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Autocratic Politics, Public Opinion, and Women's Medical Education During the Reign of Alexander II, 1855–1881

The reign of Alexander II witnessed an extraordinary expansion of women's medical education. The post-Crimean War regime saw the establishment of the first Russian medical courses which trained female physicians and the creation of a contingent of women doctors far outnumbering that of any contemporary European state. This remarkable advance of Russian women in the medical profession grew out of the experimental policies and the somewhat erratic nature of Alexander II's rule, which introduced sweeping, but often uncoordinated, domestic reforms and allowed favored statesmen to develop competing policies in their respective ministries.¹ During the period 1855–81, the popular press, reveling in its recent release from Nicholas I's censorship, transformed the question of women's medical education into a major issue of public controversy. At the same time, rival statesmen bandied the question about like a political football in their interministerial struggles. Alexander II, however, failed to take a definite stand on the issue of women's medical education. In the context of the public debate and interministerial disputes, the emperor's ambiguous attitude not only permitted the significant advance in women's medical education, despite considerable high-level opposition, but determined the transitory nature of the advance. Consequently, by 1882, Russia could boast 227 women doctors,² although the medica-

1. An indispensable study of women's education during this period is E. Likhacheva *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii, 1856–1880* (St. Petersburg, 1901). Recent studies which have influenced my interpretation of educational reform under Alexander II are Patrick L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford, 1969); Allen Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery: State Educational Reform in Russia under Count Dmitry Tolstoi* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); and Alexander Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture, 1861–1917* (Stanford, 1970). Useful studies on the nature of autocratic politics include Marc Raeff, *Plans for Political Reform in Imperial Russia, 1730–1901* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966); Alfred J. Rieber, ed., *The Politics of Autocracy: Letters of Alexander II to Prince A. I. Bariatinskii, 1857–1864* (Paris and The Hague, 1966); Alfred J. Rieber, "Alexander II: A Revisionist View," *Journal of Modern History*, 43, no. 1 (March 1971): 42–58; and George L. Yaney, *The Systematization of Russian Government: Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711–1905* (Urbana Ill., 1973).

2. "O zhenskom meditsinskome obrazovanii, 1871–1886 gg.," in *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Leningrada* (TsGIAL), fond 846 (Georgievskii), opis' 1, delo 119, list 89.

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courses which trained them remained a provisional establishment and ready victim of the conservative reaction that followed the assassination of Alexander II.

Three major stages distinguish the history of women's medical education during the reign of Alexander II: women's brief admission to medical schools during the "thaw" of 1855–61, followed by women's flight to Zurich University in 1867–73, and, finally, the establishment of advanced midwifery courses under the War Ministry during the period 1872–82.

During the "thaw" following the abandonment of Nicholaian controls in 1855, preparations for massive educational reform allowed women to enter Russia's traditionally male universities and higher schools. Defeat in the Crimean War had convinced Russian statesmen that educational reform was indispensable for the revitalization of Russia's Great-Power status: the production of able soldiers, administrators, and technicians demanded an overhaul of the school system.³ In order to secure the cooperation of its bureaucratic and academic cadres in the preparation and implementation of reform, the government invited both educators and educational administrators to discuss the impending changes in the educational system and permitted public discussion, albeit within limits, of the existing deficiencies found in tsarist schools.⁴ By welcoming popular participation, the government inadvertently fostered the development of a public opinion which not only criticized existing educational policy, but professed a humanistic philosophy of education that was at variance with the tsarist conception of education as service to the state.⁵ The paucity of girls' schools and the absence of institutes of higher education for women could hardly escape the reforming zeal of the newly developed public attitude. Educators and publicists demanded drastic reform and expansion of women's education. Most of Russia's professorial community advocated admission of women to all university faculties, including medical schools, on an equal footing with men.⁶

Proposals to expand women's educational opportunities were an integral part of the much larger and more volatile woman question—the controversy

3. Alston, *Education and the State*, pp. 43–44; Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery*, p. 24; and Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture*, pp. 35–37.

4. Although educational reform is not discussed by Terence Emmons (*The Russian Landed Gentry and the Peasant Emancipation of 1861* [Cambridge, 1968]), or by Charles A. Ruud ("Censorship and the Peasant Question: The Contingencies of Reform Under Alexander II [1855–1859]," *California Slavic Studies*, vol. 5 [Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1970], pp. 137–67), both historians agree that the exigencies of peasant reform prompted Alexander II to make conciliatory gestures to various interest groups outside the government and to invite their participation, however temporary, in the reform effort.

5. For the humanistic views of two leading educational theorists who advocated the reform of women's education, see "Voprosy zhizni," in N. I. Pirogov, *Izbrannye pedagogicheskie sochineniia*, ed. V. Z. Smirnov (Moscow, 1952), pp. 55–84; and "Odna iz temnykh storon germanskogo vospitaniia" and "Otchet komandirovannogo dlia osmotra zagranichnykh zhenskikh uchebnykh zavedenii kollezhskogo sovetnika K. Ushinskogo," in K. D. Ushinskii, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia: Prilozhenie k zhurnalu "Sovetskaia pedagogika"*, ed. V. Ia. Struminskii (Moscow-Leningrad, 1946), pp. 249–60, 157–91.

6. In response to a ministerial poll of 1861, all Russian University Councils, with the exception of Moscow and Dorpat, agreed to admission of women to university study. See Ministerstvo narodnago prosveshcheniia (abbreviated MNP), *Zamechaniia na proekt obshchago ustava Imperatorskikh Rossiiskikh universitetov* (St. Petersburg, 1862), part 2, pp. 520–27.

over the role and status of women in Russian society.⁷ Radical journalists applauded women's pursuit of university study as the first step toward the emancipation of women and equality of the sexes. Conservative publicists, on the other hand, warned that higher education would divert women from their traditional roles as wives and mothers, thereby endangering both the family and the entire social order. Eulogies about the emancipated woman who defied traditional social barriers in her search for fulfillment in education or medical practice⁸ and caricatures of the *nigilistka* who cropped her hair and donned men's clothes in pursuit of anatomical studies or sexual freedom⁹ punctuated the periodical press. Polemics over the woman question imbued the issue of women's higher education with overtones of social revolution and moral decay.

Relaxation of the censorship made possible the extensive public debate over the social repercussions of women's higher education. At the same time, the loosening of state control over educators and educational administrators permitted admission of women to higher educational institutions. Official recognition of the need for reform, combined with the lack of an overall plan for higher education, prompted the Ministry of Education to grant educational personnel an unprecedented degree of autonomy at the district and local levels. Caught up in the reformist spirit of the times and enjoying their new freedom, various professors and administrators embarked upon a series of liberal experiments in higher education. One such experiment was the admission of women to university lectures and medical laboratories.

Numerous professors under the more liberal educational administrators of St. Petersburg, Kharkov, and Kiev welcomed women to university lectures.¹⁰

7. "Ukazatel' literaturnykh zhenskogo voprosa na russkom iazyke," *Severnyi vestnik*, 1887, no. 7, pp. 1–32 [separate pagination], and *ibid.*, 1887, no. 8, pp. 33–55, lists a total of 1,785 articles and books on the woman question. For further discussion of the woman question, see Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), pp. 29–154 *passim*. Other relevant studies by Stites include "M. L. Mikhailov and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Russia," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 3, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 178–99; and "Women and the Russian Intelligentsia: Three Perspectives," in Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin, and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, eds., *Women in Russia* (Stanford, 1977), pp. 39–62. For a discussion of women's higher education as a dominant aspect of the Russian women's movement, see Ruth A. F. Dudgeon, "Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855–1905" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1975); and Cynthia H. Whittaker, "The Women's Movement during the Reign of Alexander II: A Case Study in Russian Liberalism," *Journal of Modern History*, 48, no. 2 (June 1976): 35–69.

8. Widely publicized liberated women of the period were the literary heroines refashioned by Dobroliubov in "Chto takoe obломovshchina?," in N. A. Dobroliubov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. B. I. Bursov et al., vol. 4 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1962), pp. 307–43; and by Pisarev in "Zhenskie tipy v romanakh i povestiakh Pisemskago, Turgeneva i Goncharova," in *Sochineniia D. I. Pisareva: Polnoe sobranie v shesti tomakh*, ed. F. Pavlenkov (St. Petersburg, 1894), 1:481–528. N. G. Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?* (Moscow, 1963 [St. Petersburg, 1863]), created the archetype of the emancipated woman pursuing medical studies in the literary heroine, Vera Pavlovna.

9. For a succinct description of the *nigilistka* in the conservative press, see an excerpt from *Vest'*, no. 46 (1864), as cited in Charles A. Moser, *Antinihilism in the Russian Novel of the 1860's* (The Hague, 1964), p. 44.

10. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, pp. 468–69. For the welcome extended by St. Petersburg professors, see the reminiscences of one of the first female auditors, E. Iunge, "Iz moikh vospominanii, 1843–1860 gg.," *Vestnik Evropy*, 40 (May 1905): 258; and the memoirs of

Several scientists in the Medical-Surgical Academy opened their laboratories to women, although the academy statute did not authorize the admission of women.¹¹ Not all educators, however, were as receptive to women's pursuit of university study. According to a contemporary report, a number of professors rejected admission of women to the university as "incompatible with the dignity of the educational institution."¹² The curator of Moscow University, claiming that women attended lectures only to tease the students, used the power of his district office to ban women from the local university.¹³

Relaxation of state control over educational affairs not only promoted such disparate reactions to women's pursuit of higher education, but deluded the University Councils of Kharkov and Kiev into believing that their newly acquired autonomy over women's admission was a permanent feature of university life. Both provincial universities formulated regulations governing women's attendance.¹⁴ In May 1861, Kharkov University secured the approval of the Medical Council, Russia's supreme medical authority, to admit a woman to the degree program in the medical faculty.¹⁵ Despite the endorsement of the Medical Council, however, no woman took the examination for a doctor's degree at Kharkov's medical school.

Student radicalism prompted Alexander II to transfer authority over local university affairs to state security officials who expelled women from the universities. Although student disorders had disrupted university life since 1857, by early 1861 they had acquired a blatantly political character.¹⁶ Student participation in the memorial services for Poles killed by Russian troops in Warsaw and for the peasants killed at Bezdna demonstrated the emergence of a politically volatile student community. Hopes in the future utility of Russia's educated youth gave way to fears of impending student rebellion: the government tightened its grip over educational institutions and personnel. In the spring of 1861, Alexander II entrusted the formulation of more stringent university regulations to Count S. G. Stroganov, a cavalry general, to V. N. Panin, the minister of justice, and

a contemporary student, L. F. Pantelev, *Iz vospominanii proshlago* (St. Petersburg, 1905), pp. 133–37. E. N. Shchepkina (*Iz istorii zhenskoi lichnosti v Rossii: Lektsii i stat'i* [St. Petersburg, 1914], p. 288) reports that no women entered Kazan' University, although the district curator reportedly sympathized with women seeking higher education. M. K. Korbut (*Kazanskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni V. I. Ul'ianova-Lenina za 125 let [1804/5–1929/30]*, 2 vols. [Kazan', 1930]) makes no reference to women in Kazan' University during this period.

11. I. M. Sechenov (*Autobiographical Notes*, ed. Donald B. Lindsley, trans. Kristan Hanes [Washington, D.C., 1965], pp. 103–4) records the famed physiologist's warm reception of women into the Medical-Surgical Academy.

12. M. L. Mikhailov, "Zhenshchiny v universitete," *Sovremennik*, no. 86 (1861), p. 506.

13. Mikhail Lemke, "Molodost' Ottsa Mitrofana," *Byloe*, 1/13 (January 1907): 202.

14. Shchepkina, *Iz istorii zhenskoi lichnosti*, p. 288.

15. S. M. Dionesov, "Russkie tsiurikhskie studentki (Iz istorii vrachebnogo obrazovaniia russkikh zhenshchin)," *Sovetskoe zdavookhranenie*, 30, no. 6 (May 1971): 68; and *Istoricheskii obzor pravitel'stvennykh raspriazhenii po voprosu o vysshem vrachebnom obrazovanii zhenshchin* (St. Petersburg, 1883), pp. 8–9 (hereafter cited as *Istoricheskii obzor VVOZh*).

16. William L. Mathes, "The Origins of Confrontation Politics in Russian Universities: Student Activism, 1855–1861," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 2, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 34–37.

to Prince V. A. Dolgorukov, the head of the Third Department. A few months later, the emperor charged Admiral E. V. Putiatin with the implementation of the new university regulations.¹⁷

Primarily concerned with transforming student youth into able and loyal servitors of the state, Russian statesmen quickly dismissed the question of women's admission to the university. From the point of view of Russia's Great-Power status, women's education was an insignificant issue. Moreover, in the context of the public debate over the woman question and in the wake of student disorders, women's pursuit of university study not only appeared to be a threat to social morality, but could be construed as a factor contributing to the rebelliousness of the student community.

Putiatin's implementation of the statesmen's regulations in September 1861 banned women from universities, prohibited all corporate student activities, and reduced fee exemptions—which had formerly benefited over 50 percent of Russia's university youth—to two incoming students per province.¹⁸ Putiatin's severe enforcement of the regulations provoked massive student demonstrations which, by winter, had spread from the capitals to the provincial universities of Kazan', Kharkov, and Kiev.¹⁹ Women played a minimal role in the student disorders. Only one woman, who spoke at a student rally in St. Petersburg, attracted memorable attention.²⁰ Much more notable was the defiant reaction of a liberal contingent of St. Petersburg professors. K. D. Kavelin, professor of history, resigned in protest in October, and four of his colleagues quickly followed suit.²¹ The relative freedom of the years 1855–61 had so strengthened professorial commitment to academic autonomy that these St. Petersburg professors refused to compromise their liberal educational ideals when the government attempted to resume total control over university affairs.

Professorial disaffection, appended to student revolts, not only renewed the urgency of university reform, but compelled Putiatin to invite professors and district curators to participate in the preparation of the new university statute.²² Although Putiatin's gesture proved only a ploy to quiet rebellious professors and to ease the transfer of authority from local personnel to central authorities, the academic community's participation in the planning of reform prompted discussion of women's university education in high government circles. A poll of the University Councils—part of the thirty-month debate over the new university

17. R. G. Eimontova, "Universitetskaia reforma 1863 g.," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, no. 70 (1961), p. 166.

18. Alston, *Education and the State*, p. 48; and Mathes, "The Origins of Confrontation Politics," pp. 38–39. M. N. Tikhomirov et al., eds., *Istoriia Moskovskogo universiteta v dvukh tomakh, 1755–1955* (Moscow, 1955), 1:243, n. 2, reports that two-thirds of Moscow University students were exempt from fee payments in 1859. Eimontova ("Universitetskaia reforma," p. 167, n. 11) reports that over one-third of the St. Petersburg students and almost one-half of the students at St. Vladimir University paid no fees during the period 1859–61.

19. Mathes, "The Origins of Confrontation Politics," pp. 39–42.

20. A. V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik v trekh tomakh*, ed. N. L. Brodskii et al. (Moscow, 1955), 2:213. A. M. Skabichevskii (*Literaturnye vospominaniia*, ed. B. Koz'min [Moscow, 1928], p. 338, n. 38) reports that this woman, Maria Bogdanova, persuaded the students to refrain from violence and to disperse.

21. Mathes, "The Origins of Confrontation Politics," p. 41.

22. Eimontova, "Universitetskaia reforma," pp. 167–68.

statute—revealed that the majority of Russia's professors not only endorsed women's pursuit of higher education, but advocated admission of women to professional careers in education and medicine, which had formerly been exclusively male professions.²³

Professors had little impact on the resolution of the question of women's admission to the university. Because the administrative regulations of the new university policy were dictated by the government, the exclusion of women from Russian universities was virtually ensured. This was not clear at the outset, however. Just as the debate over university reform seemed to indicate that the opinions of local educational personnel would be taken into account, so did the much publicized text of the university statute of 1863 suggest that the question of women's admission would be left to the discretion of the local university and district curator. Article 42:B-8v and article 90, which governed the admission of auditors, granted the University Council the right to formulate admissions regulations with the approval of the district curator.²⁴ Neither article made any reference to women.

This apparent concession to local university autonomy proved to be little more than an indication of the government's ingenuity in coping with the public opinion aroused by the debate over university reform. Given the state's growing distrust of students, which had been exacerbated by the St. Petersburg fires of 1862 and the Polish revolt of 1863, Russian statesmen were hardly prepared to grant control over admissions to local universities. Within a month after the promulgation of the university statute, the Ministry of Education issued a directive to all University Councils amending the admissions regulations and specifically banning women from universities.²⁵ By circulating these restrictions in the form of a ministerial directive rather than the much more publicized university statute, the government helped to maintain, at least publicly, the aura of compromise and concession surrounding the university reform of 1863.

Russia's professorial community, which felt the renewed grip of a cautious and centralizing ministry as well as the recent shocks of student radicalism, had little choice but to obey the ministerial directive. By the winter of 1863, the University Councils, which had so recently championed admission of women to the universities, officially banned women from university study.²⁶

St. Petersburg's Medical-Surgical Academy, although not under the purview of the Ministry of Education, soon followed suit. On May 11, 1864, the Ministry

23. MNP, *Zamechaniia*, part 2, pp. 520–27.

24. *Universitetskii ustav 1863 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1863), pp. 16–17, 28.

25. *Sbornik raspriazhenii po Ministerstvu narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 6 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1866–1901), vol. 3, cols. 560–566 (no. 577, July 20, 1863). According to the report of the State Council, the prohibition of women did not demand special mention in the statute, but appertained to the administrative regulations to be issued by the Ministry of Education (see "Mnenie gosudarstvennago soveta," in *TsGIAL*, f. 733, op. 147, d. 95, listy 28–29). Eimontova ("Universitetskaia reforma," pp. 175–79) convincingly argues that the implementation of these restrictions through a ministerial circular was a tactical maneuver designed to create the impression that these restrictions emanated not from the central authorities but from the University Councils.

26. "Pravila i instruksii, sostavleniia sovetami universitetov: S-Peterburgskago, Kazanskago, Kharkovskago i sv. Vladimira i utverzhdeniia popechiteliami, na osnovanii universitetskago ustava 1863 goda," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia*, October–December 1863, pp. 3, 14, 36, 59 (hereafter cited as *ZhMNP*).

of War announced that because neither the academy statute nor the new university statute authorized the admission of women, the Medical-Surgical Academy would no longer admit women.²⁷ The Ministry made only one exception: Varvara A. Kashevarova was permitted to remain in the Academy until the completion of her medical training in 1868.²⁸ Kashevarova's commitment to treat Bashkir women, whose religion forbade them to be attended by male physicians, had earned her the sponsorship of the military commander of the Orenburg district and special consideration by the minister of war.

Promulgation of the new university statute and the War Ministry's edict of 1864 temporarily delayed, but failed to halt, the advance of women's medical education. Women's brief admission to universities and medical schools had not only strengthened the resolve of a number of Russian women to pursue higher education and professional careers, but convinced various professors of women's ability to master university study. Moreover, during the period of experimentation and popular participation in educational affairs, the question of women's education had become a part of the much larger controversy over the basic philosophy underlying Russia's educational system. After the official expulsion of women from institutes of higher education, several members of Russia's academic community would express their commitment to liberal educational ideals by sponsoring higher courses and medical training for women. By the early 1870s, controversy over educational policy would also compound the rivalry of two of Alexander II's leading and favored statesmen—D. A. Miliutin, minister of war, and D. A. Tolstoi, minister of education.²⁹ Despite Tolstoi's opposition, Miliutin was to promote the development of women's medical education.

Women's quest for medical education played a conspicuously large role in the struggle women waged for higher education during the reign of Alexander II. While their attraction to the medical profession was, in part, a natural outgrowth of the traditional female role of healer and comforter of the sick, the powerful appeal of medicine to Russian women of the post-Crimean War era was generated by the worship of science and the surge of social consciousness which characterized the younger generation in the 1860s.³⁰ The study of medicine could yield a body of scientific knowledge easily translated into social service, and, in a country which suffered a chronic shortage of medical personnel, the social utility of medical education could not be overestimated. Moreover, Russian women were to win admission to the medical profession long before they entered other professional fields. Alexander II would grant women with advanced medical training the title

27. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, p. 479.

28. In 1868, Kashevarova received the diploma of *lekar'* (physician) and the right to practice medicine. Eight years later, on the completion of her dissertation, Kashevarova was awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine (see M. S. Belkin, "Russkie zhenshchiny-vrachi—Pionery vysshego zhenskogo meditsinskogo obrazovaniia," *Sovetskii vrachebnyi sbornik*, no. 14 [1949], pp. 34–35).

29. For issues other than women's medical education which divided Miliutin and Tolstoi, see Alston, *Education and the State*, pp. 92–95; D. A. Miliutin, *Dnevnik D. A. Miliutina*, 4 vols., ed. P. A. Zaionchkovskii (Moscow, 1947–50), 1:55, 98, 107–9, 144–45, 171, 197–203; James Cobb Mills, Jr., "Dmitrii Tolstoi as Minister of Education in Russia, 1866–1880" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1967), pp. 64 and 176; and Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery*, pp. 79–84, 147–49.

30. For further discussion of scientism and social consciousness during the 1860s, see Vucinich, *Science in Russian Culture*, pp. 3–34 *passim*.

of woman doctor. Those women who completed three or four years of university-level education in the higher courses, however, were to remain without degree rights and professional status until the early twentieth century. The reason for women's early admission to the medical profession can be partially explained by the service of female medical assistants in the Crimean and Russo-Turkish wars. The performance of these women demonstrated not only women's ability to practice medicine, but the utility of their medical education during times of national crisis. Finally, Miliutin's patronage would prove to be a particularly significant factor in promoting women's medical education. The medical establishments of the War Ministry would provide the professional staff and clinical facilities for women's medical training, and Miliutin's favored status in Alexander's entourage would give women's medical education a powerful advocate in top government circles.

The expulsion of women from Russian medical schools, therefore, failed to stop their pursuit of medical studies and did not entirely succeed in thwarting the development of women's medical training in Russia. Instead, it inaugurated two new phases in women's medical education: initially, it fostered an exodus of women to Zurich University where they continued their studies, and later the Ministry of War under Miliutin would establish women's medical courses in Russia itself.

During the early 1860s, women's demand for higher and professional education met strong opposition in all European countries, and no continental university admitted women as regular students with the right to take degree examinations. In 1867, however, Zurich University broke the traditional male monopoly over university education and awarded Nadezhda P. Suslova the degree of Doctor of Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery.³¹ International recognition of Suslova's contribution to medical science prompted the Russian Medical Council, in 1868, to admit Suslova to the colloquium examinations for foreign doctors and to grant her the right to practice medicine in Russia. Encouraged by Suslova's achievements, over one hundred Russian women migrated to Zurich University during the next five years. In 1873, there were seventy-seven Russian women enrolled in Zurich's medical faculty.³²

Just as radicalization of the student community had led to barring women from Russian universities, however, so too did the revolutionary activities of the Russian colony at Zurich provoke tsarist officials to order all Russian women to abandon their studies at the Swiss university. When the emigration of Russian women reached its peak in 1872–73, Zurich emerged as the center of Russian revolutionary organizations abroad.³³ Investigation by a special government commission staffed by D. A. Tolstoi, A. E. Timashev (minister of internal affairs), P. A. Shuvalov (head of the Third Department), and N. A. Shtorkh

31. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, pp. 490–92.

32. P. N. Ariian, *Pervyi zhenskii kalendar' na 1899 god* (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. 139. Detailed statistical information concerning the period of enrollment, faculty, and geographical origins of Russian men and women studying in Zurich can be found in J. M. Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution: The Russian Colony at Zurich (1870–1873). A Contribution to the Study of Russian Populism* (Assen, The Netherlands, 1955), pp. 208–17.

33. Meijer's *Knowledge and Revolution* provides the most comprehensive study of Russian revolutionary organizations in Zurich during the early 1870s.

(assistant head of the Fourth Department) confirmed suspicions that women's migration to the Swiss university was intimately connected to political and social radicalism.³⁴

Radical propaganda about the woman question, the commission concluded, had promoted the exodus of Russian women to Zurich:

Under its cover, together with demands for sound, basic education for women and the expansion of their sphere of activities, are carried others [demands] which have a utopian, almost revolutionary character: equalization of the rights of a woman with the rights of a man, her participation in politics and even the right to free love, which destroys the very basis of the family and makes a principle of the extreme dissoluteness of morals.³⁵

Besides suggesting that moral depravity had driven Russian women to Zurich, the commission also accused these women of participating in antitsarist organizations. The revolutionary activities of a number of women educated at Zurich, such as Vera Figner and Sophia Bardina, substantiate the charges of political subversion.³⁶ At the same time, however, Figner's memoirs not only reveal how the Zurich experience fostered the transformation of a serious female student into a committed revolutionary, but also indicate that the desire to serve society, through medical education, was the primary motivation of the majority of Russian women who had migrated to Zurich.³⁷ Nonetheless, the coincidence of the influx of Russian women and the surge in revolutionary activities convinced the commission that revolution, not education, had attracted these women to the Swiss university.

Charges of subversive activities notwithstanding, the expulsion of women from Zurich involved no arrests, trials, or criminal punishments. Public opinion and persistent demands for women's medical education compelled the government to adopt measures of "a preventive rather than repressive character," and to explain its actions in a press release as well.³⁸ On May 21, 1873, *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik* published the government decree which threatened those women who refused to leave Zurich by January 1, 1874 with exclusion from all educational and employment opportunities in state institutions.³⁹ Aimed at expelling Russian women from the Swiss university and calculated to rally public support for the government's actions, the decree accused the women in Zurich of succumbing to "communistic theories of free love" and implied that they studied medicine in order to perform abortions on each other. Moreover, to assure the public that there was no need for women's migration to Zurich's medical faculty, the decree

34. For the report of the special commission, see "O merakh k prekrashcheniiu priliva russkikh zhenshchin v Tsiurikhskii universitet i politekhnikum," in *TsGIAL*, f. 733, op. 191, d. 268, listy 25–26.

35. *Ibid.*, list 25.

36. Valuable insight into the activities of Russian women in Zurich, particularly those who became involved in the revolutionary movement, is found in Vera Figner, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (Moscow, 1929), vol. 5, and Figner, "Studencheskie gody," *Golos minuvshago*, 10, no. 2 (1922): 165–81, and *ibid.*, 11, no. 1 (1923): 27–45. Another useful study is Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, pp. 131–38.

37. Figner, "Studencheskie gody," *Golos minuvshago*, 10, no. 2, p. 181.

38. This was recommended by the special commission (see "O merakh k prekrashcheniiu priliva russkikh zhenshchin," list 26).

39. *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, May 21, 1873, p. 1.

pointed to the advanced midwifery courses, recently established under the War Ministry, as evidence of the government's "sympathetic attitude" toward women striving to get a medical education. Indeed, the Zurich decree revealed how well tsarist officials had refined their tactics in dealing with newly developed public opinion.

Once again, the specter of political and social radicalism had prompted the Russian government to forbid women from pursuing medical careers through regular academic channels. The majority of Russian women complied with the May decree and left Zurich by January 1, 1874,⁴⁰ without having completed their medical education. Only one Russian woman had repeated Suslova's achievement. Maria A. Bokova, who graduated from Zurich's medical faculty before the massive influx of Russian women, returned to Russia with a doctor's degree in 1871 and successfully passed the colloquium examinations for domestic medical practice.⁴¹ Much more productive and somewhat more durable than the Zurich experiment was the War Ministry's sponsorship of advanced midwifery courses.

The Medical-Surgical Academy instituted advanced midwifery courses on November 2, 1872.⁴² Established to improve and expand training in midwifery, the women's medical courses originally offered a four-year program specializing in obstetrics and women's and children's diseases. Completion of the courses and passing final examinations would earn the graduates the degree of *uchenaia akusherka* (advanced midwife) and the right to practice obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics independently. The advanced midwifery courses quickly developed into a full-scale medical school. In 1876, the courses were expanded into a five-year medical program equivalent to that of a university medical faculty. The following year, advanced midwives served as medical assistants in the Russo-Turkish War. In 1879, a number of the graduates of the courses were employed as general practitioners by the zemstvos. By 1882, they had become physicians in rural and urban hospitals as well as interns and assistants in the advanced midwifery courses.⁴³ The success of the courses in creating a corps of female physicians, whose training rivaled that of the graduates of the university medical schools, testified not only to the ability and patronage of professors attached to the War Ministry, but to the talents and persistence of Russian women in the

40. The number of Russian women enrolled in Zurich University dropped from one hundred and two in the summer of 1873 to twelve in the summer of 1874 (see Ariian, *Pervyi zhenskii kalendar'*, p. 139).

41. Dionesov, "Russkie tsiurikhskie studentki," p. 69.

42. Essential to the discussion of the advanced midwifery courses is the collection of official documents and ministerial correspondence found in *Trudy Vysochaishe uchrezhdennoi komissii po voprosu o zhenskom obrazovanii*, parts 1 and 2 (St. Petersburg, 1879) (hereafter cited as *Trudy ZhO*). Other useful sources include *Istoricheskii obzor VVOZh*; Isakov Commission, *Istoricheskaiia zapiska k dokladu Vysochaishe uchrezhdennoi komissii po voprosu o zhenskikh vrachebnykh kursakh, meditsinskom obrazovanii i pravakh meditsinskoi praktiki zhenshchin* (n.p., n.d.) (hereafter this collection of materials of the Isakov Commission of 1878-79 will be cited as *Istoricheskaiia zapiska Isakova*); N. I. Kozlov, *Zapiska po voprosu o vysshem, v osobennosti meditsinskom, obrazovanii zhenshchin* (St. Petersburg, 1879); and P. P. Sushchinskii, *Zhenshchina-vrach v Rossii: Ocherk destiatletia zhenskikh vrachebnykh kursov, 1872-1882 gg.* (St. Petersburg, 1883).

43. For further information on the employment of the graduates of the courses, see Sushchinskii, *Zhenshchina-vrach v Rossii*, p. 17.

medical field. Yet, the very establishment and continued operation of women's medical courses depended upon the sponsorship of Miliutin.

Controversy over women's medical education provoked sharp division among the ministers who shared in the administration of Russia's medical establishments. The more liberal Miliutin, whose jurisdiction over the War Ministry encompassed the Medical-Surgical Academy, emerged as the champion of women's medical education. The more cautious Tolstoi, whose authority as minister of education embraced the university medical faculties, and Timashev, whose Ministry of Internal Affairs included the Medical Department and Medical Council, were its chief opponents.

Because of the jealous nature of autocratic rule under Alexander II, these leading ministers were able to develop contradictory policies governing women's medical education. In order to guard his autocratic power, Alexander II created no central agency to coordinate the tsarist administration. Instead, he divided authority among favored statesmen who enjoyed almost exclusive command of their respective spheres of government service, but had little influence in any other area of the administration.⁴⁴ The compartmentalized administration demanded constant intervention by the tsar in order to maintain the functioning of the autocratic regime and prevented any individual statesman from acquiring extensive power. At the same time, however, the absence of a well-coordinated bureaucracy also enabled tsarist administrators to pursue divergent policies in their respective spheres of influence and imparted a somewhat erratic quality to Alexander II's rule. The erraticism is particularly evident in the educational policy of the 1870s. Fragmentation of the administration and autocratic intervention on behalf of favored statesmen—but only within their restricted realms of authority—permitted the introduction of Tolstoi's classical system, despite protests by Miliutin and the majority of the State Council.⁴⁵ Similarly, advanced midwifery courses were instituted in the Medical-Surgical Academy, despite the official ban on women in university medical faculties and considerable high-level opposition.

Advanced midwifery courses had generated controversy among Russia's leading statesmen since the time that N. I. Kozlov, the chief war-medical inspector, first proposed their establishment. In January 1870, Kozlov petitioned the Medical Council to authorize the creation of these specialized and separate courses for women in the Medical-Surgical Academy and in other medical schools having the necessary facilities.⁴⁶ Given the paucity of obstetricians and trained medical personnel in mid-nineteenth-century Russia, the Medical Council endorsed Kozlov's proposal without hesitation. In the spring of 1870, the Council submitted to the Ministries of War, Education, and Internal Affairs its recommendation for the establishment of advanced midwifery courses in the Medical-Surgical Academy and university medical faculties.⁴⁷

44. Raeff, *Plans for Political Reform*, pp. 15–16; Rieber, *The Politics of Autocracy*, pp. 39–40, 55, 65, 94–96. George Yaney (*The Systematization of Russian Government*, p. 299) suggests that Alexander II deliberately appointed ministers of opposing views to constrain one another.

45. Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery*, pp. 148–50.

46. For further details of Kozlov's proposal, see *Istoricheskii obzor VVOZh*, pp. 5–17.

47. *Istoricheskata zapiska Isakova*, pp. 7–8.

Miliutin welcomed the establishment of medical courses for women in the Medical-Surgical Academy. Contemporary memoirs suggest that prompting by Miliutin's wife and daughter, as well as appeals by Kozlov's daughter and Anna Filosofova (the wife of Miliutin's chief assistant in the War Ministry), had garnered the war minister's support for women's medical education.⁴⁸ At the same time, however, sponsorship of women's medical courses (which Tolstoi opposed) also demonstrated Miliutin's rejection of Tolstoi's administration of educational affairs. When Tolstoi assumed the post of minister of education in 1866, Miliutin was convinced that Tolstoi's ministry would lead to "the suppression and smothering of every rudiment of vital strength of the younger generation."⁴⁹ And the introduction of Tolstoi's classical system in 1871 further strengthened Miliutin's conviction. The war minister, moreover, not only proved eager to sponsor the medical courses but, as if anticipating the forthcoming resistance to women's medical practice, attempted to secure legal rights for the advanced midwife. Miliutin's initial endorsement of the Medical Council's recommendation also included a request that the degree of *uchenaia akusherka* "be established in the legal order, on the basis of an agreement between the War Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs."⁵⁰ However, because Timashev, the minister of internal affairs, consistently failed to reach an agreement with Miliutin on questions of women's medical education, the degree of advanced midwife never appeared in the legal code.

Unlike Miliutin, Timashev feared that the expansion of women's professional activities would have damaging repercussions on the entire fabric of Russian society. Yet, although the minister of internal affairs refused to grant legal status to advanced midwives, he formally endorsed the Medical Council's recommendation for the establishment of the courses.⁵¹ These seemingly contradictory gestures did not emerge from any ambivalence on Timashev's part toward women's medical education, but they do illustrate his cautious policy of minimal concessions in coping with demands for women's education. When pressured by an influential office or public opinion, Timashev granted limited concessions, but only as temporary privileges, never as rights which would legally admit women to established professions. Thus, respect for the Medical Council prompted Timashev's quasi-endorsement of the advanced midwifery courses. Concern over the social dangers of women's medical education, however, ensured that the minister of internal affairs would block all efforts to transform the courses into an institution established in the legal order.

Tolstoi delayed for almost two years before responding to the Medical Council. The minister of education, who sometimes sought but seldom followed the advice of the academic community, submitted the proposal to the university professors for review.⁵² Both the University Councils and university medical faculties

48. Vladimir V. Stasov, *Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Vospominaniia i ocherki* (St. Petersburg, 1899), p. 175; and A. Tyrkova, *Sbornik pamiati Anny Pavlovny Filosofovoi*, vol. 1 (Petrograd, 1915), pp. 222–23, n. 1.

49. As quoted in Mills, "Dmitrii Tolstoi," p. 64.

50. As quoted in *Istoricheskaia zapiska Isakova*, p. 8.

51. Approved by the minister of internal affairs on April 23, 1870 (see "Otnoshenie Voennago ministra k Ministru vnutrennikh del'" [June 12, 1872] in *Trudy ZhO*, part 1, pp. 8–9).

52. "Iz otzyva Ministra narodnago prosveshcheniia" (May 11, 1872) in *ibid.*, p. 8.

unanimously supported the expansion of women's medical education, but stipulated that women must fulfill the same requirements and pass the same examinations as regular medical students.⁵³ Despite the enthusiastic response of the Russian professoriate, the minister of education failed to approve the establishment of advanced midwifery courses at the university and suggested further study of the question of women's medical education.⁵⁴

Tolstoi's predilection for foreign educational models might have prompted his request for the investigation of women's medical education and practice in Western Europe. Yet his suggestion that the Medical Council consider opening courses for male medical assistants, who would perform health services similar to those performed by advanced midwives, appeared to be little more than a ploy designed to undermine the practical necessity for establishing the women's courses. Additional courses for men would have provided a much more conventional means of satisfying the country's need for trained medical personnel.

Rivalry with Miliutin hardened Tolstoi's opposition to the advanced midwifery courses. The war minister's attempt to obstruct the introduction of Tolstoi's classical system and Tolstoi's demand for control over the Medical-Surgical Academy had cast Miliutin and Tolstoi as intransigent rivals in the interministerial struggle. Tolstoi could hardly be expected to endorse an experiment in medical education sponsored by his chief opponent.

Tolstoi refused to institute advanced midwifery courses in the university medical faculties, but his delaying tactics failed to impede their establishment in the Medical-Surgical Academy. Without waiting for, or perhaps anticipating, Tolstoi's response, Miliutin independently petitioned Alexander II to allow the establishment of the courses under the War Ministry. A fifty-thousand-ruble donation from a wealthy patron, Lydia A. Rodstvennaia, enabled Miliutin to assure the emperor that private funding, not the state treasury, would finance the organization of women's medical courses.⁵⁵ On May 6, 1872, Alexander II authorized the creation of advanced midwifery courses in the Medical-Surgical Academy as a four-year experiment.⁵⁶

The tsar's approval of women's medical courses demonstrates that Alexander II championed Miliutin's War Ministry policy even in educational matters opposed by Russia's chief guardian of educational affairs. Authorization of the courses reveals little about the emperor's attitude toward women's medical education, however. Although Alexander approved Miliutin's sponsorship of the courses, he also endorsed Tolstoi's ban on women in the universities and Timashev's refusal to grant the courses legal status. Acceptance of these contradictory policies suggests that Alexander II had formulated no definite views on the issue of women's medical education.

53. For the replies of the University Councils, see "Izvestiia o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii nashikh uchebnykh zavedenii," *ZhMNP*, October 1871, chapter 157, part 4, pp. 164-77. The reports of the medical faculties are found in TsGIAL, f. 846 (Georgievskii), op. 1, d. 119, listy 1-3.

54. For the response of the Ministry of Education, see *Istoricheskaia zapiska Isakova*, p. 8.

55. "Doklad po Glavnomu voenno-meditsinskomu upravleniiu o kapitale na uchrezhdenie kursov" (March 2, 1872) in *Trudy ZhO*, part 1, pp. 3-5.

56. "Otnoshenie Voennago ministra k Ministru vnutrennikh del" (June 12, 1872) in *ibid.*, p. 10.

In view of the exodus of Russian women to Zurich's medical faculty, authorization of the advanced midwifery courses was not that surprising. Moreover, numerous requests to employ women in social and government institutions had recently prompted the government to publish an official statement on women's occupations.⁵⁷ The imperial order of January 14, 1871 expressed the government's intention to confine women to their traditional occupations as teachers and midwives, but it also endorsed the expansion of women's midwifery training.⁵⁸ Thus, instituting advanced midwifery courses was in direct keeping with the imperial order of the previous year. Their establishment on an experimental basis and under the sole jurisdiction of the War Ministry, however, would facilitate the closure of the courses when Miliutin lost his ministerial post in 1881.

Throughout the 1870s, Timashev thwarted Miliutin's efforts to transform the courses into a full-fledged educational institution. In March 1876, the War Ministry secured the tsar's approval to transfer the courses to Nikolaevskii War Hospital and to extend the period of study to five years.⁵⁹ Alexander stipulated, however, that permanent regulations of the courses would be established in conjunction with the other ministries responsible for women's medical training, namely, the Fourth Department and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The War Ministry's draft of the new regulations won the immediate approval of the Fourth Department.⁶⁰ But the minister of internal affairs disputed the legality of women's medical courses. Although Timashev had earlier approved the opening of the advanced midwifery courses, he now insisted that the rights of the graduates, as well as the extended medical program of the courses, contravened the imperial order of January 14, 1871 and therefore required the endorsement of the minister of education and subsequent ratification by the State Council.⁶¹ By demanding that the war minister solicit the cooperation of Tolstoi, Timashev ensured that no permanent regulations would be established for women's medical courses.

Timashev was equally successful in frustrating the War Ministry's attempts to expand women's rights to medical practice. In February 1878, Kozlov petitioned the Medical Council to grant the graduates of the women's courses the right to medical practice, equal with male physicians, without restricting their practice to the treatment of women and children.⁶² On the basis of the extensive program of medical courses and the performance of twenty-five advanced midwives in the Russo-Turkish War, a special commission of the Medical Council endorsed Kozlov's proposal.⁶³ The minister of internal affairs, however, refused

57. *Istoricheskaiia zapiska Isakova*, pp. 1–2.

58. "Otnositel'no dopushcheniia zhenshchin na sluzhbu v obshchestvennyia i pravitel'stvennyia uchrezhdeniia" in *Sbornik postanovlenii po Ministerstvu narodnago prosveshcheniia*, 15 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1875–1902), vol. 5, cols. 14–16 (no. 5, January 14, 1871) (published in *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, February 19, 1871, p. 1).

59. "Rezoliutsiia" (March 4, 1876) in *Trudy ZhO*, part 1, pp. 24–25.

60. "Glavnoupravliaiushchago IV-m otdeleniem Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva kantseliarii Gospodinu Voennomu ministru" (May 11, 1876) in *ibid.*, p. 29.

61. "Otnoshenie Ministra vnutrennikh del k Voennomu ministru" (May 5, 1876) in *ibid.*, pp. 30–31.

62. "Zapiska, vnesennaia v Meditsinskii sovet Ministerstva vnutrennikh del Tainym sovetnikom Kozlovym" (February 1, 1878) in *ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

63. "Vypiska iz doklada v Meditsinskii sovet komissii po peresmotru pravil ispytaniia na meditsinskaia, farmatsevticheskaia i veterinarnyia stepeni i raz'iasneniiu prav lits zhenskago pola na vrachebnuiu praktiku" (June 24, 1878) in *ibid.*, p. 57.

to acknowledge that the Medical Council was qualified to decide the question of women's medical practice. Insisting that women's admission to the medical profession was a social issue, outside the jurisdiction of medical experts, Timashev therefore proposed that the question be resolved by a joint commission of the Ministries of Education, War, and Internal Affairs.⁶⁴

By the late 1870s, misgivings about the social and political dangers of women's medical education had become a growing concern in top government circles. Increasing student activism and women's participation in radical movements seemed to demonstrate the revolutionary potential of educated youth, particularly those studying medicine. Police investigation of antigovernment activities revealed a high proportion of student involvement, with a large contingent of youthful offenders coming from the Medical-Surgical Academy.⁶⁵ The Trial of Fifty found ten former auditors of Zurich's medical faculty among the sixteen female defendants.⁶⁶ The nexus of medicine, radicalism, and women had become so apparent that the tsar ordered state security officials, as well as medical and educational personnel, to investigate women's medical education and practice. In November 1878, Alexander II appointed the head of the war-medical administration, N. V. Isakov, chairman of a special commission made up of middle-level administrators from the Ministries of War, Education, and Internal Affairs, and the Third and Fourth Departments.⁶⁷

Student radicalism and revolutionary terrorism, however, had not only demanded official inquiry into the women's medical courses, but also challenged Tolstoi's authority in educational affairs and Timashev's competence in state security matters. By the time the Isakov Commission launched its investigation, the chief opponents of women's medical education had little support from Russian ruling circles. In November 1878, Timashev relinquished his ministerial post, and Tolstoi, who lost his most powerful conservative associate when Shuvalov surrendered his authority over the Third Department in 1874, now found himself with few allies at court.⁶⁸

Middle-level administrators reflected the less conservative political climate of top government circles, and the majority of members of the Isakov Commission adopted a conciliatory attitude toward admission of women to the medical profession. Riding the political tide of high government circles is usually expedient and sometimes natural, particularly for the servants of an autocratic regime, but the Third Department's defense of women's medical education was nothing less than an about-face. Under Shuvalov's command, the political police had consistently opposed the expansion of educational and employment opportunities for women. In 1870, Shuvalov had warned the Council of Ministers that the

64. Minister of internal affairs to minister of education, July 15, 1878, in TsGIAL, f. 733, op. 191, d. 310, list 2.

65. N. I. Sidorov, "Statisticheskie svedeniia o propagandistakh 70-kh godov v obrabotke III otdeleniia: Zapiska M. M. Merkulova o propagandistakh 70-kh godov," *Katorga i ssylka*, 38 (1928): 29–56. For a discussion of higher educational institutions as main incubators of Russian radicalism, see Alain Besançon, *Éducation et société en Russie dans le second tiers du XIX^e siècle* (Paris and The Hague, 1974); and Daniel R. Brower, *Training the Nihilists: Education and Radicalism in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca and London, 1975).

66. Figner, *PSS*, 5:184.

67. For the membership of the Isakov Commission, see *Istoricheskii obzor VVOZh*, p. 69.

68. Sinel, *The Classroom and the Chancellery*, pp. 253–54.

admission of women to traditionally male occupations would have "disastrous consequences" for women and families.⁶⁹ During the Zurich investigation, the political police had testified to the alleged criminal and immoral activities of Russian women in Zurich's medical faculty,⁷⁰ but one member of the Isakov Commission, Third Department delegate A. Severtsov, emerged as an outspoken advocate of women's admission to the medical profession.

Severtsov played a crucial role in persuading the commission members that women's medical courses constituted no serious danger to the autocratic regime.⁷¹ The Third Department delegate testified that advanced midwifery courses, in comparison with other higher institutions in the northern capital, were a relatively unproductive school of political dissidence. Whereas 3 percent of the students in St. Petersburg University and 4.28 percent of those in the Medical-Surgical Academy had been convicted of criminal and administrative offenses, only 1.75 percent of the women in the medical courses had received similar convictions.⁷² During the period 1873–78, only forty-six of the six hundred forty-eight women enrolled in the courses had warranted investigation by the political police. Of that number, the courts had convicted four women of criminal offenses and seven of administrative infractions, and they had temporarily banned two women from the capital. Severtsov, moreover, not only minimized the political dangers of the women's medical courses, but argued that women's admission to the medical profession would prove to be beneficial to social morality. Medical practice, he maintained, would provide careers for women who, lacking a familial role or regular source of income, might otherwise turn to prostitution.⁷³

Severtsov's report helped convince the commission members to overrule the proposal of A. I. Georgievskii, the delegate from the Ministry of Education. A long-time opponent of women's medical education, Georgievskii charged that advanced medical training would rob women of "a sense of modesty and decency" and insisted that women's medical practice be restricted to midwifery and the treatment of women's and children's diseases.⁷⁴ Despite Georgievskii's objections, the Isakov Commission's final report recommended that graduates of the advanced midwifery courses be granted the title of woman doctor and the right to independent medical practice without restricting treatment to women and children.⁷⁵

In September 1879, Miliutin submitted the recommendations of the Isakov Commission to the Ministry of Education,⁷⁶ which was to forward its evaluation to the minister of internal affairs. But revolutionary terrorism disrupted ministerial consideration of the Isakov Commission report. The bombing of the Winter

69. *Istoricheskaia zapiska Isakova*, p. 1.

70. Before the official expulsion date of January 1, 1874, Shuvalov provided Tolstoi with the names of forty-five women to be barred from pedagogical activities on their return from Zurich (see Third Department to Tolstoi, December 13, 1873, in TsGIAL, f. 733, op. 191, d. 268, listy 47–49).

71. "Mnenie chlena ot III-go otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva kantseliarii" in *Trudy ZhO*, part 2, pp. 81–86.

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 85–86.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

74. A. I. Georgievskii, "Po povodu mneniia chlenov komissii t. s. Kozlova i d. s. s. Severtsova" in *Trudy ZhO*, part 2, pp. 143–46. The quotation is on page 145.

75. *Istoricheskiĭ obzor VVOZh*, p. 101.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Palace in February 1880 temporarily put a halt to all discussion of women's medical education in high government circles. The consequent reshuffling of statesmen, however, left liberals and moderates dominating Russia's top ministries. Within a week of the bombing, Alexander II named Count M. T. Loris-Melikov, an associate of Miliutin's liberal circle and opponent of Tolstoi, chairman of the Supreme Executive Committee which was charged with coordinating all state agencies; several months later, he appointed him minister of internal affairs. In April 1880, Loris-Melikov secured Tolstoi's resignation, and A. A. Saburov, who was more cooperative, became minister of education. By the summer of 1880, then, moderates and liberals controlled the ministries which were to review the recommendations of the Isakov Commission.

Undoubtedly, the more consistently liberal complexion of Russia's top statesmen, together with the widely publicized achievements of advanced midwives in the Turkish campaign, prompted Alexander II to take a more definite stand on the issue of women's medical practice. On June 14, 1880, the tsar granted the graduates of the women's medical courses the title of woman doctor and the right to independent medical practice.⁷⁷ Even before Russia's leading statesmen had begun discussion of the Isakov Commission report, exercise of the imperial prerogative had transformed advanced midwives into women doctors. The medical courses which trained these female physicians, however, remained a provisional establishment totally dependent upon the sponsorship of Miliutin.

On March 1, 1881, the assassination of Alexander II forced Miliutin to resign and left women's medical courses defenseless against the conservative reaction initiating the reign of Alexander III. Within a few months of Miliutin's ouster, the new minister of war, P. S. Vannovskii, announced the forthcoming cancellation of the courses from under the aegis of the War Ministry.⁷⁸ On August 5, 1882, an imperial order closed admissions to the courses.⁷⁹ Perhaps as a concession to public opinion, the War Ministry allowed women already enrolled in the courses to complete their medical training and indicated the possible continuation of the courses if transferred to the jurisdiction of another government agency. Despite numerous petitions to keep the courses open and the offer of the St. Petersburg City Duma to assume jurisdiction over them,⁸⁰ the more conservative imperial entourage ensured that women's medical courses would have no place in the regime of Alexander III.⁸¹ Tolstoi, the new minister of internal affairs, had already demonstrated his opposition to women's medical education. K. P. Pobedonostsev, the tutor of the former tsarevich and procurator of the Holy Synod, rejected any expansion of women's activity beyond the traditional roles of wife, mother, and elementary school teacher. I. D. Delianov, the minister of education who often cowered before Tolstoi and Pobedonostsev, surpassed his mentors in his eagerness to curtail women's educational opportunities. Consequently,

77. *Pravitel'stvennyi vestnik*, June 29, 1880, p. 1.

78. *Istoricheskii obzor VVOZh*, p. 118.

79. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23.

80. For further discussion of the public reaction to the cancellation of the courses, see Sushchinskii, *Zhenshchina-vrach v Rossii*, pp. 24-28.

81. For more detailed discussion of Alexander III's entourage, see P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe samoderzhavie v kontse XIX stoletiiia* (Moscow, 1970).

women's medical education came to a halt in imperial Russia, and no further progress would be made until the next autocrat, Nicholas II, approved the establishment of the St. Petersburg Medical Institute for Women in 1895.

The history of women's medical education provides a hitherto unexplored example of the nature of autocratic politics during the reign of Alexander II. First, it illustrates the extent to which public opinion had become a factor in Russian political life. The autocracy was confronted with public opinion on the issue of educational reform, and tsarist officials were compelled to temper their reactions to demands for women's medical education. Second, the simultaneous development of competing policies on women's medical education not only testifies to the lack of coordination in the tsarist administration, but indicates that favored statesmen enjoyed a relative degree of autonomy in matters that were peripheral to the interests of the tsar. Third, the initial success and subsequent fate of advanced midwifery courses illustrate the personal nature of autocratic rule. Just as the exercise of the imperial prerogative granted graduates the title of woman doctor, so too did the tsar's failure to resolve the ministerial controversy over women's medical education determine the precarious existence of the courses which trained the female physicians.