

reform of Russian society. The fact that contacts between them can be proved does not necessarily imply the existence of a large (and supposedly quite uniform) circle of Petrashevtsy.

2. The meetings at Petrashevskii's house were of a rather informal character; they were frequented by young people (students, junior civil servants, young officers) in no way uniform; no trace has hitherto been found of a more formal organization or conspiracy.

3. The existence of a library of officially prohibited books and the discussions of them are more important than suggested in the article.

4. The books read and discussed by the Petrashevtsy included not only socialist literature but also the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, and many clues suggest that Russia in some aspects was compared to the United States of America.

5. The Petrashevtsy had no uniform ideology of their own. The analysis of published texts shows that in some cases their preoccupation with Fourier was marked more by juvenile enthusiasm than attempt at earnest study (see, for instance, D. D. Akhsharumov, *Iz moikh vospominanii* [St. Petersburg, 1905]).

6. Some of the information on the Petrashevtsy appears to be grossly overstated, for example the alleged plan of the foundation of a phalanstery in Russia or the mysterious story about a printing machine, both of which are worthy of more detailed inquiries.

7. The Petrashevtsy—like the Decembrists—acquired their importance by their sufferings rather than by their own actions; their ideas lived on among the intelligentsia in the late tsarist Russian society as part of the general emancipation process.

Examination of the original sources in the archives of the Soviet Union permits a fuller view and a more subtle interpretation of the relevant facts than have heretofore been possible; but reference to already published books also forms part of a scholarly approach. (See Wiktorja Śliwowska, *Sprawa Pietraszewców* [Warsaw, 1964]; Manfred Alexander, *Der Petraševskij-Prozess. Eine "Verschwörung der Ideen" und ihre Verfolgung im Russland von Nikolaus I* [Wiesbaden, 1979]; reviewed in *Slavic Review*, 40, no. 3 [Fall 1981]: 471).

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J. H. Seddon was invited to respond. Several months have passed and no response has been received.

#### TO THE EDITOR:

I wish to respond to the review by Thomas Owen of my monograph *Alexander Guchkov and the End of the Russian Empire* (*Slavic Review*, 42, no. 2 [Summer 1984]: 305). Two points can be made, the first with reference to the review itself, and the second concerning work that lies ahead for scholars of the late tsarist period.

As for the review, I was not particularly surprised by Owen's objection to the central thesis of the book. Owen himself (whose work appeared after my monograph was accepted for publication), along with Louis Menashe (whose work is cited and discussed in the first chapter), provide valuable material for Guchkov's merchant origins and background. My claim simply is that Guchkov's political career can also be understood from the perspective of the peculiar political features of the age, namely the rivalries of the great powers and Guchkov's response to that rivalry. Owen and I approach Guchkov from different vantage points. All well and good. The bothersome thing about the review was its failure to mention the central theme of the book in any sense, an obligation, I believe, of the

reviewer. In other words, the reader does not come away from this particular critique with any understanding of the book on its own merits, only with a restatement of Owen's special perspective on Guchkov.

Perhaps there is a larger point in all of this. As Owen notes (both in the review and in personal correspondence), source material for Guchkov is disastrously thin. This was true of many businessmen-turned-politicians of the late imperial era. In order to render a collective portrait, for instance, of the politics of the Russian bourgeoisie, we need to bring together hitherto discrete studies by individual scholars of the Octobrists, the Progressists, and other centrist political elements. That in turn would entail a collaborative effort of the highest order, on a level of the recently published study of the history of the zemstvo by Emmons and Vucinich. Perhaps Owen is the person to spark such an effort. In any case, let us hope the effort to better understand the central political figures of the final decade of tsarism continues, whatever the debate or disagreement.

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Professor Owen chose not to reply.