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Inadvertent Educators: Russian Society and Educational Reform during the Reign of Nicholas I

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Abstract
In my senior honors thesis I explore the governmental intention behind the educational reforms of Nicholas I of Russia, as well as the way those reforms were perceived and experienced by the laity, with a particular focus on socially exclusive nature of the reforms and the application of those laws within educational institutions. Using state documents, memoirs, diaries, and contemporary fiction, I sought to establish the motivation for reform, and demonstrate how the size of the Empire and the people's perception of the reforms ultimately made their social impact far greater than the tsar and the ministry had originally intended.

Keywords
History, Benjamin Nathans, Benjamin, Nathans, Russia, Education, Reform, Uvarov, Sergei, Nicholas I, Herzen, Society and Literature, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Cholera, Nobility, Estate divisions

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INADVERTENT EDUCATORS:
Russian Society and Educational Reform during the Reign of Nicholas I

By
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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for
Honors European History

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Honors Director: Dr. Milan Hejtmanek

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INTRODUCTION

It is tempting to ignore the reign of Nicholas I when attempting an analysis of the history of Russian reform. His reign was bracketed by disaster, beginning inauspiciously with the Decembrist uprising and finishing none better with the country embroiled in the bloody Crimean War. Further, Alexander I, his older brother and immediate predecessor, was trained in the Enlightenment and advised by the renowned reformer Michael Speranksy, while his son, Alexander II, went on to free the serfs and earn himself the title "Tsar-Liberator." By contrast, Nicholas' reign was marked by the creation of the Third Section, a network of secret police specifically designed to crush revolution, and the tsar himself earned the much less flattering label of "the gendarme of Europe." Between two such beloved tsars, Nicholas often seems to get lost in the shuffle.

This oversight, however, is unexpectedly problematic. There is little question that in comparison to his son's reign, Nicholas's was more reactionary and less amenable to exploring the possibility of comprehensive reorganization of state institutions. However, while he may have been hesitant to disrupt an already fragile state, his reign did encompass several important campaigns of reform, most significantly within the realm of education. With the help of his Minister of Public Enlightenment, Count S.S. Uvarov, Nicholas oversaw an exceptional expansion and solidification of Russia's educational system, an expansion which played a critical role in what the nineteenth-century critic P.V Annenkov termed "The Extraordinary Decade" – the period in the 1840s that witnessed a veritable explosion of Russian literature, criticism, and intellectual fervor.

These topics, though, are reasonably well trodden in the secondary literature; for example, Cynthia Whittaker, W. Bruce Lincoln and Nicholas Riasanovsky have

completed state-focused studies of the Nicolaevan reforms, and Patrick L. Alston, James McClelland, and William H.E. Johnson have all examined the broader issue of education within Russia's autocratic system. The difficulty is that none of these works dwells on the reception and social experience of the educational reforms. What is largely lacking in the available secondary studies is a careful examination of the changing perception of formal education resulting from the new legislation, the way physical distance from the capital allowed for more socially diverse student bodies, and the way the people's conceptualization of the socially restrictive admission policies made the reforms much more potent than Nicholas had originally intended. It is in this arena that I hope this thesis will carve a niche in the scholarship.

This is not simply an examination of the details of legislative reform. The contrasts between the intentions of the state and the experience of the people reveal themselves through the vastly differing understanding of education and social egalitarianism that each social stratum held. By scrutinizing both memoirs and works of fiction, a far fuller picture of the widespread effect of the reforms on society emerges than the impression received from an analysis of state documents. The Nicolaevan policies, through their attempt at social segregation, were designed to effect reform on a small scale; instead, they bred a vibrant and interesting educational atmosphere. It is this story, the story of the social and national experience of the reforms, thatI will tell.

The thesis consists of four chapters, but it is not a strictly chronological or linear tale. Instead, each chapter retells the same era from a different perspective: the government; the lower schools and the nobility; the university and urban life; and finally, in a look beyond the institutions and state influence, through the lens of contemporary

literature. The chapters follow the sequence in which the reforms were drafted, but the reforms are not always discussed in order; I chose this non-linear method to give the work a thematic, rather than progressive, focus. The goal, therefore, is not ultimately the end of the Nicolaevan reforms, but a holistic view of the epoch and its educational advancements.

In crafting this work, I sought to provide an accurate depiction of the way educational reform was experienced and how education was conceptualized in different arenas at varying distances from the capital, while still dealing with some very significant obstacles, most notably my reliance on translated primary sources. Before beginning the research, I assumed that given the prevalence of French within noble society, finding contemporary memoirs would not pose a problem. What I discovered as I delved deeper, however, was that while there is sufficient French and (translated) English material for an extensive preliminary study, the majority of memoirs, letters, and other traditional primary sources from the early nineteenth century remain untranslated from the original Russian. The result was that the number of sources available was limited by the linguistic barrier, and this affected my method of argumentation.

The reader will notice that at times I seem to be straying rather far from the topic at hand. This is intentional. Since I was dealing with a limited number of primary sources, I found I needed to devise ways of looking at each source from as many angles as possible so as to fully utilize them all. An example of such an application is the investigation of the cholera epidemics of the early 1830s, which appears in chapter three. Although it would seem that cholera is unrelated to the social composition of the universities, the primary sources available to me demonstrated that the experience of the

epidemic was a landmark in the university experience of that time, and thus time spent on the cholera epidemics leads to a revealing and unexpected glimpse of the relationship between town and gown, which in turn allows an analysis of how the social atmosphere of the city influenced the perception of exclusivity within the university. It also shows the process by which control over the reforms slowly seeped away from the state. Every investigation will be shown to be relevant; I simply ask the reader's faith as I demonstrate how.

A VIEW FROM THE TOP: REFORM FROM THE STATE PERSPECTIVE

On the morning of December 14, 1825, there was trouble afoot in St. Petersburg. Three weeks earlier, Tsar Alexander I had died quite suddenly in Taganrog in the south, and his brother and disputed heir, Nicholas, was uneasy on his new throne.[1] Nicholas, the third son of Paul I and third grandson of Catherine II, was never supposed to rule the Empire. When it became clear that a brother would succeed the childless Alexander I, most assumed it would be the next oldest, Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, although he had always firmly maintained that he would never accept the crown.[2] In truth, Alexander I had drafted a secret manifesto three years previously that officially designated Nicholas as the rightful heir, but although it seems Nicholas was aware of the document, he demonstrated a profound unwillingness to take the throne when it was offered.[3]

Capitalizing on the turmoil over succession and the resultant governmental instability, several middling officers in the imperial army concocted a plot to revolt against the monarchy, theoretically wishing to abolish the autocracy and finally win Russia a proper constitution.[4] The revolt was the outgrowth of revolutionary whispers that were manifest throughout the country in various secret societies designed to promulgate Enlightenment, democracy, and intellectual Westernization.[5] Thus, on the afternoon of December 14, the day the new tsar was to receive the oath of allegiance

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[1] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 20.
[2] Ibid, 27. Grand Duke Constantine was the Viceroy of Poland, and had forfeited the throne for his heirs in order to contract a morganatic marriage with a Polish countess; his aversion to taking the throne was well known among the immediate family. For more, see ibid.
[3] Ibid, 23.
[4] Edward Crankshaw, *The Shadow of the Winter Palace: Russia's Drift to Revolution, 1825-1917*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), 13.
[5] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire, 1801-1917*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 187.

from his army, several members of the elite guard units, largely from the Moskovskii Regiment, gathered near Falconet's famous statute of Peter the Great and, rather than swear allegiance to their new tsar, vowed to overthrow him instead.[6]

Nicholas and his advisors were unsurprised by this ramshackle revolt.[7] There had been stirrings of unrest among troops in the south, and the turmoil over the succession had exacerbated anti-monarchical sentiment throughout the Empire.[8] However, although the rebels never posed a serious threat due to the paucity of their numbers, it soon became clear that they would not surrender easily, and that the day would end in death.[9] The popular conception is that this military tsar eagerly opened his arsenal, but actually quite the opposite was true. When the final decision to resort to violence was made, it was with a heavy heart. In a later account of that day, Nicholas explained that:

> I had foreseen the necessity of this, but, I confess, when the time came, I could not make up my mind to such a measure. I was terror stricken… I saw that I must either take it upon myself to spill the blood of a few and almost surely save everything, or *spare myself* at the cost of definitely sacrificing everything.[10]

This is not the recollection of a man enamored with his military prowess, or obsessed with the efficacy of brutality. There is little doubt from this short record that Nicholas felt his decision to fiercely crush the uprising was justified, but there is also a palpable pain that on his first day as ruler his understanding of the situation produced a choice between the blood of his people and the security of his nation.

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[6] Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 41.
[7] Seton-Watson, 196.
[8] Lincoln, *Nicholas I*, 33.
[9] Ibid, 39.
[10] "Nicholas I's Own Account of the Events of December 14, 1825," in George Vernadsky and Ralph T Fisher, ed., *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917, Volume 2: Peter the Great to Nicholas I*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 529-530.

The Decembrist uprising, as this rebellion was titled, is one of the most oft-cited events in nineteenth-century Russian history. It was invoked by Soviet leaders as the true beginning of revolutionary currents, and by historians to account for what is normally understood as a harshly reactionary reign.[11] The subsequent trials of the men responsible, many of which ended in exile or execution, only seem to reinforce this conception.[12] The problem with this characterization, though, is that it fails to recognize the other outcome of the thwarted rebellion: the way it led to reform as well as to repression.

Immediately after the uprising, Nicholas came to the conclusion that the revolt had been due in large part to insufficient and careless education.[13] The rebels had all been members of the nobility, and many had been educated in Western ideals by foreign instructors; their participation in the uprising indicated to Nicholas that the standard of noble instruction was deficient and posed a serious threat to the stability of the empire.[14] To combat the problem, on May 21, 1826, he founded the Committee for the Organization of Educational Institutions (COEI) whose task was to review and rebuild the school system.[15] Over the next twenty years the COEI, in conjunction with the

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[11] Seton-Watson, 196.

[12] Eugene A. Moskoff, *The Russian Philosopher Chaadayev, His Ideas and His Epoch*, (New York: 1937), 24.

[13] Cynthia H. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855*, (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 128

[14] Ibid. Specifically, Nicholas attributed the revolt to "semi-knowledge," the idea that the young nobles were given only snippets of the Western ideas and thus drew the wrong conclusions based on too little faulty information.

[15] Constantin Galaskoy, *The Ministry of Education Under Nicholas I (1826-1836)*, (PhD Dissertation, Stanford University, 1976), 167. This was not a universally popular decision; although some members of the government supported the new venture, there were other, more conservative ministers who believed that the Decembrist movement was a reason to dismantle the Alexandrine educational system, not embark on yet another program of intensive reform. For more, see ibid, 33.

Ministry of Public Enlightenment, would fully reformulate and dramatically improve Russian education.[16]

Although the Decembrist Uprising was the initial catalyst for Nicholas's program of educational reform, there were other significant, motivating factors. Chief among them was the pressing need for a well-qualified civil service. There had been numerous educational reforms during the Alexandrine era, but the education of the average government official continued to be insufficient to meet the needs of the growing Empire.[17] Therefore, Nicholas chose to solve to both problems with a single solution: in making the active choice to undertake educational reforms in response to both the half-formed ideas of the Decembrists and the inadequacies of the bureaucracy, Nicholas signaled to his ministers and his people that his would be an era of progress, in many way honoring his brother's legacy. The educational reforms of the Nicolaevan era were driven at least in part by necessity of circumstance, but they also represent a conscious choice to move forward rather seek safety in political and intellectual stagnation.

Russian rulers had been experimenting with the issue of educational reform since the time of Peter the Great. Peter had been the first tsar to insist on the education of the nobility, and later rulers, most notably Catherine the Great and Alexander I, had

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[16] This ministry is alternatively translated as "Ministry of Education," "Ministry of Public Education," "Ministry of Enlightenment," and "Ministry of Public Enlightenment." I have chosen the final version simply because it is the most accurate literal translation. For more information both on the translation itself as well as the political and historical implications of how the Russian phrase is interpreted, see Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 203, note 4.

[17] W. Bruce Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats 1825-1855*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press), 1982, 5. Alexander I had effected a remarkable number of educational reforms, particularly of higher education; his reign witnessed the establishment of several new universities throughout the Empire, including ones in Kharkov, Kazan, Dorpat, Vilna, and St. Petersburg. Alexander also worked with his advisor Mikhail Speransky to encourage future government officials to attend university. For more on the details of the Alexandrine reforms, see James T. Flynn, *The University Reform of Tsar Alexander I, 1802-1835*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

expanded the educational system in an effort to meet governmental needs.[18] The expansion of the number of educational institutions, though, did not translate into a better educated public. The nobility was the only estate consistently allowed to take advantage of gymnasia and universities, and yet they were notoriously resistant to formal education, preferring instead to be educated at home by private tutors.[19] As a result, not only were government officials deplorably under-educated, the schools themselves suffered from a constant want of native instructors beyond the clergy of local parish schools.[20]

Even taking into account noble resistance, there was a great deal to be gained from reform of the universities and the educational system. In addition to the inconsistencies of the civil service, there was also the problem of reliance on, and excessive admiration of, the West. There was an historic tension between the envy of Western opportunities and a fear of Western ideals, and the proliferation of foreign tutors and professors merely exacerbated the problem.[21] If Russia could manage to construct a system on par with the great universities of Europe, then it could begin to advance without threatening its basic political structure.[22] As Count Sergei Semeonovich Uvarov, Nicholas' most influential Minister of Public Enlightenment, later noted, one of the primary objectives of the educational reform was:

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[18] Patrick L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 4-25.
[19] James C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 6. The only notable exception to this was military academies, such as the Cadet Corps, which were almost always popular among the nobility. Although these schools did not provide strictly military training, but were rather reasonably broad educational institutions, their military roots made them considerably more palatable to the nobility. See Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 155-156.
[20] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 132.
[21] Alston, 25.
[22] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 152.

> To eradicate the antagonism between so-called European education and our needs and requirements; to cure our newest generation of blind and unthinking predilection toward the superficial and the foreign.[23]

In creating an educational system of which Russia could be proud, her rulers hoped that they could finally reconcile the need to adequately prepare her bureaucracy for the demands of modernization without undermining the autocracy and the social hierarchy.

The effort to prevent the weakening of the social structure was the most significant consideration of the reforms. Count Benkendorff, the long-time chief of the Third Section (Nicholas' secret police), observed:

> Russia is best protected from revolutionary disasters by the fact that in our country, from the time of Peter the Great, the monarchs have always been ahead of the nation. But for this very reason one should not hasten unduly to educate the nation lest the people reach, in the extent of their understanding, a level equal to that of the monarchs and would attempt to weaken their power.[24]

What Benkendorff is arguing here is that education inherently narrows the gap between ruler and subject, and thus any educational reforms must proceed with enormous caution, so as not to empower those who might ultimately threaten the authority of the autocracy. Most important to consider in this latter group were the peasants, who were both the most populous class and the least powerful. The compromise, therefore, was to educate only those members of society whose education would be indispensable to the state – the nobility. With this realization came the overarching policy that dictated the subsequent two decades of educational reform: educate according to social estate.[25]

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[23] "S.S. Uvarov's Pronouncements," in Vernadsky et al, 564.
[24] N. Schilder, *Imperator Nikolai Pervyi, ego zhizn i tsartsovnire, Volume II*. St. Petersburg, 1903, 287, as quoted in Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 142.
[25] Riasanovsky, 141.

There was, however, a fundamental flaw in this logic: social position in Russia was infamouslymurky, with two seemingly contradictory methods of delineation.[26] There was the meritocratic nobility (those who had gained either lifetime or hereditary nobility through the Table of Ranks), as well as the ancient nobility, who could trace their lineages back to the age of Muscovy.[27] There was also the distinction between "Place Honor" – rank according to Muscovite heritage, and "Status honor" – which was based on hereditary service recognition.[28] Although the Table of Ranks attempted to streamline those two notions into one coherent system, the very fact that the Table was meant to remember the families of ancient *boyars* while still ennobling new families in recognition of exemplary state service formed an inherent tension in the system.[29]

Further, the creation of the Table of Ranks seemed to undermine the traditional hereditary basis of the Russian social structure. Instituted during the reign of Peter the Great, the Table of Ranks was formulated as an official way to reward service to the tsar, and was thus a preliminary, if extremely limited, form of meritocracy.[30] Although initial entrance into the Table (rank fourteen) was not available to all estates, societal advancement was still considerably easier than it had been when the hierarchy was organized strictly according to Muscovite heredity.[31] The Table of Ranks, therefore, made it harder to build an educational system that reinforced a rigid social structure.[32]

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[26] Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia*, (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 22.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid, 23.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid, 25.
[31] Certainly, the idea of ennoblement as a reward for state service was not new at the time that Peter codified the Table of Ranks, but in its codification it created more avenues for recognition, both within the civil service as well as within the army, and thus created what must be viewed as an essentially more open and upwardly mobile society. For more on the details on the precise divisions of the nobility, see ibid, 24.
[32] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 135.

Another by-product of the Table of Ranks that further complicated the social hierarchy were the *raznochinsty*, or "people of various ranks."[33] These were people, often well represented in educational institutions, who due to past military service, level of education, or other variables that separated them from their peers, did not fit neatly into any one social estate.[34] Particularly in the later nineteenth-century, the love of the *raznochinsty* for education and the benefits it afforded was a common theme in Russian sociological analysis.[35] According to N.K. Mikhailovski, a contemporary thinker:

> Their basic characteristic traits included humble social origins, poverty, a burning for desire knowledge, especially knowledge of truth, and direct experience and understanding of the life of common people.[36]

What is significant in Mikhailovski's definition is his insistence upon originally low birth and a concurrent belief in the value and importance of education. These are then the original social climbers who succeed not because of birth but because of talent.[37] However, it should also be noted that even this explanation must be tempered by the fact that since they constituted such an amorphous group, many *raznochinsty* could in fact claim noble blood.[38] This leads to Gregory Freeze's important argument that although Russian society was becoming increasingly fixed during the nineteenth century, it was fundamentally much more fluid than many historians realize.[39] The contemporary

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[33] Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society: Imperial Russia's "People of Various Ranks,"* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994), 6.
[34] Ibid, xi.
[35] Ibid, 107.
[36] N.K. Mikhailovski, "Literary and Journalistic Notes for 1874," as quoted in ibid.
[37] Nicholas is quoted on many occasions as wishing to specifically prohibit the *raznochinsty* from attending universities for precisely this reason. For more, see , Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 178.
[38] Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, 12.
[39] Gregory L. Freeze, "The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1, (February, 1986)

ministers themselves, however, were all too aware of the difficulties they faced in attempting to craft legislation which excluded certain sections of the population.[40]

One of the difficulties that Nicholas's ministers encountered was the way in which education immediately rewarded graduates, regardless of origin. Certain degrees automatically entitled the graduate to a place within the system of ranks, and by extension the opportunity to eventually achieve a higher social status.[41] This had been tantamount to opening up society to the most able, especially during the early Alexandrine era of "ladder schools," wherein skill was considered the fundamental factor in the progression up the educational hierarchy and thereby within the social and governmental worlds.[42] If graduating from a gymnasium or university could guarantee upward social movement, it was all the more important that the state control who was allowed to make that all-important leap.[43] As Admiral Alexander Shishkov, the Minister of Public Enlightenment when Nicholas came to the throne, explained, social position was divinely determined, and thus to educate a man above his station would both destabilize the state and be unjust to the serf or peasant who was being pushed unfairly above his natural station.[44]

Something that became abundantly clear as the foundations for reform were being laid was that the government required a strong and knowledgeable Minister of Public Enlightenment to see its plans through to fruition. The committee established in the wake of the Decembrist revolt was effective at transforming the secondary schools, but the ministry itself lacked a strong leader. Actually, that position had a remarkably high

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[40] Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, 98.
[41] Nathans, 204.
[42] Galaskoy, 178.
[43] Alston, 32.
[44] Ibid.

turnover rate due to frequent shifts in imperial policy.[45] Admiral Shishkov had resigned in 1828 in protest over several new reforms, and by 1832 his replacement, Prince Karl A. Lieven, was also nearing the end of his career.[46] If the Nicolaevan government was to achieve its aims, it would have to find a minister who understood the importance of education and would be able to effect the necessary changes yet could be trusted not to take the reforms to a dangerous extreme. They found this phantom in a member of the 1826 committee, Count Sergei Semeonovich Uvarov.[47]

Sergei Uvarov was born August 26, 1786 into an established gentry family. His father died while he was still quite young, and he was raised in the household of a wealthy uncle.[48] As was standard for the day, his primary education came from private tutors in the home of his uncle, and it was not until a brief, although possibly unofficial, stint at the Göttingen University in Germany that he encountered formalized education.[49] Despite these seemingly meager credentials for a man who would grow to lead the Empire in a radical educational reform, however, Uvarov was by no means unqualified for the post he would later hold. Due both to personal aptitude and time spent as a diplomat, he spoke seven languages, and was able to write fluently in three (Russian, French, and German).[50] He was widely educated across a diversity of subjects, and wrote essays about a range of topics, including Oriental Studies and philology.[51] Uvarov also

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[45] McClelland, 11.
[46] Marianna Tax Choldin, *A Fence around the Empire: Russian Censorship of Western Ideas under the Tsars*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 14.
[47] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 128.
[48] Ibid, 12.
[49] Ibid, 13. There is no paperwork to confirm that Uvarov ever officially enrolled in the University, but it has been verified that he did attend classes there for at least a short period of time.
[50] Riasanovsky, 170.
[51] Ibid, 171.

served as the president of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg from 1818 until his death, and was instrumental in its expansion and attainment of international prestige.[52]

The most important aspect of Sergei Uvarov's *curriculum vitae* prior to his appointment as Minister of Public Enlightenment, though, was undoubtedly his work towards the creation of the University of St. Petersburg in 1818.[53] This European-style city had been the political and cultural capital of the Empire since 1712, but although it boasted several secondary facilities, including the prestigious Alexander Lyceum and the Smolny Institute for Girls, it lacked a well-regarded university. Supported by the surrounding Academy of Sciences, Naval Academy, and Medical School, the University of St. Petersburg filled that niche, and grew to be one of the best institutions in the realm.[54] It was the success of this venture, which the young Uvarov had spear-headed and seen through to completion, that above all else qualified him for the great tasks which lay ahead upon his appointment as Minister of Public Enlightenment in 1833.[55]

Uvarov's past achievements, however, were not the only deciding factors. It was evident in both his published works and his general demeanor in government that Uvarov was a staunch advocate of the autocracy. Indeed, in an internal memorandum of 1843 explaining the impetus for the reforms, he wrote:

> In the midst of the rapid collapse in Europe of religious and civil institutions, at the time of a general spread of destructive ideas, at the sight of grievous phenomena surrounding us on all sides, it was necessary to establish our fatherland on firm foundations upon which is based the well-being, strength, and life of a people.[56]

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[52] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 35.
[53] Ibid, 60.
[54] The University was actually an expansion of the already existing Petersburg Pedagogical Institute, but it was Uvarov who transformed that specialized institution into a university with a broad range of faculties. For more, see ibid.
[55] Ibid, 171.
[56] "S.S Uvarov's Pronouncements," in Vernadsky et al, 565.

In this quotation, Uvarov is referencing his famous triad "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Official Nationality," codified and first applied to legislation in 1832.[57] This tripartite slogan served as a structuring force for the educational reforms, and the unmistakable conservative nature of the aphorism has traditionally defined Uvarov's tenure, earning him the reputation of being nearly as reactionary as the tsar he served.

However, some scholarship seems to indicate that Uvarov was not quite as conservative as the triad would seem to suggest. Cynthia Whittaker argues that Uvarov in fact would have supported a constitutional monarchy, but that he did not believe the nation was ready for such a project. In essence, he believed in the inevitable march of civilization towards some form of democracy, but he found Russia too primitive in its culture and institutions to safely progress to the next stage of political development.[58] This leads to the rather radical conclusion that he fervently believed that it was possible to reconcile a belief in autocracy with a belief in the eventuality of a constitution, because he assumed that one would naturally lead to the other.[59]

There is also another way to interpret the last portion of the memorandum quoted above. Uvarov explains that "it was necessary to find the principles which form the distinctive character of Russia, and which belong only to Russia."[60] This is an unambiguous example of the minister's long-standing desire to identify and build a distinct Russian culture. He believed Russia lacked a clear cultural heritage, arguing instead that almost everything had been borrowed from the West. It was his sincere

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[57] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 94. For more on the political implications of the triad, see Riasanovsky.
[58] Cynthia H. Whittaker, "The Ideology of Sergei Uvarov: An Interpretive Essay" in *Russian Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr. 1978), 167.
[59] Ibid, 160.
[60] "S.S Uvarov's Pronouncements," in Vernadsky et al, 565.

belief that this was one of the primary hindrances to its political, cultural and educational progress.[61] He traced the roots of the problem to the lack of a strong Russian Studies program in any of the nation's educational institutions, and proposed to rectify the problem by endowing chairs in Russian history, language, and literature at all of the major universities.[62] He also encouraged the use of primary source documents in academic research, since he believed that analysis of original sources would further enforce the legitimacy of the autocracy.[63] This had the immediate effect of greatly improving both research techniques and the overall quality of Russian historical scholarship. By extension, therefore, although it was certainly a conservative document, the structuring force of the slogan actually led to the improvement of several sections of the universities. In his effort to develop the study of history, then, one gets a glimpse not of Uvarov the Minister, but of Uvarov the Intellectual.

Uvarov's pronounced intellectual side, already hinted at in his academic publications and linguistic abilities, was instrumental in determining the course of the reforms he oversaw, particularly in his conception of noble versus public education. Uvarov fancied himself a child of the French Enlightenment, but he quickly divorced that intellectual school from the bloody revolution that it preceded. Rather, what Uvarov loved about the Enlightenment was the *ancien régime* salon culture it accompanied, wherein men and women of the privileged classes would gather to discuss ideas as means of self-cultivation, not to foster political change.[64] Indeed, salons were the epitome of

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[61] Seton-Watson, 220.
[62] Whittaker, "An Interpretive Essay," 172-173.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Cynthia H. Whittaker, *Count S.S. Uvarov: Conservatism and National Enlightenment in Pre-Reform Russia*, (PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), 28.

polite aristocratic society – cultured, spirited, intellectual, and, at least in the early years, apolitical.[65]

Salon culture featured prominently in Vienna while Uvarov was stationed there as a diplomat in 1807.[66] At the time, the Austrian city played host to influential exiles of the *ancien regime*, most notably Prince Charles-Joseph de Ligne and Madame de Staël-Holstein, daughter of the Bourbon finance minister Jacques Necker.[67] Uvarov delightedly took part in the gatherings hosted by these luminaries, both observing and participating in the aristocratic debates. Of the discussions in the salons, primarily between Prince de Ligne and Madame de Staël, Uvarov wrote:

> Let me hasten to say that in these charming combats there was nothing prepared, nothing artificial; here were two different natures exhibiting themselves spontaneously; two able players tossing back the ball from one to the other courteously. Lively sudden expressions, easy talk, almost careless, from one to the other as it came, extreme care to avoid all asperity of speech, mutual *bonhomie*, if I may use the word – these were the leading features of those delightful fireworks whose wonderful rockets still linger in our memory.[68]

What the future minister loved in these exchanges was the combination of noble society with intellectual fervor, and this is crucial to understanding the later pattern of his reforms. It is tempting to look at the triad he composed and argue that the reforms stemmed from a fanatically conservative mind, or instead to look at his educational biography and argue that he was forced into limiting the scope of the reforms by the cruel

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[65] Rosena Davison, "Salons – France," in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment,* Vol. 4, ed. Alan Charles Kors, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.
[66] Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 28
[67] Katharine Prescott Wormeley, ed., *The Prince de Ligne: His Memoirs, Letters, and Miscellaneous Papers, Volume II*, trans. Katharine Wormeley, (London: William Heinemann, 1899), 250. The Prince de Ligne was originally from Belgium, but had so ingratiated himself into Parisian culture before the Revolution that most accepted him as an indispensable part of the *ancien régime*. For more, see Phillip Mansel, *Prince of Europe: The Life of Charles-Joseph de Ligne, 1735-1814*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).
[68] Wormeley, 251.

and reactionary tsar. Uvarov's recollections of his time in Vienna suggest that neither is an accurate or complete interpretation. This man who had the foresight to found the University of St. Petersburg, and the honor to be president of the Academy of Sciences for over two decades was clearly someone who valued and respected education. The reason he agreed to limit the reforms by class is because he aspired to the same noble circles he had found during his tenure in the West. He ultimately wished to recreate the *ancien régime*, and that was an inherently exclusionary exercise.[69]

If Uvarov wished to recreate salon culture, though, he also wished to improve upon the nobility who comprised it. At the same time that he was joyously partaking in the salons of the exiled French nobility in Vienna, he found himself shocked by the disinterest of the Austrian court in anything other than what he deemed frivolous pursuits. He wrote of their decadence that:

> The chief reason is a poor education: anything that breathes or speaks of spiritual interests is alien to them….The aristocracy…prefers to shut itself up in its own ignorance and to find satisfaction only in the dark vices in which it wallows.[70]

He saw in the Austrian nobility something which was all too common in Russia – a profound aversion to education and intellect. What Uvarov hoped to accomplish in his reforms was a reversal of this attitude among the Russian nobility, so as to ultimately create a society at home where the salons he so loved could flourish. Practically, Uvarov realized that the fundamental problem facing both the Austrian nobility and his compatriots was not just personal dislike of formal education, but a faulty system as well. It is perhaps this realization, combined with his obvious penchant for the paradigmatic

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[69] Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 31.
[70] Sergei Uvarov, "Tablettes d'un Voyageur Russe," 1807 (Unpublished manuscript, Historical Museum, Moscow) as quoted in ibid, 29.

cultured, well-mannered aristocrat, which made Uvarov so well suited to the position of Minister of Public Enlightenment.

Although it had been Nicholas's idea to embark on a campaign of educational reform, and despite Uvarov's clear dedication to reform within certain acceptable parameters, Nicholas still feared the social and political consequences of well-educated subjects. To mitigate the risk posed by improving the educational offerings of the Empire, the tsar demanded that universities focus on practical subjects such as engineering and medicine, as opposed to more abstract intellectual pursuits, although classical studies, philosophy, and political economy were all offered.[71] Universities were under close and constant surveillance, particularly the University of St. Petersburg, which sat at the nexus of power. Study abroad was also limited officially in 1831, when Nicholas published "The Decree Limiting Foreign Education." The law declared that if the majority of a young man's education was not undertaken within Russia he would be rendered ineligible for the civil service.[72] This decree served the dual purpose of limiting the dangerous influence of foreign ideas which had not been filtered through a Russian lens, as well as preventing the drain on Russian universities which resulted from the practice of sending the best and most promising students abroad.[73]

In 1835, the Statute for the Russian Universities constituted another effort to control the perceived risks of an educated public.[74] This statute standardized university structure, insisting that each university be administered by a university council which

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[71] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 164-167.
[72] "Decree Limiting Foreign Education," in Vernadsky et al, 562.
[73] Actually, this decree did little to stem the outward flow of Russian students to foreign universities, and by 1846 study abroad was even seen as an acceptable component of years served in the civil service. For more see , Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 161.
[74] "Statute for the Russian Universities," in Vernadsky et al, 562.

would be composed of professors, and an executive board made up of externally appointed officials. Further, there would be a superintendent of each region who would be the final arbiter over all matters relating to educational institutions under his purview. All universities were designated as "imperial," ensuring that any insubordination within university walls would be tantamount to direct insurrection against the crown, and superintendents were charged with maintaining the "stability" of the institution.[75] Article 48 of the statute states:

> The superintendent shall use every means to bring the university into a flourishing state, keeping strict watch that the institutions and personnel connected with it perform their duties vigilantly. He shall pay heed to the ability, diligence, and moral character of the professors, assistants, teachers, and officials of the university, shall reprimand the negligent, and shall take legitimate measures to remove the unreliable…[76]

In Nicolaevan universities, the superintendent was the surrogate eye of the tsar. He was responsible for supervising the controlled growth and expansion of the faculties, but also trusted with ensuring that no contraband material was distributed to the students, and that all learning was directed towards the exaltation and betterment of the state.[77]

The statute did not just address administration, however; it also dealt specifically with curriculum and the content of courses. Each university was expected to offer the same subjects including, but not limited to, medicine, mathematics, ancient history, philosophy, theology, medieval and modern languages, physics, and law.[78] These subjects were considered indispensable if Russian universities were to compete with European institutions as well as produce well-rounded bureaucrats who were fully

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 157.
[77] Flynn, *University Reform*, 237.
[78] "Statute for the Russian Universities," in Vernadsky et al, 562.

prepared for the civil service.[79] What comes through most strikingly in the redesign of the curriculum as seen in this statute is the intention of directing education towards the specific end of improving the government and strengthening the state. It is interesting to note, though, that the focus of the text is not maintenance of the social structure; while social dictums would quickly follow in official documents and internal memorandums, the omission of rules about the social hierarchy from what many consider to be the fundamental legislative document of the reforms suggests that there were certain instances where ensuring the success of the reform trumped the need for social segregation.

This interpretation is supported by the attitude of the censorship bureau to educational institutions. Universities were expected to adhere to strict guidelines of permissible material, but they were self-censoring bodies. The statue dictated that:

> The universities shall maintain their own censorship for theses, dissertations, and other treatises of a scholarly character, whether published by the universities or by their professors. This censorship shall be guided by the general statue on censorship.[80]

This is a significant concession. The letter of the law ordered that the universities adhere to the official censorship guidelines, and there is an inspector to keep order, but since the universities conducted their own censorship, they ultimately maintained a remarkable amount of autonomy.[81] This semi-autonomous system became increasingly relevant in relation to the social composition of individual universities, and, more broadly, most educational institutions.

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[79] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 162.
[80] "Statute on Censorship," in Vernadsky et al, 563.
[81] Flynn, *University Reform*, 216.

There was one other aspect of the reform from the state perspective which, while not directly correlated to the socially exclusionary policies of the laws, is nonetheless significant. In 1827, a Professors' Institute was founded at Dorpat as an extension of the university there.[82] This institute, in addition to improving the general level of education among instructors and helping to wean Russia from her dependence on foreign instructors, also signaled a change in the governmental attitude towards education.[83] The new course required two years at Dorpat, then an additional two years in either Paris or Berlin, and finally twelve years of state service in a Russian University.[84] Uvarov had founded a similar institute in St. Petersburg some ten years previously, but what distinguished the institute at Dorpat was its obvious devotion to producing professors educated in Western ideals, as evidenced by the mandatory time abroad.[85] The hope was that the initial training in a Russian setting would mitigate the cultural impact of the time abroad, thus producing teachers who could educate in Western styles without posing a threat to the state.[86] Although the Institute was only open a short eleven years, it nevertheless marked a great leap forward in the genesis of Russian education. The first graduates of the new Institute proved themselves to be well-prepared, able teachers.[87] The initial establishment and success of the Professors' Institute was an obvious indication of the gravity with which the state approached the projected reform of every facet of the educational system.

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[82] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 160. Dorpat, in Baltic territories, was one of the most rigorous universities of the realm.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] William H.E. Johnson, *Russia's Educational Heritage*, Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1950, 125.
[86] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 160.
[87] Ibid, 160-161.

If the actions of the state bespoke a renewed commitment to education, though, their target audience remained remarkably disinterested. As an estate, the Russian nobility was historically opposed to formal education, and even insisted that if they were forced to receive formal schooling, the institutions be both socially segregated and intellectually undemanding.[88] It was with these obstacles and objectives in mind – the need to improve the quality of the civil service, the desire to maintain the social hierarchy, and the nobility's historical antagonism to education – that the COEI and later Uvarov's ministry embarked on a campaign to redesign noble lyceums, gymnasia, and women's institutes. The primary goal of this aspect of the reforms was to convince the nobility to attend government schools, thereby guaranteeing the quality of future ministers and preventing the pernicious influence of foreign tutors. However, while the government did succeed in raising the premium of education among the aristocracy, their efforts at maintaining the strict separation of the estates proved less successful, particularly in the farther reaches of the Empire.

[88] McClelland, 6.

PROBLEMATIC NOBILITY: LYCEUMS, GYMNASIA, AND WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

When Peter III, the ill-fated husband of Catherine II, released the nobility from required state service in 1762, he stressed that although they were no longer studying to prepare themselves for government work, they should continue to educate their sons at home.[1] However, with the abolition of the service requirement, the nobility's motivation disappeared as well, and their devotion to education, never very strong, waned further still. Even though most continued to serve the tsar in an official capacity, either out of a sense of loyalty or economic necessity, and Catherine II had undertaken significant education reforms during her extended reign, the nobility continued to resist formal education for both budgetary and social reasons.[2] Indeed, the general disregard for the importance of education proved to be progressively troublesome as the eighteenth century drew to a close and Alexander I ascended the throne after the assassination of his father, Paul I.[3]

When nobles were educated outside the home, they exhibited a tendency towards severe self-segregation, insisting they only attend schools reserved for their class.[4] These schools were, by and large, severely sub par and produced generations of nobility who were abysmally prepared for the governmental life ahead of them. In a discussion of the memoirs of Ivan Ivanovich Panaev, one of the major literary figures of the 1840s, John Keynes recounts:

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[1] Wirtschafter, *Social Identity*, 26.
[2] Flynn, *University Reforms*, 1.
[3] Ibid, 5.
[4] John L. Keynes, *Ivan Ivanovič Panaev: A Literary Figure from the Background of Nineteenth Century Russian Literature*, (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1954), 5.

> Panaev writes of the snobbish, lazy, often contemptuous and incompetent members of the faculty who practiced slipshod methods of instruction and engaged in private tutoring for pay to cover up their classroom deficiencies; of the faculty toleration for lack of devotion to study on the part of many of the students.[5]

Even more detrimental to the forging of a strong government, this shoddy secondary school instruction was not tempered with a university education because a certificate from one of these institutes was considered equivalent to a diploma from one of the universities.[6] The students in these schools knew they held the advantage of both birth and circumstance over their instructors, and this simply reinforced their conception of education as an ultimately futile exercise.

Although evident in all levels of education, the nobility's dislike of formal schooling was most palpable in its profound aversion to universities. An imperial historian of the Alexander Lyceum in Tsarskoe Selo wrote:

> The Russian nobles, who had in fact always contributed the largest contingent to the civil service, were at the same time strangely unwilling to send their sons to the universities, and preferred to give them a home education, which was necessarily imperfect and incomplete, and not seldom entrusted their children to the care of ignorant and inexperienced foreign tutors.[7]

This short passage makes evident the tension between noble views on education and the disproportionate representation of the nobility in government jobs. It also clearly demonstrates that this conflict is not one that has been teased out with the benefit of

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[5] Ibid, 6.
[6] Ibid., 5.
[7] _____. *A Short Sketch of the History of Imperial Alexander Lyceum, St. Petersburg*, (Typographia R. Golike, 1893), 1. This text was written in 1893, and it is not always entirely clear from the context whether the author is referring to the past or the contemporary era, but other primary works as well as most secondary works indicate that these statements are applicable to the early Alexandrine era. Interestingly, there is also some evidence that one of Alexander's impetuses for founding the Lyceum was to provide an alternative to university for Nicholas, when their mother suggested they attend the University of Leipzig. While Nicholas never attended the school due to the outbreak of the Napoleonic War in 1812, this produces a new portrait of Alexander I as a ruler who was much less sympathetic to higher education for nobles than his reforms might initially suggest. For more, see Galaskoy, 32-33.

historical hindsight, but rather was also recognized as a problem by contemporary writers and politicians. In these few lines, this anonymous writer describes the fundamental problem which Alexander I faced at the beginning of his reign. Rigid about the maintenance of class and social hierarchy, the nobility preferred to educate their children in the controlled environment of the home, but this left little place for proper evaluation or effective reinforcement of educational standards.

Alexander I originally attempted to address this problem by requiring that entrance to and promotion within the civil service be tied to a certain level of education, but neither of these edicts was sufficient to solve the widespread educational inadequacies of the nobility.[8] Therefore, in 1811, he decided to establish an imperial lyceum in the royal retreat of Tsarskoe Selo, eighteen miles outside of St. Petersburg.[9] The new Alexander Lyceum would admit only boys of noble birth or the sons of men who had achieved the rank of colonel or higher in the military, thus assuring that the same social homogeneity would exist in the Lyceum as had at home.[10]

The Alexander Lyceum was not the first noble school of the realm, and thus its creation precipitates the question of why this school in particular would be any more appealing to noble fathers as an alternative for their sons. Besides the obvious answer of its physical proximity to the palaces of Tsarskoe Selo, which improved the chances of meeting and impressing the Tsar and royal family, the Lyceum offered another distinct advantage: its curriculum was specifically designed to replace that of the university. The author of *A Short Sketch of the History of the Alexander Lyceum* explains:

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[8] Flynn. *University Reforms*, 22.
[9] *Alexander Lyceum*, 1.
[10] Ibid, 3.

> The programme for the first, second, and third classes includes the study of juridical and administrative law, answering to the corresponding faculties in our universities, together with and besides the different branches of history and literature. The lower classes, the fourth, fifth, and sixth, correspond more or less with the eight classes in our classical grammar schools, with this important distinction, that English, in place of Greek, is taught in these classes.[11]

This streamlined structure eliminated several years of schooling and allowed Lyceum graduates to enter the civil service with the same (or better) rank as university graduates, who had spent on average an additional three years in school before beginning their careers.[12] This was appealing to nobles on two levels. First, more venially, a shorter school term meant more time in the workforce advancing through the ranks, and more time to acquire significant wealth. On a related but more practical level, it meant fewer years of paying tuition. Although there were scholarship places available, and some nobles were enormously wealthy, social status did not immediately translate into fabulous riches. Historically, one of the nobility's most persistent arguments against formal education was the cost, and so creating a school thatprovided all the benefits of higher education for an aggregate total of less time and money was extremely appealing.[13]

As Alexander I had originally conceived it, the Lyceum comprised two sections: the boarding school for younger boys and the lyceum for the older boys. In 1829, Nicholas closed the boarding school section, but the Lyceum remained open and it continued to be a bastion of the nobility and the most prestigious training ground for future members of the civil service throughout the Nicolaevan and later imperial eras.[14]

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[11] Ibid, 1.
[12] Steven H. Allister, *The Reform of Higher Education in Russia During the Reign of Nicholas I, 1825-1855*, (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1974), 140.
[13] Wirtschafter. *Social Identity*, 33.
[14] Charles and Barbara Jelavich, ed., *The Education of a Russian Statesman: The Memoirs of Nicholas Karlovich Giers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 25.

This reorganization was only part of a larger pattern of focus on secondary institutions, which occupied the 1826 committee long before it began seriously considering the project of university reform.[15]

Uvarov was especially dedicated to this aspect of the reforms; he had served as the superintendent of the St. Petersburg School District from 1810 to 1821.[16] Uvarov had originally proposed a vast reform of gymnasia in 1811 under Alexander I, but his reforms, which supported the inclusion of classical Greek into the gymnasium curriculum, had been rebuffed.[17] With Nicholas's new-found devotion to reforming education as a means of saving the state, however, Uvarovian policies came into favor with the imperial household, and by the end of Uvarov's tenure as Minister of Public Enlightenment in 1849, Russian gymnasia had become among the best in Europe.[18]

It is important at this juncture to distinguish between gymnasia and lyceums. A gymnasium was essentially a high school, designed to prepare its pupils for university but not intended to feed its graduates directly into the professional world.[19] A lyceum, however, was designed for precisely this latter purpose. This distinction is central to understanding the reforms of lower education in Russia in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Lyceums were preferable to the government because they produced future officials, and were more socially exclusive than the less tailored gymnasia.

During this period, several gymnasia, such as the Prince Bezborodko Gymnasium in Nezhdin and the Demidov Gymnasium in Yaroslavl, were officially designated

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[15] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 128.
[16] Ibid, 57-58.
[17] Allister, 95.
[18] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 147.
[19] Jelavich, 36.

lyceums rather than gymnasia.[20] These two particular schools had previously been endowed with strong Russian studies departments, and their designation as lyceums in 1832 and 1833, respectively, was a natural progression in their educational status.[21] The stress on education in Russian history and language is important because, as a feeder school for the civil service, these two institutions would have to instill in their pupils a love of country and knowledge of history and language so that, as graduates, they could effectively serve the state. Therefore, the installation of strong Russian faculties at both schools can be viewed as a clear precursor to their elevation from gymnasia to lyceums. It is also reminiscent of Uvarov's efforts to install Russian history departments in the universities, and is thus another example of how the lyceums were meant to replace higher education.

The case of the Demidov and Prince Bezborodko lyceums is not unique, but it is indicative of the tactic that Uvarov and the COEI used in the approach to education. It was, quite simply, ruthlessly practical. If the Decembrist uprising had been partially the result of poor education, and nobles were more amenable to boarding school than to university, then the easiest and most direct solution to the problem was to expand the number of institutions that could educationally replace a university degree. This was not the first time that a lower school replaced university for the nobility, but it does mark the first time there was a concerted effort on the part of the government to allow the nobility to circumvent higher education without impinging on the adequacy of their instruction.[22] By the mind-1840s, at which point the university reforms were well underway, this parallel program allowing the upper classes to skip several years of schooling had

[20] Allister, 139.
[21] Ibid.
[22] On the replacement of university curricula during the Alexandrine era, see Keynes, 4-6.

become increasingly popular. The lowest student in a lyceum graduated at the twelfth rank, almost identical to the rank granted with a university diploma.[23]

Although there continued to be some problems with enrollment at the lyceums, for the most part, they seemed to appeal to the noble classes.[24] The sons remained shielded from contact with the lower classes, ever more so as tuition costs were raised to further limit eligibility.[25] Further, admission criteria were made even stricter in 1837, ensuring that those who received a lyceum education were truly of the well-born classes.[26] From design through implementation, the Nicolaevan state made clear that while universities were harder to control, schools were to remain enclaves of the nobility and would therefore act as constant reinforcement of the existing social hierarchy.[27]

Incidentally, it seems from available source material that those young nobles who attended a lyceum, particularly the institution in Tsarskoe Selo, were enormously pleased with their experience, and many wrote nostalgically of their school days in later years. Alexander Pushkin, the most revered poet of the Russian canon, graduated with the first class of the Alexander Lyceum in 1817, and spoke warmly of his time in the noble school. In a letter from 1816, one year before he was due to finish his course, he wrote to Prince Peter Andreevich Vyazemsky:

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[23] Allister, 143.
[24] Ibid, 144.
[25] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 149. Prince Lambert, one of the original members of the COEI, had wanted education to be entirely funded by the nobility, arguing that this would ensure that only the most powerful and wealthy nobles were benefiting from the reforms. For more, see Galaskoy, 179.
[26] Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 159.
[27] Interestingly, in the gymnasia of the provincial capitals, far from the metropolises of Moscow and St. Petersburg, nobles and non-nobles were educated together, with the only concession to class being that the nobility were housed in separate quarters. This would seem to indicate that the stress on social segregation was strictest both nearer the center of power, and also as regarded pupils most likely to pursue a career in government. For more, see Seton-Watson, 221.

> True, the time of our graduation is approaching; one more year is left. But another whole year of pluses and minuses, of laws, of taxes, of the sublime, of the beautiful![28]

This is followed by a schoolboy's lament over his homework, but there is an unmistakable hint of what would later become an immense appreciation of the Lyceum and its offerings.[29] This nascent sentiment had fully matured by the time Pushkin wrote one of his most famous works, the epic poem *Eugene Onegin*, wherein his hero proclaims:

> In those days, when in the Lycée gardens
> I serenely flourished
> Read Apuleius eagerly…
> In those days, in mysterious vales,
> In spring, to the cry of swans,
> Near waters gleaming in stillness,
> The Muse began to visit me.[30]

Although it is always dangerous to conflate author and character, when read in conjunction with the glimmerings of appreciation in his earlier letter, the love that Pushkin felt for his school is indisputable.

However, while Alexander and later Nicholas may have been pleased that the illustrious poet enjoyed the Lyceum, aristocratic happiness was not the only factor in its establishment. In truth, Nicholas encouraged attendance at noble schools in lieu of private tutoring because he firmly believed that private tutoring was a direct threat to the state.[31] The overwhelming majority of tutors were foreign born, with a significant percentage coming from either France or Germany, and Nicholas feared the influence

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[28] J. Thomas Shaw, *The Letters of Alexander Pushkin, Third Edition, Revised*, trans. J. Thomas Shaw, (Los Angeles: Charles Schlacks, Jr., Publisher, 1997), 60.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, VIII, I, as quoted in T.J. Binyon, *Pushkin: A Biography*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 14.
[31] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 135.

that foreigners could wield over young Russians who one day hoped to make a career in government.[32] Although French Enlightenment ideals had become less appealing after the war against Napoleon in 1812 and the Restoration Monarchy, the possibility that French tutors would infect Russian youth while teaching them the French language was simply too great a risk for a monarch already uneasy on his throne. German Enlightenment ideals were slightly less worrisome, but nonetheless, the tsar feared that excessive exposure to foreign philosophies in an unsupervised environment would prevent the future servants of the Empire from acquitting themselves with the devotion to the state that the emperor demanded.[33]

The problem of foreigners being too involved in educational life was exacerbated by the proportion of private schools (as distinct from state-run schools such as the Alexander Lyceum) that were opened and administered by non-Russians.[34] Just as with private tutors in the home, those students who attended private schools were educated beyond the power of the state. Since teachers at private schools had influence over wholes cadres of boys, rather than just the few siblings a tutor might affect, Nicholas feared the foreign private schools even more than he did unregulated home schooling.

To combat the perceived problem of foreign infestation of the educational realm, Uvarov undertook several bold measures. First, he demanded that all private schools be overseen by a state-appointed inspector.[35] State-run schools were subject to the same inspection, but the advent of oversight of private schools blurred the once immutable divide between the two school systems, and was the first blow in dismantling the popular

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[32] Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 140.
[33] Galaskoy, 165.
[34] Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 145.
[35] Ibid, 146.

private schools. Uvarov also decreed that in future, private schools could only be opened by Russian nationals, thereby precluding the possibility that more foreign schools might appear just as the state was beginning to strengthen its own school system. Finally, as an attempt to appeal to the nobility before they made the initial choice of a state-run lyceum versus a private school, in 1841 a law was passed promising that attendance at lyceum would guarantee a higher placement in the Table of Ranks upon graduation than attending a private school.[36] The restrictive and manipulative measures towards the private schools are yet further proof of how the state designed its schools to train young nobles for the government, and how opposition to this program was systematically dismantled.[37]

Nicholas Karlovich Giers, the foreign minister from 1882 to 1895, attended both the Nobleman's Boarding School in St. Petersburg as well as the Alexander Lyceum during the 1830s, and his memoirs provide a fascinating insight into the Lyceum experience of the early Nicolaevan era, as well as into how social divisions within the elite schools were perceived at a lay level.[38] Giers was born on May 9, 1820 to gentry parents of German extraction.[39] His nationality is of some importance, as during the nineteenth century, Russians who traced their ancestry (whether distant or immediate), to the Baltic German territories tended to be overrepresented in positions of power, and

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[36] Allister, 143.
[37] Many of the patrons of the private schools, however, were not sons of the nobility but rather the sons of wealthy merchants who were not eligible to attend the state-run noble schools. Therefore, although Uvarov did manage somewhat to stem the enthusiasm for private schools, they still remained quite popular among the wealthy non-noble classes. See Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 137.
[38] The Nobleman's Boarding School was an attendant part of St. Petersburg University. See Jelavich, 28.
[39] Ibid, 9.

there can be little doubt that his German heritage proved highly beneficial to Giers in both his career and his admittance to the elite schools.[40]

Giers' German pedigree also provides an interesting context for his experience at a school designed to produce devoted Russian subjects. Upon his graduation from the Lyceum, he records that "Aside from my religion, I had nothing in common with the Germans, and regarded myself then, as I do now, as a pure Russian although my ancestors were Swedes."[41] Here, then, is an absolute success story in terms of the government's initial goals for the Lyceum. A man with ancestry in Scandinavia and Western Europe proclaims with sincere patriotism that the only thing separating himself from his Russian classmates in his Lutheran faith.

This statement is offered freely and without visible coercion, but it does raise the issue of what is meant by the term "true Russian." The memoir was composed between 1873 and 1875 while Giers was the Russian minister in Stockholm.[42] Therefore, although the subject recalls an earlier time, the text itself was written far from Russia at a time when nationalist sentiment across the continent was becoming increasingly prevalent. For this reason, although there is little doubt the curriculum at the Alexander Lyceum imbued the pupils with a profound love for both their country and their monarchy, the hyperbole of Giers' text must be read through the lens of the time in which it was written. It also dictates that the memoir is not a reliable basis for an analysis of the patriotic environment beyond the classroom that government officials may have been

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[40] Ibid, 4. It should be noted, however, that German was conceived of as a distinct social class. See Galaskoy, Table F, 245.
[41] Jelavich, 65. His reference to his Swedish ancestry would seem to confuse his classification as either German or Russian, but the Swedish ancestors were only on his father's side, and both his father and paternal grandfather were Baltic Germans. In terms of the Russian hierarchy, he was considered German. Ibid, 3.
[42] Ibid.

attempting to cultivate in the Lyceum as a way of preparing the pupils for a career in the civil service.

The lapse of years notwithstanding, there are other elements of his memoir that seem less affected by a revisionist memory, particularly his account of the social composition of the school and the constant stress the administration placed upon social hierarchy. In speaking of his comrades, Giers mentions the positions of their fathers as well as the ranks those comrades hold as the memoir is being written.[43] He also dwells on his rank at graduation, bemoaning the fact that he graduated only at the tenth rank despite generally stellar marks, while others managed to achieve the ninth rank, the highest awarded upon graduation.[44] Position at graduation was dependent on the average of all marks received in the final exams and throughout the course, and it was a zero in physics that kept Giers from graduating with the ninth rank, a difference of four extra years in the civil service, salary, and significant social and political privileges.[45]

Giers' dismay at this outcome is indicative of how education was viewed within the Lyceum and what nobles who attended expected to achieve. By its very design, the school rewarded and reinforced the social structure. Graduation rank was based on a meritocracy of sorts, but the goal remained the attainment of rank, not the acquisition of knowledge. Nevertheless, the same love for the school that Pushkin expressed is evident in Giers' memoir, and it provokes a question as to how clearly the separation between learning for pleasure and learning for the state was enforced. Giers writes:

> I regard the six years in the Lyceum as the best years of my life, which, of course, speaks well for the institution. I cannot say I learned there everything that a well educated man should know. Nevertheless, I did

[43] Ibid, 36.
[44] Ibid, 89.
[45] Ibid.

> learn there the usefulness of knowledge, and I acquired a desire to learn. And, most important, I acquired the characteristics of honor and nobility of mind which were at the heart of the Lyceum education.[46]

The lyceum system succeeded in convincing the noble classes of the importance of education in terms of professional implications, but it also produced what this pupil terms "a desire to learn." In creating a school designed to prepare candidates for government service, the government also created a genuinely successful, interested, and curious student population.[47] What Giers recalls as the most important part of his Lyceum experience is the attainment of "nobility of mind." While one could dwell on the use of the word "nobility" and insist on interpreting this in the context of class relations, such an understanding would belie the true message of the memory. What Giers is expressing here is that despite the intentions of the government to create an institution that simply produced qualified state servants, the reforms instead gave birth to a new generation of noble men who actually wanted to learn.

Even if the reforms appear to have exceeded what the government wished to achieve, the initial motivations behind the formation and reform of the all-male schools were abundantly clear; from the state perspective, well-educated nobles were crucial to the success of the Empire. The motivation behind the standardization of women's institutes, however, is less transparent. Women, particularly the noble women whom the elite institutes targeted, were not essential to saving the government, and they had played no role in the Decembrist uprising that had initially spurred the watershed of reforms. To understand the place of women's institutes within the framework of the Nicolaevan

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[46] Ibid, 57.
[47] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 120.

reforms, and to represent accurately how class divisions were experienced within these elite schools, a more comprehensive history is required.

In 1783, Nicholas Novikov, an important political figure during the reign of Catherine II, published an article entitled "On the Upbringing and Instruction of Children."[48] In it, he insists that childhood is the most sensitive point for the development of moral values and a sound education, and he further recommends that to take full advantage of this potential in all children, it is imperative to educate them according to both sex and class.[49] This mention of education according to sex as well as class implies an inherent belief in the necessity of education for women, a belief that the Empress had proven she shared when she established the Smolny Institute for Well-Born Girls (also known as the Catherine Institute) on the grounds of Tsarskoe Selo in 1764.[50] However, while Novikov makes only this brief mention of the necessity of educating women, Catherine the Great had grand plans for the noble women of her empire.

Not surprisingly, given her own education and position, Catherine did not see in women a meek and useless half of society but rather a hitherto untapped resource. She believed that if women were educated in love of state and firm moral values, the men would soon follow suit. Further, if she took it upon herself to make of the noblewomen good and loyal mothers, the state would benefit from a new generation raised by women who had been instilled with patriotic values from a very early age.[51] In essence, just as Uvarov designed lyceums to produce the perfect civil servant, so too did Catherine design

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[48] Nicholas Novikov,, "On the Upbringing and Instruction of Children," trans. Valentine Snow in Marc Raeff, *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology*, introduction by Isaiah Berlin, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1966), 68.
[49] Ibid, 69.
[50] Joseph L. Wieczynski, ed., *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History,* vol. 36, s.v. "Smol'nyi Institute," (Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1984), 61.
[51] Carol S. Nash, "Educating New Mothers: Women and Enlightenment in Russia," in *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Autumn 1981), 302.

the women's institutes; it was simply the occupation and sex of the civil servant that differed. For men, it meant work in government, while for women it meant applying their knowledge in the home.[52]

This characterization of the women's institutes as simply elite finishing schools meant to churn out perfect Russian mothers is in no way meant to disparage the very real societal advance they represented. Under Catherine's watch, girls were educated in foreign languages, mathematics, science, drama, literature, and several other subjects designed to make them substantive, accomplished individuals.[53] Of her efforts at the Smolny Institute, Catherine wrote to the French philosophe Voltaire:

> We educate them with a view to making them the delight of their future families; we want them to be neither prudes nor coquettes, but agreeable young ladies, capable of raising their own children and running their own home.[54]

This is no small request. Although she is framing female education in the context of maintaining and strengthening the status quo rather in the more disruptive terms of the enlightenment, she nevertheless expects a great deal from the students of her school. To run a noble household efficiently, particularly a country estate with serfs and land, was a difficult task that required in-depth understanding of a myriad of subjects. Encouraging nobles to send their daughters to one of the elite institutes may have been a ploy by the

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[52] This is in essence Nash's argument in the article cited above. However, as Ruth Dudgeon points out in her doctoral thesis, during Catherine's era women served in many prominent public positions, most notably Princess Ekaterina Dashkova's thirteen year term as president of the Academy of Sciences. Therefore, although Nash does make some interesting points, it might be best to apply her thesis not to Catherine's reign but to the era directly following it, when the assumption was that women were being trained for a fairly limited role in the home. For more, see Ruth Dudgeon, *Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1905*, (PhD dissertation, The George Washington University, 1975), 4-6.

[53] James R. Millar, ed., *Encyclopedia of Russian History,* Vol. 4, s.v. "Smolny Institute," (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 1409. After Catherine's death, the administration of the school was turned over to the Empress Marie, wife of Paul, and she soon shortened the course and eliminated both math and science from the curriculum (ibid).

[54] Catherine the Great, "The Empress and the Philosopher," trans. A. Lentin, in Robin Bisha et al, ed., *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience & Expression, an Anthology of Sources*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 167-168.

monarch to gain control over a new generation of young minds, but it was also enormously practical. Promoting literacy among women strengthened households in addition to providing another inroad for the state.

The idea that female education could be as useful to the state as male education persisted long past the Catherinian era. Although women certainly received more attention from the tsarina than they did from subsequent tsars, their education was still considered an important part of improving Russian society. Alexander Nikitenko, a Nicolaevan censor who taught at the Catherine Institute beginning at the end of 1830, wrote the following diary entry upon his appointment:

> *2 and 3 December.* I have been invited to teach Russian literature to the senior class at the Catherine Institute…the salary is low: 1,050 rubles per year for nine hours of instruction per week However, the position is considered respectable and presents a great opportunity to gain teaching experience. Besides, it is pleasant to deal with such sweet, blooming creatures. And to sow even one of my ideas in the hearts of our future mothers, to further their education, and to contribute to the progress of Russian society, can prove most rewarding.[55]

Nikitenko finds in the Catherine Institute a similar situation to that which Giers found in the Alexander Lyceum. He realizes that it is a school with a purpose – to mold mothers and "progress society," but he also sees an opportunity not only to train but also to educate his pupils. This, then, is another example of how education had slowly migrated from the realm of the purely practical into the realm of genuine intellectual curiosity.

The issue of class as it pertained to female education did not fully emerge until after Catherine II's death in 1796. Catherine had founded a subordinate division within Smolny for daughters of non-noble soldiers and merchants, so that while during her reign the divisions were clear, there were other options that ameliorated the estate

[55] Aleksandr Nikitenko, *The Diary of a Russian Censor*, trans. and ed. Helen Saltz Jacobson, and abridged, (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), 30.

segregation.[56] By the time Nicholas I came to power, education for women was, in theory at least, a privilege reserved for only the most noble of daughters.[57] However the experience of discrimination based on social estate normally varied according to distance from the capital. An analysis of three autobiographies of women who studied in institutes throughout the empire – one in Moscow, one in Petersburg, and one in Kharkov – makes this clear.

When performing this comparison, the boarding school in Moscow acts as a control group. Though far enough away from St. Petersburg to be allowed to exist without the constant pressure of the imperial presence, it was still sufficiently central and nationally important to reflect standard views on society and hierarchy. Sofia Khvoshchinskaia's memoirs of the Ekaterinsky Institute of Moscow support this interpretation. Khvoshchinskaia was from a gentry family of modest means, but wealthy enough that she was able to pay her own fees and did not have to endure the embarrassments of being a scholarship student.[58] In her memoirs, Khvoshchinskaia notes two things guaranteed to incite ridicule from classmates: an inability to speak French fluently, and non-noble status.[59] The two were inextricably linked: knowledge of French was one of most obvious social markers.[60] However, that she even mentions that non-noble students were the victims of their noble classmates is evidence that, in the Moscow institutes, class was not a deciding factor for admission.

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[56] Millar, 1410.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Sofia Khvoshchinskaia , "Reminiscences of Institute Life," trans. Valentina Baslyk in Toby W. Clyman and Judith Vowles, ed., *Russia through Women's Eyes: Autobiographies of Tsarist Russia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 77.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid, 80.

Khvoshchinskaia also comments on how the different classes viewed education. She writes that, "From this group – the girls of modest means – will emerge the most diligent, if not the most capable, girls, and it is here that strength of character will be found."[61] This is an explicit admission that despite all of the state's best efforts, education continued to be most appealing to the lower classes and not to the nobles whom it targeted. This is not entirely unexpected. Education has classically been one of the few ways to gain an advantage in society when not privileged by birth. Since nobles held that privilege, they saw no need to increase it. Lower classes, by contrast, had every reason to devote themselves to the sole means they had of surpassing their parents. This holds all the more true for non-noble women, who were doubly disadvantaged by both birth and sex. Especially after some institutes began offering vocational training wherein women could learn how to support themselves, the non-nobles were the pupils who had a clear and pressing incentive to excel in their studies.

Khvoshchinskaia's endorsement of the non-noble students at the Ekaterinsky Institute in Moscow stands in sharp contrast to Natalia Grot's treatment of them in her memoir of her time at the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg. Grot was the ideal candidate for Smolny: she was born in Semenova to a wealthy, established gentry family in 1825, to two parents who were themselves well-educated.[62] Grot's father was a well known writer, but it is her mother whom she remembers as being particularly intelligent and well read. She writes of her mother that, "her intellect was outstanding, remarkable for a woman."[63] Grot's family represents a microcosm of what Nicholas wished to see in

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[61] Ibid, 88.
[62] Natalia Grot, "From a Family Chronicle: Reminiscences for Children and Grandchildren," trans. Leslie LaRocco, in ibid, 217.
[63] Ibid, 226.

the nobility at large: a father interested in current affairs, a mother who was capable of administering the household, and children who were educated and loyal to the tsar.[64] The sense that she is one of the select few pervades her writing. While her family's fortunes diminished considerably during her girlhood, she retains in her memories the voice of one born to privilege.[65]

Both her social class and her parents' level of education predispose Grot to express a much higher level of both social and intellectual snobbery than was evident in Khvoshchinskaia's work. Above all, she is convinced that she is granted access to superior educational opportunities because these opportunities are her right by birth, and she is vehemently opposed to opening up the institutes to the masses. She writes the following about the burgeoning demand for widespread educational availability:

> The extreme democratic movement dreamed of leveling everything; it wanted all classes and ranks of society to mingle; it wanted to make higher education accessible to all classes of society; and most important, it wanted to humiliate those whom life had placed above the common level.[66]

This is very different from Khvoshchinskaia, who both deplores the ennui of the nobility and applauds the rise of middle classes. Instead, Grot finds little that is more unpalatable than universal education. She believes that it would destroy the social order, and lead to the degradation of the current ruling class. Interestingly, this is an implicit admission that education is a valuable privilege. Certainly, such a statement should not be shocking given her background, but it is nevertheless rare to find a powerful noble, much less a powerful noble female, who recognized the inherent value of education. Here Grot reveals more than just the fear that permeates all of the official documents surrounding

[64] Ibid, 222.
[65] Ibid, 218.
[66] Ibid, 239.

admission criteria; she also evinces a desire to limit that which is a privilege to the privileged classes. This recognition of education as more than simply a state-imposed burden indicates a marked change in the noble outlook.

However, although Grot does briefly allow that education is more than a societal obligation, she also frequently echoes the traditional noble line. Her main argument against opening the doors of the institutes to the lower classes is that it would accustom them to a life they will never lead, and thus jeopardize their ability to readjust to their position upon graduation.[67] She argues:

> Girls of the poorer classes who were educated in Gymnasia consider it beneath them to use their knowledge and education n the modest station to which they were born, the sphere in which fate placed them.[68]

This is quite similar to the argument Admiral Shishkov, made at the beginning of the reforms.[69] Her contention is that not only were those girls who had received formal education at an elite institute not advantaged by the experience but were actually encumbered by their excessive knowledge. Her statement is indicative of the general atmosphere at the Smolny institute as regarded the children of lesser gentry or the wealthy middle class. Smolny was the most prestigious of all the women's schools, situated only minutes from the imperial palaces of Tsarskoe Selo, and the government's strict hierarchical vision trickled down to the institute's pupils.

As unfair and elitist as it may seem, writings by contemporaries do reveal an odd sort of support for Grot's claim. In her memoir, Nedezhda Sokhanskaia, a student at the institute in Kharkov, describes the difficulties of returning home to a world where

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[67] As with Khvoshchinskaia's mention of the non-nobles, Grot's disparagement is again implicit proof that the Nicolaevan efforts to limit admission based on social estate were not uniformly successful.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Alston, 32.

privilege is not the norm. Sokhanskaia was a non-gentry scholarship student at the institute, and she recalls harsh words from her classmates because of her inferior status.[70] However, what is even more striking than her brief mention of her social inadequacies is her vivid memory of what it was like to resume non-gentry life. She writes:

> I thought of Vilki, dear Vilki, the pond and the small stream. Here, there was only a well. The sun burned down, the wind blew from all quarters, there was no shelter whatsoever. And for six years I had been accustomed to walking on parquet and polished floors. I stumbled on these clay floors, my legs seemed to lag behind; I walked like a lame horse, lurching from side to side. My hands were chafed from the dust. A sharp pain pierced my breast; I found it all claustrophobic, stuffy, sad…And they lavished kindness on me.[71]

Coming home is never easy, but it is harder still when home pales in comparison to what was left behind. The "they" in this passage is particularly wrenching; it refers to her family, and the chasm that now existed between them and her. Her family had managed, through some stroke of luck or other unlikely circumstance, to gain her access to one of the elite schools of the region, and yet when she comes back she feels nothing but ungrateful that she had to return at all. Her distress upon her homecoming seems evidence enough that, although she was not peer to her noble classmates, she still enjoyed the experience and that, far from the emperor's watchful eye, she found a certain amount of security and goodwill in the institute.

As much as Grot would likely have seen in this recollection proof of the validity of her own ideas, Sokhanskaia's later success under the pen name Kokhanovskaia is proof that a few years as the outsider in an elite world were well worth the success and opportunities they afforded, and that this non-noble pupil never felt disadvantaged by what she had learned. The opportunity for a woman from the lower classes to become a

[70] Nedezhda Sokhanskaia, "An Autobiography," trans. Valentina Baslyk in Clyman et al, 52.
[71] Ibid, 52.

renowned and respected writer was what Grot and Nicholas wished to prevent, and it was why admission criteria generally demanded noble or military blood. However, even these regulations began to collapse in on themselves when, later in Nicholas's reign, the elite institutes began to offer more than moral and language instruction and began instruction in solid, vocational pursuits such as sewing and stenography, which would eventually allow graduates to enter the professional world.[72] This triggers the question of why an institute which was ostensibly aimed at the wealthy elite would offer courses that targeted a middle class audience, and thus highlights a contradiction in the way many of the reforms were organized.

In a letter to his daughter upon her commencing her studies at one of the women's schools, the famous reformer Mikhail Speranksy gave the following advice:

> To what extent this study and this practice will be necessary in your practical life you will find out in due course. Why are women for the most part weak, indecisive? Because they have long leaned on someone else, have relied on someone else even in trivial matters. This is convenient for men but most inconvenient for women.[73]

This seems odd counsel to offer someone who, given class and status, should have very few worries about provisions for the future. It shows, instead, a subtle but important understanding on the part of some government officials that education was a necessary component in advancing both society and nation. Whether it was providing women with the means to break free of their societal shackles, or giving men the intellectual tools to change society, education was ultimately a risk which the Nicolaevan government felt compelled to undertake. Nicholas, Uvarov, and the various committees took precautions to make the new system as compatible as possible with the old by limiting admission and

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[72] Sophie Satina, *Education of Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, trans. Alexandra F. Poustchine, (New York, 1966), 40.
[73] Mikhail Speranskii, "A Diplomat Writes to His Daughter," trans. Martha Kuchar in Bisha et al, 175.

raising tuition, but at a very fundamental level they must have understood that their radical reform of the lower schools and the provisions they made so that all government agents would be educated would eventually lead to something much larger and harder to control. Although the schools remained socially segregated, throughout Uvarov's time the lower classes continued to permeate the hallowed halls of noble lyceums and institutes, making government efforts to control the social impact of education seem increasingly futile as time wore on. This trouble was further compounded by the universities, particularly in Moscow, where all efforts of the government to control the social and intellectual outgrowths of the reforms seemed to go almost wholly unheeded.

THE UNIVERSITIES: A MOSCOW-PETERSBURG RETROSPECTIVE

The cultural and political divide between Moscow and St. Petersburg is one that has fascinated both Russians and Russianists since Petersburg's founding in 1703.[1] When Muscovy gave birth to the Russian Empire in the sixteenth century, Moscow was the political and spiritual center of the new country. The Kremlin walls enclosed both the palace of the tsars and the cathedrals where they vowed to protect their subjects. However, with Peter the Great's decision to force the country westward at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Moscow began to fall from grace. Increasingly the tsars resided in the environs of Peter's European city, and a significant percentage of the nobility, through both coercion and volition, followed after their rulers. Moscow remained the spiritual capital of the realm, tied to Russian religion, nationality, and history, but the city also began to define itself in opposition to Petersburg, staying defiantly Russian in dress and tradition as the nobles of Petersburg shaved their beards and adopted French as their chosen tongue.

The changing roles of the two capitals was a topic that was well addressed by the intellectuals of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. In 1784, Mikhail Scherbatov wrote an essay entitled "Petition of the City of Moscow on being Relegated to Oblivion," in which he addresses this issue of the abandonment of Moscow for the European city on the Neva River.[2] Sixty years later, Alexander Herzen analyzed the place of the cities

[1] W. Bruce Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight: St. Petersburg and the Rise of Modern Russia*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 1.
[2] Mikhail Scherbatov, "Petition on the City of Moscow," trans. Valentine Snow, in Raeff, 50.

within the national consciousness in his essay, "Moscow and Petersburg."[3] What these two essays, and the numerous others that deal with the same themes, demonstrate is the extent to which the divide between Moscow and Petersburg was fundamental to the evolution of Russian politics and society.

This contrast between history and modernity, the enduring conflict between Moscow and Petersburg, significantly affected how the education reforms of the Nicolaevan era were experienced in the cities' universities. During this period there was essentially a reversal in culture between the two capitals. While Petersburg continued to appear more modern, it was precisely Moscow's antiquity and lack of international political importance that allowed its citizens to explore the possibilities afforded by the reforms; during the Nicolaevan period, the ancient center was able to modernize intellectually far more than the European capital. Since Moscow had slipped to a state of symbolic rather than practical importance in domestic and European politics, censorship was less strictly enforced in Moscow, and Moscow University became the site of the greatest intellectual circles of the Nicolaevan decades.[4]

Education was able to flourish in Moscow because the city boasted a more open society than did the capital. Whether it was because of the city's physical distance from the center of power or the lack of a stringently defined noble class, Moscow society was slightly more fluid and less stratified than its Petersburg counterpart.[5] The inhabitants were especially unified during crises, such as the general decision to burn the city in 1812

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[3] Alexander Herzen, "Moscow and Petersburg," in Marthe Blinoff, *Life and Thought in Old Russia*, (Clearfield, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1961), 184. Note also that although the article was written in 1842, it was not published until 1845 due to problems with the censors.
[4] P.V. Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade: Literary Memoirs*, Arthur P. Mendel, ed., trans. Irwin R. Titunik, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), 2.
[5] Seton-Watson, 254.

rather than let Napoleon's army's destroy it, and there was more of a focus on maintaining programs for popular welfare.[6] The city's behavior during the 1830 cholera epidemic is a perfect case study of this point.

There had been periodic cholera epidemics during the early nineteenth century across the Empire, but they had stayed mainly in the provinces where the water sources were less well-tended and the medical care of a generally lower standard.[7] However, in 1830 a particularly virulent strain of the disease appeared in the Moscow region, and it quickly made its way within the city limits, leaving widespread panic and death in its wake. There had been warning that the cholera was coming, and the imperial and local governments had sufficient opportunity to take preventive measures to stem the spread of illness, but Nicholas I, wishing trade routes to remain open, ordered that the city not be shut down.[8] In direct opposition to this order, Prince Golitsyn, mayor of Moscow, closed all roads to the city and quarantined the inhabitants.[9] He also formed the Moscow Cholera Council, which helped remove the deceased from homes, kept order in the city, and generally helped administer and control the crisis.[10] The Council was composed of citizens of the city, and it was this cooperation between the laity and the municipal government which prevented the panic from turning an epidemic into a state of civil unrest and pandemic violence.[11]

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[6] Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts: The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen,* Volume One, trans. Constance Garnett, ed. Humphrey Higgens, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), 121.
[7] Roderick E. McGrew, *Russia and the Cholera, 1823-1832*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 4.
[8] Ibid., 78.
[9] Ibid. Prince Golitsyn's actions are prime evidence that Russia's sheer geographical size meant that the orders of the tsar became decreasingly relevant as distance from the capital increased, a phenomenon seen as well in the different memoirs of the women's institutes.
[10] Ibid., 79.
[11] Ibid., 80.

Civic cooperation was not the only element that helped control the city and care for its citizens. There was also considerable cooperation between the city and the members of the university. Alexander Herzen was a student at Moscow University during the cholera epidemic, and he recalls that:

> The university did not lag behind. The whole Medical Faculty, students and doctors *en masse*, put themselves at the disposal of the cholera committee; they were assigned to different hospitals and stayed there continuously until the cholera was over. For three or four months these marvelous young people lived in the hospitals as orderlies, assistants, nurses, secretaries, all this without any remuneration and at a time when there was such an exaggerated fear of infection.[12]

This recollection is demonstrative of the easy relationship between government, student, and citizen which was emblematic of Moscow and which distinguished it from Petersburg. Although the university consisted largely of gentry and nobility, the young men took up the public banner and did their part to help the city. In recounting his experience of the crisis, Herzen would be unlikely to write of his failure to help and would therefore paint his role and that of his peers in a positive light, but this memory goes beyond just Herzen and his schoolmates. He refers to entire sections of the university putting themselves at the service of the municipality, and by extension, disregarding social distinctions and conventions in the pursuit of a higher and more important purpose.

The social mélange which Herzen describes in the context of the cholera crisis also plays an important role in many of his descriptions of his university years. One of the most striking elements of Herzen's memoirs is his emphatic insistence on the democracy of Moscow University during his time as a student in the early 1830s. The idea of equality and a level social system are not things normally associated with

[12] Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts,* Vol. One, 121.

Nicolaevan Russia, but from Herzen's account, the university existed as a veritable democratic oasis in the midst of a stratified empire.

The illegitimate son of a wealthy nobleman, Alexander Herzen was born in Moscow in 1812.[13] He was originally destined for a career in government service, which at that time did not necessitate the pursuit of a university degree.[14] He evinced a special interest in learning beyond the secondary level, though, and managed to get an extended leave of absence from his proposed governmental duties by appealing to some of his father's more powerful friends.[15] After passing what he terms "after dinner courses" – easy exams designed for the nobility – Herzen entered Moscow University.[16] He went on to become one of the pillars of the so-called "Moscow Circle," a group that helped shape Russian intellectual life in the coming decades.

Even a brief glance at *My Past and Thoughts*, Herzen's multi-volume memoir of life under Nicholas I, demonstrates that Herzen's time in university shaped how he understood the world. The memoir also reveals that one of the aspects of his university life of which Herzen is most proud was the feeling of social equality he detected among the students.[17] He writes of the student body:

> Young men of all sorts and conditions coming from above and from below, from the south and from the north, were quickly fused into a compact mass of comrades. Social distinctions had not among us the offensive influence which we find in English universities and barracks; I am not speaking of the English universities: they exist exclusively for the aristocracy and the rich. A student who thought fit to boast among us of his blue blood or his wealth would have been excluded from 'fire and water' and made the butt of his comrades.[18]

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[13] Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism: 1812-1855*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 89.
[14] Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, Vol. One, 93.
[15] Ibid, 94.
[16] Ibid, 93.
[17] Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts,* Vol. Two, 395.
[18] Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, Vol. One, 96.

Here Herzen draws a comparison with what was, at the time, one of the most conventionally modern European nations and, surprisingly, he finds it lacking. Saying that Moscow University was so much more open than the English universities seems quite brazen; at the time of this writing, England had already undergone the Industrial Revolution, had functioned as a stable parliamentary monarchy for over a century, and had abolished slavery. Socially, it would seem impossible that a country still supported by serfdom and administered by an absolute monarch could boast higher levels of egalitarianism in one of its flagship universities. However, despite England's relative political and economic modernity, the social system was still enormously rigid, and friendships at the most elite universities continued to be determined by class more than anything else.[19] The Oxford of the nineteenth century was an enclave of the sons of the nobility and wealthy landowners, and it is this fact, in addition to his own exile in England in later years, that lends Herzen's exuberant comparison a level of plausibility.

Before being swept away by visions of a truly equal and socially diverse student body, it is important to note that this exultation of the democracy of the university immediately follows a list of classes of people who were not granted admission to the institutions of higher learning, including serfs and peasants.[20] Nevertheless, even knowing this does not detract from the pure joy of Herzen's memory. Russia's policy of excluding the lower classes from universities was hardly unique in Europe, and thus the data are ultimately much less important in this analysis than the perception. Herzen believed he had experienced the democratic ideal, and this belief is very significant in

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[19] M.G. Brook and M.C. Curthoys, ed., *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume VI: Nineteenth Century Oxford, Part I*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 40.
[20] Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, Vol. One, 95.

understanding how the governmental reforms were perceived by students at the university level.

One of the elements that likely contributed to the image of a socially unified sanctuary was that wealth was not a prerequisite for attending university. There were a significant number of students on partial or full fee remission who enjoyed the same privileged education as their counterparts who paid their own tuition.[21] Estate was not mentioned at all in the Alexandrine educational charters of 1803-1804, and while so called "state students" were obligated to enter the civil service upon graduation, they were granted the same rights as wealthier students.[22] Indeed, originally the only requirement for admission to universities was academic, and there were numerous instances during the Alexandrine era of peasants and serfs across the Empire who were academically qualified for admission and were permitted to attend university.[23] The potential destruction of social walls via education did frighten those at the top of the ladder, but there was nevertheless a surprising amount of initial flexibility regarding who was eligible for higher education. Even during the early Nicolaevan era, the tsar himself proclaimed that education should cater to the needs of the state and not focus exclusively on maintaining social categories.[24] The overarching policy was of "noble education" for the sake of governmental improvement, but at the time that Herzen was in university, a

[21] James T. Flynn, "Tuition and Social Class in the Russian Universities: S.S Uvarov and 'Reaction' in the Russia of Nicholas I," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (June, 1976), 234. It was difficult to have strict rules about that guaranteed advantages for students who paid their own fees as many members of the nobility were actually quite poor.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid, 235.
[24] Ibid, 237. This is also because the most significant threat Nicholas's government had faced up to this point had come from the Decembrists, whose ranks had been entirely noble.

concerted effort had not yet been made to pare down the number of non-noble and non-fee-paying students.[25]

Although the above quotation from Herzen refers to social democracy within the university, it also provides space to extrapolate the sense of intellectual democracy Herzen experienced. Moscow in the 1830s was in the process of changing from an intellectual wasteland into the site of the greatest intellectual discourse in Russian history up to that point.[26] It was at this time that the aforementioned Moscow Circle was formed, and this group of curious young men no doubt affected Herzen's belief that his years in university represented the apogee of intellectual and social democracy.

The Moscow Circle was a revolving group of Moscow intellectuals, both university students and writers, who gathered to discuss the philosophical movements of the age. In his biography *Stankevich and his Moscow circle*, Edward Brown writes that "The circle became a close-knit, exclusive group providing for its members the intellectual stimulation that could not be found elsewhere."[27] This is crucial. The Circle, while integral to Herzen's university experience, also existed necessarily as an extra-university force. Alexandre Bourmeyster posits that the Circle emerged in response to the cholera epidemic, when lessons were cancelled and students felt compelled to seek another forum for discussion.[28] However, while the Circle may have had its roots in a period where the university was truly unavailable, it persisted and expanded because its members found the university not unavailable but insufficient. Although Moscow

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[25] The first clear evidence of this program comes in memos circulated throughout the Ministry of Education in 1840, although they had begun to limit non-noble admissions to the gymnasia in 1837. See Whittaker, *Conservatism and National Enlightenment*, 159, 168 for more information.
[26] Isaiah Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1978), 115.
[27] Edward J. Brown, *Stankevich and his Moscow Circle, 1830-1840*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966), 12.
[28] Alexandre Bourmeyster, *L'Idée russe entre Lumières et spiritualité sous le règne de Nicolas Ier*, (Grenoble : Université Stendhal, 2001), 17.

experienced much less imperial scrutiny than St. Petersburg, the university was still monitored.[29] The Circle, on the other hand, existed beyond the official realm of the inspector, and provided a medium for unencumbered intellectual growth and exploration.

The salon culture which Uvarov wished to foster in Russia offers another way to understand the Moscow Circle. Rather than being a controlled, apolitical venue, the Circle was both volatile and inherently political, so much so that the tsar kept the members under constant surveillance.[30] What Uvarov loved most about the salons he encountered in Vienna was their assiduous avoidance of politics; he wrote:

> By a mutual unspoken compromise of good taste, never was a serious word on the events of 1789 exchanged between [Prince de Ligne and Madame de Staël]. *There*, certainly, was absolute incompatibility; never could they have agreed on any point, no matter what, that concerned the Revolution.[31]

Rather than risk discord among his guests, the Prince de Ligne simply eschewed political discussion. By contrast, Herzen later wrote of his Circle and the nascent Westernizer-Slavophile debate that, "we were enemies, but most strange ones: we loved the same thing, but not in the same way."[32] There was love among the members of the Circle, but there was also tension, animosity, and politics.

The Westernizer-Slavophile debate, which emerged during the 1830s among the members of the Circle and spread to Russia's wider intellectual world, arguably has roots in the educational reforms. One of the structuring forces of the Nicolaevan reforms was a desire to catch up with and ultimately surpass the West. The government did not wish to follow the same political trajectory as many Western European nations, but they did want

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[29] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 158.
[30] Brown, 26.
[31] Wormley, 250.
[32] Alexander Herzen, "Moscow in the Forties," in Blinoff, 195. Herzen refers here to both Russia and the Russian people.

to overcome the impression of Russia as a backward nation, finally proving Russia's modern mettle.[33] The reforms themselves, therefore, partly stem from an ongoing intra-governmental discussion about Russia's relationship with the West; officials wished to create Western style university system without undermining the fundamental Russian institutions they valued, specifically the social hierarchy and the autocracy. The Westernizer-Slavophile debate took on these same issues, debating appropriate governmental forms, Russian identity, and Russian destiny. The debate is in this way an outgrowth of the education reforms, not just because the rejuvenated universities were more suitable for intellectual development, but because this major intellectual debate addressed the same core issues as the ministers responsible for effecting the changes.[34]

The men engaged in this growing debate would all go on to be leaders of the new Russian intelligentsia. The Circle included Konstantin Aksakov and Aleksey Khomyakov, both future Slavophiles, the writer Ivan Turgenev, Herzen, the literary critic Vissarion Belinsky, and several others.[35] Significantly for establishing a grain of truth within Herzen's memory, the members represented a social spectrum. Belinsky, who had been expelled from Moscow University, was non-noble, while Aksakov was from a very powerful aristocratic family.[36] Social origin was not an element of their relations, however; as P.N Annenkov, a future associate of Belinsky's, recalls, "The bond uniting them was an identical love of learning, of the world, of free thought, of homeland."[37] It was in this world of constant discussion about their nation, conducted across class lines,

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[33] Seton-Watson, 220.
[34] For further information on the Westernizer-Slavophile debate, see Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) and Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975).
[35] Brown, 4.
[36] Ibid, 12.
[37] Annenkov, 4.

that Herzen intellectually came of age, and it is likely this above all else that prompted him to perceive social egalitarianism within the university.

The formation of this circle of men in Moscow rather than Petersburg is vitally important, and was a development that Herzen later addressed in his writings. In his article "Moscow and Petersburg," Herzen writes the following very telling pair of statements. First, that "Remote from political animation, living on stale news, having no key to the government's actions and no instinct to decipher them, Moscow argues, grumbles, criticizes freely." Slightly further on, he remarks that "In Petersburg you can say that there are no liberals, but if they do crop up, they don't get to Moscow, they are sent straight from [Petersburg] to hard labor to the Caucasus." [38] This last observation is particularly interesting. On the surface level, it is logical that punishment would not involve relocation to an urban center with a popular university, and thus liberals exiled from Petersburg would not be sent to Moscow. It is the inherent admission of concern within the observation that gives the reader pause. In stating that Petersburg liberals are intentionally diverted from Moscow, Herzen diagnoses a substantial fear in the government of the development of Moscow's intellectual fervor. By 1845, the year the article was published, Belinsky had been writing for a decade, Peter Chaadaev's *First Philosophical Letter* had been published in a Moscow literary journal, and *Dead Souls* had been released. All of this took place in Moscow and is indicative that, by virtue of its physical distance from the capital and its decline in political importance, this forgotten city was allowed to develop a much richer intellectual life and more dynamic social structure within its intelligentsia than did its northern neighbor.

[38] Herzen, "Moscow and Petersburg," in Blinoff, 188-189.

The irony of this profound development of intellectual life in Moscow as opposed to St. Petersburg is that it is Petersburg that has long captured the imagination of Russian writers and other leaders of the intellectual community. There is an entire canon of literature wherein the city is not just a setting but a character, such as Gogol's *Petersburg Tales* collection, Dostoevsky's *White Nights*, and, later, Andrei Bely's modernist novel *Petersburg*.[39] The city, fashioned after Venice and Amsterdam, has been called the "window to the west," and "the window to the future."[40] Traditionally, it was thought to exemplify western ideals and values and, most importantly, a symbolic move towards the future while Moscow stayed stubbornly rooted in the past.[41] The pressing question, then, is how during the time of Nicholas I, this stereotype was subverted.

One of the reasons lies within the structure of Petersburg society. After he officially moved the capital to Petersburg in 1712, Peter forced the nobility to abandon Moscow and make Petersburg their primary city of residence, on the threat of limiting political influence at court if they refused.[42] During its first century of existence, the city was populated by important noble families who were resident there for political reasons and were thus constantly vying for the tsar's favor.[43] This concentration of nobility precipitated the rise of French as the city's primary language, noticeable especially

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[39] Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, 11. This is not to diminish the role Moscow has played in Russian literature, notably in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, but in both those novels Moscow does not exist by itself but its rather set up in contrast to St. Petersburg. Moscow is the setting of Karamzin's short story "Poor Liza," but the city is not a character in that story, as Petersburg is in both Gogol's *Petersburg Tales* and Dostoevsky's *White Nights*.

[40] Arthur George and Elena George. *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future, the First Three Centuries*, (Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2003), xix.

[41] Crankshaw, 54.

[42] Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, 25.

[43] There were also manual laborers brought in by Peter and his successors to build the city, but this was largely a transient workforce due to agrarian demands and enormously high death rates among the workers. See Lincoln, *Sunlight at Midnight*, 20-21.

during the reign of Catherine II, who was responsible for bringing the ideas of the French philosophes to Russia.[44]

By the time Nicholas I ascended the throne, French had superseded Russian as the accepted language of the nobility. Although accounts differ as to whether or not the nobility had colloquial proficiency in their native tongue, most reports suggest that if Russian was spoken, it was rarely in a formal social setting.[45] Alexander Nikitenko, who worked as a Russian language tutor while attending the University of St. Petersburg, writes of attempting to teach his charge enough Russian to be able to read and draft government documents.[46] In his account of his travels through Russia in 1839, Astolphe Marquis de Custine records a similar but slightly more extreme impression. He writes:

> The greater number of the women of the highest circles, especially those who have been born at Petersburg, are ignorant of their native language; but they learn a few Russian phrases, which they utter to the Emperor.[47]

These two men, one Russian and one French, each focus upon the unmistakable truth that the nobility considered Russian a lowly, uncouth language. Nobles must have had more fluency than either of these two men admits, but in polite society, despite the tsar's attempts to reestablish Russian as the preferred noble language, Russian continued to be considered the language of the coarse and uneducated.[48]

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[44] Alston, 12.

[45] Russian remained the official state language and Church Slavonic still dominated religious life, but French was the preferred language of communication among the nobility, with Russian as the last resort for necessary communication with either the very young or the lower classes. Hosking, 156.

[46] Nikitenko, 11.

[47] Astolphe marquis de Custine, *Empire of the Tsar: A Journey Through Eternal Russia*, forward by Daniel J. Boorstein and introduction by George F. Kennan, (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 280.

[48] The irony of this is that during this era Russian literature burst onto the national and world stage, and writers such as Pushkin and Lermontov, all of who composed in Russian, were hugely popular among the nobility. Discussion with Dr. Benjamin Nathans, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, December 19, 2005.

It was this core belief that the Russian language was beneath them rather than ineptitude in the language that most separated Petersburg society. There was a linguistic barrier between the upper and lower classes, but it was one based on choice and snobbery rather than actual deficiency. The deliberate lack of common parlance with the non-nobles made the social and economic divides even wider. In terms of university life, it was more difficult to create an environment equal in democracy to that of Moscow's because the language barrier already served to socially exclude those who were not comfortable in foreign tongues. The nobility and intellectuals of Moscow spoke foreign languages as well, but the linguistic divide was particularly harshly felt in Petersburg and created an increasingly segmented city.

Just as the 1830 cholera epidemic helped demonstrate the unity of Moscow society, the cholera epidemic that struck Petersburg in 1831 demonstrates the opposite about that city's society. Petersburg had managed to avoid the deadly epidemic that had swept through Moscow and the surrounding region in 1830, but one year later the disease appeared in the capital and wreaked havoc on a scale unseen in other outbreaks.[49] The tsar abandoned the city, the police spread fear rather than aid, and the people, instead of helping each other as they had in Moscow, instead rioted and turned against one another.[50]

The personal accounts of the city at this time are chilling. Nicholas Giers was a student in Petersburg at the time of the epidemic, and he recalls a deserted ghost town where no one was safe. He writes:

> The classes were discontinued. We roamed around the yard the whole day long or looked out the window to see what was going on in the streets.

[49] McGrew, 109.
[50] Nikitenko, 34.

> The whole city was in a panic….The Poles were suspected of allegedly bribing doctors to poison the water.…Once from our window we saw a butcher leave his stand and attack a poor passer-by in a velvet overcoat, whom he dragged by the collar shouting in rage that he saw him throw some powder into the water in order to poison it.[51]

The reference to a possible Polish plot is particularly interesting. Poland was at that time governed by Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, and there had been numerous insurrections against Russian rule in the previous months.[52] This comment by Giers is in essence an accusation of bioterrorism. In the political center of the empire, even a medical emergency takes on a political cast. Politics was everywhere in Petersburg, and this passing remark of Polish involvement in what was an unrelated health crisis is indicative of how everything in the city was colored and influenced by the political situation.

However, while Giers continues his memoir with a statement of how the government controlled the situation and comported itself admirably given the situation, this was not an opinion shared by everyone in the city. Alexander Nikitenko had very different impressions of imperial conduct during those dark days. He recorded the following in his diary on 20 June, 1831:

> There are few doctors in the capital and it is difficult to get hold of them now. People are very unhappy in the city with the way the government is handling the situation. The emperor has left the capital and almost all the members of the State Council have left, too. The governor-general can scarcely be relied upon. The infirmaries are organized in such a way that they are nothing more than a stopover from home to the grave. Superintendents were chosen from among people who were weak, indecisive, and indifferent to the public welfare….Since there is no one to rouse the people and inspire them with trust for the government, disturbances are beginning to break out in various sections of the

[51] Jelavich, 34.
[52] Hosking, 31-32.

> city….The government appears to be asleep for it does nothing to calm the public.[53]

These are not Herzen's glorious recollections of a city's finest hour. Instead, Nikitenko here roundly condemns the imperial government and its inability to control either the disease or the ensuing panic. Where Moscow unified and weathered the crisis with a plan and a strong leader, Petersburg society fragmented even further, with the ruler only miles away physically and yet, for all intents and purposes, nowhere in sight. The government, rather than staying in the city and calming the populace, abdicated its responsibility and left the people to fend for themselves without either adequate supplies or personnel.

In terms of the complaint about the scarcity of doctors, however, there was more to the situation than simple numbers. Part of the problem was that the doctors who were available within the city were often foreign born.[54] Many were German and some were Polish, but ultimately their specific nationalities did not matter so much as the simple fact that they were not born in Russia. The rumors of foreign conspiracies that Giers mentions translated into a xenophobia that extended even to those who could have ameliorated the situation.[55] There was no doubt a noticeable level of xenophobia in Moscow as well, but most memoirs and secondary accounts of the cholera epidemic in that city are much less rife with the patent fear that runs through Petersburg stories of the same era.

Xenophobia and more general emphasis on birth and origins directly impacted the process of admissions to city's educational culture and institutions, as the story of Aleksandr Nikitenko demonstrates. Nikitenko, in addition to being an imperial censor,

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[53] Nikitenko, 33-34.
[54] McGrew, 110.
[55] Ibid.

was a former serf. Due to the perseverance of his father, Nikitenko received an excellent education during the Alexandrine era at his local parish school and was even granted admission to the region's private gymnasium. His talents and intellect were well known, but his status as serf prevented him from gaining entry into the University of St. Petersburg.[56] It was only after appeals by his father, his master, and ultimately several prominent nobles as well that Nikitenko received his freedom and was allowed to attend university at state expense.[57] Nikitenko is a rare exception, and his perspective on Petersburg's educational culture offer a rare non-noble insight into several levels of Petersburg educational life.

Nikitenko's diary begins almost immediately after the Decembrist uprising, and by the second page he is already discussing the deplorable state of education and intellectual fervor in the capital city.[58] He writes specifically that the nobility's distaste for formal and higher education will be its downfall, noting:

> Knowledge is imparted superficially. The administrators of educational institutions are more interested in their pockets than in the hearts of their pupils. It is only in the middle class that a passion for intellectual growth and a zeal for knowledge is noticeable. Thus, as our aristocracy, drowning in ignorance, gradually falls into decay, the middle class is preparing to become the real governing class.[59]

This is a shocking statement to make, even in private. To be fair, it was written in 1826, and thus coincides with only the very beginning of the educational reforms, but it is nonetheless dangerously prescient in its honesty. Nikitenko has identified the root of both governmental and societal ills in high society's refusal to educate itself, and he notes

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[56] Flynn, *Tuition and Social Class*, 237.
[57] Nikitenko, xiv.
[58] Nikitenko was actually roommates with one of the leaders of the uprising, and was himself suspected for a time of collaborating with the rebels. He was soon able to clear his name, however, as it was clear that despite his living quarters he had no knowledge of the plans to revolt. Ibid, 1-3.
[59] Ibid, 2.

with worry both the damage this view will do the ruling class as well as what it signifies for how schools are run. The observation is also remarkably similar to what Khvoshchinskaia wrote in her memoirs; that two people from such drastically different circumstances, and separated by nearly forty years, could come to such comparable conclusions says a great deal about how citizens with an outside perspective on the nobility perceived and understood the future of education and society.[60]

Beyond the frame of society, though, and the relation to other writers and thinkers of his era, this is also a profoundly personal statement. Nikitenko writes that "It is only in the middle class that a passion for intellectual growth and a zeal for knowledge is noticeable."[61] Although he did not come from the middle class, his comment here is broadly applicable to the lower classes: those who appreciate the value of knowledge are the very subjects who were denied its formal acquisition. The university experienced little of the renaissance that Moscow University underwent because the only people regularly granted admission had no true wish to be there. This is the ultimate irony of the educational situation throughout Nicholas' reign, and it is an irony that was felt most poignantly in Peter's city.

Nikitenko's memoirs also betray an overriding feeling of mental repression. Herzen's recollections of his time in university sparkle with fond memories of vibrant discussion and heated debates. There is no such verve in Nikitenko's account of Petersburg in the same era. He writes of an inability to explore what he wishes and a feeling that there are obstacles at every turn which hinder his intellectual development,

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[60] The similarity between Nikitenko's early observation and what Khvoshchinskaia wrote after the reforms had been underway for some time also mitigates any allowance we might have made for the government when considering Nikitenko's argument.
[61] Nikitenko, 2.

and thwart his ability to both finish his studies and adequately prepare his students once he has become a teacher. In a particularly vehement passage written in 1833, the same year Uvarov officially came to power, Nikitenko writes:

> Is it really possible that everything honest and enlightened is so incompatible with our social order? A fine social order! Why establish universities? Incomprehensible! Once again orders have been issued to send twenty of our finest students abroad for further training. And what will they do with their knowledge when they return, with their lofty desire to illume their generation with the lamp of truth?[62]

Here Nikitenko lodges a multilayered protest. First, on the most obvious level, there is the frustration that the government seems to prevent any sort of advancement in the universities which might threaten the social hierarchy it was so intent on preserving. Nikitenko's disgust with the system is almost tangible as he questions why the ministers bother funding institutions of higher learning, only to censure and silence them just as they begin to learn how to educate.

The second piece of this quotation is a combination of both puzzlement and protestation. Nikitenko objects to the common practice of sending the most promising students abroad for study because he rightly believes that this will forever prevent Russian universities from establishing comparable programs at home. He sees in this practice a sort of government sabotage of its own projects, wherein there are universities to cultivate a Western image, but the institutions are never allowed to reach their full potential for fear of the way they might change or destabilize society.

Finally, there is the last line, the rhetorical question hurled in anger to the pages of his journal. Nikitenko asks, "And what will they do with their knowledge when they

[62] Ibid, 41.

return, with their lofty desire to illume their generation with the lamp of truth?"[63] This is the question which Nicholas struggled with when he passed the law on studying abroad in 1831, and which Uvarov confronted later when he decided to grant civil service credit for time served abroad.[64] Again, Nikitenko has asked the most important question. He does not understand why Russia pretended to be modernizing its education system and allowing contact with Western ideologies when she continued to quash potentially harmful ideas within her borders. He cannot fathom the purpose of a university if it is not to educate people and give the deserving an opportunity to succeed.

The dearth of free thought that Nikitenko describes in his diary is what Raymond McNally refers to as "Petersburgian Absolutism."[65] It is the idea that there was no room in the city for thought beyond total devotion to tsar and country. As the political capital and the physical home of the dynasty, there was not space for the sort of development seen in Moscow during the same epoch. Although Petersburg had a reputation of being more Western, more modern, and more willing to embrace change, the balance that the imperial government attempted to strike between educational reform and social hierarchy translated into a stark change in the culture of both Moscow and Petersburg. The political restrictions of the reforms were more easily enforced in the capital city, and so although it boasted all the physical trappings of its Western models, intellectual life remained relatively stagnant. In contrast, although Moscow still struggled against Western influence and was considered to be lagging behind Petersburg's example, intellectual life in that city was much more vibrant because it experienced the

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Whittaker, *Intellectual Biography*, 161.
[65] Raymond T. McNally, *Chaadayev and His Friends: An Intellectual History of Peter Chaadayev and His Russian Contemporaries*, (Tallahassee: The Diplomatic Press, 1971), 121.

rejuvenation of its university far away from Petersburg's political vortex. It was a rejuvenation which lasted throughout the 1840s, as Moscow literary journals thrived and new Russian novelists and critics burst onto the intellectual stage, each bringing a distinct view on reform, education, and society.

BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS: EDUCATION AND LITERATURE IN THE 1840S

> It's something so profound! It strengthens and instructs the heart…Literature is a picture, I mean it's a sort of picture and mirror. It's the expression of passion, it's subtle criticism, it's edifying instruction and it's a document.
> -*PoorFolk* , Feodor Dostoevsky[1]

When *Poor Folk*, Feodor Dostoevsky's first published work, appeared in literary journals in 1846, the response was overwhelming. A colleague of Vissarion Belinsky's hailed the new writer as "the next Gogol," and Belinsky himself saw in Dostoevsky Russian literature's future and salvation.[2] Such a statement would seem to suggest that the literary landscape was barren; to the contrary, the 1840s witnessed a literary blossoming in Russia, the likes of which had never been seen before. What distinguished *Poor Folk* was its brutal honesty and its depiction of a grim reality without hiding behind satire and the grotesque, as Nikolai Gogol was wont to do.[3] Additionally, as the above quotation so aptly suggests, Dostoevsky's novella was also at the forefront of a trend in literature that was self-referential, socially relevant, and consumed with the issues of both writing and, in a broader context, education and egalitarianism. Through the use of fiction, contemporary novelists portrayed the educational scene, using their characters to argue both for and against widespread public education.

A discussion of the depiction of education and equality in Russian literature should start, however, with a piece that was not fictional at all: Peter Chaadaev's *First Philosophical Letter*, written in 1829 but not published until 1836, when the Moscow

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[1] Feodor Dostoevsky, *Poor Folk*, trans. Robert Dessaix, (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982), 66.
[2] Ibid, 6. Nikolai Gogol had won great acclaim after the publication of *Dead Souls* in 1842, and to be compared to him was to automatically garner praise and attention.
[3] Ibid.

Telescope risked its charter and reputation to publicize this controversial text.[4] The *Letter* shook the very foundations of Russian intellectual life, but its primary relevance here is that it provides a glimpse of how a noble long out of university and quite familiar with the intellectual landscape understood the state of education in Empire.[5] Chaadaev's *Letter* is a short discourse on all that he finds problematic in Russian cultural life, or, more accurately, the entire lack thereof. He is grossly dissatisfied by Russian culture, and despairs of it ever developing a thriving intelligentsia, proclaiming:

> Alone in the world, we have given nothing to the world, taken nothing from the world, bestowed not even a single idea upon the fund of human ideas, contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit, and we have distorted all progressivity which has come to us.[6]

Chaadaev describes Russia as an intellectual wasteland, unworthy of even a cursory association with Europe because Russia never makes even the most minor contribution to the collective bank of ideas and philosophy. Further, Russia is fundamentally unable to partake of Europe's intellectual life because the country lacks what Chaadaev terms "national knowledge" – a general understanding and level of education shared by all of a nation's citizens, upon which the greatest minds can build.[7] What he essentially argues throughout the *Letter* is that by denying public education, Russia disadvantages not only the lower classes but also intellectual life at large, because genius never has the

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[4] Peter Chaadaev, *Major Works of Peter Chaadaev*, trans. and ed. Raymond T. McNally, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 1-2.
[5] McNally, *Chaadayev and his Friends*, 40. Chaadaev entered Moscow University in 1808, but dropped out to fight in the Napoleonic Wars of 1812; he was, however, extremely well-educated, multilingual, and always apprised of the intellectual doings in Western Europe. Therefore, his indictment of Russian thought is not merely useful in terms of understanding the intellectual world of the era, but also provides an aerial perspective which is quite distinct from the voices of Herzen or Giers, both of whom were educated during the reign of Nicholas I. Just in terms of establishing his hereditary place within the intellectual history, his uncle was Prince Mikhail Scherbatov, author of "Petition of the City of Moscow on being Relegated to Oblivion." For more, see , Moskoff.
[6] Chaadaev, 37-38.
[7] Ibid, 33.

opportunity to be discovered. Since there was not yet an ingrained sense of the necessity of education, even those who did manage to receive formal schooling were not driven to produce or create. The result is an epidemic of superficial knowledge with no past and no future.[8]

One of the fundamental reasons Chaadaev may have felt compelled to draft such a venomous indictment of Russian intellectual life was the state censorship that clouded the air and often hindered the pursuit of knowledge. Indeed, immediately after the *Telescope*'s publication of the *Letter*, the horrified government closed down the journal and had Chaadaev declared mentally insane, thus preventing him from publishing any more inflammatory works.[9] However, his harsh ordeal not withstanding, Chaadaev may have also perceived a greater threat than actually existed. Despite the state's harsh reaction *ex post facto*, the very fact that the *Letter* passed the censors in the first instance is proof enough of the inefficiency, unpredictability, and arbitrariness of the entire censorship machine. In truth, although Nicholas has the reputation of having presided over a cruel and unforgiving network of censors, the lay experience of censorship was uneven at best.[10]

At the beginning of Nicholas's reign, censorship was governed by the arch-conservative Minister of Public Enlightenment, Admiral Shishkov.[11] Shishkov was responsible for drafting the censorship statute of 1826, which was judged by even the more reactionary ministers as extraordinarily strict.[12] It decreed that several subjects,

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[8] Ibid, 32.
[9] Ibid, 1-2. Chaadaev did not actually perish under house arrest; he was released after some time and published the essay *Apologia of a Madman*, which was an explanation and refutation of his previous works.
[10] Choldin, 38.
[11] Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 52.
[12] Choldin, 25.

such as the Church and religion, were uniformly banned regardless of the author's stance, and that above all published works should be "useful" to society.[13] Shishkov had a very utilitarian view of education in general, insisting that:

> Learning which is cultivated by the mind does not deserve public confidence if it is not grounded in faith and good morals.…Learning is useful only when, like salt, it is applied in the measure appropriate to the needs of the people and to the needs which each rank has. Too much, as well as too little, is the enemy of true enlightenment. To teach reading to the whole nation, or a disproportionate number of people, is to do more harm than good.[14]

This was not a man who shared either Uvarov's or the tsar's belief in the necessity of even limited educational reform, believing instead that all revolutionary elements in society could be quelled by the strict enforcement of harsh censorship laws. The tsar was of a different mind, however, and in 1828 Shishkov was replaced by the more liberal Prince Karl A. Lieven, whose first action as the new Minister and Chief Censor was to replace the stringent 1826 statute with the more lenient Censorship Statute of 1828.[15]

The statute of 1828 is a fascinating piece of legislation. It professed to be more forgiving than its predecessor, and yet was so vague that it provided little explicit guidance to the censors charged with its application.[16] The statute dictated that:

> 3. Works of literature, science, and art are to be banned by the censorship: (a) if they contain anything which tends to undermine the teachings of the Orthodox Greco-Russian Church, its traditions and rituals, or in general the truths and dogmas of the Christian faith; (b) if they contain anything infringing upon the inviolability of the supreme autocratic power or upon the respect for the imperial house, or anything contradicting basic government legislation; (c) if they offend good morals and decency; and (d) if they offend the honor of any person especially by slander and by

[13] Ruud, 53.
[14] As quoted in Flynn, *University Reform*, 167.
[15] Choldin, 25.
[16] Ibid.

> indecent expressions or injurious dissemination of that which concerns his morals or domestic life.[17]

Both the first two clauses as well as the final clause seem relatively transparent, but the third part is extremely troubling. Morals and decency are dependent on the censor's own understanding of the world and the work, and thus this caveat within the law was both an excuse for censors to be extraordinarily strict and at the same time a loophole through which potentially dangerous works could slip unfettered.[18] Matters were further complicated by the fact that, in order to ensure some level of integrity of education, university libraries and university faculty were permitted access to otherwise banned books.[19] Although professors were technically prohibited from distributing contraband material to their students, this law was not strictly maintained, and a veritable black market of illegal reading material flourished even as the strength and dedication the censors waxed and waned.[20]

The odd combination of an otherwise conservative political structure with a haphazard censorship bureau gave literature a much freer reign than the traditional depiction of Nicholas's Russia would suggest. The small window left for literary advances, whether because of a governmental desire to develop Russian national culture, seen also in the endowment of Russian Studies departments in the universities, or simply due to carelessness, allowed an entire subculture of critical writing to develop. Vissarion Belinsky, the foremost literary critic of the era, once said that "in Russia, literature is

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[17] "Statute on Censorship," in Vernadsky et al, 533.
[18] In addition to the example given of Chaadaev's *First Philosophical Letter*, the censors were also particularly uneven in their censorship of foreign works, many of which contained precisely the inflammatory ideas that the government wished to prohibit. The books were allowed in largely because of trouble with finding foreign language censors, although problems also arose when the government tried to balance Western style education with its desire to censor Western ideas. For more, see Choldin, particularly the first chapter.
[19] Choldin, 24.
[20] Ibid, 38.

everything."[21] What he meant by this was that in an otherwise silent political world, Russian literature was art and politics, protest and praise, poem and polemic. As Isaiah Berlin notes in his essay "A Remarkable Decade," the generation educated during the reign of Nicholas I was the first to use the depiction of life in art as a form of social criticism.[22] That generation, which included Herzen, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and many others, found in literature a relatively safe outlet to vent their frustrations with the government and propagate true and lasting social change.

The man perhaps most responsible for changing the way society perceived the role and potential of literature was the critic Vissarion Grigorevich Belinsky. An alumnus of the Moscow Circle, Belinsky thought that literature had both transformative and restorative power.[23] He believed that in literature's beautiful form and intelligent method, artistry and preaching would work in tandem to create a whole which was considerably bigger than the sum of its parts.[24] Above all else, he wished to infuse society with a love of literature and an appreciation of the wealth of words available in the late 1840s. To love literature, Belinsky understood that one must attain and value education; he writes in his essay "Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature" that "the needs of the educated have not yet become a habit with us."[25] This statement, which bears echoes of Chaadaev's denunciation of Russia's lack of "national knowledge," must be read as nothing less than an impassioned cry for widespread public education. Belinsky was himself non-noble, and among the first to make a living through writing

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[21] Lecture series, "Westernizers and Slavophiles," Andrei Zorin, University of Oxford. Oxford, England, Trinity Term 2005.
[22] Berlin, 116.
[23] Brown, 4.
[24] Berlin, 181.
[25] Vissarion Belinsky, "Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature," in Ralph E. Matlaw, ed., *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov: Selected Criticism*, Ralph E. Matlaw, trans., (New York: E.P Dutton & Co., Inc., 1962), 18.

and criticism.[26] In the apathy of his countrymen, Belinsky saw a mockery of his attempt to elevate literature in the public consciousness, and the likelihood that, without more devotion to education, all his efforts would be in vain.

It was more than a cry for more institutionalized public education, though; for Belinsky, the son of a Finnish army worker, expelled from both gymnasium and Moscow University, literature was not just an instrument of social change, but was itself also a path towards education and enlightenment.[27] This is particularly evident in his discussion of the relationship that those who lived outside the capitals had with literature. Traditionally, the intellectuals of Moscow and St. Petersburg mocked provincial readers; Belinsky realized that provincials also read, judged, and learned from the literary journals which traveled to the countryside.[28] Through his prolific pen, Belinsky worked to promote literature as an alternate university system that educated the audience, explored society, and analyzed its social role. If literature is understood as another university, it is also one which through popularity and availability does in some ways reach Herzen's democratic ideal.

Belinsky, however, did not just deal in the ephemeral realm of literary perception; he was also involved in helping many of the most prominent writers of his day achieve acclaim and respect. Pavel Annenkov credits Belinsky with the success of many of Russia's most famous writers, especially Gogol and Dostoevsky.[29] This is not an unwarranted compliment. In the literary world of the 1830s and 1840s, Belinsky's praise

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[26] Berlin, 176.
[27] Francis Randall, *Vissarion Belinskii*, (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1987), xi.
[28] William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 102.
[29] Annenkov, 45.

was fiercely sought and hard won.[30] Through his integration of Western philosophical theories with a passionate love of the Russian people, Vissarion Belinsky can be said to have created the oeuvre of Russian literature in tandem with the authors themselves.

Towards the end of his life, Belinsky found himself expressing a distinct preference for works that dealt less with fantastical fiction, preferring instead those novels that rested on a sound instructional and realistic core.[31] This was often interpreted as a desire for literature which bridged the gap between recounted and imagined stories. Thus, the decade during which Belinsky was most productive witnessed the publication of many novels written in both memoir and epistolary form. These works deliberately efface the division between fact and fiction, and in doing so impart lessons and opinions that are much more difficult to dismiss than those hidden in the text of an invented tale.

One of the more popular literary fusions between life and art was Leo Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*, which appeared as three separate works in the literary magazine *The Contemporary* between 1852 and 1856.[32] This autobiographical novel deals with the formative experiences of a young noble, much like Tolstoy himself, and in particular his encounters with the Nicolaevan university system. The protagonist is educated by private tutors until age 16, at which point the tutors prepare him for the entrance exams to Moscow University.[33] This is the young man's first experience with institutionalized education, and his first reaction is how odd the social mix seems, and how segregated the students are from one another. Tolstoy writes:

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[30] Ibid, 6.
[31] Victor Terras, *Belinskij and Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 37.
[32] Leo Tolstoy, *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*, trans. Michael Scammell, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), preface. Although this work was written slightly outside of both Belinsky and Uvarov's time period, it recalls the relevant era and is thus still an excellent example of the intersection between education and literature.
[33] Ibid, 235.

> Everywhere I sensed the bond that held the whole of this young company together and I felt sadly that somehow this bond had missed me. But this was only a momentary impression. Because of it and the chagrin it provoked in me I even found, on the contrary, that it was a very good thing that I did not belong to this whole company, that I ought to have my own circle of the right sort of people, and I sat down in the third row with Count B, Baron Z, Prince R, Ivin and Count B. But these men looked at me in such a way that I did not feel as though I quite belonged in their society either.[34]

Even though it is not Tolstoy's own experience (he was educated mainly at Kazan University), this passage gives the reader pause, especially when it is compared with Herzen's memoirs of the same institution.[35] The young man of Tolstoy's imagination found that any friendship between students of different social estates was almost purely superficial, and instead the same social laws applied within university walls as applied to the city at large. The character does not fit in anywhere, because he is of too elevated a social standing to sit with non-nobles, but of insufficient status to mingle with barons and princes. Tolstoy's alter-ego is a man caught between the estates, and fundamentally unsure of how to navigate the new social order, where princes and non-nobles are seated in the same auditorium.

Before finding himself at a loss for companions, though, the narrator is briefly struck by the impression of "the bond that held the whole of this young company together." What is unclear is whether or not he enjoyed that fleeting illusion of social equality. He writes that it "provoked a feeling of chagrin in him," but the end of the passage, where he records the awkwardness after his encounter with members of the

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[34] Ibid, 342.
[35] Henri Troyat, *Tolstoy*, trans. Nancy Amphoux, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), 45.

upper nobility, leads the reader to question whether he has not reached the conclusion that, despite the threat to the social order, a democratic university would be preferable.[36]

Moscow University's actual social atmosphere likely lay somewhere in between Herzen's idyllic memory and Tolstoy's bleak fiction. What is more interesting than the facts, however, is what Tolstoy's novel suggests about literature and society. When the first sections were published in the early 1850s, N.G. Chernyshevsky, a renowned critic, extolled the work for its careful observation of the human condition and its forthright morality.[37] In a statement encompassing both this work in particular and the role of literature in general, Chernyshevsky explained:

> Social morality has never yet attained so high a level as in our noble time, noble and splendid despite all the remnants of ancient dirt, because it harnessed all its powers to cleanse itself from inherited sins. And the literature of our time is the noble manifestation of the purest noble feeling in each of its remarkable works, without exception.[38]

He imbues literature with distinctly religious overtones: its role is to instruct, to cleanse, and to improve society. Therefore, it is not necessarily the precise truth which must be represented; sometimes a slightly grimmer depiction more effectively captures attention and demands reform. This, then, lends another layer to possible interpretations of Tolstoy's writing. Given Chernyshevsky's review of the book, it is possible that the

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[36] Another possible interpretation of this section is that Tolstoy disliked formal education in general, regardless of social demography. This would be consistent with his personal biography, his later philosophical writings, and the protagonist's diatribes against the boarding school students. Either way, though, it seems evident that although the words of the text seem to deride social egalitarianism within education, the reader is not meant in to interpret the words literally.
[37] N.G. Chernyshevsky, "L.N. Tolstoy's *Childhood* and *Boyhood* and *Military Tales*," in Matlaw, 102.
[38] Ibid.

unflattering description of Moscow University students was meant to be read as a call for reform and improvement rather than a truthful representation of student society.[39]

Some authors, however, felt no need to exaggerate in their novels in order to teach and advance society, believing instead that it was incumbent upon them to speak a harsh and uncompromising truth. It was precisely this sentiment which spurred Nikolai Gogol to publish *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* in 1846.[40] Gogol had briefly been a professor at the University of St. Petersburg, at which time he wrote an essay entitled "On the Teaching of World History," wherein he argued that it is the role of the instructor to make the subject come alive and engage his students.[41] The famed novelist brought the same sensibility to his narrative pursuits, insisting that it was the responsibility of the writer to instruct and captivate his readers through his unflinching recitation of the truth. In the introduction to *Selected Passages*, which is a collection of both real and imagined letters between Gogol and various literary luminaries of his time, the author explains:

> I am a writer, and the duty of a writer is not only to furnish pleasant pursuits for the mind and taste; he will be held accountable if things useful to the soul are not disseminated by his works and if nothing remains after him as a precept for mankind.[42]

This epistolary conflation of fact and fiction certainly imparts "precepts for mankind," as Gogol so modestly phrases his intention, but they alienate the reader rather than convince him of their validity. *Selected Passages* is a vitriolic rant against all that Gogol despised

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[39] This technique stands in sharp contrast to the ideology of Socialist Realism adopted by Stalin in the 1934, wherein reality is depicted as better than what it actually is as an inspiration to readers for what the real world could be.
[40] Henri Troyat, *Gogol: The Biography of a Divided Soul,* trans. Nancy Amphoux, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), 34.
[41] Nikolai Gogol, *Arabesques*, trans. Alexander Tulloch, (Ann Arbor: Ardis Publishers, 1982), 45.
[42] Nikolai Gogol, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, trans. Jesse Zeldin, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 9.

in Russian society, and in it he advocates the return to traditional Russian values, particularly to Orthodoxy, a position which, in its extremity, provoked the ire of both liberals and conservatives alike.[43]

Gogol covers a range of topics in his letters, but one of his favorites is literature, education, and the respective roles of the two. He is not in favor of breaking down social distinctions, and unlike Belinsky and Tolstoy, he leaves little room for alternate interpretations of his viewpoint. His arguments are wholly single-minded; in one passage, Gogol successfully turns a review of a new Russian translation of the ancient classic *The Odyssey* into an unequivocal demand for a ban on public education and the immediate reinstitution of the social hierarchy. He writes:

> When one finally begins to become suspicious of the perfection to which the latest constitution and public education have led us; when one perceives in everyone a kind of uncontrollable thirst to be something other than what he is, perhaps even proceeding from a fine source – to be better; when through the absurd clamor and the thoughtless propagation of new but dimly perceived ideas one perceives a kind of general attempt to be closer to a mean, to find the real law of our actions, as well as those of the mass as persons taken separately – in short, it is precisely at this time that *The Odyssey* strikes with the majesty of the patriarchal, ancient mode of life, with the simplicity of uncomplicated social lines, with the freshness of life, with the clarity of man's childhood. In *The Odyssey*, our nineteenth century will hear a strong reproach, and the reproaches will go on the more it is scrutinized and carefully read.[44]

This is, in one fell swoop, a comprehensive condemnation of the effects of the Nicolaevan reforms. Whereas Nicholas and Uvarov had both believed that as long as the reforms proceeded carefully, they would save society from slipping farther behind the West in terms of development and education, Gogol argues here that the reforms themselves are insidiously destroying society from within.

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[43] Troyat, *Gogol*, 347.
[44] Gogol, *Selected Passages*, 39-40.

Gogol's argumentation, however, contains an intrinsic contradiction. He writes that Russian society will find salvation in the historic patriarchy of Homer's *Odyssey*, and yet that implies an inherent respect for the Greek and Latin classical works, which were introduced into the educational system by Uvarov in 1828.[45] He is therefore attempting to combat the reforms by promoting the study of a work that is available on account of those same reforms. What is significant is that even as he denounced the rise of public education, Gogol also understood that, given the newly educated and literate society he addressed, his social critiques would be weightless without foundations in literature.

The condemnatory tenor of *Selected Passages*, particularly its insistence on the danger of social egalitarianism within education, incited a direct attack by Belinsky. In response to the book, Belinsky, who at the time was dying from tuberculosis, dashed out a hasty response that was both sent to the author and later published in part as the essay "A Letter to N.V. Gogol."[46] In the letter, Belinsky matches Gogol's rancorous tone, writing:

> It also occurs to me that in your book you affirm – as if it were a great and undeniable verity – that literacy is not only not good for common folk, but positively harmful. What can I say to this? May your Byzantine God forgive you for this Byzantine thought, provided that when you put it down in black and white you knew not what you did.[47]

After the publication of *Dead Souls* in 1842, Belinsky had hailed Gogol as the prophet of Russia, seeing in the darkly comic epic a sharp ridicule of all the embarrassing and deplorable aspects of Russian culture. Belinsky had believed that in writing that seminal work, Gogol was calling for reform; the critic therefore felt personally and ideologically

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[45] Marinus A. Wes, *Classics in Russia, 1700-1855: Between Two Bronze Horsemen*, (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1992), 197.
[46] "A Letter to N.V. Gogol," trans. Valentine Snow in Raeff, 252.
[47] Ibid, 257. The Orthodox faith has its roots in Byzantine Christianity; Belinsky here juxtaposes Byzantium with an implicit Western tradition, arguing that Gogol's god is outdated and backwards.

betrayed by the reactionary nature of *Selected Passages*.[48] Whatever the betrayal, though, the nature of this debate illustrates how contentious an issue educational reform was, and it is representative of the conflict which continued to face the educational and literary worlds. Although the reforms had been underway for nearly two decades at this point, touching all levels of education within the realm, there was still no consensus among either the leadership or the intelligentsia as to what place social egalitarianism had in the formation of an adequate education system.

That there was still no formal accord as to the proper demographics of the educational system, however, did not mean that Uvarov's reforms had not taken root in other ways. Instead, exactly the opposite was true. What the literature of the 1840s makes clear is that whether or not writers, critics, and ministers could agree on what would constitute the best social composition of educational institutions, by the end of Uvarov's term as Minister of Public Enlightenment, education itself had attained a much higher premium in society. This is demonstrated most eloquently in Dostoevsky's novella *Poor Folk*, the work cited at the beginning of this chapter. *Poor Folk* is a collection of letters between a poor civil servant, Makar, and his love, Varvara. It touches on the importance of education in several places, most noticeably in the section of the novella wherein Varvara shares her journals with Makar, allowing both him and the reader to peruse their contents and glean what they will. Through the diary, the

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[48] Ibid, 252. It is unclear, however, whether Belinsky's interpretation of either *Dead Souls* or *Selected Passages* is correct. Belinsky believed that *Selected Passages* represented a sudden and dramatic break with the ideals he attributed to *Dead Souls*. While this explanation is one of the most popular, Gogol explained that both works were meant to instruct the reading public and alter their perceptions; therefore, it is evident that the two works stemmed from the same ideological belief in the purpose of literature. Further, if *Dead Souls* is read not from a political standpoint but rather from a religious perspective, as a tale about good and evil rather than about the woes of serfdom, the ideological reversal that Belinsky diagnosed in *Selected Passages* becomes moot. Discussion with Dr. Benjamin Nathans, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, March 16, 2006.

reader learns of Varvara's experience as a poor student at one of the elite women's schools in Petersburg, and then later about her relationship with the student-boarder Pokrovsky and its basis in books and learning. These are two formative episodes in her life, and through her descriptions, the reader and the historian begin to understand the way the perception of education has changed since the beginning of the Nicolaevan era.

Varvara's family moved to St. Petersburg when she was young, and her father immediately scrimped, scavenged, and saved whatever he could, managing to send her to one of the renowned women's institutes of the city.[49] Her experience, however, was marred by her visibly inferior social and economic status. Of her first days and reception by the other students, Varvara writes:

> I was so unhappy at first among strangers. It felt so grim and unwelcoming – the governesses were always shouting at us, the girls were always mocking me and I felt so awkward and uncouth….In the evening everyone would go over their lessons or learn new ones, and I would sit by myself learning French sentences or lists of words, not daring to move….At first all the girls used to make fun of me, tease me, make me go wrong when I was answering questions in class, pinch me when we were walking in rows to dinner or tea, and make complaints about me for no reason to thegoverness. [50]

This memory, a product of Dostoevsky's fevered imagination, is actually the mirror image of the recollections which Natalia Grot shares in her autobiography. Grot wrote of her disdain for the students of the lower classes; Dostoevsky, via Varvara, channels that disgust and recreates what the experience must have been for pupils not blessed with Grot's pedigree. Dostoevsky's choice to make Varvara's profound discomfort in boarding school such a dominant part of his narrative implies the far-reaching impact of the boarding school experience on public perceptions. It further suggests that boarding

[49] Dostoevsky, 34.
[50] Ibid, 35.

school had become a sort of milestone for all girls whose families could even remotely handle the financial burden (and even those who could not). Since the title of the novel suggests that Dostoevsky intended his characters to represent archetypes of the impoverished classes, his education of his characters is redolent of the new type of urban poor that Dostoevsky saw around him. These were people who strove to break down the social hierarchy, and their primary weapon of doing so was formal education, even at the expense of their own happiness.

Poor Folk does not only focus on the value placed on boarding schools and women's education, though; it also enunciates a general sentiment that education is now as much a prerequisite for success as birth and heritage. Varvara's entire relationship with the boarder Pokrovsky is grounded in her need for knowledge. She writes:

> Pokrovsky's room was set up very barely and was in some disorder. There were five long bookshelves attached to the walls. On the desk and the chairs papers were lying. Books and papers! A strange thought suddenly struck me and I was possessed by an unpleasant feeling of spite. It seemed to me that my friendship and my loving heart were not enough for him. He was clever while I was stupid and knew nothing, not a single book…I then looked with envy at the long shelves which were burdened to the breaking point with books.[51]

Varvara's immense frustration at her own lack of formal education, which is magnified by her intense envy of Pokrovsky's world of books and learning, is symptomatic of a society wherein education has recently gained a new degree of importance. In this passage, Varvara realizes that she has reached a public and private ceiling which, due to her minimal education, cannot be breached.[52] Although Varvara does eventually complete her education, albeit in a rather haphazard way, her childish flash of intuition is evidence enough that during the Nicolaevan era, education was transformed from a

[51] Ibid, 45.
[52] She was forced to drop out of boarding school after her father's death; see ibid, 39.

burden imposed by the state to a necessity for success in every facet of public and private life.

Makar, the male correspondent, also acutely feels his lack of education, but he notes not how it has affected his career, but rather how his crudeness affects his inability to woo women. In one of his letters, he apologetically explains to Varvara that:

> I write whatever comes into my head, just to brighten you up a little. If only I'd had some education it would be a different matter, but what sort of education did I have? Not worth a penny.[53]

This simple expression of regret shows that the perceived need for education was one which transcended lines of sex and class. These instances, which permeate the text of the novella, establish beyond reasonable doubt that by the time Dostoevsky wrote this piece, education had become a quantifiable commodity, and its indispensable importance to success had been firmly established.

When considering the success of fiction of the 1840s, it is vital to remember that the literature was not being produced in a vacuum, but was rather a response to the age, especially in terms of the newly literate public who could appreciate and encourage the authors.[54] It was the rapport between reader and writer that allowed literature to take such an important place in the cultural hierarchy.[55] Therefore, the novels, both in content and in historical lore, are direct products of their contemporary environments, and cannot be sufficiently understood separate from their cultural context.[56] They deal with the pressing social issues of their age, such as serfdom and education, because the authors

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[53] Ibid, 30.
[54] Todd, 3. This stands in sharp contrast to the society of two decades earlier, when Pushkin found society unprepared for some of his more lyrical works. See Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 38-39.
[55] Todd, 3.
[56] Ibid, 8.

were writing for a much broader public than their literary predecessors, and the knowledge of that public necessarily contributed to the composition of the works. Authors have long felt pressed to speak the truth about their societies, but what happened in Russia in the twilight of Uvarov's tenure was that these authors finally found a public with enough education and interest to grasp and promulgate the message.

The extent of the newly literate society was evident in the unquestionably increased social diversity of the universities. Whereas two decades previously Herzen had found much of his democracy in the circle which met outside the university walls, and Nikitenko despaired of ever having a non-noble university population, at the end of the 1840s there was little doubt that non-nobles were a force to be reckoned with both inside the university as well as beyond its confines. No single example demonstrates this better than the Petrashevtsy Affair, a minor anti-governmental plot which confirmed that one could not effectively reform education without effacing societal divisions.

The Petrashevtsy Circles were a loosely connected cluster of literary circles in St. Petersburg which had all been begun by Mikhail Petrashevsky and were modeled on the famous Moscow Circle of the 1830s.[57] What distinguished this circle from its forerunners, however, was that it was an open circle with men who, without the opportunities afforded them by Uvarov's reforms, would have remained nonentities. As J.H. Seddon writes in his study of the circles:

> The Petrashevtsy were the first representatives of the new intelligentsia created by Nicholas I's educational reforms. In contrast to the intelligentsia of preceeding [sic] years, only a few belonged to the wealthy upper classes. The majority came from the impoverished gentry, a few from the non-noble classes.[58]

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[57] J.H. Seddon, *The Petrashevtsy: A Study of the Russian Revolutionaries of 1848*, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1985), 18.
[58] Ibid, 19.

These were not the intellectually elite circles of Stankevich and Herzen in Moscow, or of Panaev or Annenkov in Petersburg: these were circles of simple students who gathered together, regardless of origin or wealth, to discuss what could not be discussed at school.[59] They were united by a belief in the profound need for social and political reform, and slowly formed a plan to take up arms against the government.[60]

Just as it was significant that the Moscow Circle formed in the old capital, it is equally significant that the Petrashevtsy were all a product of Petersburg; these men were among the first organized political radicals from the lower classes who would later form the basis of the revolutionary movement and the Revolution itself.[61] Many of the major events of the march to Revolution, such as the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, the 1905 Revolution, and then finally both the February and October Revolutions, would take place within the limits of Peter's capital. The Petrashevtsy revolt can therefore be seen as the point at which so-called "dangerous" currents shifted away from Moscow and back to the Window to the Future.

The Petrashevtsy is also a perfect bookend to an era which began with the Decembrist Uprising. While neither was either successful or particularly threatening to the monarchy, the dramatic shift in the revolutionaries' social origins and their comparative levels of formal education amply demonstrates the wide reach and success of the educational reforms in terms of establishing an educational and intellectual culture. The members of the Petrashevtsy Circles suffered from the mirrored problem of the Decembrists: the semi-knowledge of the Decembrists is what Nicholas found threatening,

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[59] Ibid, 21.
[60] Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 8.
[61] Seddon, 19.

whereas it was the extensive knowledge of the later rebels that caused the ruler profound alarm.

Although the story also began with a rebellion, it is not only the revolutionary aspirations of the Petrashevtsy that make them a fitting conclusion to the story of the Nicolaevan reforms. It is also important to recognize the Petrashevtsy's illustration of the way education had redefined society and social relations. In the wider context of the educational evolution of the Empire, this group of young men represented the remarkable level of a general thirst for knowledge, visible as well in the literary flowering, which had begun to seize citizens of all estates and stations. It was, then, the realization of Nicholas's greatest fear – the regular association of men from all classes who gathered to discuss literature, politics, and rights, men who had learned to do so because of the improved educational offerings of his realm, despite his unceasing efforts to limit their availability to the lower classes. When the seeds of a plot were uncovered and the perpetrators arrested in April of 1849, the success of the reforms from an intellectual standpoint, if not in terms of the government aims, was incontrovertible.[62]

[62] Frank, 6.

CONCLUSIONS

When the Nicolaevan state embarked on its campaign of educational reform, the goal was to educate the next generation of government officials and thereby gradually improve the overall quality of governance. The aim was not the creation of an intelligentsia; Nicholas did not want a thinking populace, he wanted capable ministers. Although a desire to prove Russia's comparative modernity to the West through the advances of the educational system and the education of the people was a component of the government's goal, this was not the impetus for the reforms and it was never their primary purpose. The Minister of Public Enlightenment, Sergei Uvarov, did want more generally sophisticated and educated nobles, but this was not in conflict with his tsar's goals, since Uvarov believed intellectual discussion should occur outside of the political sphere. Thus, from the state perspective, the reorganization of the school system was entirely directed at improving the civil service.

An analysis of the way the government set about restructuring the educational system demonstrates these utilitarian roots: the first target of the reforms was the noble boarding schools, the single most important source of future government officials. The universities were not officially reformed until nearly a decade after the campaign of reform was conceived. This chronology is also evidence of the ministers' desire to reform with the aim of maximizing governmental benefit and minimizing the impact of the reforms on the sectors of society least likely to provide men for the civil service. The attempt to institute socially restrictive admissions policies is indicative of how narrowly the government wished the reforms to be felt; Nicholas was fundamentally fearful of the possible effects of pervasive public education, and so although he sanctioned the reforms

and wished them to be comprehensive, he did not want them to be applicable to all of the estates.

The memoirs of the era, however, reveal a significant failure of the government to enforce its own legislation. Although the extent of non-noble presence varied according to physical distance from St. Petersburg, most of the memoirs discussed refer, with either disdain or admiration, to non-noble classmates. The attitude towards the lower classes is often linked to the rank of the memoir's author, but that each writer felt compelled to dwell on the social make-up of the school demonstrates a preoccupation of the general populace with the issue of social egalitarianism within education. What this suggests is that the governmental policies regarding exclusivity were not strictly obeyed, especially in cities that were geographically farther from the political capital. This, in turn, is evidence of the way the reforms were received and subverted by the public; it is indicative of the process by which the power of the state to control the influence of its programs gradually and noticeably diminished.

The discussion of social equality and educational access gives rise to a broader question, namely, the way society's perception of education changed as a result of the Uvarovian reforms. It seems to me that the very preoccupation of the authors with the issue of social egalitarianism is a demonstration of the extent to which the perception of education as a commodity had pervaded society. Every protest against widening the availability of public education is tantamount to an explicit admission of the importance of education, because to fight to maintain exclusive rights inherently implies that the service in contention is of considerable value. Similarly, every exhortation of the social democracy of educational institutions is an affirmation that it is crucial to give everyone

the advantages afforded by a sound education. The debate even moves beyond memoir into the realm of fiction. The emphasis contemporary authors placed on the educational experience, and the arguments put forth in their novels, are yet further evidence of the way education itself had become a fundamental value of society by the end of the Nicolaevan age.

If this is accepted, then one final leap can and must be made: rather than being a period of stagnation, the Nicolaevan era was a time of significant educational and intellectual advancement. While strict analysis of the goals of the state suggests a narrow and limited campaign of reform, what the memoirs and the fiction indicate in their concern with both the issue of who is allowed to be educated, as well as with the very concept of education itself, is that the program had far wider ramifications than the state had first envisioned. The reforms were not universal, and the socially exclusive policies were never completely ignored, but they were ultimately much less successful than the government had hoped. Members of lower estates were educated. In examining these reforms, therefore, it is crucial to consider not only the goals of the government, but also the way the Russian public received these reforms and made them their own.

If a parallel tale of Nicholas's education reforms is the way society transformed and improved upon them, then a necessary corollary to this tale is the birth of the intelligentsia. The topic of the fully-formed Russian intelligentsia, operating outside of the traditional world of universities, falls beyond the limits of Nicholas I's reign; indeed, most historians argue that one cannot accurately describe Russia as being possessed of an intelligentsia until well into the 1860s. Even if the intelligentsia were not present as a defined social and political group until later in the century, however, their roots are

clearly discernable in the Nicolaevan epoch. Chaadaev, Herzen, Belinsky, Aksakov, and Khomyakov gave birth to Struve, Berdyaev, and Blok, the foremost members of Russia's "Silver Age." Nicholas's reign does not tell the history of the intelligentsia, but, through the initial implementation of educational reforms and the public's concurrent extrapolation upon them, the reign made possible their future existence. Despite his best intentions, Nicholas left behind a society on the brink of educational and intellectual greatness.

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