

Seduced and Abandoned at Columbia

Playing it Straight at Columbia U.

R. L. Crossland

Squinting into the poorly lit, smoke-blurred pub, one stumbles among crowded tables, bordered by serried booths manned with boozey collegians. The walking wounded weave about in the contemporary student's characteristic attire of discarded military haberdashery. Though beards and mustaches are in evidence they seem strangely less repugnant. Even the ubiquitous buttons are different from those adorning the radical rich of "our generation," for these buttons proclaim disturbingly: "Tell It to Hanoi," "No Amnesty," "Free Prague," "Jim Buckley for Senator," and mysteriously "Irish Republican Army," or "Captain Budweiser Lives."

Everywhere there are large pitchers of frosty beer indicating that at least these young, idealistic veterans are Hemingway's idealists. Though most of

the externals of the now generation are there, the substance is different. These students might exude the fatalism of those at war, but you probably have never heard of them. They never made the front pages. They fought for ideals but their ideals never impressed CBS.

"The Folsom Prison Blues" just barely carries above the discordant hum of the crowd. In one corner a bulky ex-football player elicits giggles from a trinity of nurses and adds a roar of his own. Three inspired warriors retreat from their much-littered booth in the far corner and boisterously weave a path to the door. A waitress (wench in the vernacular) collects the empty pitchers and dumps the ashtrays onto the floor. This is where the defenders of forsaken ideals rehabilitate. These are the veterans who fought for

Columbia. No one writes editorials or poems about them. For these young minds were not destroyed by their vices or velleities. They were exploited for their strengths by dissimulating administrators who quietly sold them out. Though the Tudor decor is hardly redolent of it, this seamy pub--The Rail--is the last stronghold of Columbia's counter-revolution.

It was here at The Rail, in 1968, that Frank Dann and Paul Vilardi organized the Majority Coalition. That spring the Majority Coalition formed a defensive cordon hoping to keep open Low Library, the main arena for campus demonstrations. Members of the Coalition were in ties and jackets, clean-shaven and grim, as if such appearances could jar Columbia to sanity. When attacked with lead pipes and bicycle chains, the coalition members had to abandon the ties, for they provided too easy a handhold, their jackets were torn and stubble appeared on bitter chins. A sock full of pennies, called a "Fiji special" after the fraternity that developed it, became the MC's standard weapon. For a time guerrilla war raged. Finally, after what seemed interminable vacillation, the administration was compelled to call in police.

The Rail has its colorful cadre of steady patrons. Dave Carpenter (see the following article) attired in a fisherman's knit sweater and a balmoral, bellows Scottish regimental ditties gloriously, but with little attention to tune. One of the twelve students to, in 1969, sue the university's trustees for maladministration, he is now on disciplinary probation for constituting "a threat of violence" when he and three or four others led an incursion into an SDS occupied building. The New York Times described Carpenter as "a highly politically active jock." Kind of chewy--but typical Times. Roger Crossland, wearing a paratrooper jacket, sits at another booth and converses with a knot of oarsmen in garish purple sweatshirts. Allegedly he tossed two photographers out a first floor window during the same raid. John Meyer, visiting from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, stands near Carpenter's table. Meyer's nervous energy adds a new turbulence to the smoke as he scurries out of the bar with a folder of leaflets under his arm. Meyer, son of one of National Review's senior editors, splendidly fills the role of the student Right's Tom Paine--though somewhat more versatile, for he has been the National Intercollegiate Chess Champion (another of the Times' jocks?). Entering as Meyer leaves are Lehr and Rossetto, the authors of caustic parodies of SDS propaganda which first confused, then amused the university's student body. For example, they had deplored the "rape" of Anguilla by the university supported British war machine and founded a mock pressure group, the Columbia Italian-Americans (CIA). They call themselves the Ministry of Disinformation.

And the Rail has its supporting cast, but these straights are a little louder, a little rougher, a little more bitter than their more publicized adversaries. They have the same intensity of purpose (when it is



Dissent is Conformity

the left's purpose the Times calls it sincerity) yet a little more humor than the left's youthful idealists. One fraternity held a rally last year against the Good Humor ice cream company. Good Humor men in their militaristic white uniforms are part of a neofascistic plot to condition the masses. And "Ban the Popsicle" for today's popsicle sticks are tomorrow's punji stakes!

But after a reverie of sunshine the sadness rolls in. Like Antaeus, the straight is suspended in an environment from which he can never derive much strength. He is like one of Larteguy's Centurions, abandoned and accursed by those he defends.

Columbia draws a greater proportion of its student body from outside New York than the other Manhattan colleges, a situation which has caused the administration more anguish than it would care to admit. Bending with the student wind is far simpler at governmentally funded CCNY and NYC where student bodies are homogeneous and ingrown. Concessions can not be made in the benevolent manner of men of good will bending to inevitable progress, and the moderates and conservatives at Columbia are viewed as more terrible than the New Left because they do not understand the need to bend. So Columbia's administration carefully courts its enemies and rebuffs its supporters. The dropouts and transfers since the riots of '68 have been largely from the Majority Coalition element. This is a surprising development when one notes the alleged leftist disenchantment with Columbia during and since the '68 disturbances.

But from a typical conversation at The Rail you can draw your own conclusions. "I'm cutting out. I've had it up to here," a freshman with wiry blonde hair asserts sourly. He plans to transfer to Stanford. Another in the booth observes skeptically that the ROTC building there has been

razed three times. "Yeh? Well at least I've seen some balance there, not like Columbia's phony claim to geographical distribution and heterogeneity. Yeh, heterogeneous for a City school." He clicks the salt shaker against the pitcher. "In every class I'm in, I feel like the token 'reactionary.' In class my contributions are greeted with the instructor's supercilious grins." An upperclassman in a ski jacket nods, "Here the dissenters are the Establishment."

At the bar, there is a scuffle between two "townies" or non-students. A pair of varsity wrestlers climb over the bar, subdue and then force the transgressors out the door in the time it takes to chug a stein.

But it is time to leave and as we go we notice over the entrance a large American flag. At The Rail things are different. Bartenders always seem to understand.

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R. L. Crossland presently serves in the Armed Forces in Vietnam.

A Letter to the Grateful Administration of Columbia University from one of their Counter-Revolutionaries

Gentlemen:

Four years and over \$8,000 ago, I came to Columbia College expecting to be able to get a good liberal arts education and in general spend my college years in the peaceful pursuit of this goal. Well, we all have our dreams! In four years at Columbia I have witnessed the destruction of a once-honorable institution. I have seen a once-great university become a third-rate political tool for a mob of Vietcong flag-waving animals who trample the rights of anyone who dares to disagree with them. This mob rules while the spineless "leaders" of the university community cringe under their desks (when they can get into the buildings), and talk about whether they are relevant or not. I have seen a once-honored Columbia degree become a worthless scrap of paper while the only real leader Columbia ever had, Dr. Truman, gets the axe because he might offend the sensitivities of the mob. I have seen many of the university's best faculty members pack their bags and leave in frustration or fear or maybe simply because they didn't relish the thought of having their files burned. I have seen the last three spring semesters disrupted with the disrupters getting only a slap on the wrist by the administrators who so want to understand them. Gentle-

men, I've seen all this and I have done my best to fight it. In 1968 I stood with the Majority Coalition when the administration refused to act. I went to court against the trustees when we thought that might stir them to head off future disruptions. Last spring I acted with others to attempt to open the buildings when it appeared that administration was vacillating. Just a few weeks ago I stood with others in front of Hamilton Hall while the mob threw bricks at it to prevent them from smashing their way in. During the last three years I have had my life repeatedly threatened because I chose to stand against the mob and now I'm finished.

Gentlemen, I've had enough; I'm throwing in the towel. I have fought for Columbia for the last four years and now I believe that there is nothing left worth fighting for. Let your little friends wave their Vietcong flags, I'm sure my friends who went to Vietnam and never returned would appreciate their youthful idealism. Sit around and debate the war in your cozy senate meetings while Columbia slides into the cesspool; I no longer care. I am leaving Columbia this week to return to my native land, the United States of America, and I only hope its people will take me back.

I will not attend Commencement, that would delay my departure too long and I can't get out of here soon enough. You may mail my diploma to my home address and may I never see or hear of Columbia again. You have said that I should seek out my teachers and attempt to barter for a passing grade for my courses. This I refuse to do. I will not chase them all over the East Coast because they can't get into their classrooms or offices in this great university, which I am told by the president is still open. I have been told that I should try and finish my papers, but the last time I tried to get into the library I met a barrage of obscenities and was threatened with a club if I even attempted to try and get to the doors. The academic environment, or rather the lack of it, at Columbia, at this time makes any attempt at scholastic endeavor ludicrous.

Gentlemen, I am angry and bitter not with the leftists who do what is predictable, but with you, gentlemen. You have failed me and every other student who came to Columbia not for a war or to turn the university into a political tool for his pet cause, but for an education. For those like me Columbia is no longer worth fighting for, not when those whose duty it is to protect her fail to meet any crisis with courage and leadership. Gentlemen, continue with your myth that Columbia is still open, even though you can't get into your offices and the students can't get into the library. I want no more of it.

Alma Mater? An aging prostitute probably has more honor left.

David B. Carpenter
Box 146

Barrington, Illinois, U.S.A.

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David B. Carpenter is a law student at Emory University.



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The Hunt for the Czar

by Guy Richards

Doubleday. 254 pp. 7.95

Pick up any recent history of twentieth-century Europe. Look through the index for "Czar Nicholas II." Somewhere in that textbook you will find a paragraph on the execution of the Czar and his family in Ekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk) in far western Siberia. Often the textbook will give a grisly account of the bloody deaths, the hacking to peices of the corpses, the pouring of sulphuric acid on the remains. So died the Romanovs, and with them the last great European dynasty! A tragedy, and yet a necessary step in the march of progress! Such is the fate of reactionary monarchs who oppose history.

Unfortunately for the textbooks, it never happened. Of course, as all good progressive humanists know in their hearts, it should have happened. The fact that no bodies were ever recovered should not be regarded as evidence (though no acid works as fast as the account demands). The fact that the main source of the details is a 1920 book by Nicholas Sokolov--an intensely anti-Bolshevik White Russian judge commissioned by White Russian authorities to conduct the investigation seven months after the "massacre" (during the White Russian liberation of Siberia)--is not at all suspicious. Also insignificant is the odd fact that the financing behind the book came from the Czar's mother, the Dowager Czarina, who insisted to her intimate friends until her death in exile in 1928 that the whole family had escaped and was well. Yet publicly she maintained that they were all dead, and that is what is important, right? It almost sounds like the words of Rousseau in the introduction to his *Essay on the Origin of Inequality*: "Let us begin by laying facts aside, as they do not affect the question."

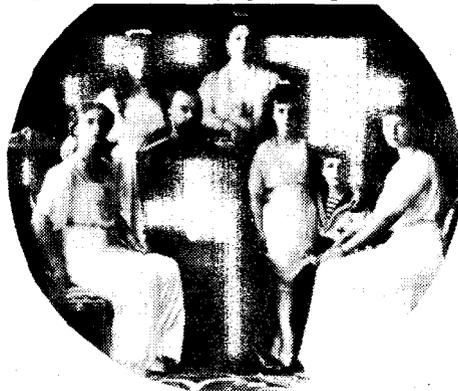
The evidence did not convince many early reporters, most notably the French official, Joseph Lasies, whose refutation of the legend appeared in the same year as Sokolov's. But the other side won the battle. Robert Wilton, correspondent with the *London Times*, stayed with the massacre account, and that is the one which the governments officially accepted. As Wilton said in his confrontation with Lasies in the Ekaterinburg railway station in May 1919: "Commander Lasies, even if the Czar and the Imperial Family are living, it is necessary to say they are dead!"

All of this is faithfully recorded in Guy Richard's startling book, *The Hunt for the Czar*. Richards, a successful New York newspaperman, has provided compelling evidence that the family escaped in 1918. The book is one of the best detective stories one could wish for. He is careful not to overstate his case; he lets his evidence do that for him. The fact that no one has even bothered to make such a search before is discouraging; the fact that it is unlikely

that any textbooks will rewrite the record in the light of new evidence is even more discouraging.

When I was originally asked to review this book by the editor of the most competent (though little known) book review column in any West Coast newspaper, the editor did not know what the book contained. When I submitted my short review, calling attention to only the most verifiable facts in the book, he was obviously displeased. "Nut stuff," he said. He hesitated to publish the review for weeks, although I have reviewed for the paper for over five years and am a personal friend of his. Finally he consented to print it, but only after "toning down" my already guarded statements. He did not read the book, refusing on the grounds that he did not read nut stuff. He only glanced at the evidence. His real reason: "I've watched for a review of it. No other paper will touch it." He was willing to admit that a conspiracy of silence might be operating, but he still was not willing to break it.

This is how "climates of opinion," as the late Cornell scholar, Carl Becker, called them, operate in today's society. "Nut stuff" has to be kept out of "respectable" newspapers. Establishments feed on this phenomenon. For example, this liberal editor knows that the newspaper guild is made up of average men who lack very extraordinary qualities; he has said so on numerous occasions. Yet he absolutely refuses to believe that any important event could have happened unless some legitimate newspaper reported it.



God Bless Our Happy Home

When I informed him of the fact that close associates of the Churchill family admit in private that the late Randolph Churchill was the victim of suicide he was literally angered. It couldn't be; a paper would have reported it; and besides, so what? (He is a rabid anglophile.) He doubted my source, a former student at the London School of Economics who was earning his M.A. at the time of Churchill's death. My source insists that the suicide was "well known on campus." Now, it may have been a wild rumor among distinguished professors (one of whom was his directing instructor), but the papers never followed it through. They preferred, apparently, to

leave England's most distinguished non-royal family to its private grief. A fine sentiment, perhaps, but not one easily conformed to by "responsible, modern, all-the-facts, democratic" journalism. Truth becomes limited to what the *Times*--New York or London--wishes to print.

Guy Richards is a different kind of journalist. He really enjoys finding out what happened, even to the point of staking his reputation on his controversial findings. And to Doubleday's great credit, he was permitted to publish his findings. He has found some startling things.

Most impressive is the passport photo his team of Romanov buffs located in the private files of the late David P. Barrows, the former President of the University of California (early 1920s). Barrows was to become General Barrows in the California National Guard; he had been Colonel Barrows in the Allied Expeditionary Force into Siberia in 1918-19, chief of intelligence for Major General Graves. The passport photo, dated 1919, was for Colonel Nicholas Romanov, signed by General Semonov of the White Russian Cossack forces. Also in the files was an autographed photo to Barrows from this same Nicholas Romanov. Though Richards does not mention it, the photo is in an almost identical pose to one of a young, beardless Czar Nicholas. When comparing the two beardless photographs, the resemblance is convincing: same ear, same nose, same mouth, same eyes.

Who was this "Colonel Nicholas Romanov"? Richards' team found one answer buried in the files of the *San Francisco Examiner*. In two articles, 16 October 1919 and 26 July 1920, accounts are given of a visit from Romanov to Barrows. The first claims that the visitor said he was no relation to the Czar; the second reports that he claimed to be the "natural son of Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevitch, uncle of the late Czar." But no record of such a person exists. This the *Examiner* reporters never bothered to trace down. There is a photo of the visitor in the July paper, and Richards includes it in the book. It is not very sharp, and the man looks young, but the photo matches the features of the man on the passport.

This evidence is Richards' "hard" evidence. The bulk of the book is devoted to other matters. First, a peculiar book published in 1920 in California, *Rescuing the Czar*. It is rare. It claims to be the diaries of two men who participated in the rescue. Chapter six of the Richards book is devoted to the hunt for the authors; it appears they have been found. This is probably the most exciting chapter in the book for anyone who regards himself as an historian, professional or amateur.

The editor of the book, "James P. Smyth," turned out to be William R. McGarry, whose biography is available in *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, vol. XXXIX, p. 609. He was, according to Richards, one of America's most successful secret agents of the World War I period.

The interesting figure, however, we know very little about. He seemed to be a mild-mannered newspaperman of the Clark Kent variety, Charles J. Fox, owner of the *North China Star*, published in Tientsin. His son at first could hardly