

OUTLINE
RUSSIA IN THE TIME OF NICHOLAS I.

~~RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE TIME OF NICHOLAS I.~~

AUTOCRACY & BUREAUCRACY

- I. THE AUTOCRACY
- II. THE CULT OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY
- III. GOVERNMENT CENTRALIZATION & UNIFORMITY
- IV. BUREAUCRACY AND BUREAUCRATS

(60)

The Tsarist Government

I. THE AUTOCRACY.

(Compare with U.S. President)

1. At top of the govt pyramid -- the supreme autocrat. Answerable to no one for his acts.
 2. Head of both Church and State.
 3. ~~the~~ Divine Right -- commonly accepted by the tsars.
 4. No constitutional limitations on his powers until 1905, and then only because the Tsar himself permitted it, and then mostly on paper. *No parliament until 1906.*
 5. Many functions -- priest, soldier, judge, ^{bureaucrat,} ~~Chief~~ Chief of police.
 6. Many responsibilities -- too much for one man.
"An ideal tsar must not merely be divinely anointed -- he must himself be indeed a God."
 7. Empire too big -- Might have been OK when Russia a small state, but by middle of 19th c., was such a vast empire of so many peoples, customs, languages, religions, etc., that was far too much for one man to try to rule, *unless he delegated authority.*
~~200,000,000 subjects.~~
 8. Inefficiency -- too much for one man, especially when chosen on basis of family rather than ability.
Tom Paine - By heredity as likely to get an ass as a man.
 9. Blind Faith in Tsar -- Masses indulged in ceasar-worship. "Little Father". "Dear Father does not know how bad our situation is, or he would change it." Evil advisers, *responsible.*

But this tended to disappear. Decided the tsar must know what everyone else knows.

Bloody Sunday -- disillusionment. (1905)
- later
- ~~10. Nicholas II -- "Autocracy without an autocrat."~~
11. No Safety Valves -- for discontent. In representative govt, dissatisfaction expressed by voting govt out of office, electing new president, etc. But in autocratic system, can express itself only by sullen discontent, underground conspiracy, revolutionary movements.

10. The Cult of the Imperial Family.

The Emperor and his family surrounded by an elaborate ceremonial. Signs of deference, respect, submission, worship. Treated as though he were God.

- a. Adulation -- Crowds waited daily outside his palace in the hope of catching a glimpse of his Imperial Majesty. When he appeared, the people became delirious with emotion. Cheers.

"Thousands of men throw themselves in front of his horse, striving to touch him, and when they have succeeded in doing so, they make the sign of the cross."

(Grunwald 154)

- b. A Semi-Divine Being -- A group of peasants once asked a learned man: "Is it true that our Tsar has a special paper from the Good God and that from time to time he goes up to heaven to see Him?"

(Grunwald 154)

- c. Holidays -- Celebration of birthdays, name-days of the Tsar and his family. Also the day of the coronation.

Battle of Tsushima -- On the day of the battle, just a few minutes before they knew they would probably meet the Japanese fleet, the Commander nevertheless ordered that the traditional celebration be held for the anniversary of the coronation of the Tsar & Tsarina. Priests led the men in prayer, rum passed out to the crew, while the officers met in the wardroom to drink toasts in champagne.

(R. Hough 129)

- d. Emigres in Paris -- Selling photos of the imperial family in front of the church.

Emigre family -- "Don't mention the name of that horrid Kerensky."

11. Blind Faith in the Tsar. -- "Dear Father"

A good man, benign, father image.

Evils -- "Dear Father does not know how bad our lot is, or he would ~~change~~ correct the evils." Due to bad officials.

But this attitude changed -- Decided the tsar must know what everyone else knew.

~~Monday, Sunday (1905) -- disillusionment.~~

Later - cult of Stalin, Khrushchev, Lenin.

EXTREME

II. CENTRALIZATION. AND UNIFORMITY

1. Need for it -- such a diverse country, conglomeration of many races, nationalities, religions, etc. Centrifugal forces would tear it to pieces unless held together by firm hand.
2. Yet at the same time, the attempt to impose senseless uniformity on diverse peoples led to irritation and resentment, and actually increased the desires of these peoples to split off from Russia.
Independence movements. (Ukrainians, Finns, Poles)

Extreme

3. ~~Uniformity~~ Uniformity -- all official buildings had to follow plans drawn up in capital. *Nicholas I required that all designs be approved by him personally.*
~~Uniformity~~ A permit to ~~erect~~ erect a moderate size building had to come from the capital. Little left to local initiative or judgement.
5. Inefficient -- "Centralized administration is difficult in proportion to the size and variety of the territory ruled."
Communications slow in those days.
6. Not systematic -- Govt institutions not rational, but a heterogeneous collection of old and new institutions inherited over the past centuries.
7. Paternalistic -- govt looked upon subjects as children. *Couldn't* ~~be~~ be left to make their own decisions, because would do the wrong thing. Must be guided, directed, checked on.

(Centralization a Recurring Problem - in USSR today. Present plans for decentralizing the administration of industry, permit more initiative by the factory manager.)

8. Committee of Ministers -- No real Cabinet. Did not act as a group. Were supposed to coordinate policy, but did not in practice, as each Minister dealt separately with the tsar, (Isn't that true of our Cabinet also?)

(66) III. BUREAUCRACY AND BUREAUCRATS.

1. Shun Responsibility -- Bureaucrats afraid to make a decision, pass it on to higher authority, pass the buck.
Enormous flow of papers to the capital.

All action awaits decision of the highest authorities.

(Soviet cartoon. "I can't sign it until you get X. to sign it first." "Oh well, if you have his signature, you don't need mine.")

2. Officials Arrogant -- Look upon the citizenry not as their masters or employers, but as their slaves, as a conquered and inferior race.

Not responsible to the people for their offices, hence did not have to consider the opinions of the people.

"In all matters in which State interests are supposed to be involved, the rights of individuals are ruthlessly sacrificed."

(Nicholas didn't trust anybody.)

3. Checks on Officials -- Reports, prescribed procedures, verifications.

But procedures so elaborate, requiring so many papers to be signed, that officials could not possibly follow the letter of the law and get their jobs done.

So they violated the law actually, while obeying it on paper.

Cooperate in falsifying the records.

(Case of repairing stone in Walsh p. 329.)

4. Red Tape -- constant flow of reports to Petersburg.
- inquiries, reports, communications, explanations, rectifications, approbations, confirmations, etc.

5. Inefficiency. -- slow, ponderous,

6. Graft, Corruption -- Tips.

Theft.--

Gouging the public--

7. The Chinovnik -- hated, feared.

8. How officials were chosen. -- lazy nobility.

RED TAPE UNDER NICHOLAS I.

1. Countless Reports required of provincial administrative offices.

Perpetual flood of documents to be filled out, returned.

So many reports required that the administrators had no time left to ~~work~~ perform their real jobs because they were continually filling out papers.

Primary occupation became not the fulfilment of business tasks, but the evacuation of paper.

Reports, inquiries, communications, explanations, rectifications, approbations, confirmations, etc.

~~2. accumulation of legal cases.~~

In 1825 when Nicholas took office, he learned that pending in the various courts under the Ministry of Justice were 2,800,000 cases.

In 1842 the number had increased to 3,300,000

Governors -- in 1840's a governor had to sign 270 papers every day, i.e. 100,000 a ~~year~~ year. At one minute per paper, this would take him 4½ hours a day just signing his name. Also had to attend 17 meetings of committees & bureaus every day. (Raef in RUSSIAN THOUGHT & POLITICS, 80.)

3. Case before the Senate.

Fifteen chief secretaries employed on the case.

Summary ~~of the case~~ of the case used 15,000 sheets of paper.

Full exposition of the case took hundreds of thousands of sheets.

After all this work was done, the records on the case were ordered ~~transferred~~ transferred to St. Pete. Filled up two wagons. On the trip the 2 wagons were ~~wrecked~~ wrecked, lost.

NO SAFETY VALVES UNDER AN UN-DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM.

In a democratic system, dissatisfaction is expressed by voting the unpopular government out of power -- electing a new president, etc. But in an autocratic system, dissatisfaction has no means of expression.

No ~~any~~ opposition possible except illegal opposition, i.e., revolutionary conspiracy.

#

"No grease, no motion"

(67)

6. Graft, Corruption -- Everyone ~~had to be paid~~ ^{had to be paid, bribed} for performing their jobs.

Not considered dishonest -- a tip. Salaries too small. *Had been fixed several reigns before; cost of living had risen.*
Only dishonest if the bureaucrat took more than the usual tip, or stole a large amount from the government.

Army contracts -- a common means of enrichment.

An old tradition -- Peter the Great had found that all his top officials stole from the government.

Government jobs rated -- according to the amount of revenue that could be gotten from ~~the~~ ^{them} illegally.

Police -- sold the bodies of murder victims to the medical schools and didn't try to solve the crime, because they themselves had gotten rid of the corpse.

Nicholas I -- Himself wrote: "With us, the copyist, the secretary, the judge, do everything for money, and nothing without money."

Told his son and heir -- "It seems to me that in the whole Empire only you and I are not thieves."

People who never in their lives would steal from an individual think it's OK to steal from an impersonal organization like the government.

7. The Tyranny of the Chinovnik -- ~~hated, feared.~~ *(me in Navy)* ✓

8. The Arrogance of the Chinovnik -- (De Custine in 1839)

"Each one of these men discharges his duty with a pedantry, a rigor, an air of importance uniquely designed to give prominence to the most obscure employment. He does not permit himself to say so, but you can see him thinking approximately this:

'Make way for me; I am one of the members of the great machine of the State.'" (p. 54-55)

9. How Officials Were Chosen -- Sinecures given to lazy nobles, who didn't even pretend to do any work, but left the details to subordinates.

Governors of Provinces -- usually retired army officers, who concerned themselves principally with banquets and balls, ~~and~~ and seeing to it that they got their share of the profits from those who had the right to sell liquor.

Gogol - "The Inspector General" - graft, inefficiency.
"Dead Souls" - Governor busy with needlepoint.