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## ***National and Personal Renewal and Resurrection: Dostoevsky and Asia***

In 1881, right before his death, in the last numbers of *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevsky wrote about the need to develop Russia's Asian empire in Siberia.<sup>1</sup> Recently, a good deal has been made of Dostoevsky's views on Asia, as well as on Europe, by the Russian diplomatic corps, with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov often mentioning Dostoevsky in his speeches. Dana Rice writes that with respect to Asia "the fact that the current Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov regularly cites Dostoevsky in his speeches is significant. Dostoevsky's analysis of Russian identity remains critical for understanding Russia's engagement of Eurasia today".<sup>2</sup> But the truth is that in his journalism Dostoevsky wrote very little about Asia – and virtually all of it in the last issue of *The Diary of a Writer*. Even Milan Hauner's insightful book, *What is Asia to Us*, which takes its title from Dostoevsky's article byline, concerns itself mostly with Soviet policy toward Russian Eurasia and does not attempt to engage Dostoevsky's actual views in the article.<sup>3</sup> In the abridged version of Kenneth Lantz's excellent translation of *The Diary of a Writer*, the editor, Saul Morson, states that many sections and passages, especially those dealing with foreign policy, "were easy [to omit] because it is hard to imagine they could interest anyone".<sup>4</sup> About eight-five percent of the *Diary* article on Asia was cut.<sup>5</sup> Some of those who have dealt with the *Diary* article on Asia have used it

- 1 See the selections devoted to Asia in *IICC* 27; 32-40. Translations are from F.M. DOSTOEVSKY, *The Diary of a Writer*, trans. Boris Brasol (New York: Braziller, 1954), pp. 1043-1052. Hereafter the Russian citations will follow the English citations in text as will the Russian citations for the translations of Dostoevsky's other quoted works.
- 2 Dana RICE, "The Dream to 'Go to Asia as Masters': What Dostoevsky Can Teach Us About the Greater Eurasian Partnership", *Australian Outlook*, 9, Jan. 2020, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian-outlook/about/>
- 3 Milan HAUNER, *What is Asia to Us: Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (London: Hyman, 1990).
- 4 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Gary Saul Morson, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), p. lxi.
- 5 In her section on East Asia in Russian thought and literature from the 1830s to the 1890s, Susanna SOOJUNG LIM ("Between Spiritual Self and Other: Vladimir Solov'ev and the

to castigate Dostoevsky's extreme political views. Kalpana Sahni, for example, argues that the article just underscores Dostoevsky's orientalism, "religious fanaticism, chauvinistic nationalism, and an unfounded hatred of the Orient",<sup>6</sup> unfavorably comparing Dostoevsky's views with those of the more universalist Tolstoy. In 1925, Clarence Augustus Manning, by contrast, argued that, at least among prominent Russian writers, Dostoevsky was introducing a new and salutary view by his seeming turn away from Europe toward Asia.<sup>7</sup>

To get a better understanding of Dostoevsky's position on Asia we first need do a much more thorough analysis of the *Diary* article itself, so that we can determine what Dostoevsky thinks Russia's goals in Asia should be, how they might be achieved, and most important, how they offer Russia the possibility of promoting Dostoevsky's own Russian agenda: fulfilling its Christian mission, asserting its national identity, reviving its spirit, and enhancing its economic and political position in its rivalry with Europe. I hope to show that Dostoevsky's article on Asia is much less of a maximalist declaration, as some have argued, and more of a tentative exploration of the possibilities that Asia *might* offer Russia in fulfilling its agenda as Dostoevsky's conceived it. There is, as it were, an internal dialogue going in these *Diary* articles, with Dostoevsky taking strong pro-Asian positions but then revealing, implicitly, if not explicitly, reservations about an aggressive policy in Asia, a sort of explicit pro and an implicit contra. It is also necessary to view Dostoevsky's article in a larger context: that is, in the context of his other writings about Asia, for although Dostoevsky rarely mentions Eurasia in other places in *The Diary*, he lived in Siberia for four years as a prisoner in a forced-labor camp in Omsk, followed by six years as a soldier in a line-battalion in Semipalatinsk. He wrote a number of letters after his release from prison that deal with his prison experience and his life in Semipalatinsk (present day Saley). In 1860 he published a novel based on his prison experiences, *Notes from the House of the Dead*. In the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment* (1866), the narrator recounts the first year of his hero (Raskolnikov) in a Siberian prison camp, and in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80), Dmitry Karamazov, at novel's end, is sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in Siberia for a murder that he did not commit. I hope to show to what extent the portrayal of Siberia in Dostoevsky's letters and novels supports, or undercuts,

Question of East Asia", *Slavic Review*, 67 (2), 2008, pp. 321-341) does not even mention Dostoevsky.

6 Kalpana SAHNI, "F. Dostoevsky's Views on the East", *Social Scientist*, vol. 14, n. 7 (1986), p. 43.

7 Clarence Augustus MANNING, "Dostoyevsky and Scythism", *The Sewanee Review* vol. 33, n. 2 (1925), pp. 139-140.

the Asian agenda promulgated in *The Diary*, given that they are all tied to one of Dostoevsky's most recurring concerns and themes: the idea of personal and national renewal, redemption, and resurrection from the dead.

### *The Diary Article of 1881*

#### *1. Europe: Disillusionment and Frustration*

The *Diary* article reveals that the underlying reason for Dostoevsky's turn to Asia is his disillusionment with, and frustration over, European policy toward Russia.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, it reprises Dostoevsky's well-known love-hate relationship with Europe that we see so often in his journalism, letters, and fiction. He can still say, even here, that Europe is still "a land of holy miracles", that it "is our second mother [*vtoraia mat' nasha*]" that we have taken much from her; "we shall again take, and we shall not wish to be ungrateful to her" (1048; *ITCC* 27; 36). But there is a great deal more antagonism than affection.<sup>9</sup> Dostoevsky argues that since Peter the Great, Russians have tried to become Europeans, but "the Europeans have never accepted us as Europeans no matter how much we have tried, preferring to view us as Asiatics. Further, Europeans have been callously ungrateful given that Russia has often sacrificed its own inter-

8 We are dealing here with Dostoevsky's opinions not political realities. Russia, with surges and lulls, pursued an expansionist policy toward Eurasia throughout most of the nineteenth century. Numerous military expeditions were undertaken, towns were established, administrative districts were drawn up and staffed, and attempts at increasing the Russian population in pacified areas were made. It was this expansionist policy that often put her in conflict with England, the other expanding empire during this period, especially with regard to Afghanistan and India, with England seeing Russian expansion in Asia as a direct threat to her vital interests in India. See, for example, the sections devoted to the nineteenth century in Andrei LOBANOV-ROSTOVSKY's *Russia and Asia* (Ann Arbor: Wahr, 1951), originally published in 1933. For a more recent attempt at the same subject see Chris MILLER, *We Shall Be Masters: Russian Pivots to East Asia from Peter the Great to Putin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021).

9 "A Russian who has become a real European cannot but become at one and the same time a natural enemy of Russia [*estestvennym vragom Rossii*] [...]. Under no circumstance can a Russian be converted into a real European as long as he remains the least bit Russian" (357; *ITCC* 23; 43). For Dostoevsky, real Europeans are socialists and atheists and therefore cannot be real Russians. Of course, Dostoevsky was not advocating imprisoning, deporting, or even censuring "real" Europeans. He even pleaded leniency for revolutionaries who committed crimes against tsarist officials. But it is easy to see how many of his statements, reflective of his maximalist style, can be easily exploited for political purposes.

ests for the sake of Europe". Russia, Dostoevsky maintains, has repeatedly assured Europe "that we were created solely for the purpose of serving her and making her happy [*chto my sozdany lish', chtob sluzhit' Evrope i sdelat' ee schastlivoiu*], 1045; *ICC* 27; 33)". After all did Russia not defeat Napoleon and save Europe from tyranny? Russia could have chosen to make a peace treaty with Napoleon, which would have been in its own interest. But it is not Europe's perceived disdain for, and ingratitude to, Russia that upsets Dostoevsky most, it is Europe's interference and thwarting of Russia's political and Christian mission in the Near East: that is, the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. Russia had suffered a humiliating defeat in 1856 in the Crimean war waged against Turkey, which, according to Dostoevsky, could not have been victorious without significant aid from Great Britain and France. Even worse, in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-78, in which Russia was much more successful militarily, she was frustrated in the end by the collusion of European powers, actively working in concert to thwart Russia from attaining her most important goals, especially its Christian and national mission, symbolized by the capturing of Constantinople. Hauner writes, "This unexpected involvement of Russia's major writer represented a serious challenge to the traditional obsession of the Russian public supported by the press and the Pan-Slavists, with the fate of their dream of seizing Constantinople. What Dostoevsky was proposing represented nothing less than a redirection of Russia's traditional imperial dream, associated with the resolution of the Eastern Question, away from the Balkans, away from the deceitful European powers that robbed Russia of her fruits of victory after the last Balkan war, toward a new civilizing mission in 'our Asiatic Russia'".<sup>10</sup>

Another important factor that Dostoevsky cites to support his turn to Asia, one that is indirectly related to European political malfeasance, is the victory at Geok-Tepe of Russian military forces led by General D. Skobelev on 12 January 1881. The victory came on the heels of several recent military setbacks, in particular that of General Lazarev's failure in 1879 to capture the fort at Geok Tepe. Dostoevsky begins the article on Asia celebrating the Russian triumph. "Geok-Tepe is captured. The Turkomans are defeated, and although they are not yet quite pacified, our victory is indubitable. Society and the press are jubilant" (1043; *ICC* 27; 32). He closes the article, as he began, with a shout out for the Russian success in Eurasia. "Therefore, let me exclaim once more: 'Long

10 HAUNER, p. 24. As LOBANOV-ROSTOVSKY (*Russia and Asia*, p. 147) points out, this focusing on Asia was not something new for Russia in the nineteenth-century. It happened at the end of Crimean War as well. "There was nothing surprising in this: it becomes a law in Russian history that every time Russia finds herself checked in Europe, she intensifies her drive in Asia".

live the Geok Tepe victory! Long live Skobelev and his good soldiers! Eternal memory to those valiant knights who 'were eliminated from the rolls'. We shall record them on our rolls" (1052; *ITCC* 27; 40). The implicit argument Dostoevsky is making is that Russia can profit from her victories in Asia, as she could not in the Balkans, because there will be no European interference. Everything is open in Asia now for exploitation. The locus for Russia's national, if not Christian, mission should shift – or at least for now.

As we shall see, it is not only that the arguments Dostoevsky gives for turning to Asia are not particularly convincing but he himself seems to harbor doubts about the viability of Asia as a new locus for the Russian mission. First, almost three quarters of the article about Asia is devoted to a discussion of Europe, especially what Dostoevsky perceived to be her perfidy in the Near East. And at the end of the article, Dostoevsky hears a voice calling him back to the old question of Constantinople. Should not, he implies, our priority still be Constantinople?<sup>11</sup> For Dostoevsky it is never a question of *if* Russia takes Constantinople, he assumes it will, the question is always *when* it will take Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> He makes it clear here that Russia's main national and Christian mission still lies in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire, not Eurasia. The turn to Asia is, in effect, a policy of distraction. Since we, Dostoevsky states, cannot now make any progress on the Eastern Question as long as Germany and Austria are allied, we must pretend that we do not intend to meddle in Euro-

11 The very last lines, which end with the Russian victory at Geok-Tepe, seem almost a tack-on, as though Dostoevsky realizes that he has forgotten his main subject, Asia, and needs to get back to it. Dostoevsky is fixed on the idea that Constantinople "must be ours". There are several long sections in *The Diary of a Writer* devoted to the Russian taking of Constantinople as the most logical conclusion of the "Eastern Question".

12 In several articles that Dostoevsky wrote about the Eastern Question in *The Diary of a Writer*, he advocated for Russian hegemony over the Slavic world, not so much in the interest of Russia, he asserts, but in the interest of the Slavic peoples and with the goal of promoting the true religion, Eastern Orthodoxy, especially its Russian instantiation. It was only in the Russian common people (*narod*) that "Christ's truth" had been preserved, for "the true image of Christ [...] had dimmed in all other religions and in all other nations" (360; *ITCC* 23; 46). These national and religious goals, Dostoevsky insists, could be achieved only with the taking of Constantinople – and other adjacent territories. "Constantinople must be ours, conquered by us, the Russians, from the Turks, and it must remain ours forever. It must belong to us alone; and when we possess it, of course, we can admit all the Slavs and whomever we like, and do so, moreover, on the broadest possible terms; but this will not be a federative possession of the city together with the Slavs. [...] Russia will possess only Constantinople and the essential territory around it, as well as the Bosphorus and the Straits; she will maintain troops, fortifications, and a fleet there; and so it should remain for a long, long time (904; *ITCC* 26; 83-84).

pean affairs (“*Ved’ tol’ko by my vid pokazali, chto v Evropu stol’ vmeshivat’sia, kak prezhde, my uzhe ne zhelaem*” – *IICC* 27; 39), that our new interest is Asia. When Germany and Austria see our turn to Asia they will begin to quarrel and exacerbate the discord roiling the affairs of European nations. Then “the Eastern Question will at once be resolved [*razom pokonchit’ i vostochnyi vopros*]” (1050; *IICC* 27; 39). All we have to do is “choose the opportune moment to strike [*vybrav mgnovenie*]” (1052; *IICC* 27; 39) Yes, the victories in Asia are necessary, Dostoevsky implies, to stem possible British incursions into Central Asia, but Asia is primarily a diversion, a deception, a way of misleading European nations regarding Russia’s abiding interests in the Balkans.

## 2. *Justification.*

But even if the main reason for turning to Asia is to take a strategic pause before pursuing at a later date Russia’s primary national and Christian mission, how can Dostoevsky justify the turn to Asia for other reasons of national interest: that is, can a case be made for Asia in and of itself. Dostoevsky attempts to answer this question in the second section of the article, arguing against an imaginary interlocutor, who expresses commonly held views in the Russian press skeptical of the economic and political benefits of a turn toward Eurasia and away from Russia proper.<sup>13</sup> But even before he can address the benefits of exploiting Asia and the possibility of seeking a national mission in Asia, he seems to think it necessary to justify Russia’s right to be in Asia in the first place. If the Russians are Europeans, the most European of Europeans, as Dostoevsky’s implies – one need only look, he says, to Russia’s national poet, Pushkin – what gives them the right to occupy and exploit Eurasian lands and wealth. The answer for Russians is not to deny that they are Europeans, even primarily Europeans, but to accept the fact that they are also Asians, to acknowledge their Asianness, to embrace it and no longer be ashamed of it.

Russia is not only in Europe but also in Asia; because the Russian is not only a European but also an Asiatic. [...] This erroneous fright of ours, this mistaken view of ourselves solely as Europeans, and not Asiatics – which we have never ceased to be – this shame and this faulty opinion have cost us a good deal in the course of the last two centuries, and the price we have had to pay has consisted

13 For a summary of the skeptical opinions in the press about a turn to Asia to which Dostoevsky is referring, see the notes in the Academy edition: *IICC* 27; 14.

of the loss of our spiritual independence, of our unsuccessful policies in Europe, and finally of money – God only knows how much money – which we spent in order to prove to Europe that we were Europeans and not Asiatics (1044-1045; *ICC* 27; 33).

In other words, Eurasia is ours to develop and exploit, because it is ours; we belong there, as much as we belong in Europe.

Like most other Russian Eurasian expansionists, Dostoevsky views the turn to Asia as a form of colonization, even a Russian form of American “manifest destiny”. Throughout the nineteenth Russian historians, philosophers, and geographers had been thinking about Russia’s role in Asia, proposing radically different perspectives and programs, ranging from exploitation and domination by a superior race – the Russians – to the creation of a new superior interracial Russian-Asian entity.<sup>14</sup> Dostoevsky does not see Asia in racist terms. Yes, there remain some Asians who still need to be subjugated to the tsar, or recognized by the tsar as their sovereign, but for the most part Asia is sort of an empty space that is waiting to be occupied by those who can best exploit it. Dostoevsky does not compare Russia’s eastern expansion to America’s western expansion, but to the European discovery of America, the opening of a new world that transformed the West economically and spiritually. “When we turn to Asia, with our new vision of her, in Russia there may occur something akin to what happened in Europe when America was discovered. Since, in truth, to us Asia is like the then undiscovered America. With our aspiration for Asia, our spirit and forces will be regenerated [*vozrodit’sia*]” (1048; *ICC* 27; 36) The colonization experience, he argues, promises to have the same effect on Russia as it had on Europe, especially western Europe. Dostoevsky of course was unaware, as were almost all at the time, that the economic transformation of Europe came about, in large part, through the importation of slave labor to the New World, not because of European genius.<sup>15</sup>

14 For discussion of nineteenth-century theories of expansion into and exploration of Eurasia, see, for example, HAUNER; SAHNI; SOOJUNG LIM; David SCHIMMELPENNICK VAN DER OYE, “The East”, in William LEATHERBARROW and Derek OFFORD (eds.), *A History of Russian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

15 The close relationship between the rise of the West and slavery was first explored in depth by Eric WILLIAMS’ landmark work, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). The role of slavery in the rise of the west has been gaining increasing acceptance as of late. For one of latest works establishing the connection, see Padraic S. SCANLAN, *Slave Empire: How Slavery Built Modern Britain* (London: Robinson, 2021).

### 3. *Prospects in Eurasia: Development, Settlement, and Mission*

But even if the end strategy for Russia is Constantinople, even if Russians, being Asians as well as Europeans, are justified in turning to Asia, what can Russia actually accomplish in Siberia and how? Dostoevsky discusses three integrally related areas of Asian potential: the economic benefits deriving from Siberia's natural resources; Siberia as an outlet for Russia's surplus population; and the development of a Russian idea. The economic benefits are the easiest to conceptualize. Colonization of Eurasia will, he asserts, lead, as elsewhere, to the exploitation of its immense natural resources. Great riches are "concealed in the bosom of these boundless lands". Eurasia contains abundant resources of "metals and minerals", it has "innumerable coal fields" (1049; *IICC* 27; 37). It has potential for producing bountiful grain harvests. All this will foster new industries, attract new settlers, and contribute to the formulation of a new Russian idea.

Again, Dostoevsky is talking about potential and a distant future, just as he argued for another chance at taking Constantinople at some propitious future date. He is aspirational and hopeful but has difficulty answering the doubters of a Russian move into Eurasia. Although Dostoevsky talks about the boundless wealth in Asia that is ready to be exploited, he concedes that Russia has failed to spend money on developing Asia in the past, and it seems to have no intentions of spending any now. And without railroads there is no way of accessing all that wealth. And why has that been so? Unfortunately because Russians are not as enterprising as Americans and Englishmen.<sup>16</sup>

Oh, if instead of us Englishmen or Americans inhabited Russia, they would show you what losses mean. They would certainly discover our America! [...] Oh, they would get at everything – metals and minerals, innumerable coal fields; they would find and discover everything – and they would know how to use these materials. They would summon science to their aid; they would compel the earth to yield fifty grains to one, that same earth about which we here still think that it is nothing but a steppe naked as our palm (1049; *IICC* 27; 37).

<sup>16</sup> The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway began only in 1891, but not in an effort to develop Siberia, but as a response to the possibility that China might build a railway system herself. See, SOOJUNG LIM, p. 331; Steven MARKS, *The Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 35-37.



But Dostoevsky argues that you need not only railroads and enterprising minds to develop the wealth of Eurasia, you need Russians to settle there. Far from fearing that Russia will be depopulated by developing Eurasia, as some critics of the Eurasian experiment are purportedly arguing, it will actually be difficult to attract Russians to leave Russia for Eurasia. Dostoevsky suggests a population reservoir to overcome this impediment to Eurasian development: Russian misfits. Those who have been unable to establish themselves in Russia proper are the ideal candidates of doing something different in a new environment. As he contends, “it often happens that an incapable man in one place is resurrected [*voskresaeť*] almost as a genius in another place. This is also often observed in European colonies” (1049; *ITCC* 27; 37).

Our longing for Asia, should it ever arise among us [*esli b tol'ko ono zarodilos' mezh nami*], would, in addition, serve as an outlet to many a restless mind, to those seized with anguish, to the lazy, to those who have grown tired of doing nothing. Give an efflux to water, and mustiness and stench will disappear. Once they are drawn into work, they will not feel bored; they will all be regenerated [*vozdidsia*]. [...] Wherever a “Russ” settles in Asia, the land will forthwith become Russian land. A new Russia will arise which in due time will regenerate and resurrect the old one [*by vozrodila i voskresila*] and will show the latter the road which she has to follow (1049-1050; *ITCC* 27; 37-38).

But most important, without economic development and an influx of population willing to undertake that development it will be virtually impossible to develop a Russian idea, something that at least can, for some time, take the place of Constantinople in the Russian imagination. For Dostoevsky a nation or people without its own idea cannot become an authentic and viable civilization. Right now without Constantinople, Russians are bereft of an inspiring idea and Europeans are not wrong to dismiss Russian accomplishments in the absence of such an idea. Europeans begrudgingly admit that Russians have made some advances in knowledge that have contributed to European scientific endeavors, but they will never believe that it is possible for not only scientists to be born in Russia but even great geniuses. Russians don't yet have Bacons, Newtons, and Aristotles. And they will never have them if they don't become independent, if they do not develop in the future their idea. Until they develop their own idea, they will never be recognized as an equal and they will in fact be inferior. Again the argument for Russia's future accomplishments is dependent on developing its own idea. The hope is that if that is not happening in Russia perhaps it can happen more easily and quickly in

the promised land of Asia, Russia's America. For Russia, he concedes, is still in search of an idea.

But under no circumstance will Europe now believe that not only scientific workers (even though very talented) may be born in Russia, but men of genius, leaders of mankind, such as a Bacon, Kant, or Aristotle. This they will never believe, since they do not believe in our civilization, while, as yet, they do not know our future idea. In truth, they are right: we shall have no Bacon, no Newton, no Aristotle so long as we fail to stand on our own road and be spiritually independent. The same is true of all other things – of art and industry (1047; *ITCC* 27; 35).

The problem is that the idea that is to be borne is Asia is predicated on aspects of Asian development that are not happening in the present and Dostoevsky does not see them as probable in the near future. Russians are not flocking to Eurasia and no significant development is occurring there. The Russian idea, however, cannot be born there without Russians nor without economic development. Moreover, Dostoevsky has no notion what that idea might be. Not knowing what that idea might be or asserting that it can only be determined when Eurasia is already a going concern, just emphasizes the problem with relying on Asia to determine Russia's future direction. For so many years Dostoevsky knew Russia's national, spiritual, and religious mission was: to free the Orthodox Christians under Turkish rule, capture Constantinople, and establish an Orthodox empire in place of the Ottoman empire under the hegemony of Russia. In Eurasia, there are no Christians in bondage who must be liberated, there is no Constantinople to be seized, and Russian hegemony, with a few exceptions in Central Asia, had already been established in most of Eurasia, in some cases, centuries earlier. Yes, Russian has just won a victory in Turkestan against indigenous forces – who had no support from French, the British, and the Turks – but it is a victory with no prize comparable to Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> It is not going to open up Asia to anything resembling Dostoevsky's agenda, especially given Dostoevsky's own reservations of how difficult it was probably going to be to exploit Eurasia, move significant Russian population there, and to create an idea as meaningful as that of Constantinople.

Dostoevsky's lack of enthusiasm about Eurasia, to be sure, reflects his disillusionment with the results of the Russo-Turkish War and the difficulty of garnering immediate positive rewards from Eurasia. But this is partly because Dos-

17 Fear of British expansion in Central Asia might be the closest in importance.

toevsky had never seen Eurasia as a pressing issue before 1881. As we have seen, this was not for a lack of interest in Eurasia during the nineteenth century by many historians, political thinkers, and geographers. This lack of interest, or even distaste, is partly attributable to Dostoevsky's actual experiences in Eurasia, which are reflected in his letters from Siberia to friends and relatives and then in several of his major novels. When in Siberia, Dostoevsky's main goal and hope was to get out. There is more of a *stremlenie na zapad* than a *stremlenie na vostok*, a desire to get back to Russia as soon as possible. His characters go there only when, like himself, they are compelled, usually by prison sentences.

### *Prison and Military Service in Asia*

Before examining how Dostoevsky re-imagined Siberia in his fiction and semi-autobiographical memoir *Notes from the House of the Dead*, it is worthwhile looking at what Dostoevsky's thought of Asia when he actually lived there, four years in the prison camp at Omsk and over five years in Semipalatinsk (present Semey) then a small town of about 15,000 inhabitants in what is now the eastern part of Kazakhstan, about 400 miles south of Omsk. We have no extant letters from Dostoevsky during the four years of his imprisonment, but during the time he lived in Semipalatinsk (from February 1854 to 18 August 1859, when Dostoevsky's arrived in Tver, he wrote about 65 letters, most of them to his brother, Mikhail. In his first letters, he describes his imprisonment as four years in hell. Along with the other prisoners of the nobility, he was tormented by his "enemies", the prisoners of the common people. The conditions in the buildings were abominable, the work was done in the worst of conditions, and he was never alone. What he describes to his brother Mikhail in detail, he sums up in his letter to his younger brother Andrei (6 November 1854): "And those four years I consider a time during which I was buried alive and locked up in a coffin. I can't even tell you what a horrible time that was. It was inexpressible, unending suffering, because every hour, every minute weighed on my soul like a stone".<sup>18</sup> In addition, Dostoevsky experienced his first epileptic attacks in prison. As later in his life, during his stay in Semipalatinsk, Dostoevsky was also in desperate need of money. In many of his letters we find him begging for funds or loans. But what he wants most of all is to leave Siberia, to get permission to go to Russia – to Petersburg if possible, but at least to Mos-

18 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Complete Letters*, ed. and tr. David Lowe and Ronald Meyer (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1988), 1:201; *IICC* 28; 181. Further citations from this English translation will appear in text followed as above by the citations from the Russian academy edition.

cow. He continually tells his brother Mikhail “that the very best thing for me is to get to Russia” (1:227; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 203).<sup>19</sup>

Dostoevsky did not hate Semipalatinsk or Russian Asia. After his release from prison, he had a circle of friends and acquaintances – former prisoners, civilians, and military personnel – who sustained him mentally and financially, but he did not like it either. There were many good reasons for wanting to leave and as soon as possible. Dostoevsky wanted to be back at the center of Russian culture, to seek help from doctors in either Moscow or Petersburg to treat his worsening epilepsy, to be close to his family and friends, and to be in contact with those who could promote his publishing career, on which his livelihood depended. After 1856, in addition to himself, he had a wife and a step-son to support. Dostoevsky often complains in his letters about life in Semipalatinsk and other communities in the area. There is little family life. Most of the inhabitants are transitory residents, mostly government officials and military personnel. To an unknown correspondent, on 22 December 1856, he writes: “We have no home with families, or very few. A lot of single people have come here. Everyone, starting with the governor, is a bachelor. And only familial society gives a city a face. [...] The bachelor circle eternally and everywhere lives the same way” (1:294; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 264). Siberia is not home, he writes to his sister Mar’ia Ivanovna on 22 December 1856.

And God grant that I soon visit Russia. There in Russia, one feels at home [*kak by doma*]. Everything there is established, settled. While the character of our little Siberian towns is a sudden influx of society, the arrival of petty officials and later, at the first change in power, all of this disappears as quickly as it appeared, making room for others (1:295; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 265).

On 7 Sept 1857, he writes to Varvara Karepina: “But here (in Semipalatinsk), with our doctors, there’s no way to be treated. In Moscow, despite my illness, I hope to support myself. And renew my soul, Siberia is crushing me [*davit menia Sibir*]” (1:318; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 287). He complains to his brother: “To live continually in Semipalatinsk, intensifying my illness and neglecting it, in my opinion, is a sin” (1:319; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 288). Again to his brother: “By this time my retirement will come through and I don’t want to spend [*sidet*] an one extra day in Semipalatinsk” (1:355; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 319-320).<sup>20</sup> When he finally leaves Asia, crossing the Ural, he thanks God for bringing him to see the Promised Land.

19 See, for example, the letter of January 13-18 (1:227; *ICC* 28<sub>1</sub>; 203).

20 Like many areas in central Asia, towns began to grow most substantially with the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad late in the nineteenth century.

He writes A. Geibovich, the commandant of the Omsk fortress:

One fine evening, about 5 p.m., wandering in the spurs of the Urals, in the middle of the forest, we finally came upon the border between Europe and Asia. A marvelous column with inscriptions has been placed there, and beside it a disabled veteran lives in a hut. We got out of the carriage and I crossed myself to thank God for having finally allowed me to see the Promised land [*chto prevel nakonets gospod' uvidat' obetannuiu zemliu*]. Then your wicker flask was brought out, filled with bitter orange-blossom (Schreiter's recipe), and we drank with the veteran to our parting with Asia [*na proshchaniie s Aziei*] (1:405; *ITCC* 28; 361-362).

At this time, in 1859, crossing the border is Dostoevsky's Exodus. Asia is Egypt (the land of imprisonment and forced military service) and Russia the promised land, which he had been forbidden to enter for ten years.

Not only was Dostoevsky intent on leaving Asia behind, but on occasion would advise his friends that he had made there to do the same. For example, in the same letter to Geibovich, Dostoevsky advises his friend to leave Siberia and move to Russia. "You surely remember, Artemy Ivanovich, how I always wished you to move to Russia, to a better position for the education of your dear children, and being devoted to you with all my heart, with sadness told you that you were not in the right place [*ne na svoem meste*], were contenting yourself with a paltry salary and were losing your life [*teriaete zhizn' svoiu*], but meanwhile you were working, fussing with things, putting up with job worries and troubles and so forth" (1:407; *ITCC* 28; 364).

So the ten years Dostoevsky lived in Siberia were years of great suffering and struggle, of forced labor and military service. It was a place he wanted to leave, for many reasons, and as fast as possible. It was not Russia, but a distant Russian colony. Asia was his Egypt. When he entered Russia, the promised land, he crossed himself and thanked God. Yes, there are a few hints in the letters this time soon after his release that he had changed, at least with regard to some of his convictions and the way he viewed those of his previous actions that led to his sentence, but we see very little of that especially in the last five years of letters, which show him preoccupied, for understandable reasons, with all the worries of daily life and his future prospects for moving back to Russia and establishing himself in the Russian literary world.

*Semi-autobiography and Fiction*  
*Notes from the House of the Dead*

In Dostoevsky's artistic reconstructions of his experiences in prison camp, especially in *Notes from the House of the Dead* and the story in *The Diary of a Writer*, *The Peasant Marei*, Siberia provides the site in which the initial stages of his renewal, regeneration, and resurrection from the dead takes place, a place where he was able to rethink and reevaluate his life in the camp and to appreciate the great potential of the Russian people. Understanding that these are purposeful reconstructions, Joseph Frank, nevertheless supports Dostoevsky's assertions, with the proviso, that we are dealing here not so much with a religious conversion, but a belief in the essential goodness of the Russian people.<sup>21</sup> Dostoevsky completed *Notes from the House of the Dead* when he was already a committed *pochvennik*, a man of soil, a believer in the potential of the Russian people (*narod*), and, later, of their Christ. His beliefs in the Russian people only became stronger with time. The question that confronts us here with regard to Dostoevsky and Asia is about the existence of any evidence, other than from his fiction and carefully tailored memoirs, that Dostoevsky actually experienced such a conversion, or at least a personal rebirth and regeneration, during his stay in Siberia? And even if he did, did Siberia in fact have anything to do with it? Would he not have experienced the same renewal if the prison camp had been west of the Urals?

Let's leave the people, the *narod*, aside for the moment, since they do not figure at all in his article on Asia in *The Diary of a Writer*. Those who assert Dostoevsky's rebirth point to several passages in *Notes from the House of the Dead*.

The years that followed have somehow been erased from my memory. I am convinced that I have forgotten many of the things that happened. [...] I remember those long, tedious days as being monotonous as the dripping of water from the roof after rain. I remember that it was only a passionate desire for resurrection, for renewal, for a new life [*strastnoe zhelanie vospresen'ia, obnovlenia, novoi zhizni*] that strengthened my will to wait and hope. [...] Inwardly alone, I reviewed the whole of my past life, turned everything over in my mind, right down to the last detail, weighted up my past, imposed an inexorable and severe judgement on myself, and sometimes even blessed fate for

21 See Joseph FRANK, "The Peasant Marei", in *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 116-127.

having sent me such isolation, without which neither this self-judgement nor this stern review of my past life would have been possible. [...] I eagerly awaited my freedom. I called for it to come quickly; I desired to put myself to the test again in a new struggle.<sup>22</sup>

And of course, the last lines of the novel: “Freedom, new life, resurrection from the dead! A glorious moment! [*svoboda, novaia zhizn', voskresen'e iz mertvykh. Eka slavnaiia minuta!*]” (357; *ITCC* 4; 232). But one cannot assert this spiritual and mental renewal with considerable reservations. The novel begins with an introduction (*vvedenie*) which undercuts the renewal. We learn that after his release from prison that none of the narrator’s hopes were realized. Extremely shy and avoiding personal contact whenever possible, he had in effect become a recluse. He seems never to have recovered from his terrible prison experience, dying three years after his release from prison. One can regard the introduction as a ruse, something necessary to overcome potential objections of the censor. The narrator we are told in the introduction is not a political prisoner but an uxoricide. It is also standard in an introduction of this type for an editor to have found the writings of a deceased author. Dostoevsky was a political prisoner who was alive and well in 1860. But Dostoevsky certainly could have written an introduction in which one of the central points of the narrative – the regeneration of the narrator – was not completely quashed. But he did not. Gorianchikov fails to thrive in a Siberian town which the editor describes in the most positive terms.

It is possible to be extremely happy in Siberia. [...] The climate is an excellent one; there are a great many extremely rich and hospitable merchants. [...] The young ladies bloom like roses and are moral to the very limits of virtue. [...] Generally speaking, a blessed land. All one needs is to know how to make use of it. In Siberia they know how to make use of it. It was in one of these lively, self-satisfied towns, one with the most endearing inhabitants, whose memory will remain imprinted on my heart forever, that I met Aleksandr Petrovich Gorianchikov (22-33; *ITCC* 4; 5-6).

Dostoevsky, who hardly ever has anything positive to say about any of the Siberian towns which he visited and in which he lived (Semipalatinsk) for about five and a half years after his prison release, has the editor heap praise on

22. Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Notes from the House of the Dead*, tr. David McDuff (London: Penguin, 1983), pp. 339-340; *ITCC* 4; 220.

the Siberian town in which Gorianchikov spent his last three years, thereby emphasizing the completely inability of Gorianchikov to survive even under the best of conditions: that is, whether others had flourished.

But even if one grants, despite the introduction, that the beginnings of regeneration or renewal occurred in the prison camp and there was no setback after release, it is doubtful that Siberia had anything to do with it, given Dostoevsky's almost uniformly negative statements about Siberia in the period of exile after his release from prison. If regeneration took place in prison, it could have taken place in a similar prison west of the Urals. Further, the prisoners were not primarily Siberian peasants, most of the inmates in fact were from European Russia just like Dostoevsky. What is more, Dostoevsky's life in prison was confined primarily to the barracks and the courtyard of the prison. Occasionally prisoners were permitted to go to the bathhouse and to church. Dostoevsky did not experience anything particularly Siberian in prison, not even the cold. The most extreme cold Dostoevsky endured was actually in European Russia on the way to the prison when he and his fellow prisoners got caught in a snowstorm with temperatures below 40 degrees centigrade. If there was even the first step of a resurrection from the dead, it was not Siberia per se that made it possible.

### *Crime and Punishment*

In the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, we learn that the hero, Raskolnikov has been sentenced to eight years of hard labor in a prison camp in Siberia for killing a pawnbroker and her half-sister. Raskolnikov could easily have been sentenced to a much longer sentence, but extenuating circumstances brought up at his trial led to what might be considered a minimum sentence considering the seriousness of the crime. In the first few months in prison, Raskolnikov's pride, disdain for his fellow prisoners, and belief that he had not done anything wrong – except, that is, for making a stupid blunder – are stronger than ever. Like the narrator at the beginning of his experience in *Notes from the House of the Dead*, Raskolnikov is isolated and loathes his fellow prisoners, a feeling which they reciprocate. But as a result of the constant presence of Sonia, who has followed him to Siberia, and repeated nightmares in which the human race almost destroys itself out of pride, he experiences, we are told, a radical change. He begins to think less and feel more. Life takes the place of dialectics. The new feeling is a continuation, the narrator tells us, of something he experienced when he first confessed to the murder. Like the ending



of *Notes from the House of the Dead*, *Crime and Punishment* ends on a note of hope of a complete resurrection (*voskresenie*) into a new life. In contrast to the *Notes from the House of the Dead*, however, there is nothing in *Crime and Punishment* – like the introduction of *Notes from the House of the Dead* – explicitly undercutting the narrator’s hopes for Raskolnikov’s renewal and rebirth into a new life. As is well known, many commentators have had difficulty accepting Raskolnikov’s resurrection in the epilogue, seeing it as totally out of synch with Raskolnikov’s character<sup>23</sup> in the novel proper. Further, Raskolnikov is not a stand-in for Dostoevsky, he is a new breed of *intelligent*, a man of the 60s, not one to become, like his author, a man of the people and worshiper of Russian autocracy. Under Raskolnikov’s pillow in prison is a copy of the Gospels. He has not once opened it. Raskolnikov’s resurrection would be a new story. All his life Dostoevsky planned to write that new story, of the gradual resurrection of a man from the dead, the sequel to *Crime and Punishment*. He never did. Most important, even in the epilogue, thinking has not yet completely replaced feeling. A thought flashes through his mind. “Could [*razve*] her [Sonia’s] convictions not be my convictions now? Her feelings, her aspirations, at least...”<sup>24</sup> The *razve* in the first sentence may raise expectations. But they are deflated in the following sentence with “at least” [*po krainei mere*]. Here Raskolnikov realizes that Sonia’s convictions can never be his. Perhaps, only her feelings, her aspirations.

But, for the sake of argument, to better assess the role that Siberia may play in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, let us assume that the conclusion of the novel does portray at least the beginnings of Raskolnikov’s rebirth into a new life. Is Raskolnikov’s rebirth predicated on his being in Siberia, such that it could not have occurred elsewhere or could not have occurred as easily elsewhere? In *Notes from the House of the Dead*, the narrator (Goranchikov), makes some friends among the prisoners, although not the majority by any means, and they play a role in the change that he experiences. But in the epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov is just finishing his first year of imprisonment when his turn toward a new life occurs. He is just beginning to speak to the prisoners of the people. To assume that people will play an important role in Raskolnikov’s gradual regeneration and renewal, one needs to read *Notes from the House of the Dead* into *Crime and Punishment*. Again, the vast majority of prisoners, even the Muslims, come from European Russia or the Caucasus. Virtually none are natives of Siberia. In the novel proper, in Russia,

23 Among others, Mochulsky, Rahv, Gibian, and Wasiolek.

24 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Crime and Punishment*, transl. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volkhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 550; *ITCC* 6; 422.

Raskolnikov would have perished if not for Sonia. The same is true in Siberia. For Dostoevsky, Raskolnikov needs to suffer to expiate his crime, to take responsibility for what he has done, before his resurrection can occur. Siberia is the site of that suffering. But the suffering could have again occurred in a prison camp in Russia proper. Razumikhin is planning to move to Siberia with Dunia, Raskolnikov's sister, after he finishes his studies, to help Raskolnikov and Sonia. But that is only a vague plan. The implication is that they will not settle permanently in Siberia but only stay there until Raskolnikov leaves prison and can return to Russia. There is nothing to imply in the epilogue that Raskolnikov and Sonia plan to stay in Siberia. Raskolnikov is hardly the type to live a productive life there. What would he do? He would probably do what Dostoevsky did; that is, return *home* as soon as possible. There is really only one short passage that indicates that Siberia may be indirectly related to Raskolnikov's regeneration. Soon after Easter, at work, Raskolnikov looks over a wide desolate river.

From the high bank a wide view of the surrounding countryside opened out. A barely audible song came from the far bank opposite. There, on the boundless, sun-bathed steppe, nomadic yurts could be seen, like barely visible black specks. There was freedom, there a different people lived, quite unlike those here, there time itself seemed to stop, as if the centuries of Abraham and his flocks had not passed. Raskolnikov sat and stared fixedly, not tearing his eyes away; his thought turned to reverie, to contemplation; he was not thinking of anything, but some anguish troubled and tormented him. Suddenly Sonya was beside him (549; *ICC* 6; 421).

Commentators have basically been stumped about the meaning of those nomadic yurts and the "free" people who lived in them and no less by their association with Abraham and his flocks. George Gibian thought that since these nomads lived on the other side of the river they might be associated with the life-saving power of water.<sup>25</sup> For Meerson the name of Abraham tied Raskolnikov's story with the sacrifice (or binding) of Isaac.<sup>26</sup> Since this observation of

25 George GIBIAN, "Traditional Symbolism in *Crime and Punishment*", in Feodor DOSTOEVSKY, *Crime and Punishment* (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 540-542.

26 Olga MEERSON, "Raskolnikov and the Aqedah (Isaac's Binding)", in Svetlana EVDOKIMOVA and Vladimir GOLSTEIN (eds.), *Dostoevsky Beyond Dostoevsky: Science, Religion, Philosophy* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), pp. 379-393. A possible allusion to a passage from Genesis 13:5 has been noted by Donald FIENE, "Raskolnikov and Abraham: A Further Contribution to a Defense of the Epilogue of *Crime and Punishment*", *Bulletin of*

Raskolnikov's happens after his dreams of the human race almost annihilating itself over contesting ideas, the flocks of Abraham might simply be a reference to a simpler, less contentious way of life ruled by feeling and the rhythms of nature rather than by ratiocination and the abstract categories of the modern city, like Petersburg, where Raskolnikov was first infected with the ideas that led to the murders. The life of the nomads is the antithesis of dialectic. "Instead of dialectic, there was life, and something completely different had to work itself out in his consciousness" (550; *ICC* 6; 421)

The passage, seemingly a fleeting impression, may represent an epiphanic moment for Raskolnikov in his transition from one way of life to another. Early after the murder, Raskolnikov stops on a bridge and looks toward the Neva and sees a magnificent vista dominated by St. Isaac's cathedral. It is an unusually beautiful day for Petersburg, there is hardly a cloud in the sky and the water of the Neva is uncharacteristically blue. Raskolnikov had often stopped there in the past, almost a hundred times, to admire the view and to wonder at the enigma this panorama posed. Looking at the church, Raskolnikov realizes more than ever that he has been cut off from his past. Now all his past life seems alien to him; it is vanishing from his sight as he rises above it never to see it again. The passage marks Raskolnikov's transition from one reality to another. The world that he lived in before now seems irretrievably in the past and lost. In the epilogue, when Raskolnikov looks over the river at the magnificent panorama, at the new reality that it represents – of freedom, simplicity, deratiocination he senses at that moment that he is passing again from one reality to another, from the new world that he entered when he committed the murder to the simpler world that he lived in as child, as he sees in one of his dreams, where he did not think but only felt. Perhaps in that moment of contemplation, when Raskolnikov watches, as it were, the flocks of Abraham, Dostoevsky is alluding to a salvific power belonging to Siberia alone. If this is so – and some might find this an interpretative overreach – it is the sole instance in which Raskolnikov's resurrection into a new life is tied to Siberia.

*the International Dostoevsky Society*, n. 9 (1979), p. 33. A link to John 8:33 has been suggested by George GIBIAN, *Op. cit.*, p. 463. Most articles that deal with the epilogue, say little or nothing about the reference to the flocks of Abraham. See, for example, Steven CASSEDY, "The Formal Problem of the Epilogue in 'Crime and Punishment': The Logic of Tragic and Christian Structures", *Dostoevsky Studies*, vol. 3 (1982), pp. 171-189; David MATUAL, "In Defense of the Epilogue of 'Crime and Punishment'", *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 24, n. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 26-34; Greta MATZNER-GORE, "The Improbable Poetics of *Crime and Punishment*", in Katherine BOWERS and Kate HOLLAND (eds.), *Dostoevsky at 200: The Novel in Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), pp. 159-176.

*The Brothers Karamazov*

Siberia also figures prominently in the fate of Dmitry Karamazov, especially in the days after he is convicted of murdering his father and sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in the mines of Siberia. The question of whether Dmitry Karamazov can be resurrected from the dead in Siberia is discussed by all the characters, including Dmitry himself. But before I get to Dmitry, I would like to address a comic aspect of Siberia in the novel because of its relevance to Dostoevsky's article on Siberia from *The Diary of a Writer*. In the eighth chapter of book eight, entitled "Gold Mines" (*Zolotyie priiski*), Dmitry who has been desperately trying to acquire three thousand rubles – to pay back Katerina Ivanovna so that he can court Grushenka – turns to Madame Khokhlakova. His first two attempts to acquire the money – from Kuz'ma Samsonov, Grushenka's former protector, and Liagavyi, a timber merchant – prove unsuccessful. Desperate, he argues that he could get the money from Madame Khokhlakova precisely because she hates him and will do anything to stop him from courting Katerina Ivanovna. When she tells Dmitry that she can solve his money problems, Dmitry is ecstatic, until she reveals her plan: not to give him money but advice regarding how to acquire the money, and not now but sometime in the future. He should go to the gold mines in Siberia.

What do you think of gold-mines, Dmitri Fyodorovich? [...] You may consider it as good as in your pocket, and not three thousand, but three million, Dmitri Fyodorovich, and in no time! I shall tell you your idea; you will discover mines, make millions, return and become an active figure, and you will stir us, leading us towards the good. Should we leave everything to the Jews? You'll build buildings, start various enterprises. You will help the poor, and they will bless you. This is the age of railroads. Dmitri Fyodorovich. You will become known and indispensable to the Ministry of Finance, which is now in such need.<sup>27</sup>

This comic scene, which, among other things, contains an anti-Semitic slur, is worth comparing with what Dostoevsky wrote in *The Diary of a Writer* just a few years later about Siberian mineral wealth and those who should go there to make their fortune. He argued that "it often happens that an incapable man in one place is resurrected almost as a genius in another place". Asia would be an outlet to restless minds, who "have grown tired of doing nothing. Once

27 Fyodor DOSTOEVSKY, *The Brothers Karamazov*, transl. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Viking, 1991), 385-386; *ITCC* 14; 348-349.

they are drawn into work, they will not feel bored; they will all be regenerated” (1049-1050; *II*CC 27; 38). If we were Americans and English we would already be exploiting our mineral wealth, including gold of course. As Madame Khokhlakova states: Why “leave it all to the Jews?”

It seems from the above prescription that Dmitry might be a good candidate for making it in Siberia. He is an impulsive, enthusiastic, intelligent ne'er do well who has had a difficult time focusing on anything, except, of late, extracting more of his inheritance from his father and competing with him for Grushenka. He is gifted with a magnetic personality. Simple people especially love him. A change of scenery – Siberia – might do him good. Except that it would not. Razumikhin, yes, might make it in Siberia, but not Dmitry. Dostoevsky, as we have seen, could never have himself thrived there had he remained. One could hardly imagine Dmitry being there for a day without getting into a fight, or, as he expresses it, smashing his own head with a sledgehammer. The narrator does not comment but lets Khokhlakova draw out the ridiculous conclusions of Dmitry as a gold mine magnate. Not only will Dmitry make millions in a short amount of time, he will end up a dispensable member of the Ministry of Finance. And with regard to the railroads that Dostoevsky saw as necessary for the exploitation of Siberia, it will be Dmitry who will be the driving force behind them. But even Khokhlakova does not have the fabulously famous Dmitry Karamazov, prince of finance, remaining in Siberia. He returns to Russia as soon as he makes his fortune in just a few years.

But the real question that *The Brothers Karamazov* leaves us with regard to Dmitry is whether he will actually go to Siberia (there is a plan for his escape to America) and if he goes to Siberia will he not only survive there but be resurrected from the dead – the idea on which the novel proper of *Notes from the House of the Dead* and the epilogue of *The Brothers Karamazov* end. I think we need to dismiss the idea of going to America.<sup>28</sup> In *Crime and Punishment*, the expression of going to America, used by Svidrigailov, means suicide. In *The Possessed*, Shatov and Kirillov go to America but have to return because it proves beyond their endurance. Dmitry cannot be resurrected from the dead on American soil. He does not want to “run away from crucifixion” (596; *II*CC 15; 34). Besides, the idea of escape to America with a successful return to Russia is an important plot line in Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done*. Given Dostoevsky's savaging of the characters and plot lines in *What Is to Be Done* in both *Notes from the Underground* and *Crime and Punishment*, it seems unimaginative.

28 For a spirited justification of Dmitry's escape to America with Grushenka, see Paul CON-  
TINO, *Dostoevsky's Incarnational Realism: Finding Christ among the Karamazovs* (Eugene:  
Cascade, 2020), pp. 128-136.

ble he would uncritically incorporate a plot line from *What Is to Be Done* to resolve Dmitry's fate in *The Brothers Karamazov*. However untenable an American Dmitry might seem, Dmitry being resurrected in a Siberia prison camp seems no less tenable. Dmitry states that the blow that he received from the trial and his sentence gave rise to a new man in him. He will be reborn underground because he will find God even there. He is willing to go to prison and suffer for the "babes", both big and small, "because we are all responsible for all" (591; *ICC* 15; 31). Someone must suffer for them.

Oh, yes, we'll be in chains, and there will be no freedom, but then, in our great grief, we will rise [*voskresnem*] once more into joy, without which it is not possible for man to live, or for God to be, for God gives joy, it's his prerogative, a great one... Lord, let man dissolve into prayer! How could I be there underground without God? [...] And then from the depths of the underground, we, the men of the underground will start singing a tragic hymn to God, in whom there is joy (592; *ICC* 15; 31).

This is the eloquent, exultant, exuberant, idealist Dmitry. But Dmitry knows that his old self has not yet died and will remain with him all the time down in the mines. "And what do I care if I spend twenty years pounding out iron ore in the mines, I am not afraid of that at all, but I'm terrified [*mne strashno*] of something else now: that this risen man not depart from me [*chtoby ne otoshel ot menia voskresshii chelovek!*]" (591; *ICC* 15; 31). He's afraid that the new man may leave him if they don't let Grushenka marry and accompany him. Without Grushenka, he says, there is no way he can survive. That is precisely why, knowing Dmitry's character and situation, Katerina Ivanovna, Ivan Karamazov, and Alesha Karamazov are working on a plan for his escape. Dmitry has profound doubts himself. There will be no Sonia, as there was for Raskolnikov, to get him through the terrible suffering that awaits him. In the final chapter of the novel, Alesha speaks of resurrection from the dead, but not of resurrection of the living into a new life of which Dostoevsky speaks at the end of *Crime and Punishment*.

Also Dmitry's sentence is twenty years. Raskolnikov received eight years for killing the pawnbroker and the court was lenient toward him, citing extenuating circumstances and the defendant's confession and cooperation. The protagonist of *Notes from the House of the Dead* served ten years for killing his wife. Dmitry received a long sentence because he was found guilty of having committed parricide. There were no extenuating circumstances. He had not gone into burning buildings to save children like Raskolnikov. He obviously could

not have helped the prosecution since he did not commit the crime. It was obvious that this was not a case that was subject to leniency in sentencing. The narrator tells us that the story he is going to tell us is just the first of two parts of his novel, the second part, the main part, would be devoted to the fate of his true hero, Alesha Karamazov. Dostoevsky often speculated about writing the life of a great sinner: that is, not only his life of sin but his resurrection from the dead and rebirth into a new life. He never wrote the story about Raskolnikov's resurrection from the dead. At the end of *The Idiot*, both Rogozhin and Myskin are ruined men. In *The Possessed*, Stavrogin commits suicide. Dostoevsky, had he lived, would probably not have written a sequel to *The Brothers Karamazov*. Had he done so, he had dealt himself a very difficult hand with Dmitry's situation at the end of the novel. One need only compare Dmitry's fate with that of his prototype, Il'inskii, in *Notes from the House of the Dead*. In 1863 the publisher added a note to the beginning of chapter seven, part two of the novel, indicating that Il'inskii was innocent, that the real murderers were found and had confessed, that Il'inskii had suffered ten years of penal servitude unjustly and uselessly" [*naprasno*]<sup>29</sup> and that "the unfortunate man" [*neschastnyi*] had just been released from prison. He concludes that there is "no need to go into detail on the profound tragedy [*o vsej glubine tragicheskogo*] of this matter on the young life ruined by [*o zagublennoi eshche smolodu zhizni*] such a dreadful accusation" (302-303; *ICC* 4; 195). In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the real murderer, Smerdiakov, confessed only to Ivan, and commits suicide before Dmitry's trial. Dostoevsky purposely cut off the "Il'inskii solution" of saving Dmitry: it was America or Siberia for twenty years.<sup>30</sup>

In Dostoevsky's fiction and autobiographical fiction, one can say at best that Dostoevsky holds out the possibility that resurrection from the dead into a new life is possible in Siberia. But there is strong counter evidence. At the end of *Notes from the House of the Dead*, Gorianchikov is not resurrected from the dead, but he believes it is now a possibility. Unless one sees the introduction to the novel as a complete ruse, Gorianchikov was not resurrected into a new life. If Siberia was not the problem, it certainly was not the solution. In

29 I understand "naprasno" here to mean both *bezpoleznyi* and *nespravedlivyi*.

30 After the sentencing, there seems little possibility of reducing the original sentence, especially for a non-political crime. Dostoevsky served out his sentence of four years. In *Notes from the House of the Dead*, Gorianchikov served his ten years for uxoricide. Raskolnikov was to serve out his eight-year, with no hope of any reduction. Il'inskii would have served twenty years had the real killers not been caught. What is most likely is Dostoevsky wanted to finish with both of Alesha's brothers in the first part, with Dmitry in prison and Ivan emotionally spent, so he could focus exclusively on Alesha in part two.

*Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky puts the possibility of Raskolnikov's resurrection from the dead in the last chapter of the epilogue, where novelistic realities do not apply. It is possible that it is not novelistically realizable. Even if the resurrection from the dead held out in both *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *Crime and Punishment* implies suffering in prison, it does not imply prison in Siberia. It is the suffering in prison and not the location of the prison that is important. When Dostoevsky told his young friend, the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev, that he could profit from suffering for a few years in prison, he mentioned Siberia but the emphasis was clearly on the idea of forced labor.

See here, I wanted to tell you, you can't go on like this forever, you have to do something with yourself. [...] I understand your condition perfectly. I went through it myself... Why, I've told you how fate helped me back then, how forced labor saved me – I became an entirely new person... Oh, what a lucky thing it was for me: Siberia and forced labor!.. Only there did I live a healthy, happy life, there I came to understand myself, dear friend. I understood Christ, I understood the Russian man... Ah, if only you might spend some time in forced labor!<sup>31</sup>

On another visit, after praising Solovyov, Dostoevsky added:

"I haven't finished. I want to add to my praise that you would do well to have about three years of forced labor".

"Good Lord! Whatever for?"

"Because you are not good enough: but then, after forced labor you would be a completely beautiful and pure Christian".<sup>32</sup>

Dostoevsky's less than persuasive arguments about turning to Asia in *The Diary of a Writer* seem at least in part to derive from his personal experiences in Siberia and his novelistic experiments with the idea of regeneration and resurrection into a new life in Siberia. In the end of the *Diary* article, Dostoevsky still seems fixated on Europe and Constantinople. He had never given Eurasia a thought before the *Diary* article, probably because he was still distraught over Russia's failure to achieve its goals in the Near East. Dostoevsky was probably

31 Владимир СОЛОВЬЕВ, *Воспоминания о Ф.М. Достоевском* (Санкт-Петербург, 1881), с. 16. The translation is taken from Marina KOSTALEVSKY, *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 58.

32 Дмитрий И. СТАХЕЕВ, "Группы и портреты", *Исторический вестник*, Январь 1907. Translation from KOSTALEVSKY, p. 59.



aware of the work done by Russian historians and geographers who advocated the exploitation of Eurasia, but he paid them no heed. It is not hard to see why. After he was released from the prison camp in Omsk, he did everything in the next six years to find a way back to Russia, viewing Siberia as Egypt and Russia as the new promised land. He advised everyone else that he was fond of to do the same. And even in his novels, the references to resurrection to a new life in Siberia imply a transformation of character – in Raskolnikov and Dmitry – that belie the evidence of their actual psychology and experience – and the idea that character may be destiny after all (*ethos anthropoi daimon*).

