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Concluding Remarks

Maurice Friedberg

Among the continuities in Russian history none is more striking than the unbroken debate that has been raging in that country ever since the beginning of the eighteenth century when Peter the Great, on the whim of an autocratic monarch, decided to transform that state into a European power. It can be stated with considerable assurance that the debate about the wisdom of that decision has never really abated and continues to this day. In the nineteenth century Russia did not have political parties in the Western European sense of the term, but there were the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, each of the two camps had its conservatives and its liberals, its proponents of greater power for the state, and its advocates of greater rights for the individual. I submit that this particular debate continues down to our own day — both within the Soviet Union and among the emigres, both within the establishment and among the dissenters. Suffice it to mention among the dissenters Solzhenitsyn, on the one hand; and Sakharov on the other; and within the Soviet Union, the village writers — the *derevenshchiki* — and Trifonov at the other end of the spectrum.

For too long, Russia has been viewed from the outside, from one direction only. It has been observed from those countries that regarded themselves as being to the west of Russia and to the west of Eastern Europe. That attitude continued even when Soviet, Russian, and East European studies moved across the ocean to the United States. We still persist in viewing Eastern Europe almost exclusively from the vantage point of a Western country. Even when we concede that Russia, too, has a Christian heritage, we view it as an Eastern version of the Western Christian tradition. This we have been all too aware of since the days of Peter Chaadaev in the nineteenth century.

I think that the very important and long overdue corrective has been introduced at this international symposium called by Hokkaido University. Here, for the first time to the best of my knowledge, a serious attempt has been made to mesh together a multi-layered view of Russia and of Eastern Europe — a view both from the East and from the West. We have tried to look at these countries both as they appear when we turn our eyes eastward from Paris and from New York and Chicago and as they appear looking west from Hokkaido and the rest of Japan. To those who study her from this island Russia is not a nation that begins at the frontier with Poland and with other countries of Eastern Europe, but one whose nearest point is the island of Sakhalin; the most familiar cities in Russia are not Kiev and Minsk and Moscow, but rather Vladivostok and Irkutsk, Krasnoiarsk and Kamchatka.

I think it is also very felicitous that Japanese can look at Russia from the point of view of a country that does *not* have a Christian tradition. Thus a Japanese view of the heritage of Russia is not colored, as it inevitably is elsewhere,

by the belief that somehow it is the Eastern brand — the Byzantine brand — of Christianity that principally determines many of Russia's values and explains the course of Russian history.

In the course of our conference the two views of Russia — the Western and the Japanese — confronted each other, supplemented each other, argued with each other, and finally merged, as it were, after considerable debate in which a high degree of consensus had been reached. At many of the sessions that I have been privileged to attend I have discerned, as a result, an often far more balanced view of that enormous chunk of humanity, and of that enormous chunk of land, that stretches from the Baltic to the Pacific.

I wish to express the fervent hope that we will not disperse never to hear from each other again, and that scholarly contacts between Japanese specialists and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — which incidentally greatly impressed those few of us from overseas — and between all of us, will continue. Once again, let me reiterate the hope that more and more Japanese authors will be found represented in the pages of scholarly journals published in Western Europe and in the United States. And if anybody feels a little squeamish about the quality of his English or French, let me assure him that the quality of our Japanese, among those few of us who know the language at all, is hardly better. I think it is also good that Hokkaido University, with its very impressive roster of scholars, now has a publication in a language which the non-Japanese can read.

I would like us to review each other's books. I would like us to referee each other's manuscripts, and I would like us to contribute to each other's journals. And if I may offer a practical suggestion : don't be bashful, send one in. Or better still in the case of your journal: commission a piece. Write to someone; invite him or her to write something on a general topic of this or another nature. We may come uut much the richer for the variety of views, and points, and with a much greater appreciation of the differences that, I hope, will continue to produce the kind of results that we have seen over the last few days.