

PETER ARKAD'EVICH STOLYPIN: PRACTICAL POLITICS IN LATE TSARIST RUSSIA. By *Mary Schaeffer Conroy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1976. xii, 235 pp. \$10.75.

THE AGRARIAN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIALIST-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY: FROM ITS ORIGINS THROUGH THE REVOLUTION OF 1905-1907. By *Maureen Perrie*. New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1976. xii, 216 pp. \$15.95.

One would expect these two monographs to share a common focus, since both the Socialist Revolutionaries and Premier Stolypin believed that Russia's future ultimately depended upon a resolution of the peasant question. Unfortunately, Mary Conroy's study of Stolypin devotes only three pages to his peasant policy. Instead, she has taken on the arduous task of proving that Stolypin was seriously committed to political change, "in a manner more in tune with Russian reality than were the more radical contemporary reformers." From this perspective, the author notes that Stolypin's "imperialistic and chauvinistic outlook was both logical and characteristic of the age in which he lived," while his *zemstvo* proposals reflected an awareness that any attempt to allow "often illiterate and politically inexperienced peasants to dominate the *zemstva* might have damaged local self-government." The testimony of Stolypin's daughter and friends, a number of British diplomats, and the head of the St. Petersburg Okhrana is cited in support of the scarcely controversial view that Stolypin was not the most politically reactionary of Russia's government ministers. The evidence presented is sufficient to convince the reader that at times Stolypin felt friendliness toward the Poles, a relative tolerance toward the Jews, and an impartial suspicion of left-wing and right-wing extremism. But there is no evidence presented to suggest that such feelings had any serious practical impact upon his activities as a government official. While it may be interesting to learn that Stolypin's "expression grew darker" with anger and irritation when he spoke of the anti-Semitic Union of the Russian People, as Conroy notes, Stolypin went on to subsidize the organization's founder and other extreme right-wing political figures to the tune of three million rubles annually. And if (as Conroy suggests) Stolypin warned against excessive repression in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1905, while maintaining the right of local officials to impose a sentence of banishment to Siberia without trial for persons accused of vaguely defined political offenses, it is difficult to distinguish him from other reactionary ministers in his political practice, however superior he may have been to them in intent, intelligence, or personal integrity. It is in his economic policies that Stolypin differed most markedly from reactionary government leaders, but the author has little to say on this issue.

For Stolypin and for Russian Social Democrats, the Socialist Revolutionaries were the romantics *par excellence*, blind and insensitive to the complexities faced by tough-minded political realists. This view of the S.R.'s has been generally accepted by Soviet and Western scholars. The originality of Maureen Perrie's modest study of the early years of the S.R. Party lies in its suggestion that S.R. commitment to the peasantry may not have been any more romantic than Stolypin's faith in the hardy entrepreneur or Lenin's belief in the urban proletariat.

Perrie's discussion of the formative influences on the early S.R.'s is interesting but sketchy. The emphasis is primarily on political behavior of the Socialist Revolutionaries and on their programmatic statements, as shaped by the challenge of Marxism and Chernov's inspiring political contacts with the peasants of Tambov and Saratov in the 1890s. Although the writings of Chernov and S.R. programs of the first decade of the twentieth century clearly reflect the impact of Mikhailovskii's moral vision and the economic perspectives of Vorontsov and Daniel'son, no concrete reference is made to the S.R. debt to the Russian Populist tradition. The most valuable research in this

book relates to the Revolution of 1905, when the S.R.'s were confronted with a vastly expanded arena for revolutionary political activity. Perrie is less concerned to assess motives or condemn failures than Oliver Radkey, whose work deals only briefly with the behavior of S.R.'s before 1917; she focuses instead upon an analysis of the social composition of the S.R. Party and the peasant movement in 1905-7. Her investigations suggest that the largest share (45.6 percent) of S.R. Party members active in 1905 were workers and artisans. According to statistical material taken from the work of S. M. Dubrovskii and A. Shestakov, and from contemporary research of the Imperial Free Economic Society, the repartitional commune provided the organizational structure for most peasant attacks upon gentry property, while the active revolutionaries in the village tended to be "middle" peasants who neither hired labor nor hired themselves out to work for others. Although the research of the Imperial Free Economic Society is methodologically flawed, and further analysis of S.R. Party membership is needed, as it stands Perrie's evidence poses a striking challenge to conventional Marxist and non-Marxist assessments of the S.R. Party and the peasantry in 1905 and afterward. In the context established by her work, the stubborn but increasingly defensive S.R. insistence upon communal peasant attitudes and a laboring poor, which included both "middle" peasants and hired hands, does not appear utopian. At the same time, Perrie's account makes it difficult to claim that in 1905-7 S.R.'s denied the capitalist propensities of the "strong" commune peasant, the possible limits to revolution in a backward society, or the dangers of spontaneous peasant violence. In their response to the peasant question, the S.R.'s emerge as activists who were at least as realistic and certainly as fallible as their political rivals. If we are to understand the evolution of Socialist Revolutionary Party leaders into the political incompetents of 1917, it will be necessary to look to S.R. policy on questions of party organization and the state, and to the work begun by Manfred Hildermaier on the demoralization of the S.R. Party in the wake of the Stolypin assault upon the peasant commune.

ESTHER KINGSTON-MANN

University of Massachusetts, Boston

V. D. NABOKOV AND THE RUSSIAN PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, 1917. Edited by *Virgil D. Medlin* and *Steven L. Parsons*. Introduction by *Robert O. Browder*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976. viii, 188 pp. \$12.50.

Vladimir Dmitr'evich Nabokov was an eminent Russian liberal and Kadet who, during the February Revolution, became head of the new Provisional Government's chancellery. From that position he was able to observe, and even participate in, the inner circle of the government during the critical first two months of the revolution, and he remained active in the revolution as a Kadet leader even after leaving the chancellery. These two vantage points, plus his own acumen, make his memoir one of the most valuable sources on the revolution. The book is especially useful as a description of the work of the Provisional Government and of the concerns of the men active in 1917, because Nabokov's account, written in 1918, has not been colored by the experiences of 1919-20 which tint so many similar accounts. Perhaps most valuable, however, is his series of sketches of the members of the government, probably as balanced and fair a set of descriptions to be found in any of the literature on the revolution, although not without its own biases.

This presentation, translated and edited by Virgil Medlin and Steven Parsons, is rounded out by Robert Browder's introduction and by the inclusion of Baron B. E. Nol'de's appreciation of Nabokov, originally published in 1922. The editors' footnotes