

achievement should not be underestimated—but it still needs to be reworked into a searching history.

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SYSTÈMES AGRAIRES ET PROGRÈS AGRICOLE: L'ASSOLEMENT TRIENNAL EN RUSSIE AUX XVIII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLES. By *Michael Confino*. Preface by *Roger Portal*. Études sur l'histoire, l'économie et la sociologie des pays slaves, 14. Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1969. 495 pp. 51 Dutch guilders, paper.

There is little need to stress the interest of this study, which explores one of the key problems of tsarist Russia's agrarian and social history: the three-course (or "three-field") system of cultivation which formed, along with serfdom and the commune, one of the pillars of rural life. Well prepared by his previous researches and a deep knowledge of the peasant world, M. Confino has endeavored, as a faithful disciple of Marc Bloch (who is often cited), to approach his subject in its full scope. Agrarian history, even more in Russia than elsewhere, cannot be isolated from the history of the society—noble and serf—in which it was rooted.

The first part of the book gives M. Confino the opportunity to define the question critically and to assess the geographical extent of the three-course system, whose characteristics both agricultural (crops rotated, seasons of cultivation, farm implements, etc.) and social are carefully and pertinently described. The second part provides an analysis of what has been called the "crisis" of the three-course system and the remedies proposed, following Bolotov, by the agronomist-landlords whose attempts at modernization were to prove disappointing. The examination of the root causes of this failure is the aim of the book's last part—the newest—which seeks to evaluate the uniqueness, the resistance to change, and the durability of the three-course system in Russia. The author shows that it was a coherent and well-articulated system, the reform of which would have required a radical transformation of agrarian and social relations entangled with it.

Too brief, this conspectus could in no case bring out all the riches of this work, in which the detail is even more significant—if that is possible. M. Confino ignores received ideas and casts a fresh eye on questions often discussed and apparently settled—for example, the ill effects of the commune, the very notion of agrarian crisis, and still more the peasant "immobility" and "ignorance" (which might be only a defensive reaction to landlord pressures). Thus there is traced with a fine hand a portrait of the Russian peasant, whose age-old distrust of the lord and his innovations, too often designed to serve the lord's own interest, may almost suffice to furnish the key.

These many merits, indeed, are attended by certain weaknesses and imperfections in the organization and style, which occasionally weaken the force of the argument. Certain assertions would benefit by elucidation: for example, how does replacement of communal property by individual tenure require a surplus of land? Moreover, the role played by the growing needs and financial difficulties of the lords in their dissatisfaction with the three-course system and their twinges of conscience over the "crisis" deserves more than a passing reference (p. 153). Likewise, the fact that the commune was not in itself a conservative force is not enough to prove that it did not *in fact* exercise a paralyzing influence.

Nevertheless these omissions or imperfections do not at all reduce the value of the work and of its central thesis, which sees in the three-course system not only a group of agricultural techniques but indeed a sociocultural complex no part of which can be independently isolated and transformed. In sum, it is a work much more ambitious (and meritorious) than its title would lead one to believe, but also a work to which one could not direct the attention of the hasty or superficial reader.

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THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY INTELLIGENTSIA. By *Philip Pomper*.  
New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970. vii, 216 pp. Paper.

If the subject were strictly the revolutionary intelligentsia, the first two-fifths of the book (about 78 pages, from the Decembrists to the revolutionaries of the 1860s) might have been shortened, and the last quarter (48 pages, the crucial four decades between 1881 and the 1917 Revolution) would have been expanded. Finally, the fate of the revolutionary intelligentsia after victory in 1917 might have earned an additional chapter rather than asides throughout the text and an unconvincing conclusion: a tragedy "profounder than that of any comparable historical movement in our era" (p. 196).

The subject is in fact the *road to* or *roots of* the revolutionary fate of the intelligentsia. The early history dominates. Nearly half of the book, the most informative half, is devoted to the *radical* intelligentsia (some of whom were revolutionary) in the reign of Alexander II. The discussion of Marxism is therefore sketchy (see the somewhat apologetic comment on p. 156). Next to nothing is said about Peter Struve's intellectual odyssey. The *Vekhi* group is missing altogether. A. V. Lunacharsky—a revolutionary *intelligent* and People's Commissar of Education (1917–29)—and a host of other twentieth-century revolutionary intellectuals are absent. Bukharin is mentioned only once, in connection with his "vast intellect" (p. 195). Thus the author largely retraces the path of Yarmolinsky and Venturi, adding a few steps in the direction of 1917 and the tragic years of Stalin's ascendancy, and employing a different "methodology."

Much of the interest and value of the book lies in its method. Men create, discover, and use ideologies "in a given historical context"; ideologies "reflect the diversity of human temperament and personality" (p. vi). The author lamentably was dissuaded from full exposition of his method. The result is too often an incomplete formulation of "sociopsychological" and "psychosociological" factors or "life styles." For example, "something deeper in their personalities" made Lenin and Trotsky "men of power" (p. 190); Chernyshevsky's "pathological self-subordination to his wife" is the most prominent example of the "profound self-ambivalence" that led populists to desire absorption by the masses (p. 102)—this despite the fact that the author understands that Chernyshevsky desired no such absorption and was actually an "evangelical nihilist" (p. 77) rather than a populist.

Opportunities abound, but little serious psychosociology is attempted. The oblique implication that homosexual affections linked Bakunin and Nechaev (p. 98) is too vague to help explain their puzzling association. Some important opportunities are missed—for example, the painful experience of the renegade *narodovolets*, Leo Tikhomirov, which is lavishly documented in his *Vospominaniia*.

The book is "designed for use in both survey and period courses" (back