

# Nihilism and National Security

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*Nihilism does for Tsar Alexander II*

A spectre is haunting Western societies, and it's not just Chinese imperialism. It's the spectre of Nihilism, permeating every corner of our intellectual and moral culture, and critically weakening our capacity to defend ourselves. At a time when sharply increasing international tensions are prompting an unprecedented increase in defence spending to counter external threats, it's essential that the corresponding internal threats be addressed as well.

The ultimate destination of Nihilism is civilisational collapse, a cultural and political abyss into which America is now gazing, and we may follow. As Gerard Baker laments in the *Wall Street Journal*:

*Much of the country's political leadership, almost its entire academic establishment, most of the people who control its news and cultural output, and a good deal of its corporate elite view the US as an irredeemably malignant force for enslavement and oppression, a uniquely evil power founded on an ideology of racial supremacy. These Jacobins demand that Americans repudiate most of the nation's history, tear down the icons of its creation and engage in a collective cultural expurgation of its sins.*

Nihilism can be defined as the ideological position that all prevailing values, beliefs,

systems of knowledge, conventions, and institutions are without rational, ethical, or philosophical foundation, lack any legitimacy and are systematically oppressive. For nearly two centuries, Nihilism has been associated with the radical intelligentsia and masses of alienated and under-occupied university students, other young people, and the disaffected masses generally. Historically, it has been exploited by those seeking to destabilize or overthrow existing political and social structures, with the best examples being the success of the Nazi Party in attracting millions into the Hitler Youth movement with its delirious book-burnings, and Mao Zedong's mobilization of millions of young Red Guards in an iconoclastic Cultural Revolution that obliterated much of China's cultural heritage.

These masses constitute the cannon-fodder of 'the Revolution', and characteristically they identify fanatically with some favoured 'victim group' for whom they proclaim a virtually infinite sympathy. However, the crucial point here is that the actual lives and living conditions of these groups don't primarily concern the agitators – in fact, these groups serve mainly as a proxy for the agitators own ill-defined grievances and self-regard. Totally immersed in an intoxicating mood of outraged morality these foot-soldiers are oblivious to the real-world needs of those they purport to champion. Meanwhile, they are utterly dismissive of their critics (who point this out), and contemptuous of their opponents, viewing any concessions that are made to their cause as signs of weakness, encouraging further demands and assaults.

What is its history? Nihilism emerged as a coherent ideology in Imperial Russia, and the parallels between past and present are striking. It drew its devotees from the masses of young people who had been enticed into higher learning by educational reforms implemented under Tsar Alexander II. These expanded university education for the children of the middle classes and the lesser nobility but couldn't guarantee suitable employment opportunities for graduates. These masses congregated in the university cities, such as St Petersburg, Moscow, and Kazan, and where a vigorous counter-culture thrived amidst economic upheaval and moral squalor.

As Nihilists, they cultivated a very specific attitude and image. This involved ostentatious moral posturing and virtue signalling, and included deliberately defying the older generations, authority and convention, while cultivating abrasive attitudes, manners, style, behaviour and dress, including unconventional clothing, long hair for men and short hair for women, blue-tinted glasses, communal living, sexual and class equality, and free love, polygamy, etc. They presented themselves as 'New People' implementing a new morality.

They affected to live an ascetic life close to their chosen victim group, 'the people', and especially the serfs, whom they fervently believed led a truly authentic and genuine existence. All this fell apart after an abortive campaign of 'going to the people' to offer them 'liberation'. Out in the villages they discovered that the people held them and their ideas in contempt and violently rejected their criticism of the Church and the Tsar. Crushed by this collision of their moral fantasies with reality, their alienation deepened profoundly, they rejected liberalism, and gravitated instead to various forms of political

extremism, *e.g.*, Anarchism, Marxism, and Terrorism.

This phenomenon was documented by Ivan Turgenev in his famous 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons*, which also popularized the name 'Nihilist'. Turgenev wrote in response to the cultural schism that he saw developing between the older liberals like Alexander Herzen and the new Nihilist radicalism, which ridiculed the meagre achievements of their elders. Yevgeny Bazarov, the main character of the novel, was an utterly idealistic and uncompromising Nihilist. He has been referred to as the 'First Bolshevik', for his Nihilism, fierce commitment to 'the Cause', and rejection of the old order.

Another novel gave vivid expression to this iconoclastic radicalism: *What is to be Done?* (1863) by Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Subtitled 'Stories about the new men and women' it described in agonizing didactic detail a new type of person – one totally committed to political and moral revolution and prepared to do whatever it took to achieve the revolutionary overthrow of society. Widely regarded as one of the worst novels ever written, it famously made more converts to the cause of revolution than any other work. Lenin, for example, was profoundly influenced by it and later named one of his own most important revolutionary works *What is to be Done?*

Inevitably, some alienated youth was going to put these ideas into practice. Consequently, in 1866, Dmitrii Karakozov, a member of a St Petersburg terrorist group called 'Hell' attempted to assassinate Alexander II. He was quickly caught, tried and hanged. However, he implicated many other conspirators, some of whom were executed while dozens more were exiled for life in Siberia (where they often shot themselves). Alexander's liberal policies included freeing the serfs, but this counted for nothing to the Nihilists and in 1881 he was finally assassinated by members of *Narodnaya Volya* ('People's Will').

Another influential Nihilist was the sinister Sergei Nechaev, who became notorious for his advocacy of the amoral, ruthless and single-minded pursuit of revolution by any means necessary, including every form of deceit and manipulation, extreme political violence and brutal murder. His views were expressed in the infamous *Catechism of a Revolutionary*, a manifesto of Nihilism, promoting the "merciless destruction" of society and the state. Many would-be revolutionaries were impressed by Nechaev and sought to join his organization. One of these was a certain I. I. Ivanov. Unfortunately for him, he came to disagree with Nechaev and tried to leave the group. Consequently, in November 1869, Nechaev and several others lured Ivanov to a park where Nechaev beat, strangled, and shot Ivanov before dumping his body in a lake through a hole in the ice.

The *Catechism* was adopted by various radical groups over the years, *e.g.*, the Black Panthers in the Sixties, whose leader Eldridge Cleaver adopted it as a "Revolutionary Bible", declaring that it prompted him to adopt "tactics of ruthlessness in my dealings with everyone with whom I came into contact". It still remains influential amongst political extremists, terrorists, and contemporary Anarchists and Neo-Marxists, including those presently involved in manipulating the current far-left BLM protests.

This connection was recently pointed out a former FBI counter-terrorism director on *The Outsiders* television program: “Much of the BLM program is lifted from the Black Panther Party and Weather Underground movements of the ‘60s and ‘70s.” These were Marxist-Leninist militant and terrorist groups that were seeking nothing less than “the total transformation of the United States government”, and were seeking to exploit “those situations where there is a tinderbox and light the country on fire.” (“Some lives matter more”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 7/7)

As these remarks confirm, Nihilism tends always to extremism, often ruining the prospects of their chosen victim groups, and usually culminating in violence. It also literally suffocates Liberal Democratic tendencies, as Russia found out in 1917. Therefore, the lesson to be drawn from history is simple: it must be met with uncompromising resistance.

Contemporary Nihilism is presently manifested in the mindless iconoclasm of the ‘cancel culture’, exemplified by its wilful and irresponsible street demonstrations in the presence of a pandemic, its ruthless destruction of reputations, vandalism of historical monuments and artefacts, along with the denunciation of Western Civilization, liberal democracy, capitalism, nationalism, ‘white people’, their history and everything to do with any of them.

It’s also evident in our universities. There, tenured academics elaborate and promote this Nihilistic agenda, while leaving its practical political implementation to the contemporary versions of the Hitler Youth and the Red Guards who dominate the streets.

Ominously, Nihilism has also infected many of our leaders, who fail vigorously to denounce this iconoclastic onslaught. Judged by their silence, the political class, academia, the media, and key social and cultural institutions are complicit in this ‘cancellation’ of our society. They may be motivated by some combination of cowardice, ignorance, ideology, and opportunism, or they may even have capitulated to the cancel culture and agree that both they and our society do indeed lack all legitimacy and should be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Certainly, too many seem only too eager to concede the Nihilist case, with many getting down on their knees, or crawling off to make grovelling apologies over a never-ending stream of alleged wrongs, auditing the historical monuments of our cities to identify those that might conceivably cause ‘offence’, conniving with the police and justice system to allow these assaults to proceed with only the minimum of restraint or sanctions, if any, and generally cooperating with the radical blitzkrieg on the fundamental structures of the very society they purport to lead. Tragically, they seem oblivious to the corrosive effect this never-ending campaign of un-answered denigration and self-hatred has on the morale and cohesion of our society.

This is now a vital issue, given the sudden worsening international military situation, spearheaded by blatant Chinese aggression. As Prime Minister Scott Morrison has

pointed out, “our region will not only shape our future ... it is the focus of the dominant global contest of our age.” Moreover, it faces an “almost irreversible strain” that demands a radically revamped defence strategy. (“Australia’s best defence is a good offence as China flexes muscles in region”, *The Australian*, 4/7). Because the military threat now operates in a number of dimensions, the government has directed the defence establishment to develop enhanced capabilities across five areas: air, maritime, land, space, information, and cyber. This involves significantly expanding the foundations of Australia’s defence structure, funded by a total estimated expenditure over the next decade of \$575 billion, including \$270 billion on new hardware.

To drive home the nature and scale of the threat, Morrison has repeatedly invoked the situation in Europe in the early 1930s. Then, two earlier totalitarian regimes, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, were making clear their ambitions for world domination and were preparing for war, while the world’s democracies were struggling with the Great Depression and committed to appeasement. As the Prime Minister said: “The 1930s is something I have been revisiting on a very regular basis, and when you connect both the economic challenge and the global uncertainty it can be very haunting.”

Very haunting indeed, but what Morrison did not explicitly address were the powerful cultural and ideological forces that were at the centre of this earlier explosive situation as it built up. The most active were the extremists of left and right: the communist and the fascists, and their sympathizers. All of these fed off the pervasive Nihilism of that dreadful era, as Hermann Rauschning pointed out in *The Revolution of Nihilism* (1938). The least prominent were the moderates at the centre, and this was because the legitimacy of Liberal Democracy had been undermined by the catastrophe of the Great War, the misery of the Great Depression and, above all, by a propaganda onslaught led by the Comintern and its innumerable fellow-travellers amongst the political, intellectual, and cultural elites in the Western democracies. With very few exceptions (e.g., Churchill) all of these had fallen victim to the Nihilistic evaluation of Liberal Democracy and worked frantically to reinforce the air of cultural despair and defeatism.

This then is the diabolical situation Australia faces. On one hand we have the increasingly ominous external military threat represented by Chinese imperialism augmented by their ownership and control of key corporate, academic and infrastructural elements within the commanding heights of our society. On the other hand we have the omnipresent internal threat of intellectual and cultural Nihilism, which is being exploited and coordinated as a political force by this Fifth Column in the interests of our external enemy.

Their aim is to trap our society in a pincer movement, assailed by external and internal forces, in which we will soon be thrashing about pathetically, rendered impotent by self-doubt and self-hatred, as our sovereignty is stripped away and we are reduced to a cowed and subordinate status, much as the CCP is seeking to do in Hong Kong.

And so, if the government can find \$575 billion to spend on defence, then surely it can

apply some significant resources to winning the cultural battle. Otherwise, it seems that Lee Kuan Yew's prophecy that Australians would become the 'poor white trash of Asia' will come true.

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