

(so he has constructed his article) he remains obscure: thus, "Because Billington has managed to breathe new life into a rather tired old form, the historical survey, his book is a useful point of departure for a query into current practices in English-language surveys and textbooks in Russian history" (page 119); "Billington's book is not a textbook, at least in the usual pejorative [*sic*] sense of the word. But is his not what our textbooks ought to be?" (page 121); "Billington's work cannot be pigeonholed. . . . One is forced to conclude that his work is *sui generis*" (page 124); and (the concluding sentence of the article) "It might even inspire some enterprising scholar to write a better textbook of Russian history" (page 127).

Over here *The Icon and the Axe* costs £5. Shouldn't your readers have been given better grounds for investing that much money in one book?

May 18, 1967

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TO THE EDITOR:

The review by Ethel Dunn of Klibanov's book on the Russian sectarians [*Slavic Review*, March 1967] disturbed me as I could not make out whether she agreed with Klibanov's interpretation of the sectarian movement or not. The attitude of Klibanov towards the sectarians, I take it, was influenced by Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, whose five-volume work on the sectarians was published in 1911.

The revolutionists had, at one time, believed that the dissident sects could be enlisted as allies in their struggle against the government. To this end, Bonch-Bruevich had been instructed by the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic party to undertake a thorough investigation of the sects, out of which emerged his voluminous work. The result was complete disillusionment of the Social Democrats with the sectarians as prospective allies. Klibanov has apparently followed Bonch-Bruevich in his interpretation.

But this disillusionment has, apparently, turned into hostility, and it is necessary to denigrate them in some way. I cannot speak with confidence of all the sectarians nor do I hold a brief for them, but of the Dukhobors, of whom I know something, surely it is absurd to ascribe purely economic motives to their decision to emigrate to Canada. I could not help wondering whether either the author or reviewer was familiar with the publications of the Dukhobors that were printed in England by Tolstoi's publishing house.

The Dukhobors had always been pacifist but after the introduction of universal military service had compromised with the government by doing noncombatant service. However, Peter Verigin, coming under the influence of Tolstoi, had induced his followers to refuse to bear arms. Verigin was himself sent into exile, and the Dukhobors turned over to a disciplinary battalion. The bonfire that consumed their rifles was what led to the infliction of severe flogging. In the storm that followed, Tolstoi intervened to persuade the government to allow the Dukhobors to emigrate.

Whatever one may say of the Dukhobors, mercenary motives have played almost no part in their history.

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