

aware of this, and it puzzled him. He wrote to Katkov: "To my personal amazement this character developed in my hands into a half-comic character. . . ." But of course it would be the case, granting the absurdity of the whole proposition Dostoevsky was committing himself to work with. The entire political side of the novel, which is to say most of it, fails desperately in consequence.

A Reply

MESSRS EGAN AND CRAIG seem to disagree with my article, but for reasons that I find difficult to understand. My purpose was a strictly limited one: to show that none of the incidents or events used by Dostoevsky on the political level of *The Devils*, that none of the plans, ideas or actions of the revolutionary plot, exceed the bounds of verisimilitude. I attempted to prove this by comparing the entire political intrigue (not only "some of Peter Verkhovensky's outbursts") with the documents at Dostoevsky's disposal about the Nechayev affair. Nothing said by my critics addresses itself to this argument, or refutes it in any way. Hence, I see very little to answer, and take the silence of my critics on the main point as an implicit admission of the strength of my position.

However, my critics are obviously perturbed at the idea that *The Devils* could possibly have any historical veracity; this no doubt conflicts too severely with their own ideas about Revolution and revolutionists. And in attempting to circumvent this uncomfortable fact, they raise a number of issues on which I should like to comment.

1. Their first point, if I understand them rightly, is that even if Dostoevsky's use of the facts is legitimate, such facts are only "the case for the prosecution in a Czarist police-state." Hence the novel is biased because the trial was a frame-up.

This is ingenious but unconvincing. The *Catechism*, the leaflets, the murder of Ivanov, all existed independently of the testimony of "police witnesses." The letter of Bakunin I cited—surely not a "police witness"—supports and confirms all the accusations made against Nechayev. They were also all accepted by Marx and Engels, whose biting account of the affair is much more damning even than Dostoevsky's novel (*Werke*, Berlin, 1962, vol. 18, 396-441).

2. Messrs. Egan and Craig cite a number of letters indicating that Dostoevsky did not approach his material in an equitable frame of mind, and was bitterly biased against the radicals and their movement—at least as reflected in the Nechayev case. This is certainly true; it was so stated by me; and Dostoevsky never claimed

otherwise. It is all the more remarkable, under these circumstances, that his manipulation of the material did not exceed the bounds of verisimilitude as I defined it—that is, an extrapolation of the actualities and possibilities contained in the Nechayev evidence.

Incidentally, all the letters cited refer to the first idea for the novel, before the inclusion of Stavrogin as part of the plan. They do not refer to the book as finally written; this became much less a "pamphlet" as Dostoevsky's ideas developed.

3. My critics make much of the religious symbolism of the book, which comprehensibly does not please them at all; but since this was not included in the scope of my argument, I shall not discuss it here. I have dealt with it at length elsewhere ("The Masks of Stavrogin," *Sewanee Review*, Oct.-Dec., 1969, pp. 660-691).

They object, however, to Dostoevsky's image of the revolution advocated by Nechayev as the handiwork of devils and madmen. Let me cite for them a passage from Herzen's *Letters to an old Comrade*, written—just as was Dostoevsky's novel—as a response to the revelations of the Nechayev affair. The "old comrade" is Bakunin.

"The savage clamours exhorting people to close their books, to abandon science and to engage in an absurd battle of destruction, belongs to the wildest and worst demagoguery. It always provokes the unleashing of the worst passions." (Italics in text.)

In any case, there is something astonishingly naïve, but also rather touching, in the belief that revolutionists are always sane and reasonable people.

4. Far from being an invention of Dostoevsky's (as my critics apparently believe), the continuity between the Russian Liberalism of the 1840s and the Radicalism of the 1860s (culminating in Nechayev) is one of the commonplaces of Russian cultural history. Let me cite another letter of Herzen, the father of Russian Socialism, to Bakunin (30 May, 1867):

"I am sending you the brochure of Serno-Solovievich. He's insolent and a fool; but what's most deplorable is that the majority of the Russian youth are the same, and it's we who have contributed to make them so." (Italics in text.)

The Nechayev affair occurred a year or two later; and Dostoevsky, in explaining the symbolism of the novel to Maikov (9/21 October, 1870), writes:

"The devils have emerged from Russian man to enter into the Nechayevs, Serno-Solovievichs, etc." Dostoevsky had certainly read the brochure to which Herzen refers, and had simply dramatised Herzen's response—which he could not possibly have known.

Joseph Frank

LETTERS

Wiesenthal's "Columbus"

I GATHER from the way that Dr Gerhard Prause phrases his remarks [ENCOUNTER, April, p.61], that he regards it as inherently unlikely that Columbus's interpreter, Luis de Torres, should have known "Chaldean." The name certainly has an unfamiliar ring about it nowadays, but Chaldean was the usual term employed at the time (and indeed until much later) to designate what we call Aramaic and Syriac. This man was, therefore, an expert in the Semitic languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic. It would be quite normal for a good Hebrew scholar to have "Chaldean" as well.

To take along a man with such linguistic training was really quite a sensible decision to make. Arabic would be a good trade language for the coast of Africa (and also for the Indian Ocean). Hebrew, if one believed it to have been man's original tongue (spoken by Adam and Eve in the Garden), was as likely as any other to turn out useful when venturing into the unknown.

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THERE MUST BE something important about my book if you use nearly three precious pages in order to try to "disprove" it [ENCOUNTER, April].

I would have hoped that Dr Prause would occupy himself especially with the new research that the book presents: namely, the connection between the journeys of Columbus and the hope of the Jews finally to make contact with the ten tribes of Israel, as well as with the analysis of all the absurdities about the personality of Columbus which open up possibilities for a new interpretation. Unfortunately, my expectations were not realised. He did not take up the two main subjects of this book, or at least only superficially.

I have to note that he did not read, or not thoroughly, the biography of Columbus by Salvador de Madariaga which is generally regarded as the standard work. Otherwise he would have found the fact confirmed by Madariaga that Columbus wanted his crew to be on board by 11 p.m. I think that we can rely on Madariaga.

As to the "semi-falsification," in a literal sense he is right. But I think I can take the liberty of omitting whole phrases of formal politeness about the Catholic Kings and start with the order given to Columbus. To call such an omission a "semi-falsification" is hard.

As to the question of financing, I think he overlooked what I say in my book on p. 170—how Santangel arranged it, what personal risk he accepted, and that the loan which was free of interest had been paid back years later. The sad circumstances of that time—persecutions and *autos-da-fé*, denunciations and envy at the Court—would not really lead one to suspect "business" in such a dubious affair.

But thanks to Dr Prause's critique, I must acknowledge one mistake. I wrote, as he noted, that Torres, Columbus's interpreter, spoke Hebrew, Arabic, and a bit of Chaldean. I depended here on Washington Irving and his voluminous work about Columbus which he wrote 150 years ago. Enclosed please find a photocopy of this part of Irving's book. Torres in fact spoke Hebrew and Chaldean and a bit of Arabic.

I wrote on p. 150 that at that time not everybody was definitely convinced that the world was a globe, and that the aversion of Portuguese sailors to sailing westward in the direction of endless waters was connected with this. This view changed, of course, after the successful oceanic voyages. But Dr Prause misunderstands me if he thinks I state that it was the aim of these voyages to confirm this fact.

A part of my book is devoted to my thesis about the search for the Ten Tribes and the investigations about the descent and the religion of the Indios prompted by Columbus's voyage; it further considers the quarrels of the Spaniards and the Italians, who would both like to claim Columbus as their compatriot, and also the probability of his Jewish origins.

But I do agree that "the Incorrigibles" will consider this book some kind of confirmation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. For nearly 2000 years the Jewish people have given the world—to the displeasure of those "Incorrigibles"—outstanding figures of scholarship and science. Let me mention only Moses and Jesus, Marx, Einstein, Freud, among many others. And may we hope that we shall find in future Jewish generations great men who will give the world new impulses and important achievements, whether those "Incorrigibles" like it or not.

SIMON WIESENTHAL

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SIMON WIESENTHAL'S COMPLAINT that I did not devote sufficient attention to the new material in his book is illogical. It was enough to examine the points on which he based his theory—in other words, its foundation. It is because this foundation carries no weight that his—otherwise far from uninteresting—theory hovers in mid-air.

1. Wiesenthal claims that Columbus stood on the quay-side at Palos on the evening of 2 August 1492 and personally checked that all members of the expedition went aboard by 11 p.m. This personally supervised embarkation and its timing (one hour before all Jews had to leave the country) are taken by Wiesenthal as major supports for his theory of Columbus's "secret mission". Unfortunately, there is no historical evidence, either for personal supervision or for the order to be on board by 11 p.m. Not even Madariaga, whom Wiesenthal cites as his authority, makes any such reference.

2. Columbus's log ("In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ") opens with a list, more than a page long, of events that had occurred in 1492 prior to his date of departure. The expulsion of the Jews is the last item on that list. To assert that the log opens with a reference to the expulsion (and to fashion this, too, into a theoretical building-block) is more than a mere omission of introductory courtesies.

3. That the interpreter Luis de Torres probably spoke better Hebrew than Arabic (Columbus states