

to other novels by him. In almost every case we find that his vivid imagery, shrewd observation of character, and thoughtful meditations on the human situation, are anchored to a particular word or group of words, in which the theme of the novel is epitomized, and through which the latter is communicated to the reader. An analysis of this technique does, I think, reveal him as a serious literary artist who utilizes the resources of language more fully than some critics are prepared to acknowledge.

Russian Opinion

THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND THE COUNCIL

Since the new Oecumenical Council was announced, the Patriarch of Moscow has more than once declared the attitude of his church towards it. The first time he did so was in answer to a report in *Il Tempo* (19th May 1959) that the Papal Nuncio in Vienna, Mgr Dellepiane, had been in touch with Orthodox bishops sent from Moscow to arrange for Russian participation in the Council. This story the Patriarch denied outright in a short and dignified announcement published in *Izvestya* (21st June 1959), and it was added that the Russian Church neither had considered nor would consider taking any part in what was regarded as a strictly domestic affair of the Roman church. Nothing further appears to have been said about Mgr Dellepiane and the Orthodox bishops, either by *Il Tempo* or by the Vatican, so we can only believe that the Patriarch was telling the truth. No doubt the story in *Il Tempo* made things no worse than they would have been anyway, but even on so small a scale it seems a pity that a fresh example should have been given of that curious lack of feeling which the West seems fated to show when approaching the schismatics of the East.

The second occasion when the Patriarch mentioned the Council was during a stay in Istanbul on his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. His spokesman repeated what is for the most part the usual Eastern view, that the Orthodox churches are already united, and that any step towards union with Rome would have to depend upon the Pope's renunciation of his claim to infallibility and, what is more unusual, his acceptance of the dogmatic reforms of the Orthodox church. A specifically Russian worry was voiced when the Patriarch was in Athens, and his spokesman said that if there were to be any question of meeting the Pope for discussions on reunion, then the Russian church would

have to negotiate on her own account and would not accept the lead of Constantinople. The independence of the Russian church and the extent of her authority has been an anxiety since the twenties, and it is particularly important in the case of reunion, since from the purely political point of view, a return to Rome would be less impossible for the Greek or Byzantine than for the Russian church.

The most recent and most elaborate statement of the Russian attitude towards the Council is given in the latest issue of the *Journal of the Russian Patriarchate* (1961, 5), in the form of an open letter to Cardinal Bea, President of the secretariat for Christian unity. The letter is headed *NON POSSUMUS* in bold Roman type, as if to catch the Cardinal's eye and make sure that this time he does not miss the point. The reason why they cannot come is that, 'in accordance with the strict canonical rule of the Roman Catholic Church itself, Pope John XXIII cannot invite to the Council Orthodox Patriarchs as bishops of equal right and of equal worth to himself. Otherwise he would have to recognize a Council as the highest organ of power in the Church and so renounce the primacy and the dogma of infallibility, in a word return to that position in which the Western and Eastern churches found themselves before their separation, which is of course unthinkable for Rome'. In this fairly formal wording there are two points of considerable interest. The first is that in Istanbul the Patriarch's spokesman was reported as saying that the Pope would not only have to renounce Western innovations, but also to accept the reforms of the East, which were not specified. This should be the strictly logical claim of a body which believes itself to represent the complete and undivided Church. However in this statement from Moscow the Patriarch appears prepared to accept a return to the *status quo* of 1054, as if recognizing a real division of the Church, at least in the sense that neither side has since then had the right to continue to exert the Church's power of dogmatic definition. This apparent mitigation of the claim of Orthodoxy to be the sole and complete embodiment of the one, true Church from which the West is in schism can be felt not infrequently nowadays. The other significant feature in the Patriarch's present statement from Moscow is that the phrase 'of equal right and of equal worth' seems at least to overlook and almost to exclude the universal primacy of honour which the Pope has always been accorded by the older Orthodox churches. On a similar, but more dramatic, occasion when the Patriarch of Constantinople was able to return unopened the Pope's invitation to the first Vatican Council because he had already read its terms published in the press, the words used of the Pope were 'an equal among equals in point of dignity, but being first by canonical right and rank of his See'. This recognition of the Pope's primacy of honour is rather carefully kept up by the older Eastern churches, both to emphasize their strict Orthodoxy, and to combat what they consider the Pope's own more exaggerated claims. Russians may feel in a slightly different position here, since when the Patriarchate of Moscow was recognized by Constantinople in 1589 one cause for rejoicing was that Moscow

had now replaced Rome, which had fallen into schism, and so restored the number of Patriarchs to five; and a similar idea may be seen in the claim of the Tzars to continue the line of Roman Emperors. But more immediately this silence over the Pope's supremacy is the natural accompaniment of the peculiarly Russian claim, voiced and acted upon since the Revolution, that within Orthodoxy all autocephalous Churches are of equal authority for every practical purpose, and especially in their right to rule Orthodox outside their national territories and to summon Pan-Orthodox congresses, rights which are traditionally reserved to Constantinople. Both in this understanding of Orthodoxy, and in the attitude to the Pope consequent upon it, the Russians stand apart from the older Orthodox churches.

The subsidiary reasons which the Patriarch has given in his letter to Cardinal Bea for his refusal to attend and so to recognize the Council are these: the new dogmas which have been 'thought up' to distinguish the Roman from the Eastern church; the likelihood of the Council being used for political aims; and finally, the Pope's inability to raise himself above 'the contradictions of the times'. The political accusation one may suspect as at least in part the Synod's tribute to its concordat with the State. It would be tempting also to read between the lines of the last excuse and imagine a delicate reference to the Patriarch's own entanglement in the ambiguities of the day, as a spiritual leader patronized by an atheist state.

The immediate occasion for this latest and longest Russian reply to Pope John's original appeal to separated Christians, more than two years ago when he announced the Council, has been an interview given by Cardinal Bea to *Il Giornale del Popolo* and published also in *Informations Catholiques Internationales* (No. 141, 1st April 1961, p. 5). After mentioning the appointment of Canon Powley, and more or less as an aside to some remarks about the Orthodox churches in general, Cardinal Bea added that if the Patriarch of Moscow liked to send observers to the Council, as if to suggest that he follow the example of the Archbishop of Canterbury, then they would be welcomed and could take part in some of the preliminary work of the Council. As the *Journal* is quick to point out, this means that no formal invitation will be sent, but merely that if the Patriarch likes to take the initiative he will not be rebuffed. The reader is given to understand that if anything more specific were to be added to Pope John's original address, then it might have been said more graciously, and more directly. There is also to be felt a slight exasperation that the Patriarch's previous announcements, refusing to recognize the Council or have anything to do with it, have been ignored.

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