ACTA SLAVICA ESTONICA VI.
Studia Russica Helsingiensia et Tartuensia XIV.
Russian National Myth in Transition.
Tartu, 2014

FORMULATING THE "RUSSIAN IDEA": RUSSIAN WRITERS AND THE NATIONALIZATION OF PATRIOTISM DURING THE CRIMEAN WAR (MAIKOV, GONCHAROV, PISEMSKY)

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Until recent times, studies of the "patriotic elation" that swept up many Russian writers and poets during the Crimean War (1853–1856) confined themselves to determining how sincere various authors were in their expressions of Russophilia. Following studies by historians and, in particular, O. Maiorova, the issue was formulated in a fundamentally new way: what were the implications and consequences of the powerful wave of patriotism in Russian journalistic writing and poetry during the Crimean War in terms of constructing a new type of identity in the public realm? From such a perspective, the focus of attention for the literary historian becomes less the rhetoric of elation in odes on the triumphs of Russian arms or, conversely, the rhetoric of prognosticating the imminent demise of autocracy and the rebirth of Russia, and more the ideological constructs of a new community that were formulated in such writings. I am referring to appeals to the idea of "Russian" and "Russianness". What were the foundations of this Russianness in the views of writers? To what historical narratives did they appeal? How was this Russianness defined? How did writers conceive of the relation between Russians and "others" (East, West)? I propose to examine these questions using the polemical writings of several well-known writers, which have never been considered all together as a dialogue regarding the problem of "Russian civilization" or the "Russian idea", as it was first called by Dostoevsky in a letter to Apollon Maikov in the spring of 1856. We will focus on the essays and fiction of three writers, Apollon Maikov, Ivan Goncharov, and Aleksey Pisemsky, who during the years 1854–1856 became involved in a discussion of political problems and articulated their conceptions of Russian civilizations: Maikov in a newspaper editorial and the poems in his notorious

collection *1854*; Goncharov in the travelogue *The Frigate Pallada*; and Pisemsky in his *Traveler's Sketches.*

1. A Pre-text: The Idea of Russianness in Apollon Maikov's "Letter to Pisemsky"

The beginning of war with Turkey in October 1853 compelled many writers not hitherto given to expressions of loyalism and public patriotism to find a meaning in what was taking place and to formulate their own attitude toward it. The external threat, particularly from the Moslem East, became a natural stimulus for the emergence of an acute feeling of unity and the consciousness of belonging to a community with the other subjects of the empire. This process stretched out over a whole year: only by the middle – end of 1854, when the allied fleet of France and Great Britain entered the Black Sea and the Russian army began to suffer defeats, many writers began to express themselves in public, both in journalistic writing and in literary texts. Patriotism found its most immediate expression in poems of various genres, which began to appear on the pages of official newspapers — *Russkiy invalid* and *Severnaya pchela* — as well as the Russophile journal *Moskvityanin*. Not surprisingly, the authors of the first patriotic texts included writers famous for their historiosophical lyric poetry: P. Viazemsky, S. Shevyrev, F. Glinka, S. Raich, D. Oznobishin, N. Arbuzov, P. Grigoriev, L. Brant, and others[1].

Against this background, it is significant that some writers who had hitherto been regarded if not as representatives of the opposition to Nicholas I's policy then certainly as liberals, started to publish patriotic texts. The first figure that must be mentioned is Apollon Maikov, who frequented Petrashevsky's Friday gathering and at one time was even under investigation by the authorities. Later, in 1854, in an unsent letter to M. A. Yazykov, Maikov admitted that already in the late 1840s he had distanced himself from the Westernizers and from Petrashevsky's more radical followers, as well as from Slavophiles, in search of a new foundation. Maikov's description of the spiritual rebirth brought on by the Crimean War deserves to be quoted:

> News of Bebutov's and Nakhimov's victories overwhelmed me and awakened in me a patriotic feeling that had previously been completely foreign to me; I wept like a madman, and my heart ached with pride and elation, and I unconsciously repeated one word over and over again: this is *us!* This is us in these soldiers — heroes,

[1] Patriotic poetry from the Crimean War is collected in the anthology [Ратников]. See the introduction to the same volume.

> I would now call them — whom we have been taught to despise and ridicule [Ямпольский 1976: 39].

Maikov's language here is focused on the experience of community ("we, us") which for the first time connected him with many of his countrymen. It is telling that some time later, in August 1854, Maikov published this private, diary-entry note in somewhat revised form in the newspaper *Sankt-Peterburgskiye vedomosti*. Under a demonstratively private and seemingly incidental title — "Excerpt from a Letter to A. F. Pisemsky" — Maikov laid out his views on national consolidation and Russia's grand mission. The poet's idea was that the circumstance of war gave Russia a unique, historic opportunity to develop a new form of unification, an expression of the "people's consciousness", since current events had

> forced each and everyone suddenly to stop and ask themselves: so who are you? And regardless of each person's level of education, regardless of the sources from which he drew his knowledge and opinions, everyone with one voice and in the same instant had to resolve this question and unanimously, before the tribunal of conscience, to answer: I am a Russian! The arguments of Westernizers and Slavophiles resolve themselves on their own and resolve themselves to the glory of Russia <...> nothing could suppress our consciousness of the fact that one could be a learned and educated person, and at the same time feel that we are Russians, and that the highest thing in us is the same sacred feeling of love for the fatherland!.. [Майков 1854: 863].

According to Maikov, consolidation occurs simultaneously on several levels and along several planes. First, it consists of the erasing of ideological differences among the various tendencies in Russian thought of the 1840s (Slavophiles and Westernizers). Second, it involves social integration, which erases the borders between all social classes — "a genuine democratic minute in our life", as Maikov characterized the situation in a letter to S. Shevyrev [Майков 1977: 822]. Finally, the third aspect of consolidation, to which almost half of the article is devoted, pertains to interethnic integration. In Maikov's opinion, the war awakened all residents of the empire to the recognition of the fact that they were "Russian" and established "unity among all tribes living under the scepter of one Tsar".

Rejecting the European discourse of Russia's barbaric nature, which "devours like Saturn" the nations that are annexed to it, Maikov on the contrary asserts that, by "joining the great family of nations that comprise the Russian empire, it is as if each of them received the right and opportunity to participate in world events, the right and opportunity to write its own name in the annals

of human history!.. Russia opens up to them the path to glory, the broad highway to posterity!" Maikov exults in the fact that Russia ostensibly in a short period of time transformed the Crimea, Astrakhan, Transcaucasia, Siberia, and the Orenburg region into flourishing regions, for which reason one may confidently affirm that, contrary to Western propaganda, Russians are a "civilized people, and what is even more important, even higher, a civilizing people. A Cossack sentry in the Kyrgyz steppe is the seed of Europe in Asia" [Майков 1854: 864].

Although Maikov writes about ideological, social, and ethnic consolidation, appealing to a certain Russian identity, his article only cursorily talks about who "Russians" are and who belongs to this category. This is done by referring to the concept of "Holy Rus'" (by this time well-developed in poetry — see [Киселева]) and to K. Pavlova's poem "Conversation in the Kremlin" (1854), whose idea Maikov shares completely. This idea consists in Russia's chosenness and particular path, which is different from that of the rest of Europe.

In this way, it is implied by the subtext of the article that Russianness is the feeling of "forgetting one's individuality for one's fatherland" [Майков 1854: 864]. Once can see here the modern conception of the nation in merely embryonic form[2].

The ideas presented in Maikov's newspaper article in a condensed and conceptual fashion were fleshed out by him in a collection of nine poems, entitled *1854* (St. Petersburg, 1855), which can be regarded as a political statement (not by accident did the poet himself during his life recalled this publication with regret and reprinted only three poems from it). The collection opened with the poem, "Бывало, уловить из жизни миг случайный...", whose culmination repeated the lines from Maikov's article: "Благодарю, Тебя, Творец, благодарю / Что мы не скованы лжемудростию узкой! / Что с гордостью я всем сказать могу: я Русский! / Что пламенем одним с Россией я горю!" [Майков 1855: 4]. Maikov's historiosophical views on the relation between Russia and the West are expressed in the famous poem "Клермонтский собор" ("The Council of Clermont"), whose idea consists in the fact that Russia had its own crusades[3] (against the Mongols) and that its history not

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2 About the crystallization of the modern conception of the nation after the Crimean War, see [Maiorova: 52].

3 The projection of current events onto the European crusades was not Maikov's invention: compare D. P. Oznobishin's poem "That Was a Century!" (*Moskvityanin.* 1854. № 5. Issue I (March issue)), in which Russians were enjoined to repeat the Crusade in the East. "The Council of Clermont" was published in № 4 of *Otechestvennye zapiski* in 1854, hence Maikov had most likely read Oznobishin's text.

only parallels the history of Europe, but foreshadows something greater: the possibility of seizing the initiative from the West ("to finish what the West began"). Maikov's conception differs from Slavophile ideas (for example, Khomyakov's) in that it does not reject the West and its values, but on the contrary, sees them as being reborn in Russia, as it were. Thus, it is not by accident that the text concludes with the "image of Peter" the Great — the symbol of the construction of the new Russia.

Maikov's collection contains two other noteworthy poems about sacrifices made by Russian peasants: *How the Retired Soldier Perfiliev Re-Enlisted* and *The Shepherd*. In the former, the 48-year-old retired soldier Perfiliev explains to his wife, Mavrusha, why it is necessary to join the army again: that is the duty of any genuinely Russian man. The slothful peasant youth in *The Shepherd*, after having a prophetic dream in which the motherland, personified as a woman, calls to him for help, gains vision and asks his old father to take him to enlist in the army. Out of the whole collection, the critics praised only these two "folksy" poems — as an unbiased attempt to depict the spirit of the Russian lower classes, ready to defend their homeland. By contrast with his newspaper rhetoric, Maikov's poetic picture of the unifying "national consciousness" turned out much weaker and not convincing. The author himself went through a crisis at the beginning of 1855 and after the death of Nicholas I tempered his patriotic and monarchical fervor. Doubts in the correctness of his political position led to a creative crisis, which was expressed in an urgent desire to "clear out of St. Petersburg, at least for one year, and to roam about Russia, in order to begin a new life for myself too" [Ямпольский 1977: 840]. Maikov's desire coincided with an opportunity that presented itself: in August 1855, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich was recruiting young writers for a "literary expedition" aimed at describing the life and customs of Russia's outlying regions, along the shores of its seas and rivers. Maikov petitioned to take part in the expedition, but the Minister of National Education, A. S. Norov, under whom the poet was employed, did not allow Maikov to go on the trip[4]. Maikov's dream was realized only in 1858, when he obtained permission to sail to the Mediterranean Sea aboard the Corvette *Bayan*. The search for an answer about the fate of Holy Rus' and a new world view led Maikov to the idea of traveling around Russia, and subsequently beyond its borders as well.

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[4] In November 1855, Konstantin Nikolayevich personally interceded on Maikov's behalf, but Norov refused, stating that he could not let a member of the committee on foreign censorship take such a long leave. See: Russian State Archive of the Navy in St. Petersburg. Fond 410. Inventory 2. File 1069. Folio 25, 44–45.

2. "Russian Siberia" and the Ethos of Assimilation: Goncharov's Reply to Maikov

Maikov's unconditional faith in Holy Rus' and the success of its civilizing mission soon elicited a response, not from the addressee of the letter (Pisemsky), but from Maikov's teacher and mentor Ivan Goncharov, who in 1854 returned to St. Petersburg through Siberia from his sea voyage to Japan. Goncharov read Maikov's newspaper article in Yakutsk in October–November, as he informed the Maikov family on January 11, 1855:

> I have so much empathy for what is moving you and all of Rus' at the present time that I forgive you, Yevgeniya Petrovna, my friend, for filling your letter with political news... With you, my dear Apollon, I have empathy in deed as well: in Yakutsk I read your feuilleton in the St. Petersburg Journal for 11 August 1854, No. 176, and immediately pushed aside the travelogue which I was then working on, and wrote an article, "Yakutsk", in which I use facts to support your idea about how Russia opens up for its subject peoples *a vast arena for action and rational work* [Гончаров 1935: 419].

Goncharov is in complete solidarity with Maikov's patriotic enthusiasm and attempts to develop his thoughts in an article of his own. Contrary to the opinion of the publisher of the letter, B. M. Engelhardt [Ibid.: 422], Goncharov is evidently referring not to a separate article, but to an early draft of his sketch "From Yakutsk" (Morskoi Sbornik, 1855, № 6, part 4), in which the writer enters into dialogue with Maikov concerning Russia's civilizing mission[5]. Researchers have already noted that, while sharing Maikov's civilizing and patriotic pathos, Goncharov goes much further in his vision of Russia's role and progress in the fate of the indigenous populations of Siberia [Краснощекова: 209–217; Гончаров 2000: 520]. Nonetheless, no one who has studied *The Frigate Pallada* has inquired about the limits of the civilizing process that Goncharov sees as the most important goal of the Russian presence in Siberia. Meanwhile, this aspect of the sketch *From Yakutsk* deserves special attention, and therefore a detailed examination of Goncharov's conception of Russia's civilizing mission is called for.

Researchers have emphasized that the author of *The Frigate Pallada* contrasts British and American colonialism with "Russia's original model of the civi-

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[5] It is possible that the mysterious letter from Goncharov to A. Maikov from 25 April 1855, which alludes to a passionate argument between them, which almost ended in a fight, is also connected with the same issues. S. Drugoveiko, who published the letter, makes the reasonable assumption that the discussion most likely concerned politics and the complex and rapid evolution of the writers' viewpoints [Гончаров 2000а: 353–354].

lizing process", which is humane, noncoercive, disinterested, gradual [Краснощекова: 212–217; Гончаров 2000: 520–521; Lim 35–37]. Such a picture of Russia's policies in Siberia and the Far East is indeed presented in the final chapters of the travelogue. However, such interpretation of Goncharov's viewpoint turns out to be uncritical and cut off from contemporaneous notions of Russia's civilizing mission. In order to understand the specific nature of Goncharov's stance, we must, first, examine how the sketch *From Yakutsk* develops the theme of the limits of the civilizing process when it is applied to the Yakuts, and second, describe the place of Goncharov's stance in the ethnographic context of the mid-1850s.

By contrast with Maikov, who does not directly address the problem of the Russification of foreigners, Goncharov does not conceal his position: he comes out in favor of full assimilation[6], to which the Yakuts, Chukchi, and other Siberian peoples must be subjected. On the very first pages of the sketch (cited here as first published in 1855[7]), readers are confronted with a strong tension between Russianness and otherness. The author, who has spent several years in the distant seas and exotic countries, perceives Yakutsk simultaneously as *ours*, Russian, and as *other*, a foreign space:

> From having nothing to do, I amused myself with the thought that, after two years of travels, I would finally see the first Russian city, even if a provincial one. But it too is not quite Russian, although it has Russian churches, Russian houses, Russian clerks and merchants, but how bare everything is! Who ever heard of such a thing in Rus' — not one little garden or dooryard [to be seen]; no greenery — if not of apple and pear trees, then at least of birches and acacias — shading the houses and fences! And these narrow-eyed, flat-nosed people, are they really Russians? All are Yakuts! [Гончаров 1855: 279–280].

Subsequently, the author draws parallels between Russians and Yakuts, finding many more similarities with Russians in the latter than is commonly thought — in their hair cuts, in their settled way of life. Goncharov's remark that, like the Yakuts with their summer and winter yurts, "we, too, are a kind of nomadic

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6 It is necessary to distinguish more thoroughly between two dominant positions held by ethnographers and orientalists in accordance with their stated views on the final aim of the civilizing process: assimilation (the complete absorption of one people by another) or acculturation (the preservation of cultural or linguistic identity). The differentiation of these two conceptions and goals is necessary and justified because Russian orientalists of the 1850s used these concepts. Compare the use of such concepts as assimilation, agglutination, and agglomeration in I. N. Berezin's article "Metropolis and Colony" (*Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1858, vol. 118, № 5). For more detail, see [Вдовин 2014: 101–102].

7 In subsequent editions, Goncharov deleted from the text many important and ideologically charged fragments. See their description [Гончаров 2000: 316–321].

people, since in the summers we relocate to Pargolovo, Tsarskoye Selo, Oranienbaum" [Гончаров 1855: 281], also looks like a rhetorical balancing act. Ultimately, the author perceives Yakutsk as a typical provincial Russian city, although one populated by Yakuts ("still, this is Rus', although it is Siberian Rus'!" [Ibid.: 282]). The epithet "Siberian" gradually becomes transformed in Goncharov's text into the ethnonym "Sibiryak", whose identity is described in a lyrical fragment deleted by the author in subsequent editions, after 1862. Goncharov initially defines the identity of the "Sibiryak" not by appealing to ethnicity or blood, but through the image of the life of a "person racing on a wild troika, hidden in his carriage, buried in furs". Sibiryaks are a "multi-tribal family", united by their common style of life as hunters and farmers, and by their understanding of Siberia as a "mother" (inhabitants of Russia's European part also treated their land as a "mother") [Ibid.: 282–283]. Later on, the reader can infer that Goncharov still conceives of the Sibiryaks' identity as Russian. Writing about the fact that "there is much Russian and non-Russian, which in time will also become Russian" [Ibid.: 284], and that "all measures and actions taken by the government are aimed at bringing [this] handful of children from a foreign tribe into the enormous Russian family" [Ibid.: 299], Goncharov unambiguously means the Yakuts' gradual assimilation, the idea that they will dissolve completely in Russian society[8].

The Yakuts, as the main object of the Russian civilizing mission, come across in Goncharov as a "quiet and polite people", which is moving rapidly on the path of Christianization and progress, and consequently, according to Goncharov, of education and maturation (a large part of the sketch *From Yakutsk* is devoted to a description of the success of Russian Orthodox missionaries). The Yakut, the savage, "who but recently was half man, half beast" [Ibid.: 293], becomes the Russians' main helper in the domestication of a harsh land, a testament to the absolute success of the Russian civilizing mission in the Far East and the guarantor of Russia's high status among other empires. About the appropriateness and usefulness of this mission, Goncharov has no doubts whatsoever: the Russians "taught the Aleuts and the Kuril Islanders to live and pray... created, invented Siberia, populated and educated it, and now want to give back to the Creator the fruit of the seed cast by Him" [Ibid.: 289]. Arguing

[8] In this respect, as is well known, Goncharov takes a sharply polemical stance against M. M. Gedenshtrom, who in a book from 1830 described the Yakuts as "noble savages" and voiced the apprehension that European civilization would bring them only troubles (illnesses, destructive habits, and so on). By contrast with Gedenshtrom, a Romantic and Rousseauist, Goncharov, in M. Bassin's opinion, comes out as a modern nationalist who believes in the power of European civilization [Bassin: 186–190].

with Maikov, Goncharov comes to the conclusion that the empire's civilizing work is no longer "the seed of Europe in Asia, but an original Russian model of the civilizing process" [Гончаров 1855: 299], which differs from the British and American models first and foremost due to the wise policies of the government, which prohibited liquor tax farming in the Far East and did not destroy the natives, as happened in the United States. In the mid-1850s, articles about the dismal condition of the North American Indians, who had been corrupted and destroyed by European civilization, were common in the Russian press. Thus, in 1856, the *Russkiy vestnik* journal published the translation of an article by Franz Loeher, "The Dying Native Tribes of North America", in which the proto-racist author proposed to divide peoples into the "highest", "best breeds", and the "lowest" — worst ones [Леэр: 71]. He saw modernity not only as the era of the awakening of nationalities, but also of their extinction. The reasons for this lie less in external circumstances (the encounter with European civilization) than in internal ones: the absence of a necessary, threshold level of civilization, below which the irreversible dissolution of the community begins, followed by the degradation of the individuals, and subsequently of the national character as well. This is what happened, in Loeher's view, with the American Indians, who, "awakened by civilized man", turned out to be incapable of "escaping from the bleak cycle" [Ibid.: 68–70], since they lacked a basic level of civilization.

This context helps to understand Goncharov's position, which was not unique and was entirely in keeping with the official discourse concerning the necessity of Russia's civilizing mission, which differed from the British and American approaches because it was aimed not at the segregation of the conquered peoples, but at their integration and subsequent assimilation (see the classic article: [Becker], as well as [Джераси]).

At the same time, the idyllic picture painted by Goncharov in the published version of his sketch may be revised in view of his epistolary judgment concerning the influences of Russians and Yakuts on one another. In a letter to A. Krayevsky from Yakutsk (September 1854), Goncharov admitted that he was astonished most of all by the Yakuts' unwillingness to learn the Russian language, while "Russians speak Yakut to an inexcusable degree":

> In one yurt I see a pretty white girl, about 11 years old, whose cheekbones don't look like horse-carriage shafts, and who doesn't have bear fur on her head instead of hair — in short, a Russian. I ask her name. She doesn't speak Russian, replies Yegor Petrov Bushkov, a middle class citizen, owner of post horses, her father. Why not? Is her mother a Yakut? — Not at all; she's Russian. — Why, then, doesn't she speak Russian? Silence <...> Not only their language, they began to adopt even Yakut cus-

> toms, leaving their children in the care of Yakut women, who instilled in them their morals and much else, including syphilis. But now these vices have been eliminated [Гончаров 1855: 279–280].

Goncharov did not include these observations into the published version of his sketch about Yakutsk, probably because they did not fit his conception of Russia's idealized civilizing mission. The superiority of the principles of progress and civilization did not allow for "reverse" influences — of those who were being civilized on those who were civilizing them (Yakuts on Russians). Goncharov's literary depiction of assimilation, as often happens, does not reflect the actual complexity of processes that he encountered in Siberia, but which he ultimately did not venture to commit to paper[9].

3. North vs. East: Pisemsky on the Muscovite Civilization

In 1856, the actual addressee of Maikov's letter, Aleksey Pisemsky[10], entered into polemics with him as well. In the fall of 1855, Pisemsky had been sent by the Naval Ministry to Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea as a participant of the "literary expedition" (about the "literary expedition", see [Вдовин 2014]). By contrast with Maikov and Goncharov, Pisemsky turned out to be less subject to patriotic and nationalistic fervor[11] and in his sketches about Astrakhan Tatars, Armenians, and Kalmyks he raised doubts about the success of the civilizing mission in specific regions. His doubts stemmed from his conviction that "inorodtsy" were incapable of becoming civilized[12].

For his views on the Asiatic East, Pisemsky, who had poor command of foreign languages, relied on Russian journalistic writing of the 1840s–50s, first and foremost the articles of V. G. Belinsky and P. I. Nebolsin, who depicted Asians as sleepy, lazy peoples, who were arrested in their development, could not be considered "historic", and existed in a state of stagnation[13]. However, when he came into actual contact with ethnic diversity in Astrakhan, Pisemsky devel-

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9 This refers only to the sketch discussed above. In the context of the book *The Frigate Pallada*, Goncharov's overall position turns out to be far more complex. See [Kleespies: 113–143].

10 Through his wife, née Ye. P. Svinyina, Pisemsky was Maikov's relative.

11 Although in 1854 he published and staged a patriotic dramatic episode, "The Veteran and the New Recruit", by the end of 1855, when he was in Astrakhan, Pisemsky's attitude toward the government's policies had become more critical.

12 For a more detailed account of Pisemsky's trip, his interactions with the editors of "Morskoi Sbornik", and his ideological position on *inorodtsy*, see: [Вдовин 2012].

13 About the perception of Asians in Russia during the 1830s–1850s see [Becker]. Belinsky and other journalists of his time borrowed their ideas from Hegel, see [Siljak].

oped these notions into something more complex, contrasting the East not with the West, but with the North and Muscovite civilization[14]. In this way, Pisemsky obtained an ideological "triangle", which he derived most likely from the late works of Lermontov and the Slavophiles[15].

In the sketch "The Armenians of Astrakhan", Pisemsky criticizes Armenians for the "loss of their national character" [Писемский 1858a: 9], as reflected in the Europeanization of their dress and the mixing of the Russian and Armenian languages, as a result of which these people are becoming "half-Asian, half-European" [Ibid.: 15]. If Armenians occupy an intermediary position in the cultural hierarchy, standing with one foot in Europe, then the Tatars and the Kalmyks in Pisemsky's sketches come across as typical Asians, standing at a lower rung of development. In Pisemsky's depiction of them, these two peoples of Astrakhan are endowed with all the negative traits that the Asian character is thought to possess: laziness, fatalism, inability to improve, passivity, and moral apathy [Писемский 1858b: 5]. This state of affairs, in Pisemsky's view, cannot be rectified, since "vice lies in the very nature of the Asian" [Писемский 1860: 5]. According to his logic, the innate defects of the Eastern peoples (i. e. racialist discourse) explains why "the North conquered the East and in time must swallow it up altogether" [Ibid.]. Pisemsky writes about the triumph not of the West and Western civilization, but of the North, i. e. the Russian, Muscovite civilization. It draws its strength from the Russian *muzhik*, who has "more ability in his heel than an Ulus here has in his whole body" [Писемский 1936: 97]. The author sees no meaning whatsoever in the continuation of history for the Tatars and the Kalmyks: "Rest in peace, you people who have outlived your time!.. Your historical significance was an accident. To sustain and to preserve your ethnic character now is the same as to warm a dead corpse" [Писемский 1858b: 10]. According to Pisemsky, efforts of ethnographers and linguists who tried to keep the "spirit of small nations" were pointless. They are already dead and doomed to disappear, due to the Tatars' underlying natural inadequacy, their inability to develop. It is easy to see that such a skeptical view of the appropriateness of the civilizing mission in the East constitutes a polemical stance on Pisemsky's part that is directly opposed to Maikov's ultra-patriotic newspaper article, on the one hand, and to Goncharov's idealized picture of "Russian Siberia", on the other.

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14 See his letter to A. N. Ostrovsky from Astrakhan: "All of this, my dear", he assured Ostrovsky, "is shit compared to our region, shit — the people and even the climate. Now I understand why the Muscovite Tsardom overcame all others" [Писемский 1936: 94].

15 See [Лотман].

Conclusion

One can say that already in 1854, in the middle of the Crimean War, certain Russian writers were searching for new ways of legitimating and motivating national unity, less by invoking the idea of loyalty to the emperor, the fatherland, and the Russian Orthodox faith, and more by invoking to the notion of "the Russian" and Russian civilization. "Russianness" could be defined through its folk or peasant origins (see, for example, the poetry of Ivan Nikitin from 1853–1855, Pisemsky's folksy stories, A. Potekhin's plays from this period) or through the idea of progress, the abolition of serfdom, missionary work, and the civilizing mission, as it was articulated by Goncharov in *The Frigate Pallada*. Finally, in Maikov's newspaper article from 1854, we encounter the idea of a collective unification, the neutralization of ideological, social, and ethnic borders. The result of such a consolidation, brought about by the patriotic fervor surrounding the Crimean War, becomes a new experience of unity, based on a feeling of national solidarity. In this way, by the end of the war, a "nationalization and Russification of patriotic language" [Maiorova: 28] had gradually taken place. As a vivid illustration of this complex process, it is appropriate to quote the words of Fyodor Dostoevsky, who in 1856 also entered into dialogue with Maikov in connection with the latter's poem "The Council of Clermont":

> I talk about patriotism, the Russian idea, the sense of duty, national honor — about everything that you talk about with such enthusiasm. But, my friend! Were you really ever any different? I have always shared these very feelings and convictions. Russia, duty, honor? — yes! I was always genuinely Russian — I am being frank. What is new, then, in the movement that you find around you, which you describe as some new tendency? I confess to you that I did not understand you. I read your poems and found them wonderful; I completely share you patriotic feeling concerning the moral liberation of the Slavs. This is the role of Russia, noble, great Russia, our holy mother. How good is the ending, the final lines, of your "Council of Clermont"! Where did you find such language, to express so magnificently such an enormous thought? Yes! I share your idea that Europe and its purpose will be concluded by Russia [Достоевский: 208].

It is important to note that in this private letter, Dostoevsky was chronologically one of the first writers in Russia to formulate the concept of the "Russian idea", which referred to a special mission of Russia and by the 1880s became a commonplace of the philosophical and journalistic vocabulary (see the recent study by [Hudspith]).

Thus, I have shown how Maikov's journalistic intervention from 1854 inaugurated a discussion about Russianness and Russian civilization among three

well-known Russian writers — Goncharov, Pisemsky, and Dostoevsky. All of them (apart from Dostoevsky) made use of literary sketches to articulate the nationalist idea, which was correlated in a complex manner with patriotic journalistic and literary writing of the period of the Crimean War.

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