

Daniel R. Brower. *Training the Nihilists: Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975. Pp. 248. \$12.50.

Franco Venturi's classic *Il populismo russo* has dominated the study of the Russian revolutionary movement since it was published in 1952. It must be a courageous, or reckless, scholar who would seek to supplant his massive documentation of the lives of the radical intelligentsia, the peasant movement, the terrorists and the origins of the workers' movement under the Tsars. Professor Brower is fortunate, as Venturi was, in gaining access to the Soviet state archives of the October revolution as well as the central historical archives (including those of the secret police). He has also studied the memoirs, and the secondary sources, on the radical intelligentsia. His task, and his achievement, is much narrower than Venturi. His problem is not so much historical as sociological. The question he asks is: How did it happen that large numbers of men (a high proportion from the leading families) on proceeding to higher education, became eager recruits to the revolutionary movement, seeking to overturn by violence, agitation, propaganda, education, discussion, the "Kingdom of Darkness", the "abomination" of the Tsarist régime? How was it that it was especially the "best" schools which were most successful in turning out, year after year, the Herzens, the Kropotkins, the Chernishevskys, the Levins — motivated by a single passion and directing their whole lives towards a single aim — the destruction of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and the social system which supported them?

The question has considerable topical relevance: perhaps Professor Brower's solution also carries a moral for our present-day institutions of higher education. Student unrest and radicalism under the Tsars, historically speaking, was an import from Western Europe, deriving from the French revolution (Radishchev) and the revolutionary wars (the Decembrists). By 1840 it is possible to speak of a student "movement" which took the form of discussion groups, alienated from official society by virtue of their admiration for foreign cultures and their study of ideal commonwealths. The problem of revolution was thrust on them by the secret police, and successive Tsars, who perceived them as conspirators similar to the Palace revolutionaries in the Guards' regiments. This form of organization, the student cells, resembling an extended family, survived police persecution, death sentences, Siberian exile, personal violence of an incredibly brutal character, up to the assassination of Alexander II in 1881. At that point it was superseded by the organization of trade unions and embryonic political parties.

Brower deals with this "school of dissent" as it developed, between 1840 and 1880. It was primarily recruited from, and organized by, student victims of police brutality, arbitrary administrative action, relatives of executed revolutionaries, criminal and psychotic elements, religious dissenters, adolescent romantics and poverty-stricken *raznochintzy* (sons of priests, shopkeepers, waiters, etc.).

The demand for specialists, following the Crimean War (1856) and the Emancipation of the Serfs (1861) resulted in a great expansion of secondary and higher education. The needs of the bureaucratic machine for well-educated functionaries provided opportunities for training. These were associated with a vicious failure-rate (50% in some cases) which generated student protest about such items as compulsory military dress, excessive punishments of

individual protestors, narrow curricula, hopeless teaching methods, ignorant professors, etc. etc. In turn, these protests led to arbitrary administrative action — closing of universities or classes for a year or so, drafting of students into the army, breaking-up of peaceful meetings, the use of *agent-provocateurs* and “show trials”, civil executions.

The women’s movement for social and educational emancipation was another important contribution — schools of dissent included women as theoreticians, helpmeets, active propagandists and terrorists, agitators.

Thus, side-by-side with the official career-oriented institutions the school of dissent functioned as a parallel organization, recruiting its personnel from the same sources, with its own “counter culture” norms and activities, its own curriculum and its own rewards and sanctions. Continuing efforts to suppress the radical student movement invariably failed. “The young helmsmen of the impending storm”, as Herzen designated the radical student intelligenzia, survived, providing a theoretical basis, an inspiration as well as devoted workers for the broader revolutionary movements which took over from the circles in 1881. The successful and long-prepared assassination of Alexander II by Zhebyabov and his circle was at once the finest hour of the student circles and also the moment of anti-climax. Nothing followed from this *auto-da-fé*, except more police persecution, the setting-back of constitutional reforms, a new Tsar and a return to the barracks-régime of the unmourned Nicholas I.

Professor Brower covers this whole development in a masterly way, giving us a considerable number of new insights. He does not add much to our store of information on the period — the fact of the matter is that being a student movement, anxious to persuade and convince others of the corrections of their views, and the rectitude of their conduct, the Russian radical movement has certainly the most extensive and detailed documentation of any social movement with the possible relevance to an understanding of our own situation as well as its intrinsic interest, this scholarly work should be studied especially by those in day-to-day contact with students in higher education.

John McLeish
The University of Alberta

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R. F. Dearden, P. H. Hirst and R. S. Peters (editors). *Education and the Development of Reason*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972. Pp. xiv, 536. \$18.25.

It is perhaps extremely unusual, if not preposterous, to begin a review by puzzling over the seemingly trivial question whether the work under scrutiny is best described as a book or as a volume. Yet, perverse as this approach may seem to what is unquestionably an important work, it is precisely this sort of question which, like a nagging aftertaste, one feels compelled to react to once one reaches the end of the work.

The problem arises, it would appear, partly from incongruities in the introduction itself and partly from the discrepancy between what seems to be offered as the *raison d’être* of the work on the one hand, and its organization and content on the other.

In a two-and-a-half-page introduction to the work, Hirst begins by noting that “anyone familiar with contemporary writing on education cannot but be