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Reply

I am grateful to Messrs. Bird and Kline for their thoughtful comments and informed observations on the subject of the revival of interest in the Russian past in the USSR. No one could have been more aware than I of the obvious fact that in my short essay I was only able to touch on some aspects of the subject. I appreciate the pains the two commentators have taken to fill in some of the gaps. I would like to correct any misunderstanding that may arise, however, from Mr. Bird's quoting two of my remarks somewhat out of context. My comment that "one need offer no explanation" for the scholarly interest did not refer to religious expression only or specifically, as Mr. Bird infers. It referred to the entire scholarly literature on the subject of Old Russian culture that has been produced in the last decade or so. Similarly, my statement that "on some levels the interest [in religion] has been more or less academic" had specifically to do with the interest in religion and not with culturalism as such, as Mr. Bird suggests. Nor would I claim that the cultural phenomenon we are here discussing was limited to the disenchantment of youth with increasing industrialization, pollution, and the destruction of natural resources, as Mr. Bird implies, although that is very obviously a part of the problem.

Mr. Kline's objections to the use of the terms "culturalism" and "culturalists" have merit; I wish he had suggested some alternatives. One could perhaps not do better than to avoid using any all-inclusive terms, for, as Deming Brown has noted,¹ the variety of activities as well as the motives of those here loosely termed "culturalists" is very great indeed and not readily reduced to concise delineation.

These somewhat minor points aside, there is one significant area where both Mr. Bird and Mr. Kline differ from me and still even more from each other. This concerns the role of religion and religious feeling in the "nationalist" movement. Mr. Kline argues persuasively that any manifestations of increased religious feeling or higher regard for the traditions of the Orthodox

1. Brown suggests that there are several fairly distinct gradations of the nationalist (culturalist) movement ranging from extreme chauvinism to a more benign liberal nationalism, with the "Russites" and "ruralists" occupying the center. But Brown himself acknowledges the difficulties of trying to classify various currents in the movement too rigidly. See Deming Brown, "Nationalism and Ruralism in Recent Soviet Russian Literature," *Review of National Literatures*, 3, no. 1 (Spring 1972): 183-209.

Church are most likely aesthetic, moral, and historical in origin and not connected with any true religiousness. He points to the growth of the non-Orthodox church groups in the USSR as well as the written statements of Efim Dorosh and others in support of his opinions, and he feels that the "genuinely religious searchings of Soviet young people will be better served by the new Soviet editions of the writings of religious thinkers, both Slavic and Western, and by sympathetic commentaries on their works," than by any other means. Mr. Bird is equally convinced that the role of the church, here the Orthodox Church, in fostering the study of Russia's cultural roots has been underestimated, and he, too, provides us with much interesting and persuasive evidence. I am certain, as is Mr. Bird, that the Russian Orthodox clergy are supporting the movement as far as is possible, and I am equally certain that some, at least, of the participants in "culturalism" are sincere in their expressions of religious belief and emotion. But Mr. Kline is also right. Some of the most visible culturalists do not have a religious basis for their actions, but are guided by aesthetic and secular, even political, motives. But whether the interest in religion is based on sincere belief or is a form of escapism, or both, one cannot deny that the Orthodox culture of Old Russia is an especially prominent part of the movement.

The other conclusions that the three of us have drawn are, I think, compatible for the most part. I am in agreement with Mr. Bird when he argues that the rituals and dogma fostered by the Soviet state have failed to satisfy the spiritual and intellectual needs of large numbers of Soviet people, including, of course, the non-Russians in the USSR. It is unfortunate that Mr. Bird did not have the opportunity to expand his statement that "the deep need to excise the entire epoch of the cult of personality presents formidable obstacles to the culturalist endeavor." Mr. Kline is undoubtedly correct in his contention that the interest in Old Russian art with its "powerful stylization and 'abstractness'" does offer the Soviet viewer an alternative to Soviet art, and he is probably right in stating that the inaccessibility of non-Soviet forms of art (and indeed much Soviet art located in the USSR) has fostered an interest in whatever is available. I am not so sure that the demographic trauma of which Mr. Kline speaks is a "motive" for the new culturalists; the roots of the movement antedate the publication of the demographic data by several years. It may well become a more important factor in the future, however, since the problems it raises are clearly of a sort that lend themselves to exploitation by fervent nationalists of all stripes.

In November 1972 there appeared several important statements bearing the clear imprint of party authority which have direct bearing on our discussion. The November 30 issue of *Pravda* carried a long article summarizing the speeches of various delegates to a conference representing all branches

of the arts.² One of the speakers, G. M. Markov, first secretary of the Writers' Union of the USSR, emphasized again and again the supranational aspects of Soviet literature, scoring "any attempt to juxtapose the national with the international" as ruinous for literature in general. The main party arguments against the nationalists, and in particular the Russian nationalists, were contained in a sixteen-column article by A. Iakovlev (dr. hist. sci.), writing in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (November 15, 1972).³ Iakovlev's targets are many and include "bourgeois sociologist" Herbert Marcuse and Soviet theorist I. Zabelin, who has argued in *Chelovek i chelovechestvo* (*Man and Mankind*) that the "working class came to power to yield its place in the historical arena to the intelligentsia, to the class of the intelligentsia." But Iakovlev's chief targets are in fact heretics of another sort—the nationalists, ruralists, and culturalists. For the ruralists he has nothing but abuse. Their "ideological position is dangerous in that it objectively contains an attempt to bring back the past, to frighten people with 'the evil spirit of screeching iron,' the 'industrial dance,' which allegedly kills national originality." He finds the search for morality "independent of any other fact than that it is moral, faith in that eternal self-renewing, internal spiritual quality which in Russian cultural tradition is always called conscience," totally opposed to Leninism and thus contemptible. The ruralists' and culturalists' search for the roots of their culture is unacceptable: "for thusly an admiration for the patriarchal mode of life and for *Domostroi* morals as the basic national value is cultivated. Naturally, given this formulation of the question, socialism and those changes that it has introduced into our life over the last half-century, the social practice of Soviet society forming communist morality, look like artificially introduced innovations, like a scarcely justifiable breaking up of the customary way of life."

Iakovlev is, of course, "objective" in his denunciations of the ruralist deviations: he also, but briefly, attacks those who hold popular traditions in disregard. But then it's back to the nationalists for Dr. Iakovlev. Those who seek to preserve churches, mosques, and synagogues should not forget that "beneath the vaults of places of worship the bayonets of the punitive expeditions that crushed the first Russian revolution were blessed, that from a church pulpit Lev Tolstoy was anathematized [!], that with the ringing of church bells the executioner Kutepov, the hangman Denikin, the Petliura band were greeted." Yes, keep a few of the best examples of the old architecture, but down with the rest—for churches, synagogues, and mosques were centers of oppression and still might infect the unwary population today.

Iakovlev also wants *Molodaia gvardiia* to cease its portrayal of Rozanov

2. "Vysokii dolg masterov kul'tury" ("The Lofty Duty of Experts of Culture"), *Pravda*, Nov. 30, 1972.

3. A. Iakovlev, "Protiv antiistorizma," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Nov. 15, 1972.

and Leontiev as positive figures. He demands the unmasking of the Slavophiles as the reactionaries he claims they inevitably were, and he heaps abuse on Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* for its anti-Communist, "Vekhi" sympathies. Iakovlev goes on, but lest one miss his intentions he concludes: "As concerns the past, we value before all else the genuinely democratic, revolutionary elements and traditions in the history of our nation. We see a moral example not in the 'lives of the saints' nor in the embellished biographies of tsars and khans, but in the revolutionary deeds of the fighters for the people's happiness. We value all that the genius, mind, and labor of the people have created in the course of centuries, but today's socialist actuality brings out our particular pride."

It is clear from Dr. Iakovlev's writings that, for a variety of reasons, large and ever-increasing numbers of Soviet people disagree with his priorities and his interpretation of both Soviet reality and the role of the national heritage in fulfilling the aspirations of the various Soviet peoples. This is an essential part of what Kline, Bird, and I have been trying to point out.