

Stalin in 1945, except that the Soviet Union failed to get control of Greece or the Turkish Straits which were included in the earlier blueprint. The Slav Federation would necessarily have dominated Europe by its sheer bulk, as would also the Soviet bloc after the Second World War but for a factor unforeseen by Danilevsky, the counteracting power of the United States of America. The Pan-Slav programme was indeed in effect one of unlimited objectives, as was boldly asserted in the writings of those who, like Dostoevsky, claimed that

Russia's destiny was to create "a whole new world . . . and introduce a new idea to mankind." The humiliation of 1878 was a bitter disappointment to the zealots of Pan-Slavism; they only, however, postponed their fated hour, and shortly before his death Dostoevsky wrote: "The future genuine Russian idea has not yet appeared among us, but the earth is portentously pregnant with it and is making ready to deliver it amid agonising pain."

In these words, at any rate, Dostoevsky was certainly prophetic.

G. F. Hudson

## WHAT IS BLOOMSBURY ?

SO many silly things have been written about "Bloomsbury" that it is a relief to come upon an eminently sensible book with the ominous title *The Bloomsbury Group*.<sup>\*</sup> But it is not really about the Bloomsbury group. Part I, consisting of three chapters and 95 pages, may at a pinch be taken as relevant to the title, for it is labelled "The Background" and deals with "Bloomsbury" and Bloomsbury philosophy and æsthetics. But after Part I Mr. Johnstone, to all intents and purposes, forgets the group and in 275 pages gives us appreciative and, on the whole, intelligent exposition and criticism of the novels of E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf and the biographical and historical works of Lytton Strachey.

The word group is ambiguous and, as used in the title of this book, misleading. It suggests, intentionally suggests, that the individuals included in the circle were consciously pursuing a common purpose—æsthetic or philosophic or social—like the encyclopædists, the authors of *Lyrical Ballads*, the Clapham Sect, the Pre-Raphaelites, or the Post-Impressionists. Mr.

Johnstone, in his Part I, tries unsuccessfully to force the group of Bloomsbury friends into this kind of Procrustean bed by representing them as dominated by the philosophy of G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* and the æsthetics of Roger Fry. The idea is a delusion. The Bloomsbury group was a circle of friends each of whom was an extreme individualist, doing his or her work in his or her own way, unconscious of a common purpose, theory, or philosophy. With their roots in Cambridge, they had been, of course, greatly influenced by the personality and writings of Professor Moore and eternally interested and amused by the proliferation of Roger Fry's lively intellect and imagination. They would not have become, and remained for forty, fifty, or more years, such intimate friends unless they had shared many tastes, beliefs, prejudices, and delusions. But that is a very different thing from being a group in the sense used in the first part of this book.

The point is of real importance as is shown by the second and third parts of Mr. Johnstone's book. Where he treats E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Lytton Strachey as individual writers, analyses their works, criticises their methods, and assesses their merits and defects, his book is a contribution to the

<sup>\*</sup> *The Bloomsbury Group. A study of E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf, and their Circle.* By J. K. JOHNSTONE. Secker and Warburg. 25s.

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**ANDRE DEUTSCH**

literary criticism of an era. But every now and then he remembers his title and thinks that he must prove some profound æsthetic or philosophical likeness. Not unnaturally, being an honest man, he can only point to the most general or superficial similarities between these three authors—similarities so general or superficial that they have no significance. For instance, in order to force *Queen Victoria* and *Mrs. Dalloway* into the same bed, Mr. Johnstone is reduced to the straits of the following sentence:

Around the central figure of Clarissa Dalloway, the other characters in the novel are grouped, according to the extent and method of their presentment, in somewhat the same way as the characters in Strachey's *Queen Victoria* are grouped about the Queen.

Note "in somewhat the same way"! And note the heroic effort in the following sentence to put *Eminent Victorians* to bed with *Where Angels Fear to Tread* under the æsthetic eye of Roger Fry:

The essential of great tragedy, Fry has said, is "the vivid sense of the inevitability" of its unfolding. In this respect "Gordon" recalls Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, though the sense of inevitability is much more vivid in Strachey's biography than in Forster's novel.

Having united the two novelists with the biographer in this kind of way, he united the two novelists with each other thus:

As Virginia Woolf expands a day into nearly a lifetime in *Mrs. Dalloway*, so she contracts ten years into the pattern of a day in *To the Lighthouse*—in somewhat the same way as Forster gives *A Passage to India* the shape of an Indian year.

Again on page 156, in a passage which is too long to quote, he sums up the "first principles" and the "ultimate values" which, according to him, the three writers share. Here the similarities are so general as to have little or no importance, e.g. "all three respect both reason and sensibility." This might give Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Henry James a claim to membership of the Bloomsbury Group.

Leonard Woolf

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## About our Authors

LIONEL TRILLING's essay on Jane Austen will be included in the fifth volume of *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*. This series has just been inaugurated, and the fifth volume ("Blake to Byron") will appear early next year. . . . RICHARD WRIGHT's report on the Gold Coast consists of excerpts from a book, *Black Power*, which he has just completed. . . . CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS is Member of Parliament for Devizes, and is the author of many books on political and social theory. . . . DAVID RIESMAN, Professor of Sociology at the College of the University of Chicago, is the author of *The Lonely Crowd*, by now a classic analysis of American manners and morals. . . . MAX BELOFF is Reader in Comparative Study of Institutions at Nuffield College, Oxford. . . . DAVID SYLVESTER, a contributor to *The Times*, the *Listener* and *The Burlington Magazine*, is just completing a book on modern sculpture. . . . ELIZABETH JENNINGS's book of *Poems* won the Arts Council prize. . . . CHRISTOPHER SYKES's new novel *Dates and Parties* will be brought out by Verschoyle in October. . . . ALAN BULLOCK is the Censor of St. Catherine's Society, Oxford. . . . JAMES JOLL is a Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford. . . . G. F. HUDSON is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.