LITERATURE AND POLITICS:

THE IMPACT OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, by Vasily Rozanov. Translated and with an Afterword by Spencer E. Roberts. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972. Pp. xi. 232. $12.50.

Political Apocalypse. A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, by Ellis Sandoz. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971, Pp. xviii. 263. $13.50.*

ostoevsky's great novels have spawned a vast library of critical 1/literature, a library which extends well beyond traditional literary criticism to cover the range of disciplines dealing with the human condition: philosophy, theology, psychology and sociology in particular. In this effusion of comment the real Dostoevsky is often buried under an avalanche of the commentator's personal views, although few have been so forthright in recognizing this as Andre Gide, who confessed, "Dostoevsky is often only a pretext for me to express my own thoughts here."[1] And Dostoevsky has indeed served as the pretext for the most disparate and contradictory thoughts. As we approach the centenary of his death, we find not only a lack of scholarly agreement regarding his significance as a man of ideas (perhaps inevitable, in view of the protean character of the views he scattered through his works), but even diametrically opposite interpretations of individual works. After surveying some of the published comment on *The Brothers Karamazov,* Robert Belknap was led to observe: "It is

1. Andre Gide, *Dostoievsky,* 20e edition (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930), p. 252.

2. Robert L. Belknap, *The Structure of The Brothers Karamazov* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1967), p. 14.

3. Simon Karlinsky, "Dostoevsky as Rohrschach Test," *The New York Times,* June 13, 1971, reprinted in Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment,* Norton Critical Edition edited by George Gibian (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), pp. 629-636.

*Rozanov's work will be cited in the text of this essay as "R," and Sandoz' as "S," followed by the page number.

frustrating to find that a single novel can convey views which range from sensualism to asceticism, from atheism to Catholicism to Orthodoxy to satanism." [2] And Simon Karlinsky has published an article, "Dostoevsky as Rohrschach Test," whose apt title highlights the fact that opinions about Dostoevsky often tell us more about the observer than about Dostoevsky.3

The very plethora of views is testimony to the suggestive power of Dostoevsky, just as the continued flow of books and articles on his work demonstrates that he remains an active force on the modern consciousness. But is he relevant to the student of politics? On this question, as on most others, well qualified observers stand in confrontation. Ronald Hingley, who opined that "his views on politics could no longer be held by anyone outside a lunatic asylum," [4] would presumably answer "No!" Ellis Sandoz, in contrast, offers an impassioned "Yes!": "If 'relevance' is a desideratum in what we think and do to understand and resolve the deepening crisis of the world today, then Dostoevsky is more than merely apposite; he is required reading."(S, ix)

Since Hingley and Sandoz were referring to the same writer, could they have been thinking of different things? Probably. Sandoz is assessing Dostoevsky's importance for political philosophy, while Hingley's "views on politics" may well refer to the positions Dostoevsky took on the political issues of his day. This supposition, however, still does not dispose of the issue, for even if we distinguish between Dostoevsky's philosophy and his quotidian views, it seems unwise to reject without further examination the proposition that a writer as stimulating, widely read, and politically oriented as Dostoevsky may still exert an influence on political attitudes, particularly in his native land.

In considering the impact of Dostoevsky on political thought (both theoretical and practical), three related but separable questions come to mind. (1) Is it possible to define Dostoevsky's political philosophy without subjective leaps of inference? (He was, after all, a creative writer and not a systematic philosopher.) (2) Assuming a positive answer, how did Dostoevsky apply his philosophy to the political issues of his time? (3) Do Dostoevsky's views command support today

4. Ronald Hingley, *The Undiscovered Dostoevsky* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962), p. 228.

5. Rozanov defends his choice as follows: "...the 'Legend' constitutes, as it were, the heart of the whole work *[The Brothers Karamazov],* which is only grouped around it as variations are around their theme; in it is concealed the author's cherished idea, without which not only this novel would never have been written, but many of his other works as

outside psychiatric institutions (or, for that matter, inside those where political dissidents are incarcerated)? The two books before us deal in great detail with the first of these questions, and provide a foundation for considering the other two.

Vasily Rozanov was the first Russian critic to anlyze Dostoevsky's philosophical views in a major study. A brilliant writer and eccentric religious philosopher, Rozanov was a younger contemporary of Dostoevsky who married the latter's erstwhile mistress, Apollinaria Suslova. Rozanov's study, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* was first published in St. Petersburg in 1891 but waited eight decades before Spencer Roberts made it available in a graceful and accurate English translation. Just before Rozanov's essay finally appeared in English, the most recent, and most detailed, full-length study of Dostoevsky's political philosophy was published: Ellis Sandoz' *Political Apocalypse. A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor.*

In style, approach, and viewpoint, these two works stand in contrast. Rozanov's is a frankly personal interpretation, with an approach more impressionistic than scholarly, while Sandoz offers a thorough, scholarly, highly technical analysis, from the perspective of a Western political scientist familiar with twentieth-century events and recent currents in political theory. But with all their differences—in date of composition, stylistic approach, and nationality and philosophical background of the authors—the two studies agree regarding many salient elements of Dostoevsky's philosophy

Both Rozanov and Sandoz utilize the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" and its prologue entitled "Rebellion" (Book Five, Chapters IV and V of *The Brothers Karamazov)* as the text most accurately reflecting Dostoevsky's mature philosophy. Their choice is justified, since *The Brothers Karamazov* is the most philosophical of Dostoevsky's great works, was completed shortly before his death (thus presumably represents his final views), and within it the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" encapsulates, in poetic form, a profound religious, philosophical, and political view of mankind.'

Readers will recall that Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov, who had been reared separately for most of their lives, meet in a tavern to "get

well: at least they would lack all their best and most sublime passages." Vasily Rozanov, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,* translated and with an afterword by Spencer E. Roberts (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1972), p. 7.

acquainted." Ivan, the Westernized rationalist, shocks Alyosha, then a novice in the local monastery, with his rejection of God's creation. After torturing Alyosha with accounts of cruelty to innocent children, Ivan states that he cannot accept social or religious harmony based on innocent suffering, and therefore returns to God his "entrance ticket." Ivan then proceeds to recount a "poem" which he says he composed a year back.

In it, Christ appears on earth in sixteenth-century Seville, at the height of the Inquisition. He is recognized by the people, who greet Him as on Palm Sunday, and He performs two miracles—making a blind man see and restoring a dead child to life. The Grand Inquisitor witnesses the scene, recognizes Christ (who is never explicitly named in the "Legend") and has Him arrested. That night, the Grand Inquisitor confronts Him alone in the dungeon, reproaches Him for coming again to "interfere" and "make things difficult," announces that he will have Him burned at the stake the following day, and launches his elaborate apologia. Christ erred in giving man freedom, the Grand Inquisitor charges, and He erred in resisting the three temptations in the wilderness. In refusing to turn stones into bread, refusing to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the tabernacle, and refusing to accept earthly dominion over men, He rejected what man wants most: bread, something to worship, and someone to rule him. Instead, Christ has given mankind freedom which only makes him suffer. The Church has corrected this error, offering man miracle, mystery, and authority. The few rule the many in Christ's name, knowing it is a lie, but it is done for the good of mankind. And if there should be a Judgment Day, the Grand Inquisitor will challenge Christ at that time to "Judge us if You can and if You dare!" Christ remains silent throughout, and His only reply is to kiss the Grand Inquisitor on the lips, whereupon the Grand Inquisitor orders Him to leave and come no more.

The first problem raised by Ivan's "Legend" is its relation to Dostoevsky's own view: did the Grand Inquisitor express Dostoevsky's philosophy or its opposite? D.H. Lawrence, along with other readers, concluded that the Grand Inquisitor was Dostoevsky himself.[6] Rozanov treated the "Legend" as a negative parable, but suspected that Dostoevsky sympathized with the Grand Inquisitor.(R, 176) Neither Lawrence (who felt that a writer could not present an

6. "If there is any question: Who is the Grand Inquisitor?—then surely we must say it is Ivan himself. And Ivan is the thinking mind of the human being in rebellion, thinking

argument as powerfully as Dostoevsky did in this passage without endorsing it) nor Rozanov (who offers little evidence to support his intuition) is convincing on this point, however. Sandoz is surely right when he argues that Dostoevsky put the "Legend" in Ivan Karamazov's mouth in order to refute it—or, more accurately, so that it would refute itself. This conclusion is supported not only by Dostoevsky's statements of intent in his correspondence,' but also by a careful analysis of the literary techniques employed by Dostoevsky throughout the novel to discredit Ivan's "Legend."$

This is not to say that there were no traces of dualism in Dostoevsky's attitude. In his youth he had been attracted by some elements of positivism and pre-Mandan socialism (but never to the point of atheism) and participated in a conspiratorial group that resulted in his arrest, death sentence, reprieve, and imprisonment.' He doubtless retained throughout his life insight into the attitudes of the socialists of his day (otherwise he could hardly have created characters such as Ivan Karamazov and Peter Verkhovensky) and may at times have been irresistibly attracted by their ideas, however firm his determination to repress them. Still, the fact remains that he intended to portray in Ivan the danger of socialism and atheism and that his artistic execution is consistent with this aim.

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the whole thing out of the bitter end. As such he is, of course, identical with the Russian revolutionary of the thinking type. He is also, of course, Dostoevsky himself, in his thoughtful, as apart from his passional and inspirational self....And we cannot doubt that -the Inquisitor speaks Dostoevsky's own final opinion about Jesus." D.H. Lawrence, "Preface to Dostoevsky's *The Grand Inquisitor,"* reprinted in Rene Wellek, editor, *Dostoevsky. A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962), pp. 90-91.

7. Selections from Dostoevsky's correspondence bearing on *The Brothers Karamazov* are conveniently assembled in the Norton Critical Edition of the novel, edited by Ralph E. Matlaw (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), pp. 751-769. Note especially the letters to N.A. Lyubimov of May 10 and June 11, 1879 *(ibid.,* pp. 757 and 759).

8. Robert L. Belknap, "The Rhetoric of an Ideological Novel," in William Mills Todd III, editor, *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1978), pp. 173-201.

9. This period is treated in great detail in Joseph Frank's masterly *Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1976), especially in Part III ("In the Limelight"), pp. 159-291.

In approaching the "Legend," Rozanov first sketches Dostoevsky's spiritual odyssey which led to his culminating achievement in *The Brothers Karamazov,* laying particular stress on his *Notes from the Underground* of 1864—some fifteen years before *The Brothers Karamazov* was published. For Dostoevsky's "underground man" prefigures many of the basic notions which Dostoevsky developed in greater detail in his subsequent works. As Rozanov puts it, the view of the underground man, and implicitly of Dostoevsky as well is that

> By nature, man is a completely irrational creature; therefore reason can neither completely explain him nor completely satisfy him. No matter how persistent is the work of thought, it will never cover all of reality; it will answer the demands of the imaginary man, but not those of the real one. Hidden in man is the instinct for creation and this was precisely what gave him life, what rewarded him with suffering and joy—things that reason can neither understand nor change.
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> The rational is one thing; the mystical is another thing again. And while it is inaccessible to the touch and power of science, it can be arrived at through religion. Hence the development of the mystical in Dostoevsky and the concentration of his interest on all that is religious...(R, 50-51)

Rozanov then proceeds with a close analysis of the "Legend." He points out an initial "originality" in Ivan's approach: he does not reject the existence of God, but rather the meaning of God's creation. Thus, in Rozanov's words, "That which religion tries most of all to defend, and that which it finds difficult to defend, is not in the least subjected to attack, but is conceded without dispute."(R, 85) Ivan confesses that his "Euclidean mind" simply cannot accept innocent suffering, and Rozanov comments perceptively:

> ...Its meaning is that there is a disharmony between the laws of outward reality, according to which everything in nature and human life happens, and the laws of moral judgment that are hidden in man. As a result of this disharmony, man is faced with either renouncing the laws, and along with them his own personality, the spark of God in him, and then merging with external nature, blindly submitting to its laws, or with retaining the freedom of his moral judgment—of being in conflict with nature, of being in external and impotent discord with it.(R, 90)

Ivan's rejection of God's world is an act of rebellion, as Alyosha notes, and as Ivan himself observes, "One cannot live by rebellion...."

To the Grand Inquisitor's contention that man does not desire freedom and is born a rebel, Rozanov observes that the Inquisitor does not deny the truth of Christ, but only that this truth corresponds

to man's nature and can be followed by man. Rozanov considers the Inquisitor's assertion a slander of man, since Rozanov believes that man is fundamentally good, not evil, and that falsehood is something secondary, introduced from without, while truth has its origin in man himself." To Rozanov, the three temptations of Christ represent figuratively the future destinies of man. The Inquisitor's allegation that if stones are turned to bread, men would flock to Christ, is viewed by Rozanov as "rebellion of everything earthly, of everything in man that gravitates downward, against everything in him that is heavenly."(R, 133) And he adds that the people of Europe have in fact fallen into the Inquisitor's apostasy and have ignored the injunction "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" by placing "the interests of the State, even the progress of the arts and sciences, and finally the mere increase in productivity" above religion, morality, and the human conscience.(R, 187-188) Furthermore, positivist philosophy has so destroyed man's capacity for mystical perceptions that they cannot be aroused even when salvation depends upon them.

As for the Christian churches of his day, Rozanov holds that Roman Catholicism embodies the tendency to strive for universality, a characteristic feature of "Latin races," while Protestantism strives for what is individual and particular, a characteristic of the "Germanic races." The struggle of Catholicism and Protestantism is, therefore, a struggle of opposites. Orthodoxy, however—the Slavic conception of Christianity—most closely corresponds to true Christianity, since the Slavs have retained the faith lost elsewhere. This quality gives the "Slavic race" the capacity to carry out a reconciliation of the competing churches.(R, 190-207) While Rozanov's ethnic identification of Catholicism and Protestantism goes beyond Dostoevsky, his view of the nature and mission of Orthodoxy is identical with Dostoevsky's.

Rozanov's discursive and at times aphoristic treatment of the "Legend" is not conducive to a neat, logical summary. One can, however, extract the following principles which, in Rozanov's view, are among the key elements of Dostoevsky's philosophy: (1) The inseparability of man and God, which condemns from the outset any

10. *Ibid.,* p. 179. Subsequently, Rozanov elaborated this view as follows: "Truth, goodness, and freedom are the main and the constant ideals toward the realization of which human nature in its chief elements—reason, feeling, and will—directs itself. Between these ideals and man's primordial constitution, there is a correspondence, by virtue of which human nature irresistably aspires to them. And as these ideas can by no means be regarded as bad, human nature, as originally constructed, must be regarded as benevolent and good." *(Ibid.,* p. 185)

anthropocentric philosophy and any society which chooses bread over spiritual salvation; (2) The importance of the human personality, which is unique in every individual and is revealed only in religion; (3) The freedom of the human will as an absolute and which is God's great gift to mankind; (4) The importance of suffering as a purifying experience; and (5) Redemption by faith in Christ.

II

While Rozanov's attention centers on the religious and moral significance of the "Legend," Sandoz, though delving into many of the same themes, focuses his study on the implications of Dostoevsky's philosophy for political theory. As Sandoz points out in his preface, he considers Dostoevsky, like Plato, a defender of a human society based on the proposition that "God is the measure of all things," as opposed to that of "man as the measure of all things."(S, xiii) In this distinction, and in many other basic assumptions, Dostoevsky's philosophy bears striking simularities with that elaborated by Eric Voegelin." Sandoz applies Voegelinian concepts throughout his anlaysis. Indeed, it would not distort the facts to say that Sandoz approaches the "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" as a book of Voegelinian scripture.

One may properly be skeptical in general of the usefulness of applying philosophical systems *post hoc* to works of literature, so great is the possibility that one's interpretation may be tailored, if only subconsciously, to fit the theory at hand. But in this instance, Sandoz' use of Voegelin's concepts and terminology proves itself. They in fact illuminate the major implications of Dostoevsky's thought without distorting its essentials.

In Voegelinian terms, Dostoevsky's philosophy, and particularly the "Legend," was directed against modern gnosticism with its reduction of being to historical existence, its redivinization of society, and its radical immanentization of the eschaton. All these characteristics are inherent in the Grand Inquisitor's society. Like Shatov in *The Possessed,* the Grand Inquisitor started with unlimited freedom and—ostensibly in the interests of mankind—ended with unlimited despotism. Dostoevsky thus provided a powerful embodiment of his argument that he who would limit man's destiny to the fulfillment of material needs is led inevitably to the forcible creation of a society of

11. Presented most concisely in Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics, An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952).

human ants deprived of freedom and ruled by a select few. Instead of the God-man (Christ), we have the man-god. In his rebellion, Ivan replaces divine will with self will, and as Sandoz puts it, "If there is no God, or even if there is one whose creation and revelation are rejected, then men must become gods. And because a god is a law unto himself whatever the man-god or superman wills is lawful...."(S, 109) But such a "rebellion of man, made in the name of man, ends not only be destroying God but by destroying man as well."(S, 197)

One of the fundamental defects of the Grand Inquisitor's utopia is its goal of happiness and justice rather than truth. Since man inevitably strives for truth, a lie must be substituted for truth to command obedience, and the will of God is thereby replaced by the will of the man-god.(S, 186) Similarly, "The rejection of suffering in the creation and its replacement by suffering at the hands of the man-god are ... shown to be, in fact, the repudiation of the salvation and the promise of the Kingdom of God which is only attainable through suffering."(S, 188)

The Grand Inquisitor's "miracle, mystery and authority," represent, in Dostoevsky's modern lexicon, socialism, rationalism and empire. And as Sandoz points out, "All those movements in history which extravagantly claim divine authority and possession of infallible truth—and which in support of these claims effect the destruction of freedom in the name of freedom, justice in the name of justice, man in the name of humanitarianism, tradition in the name of truth—are exhibited as afflicted by hypocrisy and shameless bankruptcy."(S, 101)

The similarity of the basic features of the Grand Inquisitor's society with that created by twentieth-century totalitarian political movements is overwhelming. Some of the most obvious features which come to mind are the following:

—The goal of creating a paradise ("The Kingdom of God") on earth;

—Adoption of a "truth" as the exclusive possession of a few initiates (the ruling party elite);

—Imposition of the adoped ideology on all, and forcible suppression of questioning, not only of the ideology itself but of the political decisions made in its name by the rulers;

—Development of a quasi-religious cult around the founders and often around the current leaders of the political movement.

Dostoevsky would lead us to expect from this an eventual spiritual bankruptcy. And, in fact, evidence is rapidly accumulating that this process is far advanced in those societies where totalitarian political

movements have been in power for an extended period of time. In the Soviet Union, for example, ideology has become a mere instrument of state policy, used to delude political innocents abroad who have not experienced it in practice and to provide an increasingly hollow pretext for the status quo at home, rather than a vital motivating and mobilizing force. '2

What strikes today's reader of *The Brothers Karamazov* with particular force is Dostoevsky's insight into the ultimate implications of some of the ideologies of his day long before these theories were applied in ruling societies. We must agree with Sandoz that Dostoevsky's diagnosis of the dangers implicit in the socialism of his day can be read as prophetic of the human and spiritual devastation caused by the twentieth-century totalitarian regimes which trace their ideological lineage to that tradition. And we must concede that Dostoevsky's concept of human freedom, as presented in the "Legend," has profound implications for one's concept of political structures, as does his indictment of all rationalist, man-centered philosophies. In this sense, we can agree with Sandoz that Dostoevsky in fact articulated a coherent philosophy and that this philosophy is highly relevant to the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, to say that Dostoevsky illuminates some of the wellsprings of contemporary ideology and raises questions relevant to political philosophy is not to say that he provides satisfactory answers to the philosophical and practical problems which confront us. In order to explore this side of Dostoevsky's influence on political thought, let us now examine how Dostoevsky applied the philosophy expressed in *The Brothers Karamazov* to the political issues of his day.

III

Dostoevsky took an intense interest in political developments, closely followed events in Russian and Europe, and expressed himself frequently on the issues which arose. We therefore have a wealth of material attesting his views on many of the political problems his generation faced. If we ignore his brief flirtation with left-wing conspiratorial politics before his arrest in 1849 and concentrate on the

12. Vladimir Bukovsky has provided a graphic portrayal of the loss of ideological elan in his *To Build a Castle—My Life as a Dissenter* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), pp. 57-58. While Bukovsky's scholarly objectivity may be suspect in view of his active opposition to the Soviet authorities, his observations on this point are paralleled by those of virtually all close observers of the current Soviet scene.

opinions he expressed during his maturity, and particularly during the late 1870's when he was planning and writing *The Brothers Karamazov*, we discover the following persistent themes.

(1) He was a vigorous supporter of war with Turkey, with the objective of freeing the South Slavs and placing Constantinople under Russian rule. Following the Balkan disorders of 1875, Dostoevsky repeatedly urged Russian military intervention, and when Russia declared war against Turkey in April, 1877, Dostoevsky exulted in the news."

(2) His Pan-Slavism, though theoretically based on Russia's supposed role as spiritual defender of Orthodoxy, is difficult to distinguish in practice from outright Russian imperialism. For example, in October, 1876, he wrote: "For the Slavic cause is the Russian cause, and it must be settled *finally* by Russia alone and according to the Russian idea." [14] He even rejected the position taken by the prominent pan-Slavicist and Russian nationalist Nikolai Danilevsky that Constantinople should be held jointly by the Russians and the other Orthodox Slays.

> ...How can Russia share ownership of Constantinople on an *equal* basis with the Slays if Russia in every respect is unequal to them—to every petty nation separately and to all of them combined? ...Constantinople must be *ours*, conquered by *us*, Russians, from the Turks, and remain ours for ages to come....Russia will rule only Constantinople and the district vital to it, along with the Bosporus and the Straits, will maintain troops, fortifications and a fleet there, and thus it must be for a long, long time."

(3) He was capable of praising the virtues of war in terms reminiscent more of the Nazi ethic than of Christian love. At the outset of the Russo-Turkish War he wrote: "We need this war ourselves, and not only for our "Brother Slavs" tormented by the Turks, for we are ris-

13. See, for example, Chapter II of the April, 1876, issue of the *Diary of a Writer* and Chapter I of the April, 1877, issue. F.M. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1873 i 1876 gody* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1929), pp. 264-271, and *idem*, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877, 1880-81 gg*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy*, 6th edition, Vol. 12 (St. Petersburg: Panteleev, 1906), pp. 103-116, hereafter cited as *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877*. The sole English translation of the *Diary of a Writer*, F.M. Dostoievsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, translated and annotated by Boris Brasol (New York: Charles Scribner, 1949, 2 vols.) is sufficiently inaccurate that it should be avoided if the reader can handle the original. Translations of passages quoted in this article have been made from the original, but citations will include the location of the passage in the Brasol translation.

14. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1873 i 1876 gody*, p. 431; Brasol translation, Vol. I, p. 477.

15. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877*, pp. 355-356; Brasol translation, Vol. II, pp. 903-904.

ing for our own salvation as well. The war will clear the air which we, breathe and in which we have been choking as we sat in decadent impotence and spiritual suffocation." [16] Then, under a chapter heading proclaiming "War is Not Always a Scourge...Sometimes It Is Salvation," he argued:

> Yes, of course, war is a calamity; still, there are many errors in these arguments [i.e., that war violates principles of humanity and Christian love and brutalizes the belligerants—JFM], and, what is most important—we have had enough of this bourgeois moralizing! The exploit of sacrificing our own blood for the sake of everything we hold sacred is, of course, more moral than the whole bourgeois catechism. The enthusiasm of a nation inspired by a generous idea is a progressive impulse and not brutalization.... [W]hat is purer and more sacred than the feat of a war like the one on which Russia is now embarking?"

(4) His comments on foreigners and also non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Empire are saturated with xenophobia and ethnic hatred. In particular, he was infected with the disease of anti-Semitism. The latter comes out clearly even when Dostoevsky was ostensibly defending himself against the charge, as in the March, 1877, issue of his *Diary of a Writer,* which contains such revealing passages as the following:

> Incidentally, I have imagined at times how it would be in Russia if instead of three million Jews there were three million Russians and eighty million Jews. What would the Russians be converted to and how would the Jews treat them? Would they grant them equal rights? Would they let them worship freely in their midst? Wouldn't they turn them into slaves? Worse still, wouldn't they flay the very skin off them? Wouldn't they slaughter them to the man, to ultimate extermination, as they used to do with alien peoples in the old days, during their ancient history?"
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> ...It would seem that Jewry is best off in places where the people are ignorant, or not free, or economically backward; they have it made there! Instead of using his influence to raise the level of education, increase knowledge, and promote economic health among the native population, the Jew, wherever he has settled, has degraded and corrupted the people even further. There, humanity has gone into a greater decline, the quality of education has fallen, inexorable, inhumane poverty has spread still more appallingly, and with it despair. Ask the native population in our border regions what motivates the Jew and has motivated him for so many centuries. You'll get a unanimous reply: "ruthlessness."'

16. Dostoevsky, *Ibid.,* p. 106; Brasol trans., Vol II, p. 661.

17.Ibid., pp. 110-111; Brasol trans., Vol II, pp. 665-666.

18.Ibid., p. 89; Brasol trans., Vol. II, pp. 644-645. 19. *Ibid.,* p. 93; Brasol trans., Vol. II, p. 648.

19. Sandoz, *op. cit.,* p. xiii.

Poles, Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Greeks—indeed virtually every non-Russian nationality Dostoevsky had occasion to mention—were subject to some sort of vicious stereotyping, although Dostoevsky's venom flowed most freely in regard to Jews and Poles."

(5) His hatred of all Western societies and forms of government was as profound as it was pervasive in his view of the world. This tendency was evident in his first extensive commentary on Western Europe, his *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions,* published in 1863 following his first trip outside Russia. In it, his view of Western Europe was still ambivalent: most of his concrete recollections were negative—a London of child prostitutes, gin palaces, and polluted air; a Paris of money-grubbing hypocrites—but he still could wax lyrical about the salutary influence of Western ideas on Russia." By the 1870's this ambivalence had disappeared. Thus, in November, 1877, he wrote:

> If we are to tell it all, then perhaps there is not a single European among us, for we are incapable of being Europeans. After all, our leading minds, those in big business and government, only collect dividends from European ideas, and I believe that it is this way with us all over. Of course I am not speaking of people with sound judgment; they do not believe in European ideas because there is nothing to believe in. Nothing in the world was ever so obscure, vague, imprecise and indefinable as that "cyclb of ideas" on which we gorged ourselves over the two hundred years of our Europeanization. The truth is, it is not a cycle but a chaotic jumble of fragments of feeling, half understood alien thoughts, alien convictions and alien habits, but especially words, words and more words—the most European and liberal words, of course, but for us nonetheless words and only words."

Dostoevsky's antipathy toward many European ideas and toward many of the conditions he perceived in Western Europe is perhaps ex-

20. For example, see Chapter III of the October, 1877, issue of the *Diary of a Writer,* where Dostoevsky unleashes a verbal tantrum against the idea of readmitting some Polish intellectuals who had gone into exile following the 1873 rebellion *(Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877,* pp. 321-327; Brasol. trans., Vol. II, pp. 870-876).

21. "After all, everything, definitely almost everything that we have of development, of science, of art, of civic spirit, of humanity, all, all of this comes from there, from this land of sacred wonders!" F.M. Dostoevsky, "Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniyakh," in *Sobranie sochineniy* (Moscow: GIKhL, 1956), Vol. IV, p. 68. The English translation of this work is: Feodor M. Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions,* with a foreword by Saul Bellow (New York: Criterion Books, 1955), p. 48.

22. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877,* p. 337; Brasol trans., Vol. II, pp. 885-886.

plicable in terms of his philosophy. Many of the other views cited above, however, are not. Taken together they amount to little more than an endorsement of the more reactionary and aggressive strains of Tsarist policy. To be blunt, when Dostoevsky spoke on current political issues he spoke as an outright Russian chauvinist, a complex and aberrant one, but one whose attachment to Russia often found its expression in a shrill jingoism.

Without discussing Dostoevsky's political views, Sandoz dismisses the thought that he crossed the line which divides faith in the Russian people as the embodiment of true Christianity from narrow chauvinism. Sandoz argues that,

> the critique of power and of the propagation of Christian truth through force is too brilliant, exhaustive, and passionate in the Legend for any other expression on the subject of a contradictory kind ever to stand against it and be understood as Dostoevsky's real conviction.(S, 146)

This argument, reminiscent of D.H. Lawrence's contention that the Grand Inquisitor's case is presented so forcefully that it must represent Dostoevsky's real view, is not convincing. The fact is that Dostoevsky repeatedly, consistently and passionately espoused the use of force to achieve Russian national ends. Certainly, this is inconsistent with the philosophy which permeates *The Brothers Karamazov,* but the inconsistency does not demonstrate that Dostoevsky expressed his "true" beliefs on some occasions and views he did not hold on others. What seems obvious is that Dostoevsky, like most of us, was capable of holding simultaneously utterly conflicting views. Indeed, he may have been more capable of this feat than most of us, and the conflicts within Dostoevsky's own psyche may well have contributed to the power of his art.

Rather than attempt to explain away inconsistencies in Dostoevsky's worldview, we should try instead to identify just where Dostoevsky left the track of his own philosophy. Nikolay Berdyaev, an admirer of Dostoevsky, explains it as stemming from Dostoevsky's attraction to the "theocratic idea" (despite his crushing blows against that idea in the "Legend of the Grand Indquisitor") and his failure to appreciate the necessity of an independent secular state "directed in a religious sense from within, not from without, immanently, not transcendentally."23

23. Nikolay Berdyaev, *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1968), pp. 219-220. The English translation of this important work, Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoievsky, An Interpretation,* translated by Donald Attwater (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934) was prepared from a French translation and amounts to a condensed paraphrase rather than an accurate translation. The passage quoted should appear on page 211 but is omitted.

Berdyaev's observation is sound, and going further, it seems clear that a principal source of Dostoevsky's derailment was his identification of the Russian people as the sole possessor of religious truth. The following passage from his *Diary of a Writer* is characteristic of his many utterances on this subject:

> The lost image of Christ in all the light of its purity has been preserved in Orthodoxy. And it is from the East that the new word will be uttered to the world in opposition to future socialism, and this word may again save European mankind....Russia, with her people headed by the Tsar, realizes that she is only the bearer of Christ's idea, that the word of Orthodoxy is transformed in her into a great cause which has begun with the present war, and that ahead of her lie centuries of self-sacrificing labor, of fostering the brotherhood of peoples and of ardent motherly service to them as dear children."

Now this is significantly more than a "pure and powerful mysticism" to which Sandoz attributes Dostoevsky's espousal of the "people's truth."[25] It represents a startling leap of faith, and a dangerous one, because in identifying a nationality with religious truth— and not just a nationality but a state as well (note "headed by the Tsar" in the passage above)—Dostoevsky himself is guilty of confusing the transcendental and existential orders of reality.

When Dostoevsky moved from theology to politics, he seems also to have misapplied the concept of religious unity or *sobornost.* In a religious sense, as Sandoz points out,(S, 104) the term denotes the unity of worshipers joined in their faith and love. However, Dostoevsky's belief that *sobornost'* was a quality of the Russian people and the Russian people alone, and that it was their destiny to "save Europe" from its apostasy, may have contributed to his consistent endorsement of all efforts to expand the Russian state and to maintain Russian rule over other peoples. While Sandoz is entirely correct in arguing that any use

24. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelya za 1877,* p. 358; Brasol trans., Vol. II, p. 906.

25. Ellis Sandoz, "Philosophical Dimensions of Dostoevsky's Politics," *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. 40, Number 3 (August, 1978), pp. 654-655. In this article, Sandoz discusses Dostoevsky's faith in the Russian people in greater detail than in *Political Apocalypse.* His defense of Dostoevsky's concept of the "people's truth" relies heavily on a demonstration of the fact that Dostoevsky recognized that the Russian people were capable of coarseness and depravity—that is, that he did not idealize the Russian masses. This is unquestionably true, but does not get at the point, which is that Dostoevsky's faith that the Russian people uniquely possessed the spirit of true Christianity is misplaced. Dostoevsky idealized the spiritual qualities of the Russian people, not the conditions of their life or their behavior.

of force to achieve *sobornost'* is inconsistent with the concept, nevertheless, if one stresses the unity of society, one tends to slide inexorably into an endorsement of despotism. Leszek Kolakowski put his finger on the problem when he wrote:

> The view that freedom is measured in the last resort by the degree of unity of society, and that class interests are the only source of social conflict is one component of the theory [i.e., Marxism]. If we consider that there can be a technique of establishing social unity, then despotism is a natural solution of the problem inasmuch as it is the only known technique for the purpose. Perfect unity takes the form of abolishing all institutions of social mediation, including representative democracy and the rule of law as independent instrument for settling conflicts."

Kolakowski was of course speaking of Marxism, the ideology so bitterly condemned by Dostoevsky. Yet, what he has to say is applicable, *mutatis mutandis,* to Dostoevsky's own thought when he spoke *sub specie temporalis.* Although Dostoevsky did not consider class interests the only source of social conflict, he did seek a unity of society, and he had scant appreciation for the role that institutions of social mediation, representative democracy, or law can play in settling conflicts. Indeed, when he observed such institutions in the West, he was generally contemptuous of them.

Finally, this writer would argue that Dostoevsky was victim of a fundamental misunderstanding of Russian history and the signficance of the political forces active in his day. George Kennan provided a concise description of these forces in his essay on the Marquis de Custine:

> For three quarters of a century after the appearance of Custine's book, the development of government and politics in Russia was destined to be determined primarily by the competing efforts of three forces: (I) the diehard reactionaries who wanted no change at all—a faction to be found largely within the framework of governmental bureaucracy, but partly also within the ranks of the land-owning gentry and the senior military and police officials; (2) the liberals and democratic socialists, who wanted gradual reform and peaceful, organic progress—a faction to be found in small part within the government, but mostly outside it, among the provincial gentry and the cream of the new intelligentsia; and (3) the revolutionary socialists and anarchists, people entirely outside the government, who wanted violent, sudden change—change by revolution, not by evolution. It must be noted that between the first and third of these categories there existed a certain bond of common purpose; neither wished to see the regime adjust to the demands of the modern age and evolve in the direction of greater

26. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism. Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution,* translated from the Polish by P.S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), Vol. I, pp. 419-420.

liberality or a greater degree of popular representation and participation. It was the liberals alone who pursued this objective."

Dostoevsky viewed Russia in terms of the first and third forces, lumping as he did the second with the third. (He, of course, recognized that they were different, but he considered liberalism the father of socialism, and a force as inimical to his vision of the true Russia as revolutionary Marxism.) Sandoz seems to endorse Dostoevsky's view, since he goes so far as to state:

> He [Dostoevsky] understood and exhaustively characterized the nature and varieties of the enemy within and without Russia in the seventies and supplied a rational analysis for solution of the deepening crisis in Russian society. That this attempt failed is not attributable to Dostoevsky's poor judgment, nor because he was "a reactionary revolutionary," nor because of historical inevitability, but primarily because of the political ineptitude and massive inertia of the successors of Alexander II.(S, 233-233)

One can concede that the successors of Alexander II were guilty of political ineptitude, and that the Bolshevik Revolution was not historically inevitable, while entertaining the gravest doubts that Dostoevsky supplied a rational solution to Russia's ills or even provided a complete analysis of them. Major changes were in fact taking place in Russian society during Dostoevsky's maturity, and they continued for more than three decades after his death. Once again in George Kennan's words:

> The power of liberal feeling in Russia, and the success it would have in moderating the autocracy, had no place in his [Custine's] view of the Russian future. Yet, in those seventy-five years that were to elapse before the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, enormous changes would be brought about in Russian life .under the pressure of liberal impulses—such changes as he himself would never have dreamed of. Serfdom would be abolished; and a promising beginning would be made—albeit only at the end of the period—on the correction of the evils of the organization of the agricultural process that serfdom had left in its train. A foundation would be laid for the development of proper organs of local self government—something Russia had never before known. The judicial system would be reformed. Extensive civil rights would be established. A promising program of universal primary education would be undertaken, and in impressive degree completed. Eventually, even a parliament would be established—a parliament limited, to be sure, in its powers and in the scope of the suffrage from which it drew its composition, but not wholly powerless, not negligible as a modification of the autocracy and a factor in Russian life. And on

27. George F. Kennan, *The Marquis de Custine and His Russia in 1839* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1971), pp. 125-126.

> top of all this, Russian culture—particularly literature, music, and the drama, but also science and intellectual life generally—would flourish as never before and never since, achieving for Russia, in these fields, a distinction not inferior to that of any of the great advanced western nations."

Dostoevsky chose to condemn the political forces which brought most of these developments to Russia, and eventually cast his own lot—with only occasional dissociation—with the first of the three forces, that of the diehard reactionaries. To the extent that he exercised a political influence, that influence is more likely to have contributed to the debacle of 1917 than to have encouraged the sort of changes that might have prevented it. Nor did his idealization of the spiritual qualities of the Russian masses fare well in extremis: in the event, the religious feelings of the Russian people proved a trivial barrier to the establishment of a regime which was not only atheistic but dedicated to the extirpation of religion."

IV

There is a Russian proverb, "Words are not sparrows: when you let them out, you can't bring them back." This is particularly true of a great writer, whose words not only fly forth without possibility of recall, but are embedded in a permanent record of art and journalistic *obiter dicta* to be read and pondered by succeeding generations. Given Dostoevsky's opposition to socialism, the power with which he expressed it, and his attachment to religion as the only foundation for human freedom and a moral life, it is not surprising that the Bolshevik rulers of the Soviet Union have been slow to accept him with open arms. Indeed, from the early 1930's until the mid-1950's, his mature work was all but ignored in Soviet publications. But since Stalin's death, his works have enjoyed a remarkable revival of publication and critical attention. °

28. Kennan, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129. The developments listed by Kennan are analyzed in detail in Jacob Walkin, *The Rise of Democracy in Pre-Revolutinary Russia. Political and Social Institutions under the Last Three Czars* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).

29. It is ironic that the Roman Catholicism which Dostoevsky so hated proved to be a significantly greater barrier to the establishment of a totalitarian secular regime among the Poles, whom he so despised, than did Orthodoxy among his beloved Russians.

30. Only the *Diary of a Writer* still languishes under a publication ban. The only Soviet publication of this work occurred in 1929-1930 when it was included in a small edition of Dostoevsky's collected works. It was scheduled for republication in the

During this period, the approach of criticism published in the Soviet Union has shifted from an outright condemnation of Dostoevsky's philosophy to a more equivocal stance based in part on distortion of his views by selective emphasis." The latter approach has permitted some to argue that Dostoevsky merely criticized "utopian socialism" and failed to foresee that "progressive intellects" would discover "the scientific foundations of a socialist society"—which he presumably would have endorsed had he lived to witness it." Whatever utility such misrepresentations of Dostoevsky may have in inducing the censors to allow publication of works such as *The Possessed* and *The Brothers Karamazov,* they cannot be taken seriously as defensible interpretations of Dostoevsky. The older view of Marxist critics—that the philosophy of *The Brothers Karamazov* cannot be reconciled with contemporary Soviet ideology—is surely correct.

But we have seen that Dostoevsky himself frequently expressed views which contradict that philosophy. And to the extent he added his voice to the stream of messianic Russian nationalism, his ideas can be used to buttress that tendency. Writing just after Stalin died, Hans Kohn observed that "under Stalin nationalist messianism was authoritatively proclaimed by the men in power who, though they seemed to descend from the 'possessed' whom Dostoevsky abhorred, were the illegitimate heirs of some of Dostoevsky's most cherished and

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1970's as part of a new thirty-volume critical edition of Dostoevsky's writings, but publication of the set was halted in 1976 when Volume 17 appeared, obviously because the political authorities had second thoughts regarding the *Diary of a Writer,* which was to have been included in Volumes 18 and 19. Those interested in the ins and outs of Soviet criticism of Dostoevsky and official publication policy can find a detailed survey in Vladimir Seduro, *Dostoyevski in Russian Literary Criticism, 1846-1956* (New York: Columbia University, 1957) and the same author's *Dostoevski's Image in Russia Today* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland Publishing Co., 1975).

31. Vladimir Yermilov's slender volume *F.M. Dostoevskiy* (Moscow: GIKhL, 1956) exemplifies the former tendency. Yakov El'sberg illustrates the latter in his 1972 essay, "Dostoevsky's Heritage and Mankind's Paths to Socialism" (Ya. Ye. El'sberg, "Nasledie Dostoevskogo i puti chelovechestva k sotsialismu," in *Dostoevskiy—Khudozhnik i myslitel', Sbornik state'ey* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1972), pp. 27-96.)

32. "Dostoevsky lived in the age when utopian socialism was collapsing, recognized that collapse, and did not believe that it would be possible for progressive people to find a scientific basis for creating a socialist society or to find a correct revolutionary theory." (El'sberg, *op. cit.,* p. 89.)

characteristic visions." Nor is this true just of Stalin's Russia. For if we take the passages quoted earlier in which Dostoevsky asserted Russia's right to Constantinople as the defender of Orthodoxy and replace "Orthodoxy" with "scientific socialism," and "Constantinople" with the "socialist commonwealth," we emerge with the Brezhnev doctrine.

As the most eloquent and artistically most accomplished champion of the Slavophile tradition, Dostoevsky exercises an influence on those elements of Russian society which are attuned to that tradition. They exist both within the ruling establishment and in some of the groups in opposition to the current regime. For many of the rulers, Dostoevsky's opposition to Marxism does not diminish the usefulness of concepts such as Moscow, the Third Rome (in a secular sense), Russia as a spiritual leader of mankind (but toward communism, rather than Orthodoxy), and Russia as representing a society superior to that of the bourgeois West. For the neo-Slavophile dissidents, Dostoevsky's defense of Orthodoxy and faith in the spiritual qualities of the Russian people furnish inspiration. Although the "official" and "dissident" neo-Slavophiles are locked in a struggle on many points—most fundamentally over the role of religion—they share an idealized view of the Russian past, a faith in Russia's destiny, a rejection of Western forms of representative government, and a willingness to accept an authoritarian political system as one most in accord with the Russian tradition."

With Marxism waning as a vital, motivating force within the Soviet Union, we may well witness a recrudescence of the Slavophile-Westernizer controversy of the nineteenth century. Indeed, such a struggle has already been joined openly among the dissidents, with academician Sakharov championing representative democracy and Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his supporters arguing for a return to an

33. Hans Kohn, "Dostoevsky and Danilevsky: Nationalist Messianism," in Ernest J. Simmons, ed., *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1955), p. 515.

34. Alexander Yanov, a Soviet historian and journalist who emigrated to the United States in 1974, offers a detailed picture of these neo-Slavophile forces in his *The Russian New Right. Right-Wing Ideologies in the Contemporary USSR* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1978). In some respects, Yanov's study can be considered highly speculative, but his description of the ideology of what he calls the New Right and his identification of the forces which are part of this tendency are accurate.

autocratic Russian past founded on Orthodoxy." Within the ruling establishment, the struggle between those attracted by various aspects of Westernism and the defenders of Slavophile ideals remains largely *sub rosa,* but seems to be gaining momentum." In this context, Dostoevsky's "pure" philosophy of human freedom which emerges from his contemplation *sub specie aeternitatis* is likely to be overshadowed by the Russian chauvinism characteristic of his political judgments uttered *sub specie temporalis.*

It was the latter strain in Dostoevsky's thought which led Berdyaev to speak of his attraction to the "theocratic idea," and Rozanov to suspect that he really sided with the Grand Inquisitor in his heart.

But the problem is not merely that Dostoevsky held contradictory views, some of which reinforce tendencies toward political developments which do violence to his avowed philosophy. Even if we ignore his opinions on topical issues and concentrate on his philosophy in the "pure" state analyzed by Sandoz, we find precious few clues regarding what, in concrete terms, can be done to deal with the political illnesses of our age, into which Dostoevsky provided such profound and moving insights. While Dostoevsky clarified the pathogenesis of some of today's most serious disorders, prescriptions for therapy are either inadequate or missing altogether. In this respect, Dostoevsky's philosophy suffers from the same shortcoming which Dante Germino found in Voegelin's: we learn little about "how philosophy can contribute to a better world."[3]

35. Compare, for example, Andrei Sakharov's *Progress, Coexistence and Intellectual Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1968) and his *My Country and the World* (New York: Knopf, 1975), on the one hand, with Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) on the other. The polemics between the groups associated with Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn can be sampled in Alexander Solzhenitsyn *et al., From under the Rubble* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975) and "Solzhenitsyn and Russian Nationalism: An Interview with Andrei Sinyaʸsky," *The New York Review of Books,* Vol. XXVI, No. 18 (November 22, 1979), pp. 3-6. Solzhenitsyn's philosophy bears striking resemblance to Dostoevsky's, and it is interesting to note that the essay sin *From under the Rubble,* written by dissidents in the Soviet Union who share Solzhenitsyn's viewpoint, contain 27 references to Dostoevsky's works or quotations from them, while no other Russian writer or thinker is honored with more than a handful.

36. Alexander Yanov provides a description of the elements on each side of the question in his *Detente after Brezhnev, The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1977).

37. Dante Germino, "Two Conceptions of Political Philosophy," in George J. Graham and George W. Carey, editors, *The Post-Behavioral Era: Perspectives on Political Science* (New York: David McKay, 1972), p. 249.

But it is surely asking too much of a creative writer, even one of the greatest mankind has produced, to offer prescriptions. Dostoevsky's work, like that of any artist, is powerful because of its artistic qualities, not because the philosophy it expounds is consistent or convincing. What gives Dostoevsky's art depth and relevance is his genius for penetrating the human psyche and throwing light in its dark recesses, for personifying complex ideas in a human context, and for depicting the interaction of these ideas in dramatic, conflict. Dostoevsky had the courage to pose the fundamental, agonizing questions of human existence, and even those not satisfied with his answers are stimulated and enriched by his profound insights.

Neither Rozanov nor Sandoz gives us a complete, balanced picture of Dostoevsky's complex and often contradictory thought. But the picture they offer is not so much the result of projecting their own views on his as that of selecting—like Montaigne's bees—the nectar best suited to their honey. The nectar they chose is indubitably Dostoevsky's, and their studies illumine his thought rather than burying it. And if Sandoz occasionally errs in claiming too much, or in attempting to excuse inconsistencies rather than accepting them as part of the man, he nevertheless makes a convincing case for his cardinal point. Dostoevsky is indeed required reading for all who wish to comprehend the anguished plight of mankind today.

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