

bully boys and fascists—with bad practice to offer.

New social issues are first posed and new patterns of human relations are first tried out not by academics but by ordinary people tackling their

own daunting problems in brave and intelligent ways. The academics, who write most of the books, contribute later, when the action is already under way.

## Russian Censorship, Then & Now

*On Police-State Methods—By LEONARD SCHAPIRO*

“SOVIET LITERATURE is the mirror of a transformed and homogeneous society. . . .” These words by the Moscow editor of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* imply that authors are expected to lie, since Soviet society is neither “homogeneous” nor particularly “transformed”—many, of course, do not follow Chakovsky’s precept. But the dictum also illustrates the gulf between censorship today in Russia and in the 19th century. For much of the century literature was virtually free (in spite of his title, Professor Ruud deals with books as well as the press<sup>1</sup>); and even when it was not, restrictions were irksome rather than prescriptive. The point illustrates the essential difference between a police state and an ideological totalitarian state: the police state is generally content to prohibit rather than to prescribe. It is true that 19th-century Russia did spend considerable sums “on bribing domestic or foreign newspapers and authors to portray Russia in a favourable light.” Professor P. A. Zaionchkovsky has discovered in the archives of the Third Department the large sums that were spent on this kind of enterprise—over half the total “secret fund” in 1880, for example. The signal lack of results produced by such expenditure suggests that the security authorities might have been better employed in searching out the conspirators preparing for the murder of Alexander II a year later.

As Dr Ruud’s careful and scholarly investigation shows (and I believe it is the first comprehensive account in English), Russia in the 19th century was very far from being the land of savage censorship that it is popularly believed to be. What appears to have taken place is a two-fold process. On the one hand, there was a long period of the kind of “dismantling” of restrictions which (according to the late Professor Leontovitch) is that which alone characterises liberalism. This gradual development, which culminated in the virtual abolition of censorship in 1906, was the result

of the willing, or unwilling, responsiveness of the autocracy to the continuing pressure of enlightened public opinion. But, on the other hand (as always in Russian history) the liberal trend, strong as it was, was constantly under threat from the traditional, arbitrary barbarity which was never far below the surface.

The reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855) was the grimmest period of censorship. The Emperor himself took a constant interest in what was published, intervened in countless individual cases, and overruled (and penalised) censors whom he considered too lenient. This became particularly evident after the revolutionary year 1848 had caused serious alarm in Russia. The Russian historian of censorship under Nicholas I, Lemke, described 1848 to 1855 as “The Epoch of Censorship Terror.” One could tell countless stories of the harassment of authors for reasons which appear too trivial even to take note of. In 1855 Turgenev was only allowed to publish *A Month in the Country* provided that the heroine was transformed from a married woman into a widow—thus destroying the main point of the play. (This was, of course, on moral grounds.) But in 1852 an obituary on Gogol, which referred to him as “great”, earned Turgenev, by Nicholas’s personal decree, a month in the guard-house, followed by indefinite exile on his estate. One could multiply such instances an hundredfold. The diary of Nikitenko, a most enlightened and liberal-minded man, who for over forty years occupied various posts in the censorship, bristles with indignation at similar incidents. (It was owing to the good fortune that *Dead Souls* was read for censorship by him that the novel was published.)

STILL, WHAT WAS perhaps more remarkable than the idiocies of a bigoted and, at times, illiterate censorship, haunted by the Emperor’s constant fear of rebellion, was the rich content of the literature which escaped through its net. All of Gogol, the best of Turgenev and Goncharov, for example, appeared before 1865. Even more remarkable was

<sup>1</sup> *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804–1906*. By CHARLES A. RUUD. University of Toronto Press, \$39.00, £24.00.

the emergence of serious political journals which between them founded and nurtured the growth of the radical and liberal *intelligentsia*, and which survived with little damage the "reign of terror" after 1848. It was the *Contemporary* (founded by Pushkin in 1856, the year before he was killed), for example, which, with censorship approval in 1863 published Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?*, written in prison. Appalling as it is in terms of literary merit, it inspired a generation of revolutionaries—among them the future Lenin, who read it at the age of 17 in 1887 (after the execution of his brother Alexander Ulyanov) and who later recounted that it had "turned him inside out." It was also during the reign of Nicholas I that the enlightened view developed among some public figures that preliminary and bureaucratic censorship should be abolished, and that writers should merely be answerable to the law if they published seditious, blasphemous, or libellous matter. But such views were clearly premature—until the reform of the law in 1864 for the first time provided Russia with a system of uncorrupt courts which conformed to civilised European procedures. It was perhaps the dismal state of the legal system before 1865 which accounted for the qualified approval of censorship, provided it was liberal and rational, which was occasionally voiced by Pushkin, the historian Granovsky, or Gogol.

THE CENSORSHIP REFORM of 1865 was a tremendous stride forward in the evolution of liberalism in Russia. Yet, at the same time, it retained a degree of arbitrary power so that the autocracy could always, in characteristic Russian fashion, take away with the left hand what it had granted with the right. The movement for reform was inspired by Alexander II, who, while he did not believe in liberal principles, did realise the need for Russia to move along more rational lines, in tune with Western Europe. The Emperor had, indeed, encouraged a good deal of relatively free discussion around the projected emancipation of the serfs—though not to the extent of permitting the founding of a new journal devoted to discussion of problems connected with the emancipation which a group of liberals had planned.

The decree and regulations of 1865 run to 17 pages. Very broadly, preliminary censorship was abolished for all periodicals in both capitals which wished for this, all original writings of more than ten signatures (160 pages) and translations of more than 320 pages. (University and Academy publications were exempt everywhere.) The Ministry of the Interior retained general jurisdiction over censorship, and for this purpose set up a special Administration. Permission had to be obtained to start a new periodical, and a host of

detailed regulations was laid down for editors and publishers. Copies had to be submitted, and a warning could follow: a third warning resulted in suspension. The Minister could institute proceedings in the courts for alleged breaches of the law. But there was also a long list of additional offences, aimed at preventing the undermining of confidence in the established order, or the law, or property. Book stores could stock all books printed in Russia, as well as foreign books "not included in the general catalogue of forbidden books."

The administrative warning system was far from a formality: in the first five years of the reformed rules there were 16 "first warnings", and eight "third warnings" (followed by suspension). A provision in the regulations that the text of the warning had to be published possibly acted as an inhibiting factor in some cases. Before the reform the censor's admonitions remained unknown to the public, which had to wait for many years before their, often hilarious, content was dug out of the archives by industrious editors and scholars. But the long struggle against the powers of the censor which ensued between 1865 and 1906 was largely fuelled by a new factor—the emergence in Russia of a press comparable to that which existed in Western Europe. If it had not been for the senseless assassination of Alexander II on 1 March 1881, which retarded the progress of liberalism in Russia for many years, the flourishing new press would have won greater liberty than that provided in 1865—such as an end to administrative penalties, and much more freedom for all except the most radical publications. By that date newspapers had won a mass readership and respected daily papers began to show signs of independence. Telegraph agencies and technical improvements played an important part in these developments.

ONE OF THE MOST remarkable features of the gradual dismantling of censorship was the role of the reformed courts. By the end of the 1860s, "the courts provided writers, editors and publishers with a defence against government interference, and with several levels of appeal. . . ." The Criminal Code enabled the judges to permit general social criticism, so long as it did not attack specific individuals or institutions. It also recognised the right of the press to report without penalty facts which were in the public record. Powerful and courageous advocates played a notable part in these developments which were no mean achievement in a country which until 1865 had suffered from courts, far below in their standards from those of the civilised world. All in all, by the end of the '60s press trials were becoming "extremely difficult for the prosecution to win."

Book publication also continued to expand after 1865. A notable feature of this development was the mass production of books for the peasant market—for village schools and for enabling adults to learn to read. One such project was initiated by Tolstoy who (with the aid of Sytin, the main publisher for peasants) worked out a scheme for a cheap, simple series which would reflect his moral teachings. Writers and artists contributed their services free. By the late 1880s Sytin had produced a hundred titles in more than twelve million copies, which were sold in the villages by pedlars for one and a half kopecks a copy. However the peasants still preferred their traditional picture-story books. In 1872 the censorship was given additional administrative powers against uncensored books which they objected to, but which were beyond the reach of the ordinary process of law in the courts. But book publishing continued to expand. It doubled within five years of the new rules, and increased in the 1880s.

The autocracy seems to have been powerless to halt the awakening tide of an ever-growing enlightened public opinion, which successfully asserted its right, in the face of all the harassment mustered against it, to criticise, to discuss and to suggest. Deprived of all voice in the public affairs of the state, it won for itself a private arena from which the autocracy never succeeded in excluding it. The revolutionary year of 1905 was almost entirely sparked off by the liberal intelligentsia which had been frustrated in its attempt to persuade the autocracy to allow them even modest participation in central government—the revolutionary parties and “Bloody Sunday” at most fanned the flames ignited by the liberals. In 1906 censorship was virtually abolished.

THE WHOLE STORY of 19th-century censorship shows in the clearest relief the limits of power of a police state, and the difference of such a polity from a totalitarian society.

A police state harasses writers, even silences them occasionally. Its object is to prevent the emergence of truth in certain areas, and to protect the established order. But it shares a common language with the writers. Moreover, after 1865 the Russian authorities were unable to prevent the adjudication of the courts in individual cases; and where a fairly honest legal system comes into being, arbitrariness comes to an end.

The object of the totalitarian state is similar: where it differs from the police state (if this is still the true description of Russia after the reforms of the 1860s) is in its methods. In the first place it invents a language of its own, a language of lies, obfuscations and “double-speak” in order to conform to the ideology and to conceal reality. Writers who stray outside this idiom stand out like

a sore thumb. *Dr. Zhivago* is not anti-communist, let alone anti-Soviet. The reason why the Soviet authorities banned it was because it was written in a truthful idiom, not the “Sovietese” considered appropriate for accounts of the Revolution and the Civil War. But there are two other differences between censorship old and new, which makes the second so much more effective an instrument of repression. The press today is state-owned as well as state-controlled: in the 19th century it was overwhelmingly privately owned. Above all, the Soviet writer is completely denied access to the courts, even the dishonest Party-line courts that operate in all cases which have any political aspect.

THE STORY of censorship in 19th-century Russia is part of the history of the rise of a responsible, educated and enlightened stratum of society, thirsting for the right to participate in shaping the policy of central government—and persistently refused that right. The revolutions of 1905, and ultimately that of 1917 were the result. No doubt there were many reactionaries in 1905 and even in 1917 who solemnly said “I told you so”, and blamed what had happened on the reforms of the 1860s. Yet, even if it is conceivable to imagine that

## THE CAUSES OF WARS

by MICHAEL HOWARD

Essays and lectures by the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford: including analyses of nuclear strategy today, the nature of modern warfare, the writing of history and figures such as Liddell Hart and Kissinger.  
(£10.00)

maurice temple smith  
Gloucester Mansions  
Cambridge Circus  
London WC2  
Tel: 01-836 5188

after the Crimean War Russia could have resisted the many social and economic pressures for change, the outstanding intellectual renaissance which took place in the 19th century could have been kept under only by the kind of tyranny that would have made present-day restrictions look like a boarding-school for young ladies (to use a favourite expression of Lenin).

Dr Ruud has amassed a wealth of material which he has analysed with sound judgment and good scholarly methods. His style is not attractive, and his book is not made easier to follow by what appears to be only superficial acquaintance with

legal terminology. The short introductory chapter on earlier censorship repeats some of the familiar misconceptions about Catherine II—for example, that she closed down journals because she disapproved of their contents. In fact, there is no evidence for this: the reading public was at the time very small, and journals like *The Drone* and *All Sorts of Things* folded for financial reasons. Dr Ruud might with advantage have read Professor Isabel de Madariaga's definitive history of Catherine's reign. But there is no doubt that his book is a valuable and welcome contribution to our understanding of the Russian 19th century.

## Zionists & Jews

### *Religious Strains, Political Difficulties—By MAX BELOFF*

FOR THOSE WHO would understand contemporary Israel, it is necessary to understand the Zionist movement. This remains true even though the population of Israel is increasingly drawn from Jews who were remote from that movement in its formative stages, and were only enabled to leave their places of residence in the Arab world because of that movement's political and military success at the time of the ending of the Mandate and the War of Independence.

But Zionist history except in bare and familiar outline is exceptionally difficult. It requires an understanding of 19th-century gentile society as well as Jewish society and of the nationalist and revolutionary movements which convulsed that century especially in Central and Eastern Europe from which Zionism derived most of its popular strength. A great diversity of circumstance, character, and outlook existed among its leaders and among the powerful opposition to the movement, itself much divided, that helped to frame within Jewry the terms of the debate. In addition, there is the technical point that the documents, published and unpublished, upon which the historian must rely are in many languages—Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Russian, Polish, English and French, not to speak of Turkish and Arabic. Israel may be becoming a monoglot society as immigration slows down and new generations step forward; but the historian of Zionism must still be a polyglot.

Ever since he published (in 1975), his *Origins of Zionism*, it has been clear that in David Vital, an

Oxford-educated Israeli with a family background steeped in Zionism, Zionism has found its historian, at least where the English-speaking world is concerned. Professor Vital's new work<sup>1</sup> consolidates the position won for him by the earlier volume, and excites the appetite for the promised third volume which will bring the story to its apparent triumph in the Balfour Declaration.

The present work covers, with the same scholarly breadth, detachment and excitement as its predecessor, the years stretching from 1897, and the first Zionist Congress, to 1906. Into this decade were crowded Theodor Herzl's short period of leadership, the abortive negotiations with the Sultan of Turkey, the attempts to find an alternative to Palestine (and particularly the "Uganda" affair), the impact upon Jewry of the 1905 Russian Revolution and the pogroms of the revolutionary period.

The narrative has to shift from Eastern to Western Europe, from the pale of settlement to capital cities, from Istanbul to London, Odessa, Vilna. In dealing with these shifts and with the individuals involved, Professor Vital shows the sureness of touch that is the mark of the true historian. But even more important is the fact that the author can enter fully into the ideas and prejudices both of the different schools into which Zionism was and remained divided, and into the no less significant views of its opponents. For the former, the question—highlighted in the Uganda controversy—was how, if the essential was statehood for the Jews, one was to make certain that the State was not merely populated by Jews but was in some sense Jewish. Had Herzl, the typical emancipated Jew, overlooked this aspect of what he was trying

<sup>1</sup> *Zionism: The Formative Years*. By DAVID VITAL. Oxford University Press, £22.50.