

On individual thinkers his judgments are uniformly benign, but sometimes questionable. It is odd to find Bakunin, for instance, described in the same breath as "an authentic titan" and as having "a mindless devotion to extremism" (p. 232). Petrashevskii's identification with the half-baked creed of Fourierism is characterized as "impressive," which is surely to mistake enthusiasm for intellect. Both Chaadayev and the Slavophiles receive even-handed praise, although their religious and historiographical ideas were diametrically opposed. Discussing two intellectuals of an earlier generation, Riasanovsky remarks that "if Speranskii represented best the *esprit de système* of the Age of Reason in the Russian government, Pestel' performed that service for the Decembrists" (p. 88). True, both men favored grandiose schemes; but the former's cautious legalism is far removed from the latter's dictatorial tendencies. This potential Russian Bonaparte is depicted here as a lily-white constitutionalist (although there is a vague hint of the contrary on p. 249). This interpretation leads Riasanovsky to contradict himself when he comes to assess the Decembrists' attitude to autocracy (p. 89): "Many of [them] remained psychologically so close to the government and so permeated by the concept of enlightened despotism that their position was ambivalent to the end"; "and yet the salient characteristic of the Decembrist movement was its rejection of autocracy and enlightened despotism." What is meant, perhaps, is that they objected to the autocrat rather than to autocracy; that if Alexander I had responded favorably to society's aspirations after 1815—as he surely could have done without endangering the monarchy—there would have been no Decembrism. Russia would have gained immeasurably; but then we should have been deprived of this gracious, thoughtful, and learned study, for which, whatever its minor shortcomings, every student of the period should be grateful.

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THE "CONFESSION" OF MIKHAIL BAKUNIN. With the marginal comments of Tsar Nicholas I. Translated by *Robert C. Howes*. Introduction and notes by *Lawrence D. Orton*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977. 200 pp. \$12.50.

Bakunin wrote his celebrated *Confession* in 1851, at the behest of Tsar Nicholas I, while imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Speaking as "a prodigal, alienated, depraved son before his outraged and wrathful father," he recounted his activities and impressions from his departure for Berlin in 1840 to his arrest in 1849 following the abortive Dresden uprising. The *Confession* is an important psychological as well as historical document. Apart from conveying Bakunin's state of mind as a prisoner of the autocracy, it reveals his deep-seated pan-Slavic and anti-German sentiments, his distrust of parliamentary government, and his plan for the creation of a secret revolutionary society. It is among the most absorbing of all Bakunin's writings, and the tsar read it with care, underlining the text and making marginal comments, which are reproduced in the present edition. Judging it a "very interesting and instructive" work, he gave it to the tsarevitch, Alexander II, for his edification.

For the next seventy years the *Confession* remained in the archives of the political police. Its existence, however, was not a secret, and on one occasion the government printed extracts from it to embarrass and discredit Bakunin. Yet the publication of the full text in 1921 aroused a flurry of controversy. Bakunin's self-abasing appeals for clemency were greeted with contempt by his detractors, while his defenders pointed to his criticisms of the Russian bureaucracy and his refusal to name accomplices. The *Confession*, however, must not be seen in simple terms. Neither an abject recantation nor a courageous gesture of defiance, it was a mixture, as Bakunin confided to Herzen, of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, fancy and truth. Entombed in the fortress, Bakunin was

fighting for his health, his sanity, his very survival, and his tone of contrition was a necessary expedient if he was ever to regain his freedom.

Written in Russian, the *Confession* has been translated into German, Czech, French, Polish, and Italian, but only excerpts have previously appeared in English. We are therefore indebted to Robert C. Howes for this workmanlike rendition, as well as to Lawrence D. Orton, who has provided a solid introduction and detailed annotations, making use of earlier editions and of the many articles—by Max Nettlau, B. P. Kozmin, M. P. Sazhin, and Vera Figner, among others—inspired by the original publication of the document. The *Confession* is remarkable not only for the light which it sheds on Bakunin's personality but for its account, by a leading participant, of the turbulent events of the 1840s. Professors Howes and Orton are to be congratulated for making this important work accessible to the English reader.

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IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE: PROPHETS AND CONSPIRATORS IN PREREVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA. By *Adam B. Ulam*. New York: The Viking Press, 1977. xiv, 418 pp. Illus. \$15.00.

The comprehensive title, with the subtitle "Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia," suggests a mixed bag, and the contents of Professor Ulam's impressive volume do not altogether belie the first impression. The period is comparatively brief—from the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 till the collapse of the People's Will organization in about 1883 after the repression which followed the assassination of Alexander II. Every Russian who in that pregnant period warred against the autocracy with pen, pistol, or bomb is swept into the net. The immense and scattered literature, much of it contemporary, some dating from the Soviet period, has been thoroughly combed. Personal memoirs, not the most reliable kind of historical source, figure largely in it. Some of the anecdotes may have grown in the telling, but there is no reason to doubt the substantial correctness of the picture. Even those moderately well acquainted with the period will find unfamiliar and rewarding material in Professor Ulam's pages.

The main thread of the narrative runs from publicity and propaganda to terrorism, from Herzen to the People's Will; and Professor Ulam's chief preoccupation is with the character and causes of the change. He recognizes the sincerity of the genuine, though often naïve, beliefs of the narodniks, and the idealism which inspired even many of the terrorists. But he perhaps underestimates the force of the disillusionment when the early promise of Alexander II's reforming zeal was not fulfilled, and the extent of the revulsion and horror triggered by the later repressions. The battle between those who hoped for peaceful reform and those who were convinced that nothing but force could shake a monstrous and hated authority—the dilemma which tormented Herzen to the end of his days—was lost some time in the 1860s.

The book inevitably challenges comparison with Professor Venturi's *Roots of Revolution*, now more than twenty years old. Professor Ulam has dug up many fresh sources, and has provided the student with a greater wealth of detail. But one should still go to Venturi for the deep feeling for the period which is sometimes lacking in his successor. No doubt, increasing commercial and financial activity accounted for the rise of a group of wealthy Jews, some of whom achieved a kind of official acceptance. No doubt, the big wave of pogroms in the countryside did not come till later. But can one really say that "to the bulk of the Jewish population Alexander II became known as the good emperor"? It may be just a matter of words. But it does jar a little to have Chernyshevskii's *What is to be Done?* described as "a silly tale," and Nechaev