

reform of 1864. But following immediately on the failure of the radicals to elicit popular approval in 1873–74, terrorism provoked overreaction from the government. One may agree, though without finding persuasive Pipes's implied dismissal of nearly 1,000 active cases of antistate crimes in 1880 as insignificant because there were "nearly 100 million inhabitants" of the empire. The result was that "all the elements of the police state were present in imperial Russia," though it was probably not "a full-blown police state," for there were too many "loopholes." Still, the repression was enough to "radicalize Russian society." By this is meant the Liberation Movement and the resulting constitution of 1906. And there we are left; even the last remark is in the nature of epilogue. Pipes's story is over.

Despite the emphasis given to the 1880s, there are incautious statements concerning this period: Pobedonostsev was "the power behind the throne,"—a view on which recent research has cast much doubt; Alexander II "was to have signed" the Loris-Melikov "constitution" on March 1, 1881—but he approved it on February 17; the Okhrana (or *okhrannye otdeleniia*) is described as being formed in 1881—as a branch of a unit not created until 1898. However, the main problem is not how Pipes interprets the 1880s, but why he closes the book on prerevolutionary Russia over three decades before the Revolution.

For the author's emphasis on the importance of law—he has an excellent list (p. 289) of measures fundamentally affecting Russian life which were never enacted into law at all or were casually tacked on to other documents—and society, as distinguished from the state, and of the way that Russian history suffered from the weakness of both, we may all be grateful. He has given us a learned and deeply reflective book, and his final assessment may look more balanced to historians in 2075 than it looks to me now. One would like, however, to see in a book about the long history of a great people more sensitivity to positive traits, greater readiness to praise what is at all praiseworthy, and more sympathy and warmth for the human beings discussed, than the author was able to muster in this volume.

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ALEXANDER I: TSAR OF WAR AND PEACE. By *Alan Palmer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. xxi, 487 pp. \$15.00.

Alan Palmer is one of the best popular writers on the Napoleonic period. After his *Napoleon in Russia* and *Metternich*, we now have his biography of a third major figure of that tumultuous era. As in his earlier works, Palmer writes with verve and shows a wide acquaintance with the memoir literature.

However, almost every cliché of the old historiography rides again in this work. Alexander is portrayed as vaguely liberal, but weak, emotional, mystical, and messianic—and nothing more. So weak was he that the most serious danger to his power at the beginning of his reign was his mother. (Count von der Pahlen, who really was a threat, hectoring and bullying the young sovereign, is hardly noticed.) Not only Alexander's will but also his traditional autocratic power is underestimated. Palmer finds that the nobility had wrung privileges from Catherine II and "Alexander did not dare to take the reins of government away from the old oligarchic families" (p. 48)—as if they had ever had them!

At times the author notes, unawares, actions which do not fit his model. Though he stresses the tsar's inability to accept criticism, he relates that when

Czartoryski wrote a long letter scolding Alexander after Austerlitz the sovereign accepted it "with pained forbearance rather than anger" (p. 118). Again, after the unpopular Tilsit alliance Palmer records Alexander's "fatalistic self-confidence" and the "surprising risks" he took (p. 149). The author soon reverses himself, however. After giving the unanimous contemporary opinion on the great menace of a conspiracy, he concludes that there was no such danger except a grave threat, again, from the tsar's mother! Caulaincourt's warning to Napoleon of Alexander's "tenacity of purpose" is noted but Palmer does not give it credence; the tsar's vow to retreat, if defeated, to the utmost ends of the earth is dismissed as high rhetoric. The tsar's diplomacy on the eve of the invasion is portrayed as vacillating, though Napoleon testified to the skill of it.

On the tsar's vindictiveness, Palmer quotes Metternich: "Tsar Alexander believes it is his duty to Moscow to blow up the Tuileries" (p. 275); Palmer believes this to be an "over-simplification" but states that it "caught faithfully enough the irrationality of Alexander's mood." This might well have been the mood of the Russian soldiers, but precisely for that reason, Alexander imposed strict discipline upon his forces to protect the city.

In matters of foreign policy Palmer himself often oversimplifies. Panin was removed because he was "too reactionary for Alexander's policy of conciliating France" and had criticized "the liberal opinion or prejudices which La Harpe had inspired" in the tsar's youth (p. 56). But Alexander's liberal opinions were no longer active after his struggle with Pahlen and company. Nor was he primarily concerned to conciliate France or, in another old cliché, to follow an isolationist policy: he maintained his father's guarantees to the rulers of Baden, Würtemberg, and Bavaria and to the king of Sardinia, blocking Bonaparte's expansionist path.

At Tilsit we have Alexander the Fool, duped and entranced by the French emperor. Palmer makes no reference to the work of Sirotkin and others which shows that the tsar bargained shrewdly despite Russia's weakness. Palmer brands Alexander unfair to his allies during the war of 1812—the tsar supposedly withholding his war aims. But, on the contrary, it was the tsar who gave away his bargaining cards by first calling (in December 1812) for the liberation of Europe. Palmer then portrays Alexander as intransigent for wishing to press on to overthrow Napoleon, but has to concede that the tsar was right in believing that cannons rather than diplomacy would bring the war to its end.

The author posits Alexander's mysticism as the driving force in his foreign policy after 1812 and exaggerates the influence of Baroness von Krüdener, "holiest of the campfollowers," "the pocket prophetess." Alexander may have said, "My heart was filled with love for my enemies," but he kept his piety and politics separate.

Alexander's internal policies receive little attention. He is rightly blamed for his failure to provide the empire with a wise administration, but Palmer devotes little space to his attempts to do this and no space to the formidable obstacles. Along with the deepening reaction, Palmer might have noted that the tsar had received the names of most of the future Decembrist conspirators from his secret police yet refused to crack down on them, observing that he had once held such opinions himself. Palmer rightly draws attention to the military colonies as a reform intended to be enlightened, but it is hardly believable that "the soldier became, in Alexander's dream, almost a 'Noble Savage,' practising domestic virtues in Arcadian delights . . ." (p. 347).

One must also protest unfairness to others. Napoleon is described after his famous interview with Dolgorukii as "seared with rage" at the Russian's presumption, whereas, in fact, he was pleased at having duped the insolent envoy into thinking that he was afraid of the Russians and anxious to withdraw. Pushkin is twice victim of allusions that mislead. No doubt the tsar was pleased to receive a verse epistle written "in love and gratitude to our great monarch" from the star pupil at Tsarskoe Selo. But Pushkin was then only fifteen; he wrote at the invitation of a government minister; he never allowed these verses to be reprinted. And as for Pushkin's remark on the flood of 1824—"it serves accursed Petersburg right"—the passage has a different ring when the next phrase is added: "voilà une belle occasion à vos dames de faire bidet."

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DAUGHTER OF A REVOLUTIONARY: NATALIE HERZEN AND THE BAKUNIN-NECHAYEV CIRCLE. Edited with an introduction by *Michael Confino*. Translated by *Hilary Sternberg* and *Lydia Bott*. LaSalle, Ill.: Library Press, 1973. 416 pp. \$8.95.

This is the latest collection of documents (mainly letters) unearthed by Confino in the manuscript collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Many of the documents have already appeared in earlier publications—in *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* and *Encounter* and in Confino's *Violence dans la violence* (Paris, 1973). He has supplemented them with excerpts from published memoirs and other sources which illuminate the history of Sergei Nechaev's relationship with Natalie Herzen, Bakunin, Ogarev, and their émigré associates in Switzerland. Approximately one-third of the collection is devoted to Natalie Herzen's heretofore unpublished correspondence. Letters by and to her reveal in detail the style of life, sensibilities, and personal trials of the Herzen ménage during the 1860s. Though not shaped into a narrative like E. H. Carr's *Romantic Exiles*, Confino's documents tell their own story. All of them have been translated into English but, unfortunately, not always gracefully. The opening line of the "Catechism of the Revolutionist" is translated: "The revolutionary is a *dedicated* [rather than *doomed*] man." This mistranslation significantly alters the character of the document.

An excellent introduction increases the value of the collection. Confino explores once again the bizarre events of the Bakunin-Nechaev scandal. Suggestive rather than exhaustive, Confino does not try to present a full psychological analysis of either this or the Nechaev-Natalie Herzen relationship. He has rendered a considerable service by making the materials available for further analysis. Nowhere can one find a better concrete picture of Nechaev's techniques of psychological manipulation or of the complex reactions which he evoked. Both the vulnerability and resiliency of the émigré revolutionists are dramatically revealed. One can hardly imagine any further discoveries telling as much about the atmosphere of l'affaire Nechaev as Confino's documents.

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