

THE DECLINE OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA

1855—1914

Hugh Seton-Watson

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION



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of Imperial Russia
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by

HUGH SETON-WATSON

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Drawn by Denys R. Baker

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INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this work is to describe and explain the stages of the Decline of the Russian Empire between the Crimean War and the First World War. The Empire's Fall, in revolution and civil war, lies outside its scope, though reference is made to it in the Epilogue. The Fall forms the subject of a vast literature of unequal merit in Russia, Europe and America: the Decline has received far less attention. There are excellent studies of special aspects, but few attempts to survey the whole half-century from the emancipation of the serfs to the catastrophe of 1914. The complexity of the issues, and the varying quality of the sources, forbid the historian to set himself too high an aim. I have tried to pursue accuracy and clarity rather than literary effect. If this work is of practical use to any who wish to understand the background of contemporary Russia it will have served a purpose.

Though Russian history is little known in Europe, there is no subject on which European writers, informed or less informed, are more willing to theorise. From the numerous enthusiastic champions of the various ready-made theories I can expect little patience. There are the various theories about the Slav soul, Dostoevski, the mystics and the noble mujik; and the Polish theories about the inward wickedness and "differentness" of all Russians, which only Poles are able to understand. There are numerous variations on the themes of a happy country of happy people destroyed by the wicked Bolsheviks, or of a vast torture-chamber from which the oppressed people was liberated—if a little roughly—by the glorious—or at least "progressive"—Bolsheviks. There is the version put forward by the infallible author(s) of the *Short History of the CPSU(b)*. Then there are the familiar theories about Russia's role within Europe. To some she is the generous protector and liberator of the poor little oppressed Slav peoples; to others the noble defender of Europe against the Germanic hordes; to others again the impious enemy of the noble Germanic defenders of Europe. This does not exhaust the list. Most of the ready-made theories contain bits—in most cases small bits—of truth. I hope that these bits are to be found within my account, but I am unable

to support any of these theories, and both unable and unwilling to produce a rival of my own. This does not mean any general objection to theory as such, or a belief that history should be a mere list of "facts". On the contrary, theoretical analysis and generalisations are an essential part of the historian's task, and in few periods more than in the last decades of Imperial Russia. But I do not see the need for an all-embracing dogmatic explanation or for a quasi-scientific "system". That Russian history in this period is too little known is due to the difficulty of access to material, not to the need for any mysterious key for its understanding.

Most students of history have special interests within their period or subject. It may be well to state my own. Russia first interested me as a great country which in certain respects resembled, and always greatly influenced, the small countries of Eastern Europe, with which I have had some acquaintance during the last decade. Secondly, Russia interested me as a country with a revolutionary tradition of its own, which in recent times has produced the world Communist movement that to-day has made an impact on most countries of the world. Thirdly Imperial Russia, the country within which Leninism was born, provides the first example of a phenomenon which has since repeated itself elsewhere—the impact of western ideas and western economy on a backward social and political structure. The rise of an intelligentsia in rebellion against society and state, and the formation from its ranks of sects of professional revolutionaries, are less specifically Russian phenomena than historians of Russia have considered them. Of these three aspects of Russia it was the first that drew me to the study of the period, but it is the second and third that have most interested me during my work. It is the third aspect whose further study seems to me to offer the most valuable lessons for our own time.

The period falls into three sections—the reign of Alexander II (1855–81), the period of reaction (1881–1905) and the "Revolution" of 1905 and its aftermath (1905–14). Of these three the first has received more and better treatment in Western Europe than the other two. Because it is relatively well known, I have here devoted relatively less space to it. In particular, the sixties, a period of development of political ideas, have received less attention than the seventies, a period of revolutionary action. This is partly because the ideas of the sixties are in some sense a culmination of an earlier period, which cannot be treated within the limits of this

work, and partly because in general this work is concerned more with action than with ideas. The second and third periods have been neglected by Western, and even by Russian, writers, with the exception of the important but restricted field of Leninist scholastics. The nine years from 1905 to 1914 are as full of important trends and events as the two preceding periods of twenty-four and twenty-six years.

The subject also falls into three sections, which may be called the structure of state and society, political movements and foreign relations. The book is therefore divided into three Parts which correspond to the three periods, and each Part into three chapters which correspond approximately to the three subdivisions of subject. Each Part has a chapter on foreign relations. Within each Part also the balance between the other two sections of the subject—structure of state and society and political movements—has been as far as possible preserved, though this may not at first sight be obvious owing to the different forms which these took within the three chronological periods. Thus in Part I the division is between the basic structure on the accession of Alexander and the reforms which he introduced; in Part II between economic and political development; in Part III between the forces set in motion in 1905–6 and the attempt made to repress and to canalise these forces after 1907. As the chronological subdivisions do not in all cases correspond to the subdivisions by subject, and as some important problems belong to more than one of the subdivisions, there has inevitably been some overlapping between the Parts. This is especially the case in foreign relations, somewhat less so in economic affairs. The following are the main examples. The section in Part I on Russian expansion in Asia is brought down to 1885 though Part I in general ends in 1881. The development of agriculture and industry after 1861 are discussed in Part II, though in general Part II begins with the reign of Alexander III. The brief discussions of the Church and of the armed forces in Part I are there taken down to the end of the century, and these questions are not again mentioned until after 1905. The Polish Question is treated in Parts I and II as a matter of foreign policy, in Part III mainly as a matter of internal policy, in the sections on The Nationalities in and after 1905. The Ukrainian problem is treated in the same manner, owing to its close relationship with the Polish. It is hoped that the reader will be helped rather than hindered by this arrangement. The special Subjects Index should also facilitate his task.

It may be well to state here which aspects of Russian development in the period are stressed, and which are underemphasised or omitted. A work of these dimensions cannot describe everything, and it should help the prospective reader to know what he can and cannot expect.

In the sections on "structure of state and society", little attention has been given to personalities. This is partly because relatively more is known to the British reading public of Russian personalities (for instance, Alexander II or Witte or Lenin), than of the problems with which they were connected, and partly because for several outstanding personalities (for instance, Dmitri Tolstoy or Stolypin) very little material is available. Nevertheless I have tried to indicate the part played by personalities at decisive moments in the period.

An important part of these sections concerns economic development. It is a curious phenomenon that at a time when the self-styled prophets of Marxism show by word and by deed that for them political factors have absolute priority over economic, a kind of quasi-Marxist snobbery should be prevalent among non-Marxists and even anti-Marxists in the West. In such circles it is considered almost indecent not to pay lip service to an imagined universal primacy of economic over political factors. During the period of Russian history under review, discussion as to whether the causes of events were principally political or economic has as much value as a discussion as to whether the egg preceded the hen or the hen the egg. That economic changes of great importance took place in Russia at this time cannot be denied. I have tried to put these changes in their historical perspective. My approach to them is of course not that of the specialised economic historian, still less of the economic analyst. I have attempted only to show the general economic background and to discuss certain economic controversies that were vital issues of Russian social and political life. In agriculture the main points are the legal position of the peasantry, the distribution of land, the problems of overpopulation and subsidiary employment, and the standard of living. In the other sectors of the economy they are the growth of the main industries, foreign trade and tariff policy, taxation, the rise of business and working classes and their relations with each other and with the government.

Another essential part of the same section is the question of nationalities. Russia was as much a multi-national empire as was Austria-Hungary. This has not been adequately appreciated in

the West, partly because the nations concerned live still further from our shores than do those once ruled by the Habsburgs, and partly because the collapse of the Russian Empire proved in the end less complete than that of Austria-Hungary. This in turn is due principally to the fact that the Russians, though forming less than half the population of the Empire, still dominated the other nations, numerically or culturally or in both respects, more thoroughly than did the German Austrians and Hungarians their Slav or Roumanian subjects. Russian history is usually written as the history of the Russian 44 per cent of the Empire's population. On the other hand writers belonging to one of the nationalities tend to exaggerate their own people's importance and to underrate the Russians. I shall satisfy neither. The limits both of space and of accessible material have prevented as complete a survey as the subject deserves. An attempt has however been made to present the main features of the political and social development of Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, Jews, Balts, Caucasians and Tatars, besides occasional reference to the peoples of Central Asia and the Russian Far East.

The political movements are not considered from the special point of view of the historian of ideas, still less of the political philosopher. I have tried to summarise the ideas of the sixties sufficiently to explain the events of the seventies and later decades. This has made it necessary to dismiss in a few words such a great figure as Herzen, who belongs, I think, essentially to the period preceding the Emancipation. Unsatisfactory though this is, there seemed no other way, within the limits that I have had to impose on myself, of presenting the political development of the last decades of Imperial Russia. This work is also no place for an analysis of the basic ideas of Marx. It is assumed that the reader either has some elementary knowledge of these, or will seek it in one of the many works explaining them, or best of all in the works of Marx himself. Leninism however consists essentially of theory about revolutionary tactics. Leninist doctrines are therefore to some extent analysed, in connection with specific historical events and problems. But it is important to remember that Lenin's greatest successes were achieved after the end of the period here described. This book is not primarily intended to be a study of Lenin. It is a study of a period of Russian history, towards the end of which Lenin played an important but not yet a dominant role. It is also necessary to warn the reader that the limits of space have prevented detailed treatment of all the subtleties of revolutionary controversy.

The complex combination of serious theoretical argument, crude personal insult and ingenious intrigue which characterised the disputes between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks and between different factions even within these two factions require one or more large volumes to themselves. All that has here been attempted is to show the most important causes of the split, and to trace the growth of the most important differences of doctrine which emerged from it. The pious scholiasts of the Marxist faith will be duly disgusted but it is hoped that the infidel reader will be able to find his way and will not be grossly misled. Another problem of revolutionary doctrine, so complex as to defy an attempt at brief treatment, is the question to what extent the Populists and Socialist Revolutionaries considered it possible for Russia to bypass capitalism. The usual generalisations on this subject are not sufficient. I have tried, in the text and in footnotes, to give a picture that is not too misleading. I am by no means satisfied that I have succeeded.

Still more serious, but intentional, is the absence of any survey of Russian literature during the period. During the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855) literature and literary criticism were the only means by which political ideas could be expressed inside Russia. In the period with which this work deals, this was no longer the case. Nevertheless political discussion still largely took the form of discussion about the characters of the great—and not only the great—works of literature; writers continued to have political influence; and the obsession of most writers with “social issues” had a far-reaching influence on the attitude of the intelligentsia as a whole. Yet it is clear to me that this work is no place to summarise the achievement of Russian nineteenth-century literature. The great writers must speak for themselves. Readers of this work who feel a deeper interest in Russia must go to the great writers for enlightenment. They may also more quickly acquaint themselves with the broad issues raised in literature by reading one or more of the numerous histories of Russian literature.

In the sections devoted to foreign relations I have tried to deal with Russian foreign policy rather than with the details of diplomacy. These sections are of course based on considerable study of diplomatic documents and of the work of diplomatic historians. But as the diplomatic negotiations of this period have been fairly thoroughly studied elsewhere there seemed to be no advantage in describing them once again. The exceptions are a few cases in which I have referred mainly to Russian documents which are somewhat less well known to western readers. Such are the

Björkö treaty of 1905, the French loan to Russia of 1906 and the Russian attitude to the formation of the Balkan alliances in 1911-12. Some space has also been devoted to the negotiations preceding the Franco-Russian Alliance and the Russo-Japanese War. These negotiations are of course very well known to historians, but they are of such importance that they cannot be hastily passed over even in a general survey such as this. In general the emphasis in this work is on the substance of the various international disputes rather than on the manner in which they were treated. In some cases an account of the substance has required a brief explanation of the internal political background in countries other than Russia (Austria-Hungary and the Balkan States). Though this exceeds the limits of Russian history in the narrow sense, it should help rather than confuse the reader.

The western historian of Russia is inevitably dissatisfied with his sources. My own circumstances have confined me to those which can be found in this country, and these I have by no means exhausted. I am well aware of the handicap of having never visited Russia. My generation has been deprived of the opportunities enjoyed by that of the late Sir Bernard Pares, the founder of Russian historical studies in Britain. The feel of the plains and forests and cities of Russia, the personal experience of Russian hospitality and friendship, hostility and obstruction, are absent from my pages. The few contacts that I have had with Russians, and the glimpses that I have had of them at work in other lands, are an insufficient substitute. I can only hope that the detachment of an outsider may have compensating advantages.

Certain subjects within the period have already been thoroughly studied by western writers, to pursue whose footsteps would be almost impertinent, and would in most cases be made impossible by the inaccessibility of the sources. For my sections on agriculture I have relied principally on the masterly work of Professor G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime*. For the diplomacy of 1875-8 and the various influences on Russian foreign policy at that time I have relied principally on the late B. H. Sumner's no less masterly work *Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880*.

The problem of spelling defies satisfactory solution. I have followed the usual practice with Russian names, with a few minor exceptions. The Russian aspirate, usually rendered "kh"—which is meaningless to British readers—I have written throughout as "h"—which is near enough to the Russian sound.¹ Thus, Harkov

¹ Exceptions are the Asiatic words Khan, Bokhara and Khiva and the Austrian name Khevenhüller, all of which are so written in Latin alphabet, and are not due to transliteration from Cyrillic.

not Kharkov. Family names ending in "iy", which in the West are sometimes rendered with the ending "y" and sometimes "i", are here throughout spelt "i". Thus, Chernyshevski and Trotski. In reproducing Russian phrases or book titles, in cases where "e" is pronounced "yo" or "g" is pronounced "v", they are so spelt. Polish, Czech, Serbo-Croatian, Roumanian and Turkish names are written in the slightly modified Latin spelling used in those languages. In the spelling of Swedish and Finnish names the only unfamiliar letter is "ä", which is pronounced approximately as a long "o" in German.

Dates of the month are complicated by the prevalence in Russia until the Revolution of the Julian calendar, as opposed to the Gregorian calendar of Europe. In the chapters on internal policy I have throughout given both dates—e.g. 19th February/4th March 1861. In the chapters on foreign relations, where events occur which are frequently referred to in non-Russian works of diplomatic history, to which the reader may wish to refer or with which he may already be familiar, I have given only the European (Gregorian) dates.

I must acknowledge my great debt to the late Warden of All Souls, Mr. B. H. Sumner. He encouraged me in my work from an early stage, advised me on sources, lent me books, and read the greater part of the MS. No less great has been my debt to Mr. I. Berlin, Fellow of New College, whose vast knowledge of the intellectual life of Russia has been of immense help to me. I have to thank him for many suggestions and for many kinds of help, including the reading of the whole MS. He is of course not responsible for my opinions. Finally I must thank my wife for help of all kinds at all stages of the enterprise.

Oxford,
April 1952.

PART ONE

THE TSAR LIBERATOR 1855-1881

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND

The Country and the People

THE name Russia at once calls to mind the notion of vastness. It is a land of long broad rivers, of deep dark forests, of sultry heat and extreme cold, of limitless plains. From central Russia the flat land spreads out towards the four points of the compass. Far to the north are the Arctic ices, far to the south the great mountain ranges and the closed sea. To the east the land rolls on, barely broken by the low-lying Urals, until it reaches the Pacific, separated at its northern corner by only seventy miles from America. To the west it rolls into Europe, and meets no important physical barrier before the shores of the Channel.

The most important natural division within European Russia is between the forest and the steppe. In the extreme north is the tundra. From the Arctic Circle until about latitude 57° N. stretch forests of pine and birch. South of this comes the zone of mixed forests, which includes oak and ash as well as conifers. It is a triangular area with its apex in the east near Kazan and stretching in the west roughly between Kiev and St. Petersburg.¹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century a large part of this area was of course under cultivation. To the south of the mixed forest zone comes a transitional region known as the woodland-steppe belt. The northern boundary of the steppe proper corresponds approximately to a line drawn from Kiev through Orel to Kazan. The greater part of the region between this line, the Black Sea and the Caucasus consists of rich agricultural soil, the famous black earth. The exceptions are the Crimean peninsula and the north coast of the Sea of Azov. Further east, the Caspian Sea is surrounded by a belt, some hundred miles broad, of poor pasture land and salt marshes.

¹ For a convenient recent description of the geography of Russia, see Jorre, *The Soviet Union* (Longmans, 1950). There is an excellent brief account in Sumner, *Survey of Russian History* (London, 1947), 2nd edition, chapter 1.

East of the Ural river the steppe continues into Siberia. To its south are deserts, and beyond them the fertile valleys of Oxus and Jaxartes and the mountain roof of Asia.

Already in the Middle Ages the furs of the northern forests were a source of wealth. They formed an important part of the trade of the Hansa cities.¹ Timber was exported to Britain from the eighteenth century. The typical cereal crop of the northern and central provinces in the middle of the nineteenth century was rye, of the black earth region wheat and maize. The south-western provinces specialised in sugar beet. Central Asia was well suited for cotton. By 1850 the mineral wealth of Russia was beginning to be known. The iron ore of the Urals had been exploited on a small scale since the seventeenth century. The iron of Krivoi Rog, the coal of the Donets basin and the petrol of the Caucasus were discoveries of the nineteenth.

The first Russian state in history was based on the rivers flowing into the Black Sea.² Its centre was Kiev, its culture largely Byzantine. It traded with Constantinople, the Moslem world, Central Europe and Scandinavia. In the twelfth century Kiev lost its supremacy, and became no more than the first among several Russian principalities which stretched to the upper Volga and the Dvina. The quarrels between the principalities, and the raids of various nomad races from the east, weakened Russia. In the thirteenth century came complete disaster when the Tatar hosts of Djingiz Khan and his successors overran the country and poured westwards into Europe.

When after a few years the flood receded, little was left of the old Russia. In the south-west, the Dnieper region, with Kiev itself, was conquered by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which in 1386 became united with the Kingdom of Poland. In the north-west the city of Novgorod, while paying tribute to the Tatars, became a powerful and prosperous community, growing rich on the Baltic trade and successfully resisting the attacks of the Swedish conquerors of Finland and the German conquerors of Esthonia. The Tatar state, known as the Golden Horde, had its centre at Sarai on the lower Volga and controlled the steppes and the Black Sea coast

¹ This subject is fully treated by Goetz, *Deutsch-russische Handelsgeschichte des Mittelalters* (Lubeck, 1922).

² For the general course of Russian history, the classic Russian work is V. O. Klyuchevsky, *Kurs russkoy istorii* (5 volumes), of which there is an English translation. S. F. Platonov, *History of Russia* (English translation, New York, 1925), is also an excellent work. Among foreign authors the outstanding works are Stählin, *Geschichte Russlands* (Berlin, 1939), 4 volumes; Milyukov, Seignobos and Eisenmann, *Histoire de Russie* (Paris, 1933), 3 volumes, and Sumner, *op. cit.*

as far west as the Dniester. The central Russian principalities remained as tributaries of the Horde. During the fourteenth century Moscow became the most important of them. It owed much to its geographical position, situated between the upper courses of the Volga and Oka, and not far from the sources of the Dvina and Dnieper. It owed something also to the cunning of its princes, who made themselves the trusted servants of the Tatar Khan by collecting his taxes from their neighbours.

At the end of the fourteenth century Moscow was strong enough to withstand the Tatars in battle, and in 1480 its ruler Ivan III finally repudiated any form of subordination to the Tatars. His grandson Ivan IV, "The Terrible" (1533-84), began the task of conquering the steppe. In 1552 he captured Kazan, and in 1556 Astrahan. Though the population of the Volga valley continued to consist largely of Tatars and other Asiatic races, it has been a part of Russia since then. At the end of the century Russian expansion beyond the Urals began. There was some resistance from the Tatars and Bashkirs of the steppes, but little from the primitive tribes of the forests. The demand for furs was an incentive to pioneers, and by the seventeenth century Russian weapons were greatly superior to those of the people whom they met. By the middle of the seventeenth century Russians had reached the Pacific. In the valley of the Amur river they met the organised power of the Chinese Empire, with which at last a frontier was settled by the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689.

Expansion towards the north-west also began in the fifteenth century. Ivan III subdued Novgorod in 1478. Ivan the Terrible began the long series of wars with Poland for the possession of the Baltic coast. At the end of his reign Muscovy had failed: Livonia was held by the Poles, Esthonia by the Swedes. Civil war early in the next century nearly led to the disintegration of Muscovy. But as Russia recovered, Poland declined. The chief rival to Russia in the north-west was now Sweden. The defeat of Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700-21) gave Russia the Baltic coast as far west as Riga, and enabled Peter the Great (1689-1725) to build his new capital at St. Petersburg.

Kiev was recovered from Poland in 1667, and from the middle of the seventeenth century the Cossacks¹ east of the Dnieper had for the most part recognised the authority of the Tsar. After the Great Northern War the Tsar's rule extended approximately to a line drawn between the Dnieper and the Donets rivers at the point where

¹ See below, pp. 32-3.

they are nearest to each other. It was Catherine II (1763-96) who brought under Russian rule the land lying between this line and the Black Sea. The last free Cossacks were subdued by 1775, the Crimea conquered from the Tatars in 1783, and the coast between Dnieper and Dniester taken from the Ottoman Empire in 1792. It was on this piece of coast that was founded in 1794 Odessa, which in the nineteenth century became the principal grain port of the empire. In 1812 the acquisition of Bessarabia brought Russia to the mouth of the Danube. In the west the First Partition of Poland (1772) added a strip of White Russia up to the Dvina and down both sides of the upper Dnieper, while the Second Partition (1793) brought a broad belt from the Dvina to Podolia.

The lands described above were for the most part inhabited either by Russians (including White Russians and Ukrainians) or by minor nationalities, or else were thinly populated and had no organised state authority. But from the end of the eighteenth century Russia began to take territory that was in no way Russian, and had belonged to well-established states. The third partition of Poland (1795) gave her some purely Polish areas, and by the peace settlement of 1815 she acquired the greater part of ethnic Poland.¹ In 1809 Finland, which had been for 600 years a part of Sweden, was united by personal union with Russia. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century Transcaucasia, including Armenia and Georgia, lands of ancient civilisation, were annexed, and both Turkey and Persia were obliged to recognise the conquest.

Russia's advance to the south, and the decline of Turkish power, caused the Russian leaders to take a growing interest in the western coast of the Black Sea, the mouth of the Danube and the Balkan peninsula. These lands were the home of peoples akin to the Russians in religion or language, or both, and formed the hinterland to the Straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the back door to Russia. The problems of these lands will take much space in the following pages. Here it suffices to say that our period opens with a Russian reverse. From 1854 to 1856 Russia was at war with Britain, France and Turkey. In June 1854 the two Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were occupied by Austrian troops, which thus prevented the Western Powers and Russia from fighting each other in European Turkey. Instead the war was fought in the Crimea. The Russian defence of Sevastopol was both brave and able, but the Western Powers dominated the Black Sea with their fleets. The war showed the Russians some of the weaknesses

¹ See map facing p. 74.

of their political and economic organisation, and also increased their appreciation of the importance of the Straits. The war was concluded by the Congress of Paris of February–March 1856. Russia ceded a portion of Bessarabia to the principality of Moldavia—which three years later became united with Wallachia to form Roumania—but otherwise lost no territory. The Sultan of Turkey undertook to close the Straits to warships in either direction in time of war. The navigation of the Danube was placed under international control. The Black Sea was neutralised, and no Power was to have a navy in it.

Russia emerged from the Crimean War internally weakened and with her international prestige diminished. But none of the essential factors and resources on which her greatness as a state depended had been affected.

Social Classes

Russia in the middle of the nineteenth century was an overwhelmingly agricultural country. The peasants formed more than three-quarters of its total population of about sixty million. Almost all of them lived in personal bondage, or serfdom.¹

The serfs were divided into two main categories, State peasants and landowners' peasants. The State peasants were those who lived on lands owned by the State. There were rather less than twenty million of them, including their families. The landowners' peasants lived on private estates belonging to the hereditary nobility. They numbered rather more than twenty million. In addition to these two main groups about ten million more people lived on the land. Some belonged to various minor categories of serfs, and some were free peasant smallholders.

Thus the State owned the land on which lived two-fifths of the peasant population. The State lands were much bigger in the north, including the sparsely populated forest areas, than in the south. In some parts of Russia, the properties of the State and of noble landlords were closely intermingled. In the Urals the State also owned mines and metallurgical works which employed serf labour.

In 1850 there were about 250,000 serf-owning noble landlords in

¹ Far the best work available in English on the land question is G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime* (Macmillan, 1932). A short popular treatment is Sir John Maynard, *The Russian Peasant* (Gollancz, 1942). An important Russian work is P. Maslov, *Agrarny vopros v Rossii* (SPB, 1908). The period before the reforms is covered by V. Semevski, *Krestyanskii vopros v Rossii vo vtoroy polovine XVIII i pervoy polovine XIX veka* (SPB, 1888).

Russia. More than half of these owned less than ten male serfs each. More than four-fifths of the total number of landlords' serfs however belonged to landlords who owned more than a hundred each. Some of these great landlords owned many thousands of serfs.

Government and society in Russia were founded on the three factors of Crown, nobility and serfs. In practice the Crown denied the nobility any independent political power, but gave them a fairly free hand in dealing with the serfs. The ambition of the Tsars was completely to subject the nobility to themselves. Some were more successful than others. Peter the Great, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, created a hierarchy of state service, which became more important than the hierarchy of birth. The nobles were obliged to serve the State either as soldiers or as civil officials. In return, Peter recognised the full hereditary rights of the nobles over the land they held, which had been limited in the past by certain traditional restrictions. But in 1762 Peter III made the nobles free to choose whether they would enter the state service except in special national emergency, but maintained their power over their serfs.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, part of the land of the village was cultivated by the serfs for their own use, and part was directly managed by the landowner, or by the local administrator of State property. For the land which they used, the serfs were obliged to pay the owner (private or State) in cash or in labour. Cash payments were called *obrok*, and payment in labour *barshchina*. When paying in labour the serfs in some cases brought their own draught animals and tools to work on the landlord's estate: in other cases they provided only the labour of their hands, while the landowner supplied the means of production.

The serfs had their own social organisation, the village commune (*obshchina*), an institution whose origins derive at least from the sixteenth century, before the system of serfdom was fully developed.¹

It was the village commune that decided what crops were to be grown on the lands used by the serfs, and all members were bound by its rules on the rotation of crops. From time to time the commune redistributed land between serf households, in accordance with their needs, when the number of mouths in some families had grown and in others had diminished. The commune was responsible for the payment of poll-tax by its members. It also issued

¹ The origins of the commune are a subject of controversy among historians of the pre-Petrine period. For a brief discussion, see Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

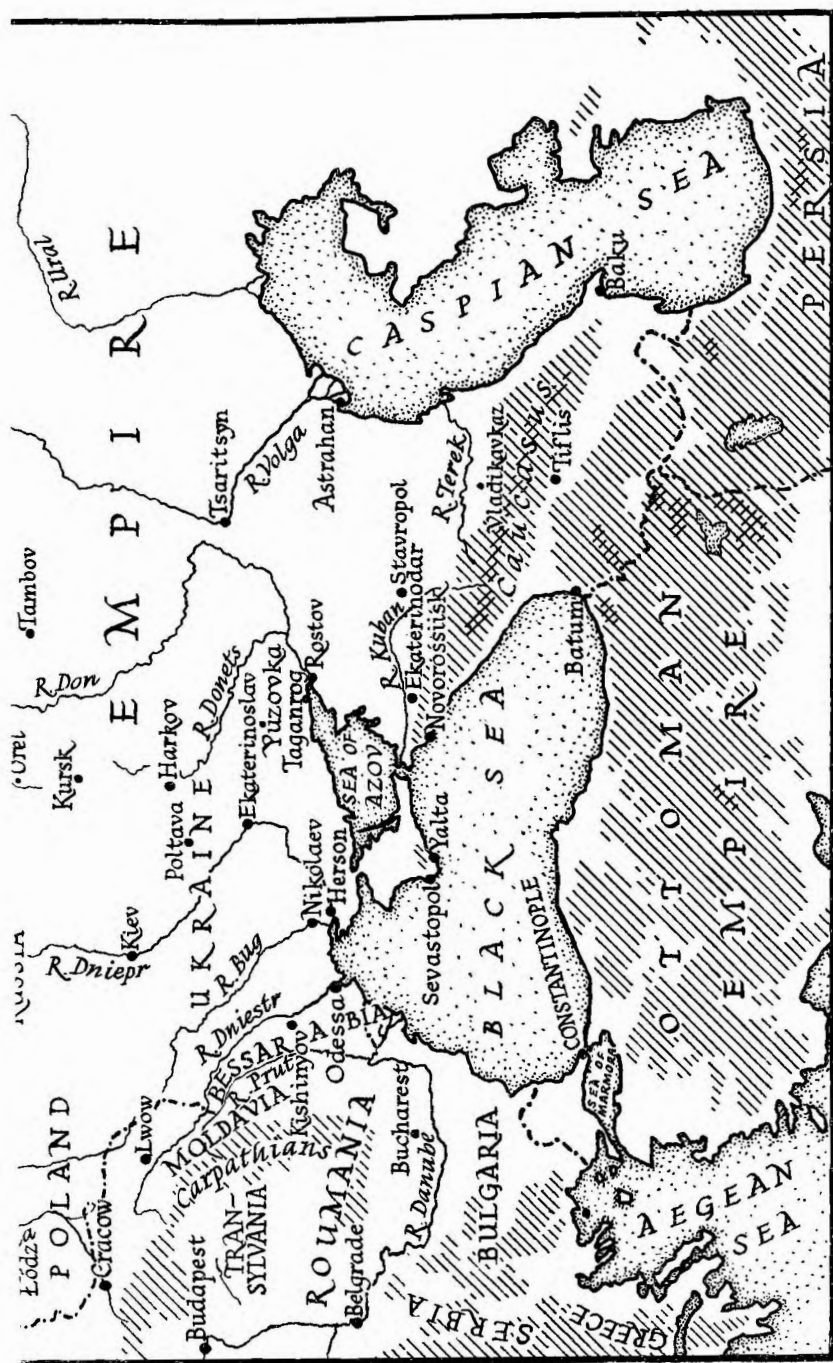
passports, which were needed in order to obtain employment outside the commune's territory. These were only granted if the local landlord agreed.

From the government's point of view, the task of the landlord was to make sure that the peasants paid their taxes and provided recruits for the army. In order that they should perform these two important functions, they had large powers. The landlord could interfere in the redistribution of land between households by the commune, and could increase or reduce the amount of land allotted to a village or to an individual householder. He could confiscate a peasant's movable goods. He could restrict the right of one of his serfs to make a contract with any person living beyond the boundaries of his own estate—for instance, to earn wages by working for such a person, or borrow money, or rent land. Up till the first years of the nineteenth century, he could command or prevent a marriage, sell a serf to another landlord, with or without land, and with or without other members of the serf's family. The *barshchina* at this time was usually three days' labour every week on the landlord's estate, but was sometimes four or five. In periods of labour shortage a serf might be compelled to work continuously for the landlord while his own plot was neglected. The landlord's judicial powers were not clearly defined, but covered most offences other than brigandage and murder. He could impose sentences of flogging and of forced labour in Siberia. The landlord's most important obligations were to feed his serfs in famine and to give them seed in case of crop failure. There was also a general obligation "not to ruin them or deal cruelly with them." In practice these safeguards were far from effective.

State serfs in most cases paid an *obrok* rather than a *barshchina*. Its amount was usually lower than that paid by landlords' serfs, but it increased towards the end of the eighteenth century.¹

Under Tsar Nicholas I (1825–55) some important reforms were carried out. In 1837 was created a Ministry of State Domains. It was entrusted to General Kiselev, an enlightened man who had the Tsar's personal confidence. In the following year a new system of administration was created. A "Chamber of State Property" was set up in each province, with district and canton authorities under it, to protect the interests of the peasants. State peasants were freed from personal serfdom, and declared to be free citizens in occupation of State land. The State began to buy land from private landlords for the use of the peasants, and made the first steps towards the

¹ Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 29.



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organisation of credit and of protection from fire and disease. By 1842 this system had been extended to State properties in all the provinces of European Russia.

Kiselev also attempted to improve the lot of the landlords' serfs. But a Committee appointed by the Tsar to examine the question, in which the landlords were strongly represented, could not reach agreement. It whittled down Kiselev's proposals, and finally made even these dependent on voluntary agreement between landlord and serf. When the Decree was published, it was at once followed by a circular from the Minister of the Interior addressed to provincial authorities. This emphasised that there was absolutely no obligation on a landlord to make any contract with his serfs. Consequently Kiselev's plans were not carried out. Serfdom remained in force on the private estates. A few concrete improvements were, however, made. For instance, in 1841 it was forbidden to sell serfs without the whole of their families, and in 1848 serfs were allowed, with their landlords' approval, to acquire immovable property. The categories of persons to whom serfs might be sold were also limited by several decrees.

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The town population of Russia was small at the beginning of our period, but it had been growing rapidly for some time past. In 1724 there were 328,000 people in the towns, in 1796 1,300,000 and in 1851 3,480,000.¹

The demand for manufactured goods in the old Russia was not large, and was of two kinds. The peasants needed coarse cloth and various metal and wooden tools. The government needed arms for its troops and cloth for their uniforms. The demand of the upper class for luxury goods was satisfied by imports from abroad. Peasant needs were supplied by craft industry. Especially in central and northern Russia, where the soil was not rich and the winter nights were long, many peasants made a large part of their living by making cloth, sacking, nails, buckets or other household objects in their own homes and selling them to merchants, who disposed of them over a wide area. In this way some measure of regional specialisation was achieved, certain districts producing their special product for the greater part of the country. The needs of the government could not, however, be supplied in this manner. Peter the Great was the first Tsar who deliberately encouraged the

¹ P. Milyukov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoy kultury* (5th edition, SPB, 1904), Vol. I, p. 82.

creation of large factories. These were for the most part entrusted to members of the merchant class, which had been of some importance in Moscow at least since the sixteenth century. Others were directly founded by the government. The factory owners received various monopolistic privileges. They were also allowed to employ serfs from the lands of the State or the nobility. This was fiercely resented by the nobility, which regarded it as a breach of its own rights. During the eighteenth century the factory owners met with much criticism both from the nobles and from the lesser merchants, who envied the wealth of their more fortunate fellows. Members of the nobility themselves founded factories on their estates, and could of course freely employ their own serfs in them. The nobles also defended the rights of the peasant craftsmen, if only because they themselves received in feudal money dues a share of their earnings. Whereas Peter had definitely backed the factory owners, Catherine II inclined rather to the nobility. But competition between factories and crafts was not bitter, as they supplied different types of consumer.¹

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were three types of factory in Russia. The "possession factories" were those based on the special privileges mentioned. The State had certain rights—which it seldom exercised—to interfere in their management. Their labour force was assigned not to the individual owner but to the factory.² Secondly, there were the noble factories, employing nobles' serfs. Third, there were factories employing free wage labour. These gained ground rapidly during the century at the expense of the other types. Wage labour was especially important in the cotton industry, which made great progress in the Moscow region. The industries in which serf labour still predominated were wool, paper and metallurgy. In 1804 the number of workers in factories in Russia was 95,000, of whom 45,000 were free wage earners. At this time 7 per cent of the factory labour force was employed in the cotton industry. In 1825 there were 210,000 workers, of whom 114,000 were wage earners. By 1836 the total number of factory workers had risen to 324,000, of whom 32 per cent were in the cotton industry.³ During these years Western economic theories were becoming known in Russia, and the view, based on both theory and experience, that free labour was more efficient than serf, was winning support. In 1840 a government

¹ M. Tugan-Baranovski, *Geschichte der russischen Fabrik* (Berlin, 1900), pp. 47–62.

² *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, chapter 3.

³ *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 102, 103.

decree provided a procedure by which owners of "possession factories" could voluntarily emancipate their serfs. Under this decree and by the initiative of individual noble factory owners it is estimated that in the last decades before 1861 about half the factory serfs had been emancipated.

The legal position of the town population was regulated by the Charter of Catherine II of 1785. Townsmen were divided into six classes.¹ Municipal councils were created, consisting of a six-member executive board (with one representative of each class) and a larger assembly. Both were elected, under a franchise which strongly favoured the propertied citizens. The councils were in practice completely overawed by the provincial governors. It was not until 1870 that genuine municipal government began in Russia.² Under Catherine II the middle class was divided into separate categories. The merchants were divided between three "guilds", according to their property. The first guild consisted of those who had a capital of more than 10,000 roubles, the second guild of 5,000 to 10,000, and the third guild of 1,000 to 5,000. Those with less than 1,000 roubles capital were reckoned as "lower middle class" (*meshchane*).³ Each category had its specific rights and obligations towards the State. Below the merchants were the artisans enrolled in corporations (*tsehi*). They were free to engage in their trade and were not bound by serfdom.

This legal framework remained in force during the nineteenth century, but soon ceased to correspond to economic realities. The development of capitalism in the industrial centres, and the rise of business and working classes, deprived it of significance long before it ceased nominally to exist.

Emperor and Bureaucracy

The Russian State was, as its official spokesmen proudly repeated, an autocracy. At its head was the absolute Tsar, who owed his position to God alone, and was responsible to none but Him. This concept derives from the Byzantine "autokrator", whose descendant the Tsar felt himself to be. In practice the Tsar's power had varied through the centuries. But Peter the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth, broke the power of the aristocracy and set up a

¹ These were (a) the richest citizens; (b) citizens who owned a house in the city; (c) merchants belonging to a guild; (d) artisans belonging to a corporation; (e) foreigners and visitors from another city; (f) unskilled workers possessing no immovable property in the city. Klyuchevski, *Kurs russkoy istorii*, Vol. V, p. 100.

² See below, p. 51.

³ Klyuchevski, *loc. cit.* The word "meshchane" defies translation. It has something of the sense of "bourgeois" when used with contempt.

centralised machine. Though at the end of the century Catherine II made important concessions to the nobility, there was no question of a challenge to the autocratic power. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was maintained, despite certain liberal inclinations, by Alexander I, and reinforced by Nicholas I.

Ministers were appointed by the Tsar. They were not a cabinet and never acted as a body. There was no Prime Minister. A body called the "Committee of Ministers" was supposed to co-ordinate policy, but in practice played a very small part. Its President was little more than an honorary figure. The individual ministers personally discussed their business with the Tsar, whose confidence was all that mattered to them. The most important ministries in our period were the Interior and Finance. The former was responsible for public order, in its very wide aspects. The latter was not only concerned with State revenue and expenditure, but had close links with the growing business class. It supervised, to some extent even directed, the development of industry and trade, in a sense unknown in Western Europe at this time. Only the Tsar himself was in a position effectively to co-ordinate the policy of the different ministries. As the tasks of government grew more complicated during the nineteenth century, the duties of the Tsar became immensely difficult. Only a man of exceptional political understanding could hope to perform them. When the Tsar had not the necessary qualities, the individual ministries went their own ways, sometimes pursuing contradictory policies. In the reign of Nicholas II this became the normal practice. But the situation could not be remedied without challenging the sacred dogma of the Emperor's autocratic power.

Alexander I had founded in 1810 a body called the Council of State. Its function was to prepare and examine legislation. Its members were appointed by the Tsar from the bureaucracy, and numbered thirty-five to sixty persons. They were not able to initiate legislation but merely produced drafts for the Tsar at his request. He was not obliged to accept their recommendations. He frequently disregarded the views of their majority and associated himself with a minority. The Council was in no sense a legislature. Important measures also often took the form of decrees (*ukazy*) or instructions (*povelenia*), which never came before the Council of State at all.

In 1711 Peter the Great had founded the Governing Senate. It was originally a general supervisory authority. It watched over both the administration and the law courts. Its members were appointed

by the Tsar from senior State officials, very often from the higher aristocracy. The Senate was reorganised by Alexander I a hundred years later, and its administrative and judicial duties were more clearly separated from each other. Under Nicholas I its powers of control over the administration fell into disuse, but it remained important as the supreme court of appeal of the judicial system. This function was exercised by its two Cassation Departments, one for civil and one for criminal cases.

Immediately subordinate to the Tsar was the "Personal Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty". This was divided into Sections, whose number varied from time to time. The most important were the first three. The First Section dealt with the Tsar's personal papers and was a sort of private secretariat. The Second was concerned with the codification of laws. The Third was in charge of political police. Nicholas I concentrated a great deal of the business of State in his Chancellery. Under his successors it lost some of its importance. But the Third Section continued to be powerful until the end of the reign of Alexander II, when it was merged in the Department of Police.¹

The Third Section was created in 1826 by Nicholas I and based on a project of General Benckendorff, who became its first head. In 1836 the two offices of Chief of Gendarmes and Head of the Third Section of the Chancellery, which had previously been united in the person of Benckendorff, were formally fused. By its original statute the Third Section was responsible for obtaining information and taking action in regard to religious sects and schismatics. It dealt with all cases of forgery of money or of documents. It issued instructions relating to persons subjected to police supervision, banishment of suspicious persons, and control of all places where persons guilty of "crimes against the State" were detained. It was responsible for all regulations concerning foreigners resident in Russia. Finally a general clause authorised it to produce "reports on all events".² The Third Section in fact controlled when it so wished all the lower ranks of the ordinary police. The gendarmerie was organised by regions, into which the country was divided—at first five, then eight from 1843 onwards. The gendarmes executed the orders of the Third Section, and it was they who arrested persons guilty of political offences. A special department of the gendarmerie was responsible for the security of the railways.

¹ See below, pp. 71-2.

² The decree which created the Third Section is summarised in M. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie zhendarmy i literatura 1826-55 godov* (SPB, 1909), p. 14.

Provincial governors were instructed, when reporting on matters coming under the headings listed, to address their reports directly to the Third Section.

The duties of the Section's employees were supposed to include the commendation of honest but modest officials in all branches of the administration. They were to ensure that such people received reward from higher authority, and to protect the people from abuses.¹ In practice the Third Section paid less attention to this than to the discovery and uprooting of political offences. Persons guilty of offences could be arrested, tried and condemned by the regular courts to exile or prison. But the Head of the Third Section also had authority to order "administrative arrest" of persons whom he considered dangerous to State security. This power was used in an arbitrary, and often in an incompetent, manner. Sometimes the wrong person would be arrested, and the authorities fail or refuse to investigate the mistake. There was no effective appeal against the system. Its victims were sent to "administrative exile" in distant provinces of European Russia or of Siberia without trial. The distinction between exile and imprisonment is important. Exiled persons did not necessarily suffer great material hardship, at any rate by Russian standards. They were forbidden to leave the place of exile, but within it they could live as they wished. Their families could accompany them, they could meet whom they wished, and they could spend money on food, clothes, lodgings and personal possessions. Very poor persons would of course suffer. But this form of punishment was usually inflicted on members of the educated class, who usually had enough means to ensure a minimum of comfort. They were not prevented from earning money in the place of exile, or acquiring and cultivating plots of land. Life in exile was full of frustration and mental unrest, but it was not a life of acute misery. Those imprisoned in a fortress or a penal settlement had a very different lot. The Russian word for the latter (*katorga*) means "the galleys", and derives from the time when slaves were condemned to the oars. A description of these conditions by an eyewitness, which is also a great piece of literature, is *Notes from the House of the Dead* by Dostoevski. Revolting though the whole system must seem by Western standards, with its waste of human ability and its opportunities for petty tyranny, it is still worth pointing out, when the horrors of the Tsarist regime are used as a justification for later horrors in Russia or elsewhere, that

¹ Instructions by Benckendorff to this effect are quoted in Lemke, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19.

the numbers sent to prison for long terms for political offences were very small by twentieth-century standards.¹

In the local administration, the most important figure was the provincial governor (*Gubernator*), and in the big cities the town commandant (*Gradonachalnik*). These officials were the executors of the decrees of all the central ministries in their province or city, but were especially responsible to the Ministry of Interior. This Ministry through them controlled the ordinary police. Their hierarchy was largely modelled on the Prussian. The chief of police in towns bore the title *Polizeimeister*. In certain frontier regions (Poland, Lithuania, the Caucasus) and in the two capitals, there were governors-general, who had greater powers and easier access to the Tsar than the ordinary provincial governors.

The old Russia was rigidly based on specified classes. Of these the most important was the nobility. Nicholas I had wished to subordinate the nobles completely to the State power, to make them a class of reliable *Polizeimeister*. In this he was following the example of Peter the Great. Under the "Table of Ranks" introduced by Peter, salaries, grants of land and titles attached to different State functions. A man of non-noble birth who reached a certain level as an army officer or in the civil administration became a noble. A still higher level made his noble status hereditary. A member of one of the leading aristocratic families would of course be favoured in a public career by wealth and personal influence, but he would still have to begin on a comparatively low rung of the ladder.

The nobles had their own assemblies in province and district, each of which elected its leader, who held the title of "marshal of the nobility". These assemblies won greater freedom from the government under Catherine II, but in 1831 a decree of Nicholas I again reduced their powers. The essence of the decree was to create within the noble class a hierarchy of ranks corresponding to that of the State service. It confined the powers of the assemblies to matters affecting only the internal organisation of the noble class, and restricted according to rank and wealth the numbers of those who could elect and be elected to offices within the class.

The most obvious defect of the whole regime was the low quality of its bureaucracy. Some of the great Russian writers have painted a picture of the corrupt, incompetent and arrogant State official.

¹ An interesting description of conditions of exiles and prisoners in Siberia in the mid-80's by an American liberal is Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* (London, 1891).

The bureaucratic machine was a heavy drain on Russia's resources, and the results of its work hardly seem to have justified the expense. But it must be remembered that the Russian people were accustomed to the machine. The Russian political tradition was paternalist. Changes in the life of the people were expected to come from above, by the action of the officials who were the executive arm of the Tsar. Western and even Russian liberal historians have perhaps been too severe in their judgment on Russian officials. They have been inclined to blame them for not being what they could not possibly have been. Their incompetence was a result of the general economic and cultural backwardness of the country. Their corruption was a result of their poor pay. It was difficult to support a family on the salary of a minor State employee.

Loyalty to wife and children conflicted with loyalty to the State, and it is not surprising if the first usually prevailed. The laws were so cumbrous and obscure that their interpretation in a common-sense manner, in return for a pecuniary consideration, often caused small harm to the public interest. Undoubtedly many officials made a substantial part of their living from such interpretation. This was especially true of the restrictions against schismatics, members of religious sects and Jews. It may even be argued that to some extent such corruption was socially desirable. It would have been better to abolish the unjust or outmoded laws. But if the supreme power was implacably opposed to repeal, the next best thing was corruption. Of course those who could not afford to give bribes suffered the full severity of the machine. And it was to the poor that the bureaucrats showed their most unlovable characteristic—their arrogance. More perhaps than in any other country, officials in Russia considered themselves a superior species, appointed to drive the herds of human cattle. Obedience and patience were required of the cattle, willingness to wait for hours and days for a decision, and acceptance of the decision when given.

The most arrogant and oppressive branch of the bureaucracy was the police. Its oppressiveness was probably increased by its duplication. There were three separate hierarchies, independent of each other—the ordinary police, subject to the provincial governors or town commandants; the gendarmerie, organised by eight regional commands throughout the empire; and the Third Section or its successors with its informers and agents scattered all over the empire. Under such a system a large number of people had a permanent vested interest in the maintenance of fear—fear by the people and fear by the Tsar. The small informer could obtain

rewards and honours from his superiors only by providing them with frequent reports on the "political unreliability" of the population of his area. Therefore evidence of sedition had to be found, if necessary had to be manufactured. The senior police officers could rise to the highest posts only by convincing the Minister and the Tsar that sedition was brewing under the surface. This notably contributed to persuade the Tsar that all political reforms were dangerous, and continued repression increased popular discontent to such an extent that the exaggerated statements of the police eventually became a reality.

The Intelligentsia

The formation of a professional class, overlapping with yet distinct from the bureaucracy, merchants and landed nobility, was an inevitable result of the modernisation of Russia, as of other countries. The growth of cities, industries, trade and communications created a need for doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers and other professional people. The State encouraged their growth. But the cultural backwardness, obsolete class structure and political despotism of Russia made the formation of a professional class an artificial process, little linked with Russian society as a whole. While the Russian masses remained plunged in a swamp of ignorance and poverty, a small crust of well-educated persons, with a nineteenth-century European outlook, came into being. The chasm which separated these modern intellectuals from the bulk of the Russian people was one of the decisive factors in the development of Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Modern education made its first steps in the time of Peter the Great, who sent selected young Russians to acquire special skills and knowledge in Western Europe. Moscow university was founded in 1755. Catherine II in 1786 founded the first State schools, and in 1787 issued a university statute, based on the Austrian model. But the beginning of a serious system of education dates from the Schools Statute of Alexander I, issued in 1804.¹ This laid down the outlines of a regular system of parish and district elementary schools, secondary schools (or "gymnasias") and universities. Members of all classes, not excluding serfs, were to be admitted. Teaching was at first to be free, but small

¹ N. Hans, *History of Russian Educational Policy* (P. S. King & Son, 1931), pp. 45-60. See also *Ministerstvo narodnovo prosveshchenia 1802-1902* (SPB, 1902).

fees were introduced in St. Petersburg in 1819. State scholarships were granted to poor pupils of ability. The poverty of the country and the lack of teachers of course reduced to very small proportions the practical achievements under the new Statute. Nevertheless in the following years some thousands of Russians obtained an education, and the proportion of non-noble scholars was high.

The accession of Nicholas I brought in education as in other fields of public life a marked reaction from the liberal tendencies of the preceding reign. In December 1828 a new Statute was introduced.¹ The different stages of education were clearly defined. At the bottom of the pyramid were the Parish Schools, "open also to the people of the lowest groups". Above them were the District Schools, open to all classes but "especially designed for merchants and other townspeople". Then came the secondary schools, whose purpose was to give "a decent education for children of the gentry and of civil officials". Serfs were prohibited from access to the secondary schools. Their curriculum was so arranged that it was not possible for a pupil of a District School to pass on into them. All taught Latin from the first year. Some taught Greek, and others instead taught longer periods of French and mathematics. These secondary schools (Gymnasias) gave access to the universities. Parallel with them were "Real Schools", which gave secondary education of a non-classical type, and from which pupils could not go to the university but were admitted to other higher educational institutions.²

The most important of Nicholas I's Ministers of Education was Count Uvarov, who expressed in his report of November the dominant ideas on the subject. It laid down that the basis of all education in Russia must be the three principles of autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality. These had been regrettably weakened in the preceding reign by "superficial education and visionary and abortive experiments". During the reign of Nicholas I efforts were made to discourage middle-class persons from entering the secondary schools. Fees were raised. The poorer families of the gentry were assisted by the erection of residential "hostels of the nobility" attached to some of the Gymnasias. Nothing similar was done to help non-noble middle-class families. During the reign the government also tightened its control over the universities. The country

¹ Hans, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-75.

² Among these may be mentioned the St. Petersburg Technological Institute, the Agricultural Institute and the Building School (for architecture and civil engineering).

was divided into educational regions, whose centres were university towns.¹ The chief representative of the Minister in each region was a Curator, to whom were subordinated a number of Inspectors. Their duties were not only to ensure educational standards, but to see that no undesirable political views were expressed by teachers or students. Under the university statute of 1835, though the right of the University Councils to elect their own Rector, Deans of faculties and professors was recognised, vacant chairs could be filled by the Minister of Education. In 1839 fees were introduced for university students, and shortly afterwards raised. A decree of October 1849 stated that Rectors would be appointed by the Tsar, and in January 1850 the appointment of professors was entrusted to the Minister, who was to choose them not only for learning but also for "loyalty, moral qualities and way of thinking". The efforts to increase the proportion of children of the nobility among university students also achieved some success.

Despite the interference of the authorities, and the odious atmosphere of petty spying, the quality of university teaching in Russia was high. Those who graduated from Russian universities belonged to the nineteenth century. They were more or less familiar with the material progress of nineteenth-century Europe, and had learned some at least of the modern political and philosophical ideas of the West. The decision of Uvarov's successor, Shirinski-Shihmatov, in 1850 to abolish all lectures on philosophy and to entrust the teaching of logic to professors of theology, was not able to keep modern ideas out of young people's minds. The government's methods were crude and ineffective. It was not ruthless by mid-twentieth century standards. Young Russians, including women—who could not get a university education in Russia—were able to study abroad. Ideas could not in those days be kept out by frontiers. The Russian educated class was aware of the gulf between Russia and Europe. It saw the contrast between its own life and that of the Russian people. It was living, materially and intellectually, in the nineteenth century, the people in the seventeenth or earlier. It saw the poverty and social injustice, the dead weight of a bureaucracy opposed to any constructive initiative, the wealth and indifference of the upper class, the inferiority of Russia

¹ The Russian universities were Moscow (founded in 1755), Harkov (1805), Kazan (1805), St. Petersburg (1819), Kiev (1833) and Odessa (1865). The universities of Vilna and Dorpat were older foundations, of German and Polish origin respectively. Vilna was russified after the Polish revolt of 1863, Dorpat in the 1880's. See below pp. 77, 161. Additional educational regions created in later years were Orenburg (1874), Caucasus (1883) and Western Siberia (1885).

to Western Europe—shown in Napoleon's time and more recently in the Crimean War. The intellectuals' own position tormented them. They could not establish contact with the people. The Russian peasant lived in another world and another century. They could not understand his mind, nor he theirs. They were equally cut off from the State machine. There was little room in the bureaucracy for men with reforming or modernising ideas. It was idle to hope that by entering the machine they could themselves improve it. Isolated from both government and people, they pursued their thoughts to their logical conclusions, unaffected by experience of power. This abstract and frustrated atmosphere was well suited to the growth of revolutionary ideas.

The contrast between Russia and Europe, between the nineteenth and the seventeenth centuries inside Russia, and the frustration of educated men and women excluded alike from the chance of power and the trust of the suffering Russian people, form the background to the rise of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. Some care must be shown in the use of this word. In the first instance, it means the educated class as a whole, and of course overlaps with the aristocracy and the highest ranks of army and civil service. Obviously, not all members of the intelligentsia in this wider sense were bitterly dissatisfied. Some highly educated Russians of great ability devoted themselves to their tasks in government service, medicine, science or economic life, enjoying the good things of a nineteenth-century life and also, for the most part at least, believing that their use of their special skills would benefit their country or improve the welfare of their people. But it was difficult for any intelligent educated Russian not to feel some frustration. The stupid obscurantism and heavy brutality of the machine, the wretched poverty and ignorance of the people, forced themselves on his attention. The majority of educated people in Russia were against the regime. The word "intelligentsia" in the Russian language was inseparable from the notion of opposition. Thus the majority of educated people, though not necessarily sympathetic to revolutionary ideas, were unwilling to help the authorities to defeat the revolutionaries. They felt that they were on the same side of the barricade as the revolutionaries, in the battle against "them". And the active revolutionaries themselves were a minority formed from their ranks.¹

¹ In the following pages I shall try to distinguish, when speaking of the intelligentsia, between these three categories—the professional class, the oppositional intelligentsia and the revolutionaries.

In the middle of the century the Russian intelligentsia was divided into two main groups, usually known as the Westernisers and the Slavophiles.

The Westernisers were ashamed of Russia's past and present, and sought deliverance by imitation of the West. One of the most remarkable of them, Chaadaev, declared that Russia had contributed nothing at all to human thought or human progress, yet her people possessed great inner forces and was capable of a great human mission. At present, Russia "constitutes a gap in the moral order of the world". Yet Russia had a vocation to "answer questions of great importance with which mankind is concerned". But this vocation would be fulfilled only by advancing further on the road of westernisation on which Peter the Great had set out a century earlier. The Westernisers were all to some extent attracted by the ideas of the French Revolution. The first who had tried to carry them out were the Decembrists, a small group of idealists whose naïf and unprepared conspiracy had been easily crushed in 1825 by a few of Tsar Nicholas I's troops. In the thirties and forties the ideas of the Westernisers were expressed in the drawing-rooms of St. Petersburg and Moscow but had no effect on political life. These ideas included of course political freedom and constitutional government. Some Westernisers went further, and inclined to some sort of socialism, or were influenced by some of the ideas of Saint Simon. The Westernisers as a whole were less interested in economics than in politics, but they admired the economic progress of the West. Those who inclined to a cautious liberalism were more enthusiastic about following the Western model than the utopian socialists, who were aware of the criticisms made of capitalism in the West. But in the forties disagreements on these points were not essential. Russia's need of modernisation and education, the citizen's need for freedom of expression and a voice in government, and the peasant's need for personal emancipation were more urgent. The liberal Granovski, the romantic revolutionary Herzen, and the radical realist Belinski were united in their belief that Russia must follow the West.

The Slavophiles were no less discontented with the regime of Nicholas I. They were not reactionaries in the sense that they wished to preserve the autocracy exactly as it was. They were well aware of the backwardness and ignorance of the Russian people, the wrongs of the serfs and the absence of civil liberties. They wished, like the Westernisers, to remedy these things. But they sought salvation, not in the imitation of Europe but in a return to what they

believed to be the true traditions of Russia. The civilisation of the West was based on rationalism and individualism, which they believed to be dissolving and disintegrating forces. The strength of Russia lay in the faith of her people, and in the sense of belonging to a community (*sobornost*), which they claimed was an essential part of Orthodoxy and of the consciousness of the Russian peasant. The economic and cultural progress of the West had only created terrible social problems with which individualism was unable to deal. Russian faith and Russian *sobornost* would be able to cure these problems. By doing so, Russia would point the way for the West. It was Russia's mission, not to learn from the West but to teach it. The defects of Russia as she was were due to the mistakes of Peter the Great. In his hurry to imitate the West he had perverted the social and political structure of Russia. In particular, he had set up a bureaucracy based on German models and largely staffed at the top level by Germans, and he had subjected the Orthodox Church to the State machine that he had created. Thus people and Tsar had been separated, the Tsar no longer knew what his subjects felt, and the subjects regarded government as a foreign and oppressive force. The Slavophiles were opposed to parliamentary government as a Western institution, but they believed that the views of the people should be expressed to the sovereign through some regular channel. To this end they proposed the revival of the popular consultative assemblies (*Zemskii Sobor*) which had occasionally been held in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹

Both Westernisers and Slavophiles were utopians. The real Western Europe was very different from the ideal, as Russian exiles in the West found out for themselves. The most striking example of disillusionment is Herzen, who in 1847 entered Paris "with reverence, as men used to enter Jerusalem and Rome",² yet by the end of the following year was thoroughly disgusted with bourgeois Europe, its ideas and its methods. But the happy past of Russia for which the Slavophiles longed was just as unreal as the happy contemporary West. This happy past had never existed. The real Russia of Ivan the Terrible or Alexei Romanov bore little relation to the idealisations of Slavophile theorists.

¹ The *Zemskii Sobor* ("assembly of the land") played a part in Russian history from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. It included not only spokesmen of the aristocracy and high clergy, but also elected representatives of the provincial gentry and townsmen, and even some peasants. For a brief discussion of its role, see Sumner, *op. cit.*, pp. 80 ff.

² E. H. Carr, *The Romantic Exiles* (London, 1933), Penguin edition, p. 32.

The practical political outlook of Slavophiles and Westernisers did not differ so sharply as might be expected. The early Slavophiles were educated Europeans. They did not hate Europe or reject European culture. They wished to reform Russia, above all to emancipate the serfs. On the other hand such Westernisers as Chaadaev and Herzen believed strongly in the mission of Russia in the world. But the fundamental difference remained, and was important. It was the difference between those who regarded the experience of Western Europe as an example to follow and those who felt it was a warning of what to avoid. The controversy between Westernisers and Slavophiles is the first stage in our period of a division which reappeared in other forms, which later split Russian socialism between Populists and Marxists, and Russian Marxism between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and which in our own day has split Bolshevism between the followers and opponents of Stalin.

We shall often be concerned in the following pages with the ideas, factions and activities of the intelligentsia in general and of its revolutionary minority in particular. It is essential to bear in mind the peculiar relationship of the intelligentsia to the government machine and to the people, the contrast between Russia and Europe, and the position of the intelligentsia with its head in the nineteenth or twentieth century and its feet in the seventeenth.

Church and Religion

The official Church of the Russian Empire was Orthodox or Eastern Christianity. The extension of the Empire had brought within its frontiers considerable numbers of Catholics (Poles and Lithuanians), Protestants (Letts, Esthonians and Finns), Moslems (Turks and Iranians), and even a few Buddhists (Mongols and Kalmyks). There was also a large Jewish population. But the Russians themselves, and the great majority of Ukrainians, were Orthodox. The non-Orthodox religious groups suffered from various forms of discrimination, or even persecution. These were essentially, at any rate within our period, a reflection of the Greater Russian nationalism of the ruling bureaucracy. They will therefore be mentioned in connection with the problem of Nationalities in the Empire. Here we are concerned only with the Orthodox Church.

Christianity was introduced into Russia when Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev was converted in 988. The breach between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople was formally completed in 1054, and the Russian Church followed the Greek. In the following