April 1853. Antonin noted that the conduct of the ceremony by a Greek prelate, in accordance with a Russian proposal, was a significant sign of mutual recognition between the two Churches. The service combined features of the Greek and Russian Orthodox liturgies, with the litany (*ektenia*) recited in both languages. Prayers were said for both countries' monarchs and synods.<sup>498</sup> Antonin described the ceremony as 'a visible and favourable sign of the unity of Greece and Russia' which 'caused great, undisguised grief to all local Catholic diplomacy.'<sup>499</sup> He was even accompanied by a Russian choir who sang in Greek, although, he recalled, they struggled to adapt the Russian 'symphonic' style of singing to the Greek language. He considered Russian church singing to be superior to the Greek 'melodic' style, writing that the latter needed to be replaced in order that the Orthodox Church would not suffer by comparison with Catholicism. Even the seemingly minor details of liturgical practice could thus play a part in Russian ecclesiastical diplomacy.

At the same time, Antonin was enthusiastic about the potential of Byzantine and Greek influence to rejuvenate the Russian Church. He suggested to the Holy Synod the founding of a school of ecclesiastical art in Athens to enable Russian seminarians to study Byzantine churches and their icons, Greek church singing, and the Greek language, though ultimately nothing came of the proposal following Antonin's transfer to Constantinople. The school

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<sup>496</sup> Shkarovskii and Zhálnina-Vasil'ioti, *Russkaia Sviato-Troitskaia Tserkov' v Afinakh*, p. 69.

<sup>497</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to Serbinovich, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1853, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 76.

<sup>498</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to Serbinovich, 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> April 1853, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, pp. 66 ff.

<sup>499</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to Serbinovich, 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> April 1853, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 72.



would have been modelled on the existing French one, which concentrated on classical archaeology.<sup>500</sup> In 1859, Petr Sevast'ianov recruited Antonin to take part in his expedition to Mount Athos. This sparked Antonin's interest in the contents of the monastery libraries on Athos.<sup>501</sup> Antonin collected manuscripts from Athos monasteries, in particular the lives of Byzantine saints, and unsuccessfully explored the possibility of transferring manuscripts from Athos to Russia, in order for them to be displayed in the Imperial Public Library in St Petersburg.<sup>502</sup> He also proposed a joint Greek and Russian commission to produce a catalogue of the manuscripts found on Athos.<sup>503</sup> Having grown acquainted with Porfirii (Uspenskii), Antonin took part in the debate over the dating of the frescoes attributed to Manuel Panselinos in the Protaton Church, arguing that they originated in the fourteenth century.<sup>504</sup> In 1861 he proposed that Porfirii and A. N. Murav'ev should be named as rectors of ecclesiastical academies, indicating that he believed that academies would benefit from being run by men with experience of the Orthodox Church in the East.<sup>505</sup>

More generally, Antonin advocated the development of closer ties between the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches. He wrote that while their doctrinal differences, which concerned the acceptance of converts and the degree of consanguinity forbidding marriage, were trivial, the risk of a schism was growing due to their increasing contacts, since all Orthodox Churches were prone to the schismatics' error of equating the specific details of their rituals with true Orthodoxy. He noted that few Greeks attended his services, since they were 'strongly attached to the forms of their own liturgy'.<sup>506</sup> The only way to avoid a schism was through 'the timely dissemination of the thought that the Orthodox faith permits and tolerates diversities or particularities of liturgy ... and is not linked with any one exclusive, universal form.' This would pave the way for 'the union of the nationally diverse churches of Orthodoxy', including the Armenians and Copts. Furthermore, he hoped that the West would soon reject the doctrine of papal primacy, and that it would then be possible to reconcile the Eastern and Western Churches, by simply recognising the Catholic liturgy as compatible with

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<sup>500</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to A. Tolstoy, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1858, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 127.

<sup>501</sup> Gerd, 'Posle Krymskoi voiny: arkhimandrit Antonin v Afinakh v 1856-1860 gg.', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1856-1860*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>502</sup> L. Gerd, "'Trudy i dni" v osmanskoi stolitse: Arkhimandrit Antonin (Kapustin) v Konstantinopole (1861-1865)', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, ed. L. Gerd (Moscow: Indrik, 2020), p. 31, and 'Posle Krymskoi voiny: arkhimandrit Antonin v Afinakh v 1856-1860 gg.', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1856-1860*, p. 30.

<sup>503</sup> Gerd, "'Trudy i dni" v osmanskoi stolitse', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, p. 37.

<sup>504</sup> Gerd, "'Trudy i dni" v osmanskoi stolitse', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, p. 34.

<sup>505</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, p. 57.

<sup>506</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to Serbinovich, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1851, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 54.

Orthodoxy insofar as it did not touch on dogmatic differences.<sup>507</sup> In the meantime he called for the introduction of Greek practices such as the separation of men and women in Russian churches, as well as the reversal of what he saw as the decline of Russian icon-painting, and an end to unmelodious singing and the ‘fetishism’ of icons among ‘common people’.<sup>508</sup> He also called for ‘the return to Russian liturgy of the spirit of prayer’ and the removal of ‘monotonal spiritless reading’. In accordance with his interest in ecclesiastical archaeology and admiration for the Byzantine legacy, Antonin implied that the Greeks were closer than the Russians to original Orthodoxy, writing that ‘the innovations which have crept into our church’ were ‘more or less alien to the Orthodox Church in the East.’<sup>509</sup> Accordingly, writing in 1857, he called for ecumenical Orthodox unity: ‘We may consist of different peoples and languages, yet we remain members of a single Orthodox Church – let not the Greeks, nor the Russians ... or any other national or ethnic Church, aspire to predominate over another ... The strength of Orthodoxy, like the power of any organic body, is not in the extraordinary development of one part of it to the detriment of another, but in the strict balance of its form and its complete agreement.’<sup>510</sup> In his dealings with the Ecumenical Patriarchate as embassy chaplain in Constantinople, Antonin noted its reluctance to make any concessions to placate the Bulgarians.<sup>511</sup> However, he lamented the position in which the Graeco-Bulgarian dispute placed him, as a ‘Slavic philhellene’.<sup>512</sup>

Thus, the Byzantine legacy in art, architecture, and church customs provided a source of imagery which could be deployed as a tool of Russian influence, but in turn it could shape the thought of Russian agents in the Orthodox East. Antonin’s admiration for the Greek Church attracted criticism from Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, who wrote that the liturgical differences of the Russian and Greek Churches were inconsequential, and that people in a position to make comparisons would prefer the former to the latter, since ‘among them there is less order and decorum’. He dismissed the ways in which Greek ecclesiastical practices differed from Russian ones as distortions introduced by the Greeks’ ‘difficult position among Mohammedanism.’ Accordingly, he rejected Antonin’s proposal to establish a school of religious art in Athens, which, he said, would not ‘bear significant fruits.’ Filaret also warned

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<sup>507</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to A. Tolstoi, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1859, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 136.

<sup>508</sup> Gerd, ‘Arkhimandrit Antonin Kapustin v Afinakh (1850-1860)’, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 30.

<sup>509</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to A. Tolstoi, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1859, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 142.

<sup>510</sup> Frary, ‘Russian Missions to the Orthodox East’, p. 144.

<sup>511</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1856-1860*, p. 523.

<sup>512</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Zametki poklonnika sviatoi gory* (Kiev: Tipografiia Kievopecherskoi Lavry, 1864), p. 386.

that increased awareness of differences between Orthodox practices would only lead to doubts and disputes. He rejected Antonin's call for closer links between the Eastern Churches, which he said would provoke fears of Pan-Slavism in Austria and Turkey, and create unrealistic expectations which the Russian Church would be unable to fulfil, thereby actually worsening relations between the Churches. Contrary to Antonin's hopes for the reunion of the Churches, Filaret blamed the West for the schism with the East: 'Will not an excess of tolerance from our side weaken our firmness against the persistence of the opposite side?' He accused Antonin of being 'embittered to no purpose' concerning icons, which, he said, inspired people to 'express the most enlightened faith.'<sup>513</sup> That Antonin's views on ecclesiastical matters were so at odds with those of the senior Russian clergy indicates that he was influenced by the experience of holding, as he put it, 'an exceptional position among a co-religionist but not like-minded Church'.<sup>514</sup>

However, the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox Church increasingly turned its attention to the Holy Places in Jerusalem, rather than the Byzantine legacy to be found in Greece, Mount Athos, and Constantinople. In part this was due to the process of 'evangelical colonisation' in which, from the 1840s onwards, the great powers competed for prestige in Jerusalem: an Anglo-German Protestant bishopric was set up there in 1841, followed by a Catholic Patriarchate in 1846 and a Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in 1847.<sup>515</sup> When Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich visited Athens en route to Jerusalem in 1859, it was clear that he viewed the former simply as a prelude to the latter: the British ambassador in Greece, Thomas Wyse, noted that Konstantin had disappointed Greek Russophiles' 'hopes of a Byzantine empire' and of 'a Russian grand duke destined to lead them to St Sophia'.<sup>516</sup> The number of Russian pilgrims to the Holy Places soared in the 1860s following Konstantin's establishment of the Russian Company of Steam Navigation and Trade. The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society was founded in 1882 to support Russian pilgrims and to strengthen Russian influence in the Holy Land. To some extent, the Russian Church's concentration on Jerusalem rather than on the remnants of Byzantine Greece reflected the fact that it aimed to establish an overseas presence through which it could display itself as both the national religion of the

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<sup>513</sup> Filaret (Drozdov), 'O pis'me arkhimandrita Antonina ot 2 fevralia 1859', in Antonin (Kapustin), *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 158.

<sup>514</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), dispatch to A. Tolstoi, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1859, *Doneseniia iz Afin (1851-1860)*, p. 147.

<sup>515</sup> Frary, 'Russian Missions to the Orthodox East', p. 136.

<sup>516</sup> S. Dixon, 'Pilgrimage and Politics: Two "Sailor Princes" in Jerusalem, 1859', in *Magic, Texts and Travel*, eds. J. Hartley et al. (London: Study Group on Eighteenth Century Russia, 2021), p. 340.

Russian Empire, and the pre-eminent Eastern Orthodox Church. Accordingly, the Russian hierarchy were not inclined to collaborate on equal terms with the Greeks, and instead opted to compete with them for predominance in the Orthodox East. Implicit in much of the Russian ecclesiastical activity in the Holy Land was the view that the Greek Church had failed to represent Orthodoxy there, in particular due to the fact that the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem resided in Constantinople, with the result that large numbers of people from the Arab Orthodox community had converted to Uniatism.<sup>517</sup> The reports of Bishop Kirill (Naumov), the head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, were so hostile to the Greeks that Emperor Alexander II asked Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich to restrain Kirill's 'excessive fervency'.<sup>518</sup> Ecclesiastical relations between the Russians and Greeks were further undermined by Russian support for the Bulgarians in their campaign for a national church. In 1884, the Metropolitan of Athens and president of the Greek Synod, Prokopios I, declined to sign a telegram composed by the Russian embassy chaplain Archimandrite Anatolii (Stankevich) congratulating Metropolitan Isidor of St Petersburg on the fiftieth anniversary of his elevation to the episcopate, on the grounds that doing so would outrage public opinion.<sup>519</sup> Arguably, had it not been for the Russian hierarchy's disdain for many of the liturgical and artistic traditions of the Greek Church, Graeco-Russian ecclesiastical unity might have flourished.

Konstantin Leont'ev emerged as a political thinker at a time marked by the rise of interest in Byzantium in Russia across a number of areas, including the arts, archaeology, and ecclesiastical thought. It is always difficult to identify a thinker's intellectual influences, and this is especially so in Leont'ev's case, given the less than systematic fashion in which he set out his ideas and described their development. The extent to which he was aware of the discussions about Byzantium which unfolded in nineteenth-century Russian cultural and intellectual life is accordingly unclear. There is no evidence that *Khristianskoe chtenie*, in which many of the debates concerning the Byzantine model of church-state relations were conducted, was widely read outside the senior clergy. On the other hand, as we have seen, exhibitions of Byzantine artefacts from Mount Athos attracted widespread attention, apparently from the common people as well as the educated class. The construction of churches and cathedrals in the 'Byzantine' or 'Ton' style also displayed the revival of Byzantine imagery to

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<sup>517</sup> Hopwood, *The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine*, p. 69.

<sup>518</sup> Dixon, 'Pilgrimage and Politics', p. 341.

<sup>519</sup> Shkarovskii and Zhalnina-Vasil'ioti, *Russkaia Sviato-Troitskaia Tserkov' v Afinakh*, p. 97.

the public. Leont'ev's discussions of the concept of Byzantinism clearly reflected an awareness of Byzantine influence on the arts in Russia: he wrote that 'all our fine arts are deeply imbued with Byzantinism in its best manifestations.' Russian icons, utensils, and mosaics influenced by the Byzantine style were 'almost the only salvation of our aesthetic pride'. Moscow, said Leont'ev, was 'more Byzantine' than St Petersburg. In particular, St Basil's Cathedral was 'the strange, unsatisfactory, but extremely distinctive Russian building, which more clearly than before indicates the architectural style characteristic of us, namely the Indian many-headed [style], applied to Byzantine foundations.'<sup>520</sup> In fact, modern scholars argue that the design of St Basil's Cathedral owed less to Byzantine influence than to Renaissance, Gothic, and traditional Muscovite styles.<sup>521</sup> However, as we will see in the following chapters, Leont'ev's understanding of Byzantinism was primarily political and ecclesiastical, revolving around the idea that the pillars of Russian statehood were Orthodox Christianity, in the form which it had assumed in Byzantium, and autocratic monarchy sanctified by Byzantine Orthodoxy. The idea of a common Graeco-Russian religious culture was strikingly similar to the views of Antonin (Kapustin), although Leont'ev seems to have taken little notice of Antonin, despite the fact that their respective periods of service in the Constantinople embassy briefly overlapped.

Nineteenth-century Russian thinkers depicted Byzantium in different ways for their own purposes. For many architects and artists, Byzantium was a source of imagery and styles with which to produce 'national' art and architecture. Nineteenth-century Russian archaeologists emphasised Byzantine influence on early Russia, and argued that Byzantine and Russian archaeology could not be understood without reference to each other. Russian archaeologists and historians also wrote that Russians were better suited than Westerners to the study of Byzantine history, in particular ecclesiastical history, due to the common Orthodox heritage of Russia and Byzantium. Many ecclesiastical historians depicted Byzantium in a positive light, as the embodiment of a model of relations between the Church and state based on equal co-operation between the two. They also aimed to vindicate the Orthodox Church's repudiation of the authority of the papacy. Conversely, critics of the Byzantine system of church-state relations accused it of severing the Byzantine Church from the universal Church and of subordinating it to the state, clearly using Byzantium as a proxy for the nineteenth-century Russian Church in order to argue for the reunification of the Orthodox and Catholic

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<sup>520</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slaviansvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 302-305.

<sup>521</sup> D. Shvidkovsky, *Russian Architecture and the West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 126-130.

Churches and the institutional independence of the Church. Byzantine imagery also acquired a new relevance after the Crimean War, in the context of Russia's efforts to make use of the Orthodox Church as a channel of unofficial influence over Christians in the Ottoman Empire and Greece, and to contain the ecclesiastical influence of the Western powers, as the career of Antonin (Kapustin) illustrates. The following chapters set Konstantin Leont'ev's political thought against the background of this growth of interest in Byzantium, in order to clarify the meaning of Byzantinism as a political concept. Leont'ev did not engage in the same kind of systematic scholarship as academics in universities and ecclesiastical academies who specialised in Byzantine history, but he instead attempted to apply the idea that Russia was the cultural descendant of Byzantium to political debates. In doing so, he exposed its potentially subversive implications. As the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy demonstrated, Leont'ev's emphasis on what he saw as the ecumenical character and Greek roots of the Orthodox Church was at odds with Pan-Slavism, which he rejected as a manifestation of 'tribal' nationalism. As a result, given that nineteenth-century Russian conservatism as a whole tended towards Russian or Pan-Slav nationalism rather than the promotion of Pan-Orthodox unity, Leont'ev's ideas received little support from other Russian conservative thinkers.

## Chapter 5: Leont'ev's diplomatic career

### *Introduction*

This chapter considers Konstantin Leont'ev's consular career against the background of the Eastern Question. Leont'ev's activities in the Ottoman Empire have already been the focus of scholarly work, such as that by Dale Nelson.<sup>522</sup> However, Nelson wrote without access to Leont'ev's dispatches to his superiors in the Constantinople embassy and the Asiatic Department of the Foreign Ministry, which have become available only recently and have so far received little scholarly attention. Russian studies of Leont'ev's intellectual development during this period of his life tend to rely more on assertion than demonstration, and also generally do not avail themselves of his diplomatic dispatches. These, together with Leont'ev's other writings from the time which he spent as a consul in the Ottoman Balkans, enhance our understanding of his political thought by demonstrating that some of its essential elements began to develop while he was still serving as a diplomat, contrary to the received view that he flourished intellectually only after he abandoned his diplomatic career in order to live among the Orthodox monks on Mount Athos and then in Constantinople. Leont'ev's dispatches are also of interest because they show us the diplomacy of the Eastern Question at the consular level, which has received far less attention than the activity of governments and their ambassadors in Constantinople, even though consuls both executed policy and, by reporting information to their superiors or creatively interpreting their instructions, shaped it. As the jurist F. F. Martens noted in 1873, the Ottoman Empire's complicated internal politics, and the presence of Christian communities who often looked to outside powers for protection, meant that the duties of consuls stationed there were much more political, as opposed to commercial, than elsewhere.<sup>523</sup> Henry Elliott, the British ambassador to Constantinople, explained in 1870 to a parliamentary committee investigating the role of consular agents in the Ottoman Empire that he relied on consuls to inform him about the political situation throughout the country. Lord Hammond, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, added that while there were few British subjects or commercial interests in the Ottoman Empire: 'the advantage of a consul there is not to be measured by his commercial duties, but by the influence that he has

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<sup>522</sup> D. Nelson, *Konstantin Leontiev and the Orthodox East* (Unpublished PhD thesis: University of Minnesota, 1975).

<sup>523</sup> Khevroлина, 'Bor'ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel'nost' rossiiskikh konsul'stv)', in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, p. 229.

over the whole population and over the Turkish authorities.’<sup>524</sup> This view was not limited to the British: Konstantin Leont’ev wrote that, as a consul in the Ottoman city of Ioannina, his twin roles were ‘observation’ and ‘influence’.<sup>525</sup> Furthermore, consuls in the Ottoman Empire operated with a great degree of independence from their governments, with the result that they not only carried out policy, but actually shaped it, as was the case with Russian consuls who dealt with the Bulgarian church question. As Leont’ev put it: ‘A consul in the East is an ambassador in miniature, and an ambassador in Constantinople is a consul on a large scale.’<sup>526</sup>

However, historians have paid relatively little attention to the essential role played by consuls in the diplomacy of the Eastern Question, and to the value of their reports in understanding how the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms and the religious controversies which broke out in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire unfolded in practice. Furthermore, consuls’ relations with each other were determined not only by their political objectives, but also by the social experience of being almost the only foreigners in remote towns. This gave rise to co-operation and sociability between them, even as they competed for influence and prestige. The study of Leont’ev’s experiences as a consul can therefore help us to understand how consuls in the Ottoman Empire navigated the requirements of representing their governments in circumstances under which it was difficult to apply the usual norms of diplomatic conduct. We will begin with a chronological overview of Leont’ev’s career, with a particular emphasis on the places where he served and their significance for him. We will then turn to Leont’ev’s official and unofficial relations with foreign consuls, another aspect of diplomatic life in the Ottoman Empire which has gone largely unaddressed in the existing literature. We will also consider how he saw the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms unfold in practice, in an area which was directly affected by them due to its diverse population and the introduction of the vilayet system. Another way in which Leont’ev’s consular activities confronted political questions was that he dealt with Polish and Old Believer diasporas and revolutionary activists from the Russian Empire, attempting to gauge their intentions and wield influence over them in Russia’s interests. Furthermore, he dealt with the controversy caused by the conversions from Orthodoxy to Uniatism which were frequently encouraged by Western consuls. Thus, his dispatches and other writings allow us to develop a much fuller picture of the life of a consul

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<sup>524</sup> G. Iseminger, ‘The Old Turkish Hands: The British Levantine Consuls, 1856-1876’, *Middle East Journal*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1968, pp. 302-309.

<sup>525</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of January 1871, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, eds. A. Torkunov et al. (Moscow: Mgimo-universitet, 2013), p. 311.

<sup>526</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moi vospominaniia o Frakii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 161.



stationed in remote outposts of the Ottoman Empire. However, we must first of all survey Leont'ev's intellectual development prior to his joining the diplomatic service.

*Leont'ev's early thought*

Konstantin Leont'ev's early writings, from the period before he joined the Foreign Ministry in 1863, contain few explicitly political statements. However, we can extrapolate the main features of his thought at this time from his mature writings. In 1888 he wrote that as a youth, in the 1840s, he was 'at the same time both a romantic and almost a nihilist.' At this time, he nursed some sympathy for 'progress, education, science, equality, freedom'. However, he later confessed that while the idea of revolution appealed to him, he was less interested in it as a political cause than in its aesthetic side: 'danger, armed struggle, battles and "barricades" and so on.' He 'hardly thought at all' about whether revolutions were harmful or beneficial to society.<sup>527</sup> He nursed some republican sympathies, but admired 'those sides of the great republics which they have in common with great monarchies: strength, diversity of characters developed by class structure, struggle, battles, glory, picturesqueness and so on.'<sup>528</sup> Leont'ev recalled in later life that he 'did not think about purely state questions in those years ... reducing everything to questions either of personal happiness or personal virtue, or to the poetry of meetings, struggle, adventures and so on.'<sup>529</sup> During the 1850s he 'paid tribute to European liberalism'.<sup>530</sup> However, when he was posted to Kerch as a military doctor during the Crimean War, he was merely a 'lightly "political" man' who possessed 'not so much convictions but rather some vague likenesses of political opinions', albeit 'of a somewhat liberal hue'.<sup>531</sup>

Arguably, the doctrine which did more than any other to shape Leont'ev's early thought was that of physiognomy, the pseudo-scientific attempt to reach conclusions about people's character and abilities based on their external appearance, which he encountered when he was a medical student at Moscow University between 1849 and 1854. Medical training provided an outlet for Leont'ev's aestheticism: 'the study of physiology and anatomy themselves dispose a thinking young man to love health, strength, beauty and frequently to be very strongly annoyed at the unfortunate physical phenomena of life in the capital.' He hoped that this concern with outward appearance could be developed into a project for social reform. As he

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<sup>527</sup> Leont'ev, 'Dva grafa', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 297.

<sup>528</sup> Leont'ev, 'Rasskaz moei materi ob Imperatritse Marii Feodorovne', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 562.

<sup>529</sup> Leont'ev, 'Turgenev v Moskve, 1851-1861', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 735.

<sup>530</sup> Leont'ev, 'Rasskaz moei materi ob Imperatritse Marii Feodorovne', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 561.

<sup>531</sup> Leont'ev, 'Sdacha Kerchi v 55 godu', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 625.

later recalled, ‘I then dreamed of finding in ‘physiognomy’ or in some ‘physiological psychology’ a point of departure for a great renewal of mankind, for the better, and more compatible with nature, distribution of occupations and work among people ... I then thought all the time that eventually I would indicate to people the possibility of organising society on firm physiognomic foundations, fair, stable, and ‘pleasant’.’ Even after he abandoned this dream, it remained his habit ‘to pay great attention to a man’s face, to his movements, to the form of his head, to his speech and voice, i.e. to externality.’<sup>532</sup> After his military service during the Crimean War, Leont’ev spent the rest of the 1850s as a family physician, and during this time he broadened his scientific studies to cover the natural sciences, including comparative anatomy, zoology, and botany, all of which, he wrote, were ‘full of poetry’. He toyed with the idea of ‘introducing into art some new forms on the foundation of the natural sciences.’<sup>533</sup> Leont’ev also apparently developed some familiarity with botany through the work of the German botanist Mathias Schleiden, who, under the inspiration of Kant and Goethe, emphasised that science must follow the laws of aesthetics and human history.<sup>534</sup> Leont’ev’s scientific thought was expressed in his proposal to establish a research institute in Crimea, which he composed in two drafts between 1857 and 1859. He hoped that such an institution would be Russia’s equivalent of the Crystal Palace in London or the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. Here, he wrote, it would be possible to cultivate medicinal plants, as well as to study meteorology, geology, and zoology, since the region’s diversity of climates meant that animals from around the world could be settled there. Furthermore, he wrote that Crimea would lend itself to anthropological research, due to its proximity to other countries and the diversity of peoples who lived there. In particular, he noted that the Crimean Tatars of the southern coast preserved traces of the Greeks who had once settled there.<sup>535</sup> Anthropology, he wrote, was the ‘link of all the sciences’, through which it was possible to trace the ‘popular spirit and popular genius’ which controlled the destiny of each people just as a seed contained the elements for the development of the adult plant.<sup>536</sup> Tellingly, Leont’ev’s study of the Crimea was purely scientific, making no mention of the archaeological research into its Byzantine past which had

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<sup>532</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vospominanie o F. I. Inozemtsove i drugikh Moskovskikh doktorakh 50-x godov’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, pp. 355-362.

<sup>533</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moia literaturnaia sud’ba’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 68.

<sup>534</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Neskol’ko vospominanii i myslei o pokojnom Ap. Grigor’eve’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 21, and T. Kitson, *Potential and Idea: Konstantin Nikolaevich Leont’ev adapts physiognomy for literary aesthetics, 1857-1863* (Unpublished PhD thesis: Columbia University, 2009), p. 42.

<sup>535</sup> Leont’ev, ‘O krymskom poluostrove’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 274-278.

<sup>536</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Ob uchebnitse estestvovedeniia v Krymu’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 308.

been taking place since the 1820s.<sup>537</sup> Indicating his liberal politics at this stage of his career, he wrote that the Slavs were ‘young Europeans’ among whom progress and enlightenment were introduced ‘from the top downwards’ by the government.<sup>538</sup>

The early 1860s saw Leont’ev’s views move in a more conservative direction. He later recalled that this was prompted by the Polish uprising of 1863-1864, Prince Gorchakov’s brilliant diplomacy on Russia’s behalf, and ‘the supremacy of the hateful Dobroliubov’ in Russian literature.<sup>539</sup> Nikolai Dobroliubov, along with the other writers associated with the liberal periodical *Sovremennik*, argued that the purpose of literature was to illustrate the shortcomings of contemporary Russian society and to prescribe remedies for them.<sup>540</sup> Leont’ev, according to his friend Anatolii Alexandrov, was disgusted when Ivan Piotrovskii, a pupil of Dobroliubov and contributor to *Sovremennik*, said in a conversation shortly before his death in 1862 that he would like to replace the palaces, churches, and picturesque peasant homes of St Petersburg with ‘identical small, clean, and comfortable little houses’.<sup>541</sup> Leont’ev’s approach is apparent from an 1861 essay attacking ‘friends of progress’ who wrote derivative and mediocre literature ‘in which there is neither real nor aesthetic truth’, and defending the writer Marko Vovchok against criticism by *Sovremennik*. Leont’ev used his defence of Vovchok to justify the concept of art for art’s sake: ‘Beauty is the same as truth ... concealed in the depths of a phenomenon. And the more complex a phenomenon, the fuller, deeper, more incomprehensible its beauty is.’<sup>542</sup> Another important influence on Leont’ev was his acquaintance with the poet and literary critic Apollon Grigor’ev. Grigor’ev’s thought was characterised by the rejection of belief in such a thing as ‘humanity’. Instead, he argued, there were only ‘individuals, families, and nations.’ Each of these was an independent, organic whole, subject only to its own internal laws.<sup>543</sup> Furthermore, he embraced aesthetic rather than utilitarian values, telling Leont’ev that: ‘People should not live for comforts alone, but for the beautiful.’<sup>544</sup> Leont’ev apparently adopted this view, writing to the literary critic Nikolai

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<sup>537</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>538</sup> Leont’ev, ‘O krymskom poluostrove’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 279-280.

<sup>539</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Dva grafa’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 298.

<sup>540</sup> G. Cronin, ‘Konstantin Leont’ev: creative reaction’, in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, eds. R. Freeborn and J. Grayson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), pp. 100-101.

<sup>541</sup> A. Alexandrov, ‘A conversation with a nihilist about aesthetics’, *Against the Current: Selections from the novels, essays, notes, and letters of Konstantin Leontiev*, ed. G. Ivask, trans. G. Reavey (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), pp. 133-136.

<sup>542</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Po povodu rasskazov Marka Vovchka’, *Pss* vol. 9, pp. 19-26.

<sup>543</sup> E. Dowler, ‘Two conservative views of nationality and personality: A. A. Grigor’ev and K. N. Leont’ev’, *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 41, no. 1, January 1991, pp. 24-26.

<sup>544</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Neskol’ko vospominanii i myslei o pokoinom Ap. Grigor’ev’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 13.

Strakhov that ‘the beautiful is more important than the useful’ and that ‘great personalities ... appear only owing to evil.’ ‘War, poetical superstition and valiant prejudices,’ he said, were preferable to ‘universal colourlessness.’<sup>545</sup> Accordingly, Leont’ev later admitted that his conservative turn of the early 1860s took place mainly for aesthetic reasons: he came to see the Church, monarchy, army, and gentry as ‘necessary for the poetry of life then worshipped by me’.<sup>546</sup>

Leont’ev’s preoccupations at this time remained essentially literary and aesthetic. In 1888, he wrote that in the 1860s he had been optimistic about the ‘great reforms’ introduced in the aftermath of the Crimean War by Emperor Alexander II, believing that ‘on our ‘soil’, European watering would give a purely Russian harvest!’<sup>547</sup> However, detailed discussion of the ‘great reforms’ is conspicuous by its absence in Leont’ev’s early writings. His first biographer, A. Konopliantsev, claims that he defended the emancipation of the peasants in arguments with his mother, but does not cite any evidence.<sup>548</sup> Nonetheless, 1862 did see the appearance of Leont’ev’s first explicitly political work, an introduction to, and partial translation of, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*, in which he concurred with Mill’s argument that not only the state, but public opinion, threatens to undermine the expressiveness of the individual personality, especially in a democracy: ‘The tyranny of society is more dangerous than any other, because society can issue and execute its own decrees; it aspires to apply to everyone without exception its rules, prevents the development of any original personality and compels all characters to bend under one common standard.’ This warning, Leont’ev emphasised, was as relevant for Russians as it was for Westerners: ‘it is impossible to say that we do not have our own kind of public or popular opinion; to a well-known extent it is possible to call by this name that dumb agreement in which until now the majority among us stagnates.’ It was therefore necessary for individuals to cultivate ‘daring independence’ in themselves and to display ‘force and fullness’ in social life.<sup>549</sup> Leont’ev’s article on Mill sounded vaguely supportive of the emancipation of the peasantry which had taken place in the previous year, since he argued that distinctive personalities emerged from different social backgrounds in different periods of history, and that: ‘Now it is the turn of the lowest classes, for whom it lies

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<sup>545</sup> Leont’ev, letter to N. Strakhov, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1863, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 41.

<sup>546</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Dva grafa’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 299.

<sup>547</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 598.

<sup>548</sup> A. Konopliantsev, ‘Zhizn’ K. N. Leont’eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniiia’, in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont’eva* (St Petersburg: Literaturnyi Sbornik”, 1911), p. 45.

<sup>549</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Mnenie Dzhona-Styuarta Millia o lichnosti’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 10, pp. 8-10.

ahead to refresh us all.’<sup>550</sup> However, he failed to address the issue explicitly or in any detail. Likewise, an article of 1863 praised a landowner for freeing his peasants in advance of the Emancipation Edict, but this anecdote about a particular individual appears not in the context of a political discussion, but by way of making the point that our moral judgments of people should depend on the circumstances they face.<sup>551</sup> Leont’ev wrote in 1883 that in the early 1860s he ‘thought very little about foreign and domestic politics in general. Women; love; poetry, the natural sciences and a kind of aesthetic philosophy – here is what then occupied me.’<sup>552</sup> Therefore, at the time of Leont’ev’s becoming a diplomat, he was concerned essentially with aesthetic and literary matters and had yet to develop a coherent system of political thought.

### *Overview of Leont’ev’s career*

Later in his life, Leont’ev wrote that he became a diplomat ‘much more for an aesthetic than for a political motive.’<sup>553</sup> We may wonder whether he also had more mercenary reasons for choosing a diplomatic career, given that he once said that his ‘ideal’ was to have a guaranteed income of seventy-five roubles per month for life.<sup>554</sup> However, the aesthetic motive for travel to the East was not entirely absent: in March 1862 he wrote to Ivan Aksakov, the Slavophile editor of the newspaper *Den’*, seeking employment as an agent or correspondent in the Slavic regions of Austria and the Ottoman Empire. He expressed the hope that life there would be conducive to his ‘main aim’ of writing large novels.<sup>555</sup> When the Constantinople embassy chaplain Antonin (Kapustin) met Leont’ev, early in the latter’s diplomatic career, he thought of him as a ‘litterateur’, whose writings he considered ‘indecent’.<sup>556</sup> Since 1859, consuls seeking to be assigned to the Near or Middle East had officially been required to hold a degree in Eastern languages, and to undergo languages training in the Asiatic Department, followed by a year stationed in Constantinople or Tehran.<sup>557</sup> Nonetheless, Leont’ev was permitted to serve as a consul in the Ottoman Empire despite having studied medicine at university, and

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<sup>550</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Mnenie Dzhona-Styuarta Millia o lichnosti’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 10, p. 11.

<sup>551</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Nashe obshchestvo i nasha iziashchnaia literatura’, *Pss* vol. 9, p. 68.

<sup>552</sup> Leont’ev, ‘N. P. Ignat’ev’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 398.

<sup>553</sup> Leont’ev, ‘N. P. Ignat’ev’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, pp. 398-399.

<sup>554</sup> G. Ivanov, ‘Strakh pered zhizn’iu: Konstantin Leont’ev i sovremennost’’, in D. Burlaka et al., eds., *K. N. Leont’ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 2 (St Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo russkogo khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 1995), p. 188.

<sup>555</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Aksakov, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1862, *Konstantin Leont’ev: Izbrannye pis’ma*, ed. D. Solov’ev (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1993), pp. 38-39.

<sup>556</sup> Antonin (Kapustin), *Dnevnik: gody 1861-1865*, p. 480 and p. 496.

<sup>557</sup> Khevroлина, ‘Bor’ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel’nost’ rossiiskikh konsul’stv)’, in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, p. 228.

later recalled that at the beginning of his diplomatic career: ‘I had no clear notion even of what the Asiatic Department was, and I then had no dealings at all with the Eastern Question.’<sup>558</sup> He recorded that when in 1864 he was left in sole charge of the Adrianople consulate shortly after his arrival there, he spoke very little Greek, Bulgarian, or Turkish.<sup>559</sup> By 1867, he had learned enough Greek to give a short speech in that language, celebrating the marriage of King George of Greece and the Russian Grand Duchess Ol’ga Constantinova.<sup>560</sup> However, he still did not speak Turkish in 1878, when he unsuccessfully applied to rejoin the diplomatic service.<sup>561</sup>

Leont’ev appears to have received his appointment thanks to his brother’s acquaintance with Petr Nikolaevich Stremoukhov, then the deputy director of the Asiatic Department, who in turn intervened on Leont’ev’s behalf with the director, Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat’ev.<sup>562</sup> Leont’ev’s friend Konstantin Gubastov, who served with him in the Ottoman Empire, implied in his reminiscences of Leont’ev that this method of recruitment was fairly typical: ‘Here is how simply our consular personnel were then replenished!’<sup>563</sup> Leont’ev himself acknowledged the importance of personal connections in the Russian diplomatic service, writing in an 1871 letter to his mother that the only men with his level of seniority to have been promoted to the rank of consul-general were a friend of Ignat’ev and a relative by marriage of the foreign minister, Aleksandr Gorchakov.<sup>564</sup> The first eight months of Leont’ev’s career as a diplomat, from February to October 1863, were spent in the Near Eastern section of the Asiatic Department.<sup>565</sup> Here he studied international law and consular documents, but, as he later wrote, this was hardly an adequate preparation for service in the field.<sup>566</sup> His first active assignment, as secretary and dragoman of the Russian consulate in Crete, began in late 1863 or early 1864. None of his diplomatic dispatches or personal letters from this period survive, although in a later piece he expressed his affection for the ‘colourful, cheerful and beautiful’ Cretan people, ‘brothers to us according to history’.<sup>567</sup> In any case, Leont’ev’s time on Crete came to a premature end in 1864 when he responded to a perceived slight from the French

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<sup>558</sup> Leont’ev, ‘N. P. Ignat’ev’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 398.

<sup>559</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moi vospominaniia o Frakii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 158.

<sup>560</sup> Leont’ev, ‘S Dunaia’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 67.

<sup>561</sup> K. Zhukov, *Vostochnyi vopros v istoriosofskoi kontseptsii K. N. Leont’eva* (St Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2006), p. 152.

<sup>562</sup> O. Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont’ev* (Moscow: Molodia Gvardiia, 2013), p. 134.

<sup>563</sup> K. Gubastov, ‘Iz” lichnykh” vospominanii o K. N. Leont’eva’, in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont’eva* (St Petersburg: Literaturnyi Sbornik”, 1911), p. 190.

<sup>564</sup> M. Leont’eva, ‘K. Leont’ev v Turtsii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 103.

<sup>565</sup> Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont’ev*, p. 135.

<sup>566</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moi vospominaniia o Frakii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, pp. 163-164.

<sup>567</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Ocherki Krita’, *Pss* vol. 3, p. 12.

consul by striking him with a whip.<sup>568</sup> Leont'ev was recalled to Constantinople and then, in August, appointed secretary and dragoman of the Adrianople consulate. He would serve there until June 1867, with a four-month leave in Constantinople in 1866. For the first nine months of his time in Adrianople, and again for six months in 1866, he was in sole charge of the consulate while the consul, M. I. Zolotarev, was on leave.<sup>569</sup>

Leont'ev's time in the Adrianople consulate is the first period of his diplomatic career for which we have extensive primary evidence. It also inspired his novel about life as a diplomat in the Ottoman Empire, *The Egyptian Dove*. The narrator, Ladnev, who clearly represents Leont'ev himself, falls in love with Masha, the Russian wife of a wealthy Greek merchant, Antoniadi. When Ladnev is posted to Adrianople, his feelings threaten to jeopardise the Russian consulate's efforts to recruit Antoniadi as a dragoman. Furthermore, Ladnev grows fond of the British consul, Willarton, even though he is also trying to secure Antoniadi's services. Adrianople was a fairly large and diverse city: in 1865 the British vice-consul, John Blunt, estimated the total population at about 46,000 people, of whom the largest groups were Muslims and Orthodox Christians, with smaller communities of Armenians, Jews, Bulgarian Uniates, gypsies, and others.<sup>570</sup> While Adrianople clearly fired Leont'ev's literary imagination, he expressed mixed feelings about the society he encountered there. First and foremost, he disliked the local Bulgarian intelligentsia, writing in a letter to Gubastov, who succeeded him as secretary of the consulate in Adrianople, that: 'Our bourgeois co-religionists are the main curse.'<sup>571</sup> However, as he observed in *The Egyptian Dove*, he was forced to deal with 'this *half-European* business class of people' because they were Russia's main source of support and information.<sup>572</sup> Leont'ev much preferred the ordinary people of Adrianople, both Christians and Muslims, whose traditional way of life had not been undermined by European influence: as Ladnev puts it, 'I am madly in love with this poor old Bulgarian with a grey moustache, in a blue turban, who has just made me a low bow; I am in love with this fierce-looking, gaunt, tall Turk who is walking ahead of me in wide crimson *shalvari*'.<sup>573</sup> Leont'ev wrote to Gubastov that: 'The poetry of Adrianople is in the simple people, in the Turkish quarters, in the mosques,

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<sup>568</sup> Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont'ev*, p. 149.

<sup>569</sup> Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont'ev*, p. 161.

<sup>570</sup> J. Blunt, table of 1865, Blunt Papers, MS46/A/2/2/12.

<sup>571</sup> Gubastov, 'Iz' lichnykh' vospominanii o K. N. Leont'eva', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, p. 201.

<sup>572</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove: The Story of a Russian (1881)*, trans. G. Reavey (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1969), p. 69.

<sup>573</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 71.

in the Muslim cemeteries, in the baths, in the pretty girls of the suburbs and in Mrs Blunt.’ He complained that he was unable to appreciate it fully because the local notables were Russia’s allies, but added that, in order to do so, Gubastov should take a Bulgarian or Greek mistress, visit the Turkish baths, shun the society of the local French community, and organise a wrestling contest by the mosque of Sultan Bayezid.<sup>574</sup> As this suggests, Leont’ev was also drawn to some of the foreign diplomats he met in Adrianople, particularly John Blunt, who was apparently the model for Willarton, and his wife Frances ‘Fanny’ Blunt. The significance of the Blunts for Leont’ev will be discussed in greater detail below.

On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1867, Leont’ev took up a new posting as the Russian vice-consul in Tulcea, a town of about 15,000 people in the Dobruja region on the lower Danube.<sup>575</sup> Many of the inhabitants were descended from Russian émigrés, including Orthodox Christians, Old Believers, and Molokans. The Muslim population of Tulcea consisted of Crimean Tatars and Circassians, who also originated from Russia.<sup>576</sup> As many as 200,000 Crimean Tatars had emigrated to escape heightened persecution in the aftermath of the Crimean War, while large numbers of Circassians fled the Russian conquest of their homeland in the North Caucasus from 1859 onwards.<sup>577</sup> However, by Leont’ev’s estimate, Muslims accounted for only about ten per cent of Tulcea’s households.<sup>578</sup> On the other side of the Danube lay Izmail, which was in the area that Russia had ceded to Moldavia under the Treaty of Paris. Leont’ev recounted that he saw ‘peasant Rus’ in Tulcea and ‘gentry Russia’ in Izmail: ‘I do not know which of these I loved more!’<sup>579</sup> Shortly after his arrival, he wrote to Gubastov that he wished to ‘to put down my roots forever in Tulcea.’ He explained that life in Tulcea combined employment with an environment conducive to writing literature, whereas he disliked Europe and St Petersburg, and was unable to find work in Moscow or his native Kudinovo. He went so far as to say that he would rather remain a vice-consul in Tulcea than be promoted to consul elsewhere.<sup>580</sup> As with the ‘simple people’ of Adrianople, Leont’ev’s aesthetic pleasure in the society of Tulcea derived from the fact that it was so distinct from anything that might be found in western

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<sup>574</sup> Leont’ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1868, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 59.

<sup>575</sup> P. Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev: An Encounter Between the Russian Revolutionaries and the Old Believers* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979), p. 144.

<sup>576</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, eds. A. Torkunov et al. (Moscow: Mgimo-universitet, 2013), p. 144.

<sup>577</sup> B. Williams, ‘Hijra and forced migration from nineteenth-century Russia to the Ottoman Empire’, *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2000, p. 79 and p. 93.

<sup>578</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 27<sup>th</sup> August 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 136.

<sup>579</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pol’skaia emigratsiia na nizhnem Dunae’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 460.

<sup>580</sup> Leont’ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1867, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, pp. 55-56.



Europe. Life on the Danube, said Leont'ev in a piece for the *Odesskii vestnik*, would appeal to Russians to whom 'Paris and its industrial exhibition, the journey by railway from hotel to hotel and walks with guides in hand' did not.<sup>581</sup>

However, in October 1868, Leont'ev went to St Petersburg on leave, and while there he learned that he was to be promoted to consul and given a fresh assignment. He asked to be sent back to Adrianople, where he was at least familiar with the city and would be with his friend Gubastov. As it transpired, his new posting was to Ioannina, in Epirus, where he arrived in April 1869. To Gubastov he expressed a strong dislike of the town: 'Society here is even worse than Adrianople's. The Greeks are unbearable apes. I live only when I depart from here and shake off the dust from my feet. Here is a small town of a different kind than Tulcea!'<sup>582</sup> The same was true of Salonica, to which he was transferred in April 1871. Gubastov recorded that Leont'ev found the climate there 'sultry, unpicturesque, unhealthy' and that, unlike in Tulcea, there were no other Russians for him to socialise with, apart from the monks on Mount Athos. His marriage was in difficulties and, as an 'imprudent Russian baron', he was short of money. Furthermore, among the wives of the foreign consuls 'he did not find a second Madame Blunt, who could have dispersed his gloomy thoughts and mitigated his solitude.'<sup>583</sup> As he later wrote: 'In Salonica I was completely deprived of health, and literary activity, and friends, and a religious atmosphere.'<sup>584</sup> It was under these circumstances that, in July 1871, Leont'ev abandoned his post in order to live on Mount Athos. His decision to do so is generally attributed to his having fallen seriously ill and prayed to an icon of the Mother of God, making a vow to become a monk if he recovered, as he did soon afterwards. However, Gubastov implied that his illness and subsequent move to Athos were due mainly to his dissatisfaction with his posting: 'the most important reasons were external, that is, all the unfortunate circumstances of life in Salonica. He would have coped with heartfelt and intellectual oppressions had he been in Tulcea or in Constantinople!'<sup>585</sup> After moving to Mount Athos, Leont'ev continued to discharge his diplomatic responsibilities and to send reports to the

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<sup>581</sup> Leont'ev, 'S Dunaia', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 49.

<sup>582</sup> Gubastov, 'Iz" lichnykh" vospominanii o K. N. Leont'eva', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, p. 207.

<sup>583</sup> Gubastov, 'Iz" lichnykh" vospominanii o K. N. Leont'eva', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, pp. 209-210.

<sup>584</sup> Leont'ev, letter to E. A. Onu, March 1873, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 89.

<sup>585</sup> Gubastov, 'Iz" lichnykh" vospominanii o K. N. Leont'eva', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, p. 211.

Constantinople embassy until he was relieved as consul at Salonica in February 1872.<sup>586</sup> He left Athos in September 1872, taking up residence in Constantinople, and he formally resigned from the diplomatic service in January 1873.<sup>587</sup> Clearly, Leont'ev's experiences as a diplomat were shaped to a large extent by the various settings in which he found himself.

### *Sociability*

There was a sizeable Western diplomatic community in Adrianople, where Greek, French, Austrian, and British consular representatives were appointed in the early 1860s. Undoubtedly the one who made the greatest impression on Leont'ev was the British vice-consul, John Elijah Blunt. In many respects, Blunt's views appear to have been representative of British consuls in the Ottoman Empire, especially those who, like him, had spent much of their lives there. He expressed a clear scepticism about the complaints of persecution made by Orthodox Christians, writing in 1876 to the British ambassador in Constantinople that: 'Every incident, every trifling occurrence is seized and commented upon in a manner to excite sensation and alarm; and unfortunately some of the foreign consular agents ... pursue a line of conduct which tends to encourage the efforts which are made to produce bad feelings between Mohammedans and Christians.'<sup>588</sup> In March 1867, when the House of Commons asked consular agents for information on the progress of reform and the treatment of Ottoman Christians, Blunt, like most long-serving British consuls, gave an emphatically pro-Ottoman response, saying that Christians were better off than Turks and that persecution occurred only due to the tension between the Christian denominations.<sup>589</sup> Likewise, during the Cretan uprising, the reports of the British consul on the island were much more favourable towards the Ottoman authorities than those of Royal Navy officers who transported refugees to mainland Greece.<sup>590</sup> Blunt was also a supporter of the Bulgarian side in the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy; his wife Fanny recorded that he received 'the hatred of the Greeks' on this account.<sup>591</sup> Once again, this stance was fairly typical of British diplomats in the East: Edward Morris Erskine, the British ambassador to Greece, wrote to Blunt in 1869, accusing the Greeks of 'deliberate & constant

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<sup>586</sup> Dispatch from the Salonica consulate to the Asiatic Department, 15<sup>th</sup> February 1872, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 435.

<sup>587</sup> Volkogonova, *Konstantin Leont'ev*, p. 238 and p. 448.

<sup>588</sup> J. Blunt, report to Sir Henry Elliot of 27<sup>th</sup> January 1876, Blunt Papers, MS46/A/2/2/22.

<sup>589</sup> Iseminger, 'The Old Turkish Hands', p. 300.

<sup>590</sup> A. Pottinger Saab, 'The Doctors' Dilemma: Britain and the Cretan Crisis 1866-69', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 49, no. 4, 1977, p. D1384.

<sup>591</sup> F. Blunt, *My Reminiscences* (London: John Murray, 1918), p. 79, and Zhukov, *Vostochnyi vopros v istoriosofskoi kontseptsii K. N. Leont'eva*, p. 108.

falsehood with regard to the predicament of the Greek element in certain parts of Thrace' and arguing that 'it would be sound policy on the part of the Turk to make every reasonable concession to the Bulgarians'.<sup>592</sup> Willarton, the character based on Blunt in *The Egyptian Dove*, goes so far as to say that 'Turkey is my homeland ... I was born here, I grew up here, and I love Turkey even more than England.'<sup>593</sup>

Blunt, wrote Leont'ev in 1878, was 'now renowned for his hostility to Russia and the Slavs'.<sup>594</sup> N. D. Stupin, who served as the Russian consul in Adrianople prior to Leont'ev's arrival there, recorded that Blunt 'tried to make acquaintances and connections everywhere with popular leaders, clergy and teachers, attempting to inspire in them distrust of Russia and to promise a shining future for devotion to England.'<sup>595</sup> Blunt, in turn, accused Russia of trying to stir up trouble in Bulgaria in order to create a pretext for intervention, in particular by claiming that the Ottomans tortured prisoners, about which he wrote that: 'I cannot conceive how my Russian colleague could make an accusation which is so palpably false ... The alleged infliction of torture is a myth.'<sup>596</sup> During the period when he served alongside Leont'ev in Adrianople, Blunt assessed that Russian influence in Thrace was declining due to Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, the Bulgarians' perception that Russia was not supportive enough of their campaign for a national church, the arrival of Circassian and Crimean Tatar refugees from Russian rule, and the return of Bulgarian emigrants who had tried and failed to settle in Russia.<sup>597</sup> In a dispatch of April 1867, Leont'ev reported that Blunt and the French consul, Guise, had rejected his proposal for a joint response to rumours that the Turks of Adrianople were stockpiling ammunition in the suburb of Kynk. Leont'ev also noted that Blunt was 'now trying in every way possible to blacken me and the Orthodox in the eyes of the Muslims' and that he might plant correspondence in the newspaper *Courrier d'Orient* to that end.<sup>598</sup> However, Blunt's own account of this incident was markedly different. He wrote to the British ambassador in Constantinople, Lord Lyons, that Leont'ev's claim that the Muslims were plotting against the Christians was the work of 'designing parties who were trying to excite the susceptibilities and passions of the inhabitants by circulating false and malicious reports'.

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<sup>592</sup> E. Erskine, letter to Blunt of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1869, Blunt Papers, MS46/A/2/2/14/1.

<sup>593</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 232.

<sup>594</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 209.

<sup>595</sup> K. Zhukov, *Vostochnyi vopros v istoriosofskoi kontseptsii K. N. Leont'eva* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2006), p. 107.

<sup>596</sup> J. Blunt, letter to A. Layard of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1867, Layard Papers, MSS 38994, f. 186.

<sup>597</sup> J. Blunt, letter to A. Layard of 19<sup>th</sup> February 1867, Layard Papers, MSS 38993, f. 334.

<sup>598</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 28<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 117-120.

Blunt took credit for dissuading the other European consuls from participating in the collective protest to the local pasha which Leont'ev was trying to organise. He ascribed the reports Leont'ev had received of ammunition being stockpiled to the fact that firearms and cartridges were manufactured and sold in Adrianople, and concluded that Leont'ev's actions had given rise to the impression that the Russian consulate was promoting the circulation of rumours designed to create tension between the city's Christians and Muslims.<sup>599</sup> Consuls in the Ottoman Empire upheld the formalities of diplomatic life, in order to maintain their own prestige and avoid being overshadowed by each other. In June 1867, after Alexander II survived an assassination attempt during his visit to Paris, the Russian consulate held a service of thanksgiving, followed by a reception. However, Blunt then led the consular corps to the French consulate to convey their congratulations on Napoleon III's survival and on 'the foresight which ... protected the hospitality of France from an indelible stain.'<sup>600</sup>

However, at the same time, Leont'ev's writings make clear his warm regard for the Blunts. Ladnev describes Willarton as a 'gentleman' and questions the need to 'show revulsion for a political enemy'.<sup>601</sup> In a letter of February 1868, Leont'ev declared his admiration for Fanny Blunt, with her 'regal appearance and shell of pretended coldness ... And her patriarchal appeal and goodness with servants'.<sup>602</sup> There is some evidence that diplomatic rivalries of the kind discussed above coexisted with friendly personal relations between the staff of the two consulates. For example, Leont'ev recalls that in 1864, only three days after he took up his post in Adrianople, the consul Zolotarev went on leave, travelling via Serbia in company with the Blunts, since John Blunt had been temporarily transferred to Belgrade during the absence of the British consul-general there, Longworth.<sup>603</sup> Fanny Blunt's memoirs contain an account of this journey, which emphasises both her amicable relations with Zolotarev ('a Russian consul, who was my husband's colleague') and his disdainful attitude towards the ordinary people they encountered en route. During an overnight stay at an inn, Fanny tricked him by disguising herself as a Bulgarian servant girl, while at one point, he decided that the procession should make a grand entrance into a small town, only to end up lashing out with his whip when they were mistaken for a troupe of performers.<sup>604</sup> This gives us a sense of how foreign

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<sup>599</sup> J. Blunt, letter to Lord Lyons of 29<sup>th</sup> April 1867, Layard Papers, MSS 38994, f. 189 ff.

<sup>600</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 126.

<sup>601</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>602</sup> Leont'ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 29<sup>th</sup> February 1868, *Konstantin Leont'ev: Izbrannye pis'ma*, ed. D. Solov'ev (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii fond, 1993), p. 59.

<sup>603</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 157.

<sup>604</sup> Blunt, *My Reminiscences*, p. 111-114.

diplomats in the Ottoman Empire and their families, even when they came from rival powers, sensed that they had more in common with each other than with the inhabitants of the country where they were stationed. Vasilii Kel'siev, a Russian revolutionary who travelled in the Ottoman Empire before returning to Russia and handing himself over to the authorities in 1867, noted in his confession that Russian consuls were disdainful towards local people, never entertaining them or accepting their invitations, and that even Slavs complained that it was easier to deal with the Ottoman authorities.<sup>605</sup>

In turn, this kind of fellow-feeling between the consuls of rival powers could give rise to unofficial co-operation between them. Leont'ev recorded that John Blunt's younger brother George, who was left in charge of the British consulate in Adrianople during John's absence, was simultaneously a clerk in the Russian consulate, receiving both accommodation there and a payment of four Turkish lira per month.<sup>606</sup> Likewise, Frederick Flocken, a Russian-born Methodist missionary from the United States who resided in Tulcea, both managed the British vice-consulate and passed intelligence to Leont'ev, in one case warning him of a decision by the governor of the Danube vilayet, Midhat Pasha, to create a local militia to guard against Bulgarian incursions from Serbia and Romania, but to arm only Muslims, not Christians.<sup>607</sup> Sometimes, it appears, diplomatic agents' services were in such high demand that they could find more than one buyer. Furthermore, relations between embassy staff and consuls from the same country were not always close. Leont'ev recalled that this was because the latter had a more prominent role in local society and tended to be more sensitive to perceived slights.<sup>608</sup> Diplomats generally regarded consuls as their social inferiors: in Constantinople, the former patronised the *Cercle d'Orient* club, while the latter were relegated to the less fashionable *Club de Constantinople*. In the case of the British, the gulf between diplomats and consuls was exacerbated by the fact that they belonged to two separate services, of which the consular service received lower pay and was treated as the inferior of the diplomatic service in terms of protocol.<sup>609</sup> This may also have strengthened the bonds of sociability between consuls in the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>605</sup> P. Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev: An Encounter Between the Russian Revolutionaries and the Old Believers* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 190-191.

<sup>606</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 158.

<sup>607</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 27<sup>th</sup> August 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 135, and dispatch of 16<sup>th</sup> November 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 153.

<sup>608</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 226.

<sup>609</sup> D. Platt, *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (London: Longman, 1971), pp. 2-3.

After leaving Adrianople and the Blunts behind, Leont'ev continued to enjoy good relations with British diplomats, who, he said, had 'better personal upbringing' than their French counterparts, even if they were 'mostly quite obtuse'.<sup>610</sup> While in Ioannina he helped the British consul, Stuart, to answer a query about the financial contributions which the various consulates required from their nationals in the city.<sup>611</sup> Leont'ev's niece Maria recorded that he also got along well with the British consul in Salonica and his family.<sup>612</sup> Interestingly, Maria recalled that while in Ioannina, where she stayed with him during his posting there, Leont'ev had only 'the coldest official relations' with the European consuls. She attributed this to the fact that he hated European and in particular French cultural influence, which he associated with 'the suppression of everything national'.<sup>613</sup> Accordingly, Leont'ev's depictions of French diplomats in his writings are consistently negative. Breshe, the French consul in his novel *Odysseus Polychroniades*, is an 'evil and vainglorious man' who 'has neither intellect, nor knowledge, nor courtesy' and provokes 'personal hatred' with his 'profound disdain' for everything connected with the East.<sup>614</sup> Leont'ev confirmed elsewhere that Breshe was intended to be 'a faithful representation of a French consul of the time of Napoleon III.'<sup>615</sup> Likewise, as Glenn Cronin observes, Leont'ev's 1864 novel *A Husband's Confession* depicts Frenchmen as interchangeable to the extent that the narrator remarks that they could be identified by numbers rather than names.<sup>616</sup> This suggests that Leont'ev, while serving as a diplomat, had already begun to develop the hostility to Western liberalism, on the grounds that it undermined cultural originality and distinctiveness, which would characterise his later writings. Ladnev expresses his dislike of the French on the grounds that they 'invented democratic progress.'<sup>617</sup> Conversely, Leont'ev's Anglophilia can be explained partly by the fact that he saw England as having a distinctive culture of its own, and he sometimes appears to suggest that Britain's influence, like Russia's, defended cultural originality, just as that of France undermined it. A character in *Odysseus Polychroniades* explains that Russia and England are two countries where, unlike in the Ottoman Empire, 'society stands on firm foundations.'<sup>618</sup> Kankelario, the Russian consulate's dragoman in *The Egyptian Dove*, argues that Orthodoxy has flourished

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<sup>610</sup> Leont'ev, 'Panslavizm i Greki', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 194, and dispatch of 7<sup>th</sup> July 1869, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 240.

<sup>611</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1870, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 282.

<sup>612</sup> M. Leont'eva, 'K. Leont'ev v Turtsii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 107.

<sup>613</sup> M. Leont'eva, 'Iarina', *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 89.

<sup>614</sup> Leont'ev, 'Odissei Polikhroniades', *Pss* vol. 4, pp. 323-324.

<sup>615</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 172.

<sup>616</sup> Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, p. 52.

<sup>617</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 233.

<sup>618</sup> Leont'ev, 'Odissei Polikhroniades', *Pss* vol. 4, p. 212.

more in the Ionian islands, a British protectorate until 1864, than in free Greece.<sup>619</sup> Furthermore, Willarton tells Ladnev that ‘England and Russia are both great powers, big powers, and both of them are conservative’ and that they can exist peacefully side by side as long as their local agents do not drag them into a conflict.<sup>620</sup> In turn, Ladnev remarks that he ‘desired Russia to be as profound and original in her *Russianness* as England was in her character’. *The Egyptian Dove* implies that this impression was derived at least in part from Leont’ev’s dealings with British consuls: ‘The British nation is truly great in spirit, and her greatness is reflected in her representatives.’<sup>621</sup>

### *Diaspora peoples from the Russian Empire*

During his postings in Adrianople and Tulcea, one of the main issues confronting Leont’ev was the presence of a large community of Polish émigrés and a substantial Russian population, who threatened to project their influence from the Ottoman Empire back into Russia. There were large influxes of Poles into the Ottoman Empire following the defeat of the Polish uprisings of 1830 and 1863, and also the Hungarian revolution of 1848, in which many Poles participated. Prince Adam Czartoryski, who led the Polish nationalist movement from exile in France, envisioned the creation of a Slavic federation in order to contain Russia. Although he therefore favoured the independence of the Balkan Slavs, the Ottoman authorities nonetheless welcomed the activity of Polish agents as a counterweight to Russian and Austrian influence among their Christian subjects.<sup>622</sup> Furthermore, many of the Poles were physicians, engineers, and officers, whose expertise was useful to the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms.<sup>623</sup> French diplomats in the Ottoman Empire recruited many of their translators and secretaries from among the Polish émigrés.<sup>624</sup> Leont’ev recalled that, as a result, the Polish revolt of 1863 put an end to the ‘friendly agreement’ between the French and Russian consulates in Adrianople that had existed until then.<sup>625</sup> From Tulcea, Leont’ev reported that the Polish émigré leadership had decided to concentrate on strengthening their movement in the Ottoman Empire, rather than planning another uprising against Russian rule in Poland.<sup>626</sup> The Polish committee in Constantinople, he

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<sup>619</sup> Leont’ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 153.

<sup>620</sup> Leont’ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 236.

<sup>621</sup> Leont’ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 196.

<sup>622</sup> J. Baylen and A. Urbanik, ‘Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire, 1830-1876’, *The Polish Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1981, pp. 46-47.

<sup>623</sup> Baylen and Urbanik, ‘Polish exiles and the Turkish Empire, 1830-1876’, p. 51.

<sup>624</sup> Zhukov, *Vostochnyi vopros v istoriosofskoi kontseptsii K. N. Leont’eva*, p. 111.

<sup>625</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moi vospominaniia o Frakii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 208.

<sup>626</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1868, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 182.

wrote, was trying to attract as many young émigrés as possible to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>627</sup> Subsequently, though, he noted that the Poles in the Dobruja had lost hope in the Ottomans and instead were planning to offer their services to whichever power opposed Russia, most likely Austria, in a general European war.<sup>628</sup> However, not all Poles in the Ottoman Empire deferred to Czartoryski and his ‘Hotel Lambert’ faction. Michal Czajkowski, a nobleman of mixed Polish and Ukrainian ancestry who was sent to Constantinople as one of Czartoryski’s agents, became known as Sadyk Pasha when, in 1852, he converted to Islam in order to thwart Russian diplomatic pressure for his extradition. His conversion, and subsequent support for the Ottoman annexation of Ukraine rather than its absorption into an independent Poland, led to his break with Czartoryski.<sup>629</sup>

The Russian communities in the Dobruja included Orthodox Little Russians, and Great Russian Old Believers and Molokans. The former were descendants of Cossacks who arrived in the Danube delta after the destruction of the Zaporozhian Sich by Russia in 1775. The Old Believers were originally descended from Don Cossacks, known as *Nekrasovtsy* after their leader Ignat Fedorovich Nekrasov. They had fled from Russia to the Ottoman Empire in 1708 due to Emperor Peter I’s persecution of their faith. In the 1720s, the Ottoman government resettled them around Tulcea. More Old Believer fugitives arrived to join them, and an 1876 book by the French scholars Abdolonyme Ubicini and Abel Pavet de Courteille estimated their population at 18,000 to 20,000 people.<sup>630</sup> Some of the Old Believers in Tulcea were *bezpovovtsy*, who did not have clergy.<sup>631</sup> Others were *popovtsy*, followers of the hierarchy of Old Believer bishops established under Austrian patronage at Belaia Krinitza in 1846.<sup>632</sup> Two Old Believer bishoprics were created in the Dobruja, one at Tulcea and one at Slava.<sup>633</sup> During Leont’ev’s service as vice-consul in Tulcea, the leading figures among the Old Believers of the Dobruja were an Ataman of the *Nekrasovtsy*, Osip Semenovich Goncharov, and Arkadii, the bishop of Slava.<sup>634</sup> While the Old Believers claimed to be the true Orthodox Church, the Molokans rejected all sacraments, icons, church buildings, and rituals, instead seeing the Bible

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<sup>627</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 6<sup>th</sup> May 1868, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 195.

<sup>628</sup> Leont’ev, dispatches of 30<sup>th</sup> November – 17<sup>th</sup> December 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 162.

<sup>629</sup> T. Prymak, ‘The Strange Life of Sadyk Pasha’, *Forum: A Ukrainian Review*, no. 50, 1982, pp. 29-30.

<sup>630</sup> A. Levy, ‘The Contribution of Zaporozhian Cossacks to Ottoman Military Reform: Documents and Notes’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1982, pp. 374-376.

<sup>631</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1868, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 189.

<sup>632</sup> T. Marsden, *The Crisis of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 37.

<sup>633</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, p. 150.

<sup>634</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, pp. 132 and 150.



as the only source of religious guidance.<sup>635</sup> Old Believers and sectarians were regarded with suspicion by the Russian government because they rejected the official Orthodox Church, which in turn implied a challenge to the authority of the state. Furthermore, the sectarians often refused to serve in the armed forces or pay taxes.<sup>636</sup> During the Crimean War, the first two Old Believer bishops from the Dobruja were arrested by Russian troops in response to complaints by local Orthodox Christians that the Old Believers had been inciting the Turks against them, and reports of the bishops' interrogation gave rise to fears that a cross-border schismatic network was emerging.<sup>637</sup> However, Leont'ev recalled that Goncharov 'never attempted anything maliciously deceiving or treacherous regarding us.'<sup>638</sup> He also reported that while the Great Russian schismatics of the Dobruja communicated with their co-religionists in Russia, the Orthodox Little Russians were a 'cut-off chunk' who could 'hardly enter into political relations with the Little Russians within our borders.'<sup>639</sup>

There were important connections between the Poles and the Russians of the Dobruja: in particular, Sadyk Pasha acted as a mediator between them. At the outbreak of the Crimean War, he raised a Cossack regiment for the Ottoman army from among the *Nekrasovtsy*, as well as Polish and Bulgarian volunteers.<sup>640</sup> Leont'ev encountered these 'intrepid officers of Sadyk-Pasha' in Adrianople.<sup>641</sup> The locals appeared to take a positive view of them: he noted that when the Christians feared that the Muslims were plotting against them, the former hoped for Sadyk Pasha's troops to be sent there, 'as forces on the one hand alien to Islam, and on the other interested in the maintenance of the existing order.'<sup>642</sup> Leont'ev reported in 1868 that the Poles were attempting to recruit Little Russians and Molokans to the regiment in order to use them for anti-Russian propaganda, and responded by spreading stories of how some of its Bulgarian soldiers had deserted and then 'died of grief' after being forced to return. However, he was assured by one of his local contacts, an influential Molokan, that these groups were not inclined to enlist.<sup>643</sup> Polish revolutionary activists, 'the wretched proletariat of the emigration' in Leont'ev's phrase, also appeared in the Dobruja, together with Russian revolutionaries

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<sup>635</sup> N. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 11.

<sup>636</sup> Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers*, p. 21.

<sup>637</sup> Marsden, *The Crisis of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia*, p. 177.

<sup>638</sup> Leont'ev, 'Sviashchennik-ubiitsa', *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 54.

<sup>639</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 215.

<sup>640</sup> A. Levy, 'The Contribution of Zaporozhian Cossacks to Ottoman Military Reform: Documents and Notes', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1982, p. 389.

<sup>641</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pol'skaia emigratsiia na nizhnem Dunae', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 461.

<sup>642</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 28<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 119.

<sup>643</sup> Leont'ev, dispatches of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, pp. 215-216.

inspired by Aleksandr Gertsen. In fact, Leont'ev recorded that the Russian vice-consulate in Tulcea had been created in order to monitor their 'revolutionary centre' there.<sup>644</sup> This would seem to be a reference to the activities of Vasilii Kel'siev, a disciple of Gertsen who had become convinced that the Russian schismatics and sectarians possessed latent revolutionary potential.<sup>645</sup> In 1862 he moved to the Ottoman Empire in the hope of making contact with the Old Believer communities there, and in the following year the *Nekrasovtsy* Ataman Goncharov visited Gertsen in London on Kel'siev's recommendation.<sup>646</sup> Kel'siev and his brother Ivan arrived in Tulcea in 1863, and together with a small group of followers they distributed propaganda materials in the area, as well as establishing contacts with Old Believers in Russia and with the revolutionary group Land and Liberty. However, they did not receive a warm reception: Leont'ev recalled being told that Kel'siev was beaten and almost killed after trying to convince the locals that God did not exist.<sup>647</sup> Ultimately, following Ivan's death and the appointment of the less than amenable Midhat Pasha to govern the Danube vilayet, Kel'siev left Tulcea in April 1865.<sup>648</sup> However, a June 1868 dispatch from Leont'ev contains a reference to a Polish revolutionary called Stankevich, the name of one of Kel'siev's followers, implying that they were still active at the time of Leont'ev's service in Tulcea.<sup>649</sup> As of March 1868, Leont'ev reported that there were around 150 Poles active in the Dobruja.<sup>650</sup> Among his main duties as vice-consul was to engage secret agents to monitor their activities, although even after doing so he was forced to admit that 'their character is as mysterious and their aim is as unclear as before.'<sup>651</sup> Nonetheless, the Poles apparently saw Leont'ev as a threat to their activities: in July that year they denounced him to Constantinople for 'revolutionary intrigues against Turkey.'<sup>652</sup>

The connections of the Old Believers of Tulcea with Polish émigrés and Russian revolutionaries coloured Leont'ev's relations with them. During the reign of Nicholas I, the Russian government adopted various measures aimed at the suppression of the Old Believers, including the closure of their prayer houses, the refusal to acknowledge their marriages, and

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<sup>644</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pol'skaia emigratsiia na nizhnem Dunae', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 461.

<sup>645</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, pp. 39 ff.

<sup>646</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, p. 134.

<sup>647</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 444.

<sup>648</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, p. 167.

<sup>649</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 215.

<sup>650</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> March 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 181.

<sup>651</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> July 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 215.

<sup>652</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> July 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 214.

the policing of the ‘fugitive clergy’ on whom the *popovtsy* relied for priests until the creation of the Belaia Krinitsa hierarchy. In 1854 the two main centres of the *bezpopovtsy* and *popovtsy* Old Believers, the Preobrazhenskoe and Rogovskoe Cemeteries, were placed under government control and partially handed over to the *edinoverie* church, the only officially sanctioned form of Old Belief.<sup>653</sup> However, under Alexander II the situation of the Old Believers began in some respects to improve: in 1858 their active persecution by the government ceased, other than that they were not allowed to proselytise for their faith, and in 1864 the Emperor approved a report from the Committee for Schism Affairs which called for the extension of the Old Believers’ civic rights. The Old Believers were by no means completely free to practise their religion: anti-schismatic laws remained in force until the early twentieth century.<sup>654</sup> However, Leont’ev found that news of Alexander II’s modest concessions had had a profound effect on the Old Believers of Tulcea: in particular, the above-mentioned Ataman of the *Nekrasovtsy*, Osip Semenovich Goncharov, was discussing a return to Russia.<sup>655</sup> However, the other leading figure among the Dobruja Old Believers, Bishop Arkadii of Slava, rejected claims that they wished to move to Russia, and affirmed their loyalty to the Ottoman government. Reports about the Old Believers’ desire to return to Russia appeared in the newspaper *Courrier d’Orient* in 1863 and again in 1868, and were described by Leont’ev on the latter occasion as ‘Polish intrigues’, suggesting that they represented an attempt to discredit Russian diplomats by implying that they were encouraging the Old Believers to move to Russia.<sup>656</sup> In fact, Leont’ev attempted to undermine Goncharov’s enthusiasm for doing so, arguing that ‘the presence of Old Believers in the borders of Turkey represents an important support for our influence in this country.’<sup>657</sup> Leont’ev also appealed to Goncharov’s desire to maintain his political influence, which, he warned, would dissipate in Russia.<sup>658</sup> This contrasts strikingly with the Russian government’s welcoming attitude to Orthodox Bulgarian migrants, who were actively recruited by Russian consuls.<sup>659</sup> Goncharov’s subversive contacts, and the Russian government’s desire not to have to cope with an influx of Old Believer migrants which,

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<sup>653</sup> Marsden, *The Crisis of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia*, pp. 159 and 183.

<sup>654</sup> I. Smolich, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi 1700-1917: chast’ vtoraiia* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo spaso-preobrazhenskogo valaamskogo monastyria, 1997), pp. 147-148.

<sup>655</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> August 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 131.

<sup>656</sup> Call, *Vasily L. Kelsiev*, p. 136, and Leont’ev, dispatch of 10<sup>th</sup> April 1868, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 188.

<sup>657</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> August 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 132.

<sup>658</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniiia*, p. 144.

<sup>659</sup> Khevrolina, ‘Bor’ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel’nost’ rossiiskikh konsul’stv)’, in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraiia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, p. 240.

Leont'ev estimated, could number six or seven thousand people, may have been the real reasons for Leont'ev's attempts to dissuade Goncharov from leading his followers back to Russia.

*Leont'ev and the 'Tanzimat' reforms*

Leont'ev served in the Ottoman Empire during the era of the 'Tanzimat' reforms, in which, as he put it, 'Turkey's western friends' sought to replace 'sincere Islamism' with 'neo-Turkish state patriotism'.<sup>660</sup> In particular, during his postings in Adrianople and Tulcea he witnessed the introduction of the vilayet system. In a dispatch of March 1867, Leont'ev gave a lengthy explanation of why he believed that, despite its notional commitment to equality for Christians, the new system was in fact bad for them. In particular, he wrote that while the vilayet councils had equal numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim seats, this meant that Orthodox Christians were often forced to compete for the latter with other religious groups, such as Jews and Armenians. Furthermore, said Leont'ev, the electoral system gave the local administration control over the results, since it chose the list of nominees who could be elected by the elders of each religious community, and those elected were again subject to its veto, whereas under the 'old system' – presumably a reference to the provincial councils which had been set up in the 1840s – the Orthodox elders had had a free choice.<sup>661</sup> Finally, the appointed members would predominate over the elected ones. Thus, Leont'ev argued that the introduction of the vilayet system represented a 'civilised despotism' which left Christian communities with less independence than before.<sup>662</sup> In a second dispatch the following month, he reported that he had spoken with the Orthodox elders of Adrianople about how they did not believe that it was possible for them to attain full equality within the vilayet system. They put forward some proposals for reform, in particular an end to Muslim domination of the army and the police, but they emphasised that their real desire was for a European war in which Russia would secure their independence for them. The only Bulgarians happy with the status quo, said Leont'ev, were the 'extreme party' who supported continued Ottoman rule in order to avoid being absorbed into Greece or Serbia.<sup>663</sup> Likewise, another dispatch from Tulcea the following year noted that the vilayet system could not 'compel the Bulgarians to forget that they are Slavs and they cannot have any inner link with the Turks.'<sup>664</sup> When Leont'ev was stationed in Tulcea, he reported that the

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<sup>660</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 202.

<sup>661</sup> Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, p. 148.

<sup>662</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 28<sup>th</sup> March 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 100-107.

<sup>663</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 4<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 100-110.

<sup>664</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> March 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 183.

*Nekrasovtsy* wished to retain their traditional model of communal land ownership, and had enlisted his help to prevent the local Pasha from imposing ownership of individual plots of land on them, presumably as part of the implementation of the 1858 Land Code and the subsequent regulations.<sup>665</sup> While he may have been guilty of reporting what his superiors wished to hear, dispatches like these helped to strengthen the Russian government's position concerning the Eastern Question: Ignat'ev forwarded Leont'ev's account of his talks with the Adrianople elders to the foreign ministry in support of the proposal to secure administrative autonomy for the Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>666</sup>

During his posting in Tulcea, Leont'ev witnessed the implementation of the judicial reforms which constituted an important element of the 'Tanzimat'. In December 1867, he reported that Suleiman Pasha, the *Mutesarif* (local governor) of Tulcea, had captured a band of robbers who operated in the area between Tulcea and Izmail, of whom three had been sentenced to death and the rest to penal labour. Previously, said Leont'ev, they had been able to rob at will in Bessarabia thanks to 'the criminal weakness of the Romanian authorities'. Furthermore, public opinion, in Izmail as well as in Tulcea, was that the robbers should be tried in the latter town.<sup>667</sup> This indicates that the vilayet system had enhanced the effectiveness of the police measures available to the Ottoman authorities. However, Leont'ev went on to report that 'the confession of the robbers was compelled by torture.' He argued that Suleiman Pasha was 'sooner a good and loyal than a bad and cruel ruler', but was forced to resort to such measures due to 'the excessive accumulation of affairs in the hands of the governors', the 'ignorance, negligence and corruption of the lower Turkish bureaucracy', and the tension between 'progressive governors' and the traditional Sharia courts, which continued to exist alongside the newly created 'nizami' courts. As a result of all these, he said, Turkish governors lacked 'that self-possession and patience which is necessary for a legal investigation and trial', but simply tried to conclude criminal cases as quickly as possible.<sup>668</sup> Leont'ev recalled that Blunt's denials that the Ottoman authorities tortured prisoners had been issued in similar circumstances.<sup>669</sup> The frequency with which defendants confessed under questioning, but then tried to retract their confessions in court, strongly suggests that the use of torture did continue,

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<sup>665</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 180.

<sup>666</sup> Khevrolina, *Rossiiskii diplomat graf Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev*, p. 200.

<sup>667</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of December 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 158-160.

<sup>668</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>669</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 15<sup>th</sup> December 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 161.

even though it was officially prohibited by the 1858 penal code.<sup>670</sup> In another dispatch from Tulcea, Leont'ev reported that some of the Circassians who had settled in the area had turned to banditry and were preying on local German colonists. When the latter turned to the *Kaimakam* (district governor) in Babadag, he refused to accept their testimony until it was confirmed by that of Muslim witnesses.<sup>671</sup> Thus, Leont'ev's dispatches indicate that the 'Tanzimat' had not in fact secured full legal equality for non-Muslims. Leont'ev also noted the problem of judicial corruption, which, he said, was due to the fact that judges depended on the approval of a government ministry rather than of local society. He added that corruption was especially endemic among Ottoman Christians, 'who have received in the course of the centuries an exclusively commercial upbringing' due to the impossibility until recently of their holding government office. The only solution, he argued, was the adoption of Gorchakov's proposal for local self-government.<sup>672</sup>

The vilayet system was also needed for frontier defence: a raiding party sent across the Danube at Tulcea by the Russian-backed Central Committee of the Bulgarian Benevolent Society in June 1868 suffered heavy losses and was forced to flee into the mountains.<sup>673</sup> Leont'ev estimated that at this time there were over 2,000 Bulgarians in Tulcea who were ready to rise up. However, he added that effective measures of surveillance were in place: the towns in the area were 'full of spies' and Bulgarians were prohibited from leaving their residences without presenting guarantors for themselves.<sup>674</sup> As we saw above, the governor of the Danube vilayet, Midhat Pasha, used the threat of Bulgarian incursions to create an exclusively Muslim local militia, perpetuating one of the main complaints made by the Orthodox elders of Adrianople. Thus, Leont'ev's consular dispatches make clear that to some degree the vilayet system and other 'Tanzimat' reforms did succeed in entrenching the Ottoman state's control of the population, even though they were implemented in ways which belied the values of due process and religious equality which supposedly underpinned them. Leont'ev deftly captured this contradiction when he referred to Midhat Pasha, who 'without a court executes the unhappy Bulgarians', as both a 'janissary' and a 'progressive', which contrasts strikingly with John Blunt's blandly upbeat assessment that the introduction of the vilayet system had been

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<sup>670</sup> Petrov, 'Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864-1868' p. 743.

<sup>671</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 191.

<sup>672</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 29<sup>th</sup> January 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 310-311.

<sup>673</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 213, and Meininger, *Ignatiev and the Establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate 1864-1872*, p. 72.

<sup>674</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 216-217.

welcomed by the Bulgarians and had led to a reduction in banditry, greater prosperity, and better infrastructure.<sup>675</sup>

*Leont'ev and religious controversies in the Ottoman Empire*

While Leont'ev was stationed in Adrianople, the city was one of the main centres of the campaign by Catholic missionaries to entice Orthodox Christians to join the Bulgarian-rite Catholic Church, taking advantage of their frustration with the mostly Greek hierarchy of the Orthodox millet. Consuls from the Catholic powers, in particular France and Austria, supported these efforts, importing Polish Uniate priests to assist in the missionary work. Leont'ev wrote that the French and Austrians were collaborating with 'Propaganda', i.e. the Catholic Church's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.<sup>676</sup> In turn, Russian consuls sought to resist conversions to Uniatism. The competition for Bulgarians' religious allegiance had such diplomatic significance because the Bulgarians' religion would determine which consuls they looked to for protection, and therefore which power enjoyed greater influence in the area. However, we should not assume that these religious conversions were entirely sincere. In practice, as Leont'ev's dispatches make clear, consuls obtained or prevented conversions largely by providing material benefits to local residents. As he pointed out, villagers might sometimes threaten to convert simply to obtain an allowance from the Russian consulate or from local Orthodox churchmen.<sup>677</sup> Uniate converts, he advised a group of Orthodox Bulgarians from a village where a third of the inhabitants had converted, were 'still Orthodox in spirit and accepted the Uniate faith only from monetary advantage'.<sup>678</sup> Accordingly, Bulgarians in Adrianople who had supposedly converted to Uniatism in fact continued to celebrate the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who at the time were not Catholic saints.<sup>679</sup> In a subsequent dispatch, Leont'ev warned Ignat'ev that a Bulgarian schoolteacher who had converted from Uniatism to Orthodoxy 'due to our persuasions' was threatening to leave Adrianople because of the 'stinginess' of the local Bulgarian community. He therefore requested permission to cancel the consulate's subsidy to a local church in order to use the money to pay an allowance to the schoolteacher, and also to help a new Bulgarian church which he thought would be more appreciative of the consulate's support.<sup>680</sup> Leont'ev,

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<sup>675</sup> J. Blunt, letter to A. Layard of 19<sup>th</sup> February 1867, Layard Papers, MSS 38993, f. 332 and f. 333.

<sup>676</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 18<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 122.

<sup>677</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> April 1865, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 85.

<sup>678</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 8<sup>th</sup> March 1865, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 66.

<sup>679</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 18<sup>th</sup> June 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 128.

<sup>680</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 20<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 123.

who had trained as a doctor, even tried to win over the local Bulgarians by offering them free medical treatment, but the scheme had to be abandoned because the Foreign Ministry refused to pay for the necessary medicine.<sup>681</sup>

Leont'ev noted that conversions also took place for political reasons, among Bulgarians who 'are not at all Uniates, but only want to reject the Greek patriarchate, under the influence of the national-Bulgarian movement.' He warned that the Orthodox authorities' corruption meant that their efforts to stop Bulgarians converting to Uniatism were ineffective: 'in the archbishop's envoys they will always see people who seek monetary profits for the Metropolitan.'<sup>682</sup> At the same time, Bulgarian nationalists were not necessarily well-disposed towards Russia. Leont'ev later recalled that the 'merchants, doctors and teachers' who controlled the Bulgarian movement dismissed the above-mentioned Slavonic services organised for them by the Russian consul Stupin, on the grounds that they sounded 'Russian' rather than 'Bulgarian'.<sup>683</sup> He sometimes even went so far as to suggest that it was the Turks, not the Bulgarians, with whom the Russians had a natural religious affinity. The Turks, wrote Leont'ev, believed in legends to the effect that the Orthodox, but not other Christians, were fellow 'peoples of the book', while Russian soldiers' respect for mosques during the war of 1828-1829 contrasted with the disrespectful behaviour of French troops during the Crimean War.<sup>684</sup>

Russian consuls also tried to win over Bulgarians by offering them education. The Ottoman authorities had abolished exclusively Bulgarian schools in favour of mixed ones as part of the implementation of the vilayet system. In areas with a mixed Bulgarian and Greek population, this meant that many Bulgarian parents began sending their children to schools run by Uniate missionaries so that they would not be exposed to Greek nationalist teachers.<sup>685</sup> At first the Russian government attempted to counteract the influence of Uniate schools by selecting Bulgarian youths for education in Russia. However, as Leont'ev pointed out, this risked exposing them to revolutionary radicals.<sup>686</sup> Russian consuls therefore supported the

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<sup>681</sup> Khevroлина, 'Bor'ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel'nost' rossiiskikh konsul'stv)', in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, p. 252.

<sup>682</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 21<sup>st</sup> April 1865, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>683</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 184.

<sup>684</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 4<sup>th</sup> March 1867, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>685</sup> Khevroлина, 'Bor'ba Rossii za usilenie svoikh pozitsii na Balkanakh v 1856-1875 godakh (deiatel'nost' rossiiskikh konsul'stv)', in *Geopoliticheskie faktory vo vneshnei politike Rossii: Vtoraia polovina XVI – nachalo XX veka*, pp. 254-255.

<sup>686</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska o neobkhodimosti literaturnogo vliianiia vo Frakii', *Pss* vol. 10 part 1, p. 359.



establishment of Bulgarian schools in Thrace, in the hope that this would imbue young Bulgarians with loyalty to Russia. The Bulgarians, though, did not always share the priorities of their Russian patrons. Leont'ev recorded that in one Thracian city, the Russian and Greek consuls set up an Orthodox school to counter the Uniate school supported by the French and Austrian consuls. However, the Orthodox Bulgarian schoolmaster used the occasion of a festival at the school to attack the Greeks in his speech, despite the Russian consul's admonition that 'the school was founded for resistance to Catholicism, not Hellenism'.<sup>687</sup> In a dispatch of 1871, Leont'ev argued that Russia should not concern itself unduly with promoting Bulgarian schools, since this would irritate the Greeks and it was hard to tell which of these two peoples would be more useful to Russia in the future.<sup>688</sup>

Nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire, having struggled to make converts among its Muslim and Jewish communities, concluded that it was necessary to convert Ottoman Christians, or reform their churches along Protestant lines, in order to offer a positive example of Christianity to the Muslims and Jews.<sup>689</sup> Furthermore, many Western Protestants appear not to have acknowledged the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire as truly Christian. John Blunt, who as we have already seen was sceptical about Orthodox Christians' claims of mistreatment, was nonetheless willing to defend the rights of Protestants in the Ottoman Empire: during his tenure as consul-general at Salonica, he protested about their persecution by the Orthodox Church and helped the Protestant converts at Bankso to obtain recognition as a separate community.<sup>690</sup> One Protestant missionary in Philippopolis expressed the hope that the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy 'may ultimately contribute to the conversion of the nation to Christ'.<sup>691</sup> Likewise, Frederick Flocken, the Methodist missionary whom Leont'ev encountered in Tulcea, concentrated his energies on the local Molokan, Bulgarian, and German communities, rather than on the Muslims.<sup>692</sup> Leont'ev advised him to proceed cautiously, worried that he might provoke a schism among the Molokans, but ultimately he did succeed in persuading at least some of them to accept a

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<sup>687</sup> Leont'ev, 'Panslavizm i Greki', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 190-191.

<sup>688</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> November 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 411-412.

<sup>689</sup> J. McCarthy, 'Missionaries and the American Image of the Turks', in *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, eds. M. Aydin and C. Ergun (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 26.

<sup>690</sup> J. Blunt, letter to the Vali of Salonica of 29<sup>th</sup> September 1881, Blunt Papers, MS46/A/2/2/55/7, and R. Thomson, letter to Blunt of 14<sup>th</sup> October 1882, Blunt Papers, MS46/A/2/2/56/4.

<sup>691</sup> T. Nestorova, *American missionaries among the Bulgarians 1858-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 10.

<sup>692</sup> [Methodist Episcopal Church], *Forty-Fifth Annual Report of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: 1864), p. 16.

priesthood and the sacraments of marriage and baptism, and they also agreed to write to their co-religionists in Russia about these innovations.<sup>693</sup> Leont'ev later recorded that Flocken had told him that he had made more progress among the Russian sectarians than among the Bulgarians, due to the former's 'sincerity and strength of convictions' and the 'equanimity' of the latter.<sup>694</sup> This echoes Leont'ev's assessment that, apart from among some minority groups, most religious conversions in Ottoman Bulgaria were brought about through practical inducements rather than genuine belief: one Protestant missionary found that the best way to make converts was to distribute medicine.<sup>695</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Leont'ev's letters and dispatches contain a great deal of information about life as a consul in the Ottoman Balkans, much of which has not previously been taken into account by scholars. Consuls monitored each other's activities and sought to undermine each other's influence. Nonetheless, this did not prevent amicable relations from developing between them, even as they remained aloof from the local population, which suggests that they felt that they had more in common with each other, as fellow representatives of the European powers, than with the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire. Even in minor postings, consuls dealt with sensitive political issues such as the struggle for converts between Orthodoxy, Uniatism, and Protestantism, and the presence of Polish and Russian nationalist and revolutionary groups, as well as of émigré communities such as the Old Believers of the Dobruja. They also witnessed the profound changes taking place in Ottoman society as a result of the 'Tanzimat' reforms: Leont'ev's reports demonstrate that while the 'Tanzimat' did strengthen the authority of the Ottoman state, enhancing its ability to defeat rebellion and cross-border raids, it did not alleviate the position of the religious minorities to whom it had supposedly extended equal citizenship, and in some respects made their position worse than it had been previously. Experiences such as these could hardly fail to make their mark on Leont'ev's political thought.

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<sup>693</sup> Leont'ev, dispatches of 12<sup>th</sup> February and 10<sup>th</sup> April 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 181 and p. 188.

<sup>694</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniiakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 447.

<sup>695</sup> Nestorova, *American missionaries among the Bulgarians 1858-1912*, p. 25.

## Chapter 6: The development of Leont'ev's thought, 1863-1874

### *Introduction*

The significance of Leont'ev's consular career for his intellectual development has not received the scholarly attention which it deserves. Many scholars, including Dale Nelson and Leont'ev's early biographer A. Konopliantsev, hindered by their lack of access to his consular dispatches, have treated it as a mere prelude to the time which he spent on Mount Athos, overlooking the development of his thought during this period. Stansislav Khatuntsev, in his intellectual biography of Leont'ev, argues that, as a result of his experiences as a diplomat, Leont'ev came to believe that only Ottoman rule could preserve the Orthodox and Slavic character of the Balkan peoples against destructive European influence.<sup>696</sup> Leont'ev's writings support this argument: in 1865, he wrote about the Greeks and Bulgarians that: 'Under Turkish rule many constraints still alienate them from Europe and from fruitless and empty imitations. Once they have been set free from political dependence by some confluence of circumstances, what will they oppose to the overwhelming culture of the West? One has only to look at the independent Greeks to see that there is little original in them.'<sup>697</sup> Likewise, Leont'ev wrote in 1879 that he went to the Ottoman Empire as a cultural Slavophile, but, living there, 'I understood with fear and anger that *thanks only to the Turks* much that is truly Orthodox and Slavic still endures in the East.'<sup>698</sup> Khatuntsev accounts for this in Marxist terms, arguing that Leont'ev supported the preservation of Ottoman rule because it supposedly restrained capitalist development and preserved the remnants of feudalism in the Balkans.<sup>699</sup> However, this view is not borne out by Leont'ev's writings from the 1860s, or by what is known about his intellectual influences at the time, which we will now consider in more detail.

### *The development of Leont'ev's thought during his consular career*

As we have already seen, while Leont'ev's political views were largely undeveloped prior to his becoming a diplomat, he had positioned himself within an aesthetic school of thought which emphasised the defence of cultural distinctiveness against mediocrity and uniformity. Whereas Khatuntsev argues that Leont'ev's appreciation of Eastern society was due to the fact that it had preserved the remnants of the feudal system, Leont'ev's own writings from the 1860s

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<sup>696</sup> S. Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont'ev: intellektual'naia biografiia, 1850-1874 gg.* (St Petersburg: Aleteia, 2007), p. 120.

<sup>697</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska o neobkhodimosti literaturnogo vliianiia vo Frakii', *Pss* vol. 10 part 1, p. 353.

<sup>698</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma otshelnika', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 546.

<sup>699</sup> Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont'ev: intellektual'naia biografiia*, p. 119.

indicate that he chiefly valued its cultural diversity. He emphasised the variety of peoples he encountered in the Balkans, including: ‘Turks, Tartars, Circassians, Moldavians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Gypsies, Jews, German colonists and *Russians of several kinds*’. As a result of this, he gained ‘a clear and living acquaintance with the common Russian man, *transferred to foreign soil*’.<sup>700</sup> This echoes Leont’ev’s earlier view of tribal diversity as the key to anthropological study. In one of his letters to Nikolai Strakhov, he noted that his views on national distinctiveness had been formed ‘among the Russians on the Danube by comparing them with their other neighbours.’ He had learned that ‘real diversity’ came from societies’ different approaches to various aspects of life. For example, Russians’ ‘combination of fondness for women with piety’ was similar to that of ‘the Latin tribes’, while ‘our moderation and common sense in state-civic aims more closely resembles the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon and German nationalities.’<sup>701</sup> In accordance with this emphasis on diversity, he took a more positive view than most Russian conservatives of the Old Believers, writing that ‘the schism is one of the greatest blessings for Russia’ because: ‘The more diverse the Russian spirit, the better.’<sup>702</sup> During his time in the Ottoman Empire, Leont’ev continued to admire Mill, sometimes reading him aloud to Fanny Blunt.<sup>703</sup> However, he apparently now saw the distinctiveness of different societies, rather than the ‘daring independence’ of the individual, as the best guarantee of cultural flourishing, as the above-mentioned letter to Strakhov indicates. In an 1867 article he has a character in a conversation say that Mill was right to warn against the rise of stifling cultural conformity, but wrong to rely on the creativity of individual thinkers to counter it, since individuality can flourish only when society is ‘original and rich in content’. The character also likens societies to apples, which resemble each other in early life and in death, but are at their most distinct from each other in maturity.<sup>704</sup> Leont’ev here clearly draws on his scientific training by analogising societies to plants, anticipating the concept of ‘triune development’ which he would later develop while on Mount Athos and in Constantinople. In 1869 he argued that living abroad had made him a more perceptive analyst of Russian society: ‘A long way from the fatherland I see it better and value it more highly ...

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<sup>700</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Gramotnost’ i narodnost’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 90-91.

<sup>701</sup> Leont’ev, letter to N. Strakhov, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1870, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>702</sup> Leont’ev, letter to N. Strakhov, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1870, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 72.

<sup>703</sup> Leont’ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1867, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 51.

<sup>704</sup> Leont’ev, ‘S Dunaia’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 59.

The country in which I now live is especially advantageous for grasping the historical vocation of Russia in all its breadth.<sup>705</sup>

To an extent which much of the existing scholarship has not acknowledged, Leont'ev's retrospective views on the emancipation of the Russian peasantry in 1861 appear to have been shaped by his experiences in the Ottoman Empire. As we have already seen, there is little contemporaneous evidence that Leont'ev was a committed supporter of emancipation when it took place. Khatuntsev identifies Leont'ev's visit to Russia in 1868-1869, during which he supposedly grew disillusioned with the progress of Alexander II's reforms, as a particularly important influence on his thought.<sup>706</sup> However, it is clear that by this stage Leont'ev supported the abolition of serfdom, in marked contrast to his attitude to the reforms in general. His niece Maria, who stayed with her uncle in Ioannina after his return to the Ottoman Empire, recalled that: 'in contemporary Russia he loved then and honoured only the foreign policy of Her Sovereign and everything in the people which was not touched by the reforms', the only one of which he supported was the emancipation of the serfs.<sup>707</sup> As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the support for emancipation which Leont'ev would express later in life was based largely on the fact that the village commune was preserved and the peasants were provided with land. A possible explanation for this is his encounter with the Old Believers in the Dobruja. As he noted at the time, they maintained communal land ownership, which, according to one of his dispatches, was beneficial in that it prevented the development of a proletariat.<sup>708</sup>

Leont'ev's writings from the 1860s indicate that he had come to believe that Russia was richer than Europe in cultural originality. In an 1868 letter to Ignat'ev, he declared his intention to write to Mill in order to refute the latter's criticisms of Russia, arguing that Russia in fact approximated the ideal of 'diverse development' which *On Liberty*, in his understanding, championed.<sup>709</sup> In the same year, he wrote to Gubastov from Tulcea about an argument with a French tourist in which: 'I demonstrated to him that Russia is richer than France in spiritual principles.'<sup>710</sup> During the late 1860s, Leont'ev was at work on a cycle of novels, *The River of Time*, which he subsequently destroyed when he moved to Mount Athos.

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<sup>705</sup> Leont'ev, 'Neskol'ko vospominanii i myslei o pokoinom Ap. Grigor'ev'e', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 14.

<sup>706</sup> Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont'ev: intellektual'naia biografii*, p. 174.

<sup>707</sup> M. Leont'eva, 'Ianina', *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 89.

<sup>708</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 12<sup>th</sup> February 1868, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 180.

<sup>709</sup> Leont'ev, letter to N. P. Ignat'ev, May or June 1868, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 62.

<sup>710</sup> Gubastov, 'Iz" lichnykh" vospominany o K. N. Leont'ev'e', in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, p. 204.

According to his niece Maria, *The River of Time* sought to demonstrate ‘that Russian life is much richer than it was possible to see from its literature until then’.<sup>711</sup> In 1867 he wrote that Europe was moving towards ‘bourgeois impersonality’ and ‘terrifying uniformity’. Therefore: ‘Our main vocation is to oppose the colourless bourgeois prose of the West with a new poetry of Russian life, diverse and rich.’<sup>712</sup> At the same time, he argued that European influence was undermining cultural originality in the Ottoman Empire, writing in a dispatch of 1867 that ordinary Turks were discontented with the ‘Tanzimat’ reforms because ‘any step which Turkey makes on the path of European progress encroaches on one or another sacred object of Muslim life.’<sup>713</sup> Subsequently, he warned that the ‘Tanzimat’, by destroying the traditional supremacy of Muslims over Christians, would turn the Ottoman Empire from the ‘Persia of Cyrus and Xerxes, full of diverse satrapies, into the plain France of the Napoleons.’ In such a state, wrote Leont’ev, the Ottoman Slavs would lack cultural originality because, with no monarchy or aristocracy of their own, they ‘without exception are democrats and constitutionalists’ and shared a ‘disposition to equality and freedom’.<sup>714</sup> Therefore, they had fallen under the leadership of the urban bourgeoisie of doctors, merchants, lawyers, and teachers, educated in the European style. Even their priests, he noted, ‘differentiate themselves little from secular people.’<sup>715</sup> Leont’ev would later write that while the Orthodox Church overtly enjoyed greater freedom thanks to the ‘Tanzimat’, its prestige and influence had been subtly undermined: ‘the previous conditions of external oppression and spiritual authority were better’.<sup>716</sup>

Another important theme which began to emerge in Leont’ev’s thought during his service as a consul was the idea that Greece and Russia shared a special bond due to their Orthodox faith. The first time that he explicitly stated this was in a speech he gave as vice-consul at Tulcea in 1867, in honour of the marriage of King George of Greece and the Russian Grand Duchess Ol’ga Constantinova. Russia and Greece, he said, had been ‘united by the holy bonds of a common faith’ since the time of Russia’s conversion to Orthodoxy by Byzantium. Furthermore, Greek influence had shaped Russian Christianity, while Russian wealth and power supported the Greek Church.<sup>717</sup> This speech was possibly intended first and foremost as a diplomatic courtesy to the local Greek community, but the ideas which it expressed would

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<sup>711</sup> M. Leont’eva, ‘Ivanina’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 88.

<sup>712</sup> Leont’ev, ‘S Dunaia’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 58-59.

<sup>713</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 4<sup>th</sup> March 1867, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 112.

<sup>714</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slaviansvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 365.

<sup>715</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slaviansvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 358-359.

<sup>716</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Sud’ba Bismarka i nedomolvki Katkova’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 290.

<sup>717</sup> Leont’ev, ‘S Dunaia’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 68.

recur in Leont'ev's writings. In part, this was because he witnessed Pan-Orthodox sentiment among ordinary Greeks. As consul at Ioannina, he reported that when the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph visited the nearby port city of Preveza, 'the Orthodox people did not pay any attention to him, whereas one false rumour about the arrival of His Imperial Highness Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich from Korfu with a Russian frigate recently brought the whole city to joyful excitement and attracted the whole population to the seashore.'<sup>718</sup> Likewise, during the Franco-Prussian War, Leont'ev wrote that ordinary people in Ioannina supported the Prussians because they believed that Prussia was an ally of Russia.<sup>719</sup> In a dispatch from Ioannina in 1870, he noted that he was the only consul to be trusted by the city's leaders.<sup>720</sup> Furthermore, Leont'ev began to realise the tension between Orthodox unity and Pan-Slavism. He reported that the Metropolitan of Ioannina, Sofronii, regarded the Bulgarians and Serbians as dangerous enemies of the Greeks and feared that the Russian government would side with the other Slavs. Therefore, argued Sofronii, only reconciliation between the Greeks and the Turks could pave the way for Greek predominance in the Balkans and 'the rebirth of Byzantium.' Leont'ev countered that Russia in fact tried to promote harmony between the peoples of the East, and felt closer to the Greeks than to the Poles, even though the latter were Slavs. He added in his dispatch that reconciliation between Greeks and Turks was unrealistic, due to the animus which existed on both sides, and that the Greeks could rely only on Russia and England.<sup>721</sup>

Leont'ev was not cut off from Russian intellectual life while in the Ottoman Empire. Maria recorded that while she was staying with her uncle in Ioannina, they took pleasure in reading Aleksandr Gertsen's *My Past and Thoughts*.<sup>722</sup> Leont'ev later wrote that he admired Gertsen, despite their diametrically opposed politics, for being the first to say in print that constitutional liberalism could never take root in Russia.<sup>723</sup> He also credited Gertsen, rather than the Slavophiles, with inspiring his disdain for the 'colourless bourgeoisie' of the West.<sup>724</sup> However, out of the texts which Leont'ev read during his time in the Ottoman Empire, that which made by far the greatest impression on him was Nikolai Danilevskii's *Russia and Europe*. Danilevskii, while partly inspired by Apollon Grigor'ev's views on national

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<sup>718</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 5<sup>th</sup> June 1869, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 230.

<sup>719</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1870, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 278.

<sup>720</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1870, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 270.

<sup>721</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 30<sup>th</sup> June 1870, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>722</sup> M. Leont'eva, 'Ivanina', *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 88.

<sup>723</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pol'skaia emigratsiia na nizhnem Dunae', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 461.

<sup>724</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 155.

distinctiveness, attempted to apply scientific methods to the study of history, which he came to understand in terms of the rise and fall of civilisations, or ‘cultural-historical types’. These, he believed, arose out of peoples who shared a common language or language group. Provided that it was politically independent, such a ‘tribe or family of peoples’ could eventually evolve into a federation or state system and then attain cultural flourishing before inevitably withering away.<sup>725</sup> This cultural flourishing took place within four areas: religion, the arts and sciences, politics, and economic activity.<sup>726</sup> Danilevskii argued that the Eastern Question was merely the latest manifestation of the age-old hostility between the Germanic and Slavic worlds, with the former shoring up the Ottoman Empire in order to prevent the Balkan Slavs from achieving their cultural potential.<sup>727</sup> Russia, he wrote, needed to form a Pan-Slav union, with its capital at Constantinople, in order to enable Slavdom to develop into a new cultural-historical type which, unlike all the others, would excel in all four dimensions of cultural activity.<sup>728</sup> The alternative would be for the Slavs to succumb to the ‘Europeanism’ which had already infected Russia via Peter I’s innovations, and eventually to be reduced to mere ‘ethnographic material’.<sup>729</sup> Maria, who was staying with Leont’ev in Ioannina at the time, recalled that when *Russia and Europe* was first published in the journal *Zaria* in 1869, ‘Uncle himself read it, compelled me to read it aloud to him, and found that almost everything in it was the truth.’<sup>730</sup> In a March 1870 letter to Nikolai Strakhov, Leont’ev praised Danilevskii for being ‘the first who confidently put in print the originality of culture as an aim.’ He favourably compared Danilevskii with the Moscow Slavophiles, who ‘somehow did not come to an agreement about this’.<sup>731</sup> In other words, Leont’ev found echoes of his own emphasis on the importance of cultural originality in Danilevskii. His pejorative comments about European cultural influence also prefigured Danilevskii’s. In a second letter to Strakhov of November that year, Leont’ev again praised *Russia and Europe*, referring to it as the ‘Gospel of Danilevskii’, but implied that his peers in the diplomatic service did not share his enthusiasm for it: ‘precisely due to its extreme conclusiveness and abstractness’, he said, it was ‘accessible to few’, and ‘many to

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<sup>725</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, trans. S. Woodburn (Bloomington: Slavica, 2013), p. 76.

<sup>726</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 405.

<sup>727</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 274.

<sup>728</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 331 and p. 436.

<sup>729</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 346.

<sup>730</sup> M. Leont’eva, ‘Ilanina’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 88.

<sup>731</sup> Leont’ev, letter to N. N. Strakhov, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1870, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, pp. 70 and 73.



whom I showed it did not want to finish it, although not enemies of Slavophilism and not entirely shallow people.’<sup>732</sup>

While Leont’ev’s reception of *Russia and Europe* in 1869 was clearly positive, its precise relationship to his own thought is a complex and important subject which has not been adequately addressed in the existing literature. Gogolev, in what has become the received opinion among Russian scholars, argues, without elaboration, that ‘Leont’ev used only the conceptual apparatus of *Russia and Europe* ... to express his own views.’<sup>733</sup> However, he fails to explain how Leont’ev actually did so. Relatively little effort has been made to account for how his experiences as a diplomat in the East shaped his appreciation of Danilevskii’s work. A. Konopliantsev, in one of the earliest biographies of Leont’ev, depicts an orderly intellectual evolution from the Slavophiles to Danilevskii, who developed the theory of cultural-historical types, and then to Leont’ev, who built on Danilevskii’s work by identifying the ‘laws of development’ of cultural-historical types in order to be able to draw comparisons between them and to predict Russia’s future.<sup>734</sup> This overlooks the evolution of Leont’ev’s thought during his diplomatic career in the 1860s, which paved the way for his favourable reception of *Russia and Europe*. On the other hand, Khatuntsev argues that Leont’ev and Danilevskii arrived at similar conclusions independently of each other, observing that Leont’ev’s ideas about the cultural decay of Europe were expressed in his writings from the 1860s, before he read *Russia and Europe* in 1869.<sup>735</sup> Accordingly, Leont’ev subsequently wrote that *Russia and Europe* struck him ‘not as something new, but only as a highly satisfactory expression of my own views.’<sup>736</sup> However, Khatuntsev overlooks the extent to which, while Leont’ev agreed with Danilevskii’s analysis of the need for Russia to differentiate itself culturally from the West, his support for continued Ottoman rule in the Balkans clearly differentiated his political vision from Danilevskii’s. Given this, and the fact that Leont’ev’s political thought would diverge even more clearly from Danilevskii’s after he moved to Mount Athos and then Constantinople in

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<sup>732</sup> Leont’ev, letter to N. Strakhov, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1870, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 79.

<sup>733</sup> R. Gogolev, ‘Angel’skii doktor’ russkoi istorii: filosofii istorii K. N. Leont’eva – opyt rekonstruktsii (Moscow: AIRO-XXI, 2007), p. 64.

<sup>734</sup> A. Konopliantsev, ‘Zhizn’ K. N. Leont’eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniiia’, in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont’eva* (St Petersburg: Literaturnyi Sbornik”, 1911), p. 90.

<sup>735</sup> S. Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont’ev: intellektual’naia biografiia, 1850-1874 gg.* (St Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2007), pp. 136 and 140.

<sup>736</sup> Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont’ev: intellektual’naia biografiia*, p. 174.

the early 1870s, there may be some truth in the assessment of his biographer Nikolai Berdiaev that he exaggerated the similarities of his own thought with Danilevskii's.<sup>737</sup>

Therefore, we can see that Leont'ev's career as a consul saw him undergo a profound intellectual evolution. First and foremost, he valued the social diversity and complexity which he encountered in the East, believing that it was the best antidote to cultural homogenisation and uniformity, the rejection of which was the basis of his political thought. His writings make clear his marked distaste for the westernised local bourgeoisie which he encountered in the towns of the Ottoman Balkans, especially Adrianople, and in particular the fact that they were frequently prepared to abandon Orthodoxy for Uniatism, often in return for material inducements. This contributed to his development of the view that 'Europeanism' was, as he later wrote, not 'enlightenment' but merely 'the popularisation of European bourgeois ideas'.<sup>738</sup> Therefore, he supported continued Ottoman rule as a counterweight to European influence. Furthermore, he came to blame the 'Tanzimat', which he ascribed to Western diplomatic pressure on the Ottoman Empire, for eroding local traditions and undermining the autonomy of Christian communities. On the other hand, his encounters with the diverse Russian communities of the Dobruja, in particular the Old Believers, bolstered his faith in Russia's cultural originality. The time which he spent in Ottoman Greece inspired him with the idea that Orthodoxy created a natural bond between Greeks and Russians, which, to an extent that many Russian conservatives who had not lived in the East did not realise, called into question the ideology of Pan-Slavism, due to the mutual suspicions between Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians. Finally, Leont'ev's relations with British consuls, in particular the Blunts, shaped his perception of England as a country with an original culture, while his less favourable impression of their French counterparts strengthened his view of France as the epitome of destructive European influence. Leont'ev's unique background as a diplomat in the Ottoman Empire, and the role it played in shaping his political thought, was arguably what made him so difficult to categorise in terms of the prevailing intellectual trends in nineteenth-century Russia.

*The evolution of Leont'ev's thought on Athos and in Constantinople*

As we have seen, Leont'ev's political thought underwent profound developments during his time as a consul. It would continue to do so after he removed himself to Mount Athos in 1871 and then to Constantinople in 1872. His flight to Mount Athos, unauthorised by Ignat'ev,

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<sup>737</sup> N. Berdiaev, *Leontiev* (Orono: Academic International, 1968), p. 73.

<sup>738</sup> Leont'ev, 'Russians, Greeks, and Yugoslavs', *Against the Current*, p. 196.

appears to have been provoked by a severe illness which was accompanied by a religious conversion to what he would later describe as ‘personal Orthodoxy’. Leont’ev’s most often cited account of this episode, an 1891 letter to his friend Vasilii Rozanov, asserts that he was miraculously cured of his illness before leaving Salonica, within hours of praying to an icon of the Mother of God which he had received from the monks of Athos. However, his contemporary correspondence, and his 1875 memoir, make clear that he was ill when he arrived on Mount Athos and for some time afterwards.<sup>739</sup> He initially intended to take monastic vows, and although the *starsy* dissuaded him from doing so, he remained on Mount Athos under their spiritual guidance for more than a year.<sup>740</sup> At the same time, to an extent which most existing biographies have overlooked, Leont’ev continued to engage in practical activity as a diplomat until he was relieved as consul at Salonica. This in turn undermines the assertion found in many biographies of Leont’ev that he left Salonica for Mount Athos because he had fallen out with Ignat’ev over the latter’s support for the Bulgarians in the controversy over their campaign for a national church.<sup>741</sup> As was discussed above, contrary to what these biographies argue, Ignat’ev did not unequivocally support the Bulgarians, but did his best to mediate a compromise between them and the Patriarchate, which brought him into conflict with the radical Bulgarian faction led by Chomakov. Furthermore, Leont’ev’s opposition to the Bulgarian cause developed only later, while he was in Constantinople. After leaving Mount Athos in the autumn of 1872, Leont’ev lived in Constantinople and on the nearby island of Halki until his return to Russia in the spring of 1874.<sup>742</sup> As we shall see, while Leont’ev’s political thought did evolve as a result of his reading and reflection while on Mount Athos and then in Constantinople, and the experience of living in these places, this was a period during which he developed and made explicit some of the ideas which he had begun to reflect upon during his prior service as a consul, rather than making a radical break with the past.

When Leont’ev was stationed in Salonica, Mount Athos, where he took up residence in July 1871, lay in his area of responsibility. As we have already seen, Russian interest in Athos increased drastically during the nineteenth century. The Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, second son of Emperor Nicholas I, visited Athos during his cruise around the Mediterranean

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<sup>739</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moia literaturnaia sud’ba, 1874-1875’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 129, and letter to N. P. Ignat’ev, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1872, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 82.

<sup>740</sup> Leont’ev, letter to V. Rozanov, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August 1891, in *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 588.

<sup>741</sup> Khatuntsev, *Konstantin Leont’ev: intellektual’naia biografiia*, p. 187, and Konopliantsev, ‘Zhizn’ K. N. Leont’eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniia’, in *Pamiati Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont’eva*, p. 86.

<sup>742</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Khronologiiia moei zhizni’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 2, p. 33.

in 1845, receiving an enthusiastic reception from its inhabitants. In turn, he displayed his reverence for the icons and relics, and was especially pleased by the liturgy in the Panteleimon monastery and the skete of Prophet Elijah, where, he observed, ‘they serve and sing entirely in our style’. On the other hand, he said, the Serbian and Bulgarian monks of the Zograf and Hilandar monasteries, although they worshipped in Slavonic, ‘sing in an unbearable Greek melody.’<sup>743</sup> It was thus clear to a Russian visitor that Athos combined various national Orthodox traditions. A second royal visitor, in June 1867, was Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, the fifth child of Emperor Alexander II, who was invited by Ignat’ev at the request of Abbot Gerasim of the Panteleimon monastery. Ignat’ev envisioned that the visit would promote Russian influence both on Athos and in the Orthodox East more generally. Like Konstantin Nikolaevich twenty-two years earlier, Aleksei Aleksandrovich mainly visited the cloisters populated by Slavic monks.<sup>744</sup> The royal visits to Athos helped to raise its prestige in Russia: partly as a result, the number of Russian monks there increased steadily, from around 200 in 1839 to more than 5,000 by the early twentieth century.<sup>745</sup> The visits also prompted an influx of alms, and Leont’ev’s duties as consul at Salonica included allocating money which was donated by Russians to the Athos monasteries without specifying which of them should receive it.<sup>746</sup> Russian monks grew more assertive due to the monasteries’ growing financial dependence on contributions from Russia, especially that of the Panteleimon monastery, which in the 1860s saw disputes between Russian and Greek monks over whose language should predominate.<sup>747</sup> On Ignat’ev’s advice, in order to promote peace, Aleksei Aleksandrovich made a point of praising the co-existence of Russians and Greeks in the monastery.<sup>748</sup> The British were concerned about the strengthening of the Russian presence on Mount Athos, which Stratford Canning, the ambassador to Constantinople from 1825 to 1828 and 1841 to 1858, saw as ‘one of the strongholds of Russian influence in Greece’.<sup>749</sup>

Leont’ev encountered these tensions when, after his arrival on Athos, he continued to deal with the monasteries’ internal politics, and in particular the power struggle which broke

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<sup>743</sup> V. Voronin, ‘Velikii kniaz’ Konstantin Nikolaevich na pravoslavnom Vostoke i arabskom Zapade v seredine 1840-x gg.’, *Rossiiskaia istoriia*, 2019, no. 2, p. 92.

<sup>744</sup> P. Pakhomov, ‘Vysokii delatel’ khristianskikh dobrodetelei i velikii zashchitnik russkikh’, in *Graf Ignat’ev i Russkii Sviato-Panteleimonov Monastyr’*, ed. M. Makienko (St Panteleimon Monastery: 2016), p. 504.

<sup>745</sup> N. Fennell, *The Russians on Athos* (Oxford: Lang, 2001), p. 48.

<sup>746</sup> Leont’ev, dispatch of 15<sup>th</sup> June 1871, *K. N. Leont’ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 368.

<sup>747</sup> Fennell, *The Russians on Athos*, p. 101.

<sup>748</sup> Pakhomov, ‘Vysokii delatel’ khristianskikh dobrodetelei i velikii zashchitnik russkikh’, in *Graf Ignat’ev i Russkii Sviato-Panteleimonov Monastyr’*, p. 507.

<sup>749</sup> I. Smirnova, ‘A. N. Murav’ev i ‘Afonskii vopros’ (1850-1870-e gg.)’, in *200 let diplomaticheskoi podderzhki russkogo prisutsviia na Blizhnem Vostoke*, eds. S. Zhitenev et al. (Moscow: Indrik, 2019), p. 386.

out in the skete of Prophet Elijah, which was inhabited mostly by Little Russian monks but affiliated to the Greek Pantokrator monastery, in November 1871. Following the death of the abbot, Father Paisii, in September, a faction of the monks led by a certain Father Andrei tried to overturn his will, which specified that they should choose a new abbot from outside the skete and leave its assets in the hands of the treasurer, Father Innokentii. Innokentii, in Leont'ev's view, now erred by appealing to the Pantokrator monastery rather than allowing the elders of the Russian monasteries on Athos to resolve the matter informally. When Andrei and his followers refused to submit to the judgment of the Pantokrator monks, the latter referred the affair to the Protat, the governing body of the monasteries of Mount Athos, which in turn called in the Ottoman authorities. At this point the dissenting monks turned to Leont'ev, who managed to secure the withdrawal of the Protat officials and the Ottomans, before brokering a compromise whereby Father Paisii's preferred candidate, Father Gervasii, was elected as abbot, Innokentii was persuaded to return to the skete and reconcile with his brothers without the Greeks' involvement, and two of Andrei's supporters were appointed to oversee the skete's finances.<sup>750</sup> Subsequently, in response to a request from the priors of the Pantokrator monastery, Leont'ev fended off an attempt by Andrei's followers to impose a collective leadership on the skete, persuading Andrei to withdraw to the skete of St Andrew, and the other brothers of the skete of Prophet Elijah to accept the Pantokrator's decision to impose a month's penance on him. Leont'ev informed Ignat'ev that, without his involvement, the rebellious Russian monks might have yielded only to force, and the Pantokrator monks might have asked the Ottoman authorities to send troops to suppress them. The Russian monks, said Leont'ev, were happy that this had not happened, while the Greeks were content since the Prophet Elijah skete's rebellion against its parent monastery had been averted.<sup>751</sup> As this episode illustrates, Leont'ev was a more influential figure on Mount Athos during his time there than is often acknowledged by the existing scholarship.

Leont'ev's presence on Mount Athos attracted widespread attention: he later wrote, possibly with some exaggeration, that it gave rise to a 'storm ... in the Greek and Turkish newspapers'.<sup>752</sup> Most educated Greeks and Bulgarians, he noted, refused to believe that he had moved to Athos as a pilgrim, and assumed that he was 'an impostor and a special agent of General Ignat'ev.' This underscored his impression of the secularisation of the bourgeoisie in

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<sup>750</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 9<sup>th</sup> November 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 394-400.

<sup>751</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 24<sup>th</sup> November 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, pp. 414-416.

<sup>752</sup> Leont'ev, letter to Archimandrite Leonid, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1873, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 100.

the Orthodox East.<sup>753</sup> Ignat'ev urged Leont'ev to leave Athos, since the Greeks, the Patriarchate, and the western powers were convinced that his residence there had a political significance, and anti-Russian voices used it as a pretext to accuse the Russians of 'wanting to establish our predominance there, in order to use it subsequently as a tool for the achievement of Pan-Slavist aims.' This, wrote Ignat'ev, was giving rise to 'great embarrassments both for us and, in particular, for the Russian oblates and monks on Athos.'<sup>754</sup> Ignat'ev in fact relented, permitting Leont'ev to remain on Athos pending a decision from the Foreign Ministry.<sup>755</sup> However, Leont'ev did leave Mount Athos soon afterwards, apparently because the *startsya* had rejected his request to become a monk. While his biographer Konopliantsev argued that this was because his 'passionate, impetuous character' made him unsuited to monastic life, Leont'ev himself speculated that the refusal was due to the need to avoid angering the Russian Embassy or Synod.<sup>756</sup> Leont'ev's experiences on Athos made a profound impression on him. He observed about the Greek monks that 'to get on well with these authority-loving people is not easy, as is well known to anyone who only happens to live in the East.'<sup>757</sup> However, in one of the last documents he wrote as a diplomat, a long essay dated April 1872 about relations between Russia and Athos, he argued that while it overtly appeared to be dominated by the Greeks, in fact 'Athos is slowly but evidently Russifying.'<sup>758</sup> He noted that the number of Russians on Athos was increasing and its reputation was spreading in Russia. At the same time, he said, Greek society was growing less pious, and the monks of Athos could not rely on independent Greece, with its bourgeois ruling class, as an ally. Ultimately, anticipated Leont'ev, the Russians would be stronger than the Greeks on Athos not only in numbers but also in terms of 'wealth, authority and even moral influence'.<sup>759</sup> Therefore, he said, Athos and the Dobruja, with its large Russian population, were the 'fulcrums' of Russian policy in the East.<sup>760</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vospominanie ob archimandrite Makarii, igumene russkogo monastyria sviatogo Panteleimona na gore Afonskoi', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 772.

<sup>754</sup> Ignat'ev, letter to Leont'ev of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1872, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 451.

<sup>755</sup> Ignat'ev, letter to Leont'ev of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1872, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 452.

<sup>756</sup> Konopliantsev, 'Zhizn' K. N. Leont'eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniiia', in *Pamiatii Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva*, p. 84, and Leont'ev, 'Moia ispoved', quoted in M. Chizhov, *Konstantin Leont'ev* (Moscow: Institut russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2016), p. 295.

<sup>757</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 9<sup>th</sup> November 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 395.

<sup>758</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniiakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 438.

<sup>759</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniiakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 450.

<sup>760</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniiakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i donesenii*, p. 435.

Leont'ev read and wrote extensively during his time on Mount Athos. He studied the Apostle Paul and Saint John Climacus 'in order to benefit from them, to love them, to imitate them'.<sup>761</sup> It was now that he reached the conclusion, expressed in a series of four letters dated from June to July 1872, that the Orthodox Church and its cultural heritage, to which he applied the adjective 'Byzantine', were the true form of Christianity, derived from the Gospels.<sup>762</sup> This perspective was apparently shaped by his experiences on Mount Athos. In addition to his studies of the above-mentioned church fathers, he was struck by the aesthetic appeal of the cloisters on the Holy Mountain, in particular the Greek and Bulgarian ones, with their 'Eastern and architectural poetry'. He wrote that the Bulgarian Zograf monastery, which had been largely rebuilt in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, combined 'the old Byzantine style with the newest knowledge and methods', forming a 'grandiose and at the same time elegant construction', whereas the Russian buildings were 'too prone, following our half-German officialdom, to barrack-like lines, to white plastered straight walls, to green cupolas and roofs'.<sup>763</sup> On the other hand, Leont'ev noted that the Russian monks were better than the Greeks and Bulgarians at icon-painting and singing.<sup>764</sup> Furthermore, Leont'ev was favourably impressed by the way in which the Zograf monks rejected Bulgarian nationalism. Drawing on reports of a visit to Athos by Bishop Lycurgus of Syra in 1873, he noted that they wished to preserve Orthodox unity, in contrast to the Bulgarian nationalist movement's campaign for a separate church: they 'did not want to sever the link with the Patriarchate, and conducted themselves very cautiously between the Bulgarian Committees and the Constantinople Hierarchy.'<sup>765</sup> Leont'ev also recounted meeting two Old Believers, 'original representatives of old Russia' from an offshoot of the *Nekrasovtsy* community near Lake Manyas in Asia Minor, who were visiting Athos for advice on how they could reconcile with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This encounter may well have helped to strengthen Leont'ev's view of Athos as a centre of the Orthodox world which transcended national and denominational distinctions.<sup>766</sup> Thus, Leont'ev's impressions of Athos imbued him with an aesthetic and religious appreciation of ecumenical Orthodoxy. This Byzantine Orthodoxy, he explained, was a religion of 'discipline' for the state and for the family, and of 'despair in whatever is earthly' for the individual.<sup>767</sup> Therefore, he developed a

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<sup>761</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moia literaturnaia sud'ba, 1874-1875', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 129.

<sup>762</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 145.

<sup>763</sup> Leont'ev, 'Khram i tserkov', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 513, and 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 134.

<sup>764</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 135.

<sup>765</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slaviansvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 349.

<sup>766</sup> Leont'ev, 'Mainoskie starovery', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 509.

<sup>767</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 173.

much more specific definition of the concept of cultural originality, which had emerged as the central value of his thought during the 1860s. As he later wrote, he integrated his new faith in Orthodoxy with his prior emphasis on cultural originality through the realisation that ‘real diversity of development ... cannot survive for a long time without an *organising, constraining, restrictive mystical* unity’, which, for Russia, could only be derived from ‘the strictest protection of Orthodox discipline’.<sup>768</sup>

At the same time, Leont’ev came to define the antithesis of cultural originality and Orthodox Christianity through his study of western thinkers including the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who believed in the need to abolish not only all forms of government, but all social distinctions based on wealth, power, and prestige.<sup>769</sup> Leont’ev also read the British social theorist Henry Buckle, who argued that history was the story of human progress driven by the growth of knowledge and the rise of enlightened public opinion, epitomised by the triumph of parliamentary reform and free trade in nineteenth-century England.<sup>770</sup> Despite the profound differences between these two thinkers, Leont’ev lumped them together as ‘bourgeois’ and recalled that he read them ‘in order to hate them, in order to struggle with their influence, in order to deviate from them as far as possible, as far as philosophical belief permits me.’<sup>771</sup> Leont’ev’s equation of Buckle’s thought with Proudhon’s illustrates that he had come to view moderate liberalism and revolutionary radicalism as essentially identical. Buckle and Proudhon, he wrote, both aimed to maximise individual freedom and equality.<sup>772</sup> They formed part of the ‘general aspiration to ... monotonous simplicity’ which characterised contemporary Europe.<sup>773</sup> Leont’ev concluded while on Athos that liberals and progressives of all countries shared a new faith, which he termed ‘eudaemonism’. This, he explained, was ‘the faith that mankind should attain peaceful, universal bliss on this Earth.’ Some eudaemonists masqueraded as Christians, but in fact they sought to ‘derive from Christianity only a tangible practical utilitarianism.’ Their aim was to create an ‘all-bourgeois, all-peaceful and all-petty Eden’ on Earth.<sup>774</sup> They had lost sight of the Christian teaching that: ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ In Russia, said Leont’ev, two cultures – the ‘ascetic Byzantine’ and ‘eudaemonic

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<sup>768</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kto pravee?’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 156.

<sup>769</sup> A. Ritter, *The Political Thought of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 95 and p. 104.

<sup>770</sup> B. Semmel, ‘H. T. Buckle: the liberal faith and the science of history’, *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 27, no. 3, September 1976, pp. 375-377.

<sup>771</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moia literaturnaia sud’ba, 1874-1875’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 129.

<sup>772</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Srednii evropeets kak ideal i orudie vseirnogo razrusheniia’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 169 and p. 176.

<sup>773</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Srednii evropeets kak ideal i orudie vseirnogo razrusheniia’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 181.

<sup>774</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chetyre pis’ma s Afona’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 145-153.



neo-French' – were 'profoundly intermixed and entangled.'<sup>775</sup> In a letter written while he was in the Ottoman Empire, Leont'ev argued that 'moderate progressives' were in fact more dangerous than revolutionaries, since the latter would provoke a conservative reaction, whereas the former would entice the world with 'material benefit'.<sup>776</sup> This would be a recurrent theme in Leont'ev's thought: writing in 1888, he ascribed to his reading of Proudhon the fact that 'for me 'revolution' and 'progress' are the same thing', since Proudhon had explained that 'revolution is no other than the movement of mankind towards universal earthly moderate prosperity and the highest justice', which necessarily entailed the assimilation and destruction of all distinct religions, cultures, and states.<sup>777</sup>

Leont'ev's writings from the period he spent on Mount Athos make clear the strengthening of his belief in the importance of Pan-Orthodox, as opposed to Pan-Slavic, unity. As we have already seen, Leont'ev first began to explore this idea in the late 1860s, and he emphasised the importance of preventing a clash between Greeks and Russians on Mount Athos while there. In a dispatch of November 1871, he expressed scepticism about the Russian policy of promoting Bulgarian education, which, he feared, would be resented by the Greeks. Furthermore, he argued, 'history ... linked the Greeks with us by both religious legends and geographical circumstances'. If Russia took a Pan-Slavist approach, he warned, its relationship with the Greeks would be undermined, since Russia 'will always be less frightening to them by itself and taken separately from the other Slavs'.<sup>778</sup> This argument would appear to echo Leont'ev's above-mentioned discussions with Metropolitan Sofronii of Ioannina. As he subsequently recalled, it was Orthodoxy which 'since time immemorial gave our activities in this country such a formidable point of support, which not one western power of a different creed possessed.'<sup>779</sup> He also called into question the existence of a Pan-Slavic identity, writing in April 1872 that the Bulgarians had no original culture of their own, but were merely 'a translation from the Greek into the Slavonic language.'<sup>780</sup>

After Leont'ev left Mount Athos for Constantinople in the autumn of 1872, he continued to work through the political implications of the religious and aesthetic experiences

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<sup>775</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 172.

<sup>776</sup> Leont'ev, letter from 1863-1873, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 105.

<sup>777</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 81.

<sup>778</sup> Leont'ev, dispatch of 14<sup>th</sup> November 1871, *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, pp. 411-412.

<sup>779</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi vospominaniia o Frakii', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 171.

<sup>780</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska ob Afonskoi Gore i ob otnosheniakh ee k Rossii', *K. N. Leont'ev: zapiski i doneseniia*, p. 447.

which he had undergone there. He recalled that he arrived in Constantinople as a supporter of the Bulgarians in their campaign for a national church, albeit with some sympathy for the Greeks. However, living ‘in the very centre of the struggle’, he realised that the Bulgarian church question had brought Orthodoxy and ‘tribal Slavism’ into conflict with each other for the first time.<sup>781</sup> Furthermore, after his arrival in Constantinople he grew convinced that the Bulgarians had deliberately caused the schism, by insisting on an Exarchate with jurisdiction over all Bulgarians rather than one with agreed geographical limits.<sup>782</sup> Leont’ev argued that the Bulgarian bishops were under the control of the Europeanised bourgeoisie which had emerged as the driving force in Bulgarian society, and which, acting out of ‘national fanaticism’, exploited the rapaciousness of the Greek ecclesiastical hierarchy to turn the Bulgarian people against it.<sup>783</sup> The Bulgarian radicals led by Chomakov, he maintained, had organised the ‘Bulgarian liturgy’ of 6<sup>th</sup> January 1872, which effectively made the schism inevitable, because the Russian embassy seemed to be succeeding in securing a compromise between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarians. Their aim, he believed, was to sow discord between the Russians and the Greeks.<sup>784</sup> Later he would even claim, presumably drawing on the accounts of colleagues who had been in Constantinople at the time, that the ‘Bulgarian demagogues’ arranged the liturgy in advance with the Ottoman authorities, while deceiving the Russian embassy about what was to happen.<sup>785</sup> Accordingly, he began to reject explicitly the idea that a vital bond existed between Russia and the South Slavs. As early as 1873, he warned that: ‘I positively fear for Russia not only confluence with the South Slavs, but even excessively sincere and thoughtless sympathies for them in all their Slavic aspirations and actions.’<sup>786</sup> Furthermore: ‘The formation of a *single unbroken and all-Slavic state* would be the beginning of the fall of the Russian realm.’<sup>787</sup> He added that the Slavic congress of 1867 should have been replaced with an all-Eastern congress.<sup>788</sup> Later, in 1877, he wrote that ‘Slavism without Orthodoxy’ would be ‘flesh without spirit’ and ‘the two main pillars of Orthodoxy are the

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<sup>781</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma otshelnika’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 547.

<sup>782</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Dopolnenie k dvum statiam o panslavizme’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 269.

<sup>783</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 359.

<sup>784</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 345-346.

<sup>785</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 606.

<sup>786</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Eshche o Greko-Bolgarskoi raspre’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 274.

<sup>787</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Panslavizm i Greki’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 184.

<sup>788</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Panslavizm i Greki’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 195.

Russian State and the Greek nation.’<sup>789</sup> Therefore: ‘The Eastern question is *precisely an Eastern*, and not only a Slavic question’.<sup>790</sup>

Neither did Leont’ev sympathise with Greek nationalism, recalling that during his time in the Ottoman Empire: ‘Athenian liberal politicians then strained so much for a break with Russia under the influence of western suggestions and their own demagogic instincts; they inclined the Constantinople Greeks towards such a break in every way possible ... But these very ‘phanariots’, who continue to be attacked so much among us until now, by some out of naivety and ignorance, by others out of truly profound and inexhaustible treachery, by their wisdom and temperance saved the almost lost ship of Orthodoxy’.<sup>791</sup> In 1884 he recounted how, in the summer of 1872, he had intervened with Iakubovskii, his successor as the Russian consul in Salonica, in defence of the right of pro-Russian, traditionalist Ottoman Greek villagers to continue supporting three Russian nuns who had settled among them, which was being challenged by a merchant from independent Greece, Panaiotaki. Leont’ev recalled the latter as ‘a demagogue and national-liberal, like almost all free Greeks, who put on, instead of the beautiful fustanella, a repulsive coat.’<sup>792</sup> He greatly preferred the Phanariots, the wealthy Ottoman Greek families from Constantinople who traditionally administered the Ecumenical Patriarchate, writing that they were the people whose ‘direct, personal interests are linked more closely than [those] of anyone else in the East with the strictness of Orthodox discipline, with the strictness of Orthodox legends, Orthodox regulations, Orthodox sentiments.’<sup>793</sup>

Some of Leont’ev’s mature writings, from 1872 onwards, anticipate that Russia would ultimately replace the Ottoman Empire, creating an ‘Eastern-Orthodox union’ with its capital at Constantinople.<sup>794</sup> In the meantime, however, he wrote that the continued existence of the Ottoman state was a ‘familiar sin’ for Russia.<sup>795</sup> He argued that the Orthodox Church had more freedom in the Ottoman Empire than in independent Greece, and in particular that Ottoman rule preserved the ecumenical character of the monastic communities on Mount Athos, which would otherwise have fallen under Greek or Bulgarian domination. Therefore, he added, the interests of Orthodoxy were connected with the preservation of the Sultan’s authority.<sup>796</sup> By

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<sup>789</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vragi li my s Grekami?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 504 and 507.

<sup>790</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vragi li my s Grekami?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 503.

<sup>791</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Mainoskie starovery’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 513.

<sup>792</sup> Fennell, *The Russians on Athos*, pp. 122-123, and Leont’ev, ‘Razboinik Sotiri’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 428.

<sup>793</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma otshelnika’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 543.

<sup>794</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Moi vospominaniia o Frakii’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 169.

<sup>795</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Eshche o Greko-Bolgarskoi raspre’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 274.

<sup>796</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Panslavizm na Afone’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 257-258 and 264-267.

arguing that ecumenical Orthodoxy created a mystical bond between Greeks and Russians, while rejecting Pan-Slavism and Greek nationalism in favour of the preservation of the Ottoman Empire for the foreseeable future, Leont'ev thus articulated an unusual position as both a Turcophile and a Hellenophile. He also distanced himself from Danilevskii, who believed that the Ottoman Empire was preventing the cultural development of its Slavic subjects and emphasised the urgency of the creation of an all-Slavic union. Furthermore, Leont'ev wrote that Russia was itself not 'purely Slavic' and would have closer relations with the non-Slavic members of his planned Eastern union, the Romanians, Greeks, and Magyars, than with the Slavs.<sup>797</sup> By contrast, Danilevskii wrote that the Magyars would join the all-Slav union only reluctantly, and would be 'hostile ... elements' within it.<sup>798</sup>

Therefore, we can see that Leont'ev's experiences on Mount Athos and in Constantinople profoundly influenced the development of his political thought. He grew convinced that ecumenical or 'Byzantine' Orthodoxy was the basis of Russia's cultural originality, and that harmony between Greeks and Russians was the key to its preservation. The stage which Leont'ev's intellectual evolution had reached by the time he returned to Russia was encapsulated in his book *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, which he began on Mount Athos and finished in Constantinople. It set out the concept of 'triune development', according to which societies, like living creatures, pass through a life cycle comprising three stages of 'original simplicity', 'flowering complexity', and 'secondary mixing simplification'. This process is characterised by the organism's increasing and then diminishing complexity and distinctiveness, and by its acquisition and then loss of 'despotic inner unity'.<sup>799</sup> As we have seen, Leont'ev explicitly anticipated this idea as early as 1867. It was earlier foreshadowed by his scientific writings, which likened societies to plants whose defining elements are contained in their seeds, and by his identification of a link between beauty and complexity in his essay on Marko Vovchok. As regards Leont'ev's depiction of the historical Byzantine Empire in *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, it is striking that the majority of his sources were western writers. He acknowledged a considerable debt to the French historians Amédée Thierry and François Guizot, for challenging the received view of Byzantium as a 'gaping, dark abyss of barbarism ... between the fallen, pagan Rome and the era of the European Renaissance.'<sup>800</sup> More specifically, Leont'ev quoted the argument made by Guizot, and also by the German historian

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<sup>797</sup> Leont'ev, 'Panslavizm i Greki', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 185.

<sup>798</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, pp. 350 and 353.

<sup>799</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 374.

<sup>800</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 311.

Aloysius Pichler, that Byzantium's lack of an aristocracy gave rise to an alliance between the Church and the autocratic monarchy.<sup>801</sup>

Another possible influence was the historian Timofei Granovskii, with whom Leont'ev had been acquainted as a student, and with whose writings he indicated some familiarity in *Byzantinism and Slavdom*.<sup>802</sup> Granovskii emphasised that due to Byzantium's lack of a predominant ethnicity, Orthodox Christianity and autocratic monarchy played an important role within it as unifying forces, and it was therefore undermined by the iconoclast controversy and the rise of a more assertive aristocracy. He also argued that Russia was indebted to Byzantium for its culture and religion.<sup>803</sup> Here, Granovskii seemingly prefigured the argument of *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, in which Leont'ev wrote that: 'Byzantinism organised us, the system of Byzantine ideas created our greatness, interacting with our patriarchal, simple principles, with our initially still old and crude Slavic material.'<sup>804</sup> This in turn gave rise to Leont'ev's defence of the autocracy, or 'Byzantine Caesarism', which, he wrote, combined Christianity with the 'ancient state law' of the Roman dictatorship. The result was that while individual emperors were sometimes killed or overthrown in Byzantium, 'nobody questioned the sanctity of Caesarism.'<sup>805</sup> In Russia, he added, Byzantine autocracy was even more strongly anchored because it was bolstered by the Russian people's instinctive reverence for their rulers, which took the place of an aristocracy or devotion to family life: 'among us the hereditary sense of society found its expression in the state.'<sup>806</sup> He noted that most rebels throughout Russian history had claimed to be the rightful Tsar, proving 'the exceptional vitality and strength of our hereditary Tsarism, so tightly and indissolubly linked with Byzantine Orthodoxy.' Thus, he saw the autocracy as the guarantor of Byzantine Orthodoxy's role as Russia's animating principle: 'no Polish uprising and no rebellion like Pugachev's could damage Russia as a very peaceful, very lawful democratic constitution could damage her.'<sup>807</sup>

Leont'ev went on to warn that the Bulgarian church question was far from the abstract issue as which it might appear, since the Bulgarians were 'beginning their new history with a

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<sup>801</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 404.

<sup>802</sup> Leont'ev, 'Sdacha Kerchi v 55 godu', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 622, and 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 312.

<sup>803</sup> T. Granovskii, 'Latinskaia imperiia', in *Sochineniia T. N. Granovskago* (Moscow, 1900), pp. 377-381.

<sup>804</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 331.

<sup>805</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 308.

<sup>806</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 314.

<sup>807</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 327.

struggle not only against the Greeks, but ... against the Church and its canons.’<sup>808</sup> The Greeks stood for the ‘Byzantine principle’ of ‘subordination of the people in Church matters to the clergy’ and the Bulgarians for ‘the neo-European democratic principle of personal and collective rights.’<sup>809</sup> Therefore, ‘for the first time since the very beginning of our history, two forces which created our Russian statehood meet in battle in the Russian heart: our tribal Slavism and ecclesiastical Byzantinism.’<sup>810</sup> The tension between these two principles led Leont’ev to conclude that ‘the idea of purely tribal nationalities’ was ‘an entirely cosmopolitan idea ... which does not conserve the *cultural* particularity of nations, for culture is no other than originality, and originality is now perishing almost everywhere mainly due to political freedom. *Individualism* is destroying the *individuality* of peoples, regions and nations.’<sup>811</sup> Thus, Leont’ev had turned entirely against the concept of individual freedom derived from Mill which had formed the basis of his early political thought, and now depicted ‘individualism’ as a threat to society rather than vice versa. Furthermore, it is clear that Leont’ev’s thought differed widely from Danilevskii’s. Just as Danilevskii argued that there was no such thing as ‘all-human civilisation’, Leont’ev wrote that the ‘idea of universal human wellbeing’ was ‘the most implausible and unfounded of all religions.’<sup>812</sup> However, while Danilevskii defined a cultural-historical type merely as a people who spoke a common language and enjoyed political independence, Leont’ev dismissed Slavism without Byzantinism as a ‘tribal ethnographic abstraction’, apparently echoing Danilevskii’s use of the term ‘ethnographic material’ to describe societies without their own original culture. There would, he said, be no reason to love a tribe which did not have ‘its own religious and political ideas’, since there was no such thing as a ‘pure-blooded’ nation, and language, which Danilevskii saw as the defining feature of each cultural-historical type, was valuable chiefly ‘as an expression of the ideas and sentiments which are familiar and dear to us.’ Therefore: ‘To love a tribe for a tribe is a distortion and a lie.’<sup>813</sup> Accordingly, Leont’ev wrote that Tibetans or Mongols who upheld ‘ancient Orthodoxy’ should be preferred to ‘a whole mass of Slavic egalitarian-liberal populousness’.<sup>814</sup>

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<sup>808</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 348.

<sup>809</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 395.

<sup>810</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 443.

<sup>811</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 333.

<sup>812</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 103, and Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 382.

<sup>813</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 333-334.

<sup>814</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Mainoskie starovery’, *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 512.

### *Conclusion*

We can see that Leont'ev's intellectual evolution over the course of the time which he spent in the Ottoman Empire was a gradual process, contrary to the views of scholars who have associated it with decisive turning points, such as his illness prior to moving to Mount Athos, or the 'Bulgarian liturgy' of 6<sup>th</sup> January 1872.<sup>815</sup> Furthermore, many studies of this phase of his career overlook the importance for him of both Russian and Western writers such as Danilevskii, Granovskii, Buckle, and Proudhon. The development of Leont'ev's thought while he was in the Ottoman Empire differentiated him from most other Russian intellectuals. Like the Slavophiles, he took a negative view of European civilisation, lamenting the spread of its influence in the Ottoman Empire. However, while the Slavophiles saw European society as morally inferior to Russia's, Leont'ev instead saw it as less culturally original. In addition, he argued that Russia's cultural originality arose not from the innate characteristics of the Russian people, as the Slavophiles maintained, but from the Orthodox traditions which, he believed, he had encountered in their purest form on Mount Athos and among the Phanariots of Constantinople. It was on Athos that he coined the term 'eudaemonism' to describe what he saw as the destructive traits of European civilisation, and came to believe that Byzantine Orthodoxy, and monarchical rule sanctified by it, offered a positive alternative to them. For Russia, he believed, this 'Byzantinism' was the essential precondition of cultural flourishing. After moving to Constantinople, Leont'ev came to see the 'tribal nationalism' embodied by the Bulgarian campaign for a national church, and the Russian Pan-Slavists who supported it, as incompatible with Byzantine Orthodoxy. He argued that aspects of the Byzantine legacy had been preserved under the Ottoman Empire: 'For a long time there has been no Byzantine state, but some Byzantine regulations, notions, tastes and customs even under Turkish authority defend themselves until now from the onslaught of cosmopolitan Europeanism. In family life, in conversations, in literature, in architecture, in dress, in views on decorum there is still much which is Byzantine in the East.'<sup>816</sup> Accordingly, he rejected political Pan-Slavism in favour of continued Ottoman rule in the short term, until such time as Russia was in a position to form an 'Eastern-Orthodox union', based on religion rather than ethnicity. This clearly distinguished his political thought from that of Danilevskii, whose work he had initially received positively.

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<sup>815</sup> G. Cronin, 'Konstantin Leont'ev: creative reaction', in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, eds. R. Freeborn and J. Grayson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p. 104.

<sup>816</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 395.

Leont'ev's experiences in the Ottoman Empire thus helped him to develop into, as he later wrote, an advocate of 'culturophilism' rather than Slavophilism.<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> Leont'ev, letter to A. A. Aleksandrov, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1888, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 362.



## Chapter 7 – Leont’ev’s intellectual development after 1874

### *Introduction*

This part of the thesis addresses Konstantin Leont’ev’s intellectual evolution after he returned to Russia in 1874. In this chapter, I will analyse the development of his views during this period of his life, with particular emphasis on his writings about the ‘Great Reforms’ which the government had implemented while he was abroad, the ‘National Question’ which arose out of the Russian state’s attempts to ‘Russify’ its non-Russian subjects, and the Eastern Question as it continued to develop throughout Leont’ev’s lifetime. While Leont’ev is often seen as an esoteric thinker whose writings were of purely theoretical significance, he in fact addressed the most pressing political issues of his time, demonstrating both a deep knowledge and a keen understanding of unfolding events. In the following chapter, I will describe the reception which Leont’ev’s writings received during his lifetime, and set out the critiques which he made of other Russian conservative thinkers. This will make it possible to develop, in Chapter 8, a fuller understanding of his place in the Russian conservative tradition.

Many scholars have treated Leont’ev’s political thought after 1874 as a ‘finished product’: Stanislav Khatuntsev’s recent intellectual biography of him even concludes in that year. Likewise, Glenn Cronin writes that ‘Leont’ev was a convinced conservative by the early seventies’.<sup>818</sup> However, as we will see, his thinking continued to evolve until the end of his life, and he had ample opportunity to set out his views in print. From late 1879 to mid-1880 he served as the assistant editor of the newspaper *Varshavskii dnevnik*, a conservative publication whose politics largely accorded with his own, since in 1871 it had been ordered to stop expressing sympathy with separatists among the Austrian and Ottoman Slavs in order to avoid inflaming Polish nationalism.<sup>819</sup> Leont’ev wrote relatively little for the next seven years, during which time he was employed by the Moscow censorship committee. However, he enjoyed freedom to write as he pleased during the final years of his life, since after retiring from government service in February 1887 he secured a pension of 2,500 roubles per year, putting an end to the financial insecurity that had plagued him since he left the diplomatic service, and settled at the Optina Pustyn monastery.<sup>820</sup> During the last decade before his death,

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<sup>818</sup> G. Cronin, ‘Konstantin Leont’ev: creative reaction’, in *Ideology in Russian Literature*, eds. R. Freeborn and J. Grayson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p. 108.

<sup>819</sup> D. Vovchenko, *Containing Balkan Nationalism: Imperial Russia & Ottoman Christians, 1856-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 182.

<sup>820</sup> Konopliantsev, ‘Zhizn’ K. N. Leont’eva v sviazi s razvitiem ego mirosozertsaniia’, in *Pamiatii Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont’eva*, p. 134.

Leont'ev furthermore enjoyed a sympathetic outlet for most of his writings in the form of the conservative periodical *Grazhdanin*, founded in 1872 by Prince Vladimir Petrovich Meshcherskii as an outlet for the views of 'gentry conservatives' opposed to the reforms introduced under Emperor Alexander II.<sup>821</sup> Leont'ev said that Meshcherskii agreed with him 'in spirit' and gave him almost complete freedom to write as he pleased.<sup>822</sup> Meshcherskii, he observed, was 'slow-witted and tactless, sometimes even stupid' and yet the most decent of all the editors he had known.<sup>823</sup> In turn, Meshcherskii credited his acquaintance with Leont'ev for having 'allowed Russian thought to develop in me', adding that Leont'ev's writings 'should be the desk book of every Russian man.'<sup>824</sup>

Furthermore, the circumstances under which Leont'ev wrote during this period were conducive to the development and elaboration of his thought. In the early 1880s, he joined the circle who gathered for weekly discussions at the home of Petr Evgen'evich Astaf'ev, a professor of philosophy at the Katkov Lyceum in Moscow.<sup>825</sup> One of the attendees, Grigorii Ivanovich Zamaraev, recalled that Leont'ev often read aloud from drafts of his articles. Leont'ev eventually ceased to attend Astaf'ev's soirées after tiring of his frequent clashes with the host, but a select group of followers continued to meet at Leont'ev's home. This appears to have prompted him to set out his thought explicitly: Zamaraev recalled that Leont'ev referred to his pupils as the 'anatolisty' or 'geptastilisty', 'indicating by the latter name the seven main positions on which, in his view, it was necessary to found and develop Slavic-Russian culture.'<sup>826</sup> While these seven principles are not explicitly identified in Leont'ev's published writings, Ol'ga Fetisenko has uncovered a note from Leont'ev to one of his followers, I. A. Denisov, datable to the mid-1880s, listing 'seven pillars of the new culture'. These included: ecumenical Orthodoxy, state control of property and labour, rejection of scientific progress, formation of a 'Great Eastern Union', strengthening of the monarchy and aristocracy, preference for 'mystical-plastic' over 'destructive-rational' religions and sects, and for 'aesthetic asceticism' over 'rational and all-dissolving comfort.' Leont'ev also

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<sup>821</sup> W. Mosse, 'Imperial Favourite: V. P. Meshchersky and the *Grazhdanin*', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1981, p. 529.

<sup>822</sup> Leont'ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1883, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 271, and letter to K. Gagarin, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1887, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 324.

<sup>823</sup> Leont'ev, letter to A. Aleksandrov, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1890, in *Izbrannye pis'ma*, pp. 499 ff.

<sup>824</sup> Chizhov, *Konstantin Leont'ev*, p. 489.

<sup>825</sup> O. Fetisenko, 'Konstantin Leont'ev i Katkovskii litsei', *Literaturnovedcheskii zhurnal*, 2013, no. 32, pp. 131-133.

<sup>826</sup> G. Zamaraev, 'Pamiati K. N. Leont'eva', in *Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 1, p. 207.

characterised the autocracy as the *'sine qua non'* of all these.<sup>827</sup> Leont'ev's 'Letters on Eastern Affairs', published in 1882-1883, can also be identified with the term *geptastilisty*, since they offer a sevenfold definition of an original culture as a 'complete system of abstract religious, political, juridical, philosophical, social, artistic and economic ideas'.<sup>828</sup> Furthermore, in July 1888, Leont'ev received a letter from his friend Iosef Fudel', asking him to explain in further detail why he saw liberal democracy and tribal nationalism as synonymous with each other, which gave rise to a series of articles on this theme.<sup>829</sup> Thus, Leont'ev now began to feel his way towards a more comprehensive definition of the concept of cultural originality.

### *Leont'ev and the Great Reforms*

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War gave rise to general acceptance in its ruling circles that drastic reform was necessary.<sup>830</sup> However, reorganisation of the army was only one aspect of the 'Great Reforms', and one of the last to be implemented. Alexander II and his advisers accepted that for Russia to remain a European great power on a level with the others, far-reaching economic and administrative modernisation was required. More generally still, the reforms sought to create a 'civil society' in which the state justified its authority through adherence to impartial principles of justice and legality, rather than ruling through simple coercion. There is some debate over whether the reforms were planned in advance in order to achieve these aims, or whether they represented concessions by the government to overwhelming social pressure for change. For example, the most significant reform to be adopted was the abolition of serfdom, and the provision of the emancipated peasantry with land, albeit while retaining the village commune as the basis of the organisation of rural society. This has been attributed to the hope that hired labour would be more efficient than serfdom, and so that emancipation would help to address the growing budget deficit, in particular through increased commodity production of grain.<sup>831</sup> On the other hand, Alexander II argued in a speech of 1856 that the abolition of serfdom was inevitable, and that it was better to impose it 'from above' than allow it to happen spontaneously 'from below'. To replace the authority

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<sup>827</sup> O. Fetisenko, *'Geptastilisty': Konstantin Leont'ev, ego sobesedniki i ucheniki* (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii Dom, 2012), pp. 133-134.

<sup>828</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 50.

<sup>829</sup> Chizhov, *Konstantin Leont'ev*, p. 481.

<sup>830</sup> The extensive literature on the 'Great Reforms' includes *Russia's Great Reforms, 1885-1881*, eds. B. Eklof et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); D. Field, *The End of Serfdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); and W. Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-1861* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986).

<sup>831</sup> L. Zakharova, 'Autocracy and the Reforms of 1861-1874 in Russia', in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, eds. B. Eklof et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 22.

which landowners had traditionally wielded over their serfs, elected local councils or ‘zemstvos’ were instituted, in which, controversially, peasants as well as landowners and merchants were represented. In order to promote public confidence in the judicial system, independent courts with jury trials were introduced.<sup>832</sup> As with the zemstvos, they proved controversial due to the participation of peasants, who seem to have accounted for a majority of jurors other than in large cities.<sup>833</sup> Furthermore, juries displayed a marked inclination to acquit guilty defendants out of sympathy, due to the general tendency to view criminals as ‘unfortunates’ driven by forces beyond their control, or because the penalties they would face if convicted were too harsh.<sup>834</sup> The reign of Alexander II also saw the easing of press censorship, which, Larissa Zakharova has argued, reflected official acceptance that the system of censorship instituted under Nicholas I had ceased to function.<sup>835</sup> Others have written that the relaxation of censorship was driven by officials such as Aleksandr Golovnin, the Minister of Public Instruction from 1861 to 1866, who believed that the state had no right to meddle in citizens’ private affairs and that a free press was necessary to expose administrative abuses.<sup>836</sup> The overall thrust of the reforms was thus ‘away from a society based on ascriptive hierarchy, kinship, patronage, tribute, and state service towards one based on meritocracy, personal rights, the rule of law, and the taxation of wealth.’<sup>837</sup>

However, from the mid-1860s onwards, in particular following a revolutionary activist’s attempt on Alexander II’s life in 1866, more conservative figures within the Russian government, who felt that the reforms had gone too far, began to gain the upper hand. Liberals complained about the lack of any zemstvo representation in the central government, the introduction of which became their rallying cry for the next forty years, but Nikolai Miliutin, one of the principal architects of the reforms, made clear that he regarded the zemstvos as purely administrative, not political, in purpose: they were to liberate the government from ‘moral responsibility for small, distant abuses, obligations so inconsistent with the true dignity

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<sup>832</sup> J. Neuberger, ‘Popular legal cultures’, in *Russia’s Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, eds. B. Eklof et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 231.

<sup>833</sup> A. Afanas’ev, ‘Jurors and jury trials in imperial Russia, 1866-1885’, in *Russia’s Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, p. 220.

<sup>834</sup> R. Pipes, ‘The Trial of Vera Z.’, *Russian History*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2010, pp. 45-46.

<sup>835</sup> Zakharova, ‘Autocracy and the Reforms of 1861-1874 in Russia’, in *Russia’s Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, p. 21.

<sup>836</sup> W. Lincoln, ‘Reform and Reaction in Russia: A. V. Golovnin’s Critique of the 1860s’, *Cahiers du monde Russe et soviétique*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1975, p. 169.

<sup>837</sup> G. Hosking, *Russia and the Russians* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 288.

and significance of Government Authority.’<sup>838</sup> A law of 1867 specifically prohibited the zemstvos from co-operating with each other, as well as subjecting their publications to the provincial censor, and allowing zemstvo chairmen to disenfranchise delegates.<sup>839</sup> Towards the end of his life, Alexander II began to explore the idea of giving zemstvo representatives an advisory role in the central government, but this idea was firmly rejected by his son and successor, Alexander III. Alexander III also introduced ‘land commandants’, commissioners appointed by the Minister of the Interior with the power to overrule the decisions of village assemblies and courts.<sup>840</sup> Thus, the ‘Great Reforms’ ultimately failed to strengthen the Russian state’s legitimacy, since they gave rise to calls for more fundamental change, which were frustrated when the government instead responded by attempting to tighten its grip on society.

As we have already seen, Leont’ev recalled, possibly with some exaggeration, that at the beginning of the 1860s he was optimistic about the prospects for reform in the Russian Empire, believing that a free society would allow Russia to differentiate itself further from Europe, and, as he wrote in 1888, ‘make us more national, profoundly more Russian than we were in the time of Nikolai Pavlovich.’<sup>841</sup> However, by 1880 he had come to believe that the reforms had had the opposite effect. He strongly criticised the court reform, on the grounds that ‘public trials became, thanks to the spirit of our intelligentsia, one of the tools of the slow and step by step legal destruction of everything old.’ In particular, Leont’ev was enraged by the contrast between the fates of Vera Zasulich, the revolutionary who was acquitted by a jury after wounding Fedor Trepov, the Governor of St Petersburg, and on the other hand the high-born Abbess Mitrofaniia, who was convicted of raising money for her religious order through fraud and the sale of honours, and who in Leont’ev’s view was merely ‘carried away by active character and desire to enrich the religious establishment beloved to her’.<sup>842</sup> Mitrofaniia’s fate could be seen as emblematic of the new courts’ hostility to Orthodoxy and to the aristocracy, due in particular to the fact that no prominent lawyer was willing to act in her defence, despite her connections to the imperial family. The journalist Nikita Giliarov-Platonov, who had long campaigned against Mitrofaniia, wrote that her conviction was a ‘moral lesson’ and an

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<sup>838</sup> J. Malloy, ‘N. A. Miliutin and the zemstvo reform of 1864’, *Slavic and East-European Studies*, vol. 14, 1969, p. 97.

<sup>839</sup> F. Petrov, ‘Crowning the edifice: the zemstvo, local self-government, and the constitutional movement, 1864-1881’, in *Russia’s Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, p. 200.

<sup>840</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 319.

<sup>841</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 596.

<sup>842</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 134-136.

indictment of the ‘old order’.<sup>843</sup> Mitrofaniia, wrote Leont’ev, would have been treated more leniently by ‘a court of peasants or old Ostrovskii merchants.’<sup>844</sup> He might not have been aware that her original sentence of eleven years’ banishment was secretly commuted by the Emperor and Minister of Justice.<sup>845</sup>

When Leont’ev wrote that a jury of peasants or merchants would have treated Mitrofaniia less harshly, he could also have had in mind that the defence lawyer in the Vera Zasulich trial had excluded merchants from the jury, stacking it with junior civil servants.<sup>846</sup> Although it may seem unsurprising for a conservative thinker to be angered by the acquittal of a revolutionary who had shot a senior official, we should bear in mind that many eminent figures in Russian society, including Leont’ev’s former chief, Prince Gorchakov, openly welcomed the verdict out of sympathy for Zasulich, who, they believed, had intended to punish Trepov himself for his cruelty, but not to overthrow the state: Zasulich herself testified that she had no desire to harm ‘the sacred person of the monarch’.<sup>847</sup> However, Leont’ev implicitly rejected the argument that she deserved acquittal because she had not intended her act to have any wider political significance, writing that as a result of her being set free, ‘life is assured to all citizens except the Tsar and his closest assistants. Only monarchs and their faithful servants are made outlaws, according to notions of the newest law, which so pleases the liberal figures of the Petersburg press.’ The St Petersburg newspapers, he pointed out, wrote that her acquittal would make it impossible for the authorities to hold, or at least to discipline, political prisoners.<sup>848</sup> The new courts, he went on to say, had a ‘liberal-European’ rather than ‘Russian-Byzantine’ spirit. As a result, their introduction had ‘significantly moved the centre of gravity of the state to the left’. In future, Leont’ev argued, trials should take place without jurors and behind closed doors.<sup>849</sup> He therefore directly contradicted the defenders of the new system of jury courts, such as Giliarov-Platonov, who argued that public trials were the key to securing equality before the law.<sup>850</sup>

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<sup>843</sup> S. Dahlke, ‘Old Russia in the dock: the trial against Mother Superior Mitrofaniia before the Moscow district court (1874)’, *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 53, no. 12, 2012, p. 106.

<sup>844</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 138.

<sup>845</sup> Dahlke, ‘Old Russia in the dock’, p. 105.

<sup>846</sup> Pipes, ‘The Trial of Vera Z.’, p. 49.

<sup>847</sup> Pipes, ‘The Trial of Vera Z.’, p. 69.

<sup>848</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 138-139.

<sup>849</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 142-143.

<sup>850</sup> Dahlke, ‘Old Russia in the dock’, p. 108.

The same liberal ‘Europeanism’ that afflicted the new courts, Leont’ev believed, also affected the zemstvos. He argued that the zemstvos had been created by the central government, but naturally strove for greater powers, thereby seeking to undermine the autocracy. Therefore, he explained, in Russia, unlike in Britain, there was effectively no such thing as a conservative opposition to the government. He argued that the electoral system, weighted in favour of the nobility, actually worsened the problem of mutual antagonism between the zemstvos and the central government, since the nobles were ‘above all *Russian Europeans*, who grew up on the common European notions of the nineteenth century’, and they were inculcated with ‘the principles of liberal-egalitarian progress, i.e. the “Rights of Man”’. Therefore, allies of the government were not elected to the zemstvos. Furthermore, since ‘in Russia, the majority until now still naively believes that all our calamities derive from backwardness, and not from progress, from a lack of Europeanism and modernity, and not from excessive imitativeness’, the zemstvos tended to oppose the government from an ‘egalitarian-liberal’ perspective, ‘which intensifies at first a general weakening, and then unruliness.’ By contrast, Leont’ev argued that the peasantry, with their ‘Byzantine’ love of hierarchy, were instinctively deferential to the church, the army, and the monarchy.<sup>851</sup> Thus, by the 1880s, Leont’ev saw the reforms as a dangerous concession to liberalism and Europeanism, which had made Russia less rather than more culturally distinct.

The sole major reform of which Leont’ev approved was the abolition of serfdom, which, he believed, had been necessary in order to prevent revolutionary ‘nihilists’ from winning over the peasantry.<sup>852</sup> He welcomed the preservation of the commune after the emancipation of the serfs and the provision of the emancipated peasants with land, which, he said, distinguished Russian socio-economic arrangements from those of the West, and prevented the Russian peasantry from succumbing to Western individualism.<sup>853</sup> The freeing of the serfs, he argued, had not had the revolutionary consequences which it otherwise would have done, ‘thanks to the fact that they find themselves in some sort of new serf dependence on the unalienated village and commune.’<sup>854</sup> Leont’ev wrote that the Emancipation Manifesto was complemented by Alexander III’s accession manifesto of 1881, in which the new Emperor declared his intention to preserve the autocracy, distancing himself from his father’s tentative proposals to give zemstvo representatives a voice in the central government: this, said

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<sup>851</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 125-127.

<sup>852</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 46.

<sup>853</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 39.

<sup>854</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 578.

Leont'ev, was 'the first step of conscious nationalism in our internal affairs.'<sup>855</sup> Alexander III's manifesto, he added, had made clear Russia's intention to resist 'liberal Europeanism' and to move 'from the path of slow but sure destruction to the path of organisation and creation.' It was, therefore, the first politically original step which Russia had taken since the time of Peter the Great.<sup>856</sup> Another reason for Leont'ev's renewed political optimism at this stage in his life was that he began to anticipate the rise of socialism, or the 'new feudalism', in the future. He saw this as a positive development, since he envisioned that socialism would 'abandon its insurrectionary methods and become an instrument of the new corporative, class-based, hierarchical, illiberal and inegalitarian structure of the state.' This would be the doom of 'liberalism, individualism, mercantilism and everything related to that'.<sup>857</sup> Socialists would realise that they, like conservatives, relied on fear, discipline, submissiveness, and 'ardour for mystical doctrines' in order to be able to govern.<sup>858</sup> Leont'ev even speculated that a Russian Tsar would assume the leadership of the socialist movement, as the Roman Emperor Constantine did with the Christian Church.<sup>859</sup> Leont'ev's unusual understanding of the concept of socialism, which depicted it as a means to preserve social hierarchy and the authority of the state rather than to promote the welfare of workers, appeared to hark back to his experiences of highly disciplined monastic life on Mount Athos, which, he wrote while there, illustrated 'that communism, not as a universal law but as a private manifestation of social life, is possible, but only under the condition of the greatest discipline and even, if you like, fear. This discipline, this fear is not of a material kind; it is an indestructible bridle of faith, love and respect.'<sup>860</sup>

### *The National Question*

In the aftermath of the Polish rebellion of 1863-1864, the Russian government embarked on an organised effort to promote a pan-imperial sense of Russian identity, in particular by making Russian, rather than Polish or German, the language of education in the western provinces, and attempting to eradicate the Ukrainian language so that Russian-speakers would be a majority within the empire. The Catholic Church in the Russian Empire was forbidden from

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<sup>855</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kul'turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 47.

<sup>856</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 48.

<sup>857</sup> Leont'ev, letter to T. Filippov, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1882, in *Proroki Vizantizma*, ed. O. Fetisenko (St Petersburg: Pushkinskii Dom, 2012), pp. 231-234.

<sup>858</sup> Leont'ev, 'G. Katkov i ego vragi na prazdnike Pushkina', *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 205-206.

<sup>859</sup> Leont'ev, letter to K. Gubastov, 17<sup>th</sup> August 1889, in *Izbrannye pis'ma*, pp. 469 ff.

<sup>860</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chetyre pis'ma s Afona', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 140.



communicating with Rome, and Uniates were forced to convert to Orthodoxy en masse.<sup>861</sup> Besides Ukrainian and Polish nationalists, a main target of ‘Russification’ was the German-speaking landowning class which dominated the Baltic provinces. Despite their long history of service to the state, Alexander III declined to confirm their traditional privileges upon becoming Emperor, as had every Russian monarch since Peter the Great. Subsequently, he removed the Baltic provinces’ autonomous judicial and education systems.<sup>862</sup> Leont’ev adopted an idiosyncratic stance on the ‘national question’, one which implicitly critiqued the policies of Alexander III’s government even as he commended its firm defence of the autocracy. Russia, he wrote in 1882, was ‘not simply a state’ but ‘a separate state world, which has not yet found its original style of cultural statehood’. In particular, due to its Asiatic possessions, he wrote, ‘Russia itself already for a long time has not been a purely Slavic power.’<sup>863</sup> A recurrent theme in Leont’ev’s mature writings was that ‘political’ or ‘tribal’ nationalism undermined the cultural distinctiveness of the societies where it took root: ‘The movement of contemporary political nationalism is nothing other than a dissemination of cosmopolitan democracy, altered only in methods.’<sup>864</sup> He wrote in 1880 that multi-national empires, based mainly on divine right and on the right of conquest, ‘were in the highest degree national in independence of thought’ and possessed original institutions and customs. By contrast, nation-states were culturally indistinguishable from each other: ‘Everywhere jury courts, everywhere constitutions, everywhere steam and telegraphs, everywhere the agrarian question and labour strikes, everywhere the open struggle of capital and labour, everywhere French melodrama, Italian opera and the English novel’.<sup>865</sup> Therefore: ‘State, political nationalism is becoming in our time the destroyer of cultural, social nationalism.’<sup>866</sup> This was borne out by the aftermath of the end of Ottoman rule in Greece: ‘*national-political* independence has turned out for the Greeks to be harmful and more or less disastrous for *spiritual independence*; with the growth of the first, the second falls.’<sup>867</sup> Truly national policy, he believed, meant the preservation of distinguishing national peculiarities.<sup>868</sup> Furthermore, he tended to argue that, in multi-ethnic societies, ruling minority groups were the bearers of cultural originality. He wrote that in the Baltic provinces, ‘if the democratic idea, the law of

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<sup>861</sup> G. Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p. 367 and pp. 376 ff.

<sup>862</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 338.

<sup>863</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 44 and 49.

<sup>864</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Natsional’naia politika kak orudie vsemirnoi revoliutsii’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 500.

<sup>865</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Varshavskii dnevnik’, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 45.

<sup>866</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 558.

<sup>867</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Natsional’naia politika kak orudie vsemirnoi revoliutsii’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 503-506.

<sup>868</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 27.

the ethnographic majority ... is on our Russian side, so to speak, then the higher, cultural and aristocratic idea is on the side of the Germans in this question.' In Ottoman Bulgaria, argued Leont'ev, the Phanariots had played the role of the Germans in the Baltic provinces.<sup>869</sup>

Accordingly, Leont'ev was deeply hostile to the policy of Russification. In 1882 he wrote that Great Russians had succumbed to 'nihilism and moderate liberalism', and, more so than other Russian subjects, were 'Europeans in the negative sense of this word, that is the slow destroyers of everything historical both among ourselves, and among others'. Therefore: 'The Russification of the borderlands is no other than their democratic Europeanisation.'<sup>870</sup> Leont'ev condoned the promotion of the Russian language throughout the empire, and also the provision of land for the peasants in the Baltic provinces, who had been freed without it. However, he argued that the Baltic nobility were faithful servants of the Emperor, 'linked with the military and political greatness of Orthodox Russia', in contrast to the native Estonian intelligentsia.<sup>871</sup> Therefore, he warned against the destruction of the Baltic nobility's traditional privileges in favour of 'the iron hooks of artificial administration' and the introduction of the 'all-European, democratic and levelling' post-reform courts.<sup>872</sup> Likewise, Leont'ev wrote that the Poles were less prone to 'nihilism' than the Great Russians, and were 'liberal only for their nation'. Catholicism, while associated with Polish nationalism, was also 'one of the best weapons against general indifference and godlessness.'<sup>873</sup> He went so far as to commend the 1863 uprising of 'Catholic, noble, reactionary Poland' against Russia, 'which was sincerely enthusiastic at that time about its destructive-emancipatory process', and lamented that the uprising's defeat resulted in Poland's being 'forcibly democratised.'<sup>874</sup> This ironically echoed the views of Mikhail Katkov, a fierce opponent of Polish nationalism, who argued that the Polish peasantry were loyal to Russia and that it was the nobility who were subversive.<sup>875</sup> Even Islam, Leont'ev maintained, was more impervious to liberalism than Christianity. Accordingly, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Old Believers, and Skopts should all be allies

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<sup>869</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 39.

<sup>870</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 32.

<sup>871</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 38 and p. 41.

<sup>872</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 40.

<sup>873</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 33-34.

<sup>874</sup> Leont'ev, 'Natsional'naia politika kak orudie vseмирnoi revoliutsii', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 520.

<sup>875</sup> M. Katz, *Mikhail N. Katkov: a political biography, 1818-1887* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 120.

against the ‘Russians of that indeterminate colour’ who were spreading nihilism.<sup>876</sup> Leont’ev therefore welcomed the fact that ‘Russification is being repulsed.’<sup>877</sup>

### *The Eastern Question*

The ‘Eastern Question’ continued to figure prominently in Leont’ev’s writings after he left the diplomatic service. Arguably, it remained his central concern, while at the same time continuing to command the attention of Russian public opinion. In 1875 and 1876, uprisings against Ottoman rule broke out across the Balkans. Driven by Pan-Slavist outrage at reports of Ottoman atrocities, and calculating that they would make it impossible for the other great powers to object, Emperor Alexander II of Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in April 1877. Russian forces invaded the Balkans and briefly seemed to be on the verge of capturing Constantinople before their exhaustion by stubborn Ottoman resistance, and the threat of British intervention, forced St Petersburg to open peace negotiations. Under the terms of the ensuing Treaty of San Stefano, Russia regained the territory it had lost in 1856, made additional gains in the Caucasus, secured full independence from the Ottoman Empire for Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, and carved an autonomous Bulgarian state incorporating Macedonia, the so-called ‘Big Bulgaria’, out of the Ottoman Balkans. However, the other European powers regarded these terms as too harsh, and the threat of a major war forced Russia to accede to a revised peace treaty drawn up at the Congress of Berlin, whereby the southern half of ‘Big Bulgaria’ was returned to the Ottoman Empire, as was some of the territory annexed by Russia in the Caucasus. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary gained the right to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the Ottoman Empire leased Cyprus to Britain. Finally, the British Foreign Secretary, the Marquess of Salisbury, informed the Congress that Britain would henceforth respect only the ‘independent determinations’ of the Sultan regarding the closing of the Straits. This implicitly asserted Britain’s right to send warships into the Black Sea without Ottoman permission, on the pretext that the Sultan had been coerced into closing the Straits, and thereby undermined the agreement laid down in the 1841 Straits Convention and the 1856 Treaty of Paris that the Ottoman Empire would not allow foreign warships into the Straits while it was at peace.<sup>878</sup>

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<sup>876</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Nashi okrainy’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 31 ff.

<sup>877</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Nashi okrainy’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 34.

<sup>878</sup> H. Temperley, ‘The Treaty of Paris and its Execution’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 4, no. 3, September 1932, p. 409, and Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, p. 251.

Most Russian conservatives regarded these developments as an unmitigated disaster: Ivan Aksakov denounced the Congress of Berlin as an ‘open conspiracy against the Russian people ... with the participation of the representatives of Russia herself!’<sup>879</sup> The fiercely nationalistic Mikhail Katkov, editor of *Moskovskie vedomosti*, attacked the military and diplomatic incompetence which, he believed, had led to the outcome of the Congress, in particular the government’s failure to cultivate ‘firm alliances based on real interests’.<sup>880</sup> Nikolai Danilevskii likened the Congress of Berlin to a military defeat which had undone Russia’s victory over the Ottoman Empire: ‘The negative results achieved by Russian policy by far overcame the positive ones achieved by Russian military skill and valour!’<sup>881</sup> By contrast, Leont’ev, in 1882, praised the Russian government’s conduct, on the grounds that its diplomats had secured the greatest possible gains at San Stefano, and had given up as little as possible in the face of inevitable pressure from the European powers at Berlin.<sup>882</sup> Furthermore, he argued that the Treaty of Berlin had only temporarily checked Russia’s ambitions in the East, while condemning the Ottoman Empire to death in the long run.<sup>883</sup> In the meantime, the Treaty preserved Turkish rule of Constantinople, which, said Leont’ev, was the best alternative to Russian conquest of the city: it was obviously unacceptable for Russia that another great power should control it, while if it became an international free city it would fall under the influence of the West. Furthermore, Leont’ev wrote that both the Bulgarians and Greeks were unworthy to hold Constantinople, the former due to their readiness to split the Orthodox Church, and the latter for entertaining the ‘Great Idea’ of uniting all the territories inhabited by Greek-speakers.<sup>884</sup> He opposed the ‘Great Idea’ because, he wrote, independent Greece had ‘one of the most egalitarian constitutions in the world’ and the other Greeks would fall under its influence if the Ottoman Empire collapsed.<sup>885</sup> There is some irony in the fact that Leont’ev, so often seen as a mystical and religious intellectual, was more willing to accept the compromise peace drawn up at Berlin, and more sanguine about the fact that Russia was in no condition to risk a war with the other European powers in 1878, than ‘practical’ thinkers such as Katkov.

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<sup>879</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 316.

<sup>880</sup> K. Durman, *The Time of the Thunderer: Mikhail Katkov, Russian Nationalist Extremism and the failure of the Bismarckian System, 1871-1878* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 243.

<sup>881</sup> N. Danilevskii, *Sbornik politicheskikh i ekonomicheskikh statei* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia brat. Panteleevykh, 1890), pp. 140-141.

<sup>882</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 109.

<sup>883</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 46.

<sup>884</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 109-112.

<sup>885</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kto pravee?’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 164.

Leont'ev argued that Russia's true mistake in the East had been to abandon the policy of Nicholas I, the 'true and great "legitivist"' who reserved the right to apply diplomatic pressure on behalf of Ottoman Christians but rejected their right to resist the Sultan. Although Nicholas I supported the Greek uprising against Ottoman rule, Leont'ev argued that he did so before his views were fully formed under the influence of the July revolution in France and the Polish rebellion of 1830. Nicholas I's decision to go to war in 1853, he argued, was taken in defence of Russian predominance over the Ottoman Empire, not of the rights of Ottoman Christians: Leont'ev termed this 'the policy of Orthodox Russianism, comparatively distrustful of all purely tribal movements.'<sup>886</sup> In the aftermath of the war, argued Leont'ev, Russia adopted a 'more tribal than creedal' policy, with a 'profoundly revolutionary character', towards the Christians of the Ottoman Empire. This was borne out by the fact that Russia went to war in 1877, in response to reports of Slavs being massacred, rather than in 1870 to prevent the disintegration of the Orthodox Church, even though the international situation was more conducive to intervention in 1870.<sup>887</sup> As a result, 'until now we do not know how to repair those misfortunes which we ourselves made in the East.'<sup>888</sup>

Leont'ev was willing to accept the outcome of the Russo-Turkish War in part because he viewed Russia's eventual triumph in the East as inevitable. As early as October 1878, he wrote to his former superior, Nikolai Pavlovich Ignat'ev, that the Treaty of Berlin could not long delay the formation of a 'Great Eastern Union with Constantinople at its head'.<sup>889</sup> For Leont'ev, the question was not whether Russia could conquer the Ottoman Empire, but whether its doing so would promote cultural originality, or undermine it.<sup>890</sup> Leont'ev went so far as to say that it was beneficial in the long run for Russia not to have taken Constantinople during the war of 1877-1878, before the Russian government grew more conservative under Alexander III: 'then we would have entered this Constantinople (in a French kepi) with general European equality in the heart and mind'.<sup>891</sup> In 1882, Leont'ev explained that it was now necessary for Russia to take the place of the Sultan precisely because 'his power has become weak and cannot oppose liberal Europeanism any more.'<sup>892</sup> He imagined Constantinople and the surrounding area, in a personal union with the Russian crown, as the capital of a 'confederation of the

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<sup>886</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 572 and p. 588.

<sup>887</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 602.

<sup>888</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vladimir Solov'ev protiv Danilevskogo', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 396.

<sup>889</sup> Leont'ev, letter to N. P. Ignat'ev, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1878, in *Izbrannye pis'ma*, pp. 217 ff.

<sup>890</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 118.

<sup>891</sup> Leont'ev, 'Srednii evropeets kak ideal i orudie vseirnogo razrusheniia', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 231.

<sup>892</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 48.

Christian kingdoms and principalities of the East', adding that the Russian capital should be moved to Kiev, leaving St Petersburg as a 'Baltic Sevastopol'. This, he believed, would lead to Russia's cultural reinvigoration, strengthening 'Muscovite Rus', which he associated with the 'establishment of the Eastern-Byzantine cultural style', as opposed to St Petersburg, with its intelligentsia fascinated by 'the illusion of 'prosperous' eudaemonic democratisation'.<sup>893</sup> Leont'ev wrote elsewhere that 'St Petersburg authority and Muscovite thought complemented each other in our recent history' and echoed the assessment of his fellow diplomat and Pan-Orthodox thinker, Fedor Tiutchev, that a synthesis between the two would be possible in Kiev and Constantinople.<sup>894</sup> Sometimes he referred to his planned confederation as a 'Slavic-Asiatic' civilisation, which would be as distinct from European or 'Romano-Germanic' civilisation as the latter was from its Graeco-Roman and Byzantine predecessors.<sup>895</sup>

While Leont'ev's vision for Russian domination of the East was therefore superficially similar to the Pan-Slavic union described by Nikolai Danilevskii in his *Russia and Europe*, Leont'ev explained that his own version entailed 'generally more Asiatic mysticism and less European rational enlightenment.'<sup>896</sup> In particular, Leont'ev wished to include Persia and the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in his 'Eastern Confederation', while the Sultan was not to be deposed, but left to rule Egypt, once the British had been expelled from it, as Russia's vassal.<sup>897</sup> Glenn Cronin even suggests that ancient Persia, with its diverse population and religiously sanctified monarchy, may have inspired Leont'ev's vision of an Eastern Orthodox civilisation.<sup>898</sup> Furthermore, Leont'ev demonstrated a marked lack of faith in the cultural potential of the Ottoman Slavs. Their most conservative figures, he said, by the standards of other European countries 'would be members of the centre-right, no more.'<sup>899</sup> Leont'ev wrote in 1888 that the Orthodox East had not undergone the turn towards conservatism that Russia had since Alexander III's manifesto on autocracy in 1881.<sup>900</sup> In particular, he noted that contemporary Serbian society was characterised by 'democratic Europeanism, faithlessness, desecration of the Church'. He added that while the unification of Serbia would be necessary for the political equilibrium of the 'Eastern Confederation', there was little reason to think that

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<sup>893</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 86-90.

<sup>894</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 579.

<sup>895</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 83.

<sup>896</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 611.

<sup>897</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 131.

<sup>898</sup> Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, p. 119.

<sup>899</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 128.

<sup>900</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 620.

it would promote cultural originality, since the examples of Germany and Italy demonstrated that ‘tribal unification in our time, rapidly increasing the external strength of states, weakens the cultural fruitfulness of societies’. He observed that the Bulgarians, under the ‘revolutionary dictatorship’ of Stefan Stambolov, were still more ‘tribal’ and prone to ‘state nihilism’. Bulgaria’s liberal ‘Tirnov constitution’, adopted in 1879, in fact vindicated Leont’ev’s prediction in *Byzantinism and Slavdom* that an independent Bulgaria would be either a republic or ‘a monarchy with the freest structure, with the most insignificant nominal power.’<sup>901</sup> Leont’ev noted that it was the Romanians, ‘less related to Russia than the other peoples of the East by blood, language and their western aspirations’, who most resembled Russia in their social structure, with a hierarchical class system, and, until recently, serfdom.<sup>902</sup> He went so far as to express the hope that the Germans would prevent the Czechs from joining his planned ‘Eastern Confederation’, since, he wrote, the latter were the most bourgeois and liberal of nations.<sup>903</sup> Leont’ev’s views were thus the inverse of Danilevskii’s: while Danilevskii worried that Russia would degenerate culturally if it failed to absorb the other Slavic peoples, who, he believed, had developed a ‘proto-national and all-Slavic consciousness’ that would help Russia to repel the European influences that Peter I had introduced into its life, Leont’ev feared that the western Slavs would be a corrupting force if they joined the ‘Eastern Confederation’.<sup>904</sup>

As this suggests, a fundamental difference between Leont’ev, on the one hand, and on the other Danilevskii and the thinkers of the next generation whom he inspired, in particular Pan-Slavist military officers such as Mikhail Skobelev and Rotislav Fadeev, was that the latter saw Germany and Austria-Hungary as Russia’s main enemies, as Danilevskii had argued in *Russia and Europe*. In order to defeat the Germans, they believed in the necessity of uniting all the Slavs, including those under Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman rule, and of concluding an alliance with France.<sup>905</sup> By contrast, Leont’ev was willing to countenance the idea of ceding Poland and Courland to Germany in return for concessions in South-Eastern Europe. During the Russo-Turkish War, Leont’ev criticised the Russian government’s decision to take back Bessarabia and compensate Romania with the Dobruja, which, he said, should have been yielded to Germany or Austria in return for Russian control over the Black Sea Straits, the lynchpin of the ‘Great Eastern Union’ which, he believed, ought to have been Russia’s aim.

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<sup>901</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 362.

<sup>902</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 610-616.

<sup>903</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 92.

<sup>904</sup> Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe*, p. 103.

<sup>905</sup> R. Fadeev, *Opinion on the Eastern Question* (London: Stanford, 1871), pp. 41-42 and pp. 90-93.

What he saw as Russia's short-sighted concern for the Romanians led him to describe the latter, in an uncharacteristic reversal of his previous and subsequent views, as less Orthodox and generally less colourful than the Bulgarians.<sup>906</sup> Furthermore, he echoed the assessment of the French linguist Cyprien Robert that Austria-Hungary was not a threat to Russia because, in the event of war, Russia could easily split off its Slavic provinces.<sup>907</sup> At the same time, Leont'ev rejected the idea of an alliance with France, arguing that it made sense from a purely military perspective, but was not conducive to the project of creating a new 'Slavic-Eastern' civilisation to replace the 'Romano-Germanic', which entailed undermining France's standing as 'the leading nation of the West'. Germany, he wrote, could be diverted away from conflict with Russia in favour of seeking predominance in western Europe, through the annexation of Austria and the Netherlands and the subjugation of France, and even if it did turn against Russia it could not inflict any permanent harm. In addition, Germany, unlike France, was still a monarchy and was capable of producing distinctive personalities.<sup>908</sup> However, Leont'ev warned that in the long run, revolutionary forces would triumph in Europe, forming either 'one atheist union' or a group of indistinguishable 'churchless republics', after which Europe would 'be still more hostile to the Russian Empire and the union of Eastern Orthodox peoples than was monarchical Europe.'<sup>909</sup>

In turn, this implied that Leont'ev's 'Eastern Confederation' was intended less as a defence against an invasion from western Europe than as a means of containing liberal European influence and in particular its manifestation in the form of 'tribal' nationalism. For example, he wrote that the West's victory over Russia in the Crimean War was unwittingly animated by a 'secret force of destruction' which sought to promote equality and assimilation around the world, and to impose 'liberalism and democracy' on both Russia and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>910</sup> Leont'ev envisioned that the Russians and Greeks would come together in Constantinople, combining the former's genius for statehood and the latter's for religion, bringing about 'the spiritual victory of the East over the West.' In stark contrast to the Pan-Slavists, Leont'ev noted that the tensions between the Greeks and South Slavs would help to realise his vision by influencing the Greeks to look to Russia for protection.<sup>911</sup> It was

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<sup>906</sup> Leont'ev, 'Territorial'nye otnosheniia', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 522-525.

<sup>907</sup> Leont'ev, 'Rossiia i Avstriia', *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 37.

<sup>908</sup> Leont'ev, 'Pis'ma o vostochnykh delakh', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 76-79.

<sup>909</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kak nado ponimat' sblizhenie s narodom?', *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 157-158.

<sup>910</sup> Leont'ev, 'Plody natsional'nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 591.

<sup>911</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vladimir Solov'ev protiv Danilevskogo', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 363.



ecumenical Orthodoxy, he wrote, which historically had guaranteed the ‘stubborn and submissive spiritual unity’ of the ‘Orthodox-Muslim East’.<sup>912</sup> In particular, this derived from the Greek Orthodox patriarchal thrones, and the monasteries of Mount Athos and the Sinai desert. However, he explained that since the mid-nineteenth century, this ecumenical Orthodoxy had been threatened by various forms of nationalism: ‘Bulgarian revolutionary intrigue, Russian tribal policy and the Greek intelligentsia’s own rationalism.’<sup>913</sup> The first of these, he believed, aspired to a ‘Great’ Bulgaria, or possibly even to convert the Sultan and become the dominant force in the Ottoman Empire in order to replace the Russians as the leaders of Slavdom.<sup>914</sup> The ‘Greek intelligentsia’ intended to create a ‘Graeco-Byzantine Empire’ which would unite all Greek-speakers. Leont’ev made clear that he regarded both of these as manifestations of ‘tribal’ nationalism: ‘I do not stand at all for the Hellenic tribe, but only for the Patriarchs and for the so-called Phanariots’.<sup>915</sup> The goals and preoccupations of Leont’ev’s ‘Eastern Union’ were thus radically different from Danilevskii’s. His concern was to promote Orthodox unity, and he treated Pan-Slavism as an irrelevance or even an obstacle.

#### *Leont’ev and Solov’ev*

Leont’ev’s writings in the final years of his life were dominated by his debates with Vladimir Solov’ev, who envisioned the unification of all Christians under the papacy. Solov’ev therefore rejected all forms of nationalism, and the idealisation of the Orthodox Church, and so repudiated Danilevskii’s concept of Slavdom as a distinctive cultural-historical type.<sup>916</sup> As we have already seen, Leont’ev rejected Danilevskii’s Pan-Slavism, and in particular his hostility to the Ottoman Empire. He wrote that Danilevskii’s list of cultural types in *Russia and Europe* had overlooked Byzantium, which formed a cultural type in its own right, ‘eastern-priestly in social form and Christian in ideas.’<sup>917</sup> Nonetheless, even as Leont’ev and Danilevskii differed over whether the basis of Russian identity was monarchical and religious or ethnic and linguistic, they both aimed to defend it against Western encroachment. However, Leont’ev’s experiences in the Ottoman Empire had convinced him that ecumenical Orthodoxy should take precedence over nationality, with the result that Solov’ev’s call for Christian unity could hardly fail to appeal to him. As Leont’ev wrote in 1890, like Solov’ev, he placed ‘the religious cause

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<sup>912</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 620.

<sup>913</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 564.

<sup>914</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 607.

<sup>915</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Pis’ma o vostochnykh delakh’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 89.

<sup>916</sup> Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, p. 373.

<sup>917</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vladimir Solov’ev protiv Danilevskogo’, p. 322 and p. 348.

above the national'.<sup>918</sup> He conceded that Orthodox Christianity, as a universal religion, could not be reduced to a means of differentiating Byzantine or Russian civilisation from the West: 'The cultural-organic point of view is not entirely Christian.'<sup>919</sup> Leont'ev's later writings document his efforts to address this tension between his sincerely held religious faith, and his particularist political vision of Russian identity.

Leont'ev did not accept Solov'ev's arguments wholeheartedly. In an article of 1888, he defended Danilevskii's theory of cultural types against Solov'ev's critique, referring to *Russia and Europe* as 'this chef-d'oeuvre or catechism of Slavophilism', and arguing that Danilevskii's thought was 'full of élan and reality', not 'impracticable and crawling' as Solov'ev maintained.<sup>920</sup> Leont'ev went on to explain, in a letter to Gubastov, that his objections to Solov'ev's views were twofold: as a devout Orthodox Christian, he could not share Solov'ev's 'Roman sympathies', while the eventual unification of the Churches, although undoubtedly the will of God, was so far in the future that the next few generations of Russians should be more concerned with differentiating themselves from irreligious Europe.<sup>921</sup> Elsewhere, he wrote that the Russian state deserved its subjects' loyalty because it was 'a pillar of genuine non-democratic Christianity.'<sup>922</sup> Another letter to Tertii Filippov made the point that Solov'ev's desire for reconciliation with Europe risked turning into reconciliation with 'Godless western democracy', and that it was as much a 'self-deception' as was tribal nationalism. By contrast, argued Leont'ev, his own hatred of western democracy would lead to 'Slavophile love of Orthodoxy' and in turn to 'living, God-fearing faith!' He accepted Solov'ev's criticisms of the Orthodox Church, but argued that 'Solov'ev does not have the right to consider the church superfluous to holiness on the basis of the deviations and mistakes of several hierarchs.'<sup>923</sup>

However, in the last three years of his life, Leont'ev appeared more amenable to Solov'ev's arguments. He wrote that Solov'ev 'shook ... my cultural faith in Russia' and led him 'to think that, perhaps, the vocation of Russia is purely and only religious.' Solov'ev was, he wrote, the 'first and only man ... who since I matured has shaken me and forcibly compelled

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<sup>918</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 146.

<sup>919</sup> Leont'ev, "'Moskovskie vedomosti" o dvoevlastii', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 19.

<sup>920</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vladimir Solov'ev protiv Danilevskogo', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 324 and p. 327.

<sup>921</sup> Leont'ev, letter to K. A. Gubastov, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1888, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 377.

<sup>922</sup> Leont'ev, 'Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?', *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 141.

<sup>923</sup> Leont'ev, letter to T. Filippov, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 1888, in *Proroki Vizantizma*, pp. 515-520.

me to think in a new direction.’<sup>924</sup> In 1890, he expressed the fear that all historical forces, even conservative ones, and not only overt tribal nationalism, promoted the ‘all-equalising revolution’ which he opposed: ‘All conservative principles involuntarily and indirectly served the triumph of this revolution.’ He no longer excused Nicholas I for having supported the 1821 Greek uprising, writing that Nicholas bore more responsibility than Napoleon III for the subsequent rise of ‘those tribal emancipations, which damaged national physiognomies.’<sup>925</sup> Leont’ev suggested that the ‘national and religious reaction’ which he had noted in Russian society was a short-lived improvement before death, of the sort which he had also observed in his own health.<sup>926</sup> In 1891 he wrote that, while Solov’ev was wrong to deny the existence of cultural types, he was correct to observe that they did not necessarily align with nationalities, and it was possible that they would cease to exist in the future.<sup>927</sup> Leont’ev appeared to display a renewed pessimism about whether the Slavs in fact possessed the potential for cultural originality, writing that they ‘in the course of 100 years have not displayed one atom of creativity’ and that, while western Europe was in decline, there was no reason to believe that Slavdom was capable of producing the sort of new, four-dimensional cultural type which Danilevskii had envisioned.<sup>928</sup> At the same time, Leont’ev wrote that he was ‘horribly unhappy’ with Solov’ev’s ‘embittered and partly actively unscrupulous polemic against Slavophilism.’ This, he wrote, was the product of Solov’ev’s misguided view that Russia’s distinctiveness from the West hindered the unification of the Churches, when in fact, he argued, Russia would have to be assured of the former before it was ready to consider the latter.<sup>929</sup> This was, perhaps, as close as Leont’ev came to a resolution of the tension between his own thought and Solov’ev’s.

### *Conclusion*

As we have seen, Leont’ev continued to elaborate on his political vision until he died. He did so in accordance with the basic principles which he had already developed: the preservation of cultural originality and the rejection of liberal democracy and tribal nationalism, which he saw as its main antitheses. These views informed his opposition to the ‘Great Reforms’, with the crucial exception of the abolition of serfdom, which, he believed, was given an illiberal

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<sup>924</sup> Leont’ev, letter to K. A. Gubastov, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June 1889, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 465.

<sup>925</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 55.

<sup>926</sup> Leont’ev, letter to A. Aleksandrov, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1890, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 501.

<sup>927</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Fudel’, 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 1891, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 552.

<sup>928</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Fudel’, 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 1891, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 553.

<sup>929</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Fudel’, 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 1891, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 532.

character by the retention of the peasant commune and the provision of the peasants with land. At the same time, Leont'ev was a rare conservative critic of 'Russification'. These two issues were tied together by his staunch support for autocracy, which was clearly undermined by the presence within the state of separate centres of power, such as independent courts and elected local councils. Leont'ev also argued that Russification more indirectly threatened the autocracy: one of its main targets, the Baltic gentry, had always been 'equivocal towards the Russian nation', but at the same time they were loyal servants of the Tsar, 'who is separated from the Russian nation only metaphysically, not really', and therefore of Russia and Orthodoxy.<sup>930</sup> Unlike most other Russian conservatives, Leont'ev did not see the Treaty of Berlin as a failure and a betrayal. In particular, this underscores the subtle but significant differences between his thought and that of Danilevskii, with whom he is often conflated. Leont'ev's 'Great Eastern Union' was to be bound together by Orthodoxy, not Slavdom: it was to exclude the Austrian Slavs and to include the Turks and Persians, since, as we have seen, Leont'ev regarded non-Orthodox and even non-Christian peoples as less prone to the influence of liberalism. This reflects the fact that he saw aesthetics as a higher principle than religion: 'it is impossible to measure and value the history of Buddhism via Christian dogma, but via some general aesthetic mystery one can and must.' Therefore, he preferred 'good Muslims, Buddhists, Skopts, Mormons, Khlysts and so on' to 'commonplace European workers'.<sup>931</sup> This was also a reason why Leont'ev opposed Russification, illustrating that a clear connection existed between his seemingly abstract principles and his views on the most urgent political questions of his time. Finally, Leont'ev's debates with Solov'ev arguably made him more critical of Danilevskii's concept of cultural types, and provoked him to reflect on whether he viewed Orthodoxy as a universal truth or merely as a cultural organising principle. Although Leont'ev never arrived at a definitive solution to this question, his efforts to do so demonstrate that he remained a dynamic thinker until the very end of his life.

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<sup>930</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi okrainy', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 33.

<sup>931</sup> Leont'ev, letter to T. Filippov, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 1888, in *Proroki Vizantizma*, pp. 515-520.

## Chapter 8: Konstantin Leont'ev and the Western and Russian conservative traditions

### *Introduction*

This chapter considers Konstantin Leont'ev's place in the Russian conservative tradition and his relationship to the various tendencies within it. In some respects, conservative thought took shape under fundamentally different circumstances in Russia and in the West. In particular, after the reign of Peter I, the Russian nobility's status derived primarily from service to the state, and in Russia there were hardly any long-established institutions to conserve apart from the autocratic monarchy itself. Therefore, no Western model of conservatism was entirely applicable in Russia. Leont'ev's political views are difficult to categorise in terms of the various schools of thought within late nineteenth-century Russian conservatism. However, synoptic studies of Russian conservatism, such as those by Richard Pipes and Paul Robinson, tend to give a fairly cursory overview of Leont'ev's thought and emphasise his lack of practical influence, overlooking the penetrating critiques he made of other Russian conservative thinkers.<sup>932</sup> In particular, Leont'ev, far more so than many others, perceived the contradictions inherent in the Slavophiles' understanding of Russian politics and history, and the ways in which, while supposedly venerating Orthodoxy, they misrepresented Orthodox tradition for their own ends. He also grasped the incompatibility in the long run of the autocratic monarchy with the 'liberal' and 'Western' institutions imported into Russia from the 1860s onwards. His writings therefore help to illustrate the difficulty of defining conservatism in a society undergoing rapid, state-sponsored change. He also appreciated that many conservatives who acted as official or unofficial government spokesmen lacked any positive vision for Russia's future. Finally, he cogently argued that nationalism, which was embraced by many Russian conservatives as a force with which to unite the Russian population and legitimise the state, would in fact strengthen the appeal of liberal and democratic ideas. In order to appreciate Leont'ev's political thought in context, we must first consider the distinctions between the meaning of conservatism in nineteenth-century Russia and in the West.

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<sup>932</sup> R. Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 144 ff., and P. Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 85.

*Nineteenth-century conservatism in the West*

Both Western and Russian scholars generally understand conservatism as a critical response to the radicalism associated with some tendencies of Enlightenment thought.<sup>933</sup> The Enlightenment has been described as ‘a general process of rationalisation and secularisation’ beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, during which new ideas in science and philosophy mounted an unprecedented challenge to religion, tradition, and authority.<sup>934</sup> Jonathan Israel has convincingly argued that the Enlightenment produced competing radical and moderate tendencies. The former was based on the rejection of traditional religious justifications for political and social hierarchies, and it therefore gave rise to democratic, republican, and secularist political views. By contrast, the moderate enlightenment favoured the reconciliation of rational and secular values with monarchy, aristocracy, and religion.<sup>935</sup> Many historians, rather than depicting the Enlightenment as an exclusively secular phenomenon, now acknowledge that most Enlightenment thinkers were not anti-religious, instead seeking to reconcile faith with reason and modernity.<sup>936</sup> Thinkers associated with the religious Enlightenment argued in favour of ‘natural religion’, the idea that the existence of God and an afterlife could be demonstrated through reason. Catholic Enlightenment intellectuals in particular, such as Cornelius Jansen, emphasised inner piety and advocated local or national rather than papal control of the Church.<sup>937</sup> Moderate enlightenment thought gave rise to the style of governance known as enlightened absolutism, in which rulers strengthened their authority and international influence through the rationalisation of administration, the supervision of the Church by the state bureaucracy, and the removal of traditional constraints on royal power such as aristocratic privileges. In so doing, they often allied with the Church and deployed it as an instrument of social control.<sup>938</sup> However, the Enlightenment in turn gave rise to a school of ‘counter-enlightenment’ thought which held that the maintenance of social order required a source of authority which was above criticism, and therefore that institutions venerated by tradition, such as monarchy, aristocracy, and the Church, were essential.<sup>939</sup> In

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<sup>933</sup> R. Scruton, *Conservatism* (London: Profile Books, 2017), p. 3 and p. 71, and P. Agapov and V. Afans’ev, *Konservativnaia Mysl’ v Rossii* (Moscow: Kanon-Plius, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>934</sup> J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 3.

<sup>935</sup> J. Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed: ideas, revolution, and democratic defeat, 1748-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 4.

<sup>936</sup> U. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 6 ff.

<sup>937</sup> D. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 7-13.

<sup>938</sup> Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed*, p. 9.

<sup>939</sup> I. Berlin, ‘The Counter-Enlightenment’, in *The Proper Study of Mankind* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 375.

particular, the ‘reign of terror’ in revolutionary France, which claimed thousands of victims and witnessed efforts to expunge all traces of France’s Catholic and royalist past, gave rise to the argument that Enlightenment ideas inevitably led to anarchy and destruction.<sup>940</sup> Ironically, the conquest of Germany by revolutionary and Napoleonic France destroyed the academic and monastic institutions which had nurtured Catholic Enlightenment thought, while Napoleon’s persecution of Popes Pius VI and Pius VII enhanced the subsequent authority of the papacy and its ability to prevent intellectual innovation within the Church.<sup>941</sup> Furthermore, Enlightenment thought was challenged by the rise of romanticism, which rejected the Enlightenment assumption that reason could solve all social and political questions, arguing instead that the characteristics of different societies expressed incommensurable values and could only be understood on their own terms.<sup>942</sup> The interaction of moderate and radical enlightenment thought with the counter-enlightenment and with romanticism meant that conservatism took different forms in different societies in nineteenth-century Europe.

In England, the proclamation of the Bill of Rights in 1689 secured many of the aims sought by moderate Enlightenment thinkers, such as representative government, freedom from arbitrary arrest, and property rights.<sup>943</sup> The Bill of Rights reflected the ideas of the political thinker John Locke, who argued that individuals possessed natural rights, in particular the right to own property, which governments were instituted in order to uphold. Therefore, the authority of the government was limited in scope, rested on the consent of the governed, and could justly be defied if it infringed natural rights rather than defending them.<sup>944</sup> Subsequent British political thought revolved in large part around the defence of Britain’s ‘traditional’ or ‘mixed’ constitution, which was held to be based on the sharing of power between the monarch, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. The French Revolution, and the possibility that it might inspire radicalism in Britain, inspired a tradition of conservative rhetoric based on defence of the mixed constitution, embodied by the Whig politician Edmund Burke’s 1790 tract *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.<sup>945</sup> Burke acknowledged that reform was

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<sup>940</sup> D. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 91.

<sup>941</sup> Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment*, p. 11 and p. 215.

<sup>942</sup> I. Berlin, ‘Herder and the Enlightenment’, in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 208 and p. 218.

<sup>943</sup> R. Porter, ‘The Enlightenment in England’, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, eds. R. Porter and M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>944</sup> R. Goldwin, ‘John Locke’, in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. L. Strauss and J. Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 451-482.

<sup>945</sup> R. Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 677.

sometimes necessary: ‘a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.’<sup>946</sup> However, he warned that the statesman should proceed cautiously, drawing on the accumulated wisdom of previous generations, rather than attempting to solve political problems through abstract reason.<sup>947</sup> Accordingly, he criticised the French revolutionaries for pulling down the ‘whole fabric’ of the French government in favour of ‘a theoretical, experimental edifice’.<sup>948</sup> The pre-revolutionary government, he wrote, was not ‘utterly unfit for all reformation.’ Rather than being overthrown outright, it ‘deserved to have its excellencies heightened, its faults corrected, and its capacities improved into a British constitution.’<sup>949</sup>

During the nineteenth century, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* gave rise to a tradition of British conservative rhetoric which depicted the British constitution as a better guarantor of both freedom and order than either absolute monarchy or revolution. Benjamin Disraeli, the most articulate expounder of conservative thought in nineteenth-century Britain, echoed Burke, writing in his 1835 *Vindication of the English Constitution* that ‘respect for Precedent’ and ‘clinging to Prescription ... appear to me to have their origin in a profound knowledge of human nature ... and satisfactorily to account for the permanent character of our liberties.’ Britain’s ‘free government’, he argued, was the product of a constitution which was ‘the growth of ages’, whereas the French revolutionaries ‘built their fabric, not merely upon the abstract rights of subjects, but upon the abstract rights of men’. Having neglected the importance of custom and continuity, wrote Disraeli, they reduced France to anarchy, paving the way for Napoleon’s tyranny.<sup>950</sup> While Disraeli’s political decisions were often shaped by partisan advantage, his rhetoric throughout his career reflected strikingly consistent ideas: influenced in large part by Burke, he tried to strengthen and promote the qualities which, he believed, gave England its unique national character. In particular, he depicted the landed aristocracy as the lynchpin of the British constitution and the best defence against the authoritarianism and centralisation which he associated with other European countries.<sup>951</sup> Accordingly, as the journalist Thomas Keibel wrote in 1886: ‘In its defence of the Monarchy,

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<sup>946</sup> E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. F. Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>947</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 74 and 82.

<sup>948</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 107.

<sup>949</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, p. 111.

<sup>950</sup> B. Disraeli, *Vindication of the English Constitution* (London: Sanders and Outley, 1835), pp. 23-30.

<sup>951</sup> J. Parry, ‘Disraeli and England’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2000, pp. 705-707.



the Church, and the territorial Constitution of this country, the Tory party has never faltered.’<sup>952</sup> Nineteenth-century British conservatism thus reflected the synthesis of political liberty with the maintenance of traditional political and social structures envisioned by many thinkers of the moderate enlightenment.

In eighteenth-century France, by contrast, the monarchy retained nearly absolute power.<sup>953</sup> France produced one of the most prominent thinkers of the moderate Enlightenment, the Baron de Montesquieu, who argued that the ‘general spirit’ of each people was formed under different circumstances, reflecting the influence of climate, religion, and history, not reason. He believed that monarchy required elected and hereditary representatives as a check on royal power, and admired the British constitution on the grounds that it guaranteed ‘moderate’ governance. Britain, he wrote, was the only country where the laws were directly intended to preserve liberty.<sup>954</sup> Montesquieu’s writings were an implicit criticism of the contemporary French monarchy: he believed that Louis XIV and Richelieu had turned France into a despotism.<sup>955</sup> However, thanks arguably to the lack of opportunities for Enlightenment thinkers to exercise any practical influence, French Enlightenment thought took a radical turn.<sup>956</sup> In particular, it developed in an anti-clerical direction, due to the monarchy’s alliance with the Jesuits and obstruction of religious reform.<sup>957</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau embodied the radicalism of much French political thought in this period. His ideas were premised on the view that it is essential for humans to live in accordance with nature. He believed that civil society, which originates through the development of property rights, is in effect a state of war between those who have property and those who do not. He therefore rejected all forms of tradition and institutionalised authority.<sup>958</sup> The only way to combine civil society with freedom, argued Rousseau, is through collective decision-making whereby the individual can contribute to the formation of the ‘general will’ which expresses the desires of society as a whole. Therefore, a regime ought to be created within which the general will can express itself and be carried out, ideally by means of direct democracy or at least through delegates who are bound

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<sup>952</sup> E. Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism, 1830-1914: An Intellectual History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 18-19.

<sup>953</sup> N. Hampson, ‘The Enlightenment in France’, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, eds. R. Porter and M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) pp. 43 and 53, and Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 263.

<sup>954</sup> D. Lowenthal, ‘Montesquieu’, in *History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 496-507.

<sup>955</sup> Hampson, ‘The Enlightenment in France’, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, p. 46.

<sup>956</sup> Hampson, ‘The Enlightenment in France’, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, p. 45.

<sup>957</sup> Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 265.

<sup>958</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, p. 718.

to express the wishes of their electors.<sup>959</sup> Following the Revolution, Rousseau's doctrines were the main inspiration of the militant Jacobin faction which seized control of the Revolutionary government.<sup>960</sup>

As a result, early nineteenth-century French conservatives tended to conflate the Enlightenment with revolutionary radicalism and so to reject it in its entirety. Enlightenment thinkers were blamed for paving the way for the extremism of revolutionary figures such as Robespierre through their criticism of religion and the monarchy.<sup>961</sup> Joseph de Maistre, the Francophone Savoyard intellectual, defended the pre-Enlightenment view of authority as divinely ordained; the Enlightenment, he said, was an 'insurrection against God'.<sup>962</sup> He saw the Revolution as France's punishment by divine providence for allowing its Enlightenment thinkers to undermine European civilisation.<sup>963</sup> Human nature, wrote de Maistre, was fundamentally violent, superstitious and irrational. For a government to be able to exercise authority, it needed to be based not on liberal principles but on force, tradition, and institutions which were above rational criticism, expressing the 'common soul' of the nation, in particular the Church. Furthermore, criticism of authority should be suppressed.<sup>964</sup> Like de Maistre, François-René de Chateaubriand rejected not only revolution, but the kind of incremental change advocated by Burke. In his *Essay on Revolutions*, Chateaubriand drew parallels between revolutionary France and ancient Greece in order to demonstrate that history endlessly repeats itself, and so to undermine the 'relish for innovation' which he regarded as 'one of the greatest scourges with which Europe has been afflicted.'<sup>965</sup> Chateaubriand, in his *Genius of Christianity*, wrote that Catholicism was the only force which could lay the basis of a post-Revolutionary society.<sup>966</sup> After the Bourbon restoration in 1815, the newly elected, ultra-royalist assembly tried to purge the legacy of the Revolution, dismissing hundreds of officials. Liberalism was often equated with Protestantism, as a rejection of the authority of the Catholic Church.<sup>967</sup> The conservative journal *Conservateur de la Restauration* warned that there was no

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<sup>959</sup> A. Bloom, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 532-541.

<sup>960</sup> J. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: philosophy, revolution, and human rights, 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 933.

<sup>961</sup> McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, p. 97.

<sup>962</sup> Scruton, *Conservatism*, p. 63.

<sup>963</sup> J. Murray, 'The Political Thought of Joseph De Maistre', *The Review of Politics*, vol. 11., no. 1, 1949, p. 68.

<sup>964</sup> Berlin, 'The Counter-Enlightenment', in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, pp. 374-378.

<sup>965</sup> F. de Chateaubriand, *An Historical, Political, and Moral Essay on Revolutions* (London: British and Foreign Public Library, 1815), pp. 394-395.

<sup>966</sup> J.-M. Roulin, 'François-René de Chateaubriand: Migrations and Revolution', in *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, ed. P. Hamilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 60.

<sup>967</sup> McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, p. 168.

middle way between those who wanted to ‘abolish the Catholic religion’ and ‘carry out in the State and Europe as a whole a general upheaval’, and those who wanted to ‘maintain at all costs the Catholic religion in France, and defend until the last breath the legitimacy of the Bourbons.’<sup>968</sup> Many French conservatives criticised Louis XVIII for dealing too leniently with former revolutionaries and for failing to restore the pre-revolutionary standing of the Church and aristocracy. Chateaubriand wrote that by negotiating the terms of his return with Bonapartist politicians, and granting a constitutional charter, Louis had made a true restoration impossible.<sup>969</sup> De Maistre likewise argued that, due to the adoption of a constitution, the Bourbon restoration represented a compromise between the Divine Right of Kings and the revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man, and therefore could not provide the basis for political stability: ‘any constitution is a regicide.’<sup>970</sup> The only check on royal authority he would support was that of the Pope.<sup>971</sup> Thus, early nineteenth-century French conservatives effectively rejected constitutionalism and the separation of Church and state, which they associated with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

While enlightenment thought in France was suppressed by the authorities and accordingly developed a radical, subversive character, the opposite was true in Germany. Many rulers in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany aligned themselves closely with the tendency of ‘enlightened absolutism’, in particular Frederick the Great of Prussia and the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II. Joseph II tried to establish administrative, fiscal, and legal uniformity throughout the Empire, partly in the hope of strengthening the state after it suffered military defeat at the hands of the Ottomans in the 1730s and Prussia in the 1740s.<sup>972</sup> Furthermore, partly influenced by figures such as Ludovico Muratori, who embodied a backlash against the ‘baroque piety’ of the Counter-Reformation in favour of simple, inner faith, Joseph imposed extensive reforms on the Church. He wished to reduce costs, weaken the authority of the papacy, promote religious toleration, divert resources from monasteries to the parish clergy, force the remaining monasteries to provide useful services such as education and healthcare, and sever their connections with the heads of their orders abroad.<sup>973</sup> Frederick

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<sup>968</sup> McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, p. 188.

<sup>969</sup> Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed*, p. 827.

<sup>970</sup> J. Hayward, *Fragmented France: Two Centuries of Disputed Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 71.

<sup>971</sup> Murray, ‘The Political Thought of Joseph De Maistre’, p. 80.

<sup>972</sup> H. Scott, ‘Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740-90’, in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. H. Scott (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 150.

<sup>973</sup> D. Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic monasteries in the age of revolution, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 179-192, and Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, p. 19.

likewise upheld religious toleration, declaring himself ‘neutral between Rome and Geneva.’<sup>974</sup> Some scholars have assumed that German conservatives were uniformly opposed to enlightened absolutism.<sup>975</sup> In fact, its relationship with traditional elites was more ambiguous. Nobles welcomed some of the reforms which were introduced by ‘enlightened despots’ to improve agricultural productivity, such as the establishment of rural credit institutions by Frederick the Great. On the other hand, they resisted efforts by the monarchy to reduce their peasants’ obligations to them, and to prevent them from confiscating their peasants’ land.<sup>976</sup> During the wave of modernising activity prompted by military defeat at the hands of Napoleon, Prussia abolished serfdom in 1806, and the 1810 Financial Edict treated land on the same terms as all other property for tax purposes. These innovations gave rise to conflict with the nobility, who opposed the abolition of serfdom, their police powers on their estates and their estates’ exemption from taxation. The Prussian aristocrat Friedrich von der Marwitz embodied the ‘aristocratic conservatism’ which defended the traditional rural order on the grounds that it preserved a ‘patriarchal bond that tied the peasant to the nobleman’. He also opposed the new uniform legal code drawn up in 1784, writing that Prussia was ‘not a nation’ but ‘a conglomerate of provinces, each of which is very different from the others in its laws and habits.’ Therefore: ‘To propose to merge them into one means depriving them of their peculiar character, turning a living body into a dead carcass.’<sup>977</sup>

A second intellectual current which contributed to the development of conservative thought in nineteenth-century Germany was that of romantic nationalism. Romantic nationalism was based on the idea that there were no universally applicable cultural standards, or forms of government. Instead, the customs and institutions best suited to each society were those which had developed over centuries and embodied the *Volksgeist*, or the essential spirit of the nation. The romantic poet Friedrich Schlegel wrote that: ‘Each state is an independent individual existing for itself, is unconditionally its own master, has its peculiar character, and governs itself by its peculiar laws, habits and customs.’<sup>978</sup> Romantic nationalists therefore opposed enlightened absolutism, in particular that of the French client rulers installed in Germany during the Napoleonic Wars, who imposed reforms such as administrative

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<sup>974</sup> T. Blanning, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia* (London: Allen Lane, 2015), p. 373.

<sup>975</sup> K. Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 73 ff.

<sup>976</sup> R. Berdahl, ‘The *Stände* and the origins of conservatism in Prussia’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1973, p. 304.

<sup>977</sup> Berdahl, ‘The *Stände* and the origins of conservatism in Prussia’, pp. 312-314.

<sup>978</sup> H. Kohn, ‘Romanticism and the rise of German nationalism’, *Review of Politics*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1950, p. 460.

centralisation, the secularisation of church lands, and the abolition of traditional guilds, in what has been described as a ‘crash course in modernisation’.<sup>979</sup> This sharpened the romantic nationalists’ opposition to the imposition of the principles which they associated with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Schlegel accused the French of trying to destroy other nationalities and, along with other ‘national bards’, wrote poetry urging the Germans to fight Napoleon.<sup>980</sup> At the same time, he argued that each nation needed a common ancestry and language, and that Germany had a special mission to promote the flourishing of religion, poetry, and philosophy.<sup>981</sup> Likewise, the philosopher Johann Fichte called on the German people to ‘cast off foreign artifice’ and ‘acquire character; for to have character and to be German undoubtedly means the same’.<sup>982</sup> While romantic nationalism was distinct from aristocratic conservatism, which rejected nationalist ideas, it put forward a different and arguably more compelling basis for the defence of pre-modern social arrangements and for opposition to enlightened absolutism.

The Napoleonic Wars created an alliance of convenience between romantic nationalists and German rulers, in particular in Prussia.<sup>983</sup> However, there was still no established school of German conservatism, a term which was not yet in use: while liberals advocated a constitution, with representative government and freedom of the press, their opponents had little in common except opposition to radical change.<sup>984</sup> It was only after the uprisings of 1848 that royalist and anti-revolutionary movements began to emerge, in particular among peasants and veterans.<sup>985</sup> Friedrich Julius Stahl, the main theorist of nineteenth-century German conservatism, argued that revolution was the antithesis of Christianity, since it sought to order society ‘on the will of man rather than on God’s order and providence’.<sup>986</sup> From 1848 onwards, the Hohenzollern dynasty harnessed romantic nationalist sentiment to legitimise its rule first of Prussia and then of united Germany, King Frederick William IV declaring in March 1848 that ‘Prussia is henceforth merged in Germany.’<sup>987</sup> However, his granting of a constitution in

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<sup>979</sup> D. Blackbourn, *History of Germany 1780-1918* (Blackwell: Oxford, 2003), p. 54.

<sup>980</sup> Kohn, ‘Romanticism and the rise of German nationalism’, p. 460.

<sup>981</sup> Kohn, ‘Romanticism and the rise of German nationalism’, pp. 457-459.

<sup>982</sup> J. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. G. Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 155.

<sup>983</sup> Israel, *The Enlightenment That Failed*, pp. 774-776.

<sup>984</sup> C. Clark, *Iron Kingdom* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 462.

<sup>985</sup> Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, p. 484.

<sup>986</sup> F. Stahl, ‘What is the revolution?’, 1852, in F. Stahl, *Siebzehn parlamentarische Reden und drei Vorträge* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1862), pp. 132-146, trans. J. Riemer at ‘German History in Documents and Images’ website, last accessed 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>987</sup> Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, p. 489 and p. 591.

the same year meant that conservatives were henceforth divided between the so-called ‘free conservatives’ who, along with moderate liberals, supported the minister-president Otto von Bismarck, and the ‘old conservatives’ who dreamed of repudiating the constitution.<sup>988</sup> The latter were associated in particular with the Prussian landowning interest, and with Prussian patriotism as opposed to German nationalism. Their defence of ‘the virtues of rural life’ and of ‘land as the only form of property upon which a stable society could be built’ echoed the eighteenth-century aristocratic conservatives.<sup>989</sup>

By contrast, Bismarck’s chief concern after 1871 was that of consolidating the newly united German Reich against perceived threats, in particular those of the Catholic Church and of the socialist movement. He openly spoke of his indifference to ideological labels, while declaring his preference for a ‘strong German state’ with ‘more or less liberal furnishings’.<sup>990</sup> While Bismarck mostly limited himself to tactical measures such as welfare reforms, the ‘*Kulturkampf*’ against the Catholic Church, and the ‘anti-socialist law’ which led to his eventual downfall, the German Conservative Party, formed in 1876, upheld the combination of royalism and nationalism which had characterised German conservatism after 1848. The party’s programme affirmed ‘the monarchical foundations of our national life’ while declaring its aim ‘to strengthen and consolidate the unity won for our Fatherland along national lines.’ It dismissed the *Kulturkampf* as ‘a calamity for the Reich and people’. In economic matters, it repudiated ‘false socialist doctrines’ while advocating ‘ordered’ rather than ‘boundless’ economic freedom.<sup>991</sup> In practice, the main thrust of party activity was the protection of Prussian agrarian interests.<sup>992</sup> While the national leadership of the German Conservatives supported Bismarck and his anti-socialist ‘*kartell*’ of conservatives and liberals, the party’s local activists, and its affiliated newspaper the *Kreuzzeitung*, favoured a more radical policy, designed to protect artisans, shopkeepers, and small farmers against unregulated capitalism, which they associated with liberal politicians and Bismarck’s government. German Conservative politicians also increasingly blamed ‘capitalist exploitation’ on Jews, giving rise

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<sup>988</sup> Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, p. 545.

<sup>989</sup> R. Berdahl, ‘Conservative Politics and Aristocratic Landowners in Bismarckian Germany’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 44, no. 1, March 1972, p. 20.

<sup>990</sup> A. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (London: Arrow Books, 1961), p. 138.

<sup>991</sup> Founding Manifesto of the German Conservative Party, 1876, in L. Parisius, *Deutschlands politische Parteien und das Ministerium Bismarcks* (Berlin: J. Guttentag, 1878), pp. 219-220, trans. E. Fink at ‘German History in Documents and Images’ website, last accessed 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

<sup>992</sup> R. Berdahl, ‘Conservative Politics and Aristocratic Landowners in Bismarckian Germany’, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 44, no. 1, March 1972, p. 19.

to the use of anti-Semitic rhetoric and calls for Jews to be excluded from positions of power.<sup>993</sup> Late nineteenth-century German conservatism therefore reflected both the monarchy's embrace of German nationalism, and, in a distorted form, aristocratic conservatism's rejection of the unregulated market in favour of the defence of agrarian interests.

Nineteenth-century European conservatism thus defended monarchy, aristocracy, and the privileged position of the Church. It did so in opposition both to revolutionary and reformist movements, which aimed to overthrow or limit royal and aristocratic power, and to rulers who sought to remove traditional limits on their authority, undermining the customary standing of the Church and aristocracy. One basis for a conservative approach was the rejection of ideological programmes for the transformation of society on the grounds that they were divisive and liable to give rise to unintended consequences, which formed the essence of the Anglophone conservative tradition. By contrast, French conservatives such as de Maistre and Chateaubriand defended the Church and absolute monarchy on the grounds that they were divinely ordained, and that there was no distinction between moderate liberalism and revolutionary radicalism. In nineteenth-century Prussia, the monarchy identified itself with nationalism from 1848 onwards, with the result that aristocratic conservatism fell by the wayside. Conservatism thus existed in an ambiguous relationship with nationalism, which could be harnessed to legitimise monarchical rule but was difficult to reconcile with the fact that many existing states, such as Prussia or the Holy Roman Empire, were not inhabited by any one ethnic, linguistic, or cultural group. Conservative thought thus took different forms in different contexts throughout nineteenth-century Europe.

#### *Nineteenth-century Russian conservatism*

The development of conservative political thought in Russia was complicated by the way in which Peter I had adopted drastic reforms in order to strengthen the country economically and militarily. Eighteenth-century *philosophes* such as Voltaire and Rousseau noted the radicalism of Peter's reforms, the latter criticising him for wanting 'first of all to make of his subjects Germans and Englishmen, when it was necessary to begin by making them Russians.'<sup>994</sup> Peter I bequeathed an alliance between the autocracy and the nobility, instituting the 'Table of Ranks', whereby hereditary noble status derived from service to the state, once an official

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<sup>993</sup> J. Retallack, 'Anti-Semitism, Conservative Propaganda, and Regional Politics in Late Nineteenth Century Germany', *German Studies Review*, vol. 11, no. 3, October 1988, pp. 380 ff.

<sup>994</sup> P. Dukes, 'The Russian Enlightenment', in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, p. 183.

reached the requisite level of seniority, and was rewarded with control of land and serfs. Moreover, Peter required lifelong service from every nobleman, as well as regulating the management and sale of their estates in the interests of the state. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the nobles defended the autocracy as the guarantor of their privileges, resisting the Supreme Privy Council's attempt to impose limits on autocratic power in 1730. They apparently feared that the Council would interfere in their lives more than the autocrat did, and that the members of pre-Petrine aristocratic families who sat on it would undermine the status of the wider nobility.<sup>995</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century, the nobles' obligation to perform state service was gradually relaxed, until Peter III ended compulsory service in 1762. It is often assumed that the nobles successfully pressured the autocrat to reduce their service obligations. However, Robert Jones has demonstrated that measures limiting the requirement for nobles to serve were instead a response to the growth in their numbers, which alleviated the shortage of army officers and civil servants. The state interpreted the nobles' obligations according to its manpower needs, often allowing them to retire prematurely or take leave illegally in peacetime, but forcing them to serve beyond the official requirements during wartime. Accordingly, Peter III's manifesto ending compulsory service came shortly before Russia's withdrawal from the Seven Years' War. However, while ending the obligation to serve, it called on 'faithful subjects' to 'despise and avoid' nobles who declined to serve voluntarily, and banned them from the imperial court.<sup>996</sup> Catherine II's 1785 Charter of the Nobility reiterated that noble status was derived from state service, imposing certain civil disabilities on nobles who did not serve at all, and stipulating that the government was entitled to compel nobles to serve in an emergency. However, at the same time the Charter converted the nobles' estates from assets which they managed on behalf of the state into private property, which could not be confiscated without due process. It also entrenched the nobility's absolute control over their serfs.<sup>997</sup> Catherine II's *Instruction* to the Legislative Commission, inspired by Montesquieu and intended to form the basis of an enlightened legal code, likewise avoided criticism of serfdom.<sup>998</sup> The Charter created corporate noble institutions, membership in which was tied to land ownership, to take over some functions of the bureaucracy. Nobles were exempted from corporal punishment and could not receive any other sentence without being

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<sup>995</sup> R. Pipes, *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2005), pp. 12-16.

<sup>996</sup> R. Jones, *The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility, 1762-1785* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 24-33.

<sup>997</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 158.

<sup>998</sup> P. Dukes, 'The Russian Enlightenment', in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, p. 183.



convicted by their peers.<sup>999</sup> Catherine II thus completed the development of the nobility into a privileged class with a legally defined corporate status.<sup>1000</sup>

Describing the legacy of the evolution of the Russian nobility during the eighteenth century, Sergei Uvarov, education minister under Nicholas I, wrote that ‘autocracy and serfdom’ were the ‘inviolable dogmas’ of Russia’s ‘political religion’. He argued against the abolition of serfdom because it was indissolubly linked to the monarchy. They were ‘two parallel forces which have developed together.’ Abolishing serfdom would lead to ‘the dissatisfaction of the gentry class which will start looking for compensations for itself elsewhere’ with the result that ‘Peter I’s edifice will be shaken’.<sup>1001</sup> The nobility were capable of overthrowing individual emperors if their privileged status appeared to be threatened, as witness the killings of Peter III and Paul I. Peter III had stripped the Governing Senate, Russia’s highest administrative body, of the powers which enabled it to act as the guardian of the nobility’s interests. He had also alienated the politically important guards regiments.<sup>1002</sup> Likewise, Paul I had undermined the privileges granted in the Charter of the Nobility, including the nobles’ exemption from corporal punishment and from paying tax on their estates, while at the same time alleviating the position of the serfs in some respects.<sup>1003</sup> However, the nobles never seriously challenged the autocracy itself, which they saw as a better guarantee of their interests than any aristocratic or constitutional system.<sup>1004</sup> There was thus no equivalent of the defence of aristocratic interests against a modernising, centralising monarchy which characterised Prussian ‘aristocratic conservatism’. Neither was the Burkean defence of the ‘mixed’ constitution as the guarantor of liberty applicable in autocratic Russia. Finally, Russia embarked on the nineteenth century without having undergone the experience of revolution, which stimulated the development of royalist and Catholic conservatism in France.

Nonetheless, the French Revolution did help to stimulate the development of Russian conservatism. It gave rise to fears that Western ideas about the need for limits on royal authority or for the separation of powers, which had acquired some admirers in Russia,

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<sup>999</sup> Jones, *The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility, 1762-1785*, pp. 278-291.

<sup>1000</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 157.

<sup>1001</sup> V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 140.

<sup>1002</sup> D. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: The Panin Party* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 60-61.

<sup>1003</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 121.

<sup>1004</sup> A. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), p. 43.

ironically including Emperor Alexander I, could lead to the total overthrow of royal and noble authority.<sup>1005</sup> The court historian Nikolai Karamzin's 1811 *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, which is generally identified as the founding text of Russian conservatism, was a defence of the unlimited autocracy against the proposals drawn up by Alexander I's minister Speranskii for the Tsar to share power with an elected State Duma and for the gradual emancipation of the serfs.<sup>1006</sup> Karamzin argued that the Russian people had chosen autocracy as their form of government, and that any legal limit on royal authority would make Russia vulnerable to anarchy and foreign domination. The autocrat, he wrote, should rule in partnership with the nobility, preserving their control over their estates.<sup>1007</sup> Karamzin argued that Russian nationhood was defined by the state rather than by the people, writing that Russia was 'a compound of ancient customs of the east, carried to Europe by the Slavs and reactivated, so to say, by our long connection with the Mongols; of Byzantine customs which we had adopted together with Christianity; and of certain German customs, imparted to us by the Normans.'<sup>1008</sup> The attempted coup by opponents of autocracy in 1825 provoked Nicholas I to develop, for the first time, a distinctive ruling ideology, known as official nationality, which emphasised Russia's victory in the Napoleonic Wars as a vindication of monarchy and religion over the atheism and republicanism of the French Revolution. Official nationality was embodied by the triad of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality (*Narodnost*)', formulated by Sergei Uvarov as the ethos of education in Russia when he took office as education minister.<sup>1009</sup> Though Uvarov saw Russia as part of Europe, and admired constitutional monarchy as the ideal form of government, he believed that Russia, as Europe's 'youngest son', was not yet advanced enough for a constitution. He accepted Karamzin's view that the autocracy was responsible for Russian greatness, calling it 'the sine qua non of Russia's political existence.' The 'dreamy visions' of the Decembrists led him to conclude that Russia's 'youth', the period of absolute monarchy, needed to be extended.<sup>1010</sup>

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<sup>1005</sup> Hamburg, *Russia's Path toward Enlightenment*, p. 714, and Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, p. 125.

<sup>1006</sup> J. Gooding, 'The Liberalism of Michael Speransky', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 64, no. 3, July 1986, pp. 407 and 418; V. Grosul, 'Zakliuchenie', in *Russkii konservatizm XIX stoletii*, ed. V. Grosul (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2000), p. 421; V. Gusev, *Russkii konservatizm: osnovie napravleniia i etapy razvitiia* (Tver': Tver' State University, 2001), p. 45; A. Kozhurin, 'Fenomen russkogo konservatizma', in *Konservatizm: Pro et Contra*, eds. D. Bogatyrev et al. (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo russkoi khristianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii, 2016), p. 24; Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, p. xi.

<sup>1007</sup> Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, p. 88.

<sup>1008</sup> Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries*, p. 95.

<sup>1009</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 146.

<sup>1010</sup> C. Whittaker, 'The ideology of Sergei Uvarov', *The Russian Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, April 1978, pp. 164-166.

Uvarov was acquainted with the ideas of de Maistre and Chateaubriand, and his conception of Russian identity based on Orthodoxy and autocracy echoed their defence of monarchy and religion.<sup>1011</sup> However, the significance of the concept of nationality was more complicated in the Russian context. Depicting Russian or Pan-Slav nationalism as one of the foundations of the Russian state was potentially subversive because it called into question the Emperor's right to rule over his non-Slav subjects.<sup>1012</sup> Furthermore, Nicholas I favoured a 'legitimist' foreign policy, based on the preservation of existing borders, which precluded any attempt to unify the Slavs: Nicholas himself wrote that the idea of a Pan-Slav state was 'criminal' since the non-Russian Slavs were 'subjects of neighbouring and in part allied states.' Finally, many imperial officials were Baltic Germans, who, government spokesmen argued, were patriotic and exercised a positive influence on the Slavs.<sup>1013</sup> Therefore, Nicholas Riasanovsky convincingly argues that Nicholas I intended *narodnost'* to refer simply to the Russian people's love of their fatherland, piety, and deference to the monarchy, which supposedly guaranteed that revolutionary ideas could never take root in Russia, rather than to imply that the Russian people formed a political community of the kind envisioned by nationalists in the West.<sup>1014</sup> As Zorin observes, Uvarov defined *narodnost'* in terms of Orthodoxy and autocracy, and vice versa.<sup>1015</sup> Uvarov himself seems to have understood *narodnost'* simply to mean the Russian past, the study of which would induce students 'better to love their fatherland, their faith, and their tsar.'<sup>1016</sup> However, in practice, many Russian intellectuals, influenced by the romantic nationalist ideas which were spreading in Europe at the time, supported Pan-Slav nationalism and the removal of non-Russians from government positions. The romantic nationalist idea that every nation has a distinctive character, which its form of government should reflect, is clearly expressed in the Pan-Slavist writer Ivan Aksakov's statement that: 'Outside the national soil there exists no base; outside it, there is nothing real, vital, and all good ideas, every institution not grounded in it or grown organically from it bears no fruit and turns to dust.'<sup>1017</sup>

A second factor which complicated the relationship between the Russian authorities and conservative thought was the programme of 'great reforms' adopted in the aftermath of the

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<sup>1011</sup> Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality*, p. 171.

<sup>1012</sup> Kozhurin, 'Fenomen russkogo konservatizma', in *Konservatizm: Pro et Contra*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>1013</sup> Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality*, pp. 144-145 and p. 164.

<sup>1014</sup> Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and official nationality*, p. 137.

<sup>1015</sup> Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, p. 350.

<sup>1016</sup> Whittaker, 'The ideology of Sergei Uvarov', p. 172.

<sup>1017</sup> Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, p. 121.

Crimean War. The great reforms began with the abolition of serfdom, which entailed the end of the traditional alliance of the autocracy with the serf-owning nobility. Furthermore, the abolition of serfdom necessitated extensive reforms of local government and the judicial system, which had hitherto been based on the nobility's power over the serfs.<sup>1018</sup> Finally, state-sponsored modernisation meant that the autocracy could no longer claim legitimacy on the grounds that it was the guardian of Russia's traditional identity or social order, while attachment to the past became hard to reconcile with allegiance to the government. Therefore, in Russia, more so than in most European countries, political and cultural conservatism existed in tension with each other.

The former arose out of the moderate liberalism represented in the 1850s and 1860s by figures such as Konstantin Kavelin, Boris Chicherin, Mikhail Katkov, and Konstantin Pobedonostsev, who sought to strengthen the state through modernisation. Boris Chicherin wrote in 1857 that defeat in the Crimean War proved that 'a faulty system of government had undermined the might of Russia, that we had neither the personnel nor the technical means to defeat our foreign enemies, and that all our efforts would remain futile, given the corruption that had spread throughout the social organism.'<sup>1019</sup> Modernisers of this kind overlapped to some degree with the 'aristocratic opposition', led by Petr Valuev and Vladimir Orlov-Davydov, who wished to preserve noble control of the countryside after the emancipation of the serfs through the abolition of the peasant commune and the limiting of the political rights of the peasantry. They believed that only a powerful landed aristocracy could act as a strong support for the throne, often holding up Britain as a pattern for emulation.<sup>1020</sup> Katkov likewise hoped that, as in England, the landed nobility would act as a progressive force that would steer society towards a constitutional system based on 'local self-government' by the landowning aristocracy, as opposed to the bureaucratic centralisation which he associated with France and, implicitly, with Russia. Like the aristocratic opposition, he thought that the commune, with its regular redistribution of plots of land and its collective responsibility for paying taxes, deprived the peasants of the ability or incentive to improve their productivity.<sup>1021</sup> Early in his career, Katkov championed the rise of liberty through emancipation from the state, and argued that

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<sup>1018</sup> L. Zakharova, 'Autocracy and the Reforms of 1861-1874 in Russia', in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, eds. B. Eklof et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 32.

<sup>1019</sup> B. Chicherin, 'Contemporary Tasks of Russian Life', in *Liberty, Equality, and the Market: Essays by B. N. Chicherin*, ed. G. Hamburg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 110.

<sup>1020</sup> I. Khristoforov, '*Aristokraticheskaia*' *oppozitsiia Velikim reformam. Konets 1850 – seredina 1870-kh gg.* (Moscow: Russkoe slovo, 2002), p. 47 and p. 235.

<sup>1021</sup> M. Raeff, 'A reactionary liberal: M. N. Katkov', *The Russian Review*, vol. 11, no. 3, July 1952, p. 163.

political freedom would end the contest of ‘despotism’ and ‘radicalism’ which had disfigured Russian life.<sup>1022</sup> Modernisers of this sort rejected the idea that Russia and the West were following separate historical paths. Chicherin emphasised that ‘the Russian people have developed parallel with the Europeans’, and rejected the suggestion that Russia’s national character made Western models unsuitable for it.<sup>1023</sup>

Westernising, modernising figures such as Chicherin viewed the state as an engine of social progress. Often, they saw arguments for constraints on autocratic power as a rationale for the defence of the outdated social arrangements, such as serfdom, which they hoped that the autocracy would abolish.<sup>1024</sup> Pobedonostsev admired British society’s ingrained respect for authority which, he believed, meant that Britain, unlike Russia, had a functioning legal system.<sup>1025</sup> He was also one of the main instigators of the 1864 judicial reform, which he hoped would overcome the ‘organised anarchy’ which he blamed for disasters such as the Crimean War.<sup>1026</sup> Konstantin Kavelin argued in his analysis of Russian legal history that the state had always supported progress and rational social organisation.<sup>1027</sup> He favoured an enlightened autocracy, arguing that Russia lacked the conditions for representative government, with no middle class or traditions of local autonomy, and that the establishment of press freedom, a judicial system, and a system of local government would have to precede a constitution.<sup>1028</sup> Boris Chicherin argued that corruption and incompetence were endemic in the government, and that freedom of speech was necessary in order to expose its shortcomings.<sup>1029</sup> At the same time, however, he wrote that Russia, not yet having a middle class, was not ready for a constitution, and that the autocracy could ‘lead the nation with giant steps towards citizenship and enlightenment.’<sup>1030</sup> He therefore rejected the ideas of Western liberal thinkers such as Rousseau and John Stuart Mill as too radical and democratic. Whereas Western liberals wished to restrict the state’s authority, Chicherin saw it not as ‘an external agency for the preservation

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<sup>1022</sup> G. Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 251, D. Offord, *Portraits of Early Russian Liberals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 209, and E. Pyziur, ‘Mikhail N. Katkov: Advocate of English Liberalism in Russia, 1856-1863’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 45, no. 105, July 1967, pp. 443-451.

<sup>1023</sup> Chicherin, ‘Contemporary Tasks of Russian Life’, in *Liberty, Equality, and the Market*, p. 113 and p. 136.

<sup>1024</sup> D. Field, ‘Kavelin and Russian Liberalism’, *Slavic Review*, vol. 32, no. 1, March 1973, p. 60.

<sup>1025</sup> P. Schilovsky, ‘Reminiscences of Pobedonostsev’, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 30, no. 75, June 1952, p. 364.

<sup>1026</sup> R. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev: his life and thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 53.

<sup>1027</sup> Offord, *Portraits of Early Russian Liberals*, p. 197, and Rampton, *Liberal Ideas in Tsarist Russia*, p. 23.

<sup>1028</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, p. 291.

<sup>1029</sup> Chicherin, ‘Contemporary Tasks of Russian Life’, in *Liberty, Equality, and the Market*, pp. 121-126.

<sup>1030</sup> Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, pp. 159-161.

of rights and social order' but as 'a combination of all the people's common interests.'<sup>1031</sup> He described himself as a 'rational conservative' and also as an advocate of the 'governmental-liberal or, if you wish, conservative-liberal position in Russia.'<sup>1032</sup>

An important element of this approach was the promotion of Russian nationalism. Unlike the advocates of official nationality, whose conception of Russian *narodnost*' chiefly involved deference to the monarchy and the Church, Katkov in particular believed that nineteenth-century European history proved that dynastic, multi-national empires were obsolete. He therefore argued that in order to strengthen Russia it was necessary to forge the Russian people into a united, politically conscious nation, in a manner analogous to the unification of Germany and Italy.<sup>1033</sup> Modernisers therefore favoured a harsh response to the Polish uprising of 1863: Chicherin wrote that that he hoped that 'for the next ten years the Poles shall live under terror so that they may be convinced that they are completely in our hands.'<sup>1034</sup> This resulted in the end of the alliance between the modernising conservative-liberals and the aristocratic opposition, who opposed the government's expropriation of Polish landlords, whom it deemed collectively guilty for the revolt.<sup>1035</sup> Orlov-Davydov accused the government of 'waging war not so much with Poland as with the nobility, both Polish and Russian'.<sup>1036</sup> The connection between liberalism and nationalism was evident throughout nineteenth-century Europe, but in Russia it took the form of attempts to impose a shared identity on the Russian Empire's population, rather than to bring state borders into line with nationality.

Chicherin argued that conservatism performed a necessary function by preserving institutions such as the family, Church, and nobility, which provided social stability and acted as a necessary counterbalance both to the authority of the central government and to individual liberty. He supported 'liberal laws, unshakeable guarantees of liberty' on the grounds that they were 'a more solid foundation for public order than is bureaucratic arbitrariness.' At the same time, Chicherin rejected abstract schemes for ordering society: 'No general theory can serve as a basis for a conservative system for the simple reason that the structure and needs of

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<sup>1031</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, pp. 304-306.

<sup>1032</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, p. 255.

<sup>1033</sup> A. Renner, 'Defining a Russian nation: Mikhail Katkov and the 'Invention' of National Politics', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 81, no. 4, October 2003, p. 668.

<sup>1034</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, p. 261.

<sup>1035</sup> T. Weeks, 'Defining Us and Them: Poles and Russians in the 'Western Provinces,' 1863-1914', *Slavic Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 1994, p. 31.

<sup>1036</sup> Khristoforov, '*Aristokraticheskaia*' *oppozitsiia Velikim reformam.*, p. 223.

societies are infinitely varied and change historically.’ Using language which strikingly echoes that of Burke, he argued that conservatives had to accept the necessity of change: ‘If a conservative party does not wish deliberately to bind itself hand and foot and to wind up as a sacrificial victim, it must not become an enemy of liberty and reform.’ Since the abolition of serfdom had been a necessity, ‘conservatism and liberalism here are identical.’<sup>1037</sup> Likewise, Mikhail Katkov wrote in 1880 that there was no contradiction between liberalism and conservatism, because the latter sought to defend order and the former to extend freedom when in fact these two aims went hand in hand. Instead, he maintained that the true divide was between the ‘national’ party, who wanted what was good for Russia, and the ‘anti-nationals’ who wished Russia ill: ‘any politically honest Russian subject of any tribal origin belongs to the national party.’<sup>1038</sup> Thus, in Russia the potential role of the autocratic state as a modernising force gave rise to a conflation of conservatism and liberalism.

Russian liberals were accordingly distinct from revolutionaries such as Aleksandr Gertsen and Nikolai Chernyshevskii. Unlike the revolutionaries, they did not want Russia to avoid capitalist development.<sup>1039</sup> They also rejected the radicals’ desire to abolish the nobility, who, Chicherin believed, were the only class with the education required to be able to act in the interests of society as a whole, until a middle class took shape in Russia.<sup>1040</sup> Finally, they opposed violent revolution: Chicherin wrote that the state bound by the rule of law naturally developed over time, and emphasised that the ‘goal’ of a ‘good citizen ... should always be the legal development of institutions through the peaceful struggle of ideas and through the actions of government and people.’<sup>1041</sup> However, in the aftermath of the ‘great reforms’ enacted by Alexander II, a dichotomy arose between radical and conservative tendencies within Russian liberalism. The former saw the reforms, in particular the creation of the zemstvos, as the first step towards the establishment of a constitution with an elected assembly to oversee the central government. After a series of revolutionary terrorist attacks in 1878, the government appealed for support from the zemstvos, some of whose more radical representatives, such as Ivan Petrunkevich, responded with calls for an elected assembly to draw up a constitution which

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<sup>1037</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, pp. 257-258.

<sup>1038</sup> M. Katkov, ‘Natsional’naia i antinatsional’naia partii v Rossii’, *M. N. Katkov: sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, p. 416.

<sup>1039</sup> Offord, *Portraits of Early Russian Liberals*, p. 200 and p. 206.

<sup>1040</sup> Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, pp. 339-340.

<sup>1041</sup> Rampton, *Liberal Ideas in Tsarist Russia*, p. 55, and Hamburg, *Boris Chicherin & Early Russian Liberalism, 1828-1866*, p. 287.

would limit the power of the autocracy and guarantee individual freedoms.<sup>1042</sup> In 1880, a group of liberals led by Sergei Muromtsev submitted a memorandum to the government, blaming ‘the morbid form which the contest with the Government has taken’ on ‘the absence in Russia of any opportunity for the free development of public opinion’. They argued that the only way to forestall revolutionary terrorism was to summon an assembly of zemstvo representatives with ‘a share in the control of national life’ and to grant freedom of speech and freedom from the arbitrary exercise of state power.<sup>1043</sup> In the later 1870s, the more radical liberals entered into tentative and ultimately unproductive contacts with the revolutionaries.<sup>1044</sup>

On the other hand, many erstwhile liberals were inclined to support the government against the revolutionary and liberal opposition, giving rise to the tendency of statist conservatism. They saw the autocratic state as a necessary guarantor of order, and believed that the ‘great reforms’ were an adequate, if not excessive, response to the challenge of modernisation. They therefore favoured repressive measures as a response to challenges to the authority of the state. Konstantin Kavelin defended the arrests of revolutionaries under Alexander II, unlike those under Nicholas I.<sup>1045</sup> By the 1870s, Pobedonostsev had turned against the jury system, arguing that it was effective only in England and was unsuited to other countries, calling for revolutionaries to be shot without trial.<sup>1046</sup> Mikhail Katkov advocated the creation of a dictatorship to suppress the revolutionary movement.<sup>1047</sup> In 1882, when the interior minister N. P. Ignat’ev proposed a consultative assembly to advise the Emperor, both Katkov and Pobedonostsev denounced the idea for undermining the authority of the government.<sup>1048</sup> The extent to which former supporters of reform had become entrenched defenders of the existing order was revealed by their response when, in 1883, Boris Chicherin, as mayor of Moscow, marked the coronation of Alexander III with a speech to fellow city mayors in which he argued that it was necessary for society as well as the state to play its part to avert revolution: ‘Without social initiative, all reforms of the past reign will not make sense. We must by our own initiative close ranks against the enemies of social order.’ This was interpreted by the government, and also by Katkov’s *Moskovskie vedomosti*, as a call for a

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<sup>1042</sup> Petrov, ‘Crowning the edifice’, p. 203.

<sup>1043</sup> G. Fischer, *Russian Liberalism: from gentry to intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), pp. 65-67.

<sup>1044</sup> Petrov, ‘Crowning the edifice’, p. 209.

<sup>1045</sup> Offord, *Portraits of Early Russian Liberals*, p. 212 and p. 218.

<sup>1046</sup> Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, p. 71.

<sup>1047</sup> S. Fusso, *Editing Turgenev, Dostoevsky, & Tolstoy* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2017), p. 215.

<sup>1048</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, p. 374.



constitution, although Chicherin maintained that he had simply exhorted his listeners to display unity, public-spiritedness, and support for the government. However, even if we accept Chicherin's version of the text of his speech, it is hard not to see his call for 'the unity of zemstvo people', and his warning that Russian institutions were 'uncoordinated, and therefore powerless', as an implicit argument for the inclusion of zemstvo representation in the central government. As a result, he was dismissed from his position as mayor.<sup>1049</sup> Statist conservatives therefore acknowledged that the autocracy could be an instrument of modernisation which could promote Russia's development along the same lines as other European societies, but, in the aftermath of the 'great reforms', they placed equal or greater emphasis on the maintenance of order and stability.

While liberal-conservative thinkers saw the autocracy as an instrument of modernisation, the culturally conservative Slavophile school, clearly reflecting the influence of romantic nationalist ideas, emphasised Russia's distinctiveness from the West. Slavophile theorists such as Ivan Kireevskii and Aleksei Khomiakov believed that Western civilisation was based on individual autonomy restrained only by state coercion.<sup>1050</sup> Conversely, argued the Slavophiles, Russian society embodied the principle of voluntary co-operation or *sobornost'*, epitomised by the peasant commune. In the Slavophiles' account of Russian history, the Russian people had invited their Tsars to rule them in order to avoid participation in politics and so retain 'inner' freedom.<sup>1051</sup> The implication that the autocratic state had no right to disrupt the traditional Russian way of life made Slavophilism a potentially subversive tendency. Slavophiles denounced Peter I's reforms for severing the connection which had supposedly existed until then between the people and the ruling class.<sup>1052</sup> They advocated the restoration of the 'Land Assemblies' which pre-Petrine Tsars had occasionally summoned in order to consult their subjects, the replacement of the Holy Synod which had governed the Russian Orthodox Church since the eighteenth century with an elected council of priests, monks, and laity, and the introduction of autonomous parish councils.<sup>1053</sup> They also opposed censorship, which prevented the Tsar from hearing the people's concerns, and serfdom, which

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<sup>1049</sup> B. Chicherin, *Vospominaniia: zemstvo i moskovskaia дума* (Moscow: Kooperativnoe Izdatel'stvo 'Sever', 1934), pp. 234-241, and S. Lovell, *How Russia Learned to Talk: A History of Public Speaking in the Stenographic Age, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 100-101.

<sup>1050</sup> A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), p. 95.

<sup>1051</sup> Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and its Critics*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>1052</sup> Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, p. 98.

<sup>1053</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917*, pp. 274-275.

was incompatible with *sobornost*'. As a result of their criticism of government policy, they faced as much repression as did left-wing radicals.<sup>1054</sup>

However, we should not exaggerate the extent to which the Slavophiles formed a conservative opposition to the post-Petrine state. They denied that the people had any right to resist the authorities, even if the Tsar clearly abused his power.<sup>1055</sup> Furthermore, in response to the Crimean War, the Polish uprising of 1863, and the unification of Germany and Italy, Slavophilism largely gave way to a chauvinistic Pan-Slavism which placed more emphasis on the political unity of the Slavs than on the preservation of a unique Russian culture. Pan-Slavist writers, such as Rotislav Fadeev, shared the preoccupation of statist conservatives with strengthening Russia militarily in order to be able to challenge Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire, which stood in the way of Slavic unification.<sup>1056</sup> Another successor of the Slavophile movement was the 'gentry conservatism' of figures such as Prince V. P. Meshcherskii and A. D. Pazuikhin, who campaigned against the 'great reforms' and for the restoration of the privileged status which the nobility had enjoyed prior to emancipation, arguing that it, not the state bureaucracy, was the Tsar's natural partner in governing the country.<sup>1057</sup> Pazuikhin argued that the reforms, in particular the zemstvos and the new courts, had undermined the nobles' traditional authority, which enabled them to protect the peasantry from exploitation.<sup>1058</sup> Thus, the distinction between political and cultural conservatism was not entirely clear-cut.

#### *Konstantin Leont'ev and the conservative tradition*

The writings of Konstantin Leont'ev help to illustrate that the Russian conservative tradition did not form a coherent body of thought, but expressed the contradictory aims of strengthening the Russian state and of preserving or restoring the supposedly authentic Russian national character. Leont'ev did have a great deal in common with the latter tendency, the Slavophiles, in particular his belief that Russia should separate itself from the West, which was in the process of decay.<sup>1059</sup> Russia, he argued in 1890, was 'still not liberated enough from common

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<sup>1054</sup> L. Schapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 70-72.

<sup>1055</sup> Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, p. 97.

<sup>1056</sup> H. Kohn, *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 161-162 and 184-186.

<sup>1057</sup> H. Rogger, 'Reflections on Russian conservatism: 1861-1905', in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Europas*, vol. 14, no. 2, June 1966, p. 199.

<sup>1058</sup> G. Hamburg, *Politics of the Russian Nobility, 1881-1905* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984), p. 192.

<sup>1059</sup> Leont'ev, 'Slavianofil'stvo teorii i slavianofil'stvo zhizni', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 465.

Western ideals.’<sup>1060</sup> He hoped that Russia would ‘turn onto a completely different path’ and ‘let the raging and thunderous train of the West tear by us towards the inevitable abyss of social anarchy.’<sup>1061</sup> Accordingly, he once wrote that ‘I am a Slavophile in my own manner.’<sup>1062</sup> However, whereas the Slavophiles defended what they saw as Russia’s innate and original character, Leont’ev emphasised the role of foreign influences in shaping Russian identity. He pointed out that Russia had received the Orthodox faith from Byzantium and that the Russian aristocracy was largely descended from the Tatars who conquered medieval Rus’. He also credited German influence with imbuing the Russians with a discipline which was otherwise uncharacteristic of the Slavs.<sup>1063</sup> Furthermore, while the Slavophiles saw the reign of Peter I as a turning point in Russian history, when the creation of a Europeanised state bureaucracy had severed the connections which supposedly existed until then between the Tsar and his people, Leont’ev’s views on Peter were more positive, albeit somewhat ambivalent. In *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, he suggested that Peter had inaugurated the era of ‘flowering complexity’ in Russian history, but at the price of importing European cultural influences which diluted Russia’s Byzantine character, although ‘the foundations of everything that is ours ... of our way of life, remain closely linked with Byzantinism.’<sup>1064</sup> Elsewhere, he depicted Peter’s reign as one of the final stages of the process, culminating under Catherine II, whereby Russian society had grown progressively more complex since the emergence of its defining features of autocracy and Orthodoxy 900 years earlier, in part due to the absorption of diverse peoples, ‘alien to the Russian tribal nucleus’. Leont’ev argued that Peter I’s Table of Ranks and Catherine II’s Charter of the Nobility had created an ‘iron web of systematic discipline’ which further promoted the development of distinctive personalities. As prime examples, he cited Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow, Emperor Nicholas I, and Aleksandr Pushkin, ‘three great men of religion, statehood and national poetry’.<sup>1065</sup> Leont’ev wrote that the ‘artificial and also extremely coercive European reforms of Peter’ had in some respects been a break with the past, a ‘condemnation of history’, but ‘evidently, this artificiality of a special kind is natural for

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<sup>1060</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 25.

<sup>1061</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Slavianofil’stvo teorii i slavianofil’stvo zhizni’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 468.

<sup>1062</sup> Leont’ev, letter to A. Aleksandrov, 12<sup>th</sup> May 1888, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 362.

<sup>1063</sup> Leont’ev, ‘G. Katkov i ego vragi na prazdnike Pushkina’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 192.

<sup>1064</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vizantizm i slavianstvo’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 303-304.

<sup>1065</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chuzhim umom’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 491.

Russia.<sup>1066</sup> ‘Everything great and firm in the life of the Russian people’, he added, ‘was made almost artificially and more or less forcibly, on the initiative of the government.’<sup>1067</sup>

Thus, Leont’ev ingeniously turned the Slavophiles’ own arguments against them by pointing out that the hierarchical and authoritarian state which they decried as an alien innovation of the post-Petrine era was in fact as old as Russian statehood itself.<sup>1068</sup> He warned that their opposition to it risked importing into Russia the egalitarianism which he blamed for the decline of the West, even as they rightly resisted the West’s atheism and rationalism.<sup>1069</sup> The distinctive character of Russian society, he said, would disappear were it not for strong government.<sup>1070</sup> Finally, while Leont’ev, like the Slavophiles, worried that the contemporary Russian nobility had embraced Western liberal ideas, he did not agree that this could be reversed through the cultivation of stronger ties between the elite and the people, which, he said, would Europeanise the latter rather than Russifying the former.<sup>1071</sup> Thus, Leont’ev believed that Slavophilism had actually become a threat to Russia’s cultural originality. He singled out Nicholas I for praise, for recognising that the Slavophiles were really just European liberals in Russian guise.<sup>1072</sup> The Slavophiles would liberate the Slavs, he said, ‘from all that which prevented them until now from becoming the most ordinary European petty bourgeois!’<sup>1073</sup>

Leont’ev parted company with the Slavophiles not only in politics but also in religion. He advocated what he termed ‘Byzantine’ or ‘Filaretian’ as opposed to ‘Khomiakovian’ Orthodoxy, aligning himself with Filaret (Drozdov), Metropolitan of Moscow from 1821 to 1867, against the Slavophile lay theologian Aleksei Khomiakov.<sup>1074</sup> Leont’ev did not precisely specify the nature of his disagreement with Khomiakov. However, the issue over which he differed from Khomiakov was likely not the relationship between the Church and the state: he wrote that the Slavophiles were right to want a stronger and freer Orthodox Church than the one left behind by Peter I’s reforms.<sup>1075</sup> Rather, Ol’ga Fetisenko has persuasively argued that

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<sup>1066</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Zapiska o neobkhdimosti novoi bol’shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 15.

<sup>1067</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Zapiska o neobkhdimosti novoi bol’shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 14.

<sup>1068</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Slavianofil’stvo teorii i slavianofil’stvo zhizni’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, pp. 467-468.

<sup>1069</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Slavianofil’stvo teorii i slavianofil’stvo zhizni’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 465.

<sup>1070</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Fudel’, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1888, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 384.

<sup>1071</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 126, and letter to I. Fudel’, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1888, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 384.

<sup>1072</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Slavianofil’stvo teorii i slavianofil’stvo zhizni’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 466.

<sup>1073</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Chem i kak liberalizm nash vreden?’, *Pss*, vol. 7 part 2, p. 130.

<sup>1074</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kto pravee?’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 149.

<sup>1075</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Plody natsional’nykh dvizhenii na Pravoslavnom Vostoke’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 582.

Leont'ev's defence of Filaret was directed against the 'Protestant' Orthodoxy of the Pan-Slavist writer Ivan Aksakov, who equated the Metropolitan with the 'official', 'historical', and 'bureaucratic' aspects of the Orthodox Church resented by the Slavophiles.<sup>1076</sup> Leont'ev, on the other hand, wrote that 'I understand holiness as the Church understands it.'<sup>1077</sup> He argued as early as 1873 that 'Orthodoxy consists of dogmas, moral law, ceremonies and canons. All four elements are equally necessary.'<sup>1078</sup> Leont'ev's 'Byzantine' Orthodoxy was based on the premise that 'only he is truly holy whom the higher clergy acknowledge as such, and not he who appears to us as such.' He wrote that the Russian hierarchy, and in particular Filaret, had avoided succumbing to the 'Khomiakovian' deviation and instead adhered to 'Byzantine' or 'Graeco-Russian' Orthodoxy, which differed administratively but not dogmatically from that practiced in ancient Byzantium. It was necessary to cultivate 'in Russia and in all Slavdom, in the closest union with the Eastern-Greek Churches, the ancient Christianity expounded by the fathers of the church'.<sup>1079</sup> For Leont'ev, Filaret was a symbol of this Graeco-Russian unity, who, during the controversy over the Bulgarian campaign for an independent church, 'said that the Bulgarians do not have the right to separate without the Patriarch's blessing, if they want to consider themselves Orthodox.'<sup>1080</sup> Leont'ev wrote that while the Russian embassy was more supportive of the secular Greeks, Filaret and the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, Count A. P. Tolstoi, were defenders of the Patriarchate.<sup>1081</sup> As we have seen, Filaret did struggle to preserve Orthodox unity during the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy, although he was not as hostile to the Bulgarian side as was Leont'ev. In accordance with his emphasis on the importance of ecumenical Orthodoxy, Leont'ev, like Filaret, was sceptical about calls for the restoration of the Moscow Patriarchate, instead favouring the transformation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate into a centralised leadership for the whole Orthodox Church, analogous to the Papacy in the Catholic Church. This was to be achieved by having the leaders of all the national Orthodox Churches choose the Ecumenical Patriarch, who would be assisted by a Synod made up of the national Churches' representatives.<sup>1082</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> Fetisenko, *'Geptastilisty'*, p. 167, and 'Rekonstruktsiia odnogo spora: K. Leont'ev i I. Aksakov o mitropolitse Filarete', *Filaretovskii al'manakh*, no. 4, 2008, p. 200.

<sup>1077</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi novie khristiane', *Pss* vol. 9, p. 170.

<sup>1078</sup> Leont'ev, 'Esche o Greko-Bolgarskoi raspre', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 283.

<sup>1079</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska o neobkhodimosti novoi bol'shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 9.

<sup>1080</sup> Leont'ev, 'Esche o Greko-Bolgarskoi raspre', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 283.

<sup>1081</sup> Leont'ev, 'Otets Kliment Zedergol'm, Ieromonakh Optinoi Pustini', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 270.

<sup>1082</sup> Leont'ev, letter to T. Filippov, 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> February 1883, in *Proroki Vizantizma*, pp. 242-247.

For Leont'ev, the antithesis of 'Byzantine' Christianity was the 'sentimental' or 'rosy' Christianity expressed by Lev Tolstoi's short story *What Do Men Live By?*, with its revelation that 'all men live not by care for themselves but by love'. Leont'ev argued that Christianity of this kind, which recognised as holy only that which approximated European progress, thought that earthly virtues would suffice without fear of God and 'the teaching of Christ, the Apostles and the Holy Fathers'.<sup>1083</sup> The 'free equality and all-comforting, universal love' which it sought to achieve was 'never promised by Christ'.<sup>1084</sup> Leont'ev went on to criticise Dostoevskii's speech at the dedication of the Pushkin Monument in 1880, which argued that Pushkin embodied the Russian genius for identifying with other nationalities, and that Russia's destiny was to 'reconcile the contradictions of Europe' and bring about 'the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ!' Leont'ev not only opposed Dostoevskii's call for reconciliation with the 'contemporary Europe' which he hated so much, but argued that true Christianity did not believe 'in an intellect of collective mankind, which must slowly or quickly create heaven on earth.'<sup>1085</sup> Furthermore, he identified the key to genuine piety as 'fear of God' and 'the fear of sin, the fear of punishment', as opposed to 'love for people, which is not accompanied by fear before God'. The latter was 'not purely Christian' and 'came to us not so long ago from the West' as a manifestation of 'the new faith in earthly man and in earthly mankind, in the ideal, independent, autonomous virtue of the individual and in the high practical purpose of 'all mankind' here on earth.'<sup>1086</sup> Accordingly: 'Only those who are little acquainted with true Orthodoxy, with the Christianity of the Holy Fathers and the elders of Athos and Optina, can consider *The Brothers Karamazov* an Orthodox novel.'<sup>1087</sup> As a corrective to the errors he identified in Tolstoi and Dostoevskii's writings, Leont'ev held up the views of the Ober-Procurator Konstantin Pobedonostsev, as expressed in a speech at a school for clergymen's daughters in Iaroslavl', in which Pobedonostsev urged his listeners to 'love above everything in the world our holy Church' and defended the Russian clergy, despite their imperfections, on the grounds that they were at least opposed to reckless innovation.<sup>1088</sup> In turn, Pobedonostsev endorsed Leont'ev's critique by sending his articles to Dostoevskii.<sup>1089</sup> Leont'ev wrote that, if he was mistaken in his faith, he would prefer to be wrong with the

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<sup>1083</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi novie khristiane', *Pss* vol. 9, pp. 166-173.

<sup>1084</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska o neobkhodimosti novoi bol'shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 9.

<sup>1085</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi novie khristiane', *Pss* vol. 9, p. 199.

<sup>1086</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi novie khristiane', *Pss* vol. 9, p. 171. This conception of Christian piety, sometimes known as 'transcendental egoism', is addressed in more detail by Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, pp. 157-159.

<sup>1087</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi obrashchenie i zhizn' na Sv. Afonskoi Gore', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 784.

<sup>1088</sup> Leont'ev, 'Nashi novie khristiane', *Pss* vol. 9, pp. 216-218.

<sup>1089</sup> J. Frank, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 841.

Apostles, St John Chrysostom, Metropolitan Filaret, and the *starsy* of Mount Athos than with Tolstoi, Luther, and Proudhon.<sup>1090</sup> It encapsulates the disparity between Leont'ev's Orthodoxy and Dostoevskii's that Dostoevskii preferred Christ to the truth, whereas Leont'ev wrote that he preferred the Church.

Leont'ev was more sympathetic towards representatives of the statist tendency within Russian conservatism, such as Mikhail Katkov and Konstantin Pobedonostsev, than towards the Slavophiles. Like the statist conservatives, after their thought took an authoritarian turn following the 1863 Polish uprising and the emergence of the Russian revolutionary movement in the early 1880s, Leont'ev was a staunch defender of autocracy and a critic of the 'great reforms'. He wrote that 'the limitation of Tsarist power' could not possibly lead to 'the better pacification of Russia', because the ordinary Russian was 'restrained profoundly more by his spiritual sense for the person of the Divinely Anointed Sovereign' than by 'respect for the abstractions of the law, entirely uncultivated in him by history.'<sup>1091</sup> The conservative journal *Grazhdanin* praised Leont'ev's article 'How and why is liberalism harmful to us?' for identifying the harm done by the reforms, 'in the zemstvo, in the courts, in universities, in the press and in the matter of the emancipation of the peasants with land.' In particular, Leont'ev's comments about the new independent courts 'with public prosecutors who are at the same time weak and merciless' were singled out for praise.<sup>1092</sup> Konstantin Pobedonostsev recommended the article to the Tsarevich, writing that 'for the first time a man has been found who had the courage to speak the truth about our courts.'<sup>1093</sup> Thus, Leont'ev's writings were valued by those who wished to argue that the reforms of the 1860s had gone too far. He credited Katkov with a sounder grasp of political reality than the Slavophiles because, unlike them, Katkov did not idealise the Russian people and understood that Russia's character was shaped by the authoritarian state. Therefore, wrote Leont'ev, Katkov 'served the Slavophile ideal much better than the Slavophiles themselves.'<sup>1094</sup> Katkov, he said, adhered to 'Filaretian' rather than 'Khomiakovian' Orthodoxy. While noting that Katkov, like Khomiakov, sided with the Bulgarians in the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy, Leont'ev argued that Katkov did so out of short-sightedness and opportunism, rather than sincere conviction.<sup>1095</sup> Leont'ev even

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<sup>1090</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moi obrashchenie i zhizn' na Sv. Afonskoi Gore', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, p. 791.

<sup>1091</sup> Leont'ev, 'Zapiska o neobkhodimosti novoi bol'shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 10.

<sup>1092</sup> *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 852-853.

<sup>1093</sup> *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 851.

<sup>1094</sup> Leont'ev, letter to I. Fudel', 6<sup>th</sup> July 1888, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, pp. 382-383.

<sup>1095</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 149 and p. 158.

went so far as to say that Russians should ‘politically canonise Katkov while he is alive’ by erecting a monument to him close to Pushkin’s in Moscow.<sup>1096</sup>

However, Leont’ev criticised the statist conservatives for having failed to develop a positive programme for the future of Russia. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, Leont’ev, unlike Katkov, wanted to preserve the peasant commune. Moreover, as we have seen, he was a critic of ‘Russification’ and argued that ‘Orthodoxy is the essence of Russian *narodnost*’.<sup>1097</sup> He therefore criticised Katkov for advocating the imposition of a secular national identity on all the peoples of the Russian Empire, rather than appreciating the value of Orthodoxy as a unifying force.<sup>1098</sup> In addition, Leont’ev implicitly rebuked Katkov for supporting state control of the Russian Orthodox Church, likening him to Peter I’s clerical spokesman Feofan Prokopovich, and writing that ‘he did not go beyond the ideals of Peter I’ while ‘others’ wanted greater independence for the Church. He also argued that Katkov was unreasonably hostile to the churches of the Orthodox East, favouring ‘the predominance of the Russian State over the Eastern Church.’<sup>1099</sup> Furthermore, Leont’ev wrote that Katkov was an opportunist who lacked a theoretical basis for his views and concentrated exclusively on the transient political situation at the expense of broader issues.<sup>1100</sup> Leont’ev depicted Katkov as inconsistent, writing that early in his career he had wished to break with Russia’s past in favour of Western models, ‘if only the break went not from below but from above’, before realising that the West was in decline, after which he began ‘to repair ... that which he formerly broke.’<sup>1101</sup> Leont’ev therefore argued that Katkov ‘does not have a shade of boldness *in ideas*, or a spark of creative genius – he is daring only in the matter of political practice and nothing more!’<sup>1102</sup> Leont’ev also dismissed Pobedonostsev as a thinker, writing in 1882 that: ‘he is like a frost that hinders further decay, but he will never get anything to grow. He not only is not a creator but is not even a reactionary, not a regenerator, not even a restorer. He is only a conservative in the narrowest sense of the word.’<sup>1103</sup> Leont’ev therefore did not sit comfortably within either the Slavophile or statist traditions of Russian conservatism.

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<sup>1096</sup> Leont’ev, ‘G. Katkov i ego vrugi na prazdnike Pushkina’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 199.

<sup>1097</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 33.

<sup>1098</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 38.

<sup>1099</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Sud’ba Bismarka i nedomolvki Katkova’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 288 and ‘Kul’turnyi ideal i plemennaia politika’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 24.

<sup>1100</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Sud’ba Bismarka i nedomolvki Katkova’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 295, and Fetisenko, ‘*Geptastilisty*’, p. 303.

<sup>1101</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Sud’ba Bismarka i nedomolvki Katkova’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 295.

<sup>1102</sup> Leont’ev, letter to T. I. Filippov, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1882, *Proroki Vizantizma*, p. 193.

<sup>1103</sup> Leont’ev, letter to T. I. Filippov, 24<sup>th</sup> February 1882, *Proroki Vizantizma*, p. 196.



*Contemporary responses to Leont'ev*

In the years after his return from the Ottoman Empire, Leont'ev provoked a considerable amount of attention in the Russian press, possibly as a result of the renewed concern with the subject of Russia's relationship to the Orthodox East brought about by the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy and then by the Russo-Turkish War. He received both positive and negative judgments, with writers differing in particular over whether his religious, aesthetic, and political views formed a coherent whole, or merely consisted of a series of contradictory impulses.

Leont'ev was frequently criticised by writers of the Slavophile tendency, who regarded him as one of their most effective opponents. Sergei Sharapov wrote in *Russkoe delo* in 1887 that 'Mr. Leont'ev is a fanatical apostle of Byzantinism, and Slavophiles stand on purely Orthodox-Slavic soil.'<sup>1104</sup> Slavophiles argued in particular that Leont'ev's attacks on nationalism, which he blamed for the spread of liberalism in Europe, were unfounded. Aleksandr Kireev agreed with Leont'ev that Europe was in cultural decline, but argued that he was wrong to blame Slavophiles and the defenders of 'national policy'. The real cause of the decline of the West, wrote Kireev, was the breaking of the link between the Church and state, and the modern aspiration to place individual material interests above the state, in a 'negatively caricatured' version of Christian teaching about the value of the individual. Leont'ev was therefore wrong to argue that Europe's cultural decline could be reversed simply by opposing 'national policy' and by defending the remnants of the old order. Furthermore, Kireev argued that Leont'ev was mistaken in blaming the setbacks which Russia had encountered in the East following the Russo-Turkish War on the Slavophiles, since it was not their fault, but rather that of their opponents, that the liberated Balkan states had been given liberal western institutions. Kireev wrote that national policy was the only way to regenerate European civilisation.<sup>1105</sup> Leont'ev countered that he had never meant to attack the 'national ideal' but only 'purely political Pan-Slavism', which was 'harmful due to the fact that the majority of educated non-Russian Slavs have grown too accustomed to European forms of freedom and equality'.<sup>1106</sup>

In 1890, Petr Astaf'ev, whose fraught relations with Leont'ev were discussed in the preceding chapter, criticised his pamphlet 'National policy as an instrument of worldwide

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<sup>1104</sup> *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 806.

<sup>1105</sup> A. Kireev, 'Narodnaia politika – kak osnova poriadka: Otvet g-nu Leont'evu', *Slavianskaia izvestiia*, no. 28, July 1889, pp. 680-683, and no. 29, July 1889, pp. 707-711.

<sup>1106</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 74.

revolution' for attributing the spread of revolution simply to nationalism, when, argued Astaf'ev, 'all principles and forces of life', including art, science, and religion, could advance the revolutionary cause under certain circumstances.<sup>1107</sup> Astaf'ev went on to argue that nationality was an essential basis of culture, and not merely a potential source of cultural 'material', as Leont'ev believed. Astaf'ev wrote that Leont'ev had 'dedicated too much force, passion and talent ... to advocacy of Byzantinism', when Byzantium was not a national culture, and therefore could not 'be reconciled with my notion about nationality as the foundation and forming strength of any powerful culture capable of life.'<sup>1108</sup> Leont'ev responded that, rather than being non-national as Astaf'ev wrote, Byzantine culture was an expression of the Greek nationality: 'the state relations which flowed from it and the aesthetic and moral ideas connected with it were products of the Greek genius for the most part.'<sup>1109</sup>

Leont'ev was also criticised in some quarters for lacking a genuine understanding of the Eastern Question and of the nature of modern politics in general. The liberal *Vestnik Evropy* wrote that his 'Byzantine fantasies' lacked 'anything in common with Russian life, with its actual needs and aspirations.'<sup>1110</sup> An anonymous South Slav, writing in *Slavianskaia izvestiia* in response to *The East, Russia and Slavdom*, the collection of Leont'ev's essays published in 1885-1886, argued that Leont'ev, like Joseph de Maistre in the West, was so extreme a reactionary as to be in effect a revolutionary, who advocated 'the resurrection of the dead.' He also rejected Leont'ev's view that Russian and 'Byzantine' Orthodoxy were identical: 'The whole nature and life of Russians and Greeks informs about this distinction.' He went on to say that Leont'ev's writings demonstrated his lack of familiarity with the Balkan Slavs, other than the Bulgarians, since Leont'ev failed to realise that they detested the phanariots who he admired: 'I cannot tolerate these Eastern Jesuits.' Both Sharapov and the anonymous South Slav argued that Leont'ev had deviated from what the latter called the 'political gospel' of Danilevskii's *Russia and Europe*.<sup>1111</sup> Conversely, Vladimir Solov'ev argued, in a review of *The East, Russia and Slavdom* which was not published in his lifetime, that Leont'ev was engaged in a futile struggle against modernity in the form of nationalism, liberalism, and

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<sup>1107</sup> P. Astaf'ev, 'Natsional'noe samosoznanie i obshchechelovecheskie zadachi', *Russkoe obozrenie*, vol. 2, 1890, p. 278.

<sup>1108</sup> P. Astaf'ev, 'Ob"iasnenie s G-nom Leont'ev'e', in *Filosofiiia natsii i edinstvo mirovozzreniia* (Moscow: Moskva, 2000), pp. 58-64.

<sup>1109</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 163.

<sup>1110</sup> *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, pp. 798.

<sup>1111</sup> *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, pp. 793-798 and p. 807.

socialism, which had defeated the forces of traditional conservatism for the past half-century.<sup>1112</sup>

One of the sharpest critiques of Leont'ev's philosophical approach came from the Pan-Slavist writer Ivan Aksakov, who, as Leont'ev himself recalled, criticised *Byzantinism and Slavdom* for treating Christianity 'not as the eternal and undoubted truth of Revelation, but as an ordinary historical phenomenon.' Aksakov also objected to Leont'ev's desire to restore 'juridical partitions, privileged classes, which among us, thank God, have been destroyed.'<sup>1113</sup> In a later article, he accused Leont'ev of being unfairly biased against the Bulgarians in the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy.<sup>1114</sup> Following Aksakov's rejection, *Byzantinism and Slavdom* was instead published in the journal of the Imperial Society for History and Russian Antiquities. The Society's secretary and its journal's editor was the Moscow University professor Osip Bodianskii, a specialist in Slavic history, languages, and archaeology.<sup>1115</sup> The Society's publication of *Byzantinism and Slavdom* may suggest that scholars such as Bodianskii recognised Leont'ev's work as a useful contribution to the creation of a narrative which emphasised Russia's Byzantine roots and its cultural distinctiveness from the West. This, as we discussed previously, was a task which preoccupied many nineteenth-century Russian historians.<sup>1116</sup>

Similarly, the philosopher and literary critic Nikolai Strakhov, in his review of *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, approved of the way in which Leont'ev rejected 'uncertain reveries' such as the concepts of *narodnost*, European progressivism, and 'Slavic spiritual originality' in favour of 'the true principles of our historical development.' Strakhov also praised Leont'ev's 'profound religious sense and profound love for Russia'.<sup>1117</sup> Leont'ev, in turn, credited Strakhov with being the only person who understood his use of the concept of Byzantinism.<sup>1118</sup> Leont'ev's pupil, Ivan Kristi, praised *Byzantinism and Slavdom* for proving the 'fundamental distinction between notions of development, which means the transition of the simplest forms into more complex ones, and progress, which demands only improvement,

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<sup>1112</sup> V. Solov'ev, 'Retsenziia na knigu K. N. Leont'eva "Vostok, Rossiia i slavianstvo"', *Khristianstvo i russkaia literatura*, 2012, pp. 176-179.

<sup>1113</sup> Leont'ev, 'Moia literaturnaia sud'ba, 1874-1875', *Pss* vol. 6 part 1, pp. 110-111.

<sup>1114</sup> *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 680.

<sup>1115</sup> *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 663.

<sup>1116</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>1117</sup> *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 676.

<sup>1118</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 145.

even if at the price of the simplification of forms'.<sup>1119</sup> The same point was made by Petr Astaf'ev, who noted the similarity between Leont'ev's views on social development and those of the British liberal theorist Herbert Spencer, adding that Leont'ev 'becomes completely original' by contrasting development, or 'complication, differentiation and so on', with 'egalitarian-liberal, utilitarian, cosmopolitan' progress, which ultimately led to 'decomposition, social and cultural death.'<sup>1120</sup> Spencer argued, much as Leont'ev did in *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, that the development of living creatures from conception to maturity consisted of 'an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity of structure.' This happened through 'differentiation' between different parts of the organism.<sup>1121</sup> Leont'ev acknowledged the similarity of his views to Spencer's, while writing that he had not been familiar with Spencer when he wrote *Byzantinism and Slavdom*. However, Leont'ev concluded that Spencer 'seeks heterogeneity only in individuals and has not reached the thought that diversity of individuals or the strengthening of a separate personality in people depends precisely on individuality of social groups and classes with only moderate mobility around the borders.' Therefore, 'Spencer is nothing other than a Western liberal.'<sup>1122</sup> Perhaps due to the obscure circumstances of the publication of *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, Leont'ev received little acknowledgement outside Russia during his lifetime. One exception was an article about him in the Paris *Nouvelle Revue* by Alfred Portier d'Arc, a Frenchman living in St Petersburg.<sup>1123</sup> Leont'ev, wrote Portier d'Arc, was 'reaching the end of his laborious literary career without having known fortune or renown.' However, he acknowledged that Leont'ev, as a 'veritable Asiatic spirit' who rejected 'individualism' and 'democratic equality', embodied 'the exact physiognomy of the Russian people.' This was because in Russia, 'the occidental or rather German era inaugurated by Peter the Great is reaching its end' and 'Byzantine traditions' were reasserting themselves as Russia sought a new way of life which would 'answer the mystical needs of its spirit, religion, and instincts.'<sup>1124</sup> Leont'ev thus commanded respect as a thinker even if he failed to attract a large number of followers.

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<sup>1119</sup> Pss vol. 7 part 2, p. 681.

<sup>1120</sup> Pss vol. 7 part 2, p. 679.

<sup>1121</sup> H. Spencer, 'Progress: its law and cause', in *Essays: Scientific, Political & Speculative*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1891), p. 10.

<sup>1122</sup> Leont'ev, 'Srednii evropeets kak ideal i orudie vsemirnogo razrusheniia', Pss vol. 8 part 1, p. 207.

<sup>1123</sup> Leont'ev, letter to V. Rozanov, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August 1891, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 588.

<sup>1124</sup> A. Tchernoff, 'Un portrait litteraire russe: M. Constantin Leontieff', *La Nouvelle Revue*, vol. 58, 1889, pp. 758-763.

Leont'ev's admirers praised him not only as a theoretician but also as an analyst of contemporary political developments, especially with regard to the Eastern Question. His friend Tertii Filippov wrote in *Grazhdanin* in 1887 that he was 'a representative and inspired devotee of sacred conservative principles, which the Russian land and the Russian state stand on and uphold.' Filippov added that *Byzantinism and Slavdom* 'should be the "desk book" of every Russian man who wishes to understand the genuine essence of the Bulgarian question and to comprehend the whole bitter meaning of the events of recent times.'<sup>1125</sup> *The East, Russia and Slavdom* received a favourable review in the government-run *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, which praised Leont'ev's 'independence of view and sincerity of conviction' and wrote that his articles were 'noteworthy both for the abundance and grouping of facts, and for the rigour of logical conclusions.' It also noted his belief that Russian policy in the East should promote Orthodoxy rather than nationalism, and his opposition to Pan-Slavism on the grounds that 'all south-western Slavs without exception are democrats and constitutionalists' who lacked any common culture, with the result that Slavism was only a 'tribal, ethnographic abstraction.' The reviewer wrote that Leont'ev's depiction of the Balkan Slavs had been confirmed by the reports of soldiers returning from the Russo-Turkish War.<sup>1126</sup> The inconsistencies in Leont'ev's writings were ascribed to the evolution of his thought, and were said to have been resolved in his most recent articles. Leont'ev's arguments about the Orthodox and autocratic foundations of Byzantinism, and Russia's cultural debt to Byzantium, were described as 'a rigorously developed, original view, which rests on numerous historical facts and the personal observations of a gifted and experienced writer.'<sup>1127</sup> It is possible that Leont'ev received this praise from an official publication in part as a means of refuting Pan-Slavist critics of the terms on which the Russian government ended the Russo-Turkish War, and its subsequent co-existence with the Ottoman Empire.

Leont'ev's religious views received mixed reactions from contemporaries. One fundamental disagreement which emerged from their commentaries on Leont'ev's work was the question of whether he was a sincere Christian, or guilty of mispresenting his own moral criteria, or lack thereof, as true Christianity. Tertii Filippov praised Leont'ev's assessment of Tolstoi's religious views, denouncing *What Do Men Live By?* as 'a false commodity, covered

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<sup>1125</sup> T. Filippov, 'Dnevnik', *Grazhdanin*, no. 36, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1887, pp. 13-14.

<sup>1126</sup> [Anon.], 'Vostok, rossiia i slavianstvo: Sbornik statei K. Leont'eva', *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 1886, no. 260, p. 2.

<sup>1127</sup> [Anon.], 'Vostok, rossiia i slavianstvo: Sbornik statei K. Leont'eva', *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, 1886, no. 250, p. 2.

by a celebrated flag' and Tolstoi himself as a 'corrupter' whom Leont'ev was ideally suited to refute.<sup>1128</sup> Iosif Fudel', an Orthodox priest and correspondent of Leont'ev, wrote that he was an 'artist of thought' who marked a new stage in the development of Russian self-consciousness, building on the work of the Slavophiles. Fudel' argued that although Leont'ev's worldview was founded on the 'aesthetics of life', he subordinated his aestheticism to faith, hating the Western revolutionary movement as both an aesthete and a Christian because it was based on a perversion of the idea of Christian love. Had it been possible, wrote Fudel', Leont'ev would have laboured towards the 'transformation of all Russia into Athos'.<sup>1129</sup> Shortly after Leont'ev's death, the philosopher Sergei Trubetskoi argued that his Orthodoxy was 'in a sense ... more correct' than that of the Slavophiles, because it had been formed by the monks of Mount Athos and so was 'more free from Protestant elements'.<sup>1130</sup> The prominent clergyman Antonii (Khrapovitskii), then the Archbishop of Volhynia, praised Leont'ev in 1911 for portraying Russia 'not as part of "cultured and enlightened" Europe, but as part of the Ecumenical, Orthodox Christian Church!'<sup>1131</sup> Antonii was known for his advocacy of a 'highly confessionalised form of Russian nationalism' free from Western influences, and for being 'the sworn enemy of liberals in both religion and politics.'<sup>1132</sup> It is therefore easy to see how he would have admired Leont'ev's defence of 'Graeco-Russian' Orthodoxy, and his hostility to Western liberalism. Leont'ev was thus acknowledged as the originator of a conservative alternative to liberal tendencies in Russian religious thought, even if it was too idiosyncratic to attain widespread acceptance.

However, earlier in his career, before he appreciated the extent to which his ideas would provoke opposition from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Antonii (Khrapovitskii) took a more negative view of Leont'ev, criticising him for depicting fear of God as the basis of wisdom and love. Antonii saw this as un-Christian, since, he wrote, the 'first and essential condition of following Christ' was to deny 'any attachment to oneself' and 'true Orthodox Christianity condemns any egoism.'<sup>1133</sup> He went on to attack Leont'ev as one of the 'religious-class conservatives of the pseudo-ascetic tendency ... who loved to speak about fear, but not about

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<sup>1128</sup> T. Filippov, 'Dnevnik', *Grazhdanin*, no. 36, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1887, pp. 13-14.

<sup>1129</sup> I. Fudel', 'Kul'turnyi ideal K. N. Leont'eva', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 1, pp. 160 ff.

<sup>1130</sup> S. Trubetskoi, 'Razocharovannyi slavianofil', in *K. N. Leont'ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>1131</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), 'Iskrenniaia dusha', in *Pamiatii Konstantina Nikolaevicha Leont'eva* (St Petersburg: Literaturnyi Sbornik", 1911), p. 317.

<sup>1132</sup> S. Dixon, 'Orthodoxy and Revolution: the restoration of the Russian patriarchate in 1917', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 28, December 2018, pp. 160-161.

<sup>1133</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), 'Kak otноситsia sluzhenie obshchestvennomu blagu k zabote o spasenii svoei sobstvennoi dushi?', *Voprosy filosofii i psikhologii*, vol. 3, no. 12, February 1892, pp 77-78.

love.’<sup>1134</sup> In the 1890s, Antonii thus associated Leont’ev with the shortcomings of the Russian Church which he aimed to address by broadening the clergy’s intellectual horizons and promoting monastic asceticism.<sup>1135</sup> In 1884, Vladimir Solov’ev wrote that Leont’ev was a ‘talented and original author’ whose works contained the ‘sharpest expression’ of the truth that ‘the religious and ecclesiastical idea should predominate over tribal and popular aspirations.’<sup>1136</sup> However, after Leont’ev’s death, Solov’ev wrote that while he had been a sincere Orthodox believer, his ideas reflected an overwhelming dislike of Europe based on a caricatured and incomplete understanding of it, with the result that the elements of Leont’ev’s Byzantinism were ‘not organically linked to each other.’ Solov’ev wrote that, despite his personal piety, Leont’ev treated Orthodoxy merely as part of a ‘neo-Byzantine culture’ with which to resist Europe, when sincerely held faith should reduce political questions to irrelevance.<sup>1137</sup> Glenn Cronin has convincingly suggested that Solov’ev’s 1891 treatise *On the Decline of the Medieval Worldview*, with its criticism of the ‘Eastern dualism’ and ‘pseudo-Christian individualism’ of those who cared only for their own salvation and not for that of the whole world, can be read as an attack on Leont’ev’s understanding of Christianity.<sup>1138</sup> Another opponent of Leont’ev’s religious views was the writer Nikolai Leskov, a critic of the Orthodox Church who sympathised with Protestantism.<sup>1139</sup> Leskov argued that Leont’ev was wrong to accuse Dostoevskii and Tolstoi of heresy simply because Dostoevskii did not share his hatred of contemporary Europe, while Tolstoi valued love over fear and humility, which, said Leskov, was closer to the Gospel than Leont’ev’s approach. Leont’ev’s depiction of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii as heretical, wrote Leskov, indicated that he had confused his personal inclinations and spiritual needs with true Christianity, which was in fact ‘a universal, cosmopolitan religion.’ Leskov also argued that Leont’ev did not demonstrate any actual familiarity with the Church Fathers whose writings, he claimed, supported his belief that wisdom began with fear of God.<sup>1140</sup> Despite their diametrically opposed views on religious questions, Leskov and Antonii (Khrapovitskii) thus converged in their criticisms of Leont’ev.

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<sup>1134</sup> Antonii (Khrapovitskii), ‘Kak otnositsia pozitivnoe uchenie ob obshchestvennom blage k moralii i religii?’, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Kazan: tipografiia imperatorskogo universiteta, 1900), p. 385.

<sup>1135</sup> P. Michelson, *Beyond the Monastery Walls: the Ascetic Revolution in Russian Orthodox Thought, 1814-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2017), pp. 176-177.

<sup>1136</sup> V. Solov’ev, ‘O narodnosti i narodnykh delakh Rossii’, in *Vladimir Solov’ev: natsional’nyi vopros v Rossii* (Ripol Klassik: 2018), p. 36.

<sup>1137</sup> Solov’ev, ‘Pamiati K. N. Leont’eva’, in *K. N. Leont’ev: Pro et Contra*, vol. 1, pp. 21-25.

<sup>1138</sup> Cronin, *Disenchanted Wanderer*, p. 179.

<sup>1139</sup> N. McLean, *Nikolai Leskov* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 198.

<sup>1140</sup> N. Leskov, ‘Graf L. N. Tolstoi i F. M. Dostoevskii kak eresiarkhi (religiia strakha i religiia liubvi)’, *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, April 1883, no. 1, p. 2, and no. 3, pp. 1-2.

Furthermore, Leskov argued that while ‘the main aim of Christianity is the heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of God,’ Leont’ev ‘entirely conflates the divine will with the authoritarian Church’ and ‘understands ecclesiastical life only in terms of ceremony.’ Leskov likened Leont’ev to Iosif Bolotskii, the defender of monastic land ownership in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, who advocated the enforcement of religious orthodoxy by the state.<sup>1141</sup> Leskov wrote that Leont’ev’s desire to compel Russia to ‘turn into something similar to a large monastery’ was ‘unrealisable without extreme violence to conscience and harm to the state’.<sup>1142</sup> He added that ‘the first three centuries of persecutions’ were ‘when the Church corresponded most to its idea.’ He warned that if the Russian Church followed Leont’ev’s advice to assume ‘obligations which are unsuitable and directly harmful for it’, then it would risk sharing ‘the fate of Byzantium.’<sup>1143</sup> Likewise, in his review of *The East, Russia and Slavdom*, Nikita Giliarov-Platonov admired Leont’ev’s reporting on conditions in the East, and agreed with him that Russia would eventually conquer Constantinople. However, he argued that Leont’ev was wrong to equate the Eastern Orthodox Church as it had developed in the Byzantine Empire with the true essence of Christianity, which, he said, could only be discerned in the early, pre-Constantinian history of the Church. Therefore, he dismissed the idea that Russia could form a new civilisation on the basis of Byzantine Orthodoxy.<sup>1144</sup> Leont’ev countered that the Church might well have disintegrated had it not been shaped by Greek influence: ‘Before the Greeks undertook, mainly in the Greek language, dogmatic definitions and the drawing up of liturgy, Christianity, although broadly spread, still remained in a very uncertain condition and could ... have divided into streams and run dry.’<sup>1145</sup> He quoted the Swiss theologian Alexandre Vinet’s argument that ‘God wanted Christianity to be Greek.’ Vinet wrote in a work of 1855 that Greece had been prepared by God as a ‘rich and well-appointed cradle’ to compensate for Christianity’s ‘weak childhood.’<sup>1146</sup> Elsewhere, Leont’ev went so far as to praise the Byzantine Empress Irene, who reigned during the controversy over icon-worship and who deposed and blinded her son, as ‘an example of Orthodox firmness in the state sphere and under difficult circumstances of dogmatic disorder.’ He credited her with

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<sup>1141</sup> N. Leskov, ‘Zolotoi vek: utopiia obshchestvennago pereustroistva, kartiny zhizni po programme K. Leont’eva’, *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, no. 80, June 1883, p. 2.

<sup>1142</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>1143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>1144</sup> N. Giliarov-Platonov, ‘O pervom tome sbornika statei K. N. Leont’eva “Vostok, Rossiia i slavianstvo”’, *Nikita Petrovich Giliarov-Platonov: issledovaniia, materialy, bibliografiia, retsenzii*, ed. A. Dmitriev (St Petersburg: Rostok, 2013), pp. 651-653.

<sup>1145</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kto pravee?’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 169.

<sup>1146</sup> Alexandre Vinet, *L’Éducation, la famille et la société* (Paris: 1855), p. 173.



the establishment of icon-worship as dogma, and argued that she had done more good for the Church than many saints.<sup>1147</sup> Leont'ev thus positioned himself as a defender of the Byzantine, as opposed to pre-Constantinian Church, in the debate among nineteenth-century Russian ecclesiastical writers over whether Byzantium had distorted or preserved original Christianity.<sup>1148</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Russian conservatism differed from other European conservative traditions in that, following Peter I's reforms, and even more so in the aftermath of the 'great reforms' implemented by Alexander II, there was little surviving continuity with the past for it to defend. Instead, Slavophiles sought to resurrect a traditional social order which supposedly predated the Petrine era. Statist conservatives were better disposed towards Westernising reforms until the 1870s, when the emergence of radical revolutionary movements meant that the modernisation which they had previously favoured came to appear as a dangerous concession to enemies of the state, and they increasingly supported the autocracy as a guarantor of order. Arguably, Konstantin Leont'ev intended his 'Byzantine' vision of a state united by 'Graeco-Russian' Orthodoxy to remedy both Slavophilism's fixation on a mythologised vision of the past, and statist conservatism's lack of an animating principle which could enable it to transcend the immediate concerns of the moment. The essentially philosophical rather than practical cast of his political thought may have been influenced by the fact that he was absent from Russia during most of the 1860s and the early 1870s, when issues such as land redistribution, the rights of the peasantry, and local administration were being widely discussed. Leont'ev's conservatism was shaped by his interpretation of Orthodoxy, and also by his aesthetic principles, on the basis of which he argued that civilisations experience an increase in the complexity of their social structures and the degree of differentiation between their constituent groups until they attain 'an era of flowering complexity', after which the process goes into reverse. In *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, he argued that during an era of growing social complexity, 'all progressives are right, all conservatives are wrong' because 'conservatives then mistakenly do not believe in growth or flowering' while: 'Progressives then lead the nation and the state to flowering and growth.' However, after 'flowering complexity' gives way to 'secondary simplification', distinctions between social groups collapse, undermining cultural originality, since: 'Mixing

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<sup>1147</sup> Leont'ev, letter to I. Fudel', 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 1891, *Izbrannye pis'ma*, p. 533.

<sup>1148</sup> See Chapter 3.

all colours results in grey or white.’ After this point, conservatism is necessary as ‘an anchor or a brake’, and ‘all the conservatives and friends of reaction are right ... for they seek to heal the organism.’<sup>1149</sup> Leont’ev argued that: ‘the richest blossoming of original and strong personalities in all fields and in all Europe coincided in our century with the religious, monarchical and aristocratic reaction which lasted from 1815 to 1848.’ However, after 1848, Europe had passed the point after which civilisation began to grow simpler rather than more complex, and it was therefore necessary to delay, rather than advance, the process of development: ‘the onslaught of liberal-democratic principles became stronger’ and ‘took the upper hand everywhere’ with the result that ‘everything was humbled, everything faded; the borders of states, the peculiarities of way of life began as if to dwindle; everything began to be debased, became drier, more soulless, more tedious’.<sup>1150</sup>

Leont’ev defined liberalism as ‘the negation of every extremity, even the most distinguished, of every constraint, of every style.’ Unlike Christianity, he wrote, it had no ‘creating, i.e. constraining, principles’ and so could not form the basis of an original culture, since: ‘Precisely that is durable among people, which in its essence contradicts democratic freedom and that individualism which it brings about.’<sup>1151</sup> Furthermore, Leont’ev saw liberalism as universal and homogenising: it was ‘colourless, all-destroying, empty in the sense that it is equally possible everywhere ... liberalism is everywhere equally hostile to those historical origins, in the discipline of which arose that or another people.’<sup>1152</sup> He therefore believed that liberalism was a purely destructive force, which undermined the traditions which differentiated one society from another: ‘liberalism cannot have a lasting future; and until now it has only represented something transient, destructive, weakening, softening, throwing into disorder everything old, everything local, everything isolating, everything which possesses style and force, but it does not create anything local, great and stable in itself, does not give to the world any striking inheritance.’<sup>1153</sup> As a result, it made people ‘shallower, more worthless, more undistinguished; more educated on the whole, that is true, but on the other hand more foolish.’<sup>1154</sup> ‘Moderate and legal liberalism’ was actually more dangerous than anarchism and communism, because it was less overtly threatening.<sup>1155</sup> By contrast, said Leont’ev,

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<sup>1149</sup> Leont’ev, *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, trans. K. Benois (London: Taxiarch Press, 2020), pp. 99-100.

<sup>1150</sup> Leont’ev, ‘G. Katkov i ego vrugi na prazdnike Pushkina’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 201.

<sup>1151</sup> Leont’ev, leading article in *Varshavskii dnevnik*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 10.

<sup>1152</sup> Leont’ev, leading article in *Varshavskii dnevnik*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 7.

<sup>1153</sup> Leont’ev, ‘G. Katkov i ego vrugi na prazdnike Pushkina’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 200.

<sup>1154</sup> Leont’ev, leading article in *Varshavskii dnevnik*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 8.

<sup>1155</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Vladimir Solov’ev protiv Danilevskogo’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 389.

conservatism was always the product of a particular time and place, so that the English conservative tradition, that of ‘aristocratic constitutionalism’, was ‘possible only in England’ and ‘assumes a destructive character’ in other societies, while ‘the conservatism of the Turks is not like that of the Buddhists’.<sup>1156</sup> Leont’ev thus understood conservatism as an attempt to delay or prevent what he believed was the natural tendency of a complex, flourishing civilisation to shed its distinguishing features as it reverted to simplicity, which liberalism, by contrast, actively supported.

Therefore, we can see that Leont’ev cannot be categorised as either a Slavophile or a statist conservative. He frequently disagreed with representatives of the latter tendency such as Pobedonostsev and Katkov: in particular he hinted at believing, unlike them, that the Church should be more independent of the state. He did not share the preoccupation with the need to strengthen Russia militarily and economically for the sake of great power competition which had emerged among modernising, statist conservatives. More generally, he criticised them for concentrating on practical questions and for failing to articulate a convincing basis for the legitimacy of the Russian state. As we have seen, he saw liberalism as essentially destructive, rejecting Katkov and Chicherin’s view of it as a constructive force which formed a necessary counterbalance to conservative maintenance of order. Like the Slavophiles, Leont’ev wished to preserve what he believed was Russia’s distinct identity. Much as they saw the masses as the bearers of Russian *narodnost*, Leont’ev wrote that ordinary Russians were ‘Byzantines’, unlike the ‘contemporary Europeans’ of the intelligentsia. However, he argued that ‘mixing or merging with the people’ would ‘infect them with our European miasmas’, and so that the Slavophiles were wrong to wish for ‘rapprochement with the people.’ Historically, this had been prevented by the class privileges which separated the nobility from the people. Therefore, he wrote, one should ‘be glad that the people do not like the ‘intelligentsia’ of our time.’<sup>1157</sup> Neither did he share the gentry conservatives’ faith in the landowning class as the bulwark of the established order, arguing that ordinary Russian people were instinctively more deferential to imperial officials than to landowners.<sup>1158</sup> As he wrote in 1891: ‘What stands strongly among us? The army, monasteries, officialdom and, perhaps, the peasant commune.’<sup>1159</sup> Furthermore, unlike the Slavophiles, Leont’ev did not depict Russia’s national character as entirely the result of its own inner development. Directly echoing Nikolai Karamzin, Leont’ev argued that Russia

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<sup>1156</sup> Leont’ev, leading article in *Varshavskii dnevnik*, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1880, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 7.

<sup>1157</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Kak nado ponimat’ sblizhenie s narodom?’, *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, pp. 156-161.

<sup>1158</sup> Leont’ev, ‘Zapiska o neobkhodimosti novoi bol’shoi gazety v Sankt-Peterburge’, *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 16.

<sup>1159</sup> Leont’ev, letter to I. Fudel’, 19<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 1891, *Izbrannye pis’ma*, p. 550.

had been shaped by the authoritarian state, which, in turn, was largely the product of Tatar and German influences, and, more importantly still, by Byzantine Orthodoxy, which, he believed, was Greek in origin. Leont'ev therefore believed that what he saw as the tribal nationalism of the Slavophiles was actually a threat to Russian identity, writing that 'a new, pure Slavism' by itself, divorced from 'these ancient Graeco-Russian roots of ours', would be 'either the most pathetic or the most terrifying Europeanism of the newest times.'<sup>1160</sup>

Arguably, Leont'ev's defence of Orthodoxy and autocracy had less in common with either Slavophile or statist conservatives of the late nineteenth century than with the 'official nationality' promulgated by Count Sergei Uvarov a generation earlier. Like Uvarov he saw the nation as secondary to the monarchy and the Church, writing that he would no longer love and serve Russia if it ceased to be autocratic and Orthodox.<sup>1161</sup> In effect, Leont'ev argued that Russia had undergone a dangerous break with the past not, as the Slavophiles believed, in the time of Peter I, who he credited, along with Catherine II, with paving the way for Russia's cultural flourishing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but rather in his own time, thanks to the spread of liberal and democratic ideas from Europe. While his anti-Western views were hardly unique in Russia at the time, Leont'ev differed markedly from Pan-Slavist conservatives in seeing 'tribal nationalism' itself as a manifestation of Western liberalism, and as incompatible with the ecumenical Orthodox Christianity, derived from the Greek Church within the former borders of the Byzantine Empire, which he believed was the basis of Russian statehood. His Pan-Orthodox rather than Pan-Slavist vision, shaped in large part by his unusual formative experiences in the Orthodox East, meant that, despite his acknowledged intellect and literary talent, he found few allies or supporters among other Russian conservative thinkers.

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<sup>1160</sup> Leont'ev, 'Kto pravee?', *Pss* vol. 8 part 2, p. 155.

<sup>1161</sup> Leont'ev, 'G. Katkov i ego vragi na prazdnike Pushkina', *Pss* vol. 7 part 2, p. 195.

### Conclusion

The development of artistic and academic depictions of Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia illustrates how images of the past could be deployed for political purposes. The use of Byzantine symbolism had a long history in Russia, and pre-Petrine monarchs often modelled their ceremonial appearances on those of Byzantine Emperors. However, during the reign of Peter I, Byzantine imagery largely fell out of use, until Catherine II revived it to legitimise her 'Greek Project'. As we have seen, though, the depictions of Byzantium associated with the Greek Project lacked any firm scholarly basis. The mid-nineteenth century saw a flowering of Byzantine studies in Russia. In accordance with the doctrine of 'official nationality', political historians argued that the Russian state had been formed under Byzantine influence, just as Western historians traced the origins of civilisation back to classical Greece and Rome. However, archaeologists and art historians, inspired by archaeological discoveries in Crimea and by an influx of Byzantine artefacts from Mount Athos in particular, developed more sophisticated arguments about Byzantine cultural influence on Russia. The growth of interest in Byzantine art and architecture can be seen as part of the Europe-wide rise of romanticism, in which art was understood as an expression of the culture which produced it, rather than being judged according to universal laws. Byzantine influence was said to have shaped Russian art, in particular by bequeathing the lack of a distinction between the sacred and secular, in contrast to Western art. Byzantine architecture also offered motifs which could be drawn on to produce a distinctively 'Russian' style, distinct from Western neoclassicism. At the same time, Byzantine ecclesiastical history attracted a great deal of attention in nineteenth-century Russia due partly to growing concern about the legitimacy of the post-Petrine system of church-state relations. Furthermore, the nineteenth-century Russian Orthodox Church increasingly feared efforts by the Catholic Church to extend its influence into Russian Poland or to reunite the Churches on terms favourable to the West. Byzantium was credited with the development of a model in which the Church and state were linked with each other but on a more equal basis than in contemporary Russia, while at the same time Byzantine history could be deployed to vindicate the Eastern side in the 'Great Schism' between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Russian artistic and ecclesiastical historians therefore argued that Byzantium, and in particular Byzantine Orthodoxy, had shaped Russian culture. After Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, the growth of Russia's diplomatic and ecclesiastical presence in Greece and the Ottoman Balkans also contributed to the rise of interest in Byzantium. The writings of Antonin (Kapustin) exemplify how the Byzantine legacy in art and ecclesiastical practice could appear

to a Russian in the Orthodox East as a potential source of cultural renewal. At the same time, Russian diplomats and churchmen in the Orthodox East acknowledged the need to strengthen ties between the Russian and Greek Churches in order to prevent the Western powers from undermining Russian prestige among Orthodox Christians. From the 1860s onwards there was thus a renewed awareness in Russian intellectual life of Byzantine influence as a force which shaped Russian identity and differentiated it from the West.

Konstantin Leont'ev's writings demonstrate how a political thinker, as opposed to an academic, might be influenced by the growing awareness of the Byzantine legacy in Russian intellectual life. Although Leont'ev's works contain very few direct references to Byzantine scholarship, he clearly did sense the atmosphere of increased interest in Byzantium in nineteenth-century Russia. His first references to a natural affinity between Greeks and Russians based on their shared Orthodoxy appeared in his writings from the period of his service as a consul. Leont'ev's experiences on Athos led him to the conclusion that Orthodox Christianity had assumed its definitive form, marked by strict spiritual discipline and worldly renunciation rather than efforts to improve the earthly lot of mankind, in Byzantium. Just as Athos was a meeting point for Orthodox Christians from different national backgrounds, Byzantine Orthodoxy transcended any one nationality. At around the same time as Leont'ev's residence on Athos, the Graeco-Bulgarian church controversy came to a head. It pitted secular Slavic nationalism against ecumenical Orthodoxy, provoking Leont'ev's interest in the question of the Byzantine legacy to Russia. Having witnessed the Westernisation of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie during his consular service, he associated the Bulgarian cause with Western liberalism, by which he meant the erosion of the social complexity which generated original culture. He believed that Byzantine autocracy and Orthodoxy provided the organising principle for this complexity in Russia. By contrast, he argued that Western civilisation was characterised by an 'extremely exaggerated notion of the earthly human personality' and by 'excessive personal self-confidence', derived in particular from German feudalism, which resulted in the emergence of the bourgeoisie and then of revolutionary and democratic ideas.<sup>1162</sup> Given Leont'ev's hostility towards the West, it is noteworthy that he seems never to have visited Europe. His impressions of it were apparently derived in large part from his encounters with diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, which left him with a negative view of France in particular, while he had some admiration for Britain, seeing the former as progressive and the

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<sup>1162</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, pp. 300-302.

latter as conservative.<sup>1163</sup> His apparent assumption that it was possible to gauge a whole nation's characteristics on the basis of a few individuals may reflect his youthful belief in the fashionable idea of physiognomy. While residing in Constantinople he wrote his treatise on Russia's cultural debt to Byzantium, *Byzantinism and Slavdom*, in which he synthesised the defence of ecumenical Orthodoxy, and autocratic monarchy sanctified by it, with the idea, derived from his early scientific training, that the rise and fall of civilisations, like the growth, maturity and death of living creatures, takes the form of increasing and then diminishing internal complexity. For Leont'ev, therefore, Orthodox Christianity was not only a religious truth but also the basis of Russia's cultural flourishing. The belief that cultural originality required a unifying principle and the enforcement of distinctions between social groups differentiated Leont'ev from Western liberal thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, with whom he otherwise had some common ground in valuing social diversity.

Leont'ev's admiration for Byzantium was thus both aesthetic and religious, echoing the Russian scholarly community's discovery of Byzantine art and ecclesiastical history. As we have seen, Leont'ev sided with ecclesiastical historians who defended the Byzantine system of church-state relations, arguing that it had given Christianity the cohesiveness which it needed to flourish, against those who wrote that Byzantine influence had corrupted the Church by subordinating it to the authority of the state. At the same time he noted that 'Byzantium gave the world inimitable and unattainable forms of all kinds of ecclesiastical art', citing in particular the Hagia Sophia cathedral in Constantinople, the legendary painter Manuel Panselinos, and Orthodox church singing.<sup>1164</sup> Leont'ev's own understanding of Byzantinism was of a more practical and political cast than that of Russian academics, but clearly reflected the view that Byzantine Orthodoxy and autocracy were what differentiated Russia from the West. This was because, unlike the Slavophiles, he did not believe that the Russian people had the potential to form an original culture by themselves. When Byzantinism reached Russia, wrote Leont'ev, it 'found a savage, new, barely accessible, vast country, it encountered a simple, fresh people, who had experienced almost nothing, ingenuous and straightforward in their beliefs.'<sup>1165</sup> In other words, the Russians were simply a vessel for Byzantinism, and Leont'ev wrote with the aim of reminding them of their cultural debt to the Orthodox Greek world.

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<sup>1163</sup> Leont'ev, *The Egyptian Dove*, p. 233 and p. 236.

<sup>1164</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vladimir Solov'ev protiv Danilevskogo', *Pss* vol. 8 part 1, p. 349.

<sup>1165</sup> Leont'ev, 'Vizantizm i slavianstvo', *Pss* vol. 7 part 1, p. 313.

Byzantinism, the defence of autocratic monarchy and of ecumenical Orthodoxy, thus shaped Leont'ev's approach not only to religious and theoretical questions but also to the political issues which he addressed in his journalism. To an extent which much of the existing secondary scholarship on Leont'ev has not acknowledged, his writings from the period after his return from the Ottoman Empire illustrate how the arguments which he made about political issues were shaped by his seemingly esoteric ideas about the role of Byzantinism in shaping Russian identity. While nineteenth-century Russian conservatives of all stripes defended the autocracy, Leont'ev's emphasis on ecumenical Orthodoxy as the unifying principle of the Russian state, and of the 'Great Eastern Union' of the future, set him apart from most other Russian conservative thinkers. In particular, it meant that he rejected 'tribal nationalism', including Pan-Slavism, which, he believed, was a manifestation of liberalism, since it helped to reduce every culture where it took hold to uniformity. Leont'ev's envisioned Great Eastern Union is often wrongly conflated with the Pan-Slavist visions of writers such as Danilevskii. However, whereas the latter wanted to unite the Slavs against the Germans, Leont'ev dreamed of uniting Orthodox Christians, and, in some of his writings, their non-Christian neighbours, in order to protect the Orthodox East from European liberalism. Therefore, unlike most Russian conservatives, he did not share in the general outrage at the Treaty of Berlin, which seemingly frustrated aspirations to unite the Balkan Slavs under Russian tutelage. Leont'ev's opposition to the premature dismembering of the Ottoman Empire reflected the fact that he rejected the conflation of nationality with statehood.

However, Leont'ev's efforts to define a deliberately non-national ethos for the Russian state were out of step with what has been described as an 'age of nationalism', when conservatives among the Europeanised Russian elite promoted nationalist sentiment in order to strengthen Russia for great power competition with Europe.<sup>1166</sup> Pobedonostsev, for example, championed a 'national Orthodoxy' which defended the practices of the Russian Orthodox Church on the grounds that they were suited to the particular needs of the Russian people. This was at odds with Leont'ev's ecumenical approach, which viewed Orthodox Christianity as the handiwork of the Byzantine Greeks. Paradoxically, given his belief that Orthodoxy was central to Russian identity, Leont'ev opposed the conversion of religious minorities to Orthodoxy, which formed part of Pobedonostsev's stewardship of the Church and of the government's programme of 'Russification' under Alexander III. This can be explained in part by the fact

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<sup>1166</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, p. 397.



that Leont'ev never reconciled his Orthodox piety with his analogising of society to a living organism, which implied an aesthetic preference for diversity and complexity, and therefore for the preservation of the various traditional religions of the Russian Empire. However, Leont'ev's opposition to Russification, and his emphasis on Orthodoxy as a bond between Russians and Greeks, can also be seen as a reflection of the fact that he rejected the equation of religion with nationality. While he saw Byzantine Orthodoxy as the animating principle of the Russian state, he acknowledged that the state's population was multinational and multi-confessional. Thus, Leont'ev's stance towards the actual policies of the Russian government was critical as often as it was supportive. This may account for the fact that, despite his undeniable literary talents and insightful commentaries on contemporary political questions, he ultimately failed to win over conservative opinion and so to develop the growing awareness of the cultural ties between Byzantium and Russia into a political doctrine capable of wielding significant influence.

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