

# FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

The Biography of the Greatest Russian Novelist  
Written by His Daughter, Aimée Dostoevsky



AIMÉE DOSTOEVSKY

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# Discovery Publisher

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## Preface

Russia was preparing to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Fyodor Dostoevsky on October 30, 1921. Our writers and poets hoped to do honour in prose and verse to the great Russian novelist; the Slav peoples had arranged to send deputations to Petrograd, to pay their homage in Czech, Serbian and Bulgarian to the great Slavophil, who was ever faithful to the idea of our future Slav confederation. The Dostoevsky family, in its turn, proposed to mark the occasion by publishing the documents preserved in the Historical Museum of Moscow. My mother was to have given the world her memories of her illustrious husband, and I was to have written a new biography of my father, and to have recorded my childish impressions of him.

It is unlikely that any such festival will take place. A terrible storm has passed over Russia, destroying the whole fabric of our European civilisation. The Revolution, long ago predicted by Dostoevsky, burst upon us after a disastrous war. The gulf which for two centuries had been widening between our peasants and our intellectuals, became an abyss. Our intellectuals, intoxicated by European Utopias, were advancing towards the West, while our people, faithful to the tradition of their ancestors, had set their faces to the East. The Russian Nihilists and Anarchists desired to introduce European atheism into our country, whereas our deeply religious peasantry remained faithful to Christ.

The result of this conflict is now before us. The intellectuals who hoped to reign in Russia in the place of the Tsar, and to govern it according to their fancy, were swept away by our exasperated people as stupid and maleficent beings. Some of them have found shelter in the palaces of our former Embassies, and pretend to govern Russia from the banks of the Thames or the Seine, trying not to notice the sly smiles of the European ambassadors; others gather round the innumerable Russian newspapers, of which some hundred copies a number are printed, and offered gratis to any one who can be induced to read them. Readers, however, become more and more rare. Europeans begin to understand that our intellectuals are dreamers, and that the socialistic and anarchis-



tic *moujik* of whom they speak in their journals has never existed save in the naive imaginations of “the grandfathers and grandmothers of the Russian Revolution.”

Far from being an anarchist, the Russian *moujik* is on the way to construct a huge Oriental Empire. He is fraternising with the Mongolians, and establishing friendly relations with India, Persia and Turkey. He keeps Bolshevism like a scarecrow for sparrows, in order to keep off old Europe, and prevent her from meddling in Russian affairs, and hampering the construction of the national edifice. On the day when it is completed, the Russian *moujik* will destroy the scarecrow, which will have served its turn, and astonished Europe will see rising before her a new Russian Empire, mightier and more solid than the old. Our *moujiks* are good architects, and like wise men, which they have always been, they have no idea of inviting the intellectuals to be their architects. They have realised that these sick men could destroy the finest civilisation in the world, but that they are quite incapable of constructing anything in its place.

If Dostoevsky's centenary cannot be celebrated in Russia, I should like to see it commemorated in Europe, for he has long been accepted as a universal writer, one of those beacons which illuminate the path of humanity. I have therefore decided to publish in Europe the biography of my father, which I once hoped to publish in Russia; this is the more expedient, since my entire fortune is in the hands of the Bolsheviks, and I must now work for my living. The new details of my father's life which will be found in my book may suggest to his admirers fresh critical studies of his works, and make them more popular among European and American readers. This will surely be the best way in which to celebrate the centenary of the famous writer.

*Aimée Dostoevsky*

# Fyodor Dostoevsky

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AIMÉE DOSTOEVSKY

## I

# Origin of the Dostoevsky Family

“I know our people. I have lived with them in prison, eaten with them, slept with them, worked with them. The people gave me back Christ, whom I learned to know in my father’s house, but whom I lost later, when I in my turn became ‘a European Liberal.’” —August, 1880.

In reading biographies of my father, I have always been surprised to find that his biographers have studied him solely as a Russian, and sometimes even as the most Russian of Russians. Now Dostoevsky was Russian only on his mother’s side, for his paternal ancestors were of Lithuanian origin. Of all lands in the Russian Empire, Lithuania is certainly the most interesting by reason of its transformations and the various influences it has undergone in the course of centuries. The Lithuanian breed is the same mixture of Slavs and Finno-Turkish tribes as the Russian. Yet there is a very marked difference between the two peoples. Russia remained long under the Tatar yoke, and became mongolised. Lithuania, on the other hand, was normanised by the Normans, who traded with Greece by the waterways of the Niemen and the Dnieper. Finding this trade highly profitable, the Normans established vast mercantile dépôts in Lithuania, and placed them under the guard of sentinels. Gradually these dépôts were transformed into fortresses, and the fortresses into towns. Some of these towns exist to this day, as, for instance, the town of Polozk, which was governed by the Norman prince Rogvolod. The whole country was divided into a number of small principalities; the population was Lithuanian, the government Norman. Perfect order reigned in these principalities, and excited the envy of the neighbouring Slav peoples.<sup>1</sup>

1. This envy led the Slavs who inhabited the shores of the Dnieper, and were the ancestors of the Ukrainians and Russians, to desire Norman princes to rule over them in their turn. They sent a deputation to Lithuania to offer Prince Rurik the crown of the Grand Duchy of Kiev. Rurik, probably the brother or the younger son of some Norman prince who was governing a part of Lithuania, accepted

The Normans did not hold aloof from the Lithuanians; the princes and their followers married readily among the women of the country, and were gradually merged with the original inhabitants. Their Norman blood gave such vigour to the hitherto insignificant Lithuanians that they overcame the Tatars, the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Poles, and the Teutonic Knights, their northern neighbours. In the fifteenth century Lithuania had become an immense Grand Duchy, which comprised all Ukraina and a large part of Russia. It played a very great part among the other Slav countries, had a brilliant, highly civilised Court, and attracted numerous foreigners of distinction, poets and men of learning. The Russian Boyards who opposed the tyranny of their Tsars fled to Lithuania and were hospitably received there. This was the case of the celebrated Prince Kurbsky, the mortal enemy of the Tsar Ivan the Terrible.<sup>1</sup>

The Normans were ruling in Lithuania at the beginning of the Christian era, and perhaps before. We find them still in power in 1392, in the person of the Grand Duke Witold, who, as his name indicates, was a descendant of the Norman princes. It is obvious that Lithuania must have become profoundly normanised in the course of fourteen centuries. To say nothing of the marriages contracted by the princes and the members of their retinue, the numerous merchants and warriors who came to Lithuania from the North readily took to wife young Lithuanian women and went to Kiev with his Norman retinue. The descendants of Rurik reigned in Russia until the seventeenth century, first under the title of Grand Duke, and later under that of Tsar. When the last descendant of Rurik died at Moscow, Russia passed through a period of anarchy, until the Boyards elected as Tsar Mihail Romanoff, whose family was of Lithuanian origin — that is to say, a strongly normanised Slav family. In their turn the Romanoffs reigned for several centuries, loved and venerated by the Russian people. The curious fact that the Russian nation has twice chosen as princes Normans or normanised Slavs, is readily explained by the disputatious character of my countrymen. Interminable talkers and controversialists, capable of holding forth for a dozen hours on end without uttering a single sensible word, the Russians can never agree. The Normans, clear-headed and practical, sparing of words but prolific in deeds, made them live in peace one with another, and kept order in our country.

1. Modern historians who deal with the history of Lithuania and Ukraina rarely mention the Normans. On the other hand, they often speak of the Varangians, and assert that the latter played an important part in Lithuania, and even in Ukraina. Now the Varangians are in fact Normans, for the word Varangian means in old Slav “enemy.” As the Normans always beat the Slavs, the latter called them the “enemies.” Slavs have as a rule but little curiosity, and are not concerned to know the race to which their neighbours belong; they prefer to give them fancy names. Thus when the Russians began to trade with the Germans they called them “Nemzi,” which in old Russian means “the Dumb,” because the Germans did not understand their language and could not answer their questions. The Russian people still call the Germans “Nemzi.” The name German or Teuton is used only by the intellectuals.

ans, who, thanks to their Slav blood, are handsomer and more graceful than the women of Finno-Turkish tribes in general. The offspring of these marriages inherited the Lithuanian type of their mothers, and the Norman brains of their paternal ancestors. Indeed, when *we* examine the Lithuanian character, we recognise its strong resemblance to the Norman character. I recommend to those who wish to study this practically unknown country, *Lithuania, Past and Present*, by W. St. Vidūnas. I shall often have occasion to quote this learned writer, but his excellent study should be read in its entirety. A curious fact in connection with Vidūnas's book is that while he describes the Lithuanian character as essentially Norman, he ignores the Norman blood of his compatriots, and declares ingenuously that they are merely Finno-Turks, who came originally from Asia. The author here adopts the attitude of the majority of the Lithuanians, who, under the influence of some perverted sense of national pride, have always repudiated their Norman ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of glorying in their descent, as the wise Rumanians glory in their descent from the ancient warriors of Rome, the Lithuanians have always tried to pass off their Norman Grand Dukes as princes of native blood. The Russians have never been deceived on this point. They knew that the Lithuanians were too weak to beat them, and were only able to do so with the help of the Normans. This is why my compatriots have always given all these Gediminas, Algardas and Vitantas their true Norman names of Guedimine, Olguerd and Witold. The Poles and the Germans have done the same, and the Norman princes have passed into history under their real names, to the great annoyance of all the Lithuanophiles. Guedimin was the most famous of these princes. He was of the true Norman type, almost without any trace of Finno-Turkish blood. His portraits always remind me of those of Shakespeare; there is a family likeness between these two Normans. Guedimin showed the characteristic Norman indifference and tolerance in religious matters; he protected both Catholic and Orthodox. For his own part, he preferred to remain a pagan.

As Russia and Ukraina became stronger, they succeeded in severing their connection with Lithuania and recovering their former independence. When they had lost their rich provinces to the east and the south, the Lithuanians were enfeebled, and could no longer struggle against their mortal enemies, the Knights of the Teutonic Order. The Germans

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1. In their hatred of Russia and of Poland, the Lithuanians have even refused to admit that they have Slav blood in their veins. Yet one has only to look at them to see that they are much more Slav than Finno-Turkish.

conquered Lithuania, and introduced into the country a host of mediæval institutions and ideas. These the Lithuanians retained for a long time when they had entirely disappeared from the rest of Europe. The Germans forced the Lithuanians to become Protestants. Like all Slavs, the Lithuanians were mystics, and Luther's religion meant nothing to them.<sup>1</sup>

When at a later period Poland had become a powerful state in its turn, and had wrested Lithuania from the Teutonic Knights,<sup>2</sup> the Lithuanians hastened to return to the Catholic or Orthodox faith of their ancestors. The Polish Catholic clergy, especially the Jesuits, warred passionately against the Orthodox monastic houses; but these were protected by many Lithuanian families, who preferred the Orthodox religion. Among these were some very influential personalities, notably Prince Constantine Ostrogsky, the celebrated champion of the Orthodox Church. In face of this determined resistance the Poles were obliged to leave the Orthodox religious houses in the country, placing them, however, under the supervision of noble Catholic families, in order to check Orthodox propaganda. The Jesuits organised excellent Latin schools, forced the nobility of the country to send their sons to them, and in a short time succeeded in latinising all the young nobles of Lithuania. Poland, wishing to attach the Lithuanians to herself definitively, introduced among them many Polish institutions, including the *Schliailia*, or Union of Nobles. The *Schliabtitchi* (nobles) adopted the custom of rallying to the banner of some great lord of the country in time of war, and lived under his protection in time of peace. These lords allowed the *Schliabtitchi* to adopt their armorial bearings. Later, Russia, who had borrowed numerous institutions from Lithuania, imitated the *Schliabta* by creating the Union of Hereditary Nobles. Among the Russians, this Union was agrarian rather than martial; but in both countries the Unions were above all patriotic.

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The Finns, the Esthonians and the Letts, who are Finno-Turks of unmixed race, adopted the Protestant religion with ardour and remained faithful to it. The hostility the Lithuanians have always shown to Protestantism attests their Slav blood more eloquently than all else. The Slavs, who readily embraced the Orthodox or the Catholic faith, have never been able to understand the doctrine of Luther.

The Germans, however, kept a part of Lithuania, which was inhabited by the Lithuanian tribe of the Borussi. They germanised it and christened it Prussia. The Prussians are not Germans, but Lithuanians, first normanised and then germanised. Their strength of character and the important part they have played in Germany are due to their Norman blood. The majority of the Prussian Junkers are the direct descendants of the ancient Norman chiefs.



My father's ancestors were natives of the Government of Minsk, where, not far from Pinsk, there is still a place called Dostoyeve, the ancient domain of my father's family. It was formerly the wildest part of Lithuania, covered almost entirely with vast forests; the marshes of Pinsk extended as far as the eye could reach. The Dostoevsky were *Schliahttichi* and belonged to the "grassy Radwan." That is to say, they were nobles, they went to war under the banner of the Lord of Radwan, and had the right to bear his arms. My mother had the Radwan armorial bearings drawn for the Dostoevsky Museum at Moscow. I have seen them, but I cannot describe them, as I have never studied heraldry.

The Dostoevsky were Catholics, very devout and very intolerant, it seems. In the course of our researches into the origin of our family, we found a document, in which an Orthodox monastery placed under the supervision of the Dostoevsky family complained of their harsh treatment of the Orthodox monks. This document proves two things:

That the Dostoevsky must have held a good position in their country, otherwise an Orthodox monastery would not have been placed under their supervision.

That as fervent Catholics, the Dostoevsky must have sent their sons to the Latin schools of the country, and that my father's ancestors must have possessed that excellent Latin culture which the Catholic clergy propagate wherever they go.

When in the eighteenth century the Russians annexed Lithuania, they did not find the Dostoevsky in the country; the family had passed into Ukraina. What they did there and what towns they inhabited we know not. I have no idea what my great grandfather Andrey may have been, and this for a very curious reason.

The fact is that my grandfather Mihail Andrevitch Dostoevsky was a highly original person. At the age of fifteen he had a mortal quarrel with his father and his brothers, and ran away from home. He left the Ukraine, and went to study medicine at Moscow University. He never spoke of his family, and made no reply when questioned as to his origin. Later, when he had reached the age of fifty, his conscience seems to have reproached him for having thus quitted the paternal roof. He put an advertisement in the papers, begging his father and his brothers to let him hear from them. No notice was ever taken of this advertisement. It is probable that his relations were all dead. The Dostoevsky do not make old bones.

However, my grandfather Mihail must have declared his origin to his children, for I often heard my father and later my uncles say: "We Dostoevsky are Lithuanians, but we are not Poles. Lithuania is a country quite distinct from Poland."

My father told my mother of a certain Episcopus Stepan, who, according to him, was the founder of our *Orthodox* family. To my great regret, my mother did not pay much attention to these words of her husband's, and did not ask him for more precise details. I suppose that one of my Lithuanian ancestors, having emigrated to the Ukraine, changed his religion in order to marry an Orthodox Ukrainian, and became a priest. When his wife died he probably entered a monastery, and later, rose to be an Archbishop.<sup>1</sup>

This would explain how the Archbishop Stepan may have founded our Orthodox family, in spite of his being a monk. My father must have been convinced of the existence of this Episcopus, for he named his second son Stepane in his honour.

At this time Dostoevsky was fifty years old. It is very curious that my grandfather published his advertisement in the newspaper when he reached this age, and that it was also at the age of fifty that my father suddenly remembered the existence of the Archbishop Stepan. Both seem to have felt a wish to strengthen the bonds of union with their ancestors at this period.

It is somewhat surprising to see the Dostoevsky, who had been warriors in Lithuania, become priests in the Ukraine. But this is quite in accordance with Lithuanian custom. I may quote the learned Lithuanian W. St. Vidûnas in this connection:<sup>2</sup>

"Formerly many well-to-do Lithuanians had but one desire: to see one or more of their sons enter upon an ecclesiastical career. They gladly provided the funds necessary to prepare them for such a calling. But they had no sympathy with studies of a more general character, and were averse from the adoption of any other liberal profession by the sons. Even of late years many young Lithuanians have had to suffer greatly from parental obstinacy. Their fathers have refused them the money necessary for advanced secular studies, when they have declined to become ecclesiastics. Thus many lives of the highest promise have been wrecked."

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1. In the Orthodox Church only monks — the Black Clergy — may become Archbishops. The White Clergy — married priests — never rise to high rank. When they lose their wives they often become monks, and can then pursue their career.

2. See his *La Lituanie dans le passé et dans le présent*.



These words of Vidûnas probably give the key to the extraordinary quarrel of my grandfather Mihail with his parents, which broke all the ties between our Moscovite family and the Ukrainian family of my greatgrandfather Andrey. The latter perhaps wished his son to pursue an ecclesiastical career, while the young man had a vocation for medicine. Seeing that his father would not pay for his medical studies, my grandfather fled from his home. We must admire the truly Norman energy of this youth of fifteen who entered an unknown city without money or friends, managed to get a superior education, made a good position for himself in Moscow, brought up a family of seven children, gave dowries to his three daughters and a liberal education to his four sons. My grandfather had good reason to be proud of himself, and to quote himself as an example to his children.

Andrey Dostoevsky's wish to see his son a priest was not, indeed, very extraordinary, for the Ukrainian clergy has always been highly distinguished. The Ukrainian parishes enjoyed the right to select their own priests, and naturally only men of blameless life were chosen. As to the higher ecclesiastical dignities, they were nearly always held by members of the Ukrainian nobility, which was very rarely the case in Greater Russia, where the priests are an isolated caste. Stepan Dostoevsky must have been a man of good family and good education or he could not have become an Episcopus. The Archbishop or Episcopus is the highest dignity in the Orthodox Church, for we have no Cardinals. After the abolition of the Patriarchate, the Archbishops managed the affairs of our church, each in turn taking part in the deliberations of the Holy Synod.

We have yet another proof that the Ukrainian Dostoevsky were intellectuals. Friends who had lived in Ukrainia told us that they had once seen there an old book, a kind of Almanach or poetical Anthology published in Ukrainia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Among the poems in this book there was a little bucolic piece written in Russian and gracefully composed. It was not signed, but the first letters of each line formed the name Andrey Dostoevsky. Was it the work of my great-grandfather or of some cousin? I know not, but it proves two things of great interest to the biographers of Dostoevsky:

First, that his Ukrainian ancestors were intellectuals, for in Ukrainia only the lower and middle classes speak Ukrainian, a pretty and poetic, but also an infantile and somewhat absurd language. The upper classes in Ukrainia habitually spoke Polish or Russian, and accordingly last year, when the country separated from Russia and proclaimed its

independence, the new Hetman, Scoropadsky, had to post up eloquent appeals, which said: "Ukrainians I learn your native tongue!" The Hetman himself probably did not know a word of it.

That poetic talent existed in my father's Ukrainian family and was not the gift of his Moscovite mother, as Dostoevsky's literary friends have suggested.

The interesting and varied history of Lithuania had a great influence in the formation of my father's powers. We find in his works traces of all the transformations Lithuania has undergone in the course of centuries. My father's character was essentially Norman: very honest, very upright, frank and bold. Dostoevsky looked danger in the face, never drew back before peril, pressed on to his goal unweariedly, brushing aside all the obstacles in his path. His normanised ancestors had bequeathed to him an immense moral strength which is rarely found among Russians, a young, and consequently a weak race. Other European nations also contributed to the formation of Dostoevsky's genius. The Knights of the Teutonic Order gave to his ancestors their idea of the State and of the family.

In Dostoevsky's works, and still more in his private life, we find innumerable mediaeval ideas. In their turn the Catholic clergy of Lithuania, the leaders of whom came from Rome, taught my father's ancestors discipline, obedience, and a sense of duty, which can hardly be said to exist in the youthful and anarchic Russian nation. The Latin Schools of the Jesuits formed their minds. Dostoevsky learned to speak French very quickly, and preferred it to German, though he knew German so well that he proposed to his brother Mihail that they should collaborate in translating Goethe and Schiller. My father had evidently the gift of languages, which is very rare among the Russians. Europeans generally say: "The Russians can speak all tongues." They do not, however, notice that those among my compatriots who speak and write French and German well all belong to Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian families, whose ancestors were latinised by the Catholic clergy. Among the Russians of Great Russia, it is only the aristocrats who have had a European education for several generations who speak the European languages well.

The Russian *bourgeois* find the study of foreign languages enormously difficult. They learn them at school for seven years, and when they leave can barely manage to say a few sentences, and do not understand the simplest books. Their accent is deplorable. The Russian language, which has hardly anything in common with the European tongues, is rather a

hindrance than a help to linguistic studies.

The emigration of my ancestors to Ukrainia softened their somewhat harsh Northern character, and awoke the dormant poetry of their hearts. Of all the Slav countries which form the Russian Empire, Ukrainia is certainly the most poetic. When one comes from Petrograd to Kiew, one feels oneself in the South. The evenings are warm, the streets full of pedestrians who sing, laugh, and eat in the open air, at tables on the pavement outside the cafés. We breathe the perfumed air of the South, we look at the moon which silvers the poplars; the heart dilates, one becomes a poet for the moment. Everything breathes poetry in this softly undulating plain bathed in happy sunshine. Blue rivers flow serene and unhasting seawards; little lakes sleep softly, girdled by flowers; it is good to dream in the rich forests of oak. All is poetry in Ukrainia: the costumes of the peasants, their songs, their dances, and above all their theatre. Ukrainia is the only country in Europe which possesses a theatre created by the people themselves and not arranged by the intellectuals to develop the taste of the masses, as elsewhere. The Ukrainian theatre is so essentially popular that it has not even been possible to make a *bourgeois* theatre of it. In early days Ukrainia was in close contact with the Greek colonies on the shores of the Black Sea. Some Greek blood flows in the veins of the Ukrainians, manifesting itself in their charming sunburnt faces and their graceful movements. It may even be that the Ukrainian theatre is a distant echo of the drama so beloved of the ancient Greeks.

Emerging from the dark forests and dank marshes of Lithuania, my ancestors must have been dazzled by the light, the flowers, the Greek poetry of Ukrainia. Their hearts warmed by the southern sunshine, they began to write verses. My grandfather Mihail carried a little of this Ukrainian poetry in his poor student's wallet when he fled from his father's house, and kept it carefully as a souvenir of his distant home. Later, he handed it on to his two elder sons, Mihail and Fyodor. These youths composed verses, epitaphs and poems; in his youth my father wrote Venetian romances and historical dramas. He began by imitating Gogol, the great Ukrainian writer, whom he greatly admired. In Dostoevsky's first works we note a good deal of this naïve sentimental and romantic poetry. It was not until after his imprisonment, when he became Russian, that we find in his novels the breadth of view and depth of thought proper to the Russian nation, the nation of great genius and a great future. And yet it is not right to say that Dostoevsky's powerful realism is essentially Russian. The Russians are not realists; they are dreamers and mystics.

They love to lose themselves in visions instead of studying life. When they try to be realists, they fall at once into Mongolian cynicism and eroticism. Dostoevsky's realism is an inheritance from his normanised ancestors. All writers of Norman blood are distinguished by their profound realism. It was not for nothing that Dostoevsky admired Balzac so heartily, and took him as his model.

The Dostoevsky family was essentially a family of nomads. We find them now in Lithuania, now in Ukrainia, now domiciled in Moscow, now in Petersburg. This is not surprising, for Lithuania is distinguished from other countries by its curious class of "nomad intellectuals." In all other countries it is the proletariat which emigrates. In Russia, the *moujiks*, who cross the Ural Mountains in hordes every year and are absorbed by Asia; in Europe, the peasants and lower middle classes who go to seek their fortune in America, Africa and Australia. In Lithuania, the populace remained in the country; only the intellectuals emigrated. As long as Lithuania was a brilliant Grand Duchy attracting European poets and learned men, the Lithuanian nobility stayed at home. But when the splendour of Lithuania began to wane, the intellectuals<sup>1</sup> soon felt themselves circumscribed in their forests and swamps and emigrated to neighbouring nations. They entered the service of the Poles and the Ukrainians, and helped to build up their civilisation. A great number of famous Poles and Ukrainians are of Lithuanian origin.<sup>2</sup>

Later, when Russia annexed Lithuania, a horde of Lithuanian families descended upon our large towns. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Poles in their turn entered the service of Russia, but my compatriots very soon noted the difference between the Polish and the Lithuanian "sky."<sup>3</sup>

Though the Poles lived and grew rich in Russia, they remained Catholics, spoke Polish among themselves, and treated the Russians as barbarians. The Lithuanians, on the other hand, forgot their mother-tongue, adopted the Orthodox faith, and thought no more of their native land.<sup>4</sup>

1. Critics may accuse me of confounding the words "noble" and "intellectual," which are not always synonymous. But they must remember that in the good old times education was impossible for the proletariat and the middle classes. The Catholic and Orthodox clergy, who were the principal educationists of Lithuania, were only interested in the sons of the nobility, the future legislators and governors of their country.

2. It is thought that the great Polish poet Mickiewicz was a Lithuanian. One of his poems begins: "Lithuania, my country."

3. "Sky" is the termination of the names of the Polish and Lithuanian nobility.

4. Among the great Russian families of Lithuanian origin, we must note more especially the Romanoffs, the ancestors of the late reigning family, who belonged

This migration of the intellectuals, and their facility in amalgamating with the nations of their adoption, is the most characteristic feature bequeathed by the Normans to their Lithuanian posterity. The Normans alone among the nations of antiquity possessed a nomad nobility. The young men of the highest families rallied to the banner of some Norman prince, and sailed in their light vessels to seek new homes. It is generally asserted that all the aristocracies of northern Europe were founded by the Normans. There is nothing surprising in this: when the young Norman nobles appeared among some primitive people, they naturally became the chiefs of the wild and ignorant aborigines. Their descendants, accustomed to govern, continued to do so throughout successive centuries. The Normans, as we have already seen, did not hold aloof from the nations they conquered; they married the women of the country, and adopted its ideas, its costume and its beliefs. Two centuries after their arrival in Normandy, the Normans had forgotten their native tongue, and spoke French to each other. When William the Conqueror landed in England with his warriors, the culture he brought to the English was a Latin, and not a Norman culture. When the Norman family of the Comtes d'Hauteville conquered Sicily, they adopted the Byzantine and Saracen culture they found in that country with amazing rapidity. In Lithuania there was a complete fusion of invaders with invaded; the Normans gave the Lithuanians their moral strength, and bequeathed to them the mission of civilising neighbouring peoples. All the nomad intellectuals of Lithuania are, in fact, but Normans in disguise. They continue the great work of their ancestors with unfailing courage, patience and devotion.

It is obvious that poor Lithuania, who gives the flower of her race to others, can never become a great state again. She understands and regrets this herself. "The Lithuanians must be accounted in general a most intelligent race," says Vidûnas; "that in spite of this, Lithuania has exercised no influence on European civilisation, is to be explained by the fact that Lithuanian intelligence has been perpetually at the service of other nations, and has never been able to put forth all its powers in its native land." Vidûnas is no doubt right when he deplores the emigration of the Lithuanian intellectuals, but he is mistaken when he says that Lithuania has had no influence on European civilisation. No country, indeed, has done so much for the civilisation of the Slav states as Lithuania to the tribe of the Borussi; the Soltikoffs, whose Lithuanian name was Saltyk; and the Golitzins, the descendants of Duke Guedimin. In Poland, the majority of the aristocratic families were of Lithuanian origin, as well as the royal house of Jagellon.

uania. Other peoples worked for themselves alone, for their own glory; Lithuania has devoted the gifts of her intelligence to the service of her neighbours. Poland, Ukraina and Russia do not understand this yet, and are unjust. But the day will come when they will see clearly what a huge debt they owe to modest and silent Lithuania.

The Dostoevsky were such wanderers, they had such a thirst for new ideas and new impressions, that they tried to forget the past, and refused to talk to their children of their forbears. But while thus renouncing the past, they had a desire to link their wandering family by a kind of Ariadne's thread. This thread, which enables us to trace them throughout the centuries, is their family name Andrey. The Catholic Dostoevsky of Lithuania habitually gave this name to one of their sons, generally to the second or the third; and the Orthodox Dostoevsky have kept up the custom till the present. In each generation of our family there is always an Andrey, and, as before, this name is borne by the second or the third son.

## II

# The Childhood of Fyodor Dostoevsky

After completing his medical studies at Moscow, my grandfather Mihail entered the army as a surgeon, and in this capacity served during the war of 1812. We may assume that he was well skilled in his profession, for he was soon appointed superintendent of a large State hospital in Moscow. About this time he married a young Russian girl, Marie Netchaïev. She brought a sufficient dowry to her husband, but the marriage was primarily one of mutual love and esteem. The young couple, indeed, lacked nothing, for in those days government appointments were fairly lucrative. If salaries were not very high, the State made amends by providing its functionaries with all the requisites of a comfortable existence. Thus, in addition to his income, my grandfather Mihail was lodged in a Crown building, a small house of one storey, built in the bastard Empire style which was adopted for all our Crown buildings in the nineteenth century. This house was situated close to the hospital and was surrounded by a garden. In this little house Fyodor Dostoevsky was born on October 30, 1821.

My grandfather was allowed the services of the servants attached to the hospital, and a carriage to visit his patients in the town. He must have had a good practice, for he was soon able to buy two estates in the government of Tula, 150 versts from Moscow. One of these properties, called Darovoye, became the holiday residence of the Dostoevsky. The whole family, with the exception of the father, spent the summer there. My grandfather, who was kept in the city by his medical duties, only joined them for a few days in July. These annual journeys, which in those pre-railway days were made in a *troika* (a carriage with three horses), delighted my father, who was devoted to horses in his childhood.

A few years after the birth of his elder sons, my grandfather had himself registered together with them in the book of the hereditary nobility of Moscow.<sup>1</sup> My father was five years old at the time. It is strange that my

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1. No one could be registered in the books of the nobility unless they possessed titles of hereditary nobility. The Russian nobles willingly admitted to their un-



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# FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

The Biography of the Greatest Russian Novelist

Written by his daughter, Aimée Dostoevsky

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