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in 1863, one-fifth of the people did not even speak French. With the ruthlessness of B-movie villains, though employing civilized weapons (schools, roads, savings banks), Republican governments moved to colonize the minds and life of a peasantry for which ancestral tradition soon ceased to be the only rational option.

It is a pity that neither of these fine books has adequate maps.

—Joaquín Romero-Maura

**THE FILE ON THE TSAR:**  
**The Fate of the Romanovs**  
—Dramatic New Evidence  
By Anthony Summers and  
Tom Mangold  
Harper, 1976, 416 pp. \$12.50  
L of C 75-25050  
ISBN 0-06-012807-0

Two British journalists have unearthed evidence that only Nicholas II and his son Aleksei were shot in July 1918 by the Bolsheviks in Ekaterinburg: The Czarina, Alexandra, and her four daughters were seen as late as December in Perm, 200 miles away; George V and Lloyd George refused them asylum in England; pressure from Kaiser Wilhelm kept the women alive until after Germany's defeat; a German diplomat predicted that the Bolsheviks would fake a massacre; in 1919 White Russian investigators ignored pertinent testimony in order to create martyrs; today's forensic experts question evidence of a massacre. The author's credible spade-work and judicious conclusions make *File* a good read for historical detectives, amateur and professional.

—Robert C. Williams

**PLAGUES AND PEOPLES**  
By William H. McNeill  
Anchor Press/Doubleday,  
1976  
369 pp. \$10  
L of C 76-2798  
ISBN 0-385-11256-4

Historical writing usually assumes good public health, almost always mistakenly so. This work stands apart. Taking world history as his preserve, McNeill gives us a book that bristles with linkages between the devastations of plagues and the development of political and social elites; between disease and the decline of Rome, the structure of society in India, settlement patterns in China. World history is the story of communication, including the spreading of contagion among civilizations. Exchanges of microorganisms and parasites, McNeill shows, have gradually converted the isolated disease pools of antiquity into one interlocking world pattern.

—F. Gregory Campbell