

## **A Return to Autocracy?**

### **The Bureaucratic Network at the Accession of Alexander III**

By Ala Creciun

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Supervisor: Alfred J. Rieber  
Second Reader: Alexei Miller

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the changes in the modes of informal organisation and interaction within the highest ranks of state administration during the accession of Russia's Alexander III in 1881. Using alternative categories of bureaucratic organisation, this study sheds a new light on the dramatic period of deadlock during Alexander III's first year in power, which has hitherto been attributed to the personal idiosyncrasies of the new tsar, but, as this study shows, lay in an excessively centralised mode of administrative organisation. As centralisation gives the impression of control, studies of the period refer to the accession of Alexander III as a 'return to autocracy'; this study demonstrates that the consolidation of autocratic control amid the growing complexity of administration has led Alexander III to forfeit control of entire spheres of social life. Finally, the study will touch upon the emerging political agents – the mass press and the entrepreneurs – who helped shape the style of the new rule.

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“И днесь учитесь, о цари:  
Ни наказанья, ни награды,  
Ни кров темниц, ни алтари  
Не верные для вас ограды.  
Склонитесь первые главой  
Под сень надежную Закона,  
И станут вечной стражей трона  
Народов вольность и покой.”

*А.С. Пушкин, «Вольность»*

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## INTRODUCTION

During the 1860s and 1870s, Russia's Alexander II (1855-1881) introduced a host of reforms, hailed in salons across Europe and in St. Petersburg for their Western, 'liberal' spirit: the dissolution of serfdom, open trial by jury, a new penal code, universal conscription emphasising military education and banning corporal punishment, local with greater autonomy. For reasons that have been sufficiently discussed elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> the reforms yielded mixed results, but it was not until the acquittal of Vera Zasulich in 1878 and later the three unsuccessful attempts on the life of Alexander II during less than one year,<sup>2</sup> that the viability of the reformist course came under question. Acceding to the throne, the successor of Alexander II, Alexander III (1881-1894), found himself at the crossroads between continuing the reformist course of his father and turning to the pre-reform principles of autocratic rule.

Historiographies on both sides of the Atlantic, accorded elaborate attention in to the dramatic factional struggle that accompanied the accession of Alexander III.<sup>3</sup> The rich cultural interpretations of ritual, symbolism<sup>4</sup> have given Alexander III's bent on personal

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Ben Eklof et al., eds., *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); L. G. Zakharova, *Samoderzhavie i Otmena Krepostnogo Prava v Rossii, 1856-1861* (Moskva: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1984); *Reformy Aleksandra II* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo "Iuridicheskaiia literatura," 1998).

<sup>2</sup> After an attempt on the life of Alexander II by D.V. Karakozov on April 4, 1866, there was another attempt on 20 April 1879 by A.K. Soloviev, before in December of the same year Narodnaya Volia organized an explosion on the railway from Livadia, but missed the emperor's train. Finally, there was the February 5, 1880 explosion at the Winter Palace, before Narodnovol'tsy succeeded on March 1, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> See: Got'e, Ju.V., "Bor'ba Pravielstvennykh Gruppyrovok i Manifest 29 Aprelia 1881g.," *Istoricheskie Zapiski* no. 2 (1938); Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii, *Krizis Samoderzhavii Na Rubezhe 1870-1880-kh Godov* (Moskva: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1964); Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe Samoderzhavie v Kontse XIX Stoletii: Politicheskaiia Reaktsiia 80-kh-nachala 90-kh Godov* (Moskva: Izd-vo Mysl, 1970); Chernukha, *Vnutrenniaia Politika Tsarizma s Serediny 50-kh Do Nachala 80-kh Gg. XIX V.*; Heide W. Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council: Bureaucracy and Counter-reform in Late Imperial Russia* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982); Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917*, Longman History of Russia (London: Longman, 1990); A. N. Bokhanov, *Imperator Aleksandr III* (Moskva: Russkoe slovo, 1998). Theodore Taranovski, "The Politics of Counter-reform: Autocracy and Bureaucracy in the Reign of Alexander III, 1881-1894" (Harvard University, 1976); Hans Heilbrunner, "The Administrations of Loris-Melikov and Ignatiev, 1880-1882" (University Microfilms, 1954).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995); Mikhail Dolbilov, "Rozhdenie Imperatorskikh Reshenii: Monarkh, Sovetnik i 'Vysochaishaia Volia' v Rossii XIX V.," *Istorichaskie Zapiski* 9, no. 127 (2006): 5-48; A. V. Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel'stvo: Komitet Ministrov v Sisteme Vysshego Upravleniia*

power wielding and sympathies for Great Russian nationalism farsighted perspectives. and the sociological elements of administration<sup>5</sup> This study sets aside the ideological element to examine the modes of informal organisation and interaction within the highest ranks of the state administration as a mode of analyzing Russian social, political, and cultural change in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the basis of alternative categories of bureaucratic organisation pioneered by Alfred J. Rieber,<sup>6</sup> the study will examine the patterns of interaction within the imperial entourage that sheds light on the deadlock of Alexander III's first year in power, but have hitherto escaped analysis under functionalist approaches. On the basis of Richard Wortman's model of 'scenarios of power',<sup>7</sup> this study will focus on how Alexander III, brought up with negative formative experiences at the court, which brought him under the influence of Slavophile entrepreneurs, came to rewire his father's increasingly delegated system of administration into a highly personal wielding of power. While the latter held bureaucracy in a tight grip, under the complex tasks of administration, it led Alexander to all but lose control of entire spheres of social life. The study consists of five distinct parts, with each contributing a layer to the understanding of Alexander's period of accession as crucial to understanding subsequent developments.

The first chapter explores Alexander III's neglected upbringing, lackadaisical education, and the circumstances in which he came to inherit the throne, as formative experiences for his subsequent style of interaction with the bureaucracy. Drawing on Max

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*Rossiiskoi Imperii: Vtoraia Polovina XIX - Nachalo XX Veka* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii, *Pravitel'stvennyi Apparat Samoderzhavnoi Rossii v XIX v.* (Moscow: Mysl', 1978); D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Walter McKenzie Pintner and Don Karl Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (London: ; Chapel Hill: Macmillan: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, "Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia," *Social Science History* 2, no. 4 (July 1, 1978): 399–413, doi:10.2307/1171155; Rieber, Alfred J., *Patronage and Professionalism: The Witte System*, ed. B.V. Ananich, *Problemy Vsemirnoi Istorii*: Sbornik Statei v Chest A. A. Fursenko (Saint-Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995).



Weber's theory of charismatic leadership, the chapter will study how the necessity to cement the legitimacy of an unexpected heir prompted efforts to construct Alexander's image of charismatic authority on an expedient national basis, cultivated by educators and agents linked to Slavophile intellectual and entrepreneurial circles.

The second chapter will develop a broader context of post-Crimean Russia, in which Alexander was drawn to Moscow merchants' and entrepreneurs' Slavophile ideas of an inwardly oriented economy, focused on the emancipated peasant rather than on the St.-Petersburg courtier, and a patriotic autocracy. The interaction between entrepreneurs and the administration during the 1860s and 1870s, where the latter prioritized foreign import over domestic self-sufficiency, prompted Alexander's inclination to circumvent bureaucracy in favour of 'a direct relationship' with the subjects - people and the entrepreneurs - in what essentially amounted to the undoing of the petrine legacy. The chapter will show that the national idea among Moscow entrepreneurs went hand in hand with the idea of a consolidated autocracy that bypassed regular, codified bureaucracy. The consolidation of autocratic prerogative and the broader social and cultural ramifications of the echoing pre-petrine tradition, has marked the nationalisation the Romanov dynasty during the rule of Alexander III.

The third chapter will study the continuities and discontinuities of Alexander III's elements of authority, setting off with the conceptualisation of autocracy as an administrative form, its place, role, prerogative, the structural elements of Russia's highest administrative institutions and their mode of interaction that reveal a complex net of interdependencies beyond the primitive 'limited-unlimited power' dichotomy. The chapter will then pursue the immediate administrative legacy of Alexander II, the Supreme Administrative Commission, before - foregoing the dramatic event of Alexander II's assassination and the worn-out

accounts of factional struggles that followed – delving into Alexander III’s consolidation of autocratic power in the Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy, of April 29, 1881. The chapter will then focus on the rewiring of the bureaucratic network, using alternative categories of bureaucratic analysis pioneered by Alfred J. Rieber, which reveals the increasingly vertical structure of bureaucratic organisation that has been associated with a ‘consolidation of autocracy’. On the example of count N.P. Ignatiev, the minister of the interior during the first year of Alexander III’s rule, the chapter will show the instability of the vertical bureaucratic organisation as it paralysed the administration during the first year of Alexander’s rule and lead to autocrat’s diminishing control over entire spheres of social and political life.

The fourth and final chapter will examine how –after the calamity of the regicide - M.N. Katkov’s editorials *Moskovskie Vedomosti* lubricated the transition to a consolidated autocratic rule both in terms of ideology, as they re-conceptualised its civic role and that of its subjects, and in terms of the dramatic reshuffling of ministerial cadres that followed. Katkov’s editorials helped establish the authoritative tone of the newly-acceded and otherwise inarticulate Alexander III, it interpreted the legacy and assassination of Alexander II, and took control of public discourse.

By examining the formative experiences of the heir apparent, by using creative categories to wield strategic insight, and by broadening the concept of political agency to include the emerging extra-bureaucratic agents, the study strives to reveal a multi-faceted, sedimentary account of the processes that prepared Alexander III for his consolidation of autocratic power during his accession. At the same time, the study discusses not an abstract, but a contextualised concept of autocratic rule, taking heed of its real limitations: its indistinct lines of hierarchy, its permeability to extra-bureaucratic agents, and complex

interdependencies that have lead to the fragmentation of the administrative apparatus and autocracy's increasing loss of control over the entire spheres of social life.

The challenges of pursuing this study should be recognized. Alexander III remain relatively obscure in historiographies on both sides of the Atlantic and a number of areas require special efforts. A thorough study of Alexander III's tutors and the process of his education is in order; in this respect the present study brings to attention only thematically relevant elements. The entrepreneurial group plays an important part in the shaping of a national idea that influenced Alexander Alexandrovich, but does not nearly exhaust the subject. A study of literary and artistic production is necessary. The analysis of M.N. Katkov's editorials in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, is merely an example, albeit an illustrative one, of the powerful new role of mass press in the affairs of the State. A revision of the editorials by Aksakov brothers, Ju. F. Samarin, G.P. Danilevski, A.S. Suvorin, A.A. Kraevskii is incumbent upon thorough studies of the period. In this respect, the current work merely sheds light on rule of Alexander III; it will, however, serve its purpose if it succeeds in illuminating the accession of Alexander III beyond the surface of factional conflict, suggesting instead the multifarious processes and agents that shaped his system of values and ruling personality at a critical moment for late Imperial Russia.

## HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

Since the 1970s, the study of the imperial state apparatus in nineteenth century Russia underwent important transformations. In 1976 Daniel Orlovsky identified the three main directions of historical research on Russian Empire's highest administration.<sup>8</sup> First, both American and Soviet historians demonstrated a sustained focus on the tsarist government policy in response to social and political issues, unveiling institutional, personal and ideological conflicts within the government. Second, the discussion of absolutism and its relation to the historical regimes of Europe and Asia raised questions regarding the relationship between the state and social and economic forces. Third, efforts to redefine the practices of autocratic rule focused on the study of officials and institutions that comprised the government. Early studies confronted the challenge of periodisation. Attempts to establish distinct phases of administrative evolution, such as George Yaney's monograph *The Systematisation of Russian Government*,<sup>9</sup> have only demonstrated, in the words of Marc Raeff, that "we seem to be confronted not so much by [...] distinct organic patterns, each arising out of a proceeding according to an imminent structural and functional logic, as by a single organism that retains its essential identity while undergoing an evolution."<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, structuralist studies that underscore continuities of bureaucratic function and

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel T. Orlovsky, "Recent Studies on the Russian Bureaucracy," *Russian Review* 35, no. 4 (October 1, 1976): 448–467, doi:10.2307/128440.

<sup>9</sup> George L. Yaney, *The Systematization of Russian Government: Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711-1905* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973). In this monograph Yaney posited, with some controversy, that between the administrative reforms of Peter the Great and 1905, the imperial government changed three forms of bureaucratic organization. First, between 1701 and 1801, 'senatorial bureaucracy' was charged mainly with the extraction of tribute, recruitment of officials, and the maintenance of order. Second, between 1802 and 1862, 'ministerial bureaucracy' sought reforms through differentiated specialization. Third, the success of ministerial organization spanned the total bureaucratization of life in the empire after 1862.

<sup>10</sup> Marc Raeff, Review of *The Systematisation of Russian Government: Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711-1905* by George Yaney, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Jun., 1974), p. 346.

structure, like Daniel Orlovsky's monograph on the Ministry of the Interior,<sup>11</sup> face criticism for its teleological results.

Orlovsky's above-mentioned review of literature came on the eve of the 1980s, a period that saw the coming of age of the first generation of scholars brought up in the tradition of Annales, who broadened confines to include a fluent application of social<sup>12</sup> and cultural themes,<sup>13</sup> symbolism,<sup>14</sup> linguistic and gender analysis<sup>15</sup> to the study of nineteenth century Imperial Russia. The first step into this direction was made by Walter Pintner's 1970 pioneering study<sup>16</sup> on the demographics of bureaucracy challenged institutional strictures and proposed the study of officialdom as a sociological group in itself. Pintner demonstrated that the changing demands of state administration prompted a shift social basis of bureaucratic recruitment, where increased numbers of propertyless officials joined state service to earn their living, as opposed to the still dominating group of their colleagues and superiors, who received either home or military education and viewed their positions as honorary, rather than sources of income and professional advance. But this approach was not uniquely Western. Already in 1976 Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii published two monographs concerned with the social composition and analysis of the Russian officialdom in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century - *Russian Autocracy Under Alexander III* (1976) and *Pravitelstvennyi*

<sup>11</sup> Daniel T. Orlovsky, *The Limits of Reform: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Imperial Russia, 1802-1881*, Russian Research Center Studies (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Olga Semyonova Tian-Shanskaia, *Village Life in Late Tsarist Russia*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia H. Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855* (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995); Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*.

<sup>16</sup> Walter M. Pintner, "The Social Characteristics of the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Bureaucracy," *Slavic Review* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 1970): 429-443, doi:10.2307/2493158; Don Karl Rowney, "Higher Civil Servants in the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs: Some Demographic and Career Characteristics, 1905-1916," *Slavic Review* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 1972): 101-110, doi:10.2307/2494147; Walter M. Pintner, "The Russian Higher Civil Service on the Eve of the 'Great Reforms'," *Journal of Social History* 8, no. 3 (April 1, 1975): 55-68, doi:10.2307/3786715; W. Bruce Lincoln, "The Ministers of Alexander II: A Survey of Their Backgrounds and Service Careers," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 1976): 467-483, doi:10.2307/20169767; Dominic Lieven, "The Russian Ruling Elite Under Nicholas II. Career Patterns," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 25, no. 4 (October 1, 1984): 429-454, doi:10.2307/20170044.

Apparat Samoderzhavnoi Rossii v XIX v (1978). Combining a social and demographic approach, Zaionchkovskii showed how the increasing number of younger untitled noblemen (dvoryane) among older, title-bearing, land-owning servitors, marked the rupture between autocracy and landowning officialdom, reflecting a changing set of administrative needs and priorities.<sup>17</sup> The limits of the purely sociological approach were clear from Dominic Lieven's monograph on the State Council between 1894 and 1914,<sup>18</sup> where cultural and demographic perspectives without a solid institutional track record offer little beyond teleological conclusions.<sup>19</sup> Written simultaneously with Lieven's monograph, A.V. Remnev's dissertation on the Committee of Ministers, although only recently published, by contrast, skilfully combines an institutional framework with functional practices, *raison d'être*, ethos, and socio-cultural representations.<sup>20</sup>

Overlapping approaches prompted broader interpretations of political agency. Expanding on Pintner's inquiry, Roberta Manning examined the impact of the shifting social estate system, growing social and physical mobility, access to higher education, and the changing needs of administration, on functional patterns within the state apparatus.<sup>21</sup> Manning has subsequently claimed that the crisis of tsarism stems as much, if not more, from extra-bureaucratic forces, than from the inadequacy of internal function. Manning sees the crisis of the tsarist order inseparable from the crisis of the landed gentry. As Whelan observes, the decreased significance of the landed gentry as a social and economic force -

<sup>17</sup> P.A. Zaionchkovskii, *Russian Autocracy Under Alexander III*, (Gulf Breeze, FL: Academic International Press, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> D. C. B. Lieven, *Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> The institutional perspective missing from Lieven's study places under question his research design: were members of the State Council, albeit their status and education indeed the "ruling elite" as Lieven claims? The study also lacks a diachronic perspective of their governance patters. Heide Whelan's earlier inquiry into the status of the State Council under Alexander III, with considerably greater institutional insights, shows the Council to be, with exceptions, a post of honorific retirement for prominent ministerial figures and members of the tsar's entourage.

<sup>20</sup> A. V. Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel'stvo: Komitet Ministrov v Sisteme Vysshego Upravleniia Rossiiskoi Imperii: Vtoraia Polovina XIX - Nachalo XX Veka* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Roberta Thompson Manning, *The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government*, Studies of the Russian Institute, Columbia University (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1982).

‘soslovie vymirayushchee’ in the words of N.Kh. Bunge - reflected both in its dissociation from the class of service nobility, and a deep disintegration of the ties with the tsar.<sup>22</sup>

Further diversification and inter-mixing of analytical genres has been called on by American Russianists across the field at a Social Science Research Council Workshop in 1993, stating the need for the interpretation of continuities and discontinuities of not only the state apparatus, but also social and cultural life. Gregory Freeze called historians to be more attentive to contemporary sociological (and one can add anthropological) literature on institution-building, and to “deinstitutionalise” institutional history by shifting from organisational to cultural definitions of institutions for comprehensive interpretations.<sup>23</sup> Reggie Zelnik and Laura Engelstein urged a combination of “such notions as social identity, mentalities, popular culture, discourse, dialogue, semiotics, interpretation, imagination, experience and the history of concepts.”<sup>24</sup> Richard Wortman advocated “the consideration of perceptions and representations of authority as key to understanding political motivations, institutions, and movements in imperial Russia.” Two years later Wortman’s pioneering use of cultural history in the study of ceremony, ritual, and their role in monarchic representation illuminated modes of interaction at the Russian imperial court as they span from pre-accession experiences, outlooks and personalities of the Russian tsars and shaped dynastic scenarios.<sup>25</sup>

The ensuing interest in semiotics further shed light on the daily functioning of the state apparatus, the ethos and mentalities of its servitors. Mikhail Dolbilov juxtaposed several

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<sup>22</sup> Iurii Borisovich Solovev, *Samoderzhavie i Dvorianstvo v Kontse XIX [i. E. Deviatnadsatogo] Veka* (Leningrad: “Nauka,” Leningr. otd-nie, 1973); Avenir Pavlovich Korelin, *Dvorianstvo v Poreformennoi Rossii 1861-1904 Gg.: Sostav, chislennost, Korporativ. Org* (Moskva: Nauka, 1979).

<sup>23</sup> Jane Burbank, “Revisioning Imperial Russia,” *Slavic Review* 52, no. 3 (October 1, 1993): 555–567, doi:10.2307/2499723. Unfortunately, the proceedings of the workshop appear not to have been published. However, Jane Burbank’s ‘Conference Report’ relates in some details the papers presented at the Social Science Research Council Workshop, “Reconstructing the History of Imperial Russia,” Iowa City, 1–3 November, 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 562.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, Studies of the Harriman Institute (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1995).

modes of the actualisation of the ‘supreme will’ [‘vysochaishaia volia’], revealing the mechanisms of mutual legitimation between the tsar and his official, an element conscious and reglamented for both parties. Dolbilov also pointed to the combination of everyday courtly etiquette, formal rhetoric, and routine, which, is “an important regulator of monarchic power, the actions of which do not succumb to analysis in terms of the usual opposition of ‘limited’ and ‘unlimited’ power.”<sup>26</sup> A more radical approach to semiotics has called into question the appropriateness of the term ‘autocracy’ in describing the ruling practices in pre-revolutionary Russia, positing instead a variety of alternatives. Richard Pipes called pre-revolutionary Russia a ‘patrimonial regime.’<sup>27</sup> Pipes correctly linked the ‘patrimonial regime’ to votchina: the tsar, like the owner of votchina, enjoys both rights and responsibilities over the domain and those who inhabited it. But as Geoffrey Hosking observes,<sup>28</sup> Pipes had somewhat misleadingly conceived of votchina as a dominium, or “an absolute ownership [...] involving the right to use, abuse and destroy at will,”<sup>29</sup> which has lead him to different conclusions about the nature of the tsarist regime in pre-revolutionary Russia.

Neither have the structuralists, who persisted in the discussion of the nature and extent of ‘absolutism’ in Russia managed to reach consensus on whether the administrative reforms of 1802-1811 strengthened autocratic control<sup>30</sup> or weakened it.<sup>31</sup> John LeDonne contended that the loss of autocratic power took place to the extent that “the glorification of the ruler’s

<sup>26</sup> Mikhail Dolbilov, “Rozhdenie Imperatorskikh Reshenii,” 8.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribner, 1974). Pipes’s conclusions about the *dominium* of the Russian monarch have been borrowed by Marc Raeff in his assessment of “The Russian Autocracy and Its Officials”, *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1994), 76.

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, “Patronage and the Russian State,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 303, doi:10.2307/4213055.

<sup>29</sup> {Citation}

<sup>30</sup> Safonov, M.M., *Problema Reform v Pravitel’svennoi Politike Rossii Na Rubezhe XVIII i XIX Vv.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> John P LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: the Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700-1825* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel’svo*; Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council*.



autocracy only served to strengthen each minister's despotism toward his subordinates and his independence of other ministries<sup>32</sup> and that the imperial prerogatives, while removed from actual administration and largely symbolic, provided charismatic cohesion to the system of administration.<sup>33</sup> Heide Whelan has gone even further, positing that "the reign of Alexander III marked the passage of decision-making authority from an autocratic tsarist administration to a no less autocratic bureaucratic administration." But, a cavalcade of events, including the resistance encountered by Alexander II in bringing about the peasant reform, suggests continuity rather than the radical change that Whelan emphasises. Orlovsky has since taken issue with Whelan regarding the "numerous tsars – as far back as Ivan the Terrible, Mikhail Fedorovich, and Alexei Mikhailovich – who faced similar kinds of constraints."<sup>34</sup>

More recent efforts to systematise the relationship between the autocrat and the highest tiers of bureaucracy have been largely based and evaluated against the Weberian model. In a recent study of the Imperial Chancery, Peter Mustonen juxtaposed the 'institution of the autocrat' and the 'regular institutions.'<sup>35</sup> But as Mikhail Dolbilov observes,<sup>36</sup> the presence of the "personal agents of autocracy" within ministerial circles render the divide fluid. Mustonen based the dichotomy on a division established earlier by Marc Raeff, as the latter distinguished between "leading regular high officials (individual senators, councillors of state, principal ministers) on the one hand, and personal friends and confidants of the monarch on the other"<sup>37</sup>. But, as Raeff himself acknowledged, individuals often belonged to

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Heide W. Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council*.

<sup>32</sup> John P LeDonne, *Absolutism and ruling class*, 108.

<sup>33</sup> John P. LeDonne, "Administrative Regionalization in the Russian Empire, 1802-1826," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 43, no. 1 (2002).

<sup>34</sup> Daniel T. Orlovsky, *Alexander III & the State Council*, 691–693.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Mustonen, *Sobstvennaja ego imperatorskogo velicestva kanceljarija v mehanizme vlastvovanija instituta samoderzca 1812-1858* □: *k tipologii osnov imperskogo upravljenja* (Helsinki: Kikimora Inst., 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Mikhail Dolbilov, "The Political Mythology of Autocracy: Scenarios of Power and the Role of the Autocrat," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 4 (2001): 791.

<sup>37</sup> Marc Raeff, *The Russian autocracy and its officials*. (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 79.

both categories. Equally, as V.G. Chernukha contended during the colloquium “Rabochii Klass i Revoliutsionnie Situatsii v Rossii v nachale XX v.”, in 1990 in Leningrad, the crisis of autocratic rule in the latter half of the nineteenth century was first and foremost a crisis of bureaucracy, once more highlighting the difficulty of clear cut division.<sup>38</sup>

Part of the difficulty consists in the use of the term ‘bureaucracy’, with or without allusions to the Weberian framework, to designate the imperial administrative apparatus, without clear definitional underpinnings. Yet, as Daniel Orlovsky observed, “it is one thing to say that a majority of Russian officials were non-landed, hereditary noblemen with law degrees but quite another to assert on this basis alone that a professional bureaucracy of the Western European type was emerging in Russia.”<sup>39</sup> In Russia, technical expertise did not translate into commitment to the concepts of *Rechtssaat* and, as Alfred J. Rieber has shown, patronage and professionalism not only coexisted, but in some cases, paradoxically, enhanced each other.<sup>40</sup> Still, Rieber placed professional bureaucracy at “a very high level of competence, reliability and homogeneity of outlook.”<sup>41</sup> His integrated perspective shows that “the ministry was fully prepared to appear before the State Duma and the State Council to present and defend its estimates without reliance on evasive tactics or the protection of the crown,” which could not be said about most other ministries. Much of this applied to the legal specialists, emergent from the period of reform during the 1860s: “the same sense of moral identity as experts, [...] and the same corporate pride in achieving mastery of problems.”<sup>42</sup> The exclusive Tsarskoe Selo Lycée, to a greater degree than the St. Petersburg University, besides education in statistics and political economy, fostered amongst its pupils

<sup>38</sup> V.S. Diakin, ed., *Reformy Ili Revoliutsiia?: Rossiia 1861-1917: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo Kollokviuma Istorikov* (Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka, 1992), 287.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, “Patronage and Professionalism: The Witte System,” ed. B.V. Ananich, *Problemy Vsemirnoi Istorii: Sbornik Statei v Chest A. A. Fursenko* (Saint-Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2000), 296, *et passim*.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 291

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

links that would form the basis of future clientele networks, creating a corporate identity grounded in moral aspirations and a commitment to public service.

A.V. Remnev rejected the positivism of Mustonen's dichotomy to argue that the ministerial structure, while allowing a great deal of personal discretion to the minister, concentrated the responsibility for policy outcome on the person of the emperor. For instance, following the national upheavals in Europe, repressive measures and limitations of a minority were regarded not as reflective of popular preconceptions or persuasions within the ruling elites, instead they were attributed to the emperor himself – a point of vulnerability Alexander II was aware of. Remnev notes that under pressure from the increasing pace and complexity of administration, the autocrat had to strike a balance, and often alternated between posing as the highest link in bureaucracy and standing outside of it – as an ethereal figure to avert direct responsibility for administrative failures. To a considerable extent, this argument seems to put to rest attempts to draw the line between 'bureaucracy' and 'the autocrat' in favour of mixed approaches.

Still, the entrenchment of the Weberian model of a hierarchical, specialised, meritocracy in studies of pre-revolutionary administration in the Romanov Empire, as in the studies of Marc Raeff, has led to more radical conclusions, jaded by normative expectations. Still, the entrenchment of the Weberian model of a hierarchical, specialised, meritocracy in studies of pre-revolutionary administration in the Romanov Empire, as in the studies of Marc Raeff, has led to more radical conclusions, jaded by normative expectations: "autocracy in Russia remained strong and rigidly conservative throughout the nineteenth century because there was no true bureaucracy."<sup>43</sup> "The Russian bureaucracy", continues Raeff, "was unable to create a *Rechtsstaat*, the sine qua non of orderly bureaucratic

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<sup>43</sup> Marc Raeff, "Russian Autocracy and Its Officials" in Marc Raeff, *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1994); Marc Raeff, *The Russian Autocracy and Its Officials*. ( 's-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957).

government, and as a result, the arbitrary and capricious personal power of the Russian autocrat remained undiminished until 1905.” But, the numerous limitations on the actions and appointments of the tsar, outlined earlier, as well as the avenues by which he could be pressured, suggest a less autonomous monarch than contended by Raeff. Joerg Baberowski went even further as he juxtaposed a ‘modern’ reliance on law and de-personified institutions that is characteristic of professional bureaucracies; and ‘pre-modern’ or ‘feudal’ relationships like patronage, dependent on personal loyalty.<sup>44</sup> But much as the system of ‘most loyal reports’ was based on personal politics, the invariable reliance of high state officials on the practice of a personal audience with the tsar were in themselves conventions; whether or not they benefited from it is a different matter. The reliance on the Weberian model for comparative reference is matched only by affirmations of Russian particularism. According to Michael Confino,<sup>45</sup> the dangers of this “Russia vs. West” juxtaposition, both in its particularistic and indiscriminately comparative variants, is that the ‘west’ - in fact, reducible to Britain - is unique model that has become the yardstick of every development.<sup>46</sup> But Confino’s own defence of the Russian “differences,” which, he contends, have been converted to abnormalities – “‘awkward’ peasantry, ‘awkward’ middle class (if at all), ‘unique’ intelligentsia, no ‘genuine’ nobility, no ‘true’ bourgeoisie” – slips into apologetics. The casual, sometimes irresponsible, use of western social science categories like ‘institutions’, ‘state’, ‘bureaucracy’, even ‘autocracy’, reflects the need of a critical, and perhaps comparative re-evaluation. The persisting ambiguity of these basic terms makes for an unstable foundation of subsequent studies and their conclusions. Yet, as Jane Burbank has forewarned,<sup>47</sup> insistent reliance on the Weberian model and western social science concepts

<sup>44</sup> Joerg Baberowski, “Doverie Cherez Prisutstvie. Domodernie Praktiki Vlasti v Pozdnei Rossiiskoi Imperii,” *Ab Imperio* (3): 2008, pp. 71-95.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Confino, as cited in Jane Burbank, “Revisioning Imperial Russia,” *Slavic Review* 52, no. 3 (October 1, 1993): 556.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 558.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

may mean that historians of Russia will overlook structures that are absent or only subtly manifested in the West, but are essential to Russia's own social and political function.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS AND METHODOLOGY

A critical and integrated study of the developments of statecraft in late Imperial Russia remains to be produced. Methodological approaches, beset by the difficulty of periodization and the teleological risks of structuralism, are in want of mixed methods. Linguistic and socio-cultural analysis, the study of ritual, symbolism, perception, and representation have produced remarkable insight, and there is a general consensus within the research community on their heuristic value. The studies that employed this variety of methods have since illuminated the practices of autocracy, decision-making and bureaucratic ethos, previously overlooked by purely institutional approaches. The persistence of the Weberian model as a frame of reference for studies of Russian statecraft requires reconsideration as its dominant institutional character endorses the omission of essential elements of Russia's social activity. Future studies must broaden the institutional confines to extra-bureaucratic factors – i.e. 'deinstitutionalise' institutional studies - for more nuanced interpretations. Finally, the shifting tectonic plates of social estates in Russia, mirrored in the composition of the highest officialdom do not permit their static evaluation, the assessment of their modes of operation, organisation and interests. Perhaps most importantly, attempts to draw the line between the 'arbitrary autocracy' and the 'regulated bureaucracy' must be resisted; having the tendency to study both agencies autonomously of each other, studies routinely overlook the elements of the cultural, habitual, symbolic, linguistic matrix in which they function and shape one another.

The first premise of this study is to set aside the category of 'liberal-conservative' politics, which has hitherto guided studies of the Russian Empire in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The values upon which this dichotomy rests have been so fluid so as to obscure the social meaning of the distinction altogether. Alfred J. Rieber observed that values attributed to either category are not only situational, but also interconnected with an

entire set of values implied by the category, making the unequivocal ascription of an agent or polity to a 'liberal' or 'conservative' camp a difficult task, if at all possible.<sup>48</sup> i.e. if 'liberal' views dwelled on political representation and private property, then the nobility should be considered 'liberal'; on the other hand, if the tightening of police control is considered reactionary, then even the lauded 'liberal reformist' as M.T. Loris-Melikov should be considered a 'conservative.'

Marc Raeff argued that the oversimplification of 'liberalism' since its original formulation in the West, in Russia became popularly identified with any measure that meant a decrease of state power or the evasion of state authority altogether.<sup>49</sup> Proponents of a weaker monarchy and restricted administrative means were, therefore, automatically branded 'liberals.' Conversely, those who defended the prerogatives of autocracy and its paternalistic power were labelled 'conservative' or 'reactionary,' irrespective of their actual programme. The uncomplicated symmetry of these definitions proves vacuous for purposes of historical analysis: in practice, the actors' frequent crossing-over, negotiation and re-negotiation of the thresholds of 'liberalism' or 'conservatism' shows these categories to be far too arbitrary for scholarly investigation. Raeff drew on the persistence of such arbitrary elements in practices of administration which, together with a firm imperial dictum, permitted the Russian Empire to develop into a *Reglementsstaat* under the Great Reforms, but never into a *Rechtsstaat*.<sup>3</sup>

Richard Wortman and Bruce Lincoln suggest the presence of legal consciousness as an attribute of 'liberal,' 'reformist' elements, such as those struggling for the rule of law during the reforms of 1861-1864; conversely, their opposition is labeled 'conservative' and

<sup>48</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, *The Politics of Autocracy: Letters of Alexander II to Prince A.I. Bariatinskii, 1857-1864*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1866), 94.

<sup>49</sup> Marc Raeff. "The Bureaucratic Phenomena of Imperial Russia, 1700-1905," *The American Historical Review* (84):2, April 1979, 409.

‘reactionary.’ Similarly, Daniel Orlovsky<sup>50</sup> and V.K. Leontovitsch<sup>51</sup> understood liberalism as institutional legalism. In their definition, the ‘liberals’ advocated a legalistic approach to the systematisation state mechanisms, aiming to make it less reliant on the traditional personal authority of the tsar, and more reliant on a certain set of established and accepted norms and legal practices – i.e. a *Rechtsstaat*. But, the radicalization of extra-bureaucratic ‘legalistic liberals’ and the pragmatic pliability of liberals within the bureaucratic apparatus, again render the dichotomy blunted.

The complexity of events on Russia’s political scene in the late nineteenth century requires not only a more considered vocabulary of study, but a more distinguishing approach toward the very basis of its social and political order. This study will avoid using the ‘liberal-conservative’ dichotomy to designate political outlooks or trajectories of state polity; instead, it will examine theoretical basis of the political structure with strong cultural underpinnings for a more nuanced understanding of their mutual influence. As a third step to this theoretical and methodological elaboration, the study will suggest alternative categories for the study of Russian statecraft in late nineteenth century. The structure of the chapter aims to provide a sedimentary image of the alleyways for historiographic explorations in the field, suggesting theoretical reconsideration of the social and political order under investigation, immediately complemented by empirical basis for practical understanding of the methodological intentions of this study. The methodological intentions project a plan of investigation for the entire body of this work. But before delving into proper discussion, basic operational premises of the social order at hand must be overviewed to avoid assumptions and their teleological consequences.

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<sup>50</sup> Orlovsky, *The Limits of Reform*.

<sup>51</sup> Victor Leontovitsch, *Istoriia Liberalizma v Rossii: 1762-1914*, Issledovaniia Noveishei Russkoi Istorii 1 (Moskva: Russkii put, 1995).



Societies, as they navigate between structured and unstructured situations, construct social orders as they face with anxieties about the unpredictable, fatal possibilities of the human experience. Emile Durkheim, in his definition, deemed culture to be an inseparable element of a social order, as reflected by the society in its mechanisms of legitimation. One of the tasks of this study is to place the modes of legitimation, as well as the changes they undergo, into a broader cultural context that shapes the dominant social order. This study will steer clear of deterministic definitions of culture like Geertz's 'programmatic codes for human behaviour'. Instead it will use a definition closer to symbolic anthropology, where the understanding of culture in recent decades has shifted from values and norms to a system of interaction constructed through constant mutual feedback. Particularly in the context of nineteenth-century imperial Russia, a more fluid notion of cultural and social order reflects with greater accuracy the consciousness of the arbitrariness of any such cultural and social order and certain acute tendencies toward its routinization. In a given cultural and social order the satisfaction of routine demands of the respective polity – otherwise known as the *economy* - relies on an authoritative centre.<sup>52</sup> Edward Shils identified the centre of every society to denote a set of core of values, beliefs, and symbols, perceived indispensable even by those who cannot articulate its indispensability; at the heart of the macro-societal political framework in Imperial Russia the focus of the charismatic power was the tsar.<sup>53</sup> This real or perceived indispensability Shils identifies with charisma, reiterating that charismatic propensity in itself is a function of the need for order.<sup>54</sup>

Max Weber defined charisma as an extra-ordinary individual personality, and charismatic leaders - as 'the "natural" leaders in moments of distress [who] were neither appointed office-holders nor "professionals" in the present-day sense [...], but rather the

<sup>52</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1111.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Shils, "Center and Periphery" in *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays presented to Michael Polanyi* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, pp. 117-131.

<sup>54</sup> Edward Shils, "Charisma, Order, and Status," *American Sociological Review* 30, no. 2 (April 1, 1965): 203.

bearers of specific gifts of body and mind that were considered “supernatural”.<sup>55</sup> The discussion as to what exactly compels people to commit resources to a charismatic figure is beyond the scope of this study, however some basic underpinnings are in order. Weber virtually swept over this question with a general presupposition that charisma “may involve a subjective or internal reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts or enthusiasm [...] in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, political distress.”<sup>56</sup> Shmuel Eisenstadt underlined the sensitivity to charismatic forms “in certain definite types of social situations in which:

- (i) there takes place some transition from one institutional sphere to another, or situations of simultaneous activity in several institutional spheres, or in several subsystems of a society (in this study: the transition of monarchic succession from Alexander II to Alexander III);
- (ii) such various subsystems have to be directly connected with the central values and activities of a society (in this study: the revolutionary subsystem challenging the fundamental value of autocracy);
- (iii) people are faced with a choice among various roles (in this study: the heir suddenly becoming the autocrat and facing a choice of ideological avenues is susceptible to the charisma of the advisor);
- (iv) the routine of a given role or groups endangered or disrupted (in this study: the challenge to dominant ministerial circle).<sup>57</sup>

In Eisenstadt’s definition, the ‘common denominator’ of these situations is that individuals or groups experience some kind of dramatic change in the existing social and cultural order to which they are bound.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the public shock at a public regicide - an unprecedented event in Russia (we will not delve here into the details of the death of Paul I) - , particularly in the dramatic circumstances of the Loris-Melikov reform, plunged St. Petersburg into a state of confusion during the first weeks of the accession of Alexander III. According to Eisenstadt, in such critical situations audiences

“become more sensitive to those symbols or messages which attempt to symbolize such order and more ready respond to people who are able to

<sup>55</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1112.

<sup>56</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 224–246.

<sup>57</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building: Selected papers*, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), xxviii.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

present them new symbols which could give meaning to their experiences in terms of some fundamental cosmic, social, or political order, or prescribe the proper norms of behavior, to relate the individual to collective identification, and to reassure him of his status and of his place in a given collectivity.”<sup>59</sup>

Weber, in his definition, identified the original form of charismatic leadership to have emerged from the heroism of war, particularly chronic war, or, in more general terms, in conditions of extraordinary external or internal distress. The charismatic, including wartime leader can be distinguished by a sense of compelling duty and moral fervor that transcends the quotidian routine. But, Weber clearly forewarns about the impermanence of charismatic leadership: as war ceases to be a chronic threat, or the threat becomes non-military, charisma, under the pressure of the economy, ultimately yields to tradition or rational organisation.<sup>60</sup>

Receding within an institutional structure, charismatic leadership has but the option of claiming the transferability of charisma through kinship or blood, sacralising itself into an institution such as traditional dynasties are. The house that claims the continuity of its ‘supernatural endowment’ through blood, simultaneously depersonalizes, appeals to discipline, ethical motives, sense of duty and conscience, directed toward a common purpose.<sup>61</sup> But, as Weber again observes, the charisma of lineage is not sufficient to secure unambiguous succession; the element warranting greater charismatic appeal in dynastic scenarios is the rule of succession by primogeniture.<sup>62</sup> This corollary will allow the study to pose questions to the nature of dynastic succession – whether planned or unexpected, violent or peaceful, and its role in setting the tone of the new rule. The dynastic tradition in the Russian Empire thus required what Weber called a charismatic duty “attached to the incumbent or an institutional structure regardless of the persons involved.”<sup>63</sup> But where Weber saw a fundamental incompatibility between charisma and institutional framework,

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2:1146.

<sup>61</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2:1149–1150.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 2:1137.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 2:1135.

Eisenstadt contested the division as somewhat too radical, rooted in an idealized and rigid notion of institutions, and hence urged both a broader view of institutions and a more pragmatic understanding of ‘absolute’ rule.

The hereditary monarchic charisma in itself poses the paradox of dynastic continuity of order: the creative, edifying capacity of charisma bears an inherently destructive aspect as it seeks detachment from the preceding order. Richard Bendix too pointed to the “duality of rule that is tradition-bound as well as free from tradition.” Bendix refers specifically to the absolute ruler “who may have the right to ignore the tradition since his will is absolute, but who can thereby imperil his own traditional authority”<sup>64</sup> This corollary will become important when we discuss the considerable difficulties countered by Alexander III at his accession, as he struggled with his father’s legacy. In efforts to explore the tension between the charisma of tradition and that of the individual, the study will distinguish between continuous structures of Russian administrative order, or in Weberian terms ‘charismatic authority’, from the personalized elements of the incumbent ruler, ‘charismatic leadership’, without claiming either of these to denote, in absolute terms, political agencies in late Russian Empire. Reinterpreting Weber’s somewhat elusive distinction, Reinhardt Bendix formulated the following definitions:

A leader can only request, an authority can require [...]. Leadership depends upon the personal qualities of the leader in the situation in which he leads. In the case of authority, however, the relationship ceases to be personal and, if the legitimacy of the authority is recognised, the subordinate must obey the command even when he is unacquainted with the person who issues it [or is unacquainted with the leader’s political agenda or persuasion – AC]. In a leadership the relation with the person is basic; in an authority the person is merely a symbol.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Bendix, Reinhard, “Max Weber’s Sociology Today,” *International Social Science Journal* 17 (1965): 19–20.

<sup>65</sup> Reinhard Bendix, as cited in Robert Beirstedt, “The Problem of Authority,” in Morroe Berger, *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (Van Nostrand, 1954), 71–72.

Bendix reiterated this definition, describing the charismatic authority enjoying power because he represents the sanctity of the tradition, whereas the charismatic leader dominates because of his challenge to the established order, however a challenge that is not necessarily of tradition. An example of the depersonalisation of charismatic authority through institutionalisation is the papal succession at the throne of the Holy See. The accession of Pope Linus following the martyrdom of Peter, presented in itself a full enfranchisement to the leadership of the episcopate; Jerome's *Chronicon* proclaims "Post Petrum primus Romanam Ecclesiam tenuit Linus annis XI" ["After Peter Pope Linus held the Roman Church for 11 years"] To day the ceremony of anointment of a new pope, endows him with charisma – at least at first not personal, but institutional – as he accedes to an office of authority. Bendix suggests that, in fact, the charismatic authority of the institution is, at least at first, so detached from the individual persona of the incumbent that any depravity of the cleric may be overlooked so long as his charismatic capacity remain intact, thus posing no danger to the institution itself.<sup>66</sup> One accepts the authority of Papal office so long as its incumbent does not (manifestly) violate the honour of God, i.e. the institution that grants him his legitimacy. Transferring this corollary to the institution of Russian autocracy, a basic argument against the cliché of tsarist 'absolutism' is clear: the maintenance of autocracy was conditional upon the incumbent's observance of its regulations. A slight digression while on the subject of church: an indirect way of deriving dynastic legitimacy, particularly when the ruler either lacks personal charisma, or the circumstances of his succession or accession undermined his personal charisma, comes from clerical endorsement. Weber, in his definition, claims clerical charisma to issue from an otherworldly way of life,<sup>67</sup> but contact with the administrative power, its role is entirely secular, as it poses as the guardian of tradition and as a 'domesticator', particularly in schools and the army. The overwhelmingly secular function of

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<sup>66</sup> Bendix, *Max Weber*, 311.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of clerical charisma, see: Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber*, 314–318.

the Orthodox Church in nineteenth-century Romanov Empire, even under Alexander III, can be observed as Orthodox ritual permeates the military ritual and everyday life with the scope of nationalising the diverse range of recruits by cultivating their commitment to Orthodoxy.

Expanding on Bendix's binary distinction between personal and institutional charisma, Eisenstadt offers a more differentiated range of charismatic manifestations, such as charisma of the office or prominence within the entourage of the ruler, which has nothing to do with kinship or dynastic succession.<sup>68</sup> The essential principle that lay at the basis of these categories works in opposite direction: for a ruling house, succession to managing state affairs takes priority of the personal qualifications to exercise this prerogative, while among serving officialdom personal qualification took priority over succession.<sup>69</sup> Bendix explains that this is "related to the fact that familial charisma refers primarily to the identity of the rulers and their descendents and has little bearing on the functioning of an organisation; institutional charisma, on the other hand, refers primarily to the organisation and depends little on the personal identity of the ruler."<sup>70</sup> While this schematic dichotomy is rooted in an idealised form of constitutional monarchy, this study will expose the numerous inter-crossings of kin and institution at the service of one another for a more nuanced understanding of both. A caveat regarding the transfer of charisma suggests its fluidity. Bendix pointed to the very separation of the 'charisma of the office' from the merit of the incumbent meaning that charisma can, in fact, be learned. While heroic and superior qualities are being emphasized from birth, if latent, they can be reactivated through by means of regeneration and/or reinterpretation of personality;<sup>71</sup> Weber calls this a *charismatic education*.<sup>72</sup> As Grand Duke Alexandr Alexandrovich unexpectedly inherited the throne,

<sup>68</sup> Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, xxii.

<sup>69</sup> Bendix, *Max Weber*, 312.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2:1142.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 2:1145.

charismatic education prove both pressing and problematic considering that his formative experience and education had already been completed.

Having discussed to some length the formulation of a charismatic tone from within, the study would like to emphasize the inter-dependency of the charismatic leader or charismatic authority and his polity. In institution-building, including the institution of autocracy, this amalgam of the ordinary and the charismatic is “built up through the varied responses and interactions between people or groups who, in order to implement their varied goals, undertake processes of exchange with other people or groups.”<sup>73</sup> But as Eisenstadt also explained, the exchange “takes place between people placed in structurally different positions [...] their very aspirations are influenced by their differential placement in the social structure [...] the terms of exchange [...] are at least partially derived from charismatically charged goals and norms.”<sup>74</sup> The institution is, therefore, built and maintained not only on the basis of “an exchange of various institutional resources”, but also of individuals or group who are able to formulate a broad orientations and those who are willing to accept them. One of the major aims of this study is to understand how modalities of interaction shaped the institutional order and vice-versa. Eisenstadt and Roniger identify four dimensions that shaped such interaction:

- (i) structural and symbolic differentiation of institutional sphere (example: how to qualify the symbolic meaning of the position of the over-procurator of the Holy Synod and its relative position in the hierarchy of the state apparatus?);
- (ii) the degree to which different institutional spheres are structured to the same principle (example: understanding the different principle at the heart of the institution of autocracy and specialised, sometimes even technically skilled, ministries and the Council of Ministers);
- (iii) the degree of clarity with which such principles are applied to different institutional spheres (example: understanding the need of the autocrat to transcend sacral symbolist and step into the bureaucracy to maintain control of it);

<sup>73</sup> Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, xxxviii.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxviii–xxxix.

(iv) the clarity in specifying the degree of autonomous access of different groups to centres of political and cultural power (example: the formation of Sviashchennaia Druzhyna signalled the recruitment into the corridors of power will proceed under the guidance and patronage of the senior members of Druzhyna).

The relative lack of clarity when it comes to regulating different institutional spheres and criteria of access to the political and cultural centres are conducive to a diminishing trust in institutions and generate a widespread dependency on interpersonal relations to secure desired political outcomes or access to the political centre. In late Imperial Russia, the absence of a cabinet system allowed ministers both wide room for manoeuvre within their respective ministries and direct access to the tsar, whose favour superseded the need to coordinate policy with other ministers. The minister thus enjoyed a great deal of discretion over the administration of the domain entrusted to him, with the success of his policy endeavours depending directly upon his personal influence on the tsar. In the first half of the nineteenth this situation opened the way for the free floating politicians - concept articulated by Alfred J. Rieber in several articles.<sup>75</sup> The free floater, Rieber explains, while having neither rank, nor wealth nor connections, was a highly influential member of the imperial entourage due either to his comprehensive grasp of complex and technical skill or his talent in administration. The jurisdiction of a free floater was administrative rather than narrowly specialised, which allowed him to 'float' from one ministerial task to another. Virtually independent of the need to shore up support within ministerial circles, the free-floater only needed to demonstrate to the tsar that he was indispensable to the functioning of the system. In a definition that closely describes the status of a free floater, Max Weber emphasizes that charisma, in contrast to bureaucratic organization, "knows no formal and regulated

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<sup>75</sup> 'Free floater,' 'patronage network,' 'opinion group,' and 'extra-bureaucratic interest group' have been first suggested by Alfred J. Rieber in "Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia," *Social Science History* (2):4, Summer 1978. "Interest-Group Politics in the Era of the Great Reforms" in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, ed. Ben Elko, John Bushnell, Larissa Zakharova, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994). "Patronage and Professionalism: the Witte system," in *Problemy Vsemirnoy Istorii: Sbornik statei v chest' Aexandra Alexandrovicha Fursenko*, (M.: "Dmitrii Bulanin," 2000).



appointment or dismissal, no career, advancement or salary, no supervisory or appeals body, no local or purely technical jurisdiction, and no permanent institutions [...], which are independent of their incumbents and their personal charisma;’ during the first half of the nineteenth century, A.A. Arakcheev has been perhaps the most famous, or infamous, free floater. Upon the accession of Alexander III, the attempt by M.T. Loris-Melikov to re-establish the position of a free floater was undercut, without an alternative presented in his stead. However, the study will distinguish between the free floater, whose experience and expertise were directed toward a clear political aim, from the ‘personal agents of the tsar’, who had no special area of expertise and stood at the guard of the decision-making processes, rather than drove its initiatives. The figure of K.P. Pobedonostsev, which has gained notoriety though its almost exclusive proximity and influence on the tsar requires some consideration. This study sets forth two arguments on account of Pobedonostsev: first, that his influence was never, in fact, fully consummated, since throughout his service he remained unable to formulate a clear political programme or decisive plan of action. S.G. Stroganov remarked that K.P. Pobedonostsev was an obdurate critic of what must not be done, but had never offered a solution of his own, unlike the imaginative Arakcheev. Secondly, rather than being specifically charged with the handling of policy formulations and decision, Pobedonostsev was a factor of control, intervention and intelligence, rather than initiative. As one of the courtiers put it, Pobedonostsev was the ‘eyes and ears of the tsar’. State Secretary E.A. Peretts remarked that Pobedonostsev was less a statesman than a moralist and his formal position as the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, above all, endowed him with a moral authority, which Alexander III hoped would keep in check the ministers whom he did not trust.<sup>76</sup> However, Pobedonostsev’s charismatic capacity, particularly in his influence over appointments within the highest ranks of bureaucracy and his game-changing interventions,

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<sup>76</sup> Peretts. Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa. p. 63.

should not be underestimated. This study will henceforth refer to Pobedonostsev as a personal agent of the tsar.

The practice of personal politics, of which ‘personal agents’ are only one aspect, owed itself also to the lack of solidarity within the service elite, which translated into persistent competition and fragmentation of these elites, dependent on the personal favours of the tsar rather than on collegial support. In the definition of Eisenstadt and Roniger, in conditions where “no category of social actors enjoys a ‘corporate’ legitimization of its attempts to assure position and resources for itself, [...] through autonomous access to the major controlling agencies that regulate the flow of resources and the allocation of positions”<sup>77</sup> relations of patronage and clientelism are bound to emerge. This study aims to understand how the process of restructuring trust in a society shapes modes of interaction and institutional frameworks.

Eisenstadt and Roniger observed that patron-client relationships are based on a strong element of inequality and disparity of power between patron and client; essentially, it is the “monopolisation by the patron of certain positions which are of crucial importance for the client.”<sup>78</sup> The inequality of patron-client relationship is established from the start, whereby the patron allows the client access into his special resources, closed to others, whether this resource is material, a contact or the ability to secure employment, in return for the client being expected to embrace the values and the agenda of the patron.<sup>79</sup> Patron-client relationships “are usually particularistic and diffuse [...] characterised by the simultaneous exchange of different types of resources, above all political and economic, on premises of reciprocity, solidarity, loyalty on the other.”<sup>80</sup> In the present study of the high corridors of

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<sup>77</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society*, Themes in the Social Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 213.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 213–214.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 48.

power, 'clients' were usually members of the upper ranks of ministerial bureaucracy or state departments, usually came under the influence of a personal agent of the tsar. The personal agent seeks not a constituency of supporters to outweigh the rival opinion group - he deemed his relationship with the tsar a better guarantee of his influence. Instead, he looked to extend his control over the committee itself by replacing members of the rival opinion group with his loyal clients, who looked forward to the career prospects. Pobedonostsev's stable of clients serves as one example of patronage relationships: N.M. Baranov, M.N. Ostrovskii, baron Nikolai. Clients are particularly difficult to place in the 'liberal-conservative' dichotomy because, despite their high ranking positions in the bureaucracy, they were not entirely independent agents: the trajectory of their career depended on the political weight of their patrons, and they could have more than one patron. Pobedonostsev underestimated the relationship A.P. Nikolai entertained with A.V. Golovin at the time of Nikolai's appointment to the Ministry of Education and was soon disappointed with him. Because clients were generally regarded as extensions of their patrons, their appointment by a third party could mean a gesture to gain the favour of the patron rather than a testimony to the client's skill. For example, M.T. Loris-Melikov's appointment of N.M. Baranov as Petersburg's mayor could not have meant a sudden appreciation of Baranov's administrative talent following the scandal with the Navy Ministry; rather, it was an attempt to gain the favour of Baranov's patrons, Pobedonostsev and the heir.

The element of mutual solidarity, and, in a certain sense, trust, operates in relation to the division of labour, which the institution of specialised ministries in 1801, each with a prescribed sphere of jurisdiction, in place of diffuse responsibilities of a collegial system, certainly reflect. Patron-client relationships serve as modes of institutional recruitment particularly where no code regulates qualifications for attaining prerogatives or access to resources, Bendix's definition is telling:

He [the Tsar] empowers his officials from case to case, selecting and assigning them specific tasks on the basis of his personal confidence in them and without establishing any consistent division of labour among them. The officials in turn treat their administrative work for the ruler as a personal service based on their duty of obedience and respect. [...] In other words, patrimonial administration is administration and adjudication from case to case, combining the discretionary exercise of personal authority with due regard for sacred tradition or certain fixed rights of individuals (emphasis added).<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, where uncertainty governed access to resources, as well as the loss of this access, patron-client relationships by virtue of their durability (let us first assume these relationships do last some time) are able to secure institutional stability, immunity from frequent, destabilising change of cadres and, most importantly, institutional integration. In the words of Eisenstadt and Roniger

the client 'buys', as it were, protection, first against the exigencies of markets or nature; second, against the arbitrariness of weakness of the centre, or against the demands of other strong people or groups. The price the client plays is not just the rendering of a specific service but his acceptance of the patron's control over his (the client's) access to the markets [of power –AC] and to public goods [resources], as well as over his ability to fully convert some of his own resources<sup>82</sup>

At least in principle, the patron-client relationship is voluntary, although not fully legal or formally contractual, and has at its root a sense of mutual obligation.<sup>83</sup> While the rules of the exchange are not subject to formal negotiation, the misunderstandings between parties as to the terms of exchange, not to mention that the terms of exchange can be and often are changed and manipulated as parties may alter their agenda or their spheres of interaction, in more extreme forms take the shape of power struggles. Eisenstadt also makes allowance for the unevenness of commitment to the institution and its values among the participants. Some may entirely oppose the norms of the institution, others may accept them, but while seeing themselves at the superior reservoirs of the same values.<sup>84</sup> This project will

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<sup>81</sup> Bendix, *Max Weber*, 345.

<sup>82</sup> Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends*, 214.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>84</sup> Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, xlv.

reflect on the causes and dangers of such unstable alliances. The particular interest of this study in a period of crises at the accession of Alexander III is that it clearly shows the alignment of political agents.<sup>85</sup>

With the same aim as patron-client relationships, to make unpredictable situations more predictable by ‘providing for mutual support against surprise upsets from within or without,’<sup>86</sup> but also to maintain a certain order in which their members can persist, ministerial interest groups, composed of several ministers or heads of departments, concentrated around a minister with greatest access to the tsar, a personal agent or a relative of the tsar. Members of an interest group shared a common view of a certain issue, which was being opposed wither by a rival group or by a powerful personal agent. The *raison d’être* of interest groups is conflict or potential conflict, and it mobilises patrisans irrespective of their expertise or prerogative over the issue at stake. Ju.V. Gote described the period between the accession of Alexander III and the issue of the April 29 Manifesto as a “political struggle [...] of two opposite groups,”<sup>87</sup> but this warranted neither a common set of political persuasions within with group beyond the subject at stake, nor a record of good terms of among its members. Beyond personal convictions, informal relationships often played a decisive role in the alignment of positions on main debates. Ralph Nicholas in his discussion of interest groups – although he calls them ‘factions’ - identifies members of the group being recruited on diverse basis, usually depending on the resources the potential member has at his disposal: kin ties, patron-client relations, politico-economic advantage, to be mobilised by the

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Kenny, *A Spanish Tapestry: Town and Country in Castile* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1962) as cited in Eric R. Wolf, “Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies,” in *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientilism*, ed. Steffen W. Schmidt et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>87</sup> Ju.V. Gote, “Boriba za politicheskoe vliianoe v pervie mesiatsy Tsarstvovaniia Aleksandra III,” (Moskva: Izd-vo M. I S. Sabashnikovykh,” 1929), MS-RSL 261.16.2 p.4

leader of the group standing at its leadership toward the agenda of the common.<sup>88</sup> Unlike a personal agent, the interest group aimed not so much at maximising their influence over the tsar, as at the immediate approval of the policy project it advocated - quality that characterises the lack of permanence of these groups, but as Nichols puts it, it does not mean that they may not persist for a long period of time.<sup>89</sup>

The element of coordination is key for the interest group and supersedes previous conflicts in order to achieve an immediate policy objective. The absence of coordination distinguishes an opinion group from a set of individuals with converging opinions, like the opposition to Loris's project. A coordinated alliance allowed the pursuit of an immediate policy goal, which did not mean that opinions have by then converged or that the group was hermetic. In this respect, Bendix underlined the paradox of the ruler's 'absolute' authority and his impotence against the collectivity of his officialdom [which] demands for a reciprocity of obligations."<sup>90</sup> The limits to the 'autocratic rule' increased particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the tsar was increasingly responsible for attracting functionaries both able and willing to provide their services, meaning that the tsar had to limit his demands on them to the realm of the possible and to treat them with dignity.<sup>91</sup> The idea that political opponents are not physically or economically prosecuted, or sent into exile, but retired to honourable posts, like in the State Council or even to the chair of the Committee of Ministers is not to be taken for granted in a patrimonial context.

Still, with patrimonialism as a dominant framework, gentry families continued to staff the high ranks of imperial bureaucracy throughout the nineteenth century, their traditional opposition to technical education and the increasing volume and complexity of

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<sup>88</sup> Ralph W. Nicholas, "Factions: A Comparative Analysis," in *Friends, Followers, and Factions: a Reader in Political Clientelism*, ed. Steffen W. Schmidt et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 58.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Bendix, *Max Weber*, 333.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

state affairs, prompted the widening of the social basis for bureaucratic recruitment. The most influential men in the empire no longer had to come from the old elite, instead they were recruited from institutions of higher education and positions of high technical specialisation. Some became powerful free floating favourites of the tsar (M.T. Loris-Melikov, K.P. Pobedonostsev), others rose through networks of patronage to lead interest groups (D.A. Tolstoy), yet others used extra-bureaucratic positions to infiltrate within the state apparatus (I.A. Vyshnegradskii, M.N. Katkov, I.S. Aksakov). With economy as the first locus of charismatic authority, Eisenstadt identified entrepreneurs as a challenge to bureaucracy monopoly in the game to “set up broad orientations, to propound new norms, and to articulate new goals.”<sup>92</sup> Weber’s own broad concepts of demands and utility call for the inclusion of extra-bureaucratic political agents - like entrepreneurial circles, but also press – both of which shaped solutions to ‘calculable needs with ordinary, everyday means.’ The rise of extra-bureaucratic political agents took two forms in post-Crimean Russia: press lords and entrepreneurial interest groups. Press lords<sup>93</sup> emerged out of the failure of the government to establish an official public organ of press, both as its informative and ideological tribune during the 1860s -70s.<sup>94</sup> But the scarcity of journalistic talent ready to submit to state service<sup>95</sup> allowed the state to create only dry, informative bodies – *Severnaya*

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<sup>92</sup> Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, xxxix.

<sup>93</sup> Here, M.N. Katkov, I.S. Aksakov, V.P. Meshcherskii. The study will not include all editors who were in the service of the state, such as N.F. Pavlov because of the shortlived existence and utter fiasco of *Nashe Vremia*; A.A. Kraevskii and V.A. Bil’basov because of Valuev’s continuous pressures on *Golos*; N.P. Emilianov because of the loss of authority of *Otgosloski* as Valuev’s ‘own periodical’, albeit at the expense of State Properties; M.A. Silaev because the immoderate views of *Bereg* warranted it a very low readership; V. Korsh because his *St.-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* at once became an instrument in the hands of ‘konstantinovtsy’. All of these semi-official periodicals were either promptly revealed to be enjoying the subsidy of the state or failed to secure a wide enough readership. Unlike Katkov, Aksakov and Meshcherskii these editors were in a subordinate position in relation to their powerful patrons, at times humiliating as in the case of A.A. Kraevskii.

<sup>94</sup> See Shchebaliskii P.K., *Istoricheskie Svedeniia o Tsenzure v Rossii*, (S.-Peterburg: F. Person, 1862), p. 66-71; Engelhardt, N.A., *Ocherk Istorii Russkoi Tsenzury v svyazi s Razvitiem Pechati: 1703-1903*, (St.-Peterburg: A.S. Suvorin, 1904), p. 181-183, 233-243.

<sup>95</sup> In 1861 B.N. Chicherin declined the personal and exceedingly courteous invitation by P.A. Valuev, then Minister of Interior, to contribute to a new ministerial daily *Severnaia Pochta*. Chicherin argued his decision with the need of “freedom and independence” in writing - the preconditions of sincere exposition, which alone could influence public views. Another candidate, a well-respected publisher S.S. Gromeka, also declined the editorial position. V.G. Chernukha, *Pravitel’svennaia Politika v otnoshenii pechati*, p. 88.

*Pochta, Russkii Invalid, Pravitelstvennyi Vestnik*, with a negligible claim to public influence.<sup>96</sup> In these conditions, state promotion of ideological messages through official periodicals was precluded by autocracy's fear of a polemical confrontation with the private press, or worse – the prospect of defeat at the hand of its prominent, expert contributors like B.N. Chicherin, N.Kh. Bunge, or V.I. Lamanskii.

By 1858, the idea of creating a state press organ was underway, that 'would counter public dissatisfaction, but at the same time would have a public logo.'<sup>97</sup> These were to be entrusted to several editors, who would enjoy privileged access to information, state subsidies, and other benefits.<sup>98</sup> The first experiments with "Nashe Vremya," "Golos," "Ogoloski," and "Bereg" showed that government subsidies could not remain secret for long and ultimately discredited the periodical; neither were these publications able to amass a wide readership. Later, more lasting arrangement were built with periodicals on the basis of stable liaisons within the state apparatus: M.N. Katkov's positions were secured through the good offices of K.P. Pobedonostsev and D.A. Tolstoy; I.S. Aksakov's views enjoyed the personal sympathy of Alexander III, and V.P. Meshcherskii was a childhood friend of Alexander III. But, in the absence of a unified government ('cabinet'), ministerial in-fighting was bound to attempt to recruit press in its support, giving the latter a factional character; for instance Golos was the political tribune of 'konstantinovtsy' from 1865 to 1881.<sup>99</sup> The positions of the semi-official periodical were dependent on its patron: after the retirement of A.V. Golovin, the new minister of education D.A. Tolstoy, relied

<sup>96</sup> Two changes are remarkable in this respect: the transformation of censorship from control of discourse to a formulation of discourse conform state agenda; the unprecedented role of independence as the cornerstone of a journalist's reputation.

<sup>97</sup> V.G. Chernukha, *Pravitel'stvennaia Politika v otnoshenii pechati 60-70e gody XIX veka*, (Leningrad: "Nauka" Leningradskoe Otdelienie, 1989), pp. 99-100.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. pp. 85-87.

<sup>99</sup> Among the contributors were prominent V.P. Bezobrazov, N.Kh. Bunge, I.V. Vernadskii, A.D. and G.K. Gradovskii, N.A. Korf, V.I. Lamanskii, V.A. Tatarinov.



primarily on ~~Katkov's Moskovskie Vedomosti~~. The press lords viewed their position not only as a tribune for official information and critic of the revolutionary movement; they had their own program of social demands, which promoted regardless the patron. The government appreciated its press lords for hearty lashing of the revolutionary movement, but unable to satisfy the aggressive demands of Katkov for exclusive rights of nobility or Aksakov for '*narodnost*' without estates, did not hesitate to put even these favourites in check for their reproaches. Secondly, editors were able ex catedra to manipulate client ministers in pursuit of their own agenda, thereby at times taking almost complete control of legislative processes. D.A. Tolstoy's inability to formulate a policy on the classical 'gymnasiums' prompted him to turn to M.N. Katkov and P.M. Leontiev, who had their own ready draft. Lacking in popularity and support within the ministerial circles, the embattled and isolated Tolstoy sought to maintain a relationship with Moskovskie Vedomosti, painfully submitting to Katkov's uncompromising positions. E.M. Feoktistov calls Katkov's relationship with Tolstoy a 'tutelage' [*opeka*].<sup>100</sup> On other occasions, when orders to publish on a certain subject were accompanied by vague instructions, often because of the minister's own vague understanding of the subject, press lords enjoyed an opportunity to 'spin' it to their advantage.<sup>101</sup> Controlling the process from a distance was difficult and the idea in print may have appeared rather different from what the official orders originally intended. The inability of the government to control the press testifies to an entire sphere of socio-political life slipping from under its control and profound fragmentation within the

<sup>100</sup> E.M. Feoktistov discusses at some length Tolstoy's difficult, but as it seems vital relationship with the press and Katkov in particular. See E.M. Feoktistov, *Za Kulisami Politiki i Literatury*, (M.: Novosti, 1991), p. 177-191.

<sup>101</sup> Prompted by M.N. Katkov and P.M. Leontiev and well as by his aversion toward the former minister of education A.V. Golovin, D.A. Tolstoy launched a campaign in defence of classicism, but –according to E.M. Feoktistov – had a very remote understanding of it. As always, he felt the need for action, but what exactly must be done was a mystery to him. He turned to Katkov and Leontiev, who had long since formulated their own conception of the changes that must be done to Golovin's reforms. E.M. Feoktistov, *Za Kulisami Politiki i Literatury*, (M.: Novosti, 1991), p. 177.

highest ranks of bureaucracy.

The first significant entrepreneurial interest group began to emerge in Moscow in the late 1850's and early 1860's, when a number of reforms, including the emancipation of serfs, were primed to transform economic life in Russia. Continuous disagreement and conflict with economic bureaucracy prompted Moscow entrepreneurs to influence policy-making through the press and vigorous lobbying of members of the Council of Ministers and the royal family.<sup>102</sup> In the following two decades, the entrepreneurial group gained influence to the extent that it took direct participation in deliberations on tariff, railroads, and foreign capital, seeking maximum leeway on entrepreneurial activity and protection against powerful foreign investors. Rieber suggests that the success of their special relationship with bureaucracy lay with the narrow scope of their direct participation, limited to their entrepreneurial and editorial activity; only later and very cautiously did they move into the area of zemstvo politics. As long as the basic principle of autocracy remained intact, entrepreneurial interest groups were able to gain central ground in political life, competing with ministers and factions for influence over decision-making, and infiltrating the high ranks of bureaucracy to secure policy outcomes. The high cost of relying predominantly on foreign capital and know-how obliged the government to heed the demands of Moscow entrepreneurs, who were responsible for building the modern infrastructure in the Central Provinces, including the railroad network, technical schools, and the banking and insurance systems.

In the Russian Empire of the late nineteenth century social and political structures were complex, and depended not so much on ideological persuasions of the incumbent

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<sup>102</sup> Alfred J. Rieber in "Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia," pp. 410-411; "The Moscow Entrepreneurial Group: The Emergence of a New Form in Autocratic Politics: II," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge* (25):2, 1977, esp. pp. 197-199.

monarch, which has been so overwhelmingly emphasised by the historiography of the field, but on a set underlying sociological constructs and their implicit assumptions, which this chapter has set out to explore. Having established the basis of monarchic succession and its conditions, the discussion that follows will investigate the particular choices made by Alexander III in this framework and the limitations it confronted him with. The discussion above has also attempted to demonstrate how modes of interaction and the subsequent institutions into which they solidified emerged not merely from certain values and assumptions, but through the continuous dialogue between these values and the negotiation of modes of interaction. Having shown how extra-bureaucratic factors contribute to the 'routine satisfaction of needs', the chapters to follow will also show how these factors become powerful political agents and increasingly shape the agenda of the state.

## **CHAPTER 1: ALEXANDER III – THE MAKING OF A RUSSIAN TSAR**

A study of Alexander III's style of governance, or what Richard Wortman has called 'scenario of power', necessitates an exploration of Alexander's formative pre-accession experiences. This chapter will examine a variety of such experiences. Alexander's relationship with his family, his upbringing and his relationship with his environment, namely the court, will reveal his social habits that lay the foundations for his mode of interaction already as emperor. During the rule of Nikolai I, the image of the emperor underwent a demystification, evolving from the status of a demi-god 'seeking truth in isolation', to the image of a human, with superior talents and moral probity, tending to the needs of the empire. In the process of preparation of an heir for his accession, education was emerging as the dominant feature. This chapter's exploration into Alexander's educational experience will illuminate both his capacity and inclinations, while the selection of tutors will hint at the ideological sympathies of the ruling parent. Finally, Alexander's apprenticeship in matters of the state establish telling continuities both on the level of ideological persuasion and personal conflict. The demystification of autocracy in the early nineteenth century began to place increased emphasis on the popular reception of the monarch. Although consequent Russian monarchs continued to believe in their divine appointment, the latter ceased to be the only source of charismatic authority, personal traits and distinctions were to become new sources of charisma. The aim of the chapter is, therefore, to observe how Alexander's emerging personality was crafted – indeed, it had to be crafted, considering the imminence of his accession – into a source of charismatic authority.

### **1.1 Upbringing, Family, Environment**

Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovich, future Alexander III (1845-1894), was the second eldest son of tsar Alexander II and by the right of primogeniture was not meant to inherit the Russian throne. The initial heir to the throne was the first-born son of Alexander

II, Grand Duke Nikolai Alexandrovich, who was two years Alexander Alexandrovich's senior. While Nikolai Alexandrovich was a family favourite, displaying a keenness for study and court engagements, Alexander Alexandrovich grew up in on the margin of imperial court. Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich is said to have mentioned that "all the attention of the late emperor and empress was focused on the rearing of *tsesarevch* Nikolai Alexandrovich, who was considered near perfect. The present Emperor [Alexander III] and [Grand Duke] Vladimir Alexandrovich were in their childhood and adolescence left almost exclusively to their own devices."<sup>103</sup> Despite Alexander's modest results in education, even his relentless tutor B.A. Perovskii defended the young Grand Duke from accusations of idleness, pointing rather to the relative neglect in which he was being brought up.<sup>104</sup> Alexander's mother, Empress Maria Alexandrovna, presence in Alexander's life was defined mostly by correspondence as she frequently undertook lengthy sanatorium stays abroad, driven from the damp St.-Petersburg by alleged by respiratory illness as well as by her husband's unconcealed affairs at the court. Alexandra Tolstaya, lady-in-waiting to Maria Alexandrovna, wrote in her journal that of all her children, it was the young Alexander who was most distant from the empress.<sup>105</sup> Most revealing were the empress's letters to Tolstaya that spoke of her distress at the nine-year old Alexander's "hateful resemblance with Paul I."<sup>106</sup>

Alexander Alexandrovich had a cool relationship with his father as well, to whom he was called for little more than the regular reprimand following B.A. Perovskii's reports; Alexander II, who had little regard for his son's capacities, called him '*bychok*'.<sup>107</sup> Their difficult, at times highly strained relationship, to a considerable degree, owed itself to the

<sup>103</sup> Grand duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, as cited by E.A. Peretts. *Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa*, ed.A.E. Presnyakov and A.A. Sergeev. Moscow-Leningrad: Gos Izd-vo, 1927. p. 46. Entry from 9 March 1881.

<sup>104</sup> B.A. Perovskii, as quoted in Alexandr Bokhanov. *Imperator Alexandr III*, 23.

<sup>105</sup> A. Tolstaya as cited in Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 165.

<sup>106</sup> Empress Maria Alexandrovna as cited in *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>107</sup> From Russian: 'young steer'.

emperor's numerous romantic adventures at the court, particularly with Maria Alexandrovna's ladies-in-waiting. In the last decade of his life, Alexander II was involved with one lady-in-waiting, E.M. Dolgorukaya, who was two years Alexander Alexandrovich's junior; they appeared together at the court, lived together, and had three common children. Alexander Alexandrovich, who was very protective of his mother in spite or unwitting of her aloofness, resented his father for his unconcealed amorous adventures. The definitive break came when Alexander II secretly married Dolgorukaya in 1880, granted her the title of Princess Yurievskiaia, and legitimised her children mere forty days after the death of Maria Alexandrovna.<sup>108</sup>

Despite differences of treatment, young Alexander Alexandrovich was attached to his brother Nikolai, whom he both admired for his intelligence and ease in society, and pitied for the role he was expected to fulfill. Alexander frequently expressed relief that 'this cup had passed from him' and since early childhood fretted at the mere thought of the tremendous task that awaited his brother.<sup>109</sup> Alexander expected a life of largely ceremonial functions. Siblings of heirs to the throne enjoyed a relatively independent lifestyles, assuming symbolic posts in the military apparatus or in state institutions. They could live abroad, marry foreigners and even marry down, seek divorce, lose fortunes to gambling, live lives of scandal and debauch, and could still expect their position at the court to remain unchanged. For instance, Alexander's younger brother, Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich subsequently spent most of his time in amorous adventures and ruinous card games; Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich indulged in court distractions and gluttony;<sup>110</sup> Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich was famous for his debauches among officers at the Preobrazhenskii Guard

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<sup>108</sup> The tension was exacerbated not the least because Alexander II once categorically prohibited the love-struck Alexander Alexandrovich to enter into a morganatic marriage with a lady-in-waiting, M.E. Meshcherskaya - a relative of the editor of *Grazhdanin* - and renounce his right to the throne.

<sup>109</sup> Bokhanov, *Alexander III*, 56.

<sup>110</sup> A.A. Polovtsov as quoted in Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe Samoderzhavie*, 51.

Regiment.<sup>111</sup> This marginal role of royal siblings reflects the expectations Alexander grew up with, which might explain his meagre academic progress and relative alienation from the court.

After turning twenty in 1863, Nikolai's royal duties increased, and the same year he toured Russia with his father. The following year, in 1864, he was sent to Europe to introduce himself to royal houses and to find a bride from amongst the Danish princesses.<sup>112</sup> But the time of Nikolai's departure from Russia coincided with the worsening of his kidney disease. Following an English fashion of water therapy introduced by his grandfather Nikolai I, Nikolai Alexandrovich was prescribed cold water diving ('закаливание') in the Dutch reefs. He fell ill whilst in Italy and on arrival to Nice died of meningitis on April 12, 1865. Alexander Alexandrovich, at the age of twenty, who since childhood could not but commiserate with his brother's lot, became heir apparent.

Clearly, Alexander Alexandrovich was ill-suited for the throne. At twenty, his formal education was already completed, and as for someone who did not plan to use it, without particular distinction. His chilly relationship with the court was formed as well: the court paid Alexander little more than the formal respects and was at times quite cruel - Countess Kleinmichel once even compared him to a peasant Kalmyk<sup>113</sup> - an Alexander paid back in kind. Having long endured the aloofness of the courtiers, Alexander Alexandrovich had no illusions about their flattery after becoming heir apparent. During Nikolai's lifetime, he had no interest in cultivating relationships at the court, since the prospects of a close relationship were hardly promising. At the Russian court, royal siblings traditionally forged relationships at court mostly for political aims, and young Alexander, expecting Nikolai to become emperor, was rather indifferent. Nikolai's death was a sobering experience, indeed. It must

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>112</sup> Russia had an interest in a Danish alliance to secure the Baltic Sea from German domination.

<sup>113</sup> Countess M. Kleinmichel, as cited in Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, vol 2, 165.

be noted, however, that the status quo of the heir – his special education, socialisation and participation in the affairs of the state -, as well as the marginalisation of potential pretenders to the throne, can be viewed as a preventative measure against competition between the royal siblings that could lead to a power struggle upon accession.

This ‘segregation’ of the imperial siblings raises the question of whether the scenario of power can be influenced by the circumstances in which one becomes the heir to the throne. Expectations play a tremendous role where the stakes are so high, and make a difference between being *born heir*, like Alexander I and Alexander II, and *becoming heir*, like Alexander III, or, as an even more extreme example, unexpectedly inheriting the throne like Nikolai I. Since *becoming* an heir to the throne involves an element of the unexpected – and, again, where the stakes are so high, the unexpected carries the substance of a ‘micro-crisis’ -, heirs who unexpectedly receive the throne, it seems, aim at conserving a pre-existing order, rather than reforming it. Heirs, who are from very early on aware of their lot, benefit from special preparation, experience and have time to ponder their program,<sup>114</sup> appear to be driven by an urge to introduce change to the pre-existing order, rather just preserving it. Critics of this hypothesis will argue that Alexander III had at his disposal fifteen years, between becoming heir in 1865 and acceding to the throne in 1881, to ponder his program, socialise with the affairs of the state, and forge relationships at the court. But, a closer look at Alexander’s apprenticeship at the hands of his father during these fifteen years, reveals alienation, rather than preparation for the role he was obliged to assume.

## 1.2 Apprenticeship in the Affairs of the State

During the fifteen years Alexander Alexandrovich was heir to the Russian throne, his father reluctantly socialized him into the affairs of the state and thought little of his

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Werner Eugen Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 29-32, 35-37.



capabilities even after his success in the 1868 hunger relief charity handling. After the death of Nikolai, young Alexander began to attend the sessions of the State Council, the Committee of Ministers, and various other committees, but was never made a member. His involvement in the affairs of the state was rather limited, owing both to his distant relationship with his father and because, truth be told, he displayed little interest in such matters. Alexander's personal diaries do not discuss matters at stake in the Council or committees, noting merely that he "read and wrote" without indicating the content of activities.<sup>115</sup> Matters that did interest Alexander received, on the other hand, plenty of attention. The same diary combines a daily, stupidly dutiful weather ledger, a register of hunting and fishing expeditions with detailed descriptions of the game and its dimensions, calculations of the number of miles he walked during a given period, and what would resemble the porter's records of visits and departures from the court. With the amount of time allowed for preparation for the throne, it does not seem Alexander prepared much for the tremendous duty that awaited him.<sup>116</sup>

Alexander's debut, and one of his formative experiences, took place in the summer of 1868, when, aged 23, chaired the Committee of Ministers while his father was touring Europe. It was during this time that *La grande société des chemins de fer russes* and the Moscow entrepreneurial group were battling over concessions on the lucrative Kharkov-Kremenchuk railway. Alexander expressed indignation at the terms of the French contract, which were nevertheless unanimously supported in the Committee of Ministers. His opposition to French concessions was sharply rebuked by his father as reflecting the slander of the Moscow group.<sup>117</sup> Only after his own accession did Alexander III learn about the several million-franc deposits made by railway magnates in the banks of London and Paris

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<sup>115</sup> Alexander III. *Pamiatnye Knizhki*, 1880-1882. GARF 677/1/269-272; *Dnevnik*, 1880-1881, GARF 677/1/308.

<sup>116</sup> *Dnevnik*, 1880-1881, GARF 677/1/308.

<sup>117</sup> Alexandr Bokhanov, *Emperor Alexander III*, 171-172.

into the accounts of Princess Yurievskaya.<sup>118</sup> In 1869 Alexander made another effort to earn his father's affections by trying to uncover abuse in D.A. Miliutin's War Ministry, but this attempt backfired as well. He was brusquely dismissed as soon as he tried to raise the issue with his father. These incidents left Alexander with an unpleasant impression of intrigue within ministerial circles, sowing the seeds of Alexander's lifelong distrust of bureaucracy, his highly-personal wielding of power, and his blunt, authoritative manner, where he constantly sought to emancipate himself from bureaucracy either by circumventing it or overriding its decision. Alexander's personal conflict with his father, intensifying toward the end of the latter's reign, was not particularly conducive to Alexander developing sympathies toward his father's political agenda.

Alexander's second formative experience was the negotiations with the Minister of Finance, Mikhail Khristoforovich Reutern over funds for the Balkan campaign of 1877-1878, which Alexander considered patriotic and, therefore, morally incumbent upon Russia. Reutern pleaded with Alexander about the high cost of the campaign for Russia's struggling treasury, but Alexander interpreted Reutern's protestations in distinct, unprecedentedly national terms: "And this calls itself a Russian Minister of Finance who understands Russia's interests and dignity; to hell with this heathen German. May God permit us to find at least one genuine minister of finance in Mother Russia among eighty millions of inhabitants!"<sup>119</sup> M.Kh. Reutern was indeed of Baltic German origin, but his family was in the service of the Russian state since the time of Peter I, which is unsurprising considering the general loyalty of Baltic Germans to the Russian throne. But, for Alexander Alexandrovich, the ethnic origins of high-ranking state officials was a sign of loyalty, subject to his suspicion. Already as tsesarevich, Alexander began taking issue with ministers of non-Russian origin, particularly with M.Kh. Reutern and his successor at Ministry of Finance, S.A. Greig. He

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 257.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, vol.2, 186.

was vulnerable to the insinuations of his childhood friend Prince Meshcherskii, who sought to construct for tsesarevich an image of a two-party government: the umbrella-party, headed by P.A. Shuvalov, representing foreigners in the state apparatus striving to stifle the Russian people, and the ‘Russian party.’<sup>120</sup> Language and birth were no longer enough to satisfy Alexander’s conception of ‘Russianness’, which also required a certain political esprit, and a forceful and decisive patriotic manner. During the 1860s and 1870s Alexander began to fashion his own, if vacuous, conception of bureaucracy as an army of ‘real Russian men’, inspired by a national spirit ‘to do good’ for Russia. For Alexander, the ability to ‘do good’ came only through that elusive ‘knowledge of Mother Russia’,<sup>121</sup> accessible, it seems, only to beholders of Russian-sounding last names. The next chapter will place into an integrated context the issue of state officials’ nationality, which – particularly in relation to the Ministry of Finance - involves Slavophile entrepreneurs and their commercial interests. But in what regards Alexander himself, whose overwhelmingly German genealogy undermined his prejudice against foreign – particularly German - officials, prompted his intense projections of himself as what he perceived to be ‘true Russian’.

### 1.3 The Making of a ‘Russian’ Tsar

The imminence of Alexander Alexandrovich’s accession called for him to fashion himself as a charismatic authority to cement his legitimacy as a future ruler of the vast Russian empire; this was a difficult task. Alexander was a man of enormous, bulky stature (see photograph to the right), for which his grandfather, Nikolai I, called him ‘*bogatyr*’,<sup>122</sup> but which made him quite awkward at court events, where European *finesse* was cultivated by his father. He mastered English and German poorly, had good command of French, but at receptions stubbornly and against all etiquette spoke Russian even when he was addressed in French.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>121</sup> Grand duke Alexander Alexandrovich, Letter to B.A. Meshcherskii, August 1867, as cited in Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 183.

<sup>122</sup> In Russian: the like of cavalier warrior.

With Alexander lacking late Nikolai Alexandrovich's effortless gallantry, royal tutors fashioned some of Alexander's maladroitness in a patriotic spirit of what they thought represented Russianness.<sup>123</sup> Alexander's asocial habits at the court were masterfully spun into an unpretentious simplicity and honesty of a 'Russian man'. His sulking manner was presented as a manifestation of personal authority, and his difficulty in verbal expression – as an internal balance and certainty.<sup>124</sup>

#### 1.4 Education

To understand the origins of Alexander's worldviews, we shall turn to his education - a formative process for his worldviews -, and to his tutors as key-authorities in charge of this process. Royal tutors not only had privileged – daily and prolonged - access to their pupils, but in their authoritative capacity, accountable directly to the monarch, tutors were able to formulate conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong' for their tutees, and evaluate them against this scale. The choice of tutors was therefore a strategic decision for the ideological compatibility and continuity within a dynasty, which, ideally being consistent, creates a linear developmental progression and reinforces the legitimacy of the dynasty. Hence, the apparent ideological differences between young Alexander Alexandrovich and his father are surprising, since the choice of tutors should be closely linked with the values and worldviews of the imperial parent.<sup>125</sup> For instance, Alexander II did not hesitate to sack K.D. Kavelin, Nikolai Alexandrovich's tutor of Russian history and jurisprudence, after socialists A.I. Hezen and N.G. Chernyshevskii published excerpts from Kavelin's "*Zapiska*" on the emancipation of serfs. From here, it follows that a closer look at the choice of tutors reveals considerable insight about the ideological commitments of the emperor-parent, and in the

<sup>123</sup> Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, vol 2., 178.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>125</sup> Indeed, how scrupulously tutors were chosen also remains unclear; for example, future Nikolay II had his courses in national economy and economic thought from N.Kh. Bunge after the latter's retirement from the Ministry of Finance, where Alexander III was not particularly keen on him. See: V. L. Stepanov, *N.Kh. Bunge: Sudba Reformatora* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

given case, challenges the watershed between Alexander II and Alexander III reproduced in historiography.

Despite the 'liberal' views traditionally ascribed to Alexander II, the education of the royal offspring was entrusted to S.G. Stroganov (1794-1882) – the tremendously erudite veteran of Napoleonic war, whose understandable opposition to the constitutional fashions of his day marginalised him from the political arena. Under the tutorship of count Stroganov, Nikolai Alexandrovich grew confident that both constitution and parliament were unsuitable for Russia in the near future, and in the first months of Alexander III's accession Stroganov was one of the most trusted aides of the new order, perhaps even more so than K.P. Pobedonostsev. Pobedonostsev, Alexander's tutor of jurisprudence, strove to instill in his pupil a moral-Orthodox prism of looking at the world that would extend to virtually every area of administration, whether industrialisation, education or trade. The predilection for morality was uncharacteristic of Alexander II, whose rather secular outlook and adoration of all things European made the choice of Pobedonostsev unlikely. But, perhaps the most puzzling choice of tutor, considering Alexander II's reliance on Western resources for Russia's industrialisation, was Ivan Kondratievich Babst - hired to instruct young Alexander in political economy. Babst was one of the principal ideologues of Slavophile Moscow entrepreneurs and a financial expert in their service; he was also the editor of Fedor Vasil'evich Chizhov's newspaper *Vestnik Promyshlennosti*. Babst wrote his dissertation on John Law and the financial crisis in France, under the supervision of Timofei Nikolaevich Granovskii, and formulated his ideas of political economy under the influence of the historical school and Wilhelm Roscher before converting to radical Slavophilism.<sup>126</sup> As a tutor to Alexander, Babst persuaded his pupil of the virtues of protectionism, by playing on tsarevich's anti-English and anti-German – notably anti-Bismarkian – sentiments.

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<sup>126</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 174.

Alexander's connection with the Slavophile circles and his sympathy for their agenda lasted throughout his rule, albeit with various intensity. These Slavophil sympathies reflected in many of Alexander's initiatives, like the purchase of the railways from foreign investors in early 1880s, his refusal to borrow from abroad in 1886 when N.Kh. Bunge's measures were not yielding immediate results, and his commitment to the Bulgarian crisis of 1885-1886 – especially since he himself helped take Plevna in 1877. The strategic appointment of tutors sheds more light on the formative processes of imperial heirs, but even this somewhat puzzling cast of tutors selected for Alexander III could pose question to the traditional periodisation of autonomous 'scenarios of power'.

Guarded against determinism and apologetics, this chapter sought to trace elements of Alexander III's scenario of power to his formative pre-accession experiences – his upbringing, education, and socialisation with the affairs of the state. The status quo of Russian heirs to the throne amongst their siblings foresaw little in the way of unexpected turns in dynastic succession as with Nikolai Alexandrovich. In the case of Alexander Alexandrovich, his former marginalisation played a negative role in his subsequent administrative training and integration at the court. This difficulty was further exacerbated by his relatively advanced age, when important formative processes, like education, had already been completed. The family and court environment in which Alexander was raised begins to give an explanation to the certain difficulties he experienced during his fifteen-year long apprenticeship in affairs of the state. Alexander's early frustrations with his father's bureaucracy also begin to explain his own administrative and consultative habits.

## CHAPTER 2: A NEW CONTEXT FOR AUTOCRACY: POST-CRIMEAN WAR RUSSIA

The following chapter will look into the broader political context of post-Crimean Russia, the issues at stake, and the political agents involved, as they shaped some of Alexander's formative experiences, core values, and habits. The chapter will argue that some of the essential elements of Alexander III's scenario of power— like the assertion of the national element in cultural, social and economic spheres, the reliance of personal politics, the strong autocratic manner —, in fact, reflect issues, political forces and the spirit of Russia's post-Crimean context. While the political agents that shaped the post-Crimean context were far more complex and diverse, the entrepreneurial interest group, pioneered by Alfred J. Rieber, is a heuristically valuable “mode of analyzing Russian social change in the second half of the nineteenth century”.<sup>127</sup> A powerful force on the scene of post-Crimean Russia, entrepreneurs, with the help of nationalist intellectuals and subsidized press, have left variegated and insightful source material that reflects both their socioeconomic agenda, as well as the concerns and spirit of the post-Crimean context. The study will analyze how entrepreneurs' commercial interests and patriotism combined in a broader ideological framework, with a wide cultural impact that set the Romanovs onto a path of nationalising the dynasty at the accession of Alexander III.

### 2.1 Post-Crimean War Context - The Emergence of Entrepreneurs

Following the Crimean defeat, the options for Russia's recovery were impregnated with cultural, political, and economic ramifications that would lead Russia onto different paths of industrialisation, administrative practice, and the development of national idea. One option for recovery was to draw on resources from abroad, meaning that Russia would rely on foreign import and investment for the provision of domestic markets and for industrial development. This option required the stabilisation of the Rouble to make it convertible on

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<sup>127</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 134.

foreign markets, which could be achieved only by a tight monetary policy that would disadvantage domestic producers in virtually every possible sense: (i) at the stage of investment, due to shortage of liquidity when setting up production, (ii) on the domestic market, due to foreign competition (iii) on foreign markets, due to the increased price of export. The alternative avenue for recovery, one campaigned by Russian entrepreneurs, went into the polarly opposite direction: relying on internal resources required monetary expansion to cover investment, protect the domestic markets by making domestic goods cheaper and by driving the price of Russian exports down. The Ministry of Finance, under N.Kh. Reutern, not only opted for the first option, it introduced a strict policy of credit that made it more difficult for domestic entrepreneurs to acquire loans for long-term investment, placing them at a considerable disadvantage vis-à-vis their foreign competitors. This choice of policy at the Ministry of Finance has set the Moscow merchants and entrepreneurs on the path to becoming the powerful social ideologues of ‘national economics’ with broad cultural and ideological ramifications, and considerable influence over the growing heir Alexander Alexandrovich. But first, a few definitional basics on entrepreneurs as individuals and a group are in order.

Alfred J. Rieber defined the *entrepreneur* as an agent of “large-scale private economic activity, yet [who] was distinguished in a variety of ways from both the capitalist, who merely owned their means of production, and the bourgeois, who would have been a member of a numerous, politically conscious, and nationally organised class striving for a share in or control over political power.”<sup>128</sup> Unlike eighteenth-century merchants, the entrepreneurial groups displayed qualities more common the modern spirit of enterprise: value of technical knowledge, investment into technical innovation, rational organisation, direct management, risk-taking, opposition to state interference. According to Rieber, the entrepreneurs were

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 135.



‘pathbreakers [...] with a powerful economic nationalism which carried strong political overtones,” yet whose “[membership was] too small and their origins too disparate to constitute a class.”<sup>129</sup> The principal aim of the Moscow entrepreneurs was to take Russian commerce and industry out of the hands of foreigners (we shall later see who was and who was not a ‘foreigner’), promote native enterprise – i.e. themselves –, and protect Russia’s internal market from foreign import, investment and capital. The entrepreneurial *interest group* ranged “from a dozen of activists to a dozen or so activists to a hundred or so associates [...] with (1) a common social role; (2) a value system consistent with that role; (3) a political program that fused that role and those values into a broader ideology; and (4) a network of formal and informal means of communication, association, and interaction along a broad spectrum of public life.”<sup>130</sup> The regional element that distinguishes Moscow from the three areas of economic specialisation – St.-Petersburg and southern territories, Rieber posits in its broadest sense. While Moscow served as the entrepreneurs’ financial and symbolic-ideological centre, their productive activity was spread across the central and upper Volga regions. The Moscow entrepreneurs did not depend on foreign capital or state involvement for their industry, and thrived on internal trade, rather than export. The members of the entrepreneurial groups were an alloy of (i) Old-Believer peasants rising into the guilds, (ii) noble industrialists seeking to break free from state encirclement, and (iii) established merchant families that can be traced in the guild membership back to the eighteenth century.

The first generation of Slavophiles, that emerged from the national impulse of the victory over Napoleon, – A.S. Khomaikov, I.V. Kireevskii, S.K. Aksakov, Yu.F. Samarin – provided an ideological foundation, to which the Moscow entrepreneurial group found it easy to anchor its values and interests. Wealth-bound Old Believer entrepreneurs and *déclassé*

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. As a forewarning, it must be noted that the entrepreneurs did not identify themselves with the categories ascribed to them by Rieber, who acknowledges this equally as his study presents the incomparable heuristic benefits of using these categories.

nobles feared cultural imperialism from the West; old merchant families, although keen on many things European were aware of all the dangers of competition from the West.<sup>131</sup> From the Slavophile ideological repertoire, Moscow entrepreneurs identified themselves with a nativist vision of Russia, “made strong from below, not from above, by popular rather than bureaucratic forces, based in Moscow, not in St. Petersburg, against the West, not with it,”<sup>132</sup> writes Rieber. Their Great Russian ethnic descent and the indigenous character of their production and economic life, contributed to a rationalisation of their alienation from foreign capital- dominated St. Petersburg.<sup>133</sup> Those members of the Moscow group, who stayed in Moscow through the Napoleonic campaign and endured the hardships of the invasion, including a tremendous war levy, developed a patriotic perception of themselves and their mission, suggests Rieber.

## 2.2. Entrepreneurs and the State

With political parties, clubs, and associations were prohibited, the entrepreneurs maintained an informal network, sustained by correspondence and private meetings, but, increasingly, they sought to give their views a public voice for greater leverage and did so by recruiting editorial talent and financing newspapers that served as their ideological tribune. In effort to popularise the Slavic cause, financial backing attracted likeminded editorial talent to the first commercially subsidized newspaper, *Vestnik Promyshlennosti*, founded in 1857 by paper industrialists, Dmitri and Alexander Shipov, and edited by Slavophile F. V. Chizhov, with the active contribution of I.K. Babst. *Vestnik* gained the support of Russia’s wealthiest entrepreneurs, including T.S. Morozov, I.A. Liamin, the Maliutin family, the Mamontovs, K.T. Soldatenkov. This not only outlined the key-membership of the entrepreneurial group, but, despite *Vestnik’s* unprofitability, it signalled an ideological homogeneity within the group. A number of short-lived papers followed - Chizhov’s *Aktsioner*, and I.S. Aksakov’s

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>133</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia*, 1982, 135.

*Moskva, Moskvich, Den', Rus'*, Shipovs' *Torgovyi sbornik* – but all folded, before, in 1890, D.N. Morozov's *Russkoe Obozrenie* emerged as a more stable tribune for the entrepreneurial group's ideological stance. Benefitting from the remoteness of the vast state machinery in St.-Petersburg, the papers voiced, often unreservedly, their dissatisfaction with the Ministry of Finance.

Regularly succumbing to harassment from bureaucratic organs,<sup>134</sup> Moscow entrepreneurs came to perceive bureaucracy as an obstacle, a corrupt and alien force, to be circumvented in favour of the direct audience with the tsar; indeed, to the institution of autocracy they were exceptionally loyal. But, by the 1870s, it was clear that dealing with bureaucracy was necessary and could be useful; what was needed for an effective negotiation with this structured bureaucracy, was an equally structured legal organisation representing their entrepreneurial interests, writes Rieber. The establishment of the 'Moscow exchange association' that followed, despite falling short of its intended purposes, nevertheless succeeded in influencing several mayoral appointments to the administration of Moscow, as well as the negotiations with tariffs. T.S. Morozov presided over the 'association' between 1870 and 1876, while the executive committee counted I.K. Babst, F.V. Chizhov, V.A. Kokorev, P.M. Tret'iakov, D.P. Shipov and I.S. Aksakov in midst.<sup>135</sup> Each of these men, beside wielding great wealth and influence, was a complex individual; each deserves careful study, but within the limits of this study, V.A. Kokorev's telling critique of state policy, '*Ekonomicheskie Provaly*' best illuminates the consistent opinions within the Moscow entrepreneurial group.

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<sup>134</sup> Old Believers among the entrepreneurs first struggled with administrative mismanagement while buying themselves out of serfdom; once entering professional guilds, they struggled with foreign competition and religious prosecution; when they became wealthy, they were often placed under police surveillance, as was the case with V.A. Kokorev and K.T. Soldatenkov. Nobles, who undertook entrepreneurial activity also struggled against the encirclement of the state, and were under the pressure of social disapproval.

<sup>135</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia*, 1982, 199.

The phenomenal Old Believer millionaire, V.A. Kokorev was the son of a Kostroma salt merchant, and although lacking in formal education, Kokorev had managed, by natural acumen and oratorical skill, to rise from the agent of a provincial tax farmer to a shadow advisor to the minister of finance, F.P. Vronchenko and to the president of the Committee of Ministers, A.F. Orlov.<sup>136</sup> Kokorev's close relationship both with the bureaucratic elite and with his fellow merchants, led him represent the collective views of the Moscow group in the highest levels of administration on numerous occasions. Kokorev's help with the 1867 hunger relief fundraiser, organised by heir, Alexander Alexandrovich, earned him the latter's sympathies. With the fortune he amassed before the Crimean War, Kokorev founded a number of shipping companies, engaged in trade on the Black, Caspian, and White seas, in the south of the empire, and on the Volga-Don railroad; later he tried his hand at banking and was the first to remark on kerosene's potential for lighting, venturing into its refinement in the Caucasus. As a representative of the entrepreneurial group Kokorev's was an outspoken critic of Russia's financial system reproaching it of "slavishly carbon-copying the European [one]."<sup>137</sup> *'Ekonomicheskije Provaly'* was written in the last years of Kokorev's life, as an evaluation of more than half century of Russia's economic policy, which accounts for post-Napoleonic Russia's greatest economic errors; the rule of Alexander III echoed Kokorev's admonitions with remarkable precision:

“- Had we kept the copper *hrivna*, and not the silver *rouble*, that led to our harmful habit of consumption;<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>137</sup> V.A. Kokorev, "Ekonomicheskije Provaly," in Idem, 329.

<sup>138</sup> Although V.A. Kokorev's account claimed events only in its author's lifetime, in this instance it likely referred to the 1726 shift from copper *hrivna* - which, granted the low cost of copper, was primarily for internal circulation - to the silver coin, called 'hrivennik', introduced to facilitate trade with Europe. Here, the term 'consumption' means import. The prioritisation of internal versus foreign trade has been an issue between native merchants and the ministry of finance ever since, and became acute during the ministry of N.Kh. Bunge, whose attempts to withdraw paper notes in favour of the silver rouble, understandably met with the dissatisfaction of the Moscow entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs like Kokorev perceived Bunge's efforts improve the positions of Russian currency on foreign markets as neglect of native industry in excessive imitation of other

- Had we avoided the Crimean war by building a railway from Moscow to the Black Sea during the [18]40s -50s;<sup>139</sup>
- Had we not dressed our peasants in that poorly-made chintz fabric, and instead of buying cotton from abroad had directed funds to the local producers of linen;<sup>140</sup>
- Had we, in 1857, instead of building the [St.-Petersburg -] Warsaw railway, built a rail network in the Moscow region, it would have saved us millions from depreciated bonds on foreign markets [for fear of losing it in the 1863 uprising];<sup>141</sup>
- Had we not abolished the ‘Overseeing Council’ [‘*Opekunskii Sovet*’] and not deprived landed families form accessible credit;
- Had we, before the sudden drive to build railways, built at home factories for producing rails, locomotives and other parts, necessary for operating a rail network, instead of running abroad for every screw;<sup>142</sup>
- Had our excise tax and interminable opening of taverns [‘*kabak*’] not destroyed agricultural wine-making;
- Had we not additionally weakened agricultural wine-making by relaxing the monopoly of noble estates on this business and allowing all estates to build speculative wine-making factories.”<sup>143</sup>

Kokorev had a keen understanding of the losses sustained by Russia through monetary contraction after the Crimean War, arguing that the 20-30% discounts on Russian bonds and the deflation-unadjusted interest that was paid on them to foreign holders, did more damage than 30-40% inflation would. Kokorev equally understood the political leverage the West was gaining from Russia’s condition: “the stock market price has been made a political and financial barometer for determining the level of Russian power, but the

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European states, which by 1880s either adopted a gold standard or about were about to. See: Stepanov, *N.Kh. Bunge*, 197–204.

<sup>139</sup> After the 1863 Polish uprising, the potential threat to the empire’s territorial integrity came from the Western regions. Alexander III continued his father’s plan to reinforce Russia’s control over the Western regions through an extensive rail network, securing additional lines leading to Moscow from Warsaw and Vilna.

<sup>140</sup> Russia’s dependency on imported machinery and raw cotton saw its the domestic textile production slumber during the American Civil War. On the initiative of textile magnate S.T. Morozov, the issue of raw cotton supply was resolved when in 1868 Russia conquered Western Turkestan and set up trade routes from Khiva and Boukhara. The Trans-Caspian railway, built between 1880-1891, linked the province of Fergana, where the cultivation of cotton was concentrated, with Krasnovodsk port on the Caspian Sea, from where it could reach Baku and the Trans-Caucasian Railway. ( See: “Zakaspiiskaia Voennaia Zheleznaya Doroga,” *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar’ F.A. Brokgauza i I.A. Efrona*, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html>; Thomas C. Owen, *Capitalism and Politics in Russia: a Social History of the Moscow Merchants, 1855-1905* (Cambridge, [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 66–69.) After a decade of mechanisation of all sectors of industry, by the 1890s textiles remained by far Russia’s leading industry, with main expansion of cotton textiles in Moscow and Vladimir provinces. See: Malcolm E. Falkus, *The Industrialisation of Russia, 1700-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 66.

<sup>141</sup> During his rule, Alexander III, aside from securing the control of Western regions, commissioned commercially expedient railroad construction in the vicinity of Moscow. One extension connected the bustling trading centres Vyaz’ma and Kaluga (Vyaz’ma was also a major site of textile production) with Russia’s greatest ironworking site West of the Urals, and the large coalmining sight in Novorosiisk.

<sup>142</sup> Here V.A. Kokorev was specifically referring to the iron rail production in Lugansk, owned by the British ironfounder, John Hughers, contracted by the Russian government on very favourable conditions. See: Malcolm E. Falkus, *The Industrialisation of Russia, 1700-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 58.

<sup>143</sup> Platonov, O.A., *Ekonomika Russkoi Tsivilizatsii* (Moskva: Institut Russkoi Tsivilizatsii, 2008), 330-331.

measurements of the barometer are in the hands of foreign markets, which are at the disposal of the foes of our development.”<sup>144</sup> This was nothing new; the Ottomans learned the importance of credit-worthiness after the disastrous Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1792. It turned out that consequent defeats on the battlefield had a dramatic impact on the interest rates charged by European banking houses for financing wars, in which conditions, wars were won by those who could borrow more and at lesser rates. The Crimean War thought Russia the same bitter lesson. Kokorev saw little use in wars with the Porte – “these affair of negligible importance, during the nineteenth century to go to war with some kind of turks [sic] twice during each rule [1806-1812 after Austerlitz, 1828-1829 about the Greek independence, the Crimean war – 1855-1856, the Russo-Turkish War – 1877-1878 ], as if these turks will ever come upon us like a Napoleonic invasion.”<sup>145</sup> This was a call for Russia, specifically, its finance ministry, to turn inward – as it indeed happened during the rule of Alexander III.

### 2.3 ‘National Economics’

Calling for an inward-looking empire, ‘*Ekonomicheskie Provaly*’ reflected the increasing prioritisation of the well-being of the Russian peasant, the availability of cheap credit, and practical tools to families on communal lands, and the general coordination of the politics of the empire with the condition of its essential productive element. Throughout the 1860s and well into the 1870s, the Slavophile entrepreneurs like Kokorev were frustrated that “there is no scientific approach to economics that is coordinated with Russian life [...], which places a heavy strain on the forces of the Russian people.”<sup>146</sup> The continuous failure of entrepreneurially-subsidised newspapers during the 1870s had at its heart the difficulty of finding a compromise between entrepreneurs’ commercial interests and the moral tone of the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 334.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 336.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 343.

intellectuals recruited by subsidised newspapers.<sup>147</sup> The occasional supporter of the Moscow group was the powerful editor of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, M.N. Katkov. But it was Katkov's successor at the helm of *Vedomosti*, Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov, – a *narodnik* turned monarchist –, who advocated that “the industry should first and foremost provide the means for the existence of a nation. One hundred and thirty million people must receive all the necessary goods to eat, dress, and be comfortable in their homes.”<sup>148</sup> The peasant reform of 1861 launched a shift of Russia's estate system; for the Moscow entrepreneurs, who were primarily oriented toward the internal markets, the peasant was becoming a new and still little unknown economic entity.

After 1861, the reinvigoration of the communal form of peasant organisation [*‘krestianskaya obshchina’*]<sup>149</sup> and *‘artel’*,<sup>150</sup> helped foster a relatively orderly, predictable market, with mechanisms of internal regulation maintained by the communal structure. It may be for this reason, in combination with their broader ideological commitments, that Moscow entrepreneurs, identified with a morphological, rather than a British-style mechanistic vision of economic development, as Rieber suggests. This morphological vision, inspired by embryologist Karl von Baer and agronomist M.G. Pavlov,<sup>151</sup> prompted an imagery of Russia as a body, whose peripheries were to be connected by rail to the heart, Moscow,<sup>152</sup> precisely as Slavophile A.S. Khomyakov wrote in his letter to *Moskvitianin* two decades earlier.<sup>153</sup> The Moscow merchant group sought the consolidation of all parts of the empire in Moscow, from which it would disseminate technological advancements and tools

<sup>147</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia*, 1982, 182.

<sup>148</sup> O.A. Platonov, *Ekonomika Russkoi Tsivilizatsii*, 663.

<sup>149</sup> While the peasant commune was formally instituted by P.D. Kiselev's during 1837-1841, it must be thought of in a broad historical sense, referring back to its informal existence as a subdivision of the *volost*.

<sup>150</sup> On *‘artel’*, see, for instance: A.N. Engelgardt, “Obshchina i Artel'noe Khoziaistvo”, in O.A. Platonov, *Ekonomika Russkoi Tsivilizatsii*, 268-271.

<sup>151</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia*, 1982, 137.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>153</sup> A.S. Khomiakov, “Pis'mo v Peterburg po povodu zheleznoi dorogi” in *Sochinenia A.S. Khomiakova* vol 3 (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografia na Strastnom bul'vare, 1900), pp. 104-118, esp. 111.

for the optimisation of agriculture and ‘Russian cultural substance’. The image below shows the startling physical process as passageways were cut into the Ural mountain chain during the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.



Figure 1. Image and caption from W, Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of the Continent: Siberia and the Russians* (New York: Random House, 1994), 218.

Before the Trans-Siberian Railroad, particular importance enjoyed the Southern railroad, which was a strategic asset in several respects: (i) ensuring that the like of the Crimean debacle will not happen again, (ii) linking Ukraine closer with Russia to undermine the influence of Poland in the region - especially when the line Kiev-Warsaw already existed - , and (iii) providing a transportation artery for the mining goods from the Donetsk region. The route of the rail was strategic: when a group of Baltic German and Odessa entrepreneurs and Ukrainian landowners sought to extend the line Odessa-Balta to Kremenchug and Kharkov, strategically this meant to tie Novorussia's to Odessa, meaning foreign interests, rather than Moscow.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia*, 1982, 189.



To give matters of commercial expediency an ultimate form of popularisation and legitimacy – a cultural dimension – , entrepreneurs patronised artistic talent. Remarkable in this respect are the three paintings commissioned to Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov by Savva Ivanovich Mamontov for the Donetsk rail station during the



Figure 2. «Бой скифов со славянами», В.М. Васнецов, 1881.

construction of the Donetsk-Mariupol' railway. This route was to connect the mineral-rich Donetsk basin with the Mariupol port – the second largest in the southern part of the empire after Odessa. When the construction ruffled a few feathers before being completed in 1882, Mamontov himself sought to project an image of the railway as a work of progress. The first painting, “Boy skifof so slavyanami” (Fig. 2) refers to the struggle of backwardness and progress – symbolized by orientalized Scythians and the self-righteous *bogatyr'*, respectively; yet it also shows that progress merely defends itself



Figure 3 "Kover-Samolet", V.M. Vasnetsov.

against the aggressive onslaught of backwardness.

The second painting, “Kover-samolet” (Fig. 3), showing one of the main figures of Russian folklore, Ivan-Tsarevich, atop a flying carpet, sought to convey the fantastic achievement of travel by rail, as well as its speed.

The motive of flying carpet, borrowed from the *Thousand and*



Figure 4. "Ivan-Tsarevich and the Firbird", 1899, I.Ja. Bilibin.

*One Night* is intended to suggest the speed of Mamontov's railway, and the famously unattainable 'firebird' [*zhar-ptitsa*] Ivan-Tsarevich carries in a cage (cf. Fig.4), appears to be an almost self-congratulatory gesture on Mamontov's part.

The third painting, "The Three Princesses of Underground Kingdom" (Fig. 5a), represents the underground riches of the Donetsk basin – gold (left), steel (middle), and coal (right) -, their kaftans and *kokoshniki* leave little to doubt as to where –to be exact, to whom - they belong. The painting sends a clear message about the commercial opportunities entailed by linking the mineral wealth of the Donetsk region with export outlets in the Azov.



**Figure 5 a.** «Три царевны подземного царства»,  
В.М. Васнецов, 1884.



**Figure 5 b.** «Три царевны подземного царства»,  
В.М. Васнецов, 1881.

Of note is an earlier copy of the painting, dated to 1881 (Fig. 5b). One major difference is the 'coal-princess', almost austere in 1881, she appears all the more adorned and in a more dignified posture in 1884. One can only speculate whether this greater emphasis on coal can be linked to the dramatic increases in its price on international markets during the same

period. Across the British Isle alone, the increase of price for coal went from negative rates between 1870-1880 to as much as +133% increase during 1881-1909.<sup>155</sup>

As Vasnetsov's paintings suggest, cultural and economic nationalisation did not relate only to import and investment from abroad, but also within the empire. During the rule of Alexander III, the Moscow group is shielded by protectionist policy from the Ural iron masters, the Greek merchants from Taganrog, the Jewish merchants from Odessa, the Polish manufacturers from Lodz. Richard Wortman called this an 'autocracy of the [Great] Russian majority'. Boris Ananich and Ekaterina Pravilova show that this changing understanding of 'core and periphery' at the turn of the 1880s was reflected in the fiscal policy of the empire: peripheries like Poland, Caucasus, Trans-Caucasus, and later the Duchy of Finland, were increasingly perceived by the state as burdensome [*'ubytochnye'*] for the empire, even when they contributed both in revenue and in defence capacity.<sup>156</sup> The emergence of 'the [Great] Russian master' went hand in hand with the popularisation of the Listian "National System" - its influence growing during the ministry of S.Ju. Witte -, who posited economic development and the 'wellbeing of a people' on the 'mightiest national unity'. Much to the pleasure of Alexander III, it was a unity under the Great Russian nationalism, however vacuous and elusive.

## 2.4 Nationalising the Romanov Dynasty

The emergence of not one, but a variety of 'national ideas', within Slavophile entrepreneurial and intellectual circles is inseparable from Russia's shifting estate system in the aftermath of the 1861 peasant reform - the combination that reached a culmination point during the rule of Alexander III. The lithograph below, showing Nicholas I pacifying the

<sup>155</sup> B. R. Mitchell, *Economic Development of the British Coal Industry, 1800-1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 271.

<sup>156</sup> Boris Ananich and Ekaterina Pravilova, "Imperskii Faktor v Ekonomicheskom Razvitii Rossii, 1700-1914," in A. I. (Aleksii I.) Miller, ed., *Rossiiskaia Imperiia v Sravnitelnoi Perspektive: Sbornik Statei*, Novye Granitsy (Moskva: Novoe Izdatelstvo, 2004), esp. 237-241.

cholera rebellion, displays an unambiguous stratification of estates and their rapport with the autocrat and one another.

**Figure 6. Lithograph. "Emperor Nikolai I Pacifies the Cholera Rebellion in St. Petersburg, 1831"**  
Anonymous. Dated to 1839. Published in *Album Cosmopolite* [n.d. c. 1840] by Prince G. Gagarin.



The peasants and the small artisans –

butchers, carpenters, coopers, judging by their tools - are kneeling at the feet of the emperor; one man is even crushed and only his head is visible in the very bottom of the right corner.

This is taken for granted by the emperor, by the statesmen in horse-drawn carriages in the foreground, and by the official in the left corner, who gives the mob a casual look over his shoulder. In the lithograph, the vertical estate hierarchy is shown quite literally - vertical. A very different image of the estate system can be observed in Iliya Repin's painting "Alexander III's reception of *volost'* elders" (Fig. 7):



**Figure 7. I.E. Repin. "Alexander III' receiving the *volost'* elders," 1886.<sup>157</sup>**

<sup>157</sup>One can notice in the far right part of the painting a long-bearded man, who has turned his ear toward the emperor and is the only one in the crowd facing the viewer. As an entirely personal speculation, it is possible to recognize in this man Repin's lifetime patron P.M. Tretiakov. A possible reason for painting Tretiakov in this particular setting could have been an incident having to do with Repin's legendary painting "Ivan Grozny and



*Volost'* was the smallest unit of administration in the Russian empire, and was usually comprised of up to three thousand peasants, a *volost'* elder was elected from amongst the peasants for two years to oversee communal order. Essentially, the men standing in the presence of the tsar were peasants – who, in a similar situation, half a century ago would have been expected to prostrate themselves on the ground. In the crowd, three state officials stand in full dress uniform (*'mundir'*) – two are in the right corner with their gold-embroidered collars, and another one in the left corner with a red riband on his left shoulder. The red riband worn over the full dress uniform and over the left shoulder was part of the Imperial Order of St. Alexander Nevsky,<sup>158</sup> Russia's third highest accolade after the Order of St. Andrey Pervozvannyi and the Order of St. Catherine. Its beholder could have been a general, or a distinguished official of a high rank, yet, he stands not just in a crowd of peasants, but behind one. Alexander III's repeated frustrations with his father's officials at what he perceived to be their disingenuousness and lack of patriotism, instilled in him a life-long desire to emancipate himself from institutional procedure and seek 'direct relationship with the people.' This negation of estate hierarchy in rapport to the tsar is suggested by the equal distance at which both *volost'* elders, the officials and the Orthodox priests in the foreground - all symbolically equal before the tsar.

The proximity to the emperor was a separate issue for Repin. An earlier draft of the same painting (Fig. 8), dated to 1885, shows the elders standing much closer to Alexander, almost swallowing him into their crowd.<sup>159</sup>

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his son Ivan". In 1885, the year before Repin completed "Alexander III receiving the *volost'* elders", "Ivan Groznyi and his son Ivan" was, on Alexander III's personal order, removed from the exhibition of *peredvizhniki* in Moscow. P.M. Tretyakov, who purchased the painting, was, on the personal order of Alexander III, banned from displaying the painting in his gallery. Although the ban was lifted a few months later, Repin may have painted Tretyakov as he did, to convey his obedience of Alexander.

<sup>158</sup> Leonid Efimovich Shepelev, *Tituly, mundiry i ordena v Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moskva; Sankt-Peterburg: TSentrpoligraf; MiM-Del'ta, 2005).

<sup>159</sup> I must thank A.I. Miller for redirecting me to this very interesting first draft of I.E. Repin's painting.

As the final version shows, the ‘direct relationship with the people’ had to balance proximity with the subjects with a certain distance that would protect the inaccessibility that gave his position a charismatic authority.



Figure 8. I.E. Repin. “Alexander III’ Receiving the Volost’ Elders,” Draft. 1885

A more methodical discussion of the intricate mechanisms of court interaction and etiquette, which built and protected the charismatic authority of autocracy as an institution, will be undertaken in Chapter 3.

The second important motive Repin’s painting (Fig. 7) is the ethnic inclusiveness of Alexander’s union with ‘*narod*’: the elder in the bottom-right corner, who wearing a red caftan and a skullcap, is non-Russian. However, the over-representation of the Great Russian nationality in the crowd – evident from the brown and black ‘*armiak*’ and the light-coloured ‘*sibirka*’ coats - suggests if not a preference, then a certain desired outcome. Alexander III’s own efforts at projecting himself as distinctly Russian tsar with, what he imagined to be a distinctively Russian ruling personality, went into sharp contrast both with the contemporary and his predecessors’ image of monarchy. A comparison of equestrian statues of Russian monarch, meant to reflect the spirit of a reign, is telling. The famous equestrian statue of Peter I (Fig. 9) is bursting with dynamism, forcefulness, determination,



Figure 9. Monument to Peter I, bronze, Etienne Falcone, 1768-1770.

showing Peter as a victor, civilizer,



Figure 11. Monument to Alexander III, bronze, P.P. Trubetskoy, 1909.



Figure 10. Monument to Nikolai I, bronze, Auguste de Montferrand, 1856-1859.

and a law-giver who, in non-descript dress and with a laurel leaf, appears to belong not to one nation, but to all time and humanity. The statue of Nikolai I (Fig. 10), exuding confidence and agility, reaffirms his control over the calamities of his rule; he is dressed in the Leib-Guard Cavalry Regiment, which took part in the suppression of the Decembrist uprising and the 1831 Polish uprising.

The monument to Alexander III (Fig. 11) shows the corpulent emperor, dressed in the uniform of mounted policeman, atop a heavy horse with a sunken head. The composition, which defied conceptions of monarchic grace, was recognised even within the imperial family as a caricature. Art critic Alexandre Benois wrote about the monument to Alexander III that the sentiment of inane and crushing power it conveyed “was conditioned not just by the artist’s skill, but by the artist’s profound understanding of the project.”<sup>160</sup> It seems that with the same puerile sincerity with which Alexander III had



Figure 12. “Bogatyri”, V.M. Vasnetsov, 1881-1898.  
Left to right: Dobrynia Nikitich, Il'ia Muromets,  
Alyosha Popovich.

ruled Russia, Trubetskoy sought to show Alexander, as the latter would have wished it himself. Trubetskoy based the sculpture on the image of the Kievan Rus’ epic hero, helper and defender Il’ia Muromets from V.M. Vasnetsov’s painting “Bogatyri” (Fig.12).

Alexander, who grew up neglected by his family, coveted the complements that compared him to a ‘*bogatyr*’, especially since this is how he was called by his grandfather, Nikolai I, to whom he was quite attached as a child. Epic folk narrative conveyed the he qualities of these stock characters, particularly Muromets, were exactly the ones Alexander borrowed when forging his charismatic authority: calmness, reticence, honesty, unpretentious

<sup>160</sup> Anatolij Fedorovic Dmitrenko, *50 kratkikh biografij masterov russkogo iskusstva* (Leningrad, 1970), 271.

simplicity, internal balance, certainty, modesty, and a patriarchal tone, whether or not they conformed to the image of monarchy in Europe. In some sense, Trubetskoy's monument was a heartfelt gesture and a tribute.

Without implying deterministic trajectories, it has been the aim of this chapter to show how in the context of post-Crimean Russia, through its emergent social and economic agents, shaped such prominent elements of Alexander III's rule as the revival of personal politics, of the Great Russian national idea, yet combined vigorous economic growth and industrialisation. The Moscow entrepreneurs, who recruited nationalist intellectuals, artistic and editorial talent, to promote an alternative path of Russia's development, constituted a truly powerful agent of social change. The social and cultural ramification of their program of 'national economics' – planted in heir Alexander Alexandrovich by I.K. Babst – saw the nationalisation of the Romanov dynasty during the rule of Alexander III. Although such an assessment overlooks a number of aspects, like entrepreneurship on the periphery of the empire or the variety of discourses amongst Slavophiles and across the political spectre on forms of peasant and workers' organisation, this chapter aims at merely scratching the surface of the complex development of Alexander III's scenario of power, traditionally attributed to his personal idiosyncrasies.

Hitherto, the study has emphasised those elements of Alexander Alexandrovich's scenario of power, which he acquired while an heir – through upbringing, education, the spirit of his time - but, integral and no less important were his inherited elements of authority. Upon his accession, Alexander was to assume *autocratic* powers, yet, for the vast Russian empire, on the doorstep of the twentieth century, with the process of administration was growing so complex that a large, permanent, specialised machine was indispensable, what did it mean to be an *autocrat*? The next chapter will pursue the basic structure administration's highest institutions, with an emphasis on the patterns of interaction, etiquette, and



administrative culture to reveal the complex interdependencies of autocracy and its officialdom. Chapter 5 will then assess how these patterns of interaction changed with the accession of Alexander III.

## CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES: INHERITED AND ACQUIRED ELEMENTS OF AUTHORITY

Having examined the influence of the post-Crimean context on the style of governance of future Alexander III's, the following chapter will analyse how the very nature of autocratic rule, its prerogative and limitations shaped the period of Alexander's accession. This will provide empirical ground for this study to explore the representations of the new rule. The chapter will develop a conception of autocracy, its officialdom and their mutual rapport within the practical context of daily interaction to reveal their complex interdependencies beyond the primitive dichotomy of 'limited' and 'unlimited' monarchic power. This conceptual framework will provide the basis for analysing the administrative legacy of Alexander II's rule, with an emphasis on its late period and the Supreme Administrative Commission, headed by M.T. Loris-Melikov. An understanding of structures bequest to Alexander III will afford the contrasting background for analysing change within bureaucratic structures and their modes of interaction upon his accession, important for the interpretation of later developments. Setting aside ideological divides in favour of the alternative categories of bureaucratic analysis, pioneered by Alfred J. Rieber,<sup>161</sup> this chapter aims to shed light on the substantial change in ministerial organisation and interaction. The transformation of a relatively coherent, hierarchical ministerial group coordinated by Loris-Melikov, into a fragmented, disparate and inwardly competing group managed directly by Alexander III had tangible income on decision outcomes. The case of Count N.P. Ignatiev, the minister of the interior during the first year of Alexander III's rule, reveals the instability of the bureaucratic organisation that paralysed the administration during the first year of Alexander's rule. Contrary to the impression of Alexander's 'tight grip' on power, the autocrat was, in fact, forfeiting control of entire spheres of social life and their administration.

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<sup>161</sup> Rieber, "Bureaucratic Politics in Imperial Russia"; Rieber, Alfred J., *Problemy Vsemirnoi Istorii*.

### 3.1 Autocracy, Institutional Structures, and Patterns of Interaction

‘*Samoderzhavie*’, commonly translated as ‘autocracy’, spells a

“form of monarchic rule in Russia, in which the commander of the supreme power – the tsar, emperor – holds the supreme prerogatives over legislature (the ratification of laws), administration (the appointment and dismissal of the highest-ranking officials, the high central and local administration, the army and navy command, the management of finance, etc.), and the highest court (the affirmation of conviction and acquittal).”<sup>162</sup>

For a context of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia, the same definition in the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia references ‘absolutism’, which “marks the greatest level of state centralisation, with a bureaucratic apparatus [...], a permanent army and police.”<sup>163</sup> The autocrat’s ‘supreme powers’, nominally unlimited, to intervene in any sphere of his subjects and the state’s activity has led historians like Richard Pipes to liken Russian autocracy to a ‘patrimonial regime’<sup>164</sup> and the latter to a *votchina*. But, as Geoffrey Hosking observes,<sup>165</sup> Pipes had somewhat misleadingly conceived of *votchina* as a *dominium* - “an absolute ownership [...] involving the right to use, abuse and destroy at will.” Hosking points out that *votchina* closer corresponds with *imperium*, rather than *dominium*, since the tsar, like the owner of *votchina*, enjoyed not only extensive rights over his *votchina*, but also responsibilities for the well-being of the domain and those who inhabited it.

The early rule of Nicholas I saw the first serious and open attacks on the autocratic order – the Decembrist revolt, the Polish uprising, and the formal dethronement of Nicholas by the Polish Sejm - forced a reconsideration of the basis for autocratic legitimacy. In S.S. Uvarov’s famous triad provided a newly pragmatic conceptual basis for ‘autocracy’.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>162</sup> *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, 3. izd (Moskva: Izdatelstvo “Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia,” 1970), 534.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>164</sup> Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*. See also: Marc Raeff, “The Russian Autocracy and Its Officials”, *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1994), 76.

<sup>165</sup> Hosking, “Patronage and the Russian State,” 303.

<sup>166</sup> See, A. I. Miller, *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism: Essays in the Methodology of Historical Research* (New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 139–159, esp. 141–142; A. L. Zorin, *Kormia Dvuglavogo Orla... Literatura i Gosudarstvennaia Ideologiia v Rossii v Poslednei Treti XVIII-pervoi Treti XIX Veka*, *Historia Rossica* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), 358–368.

Uvarov's texts, including those meant only for Nicholas I contained no mention of divine appointment – although the latter believed in his celestial ordainment – but rather referred to autocracy as “a necessary condition for the existence of the empire in its present condition.”<sup>167</sup> A.L. Zorin points out that this functionalist formulation of autocratic legitimacy is based not on divine appointment, but on the “conditions for existence” and “needs” of the empire<sup>168</sup> – reinstates the idea of *votchina* as a domain that entails responsibilities for its owner, not the unlimited power Pipes had suggested.

The functionalist notion of autocracy and its administration has been a petrine legacy and was particularly manifest at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the growing complexity of administration necessitated entirely new, specialised structures to cater for the administration of the empire. Alexander I's comprehensive administrative reform (1801-1803) sought to grant governing practices both a legal basis and a more structured framework of interaction between the autocrat and his officialdom. The creation of ministries,<sup>169</sup> directly accountable directly to the tsar, and of the Committee of Ministers, and from 1861 of the

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<sup>167</sup> Zorin, *Kormia Dvuglavogo Orla... Literatura i Gosudarstvennaia Ideologiiia v Rossii v Poslednei Treti XVIII-pervoi Treti XIX Veka*, 361.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>169</sup> See Annex 1 for the chart of Russia's governing institutions; a detailed definitional and structural account of administrative institutions between 1801 and 1917 has been compiled by: Nikolai Petrovich Eroshkin, ed., *Vysshie i Tsentralnye Gosudarstvennye Uchrezhdeniia Rossii, 1801-1917* (Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka, 1998). Briefly outlining Russia's uppermost administrative institutions, each *minister*, personally appointed by the emperor, was responsible for a specific area of administration and had a *ministerial chancery* at his disposal to gather, process, interpret information, which was to be presented either before the *Committee of Ministers* or before the autocrat. The Committee of Ministers would meet irregularly to settle the disagreements before ministers, but since the position of the *chairman of the Committee* was largely symbolic – not infrequently it was a former minister, fallen out of favour –, issues were relatively rarely resolved in there and the Committee quickly grew obsolete. The *Chancery of the Committee of Ministers* serviced the Committee as well as the *special commissions*, which were set up on the emperor's initiative to study and present recommendations to the emperor on a specific policy or project. In 1861, Alexander II instituted the *Council of Ministers*, which convened irregularly for consultations of issues and had practically the same membership as the defunct Committee of Ministers, but required the participation of the tsar himself and was chaired by him. The *State Council*, whose members were also personally handpicked by the monarch, advised him on legislation and the yearly state budget. The *Senate* was *de facto* the highest court of appeal, handling administrative cases, appeals from peasant court, as well as criminal and civil cassation; it was not directly connected to any other administrative organ, and was marginal to the overall administrative process.

Committee of Ministers as a consultative body, reaffirmed autocracy's permanent dependency on specialised knowledge.<sup>170</sup> At the same time, the emperor perceived his dependency on advisors as a potential threat to his prestige and the unlimited power. As the emperor could not consistently rely on one advisor without fearing loss of power and embarrassment, his favour was regularly redistributed between members of his entourage.

Throughout the nineteenth century, administrative power remained personally delegated, rather than codified. Despite the Council of Ministers being designed to become 'a unifying collegial organ,' it could not do away with the very tradition that gave it its rise – the secretive, uncontrollable, 'most loyal report'. Access to the autocrat - i.e. the ability to report to him in person - was held in high regard within the circles of bureaucracy and was the marker of status within the bureaucratic ranks.<sup>171</sup> Conversely, the loss of the right to report directly to the autocrat meant a diminishing of the authority of the agent. B.N. Chicherin remarked that "the proximity to the court determines the position in society."<sup>172</sup> Oral reports could influence the autocratic decision directly, which usually depended on the order of presentation of arguments and the reporter's own attitude toward the project. Ministers sought to foster personal relationships with the tsar to secure positions in what otherwise threatened to be an uncertain and dawdling process in the State Council. The autocrat was thereby drawn into the direct process of administrative decision-making and governance. Remnev suggests that the increasing rationalisation and professionalization of the bureaucracy was gradually transforming the divinely anointed autocrat into the highest authority of the administrative apparatus.<sup>173</sup> In these conditions, he argues, "the monarch had to continuously maintain an evasive distance, which would keep him in close proximity to the

<sup>170</sup> A.A. Mironos, *Uchenye Komitety i Sovety Ministerstv i Vedomstv Rossii v XIX veke: zadachi, struktura, evoliutsia*, (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izd-vo Nizhegorodskogo Universiteta, 2000).

<sup>171</sup> Dolbilov, Mikhail, "Rozhdenie Imperatorskikh Reshenii: Monarkh, Sovetnik i 'Vysochaishaia Volia' v Rossii XIX V.," 17.

<sup>172</sup> B.N. Chicherin, as cited in Peter Mustonen, *Sobstvennaja Ego Imperatorskogo velichestva kanceliaria* (Helsinki: Kikimora Inst., 1998).

<sup>173</sup> Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel'stvo*, 323.

processes of policy formulation, without allowing the administrative apparatus to swallow him.”<sup>174</sup> More so, while seeking to control the process of decision-making, the autocrat had to distance himself from it to avoid responsibility for policy failures, which was a difficult task because of the colossal autonomy of individual ministers over their domains.<sup>175</sup>

In the words of M.N. Katkov, “the administration was inseparable from the autocrat [...]. But the autocrat and the administration are not one and the same thing.”<sup>176</sup> The nature of autocracy posed a challenge to those who attempt to determine its legal status and that of its institutions. For instance, the legal prerogative of the State Council as the first instance of the legislative process clashed with the autocrat’s continuous anxiety to control decision outcomes. On the other hand, the autocrat’s anxieties were not unjustified, as the State Council was an institution to which ministers and high-ranking officials, including those fallen out of favour, were ‘gently’ demoted.<sup>177</sup> With the position of the State Council weak throughout its existence, Remnev concluded that the Russian monarchs were prepared to rule with the help of the law, but not on its basis.<sup>178</sup>

Essentially, the failure of consultative organs presented itself as an advantage not only to the ministers, who were reluctant to reach a compromise in the Council of Ministers, if they could attain their aims in a meeting with the autocrat. The autocrat, in turn, sought to balance, but never eliminate disagreements within the Council of Ministers. Manoeuvring between competing ministerial groups, the autocrat had the opportunity to conduct a *sondage* of ministerial opinions without being cornered into a decision by unanimity.<sup>179</sup> The desire to

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 323–324.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 323–328.

<sup>176</sup> M.N. Katkov, as cited in *ibid.*, 325.

<sup>177</sup> For instance, A.A. Abaza, appointed to State Council’s Department of Economy within the State Council, where he was able to recruit former associates like M.T. Loris Melikov, A.P. Nikolai, M.S. Kakhanov, and others to participate, often in opposition, in important policy decisions. Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council*, 183.

<sup>178</sup> Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel'stvo*, 135.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 337.

balance ministerial factions, prompted Russian autocrats to obfuscate their personal views and persuasions, to guard themselves against impromptu decisions, which they could later reverse, and make sure that no guiding ideological vector emerged to which the autocrat himself would later feel pressured to adhere.<sup>180</sup>

In analysing the process of emergence of the autocrat's will, M.D. Dolbilov observed that the bureaucrats' efforts to gain the favour of the emperor prompted them to 'guess' at his opinion on particular matters, was, in fact, invited by the vagueness of the emperor's opinion. To make his case, Dolbilov examined the linguistic conventions of interaction between the autocrat and his officials; he noted that Alexander II frequently used an inverted formulation "[this proposition, project, etc] agrees with my opinion, rather than [I] agree with this opinion."<sup>181</sup> The original proponent of 'guessing the autocrat's will' was P.A. Stroganov, who in a note to members of the Private Committee [*Neglasnyi Komitet*], suggested that the key to maximizing influence over Alexander I lay with the ability to offer him concisely formulated ideas, from which he would be able to choose, thus sparing him the labour of formulating them himself. The interaction of the autocrat and his advisors served as the catalyst for the expression of the autocratic will, as it exercised a certain pressure on the autocrat to articulate his will and an opportunity for ministers to take him at his word. In the same note to members of the Private Committee [*Neglasnyi Komitet*], P.A. Stroganov best outlined the instruments of such a personal agent: "In order to influence him, it is necessary [...] to subdue him. Because he has exceptionally pure principles, the safest way to subdue him is to reduce everything to principles [...], which he would be unable to doubt."<sup>182</sup> The personal agent thought his missions nothing less than protecting the emperor from 'untruthful conspiracies'. Dolbilov observes this rhetoric relied on the paradoxical "the combination of

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>181</sup> Mikhail Dolbilov, "Rozhdenie Imperatorskikh Reshenii," 17.

<sup>182</sup> P.A. Stroganov, as cited in Ibid., 8-9.

faith in the solidity of the emperor's will and the representation of emperor as extremely impressionable individual, incessantly vacillating between this or that piece of advice.”<sup>183</sup> The modes of interdependency between the autocrat and his entourage reveal important regulators of monarchic power that do not succumb to analysis in terms of the traditional dichotomy of ‘limited’ and ‘unlimited’ power.

This interdependency deepened when ministerial unanimity, unwelcome before a decision had been taken, was compulsory immediately after the the decision had been announced, to reinforce policy decisions. M.D. Dolbilov shows how the increasing pressure to produce ministerial consensus prompted close members of the entourage to go as far as pressing the autocrat to express an opinion to set the tone of the debate on which ministers could unanimously agree.

In the meantime, disagreements within the Committee and Council of Ministers was not merely a matter of not confronting the autocrat with unanimity; inter-ministerial rivalries were real conflicts in which parties competed for access to and influence over the autocrat, as well as resources. After the Crimean War, the Ministry of the Interior emerged as the single most powerful administrative body: it was responsible for the peasant reform, for the institution of local administration *zemstvo*, and district administration, for appointment and dismissal of governor-generals, it headed the police, censorship units, affairs of orthodox and non-orthodox religious minorities, welfare, public health, and intersected with other departments on economic and social issues.<sup>184</sup> The sheer scope of its functions made the Ministry of Interior virtually a *prime ministry*. Throughout the rule of Alexander II, several ministers of the interior attempted to exercise the authority of a prime minister: P.A. Valuev, M.T. Loris-Melikov and the chief of gendarmes P.A. Shuvalov. However, the strong

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., n.18.

<sup>184</sup> See: Orlovsky, *The Limits of Reform*, 1–13.



expertise-based administration of the Finance Ministry, as well as its ability to control through budgetary expenditures virtually all other ministries, made it, during the tenure of M.Kh. Reutern, the principal rival to the Ministry of the Interior. The level of technical expertise required by the ministerial body in drafting and implementing the budget enabled it to fend off the arbitrary interventions of the *free floaters*.<sup>185</sup> With the two super-ministries, interior and finance, struggling to dominate policy, smaller ministries allied themselves with one or another on important issues in expectation of benefits. For instance, the Ministry of State Properties, traditionally at odds with the Ministry of Finance, tended to align itself with the Ministry of Interior.

Issues that prompted factional divisions were infrequently resolved in the Committee of Ministers, since each faction, as has already been said, planned to circumvent consultation and cajole the undecided autocrat into a decision during a personal audience. In order to avoid this pattern of decision-making, the autocrat could convene temporary *ad hoc* commissions from select ministers and advisors to study specific issues and promptly formulate solutions. Remnev suggests that specialised *ad hoc* bodies sped up day-to-day administrative operation and were more effective at coordinating action between central and local administration. In practice, the wide autonomy of these committees allowed the minister serving as chair, who benefited from additional authority after being appointed personally by the tsar, to control the discussion and continue the political struggle in a different context, often with little bearing on the task at hand. Even after the decisions were made – either by consultation in the Committee or Council of Ministers, or in one of the *ad hoc* commissions – the Chancery of the Committee of Ministers, which drafted the decree, was able to influence both its content and pace of implementation, allowing some simply to

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<sup>185</sup> Alfred J. Rieber, "Patronage and Professionalism: the Witte system," in *Problemy Vsemirnoy Istorii: Sbornik statei v chest' Alexandra Alexandrovicha Fursenko*, (M.: "Dmitrii Bulanin," 2000), p. 287.

die out amidst the stockpile of other projects.<sup>186</sup> This is not to mention the direct and indirect involvement of *extra-bureaucratic interest groups* in drafting ministerial projects. Perhaps the most vivid example is D.A. Tolstoy's almost comic dependency on editor M.N. Katkov for reviewing, and even writing, the projects for his Ministry of Education.<sup>187</sup>

This reality of interdependency, indecision and deadlock could hardly be further removed from the 'supreme power' attributed to autocracy in encyclopedic definition; even less did it correspond to Alexander III's conception of power and its use. Alexander idealized his grandfather, Nikolai I,<sup>188</sup> and associated himself both in the calamitous way of their accessions, which were in both cases preceded by a period of instability, to be disciplined with a policy of sternness.<sup>189</sup> Both were stronger willed than their predecessors; amid the disasters associated with their accession, absolute control of all levels of government and in all spheres of administration remained the overarching goal of their time on the throne.<sup>190</sup> But the Nicolaevan grip could not control the realities of the last decades of the nineteenth century; Alexander never fully understood this and, with characteristic stubbornness, stood his ground just as it was shifting beneath him. For a better understanding of the changing bureaucratic organization and administrative practice during the rule of Alexander III, the chapter will examine the legacy of his father, Alexander II, who appears to have adjusted himself differently.

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<sup>186</sup> Remnev, *Samoderzhavnoe Pravitel'stvo*, 88092.

<sup>187</sup> E. Feoktistov, *Za Kulisami Politiki i Literatury, 1848-1896*, Golosa Istorii (Moskva: Novosti, 1991), 179–183.

<sup>188</sup> Taking interest in the history of Russia, Alexnader came to personally preside over the proceedings of the Imperial Russian Historical Society, and, according to Heide Whelan, "was particularly interested in work that would contribute toward a positive appraisal of the reign of Nicholas I." Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council*, 25.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2. The Institutional Legacy of Alexander II: The Supreme Administrative Commission

When on February 5, 1880, Stepan Khalturin, hired as a carpenter at the Winter Palace, detonated nearly 30 kilograms of dynamite under the dining room where the imperial family was supposed to receive guests, clearly signaled the inadequacy of L.S. Makov's Ministry of the Interior. After the incident, Alexander II instituted the Supreme Administrative Commission, charged to prevent violent attacks on Russia's imperial order and public safety, with the secret police under its purview. M. T. Loris-Melikov, the conqueror of Kars, was appointed the chairman of the Commission.

Though famous for military feats in the Caucasus, it was M.T. Loris-Melikov's administrative experience that recommended him for the position. As the chief of armed forces in the turbulent Southern Dagestan, Loris-Melikov managed to pacify local tribes, extend administrative presence and integrate the region into the empire. As the governor-general of Astrakhan, Samara, Saratov and Tver' he helped to eradicate plague from the Volga region with only a fraction of the budget the treasury allotted to the cause.<sup>191</sup> As the governor-general of the Kharkov region, he came to replace the assassinated Prince Krapotkin, and successfully raised economic and educational standards of the region, making some show of soliciting public opinion, whose demands he then attempted to meet. Loris's successful measures to suppressed revolutionary activity in Kharkov; by re-organising police and gendarme units, and the efficient use of administrative force reduced arbitrary arrests and exiles. The office of governor-general yielded control of all aspect of policy, transcending local administrative bodies, and arbitrating their inter-departmental conflicts. Loris saw his position as an instrument for unifying the competing administrative organs of the *gubernia* in the short run; which, in the long run would eradicate the age-old administrative arbitrariness, restore legality and heed the justifiable demands of the population. In his own words, Loris

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<sup>191</sup> "Zakaspiiskaia Voennaia Zheleznaya Doroga."

aimed to establish an ‘automatised’ system in which governor-generals would not meddle in daily affairs, but merely control excesses and incompetence, representing the interest of individuals and social estates within the borders of the law.<sup>192</sup> His administrative ‘system’ as governor-general in Kharkov prepared both the conceptual and the operational framework of his activity at the head of the Supreme Administrative Committee.

Recalled to St.-Petersburg immediately after the Winter Palace explosion to head the Supreme Administrative Commission, Loris-Melikov was given emergency powers also as the mayor of St.-Petersburg, and the chief-policeman of the capital and the empire. Loris was entrusted “the power to give every order and take every measure necessary for guarding public safety. The orders of the chairman of the Commission were binding and could be overturned only by the emperor or by the chairman himself. All ministries were required to give the Commission every assistance they were requested and to execute his orders immediately,”<sup>193</sup> in addition to being able to request the audience of the tsar. Aside from these unprecedentedly broad prerogatives of the Chairman of the Commission, after the shock of the Winter Palace explosion, virtually any aspect of internal administration could be seen as linked with security. This was also the impression of fellow ministers: Valuev, who saw Loris’s position as merely that of a head policeman, was irritated that “evidently, he [Loris] does not get into his role, but sees before himself another one – that of a custodian in all domains of state administration.”<sup>194</sup> Even his future ally, Minister of War D.A. Miliutin wrote that “count Loris-Melikov understands his new role not in the sense only of chairman of an investigatory commission, but in the sense of a dictator to whom all powers and all ministries would be subordinated.” Perhaps with only slight exaggeration, a contemporary

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 173. Originally quoted from Loris-Melikov, “Vsepoddaneishii otchet of svoei deiatel’nosti.” RGIA f. 908. op.1 d. 402 ll. 1-7, 24-29, 31-32, 35.

<sup>193</sup> “Verkhovnaia Rasporiaditel’naia Komissia,” *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar’ F.A. Brokgauza i I.A. Efrona*, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html>.

<sup>194</sup> P.A. Valuev. *Dnevnik*, p. 67.

biographer of Alexander II, Stephen Graham, described the appointment as “[one] autocrat, at his wit’s end of how to deal with Russia, [having] created another autocrat to do his work.”<sup>195</sup> Clearly, M.T. Loris-Melikov’s position and circumstance epitomised the free floater; his position depended on his comprehensive administrative skill, which he demonstrated as governor-general of the Kharkov region; a military hero and a provincial governor he was an outsider to the Petersburg court, and his position truly dependent only on the emperor. The breadth of his prerogative, supervising the activity of virtually any ministry, permitted him to ‘float’ from one ministerial task to another.

In the Petersburg salons the appointment was received positively and likened to a premiership – salonnière A.V. Bogdanovich wrote in her diary “all governor-generals are under his authority, [and] all ministries, not excluding [the ministry] of War.”<sup>196</sup> Already by July of 1880, Loris-Melikov became such a trusted person in the entourage of Alexander II, that he was among only a handful of witnesses to the emperor’s secret wedding with Dolgorukaya, which cost him his relationship with Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovich.

Aside from a record of administrative success, Hans Heilbronner suggested Loris had another advantage at his disposal: at the time of his appointment his political views were completely unknown.<sup>197</sup> During the first few months, the vagueness of Loris’s public proclamations allowed all sides of the political spectrum to read into it what they wished. He was careful not to undertake any controversial or specifically partisan projects. In trying to secure good terms with the heir, Loris promoted Alexander Alexandrovich’s favourites<sup>198</sup> and

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<sup>195</sup> Stephen Graham. *The Tsar of Freedom: the Life and Reign of Alexander II*. [Hamden, Conn.]: Archon Books, 1968. p. 299.

<sup>196</sup> A.V. Bogdanovich, *Tri Poslednikh Samoderzhtsa*, Entry from 14 February 1880, p. 40.

<sup>197</sup> Hans Heilbronner, “The Administrations of Loris-Melikov and Ignatiev, 1880-1882” PhD diss. (University of Michigan, 1954), 105.

<sup>198</sup> One such example had to do with the dismissal of N.M. Baranov from the navy following his insolent complaint to Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich that he had not been given an financial premium for an award. Baranov was one of the heir’s favourites, and Loris, although empathic to Konstantin Nikolaevich –kept Baranov in St. Petersburg, and later appointed him as the capital’s mayor in efforts to forge closer relationship with Alexander Alexandrovich.

even managed to forge a close relationship with K.P. Pobedonostsev, although behind the scenes both were competing for the influence of the heir.

After the wedding to Dolgorukaya, during the summer of 1880, Alexander II was increasingly withdrawn from administrative processes, living nearly secluded from the court. Miliutin's records of the period indicate Alexander's lack of interest during reports; he even asked Miliutin to shorten them.<sup>199</sup> When in August of 1880, Loris suggested to Alexander II that the revolutionary movement could not be suppressed through police measures only, but necessitated broader action with the prerogatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the incumbent minister, S.L. Makov, was humanely demoted to a specially-created for him Ministry of Post and Communication, where perustration still permitted him to retain some of his power among the ministers. In the autumn of 1880 Alexander II and the entire royal family left St.-Petersburg for a prolonged retreat in Livadia, Crimea; Loris left to manage daily affairs for the next two months. That Loris was entrusted the daily running of the administration across ministries and their coordination, could not have made his free-floating position clearer; it is little wonder that his administration reminded some of another free-floater, the powerful A.A. Arakcheev.<sup>200</sup>

Already as the governor of seditious Kharkov and later as the head of the Supreme Administrative Commission, Loris-Melikov saw the principal cause of the revolutionary unrest lying with the "ignored needs of the society, [which] have been a great source of dissatisfaction; lacking free ways of expressing itself, it takes up extreme forms."<sup>201</sup> As soon as he was appointed Minister of the Interior, Loris-Melikov launched an unprecedented comprehensive project of senatorial revisions, not in one or several, but in all Russian

<sup>199</sup> D.A. Miliutin, as quoted in Heilbrunner, p. 120; D.A. Miliutin. *Dnevnik*, III, p. 256.

<sup>200</sup> A. F Koni, *Sobranie socinenij v vos'mi tomach*, vol. 5 (Moskva: Juridiceskaja literatura, 1966), 195.

<sup>201</sup> Loris-Melikov, M.T., *V Pervye Dni Ministerstva M.T. Loris-Melikov: Zapiska o Politicheskom Stotoyanii Rossii Vesnoi 1880 Goda* (Berlin: B.Behr's Buchhandlung (E.Bock), 1881).

*gubernias* west of the Urals, to be covered by 4 senators and their staff. In Loris's own words, the revisions were "to clarify the moods outside the capital centres and to update the information at the Ministry of the Interior [...] about many important questions."<sup>202</sup> Loris extensive instructions about the areas of administration to be inspected, which fell under the prerogatives of virtually every ministry – chiefly, the Ministry of the Interior, but also finance, justice, education, public domains, transportation, and the Holy Synod. P.A. Zaionchkovskii suggested that the fact that Loris, and not the General-Procurator of the Senate, i.e. the Minister of Justice, instructed the senators dispatched for the revisions, illuminated his position as a virtual prime minister.<sup>203</sup>

Loris strove to position himself as a coordinating link between the emperor and the rest of the Council of Ministers; he succeeded not merely because of his personal rapport with the emperor, but also because he had a plan for his term in office, which he presented to Alexander II on April 11, 1880.<sup>204</sup> Having dealt with a variety of issues as governor, Loris-Melikov aimed at reproducing the same strategy of informed policies to improve the peasants' lot by finalising the reforms of the 1860s, establishing the unity and homogenisation of administrative organs, gradually codifying administrative processes, the judiciary and police forces to avoid arbitrary decision-making. The sense of purpose with which Loris-Melikov removed political opponents who were obstacles to the fulfilment of agenda is remarkable, but the overall practice was not uncommon for those members of the entourage particularly close to the emperor. For instance, the sacking of the Minister of Education, D.A. Tolstoy, credited to Loris-Melikov, gained him the valuable support in the

<sup>202</sup> M.T. Loris-Melikov as cited in Zaionchkovskii, *Krizis Samoderzhaviia Na Rubezhe 1870-1880-kh Godov*, 238.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>204</sup> Loris-Melikov, M.T., *V Pervye Dni Ministerstva M.T. Loris-Melikov: Zapiska o Politicheskom Stotoyanii Rossii Vesnoi 1880 Goda*; Zaionchkovskii, *Krizis Samoderzhaviia Na Rubezhe 1870-1880-kh Godov*, 207–213.

St.-Petersburg salons;<sup>205</sup> the finance minister, S.A. Greig, was sacrificed to Loris's ill-fated effort to abolish the salt excise, both presented as measures to curb revolutionary sedition. By replacing S.A. Greig with A.A. Abaza, Loris was able to instrumentalise the ministry of finance – the traditional source of obstacles to the ministry of the interior and secure the financing of his projects. Wielding his influence on the Ministry of Finance and having a keen understanding of ministerial interdependencies, Loris-Melikov introduced further hierarchical divisions among ministries, thus bringing the Abaza under his control. Taking charge of the Ministry of Finance, Abaza convinced Alexander II to bring military spending in line with the possibilities of the treasury as well as his request “to determine the nature of the relationship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [...] and the Ministries of State Domains and Transportation”, meant subordinating them to the Ministry of Finance.<sup>206</sup> The emerging hierarchy placed virtually all ministries – even the traditionally independent Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs - under the control of the Ministry of Finance, and the latter under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, marking a coordinated inward reorientation of policy.

Having created a coordinated machine for reform, Loris-Melikov set out to learn exactly what needed to be reformed. In January of 1881, eleven months without attacks from “*Narodnaia Volya*” strengthened Loris-Melikov's positions, but the student unrest during the previous autumn made it clear that compromise was necessary. On January 28, Loris-Melikov submitted another project to Alexander II, which envisioned some concessions to popular opinion by proposing the institution of two ‘preparatory commissions’ the likes of the 1857 Temporary Editorial Commission. Two such ‘preparatory’ commissions were foreseen: one dealing with the reform of local administration and the finalisation of the 1861 peasant reform, and another – the commission of finance – dealt with broad issues of

<sup>205</sup> Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe Samoderzhavie v Kontse XIX Stoletia*, 63–64.

<sup>206</sup> Zaionchkovskii, *Krizis Samoderzhavii Na Rubezhe 1870-1880-kh Godov*, 253.



taxation, passport control and others determined by the tsar. The issues discussed by these commissions were to be formulated into a project, and after the screening of an intermediary body were to be passed into the State Council and then land on the desk of the respective minister. Loris-Melikov's control of the commissions as their initiator and the broad range of these commissions' concern would permit him even greater command of the legislative process, despite the commissions having only a consultative role. With minor changes, the project was signed by Alexander II on March 1, 1881, just hours before his assassination. The drama of indecision of the first few weeks of Alexander III's accession over the fate of this project has received meticulously detailed coverage in the historiography of the period.<sup>207</sup> It is not the aim of this study to reproduce it, but rather, to analyse how the changing interaction within Alexander III's immediate entourage to provide insight into his style of governance.

### 3.3 Rewiring the Bureaucratic Network under Alexander III

Upon his accession in March of 1881, Alexander III inherited a relatively unified set of ministers. At the first sessions of the Council of Ministers - on March 8 and April 21 - a dominant ministerial interest group<sup>208</sup> emerged in favour of M.T. Loris-Melikov's project, with opposition coming only from K.P. Pobedonostsev, S.G. Stroganov, and, understandably, L.S. Makov. The chairman of the Committee of Ministers, P.A. Valuev, went so far as calling it a 'cabinet homogène'.<sup>209</sup> The first two months of political struggle and indecision were brought to an end with the publication on of the *Manifesto of Unshakable Autocracy* on April 29, 1881, which, contrary to the consultative organs proposed by Loris-Melikov,

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., esp. 300–379; Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917*, 1–13; Bokhanov, *Imperator Aleksandr III*, 268–287; Werner Eugen Mosse, *An Economic History of Russia 1856-1914* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 74–85; Got'e, Ju.V., "Bor'ba Pravielstvennykh Gruppyrovok i Manifest 29 Aprelia 1881g."

<sup>208</sup> Aligned in support of Loris-Melikov's project were: Minister of Finance A.A. Abaza, Minister of War D.A. Miliutin, Minister of Justice D.N. Nabokov, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers P.A. Valuev, Imperial State Controller D.N. Sol'skii, Minister of State Domains A.A. Lieven, State Secretary E.A. Peretts, grand dukes Konstantin Nikolaevich and Vladimir Alexandrovich.

<sup>209</sup> P. A Valuev, *Dnevnik, 1877-1884* (Petrograd: Izd-vo "Byloe," 1919), 163.

announced the consolidation of autocratic power. As intended, the manifesto prompted the immediate resignations of M.T. Loris-Melikov, D.A. Miliutin and A.A. Abaza, thus decapitating the ministerial interest group, but in the months to come no alternative coalition emerged.

The first weeks in power confronted Alexander with few high-ranking figures who shared his ideological inclinations. Alexander resorted to asking appointments from the ranks of family members, army comrades, tutors and friends.<sup>210</sup> P.A. Zaionchkovskii cites the closest members of Alexander's entourage to have been the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev, former Minister of Education D.A. Tolstoy, editor of the *Moskovskie Vedomosti* M.N. Katkov and childhood friend V.P. Meshcherskii.<sup>211</sup> D.A. Tolstoy was still recovering from his unceremonious ousting from the Ministry of Education the previous year; Meshcherskii, while being quite close to Alexander in the first half of the 1880s, had Pobedonostsev as his mediator with the tsar.<sup>212</sup> M.N. Kaktov – who will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, kept a firm foothold within the highest corridors of power through Pobedonostsev, who – together with the Minister of Court, I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, and the elderly S.G. Stroganov – were Alexander III's trusted agents during the period of his accession. With Stroganov reluctant to take on responsibilities due to his advanced age,<sup>213</sup> Pobedonostsev and Vorontsov-Dashkov were powerful patrons and personal agents of the tsar, albeit in a diffuse midst of ministers competing for the influence over the autocrat, who, in turn, sought to personally control them.

<sup>210</sup> Thus, brothers Vladimir and Mikhail, uncle Mikhail Nikolaevich and tutor K.P. Pobedonostsev joined the Committee of Minister by special decrees; childhood friend I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov became the Minister of Court; comrades from the Russo-Turkish War - P.V. Vannovsky became Minister of War and P.A. Cherevin became chief of Alexander's personal security; adjutant K.K. Grot headed the Imperial Chancellery.

<sup>211</sup> Petr Andreevich Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe Samoderzhavie v Kontse XIX Stoletia: Politicheskaiia Reaktsiia 80-kh-nachala 90-kh Godov* (Moskva: Izd-vo Mysl, 1970), 39-81.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>213</sup> Egor Abramovich Peretts, *Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa (1880-1883)* (Moskva: Gosud. izd-vo, 1927), 46.

Pobedonostsev's word weighed heavily for Alexander III and he was able, with little effort, to install into ministerial offices his own clients,<sup>214</sup> testify to his considerable influence, perhaps unmatched within the corridors of power. Pobedonostsev was also protective of Alexander; A.V. Bogdanovich wrote in her diary: "having gained the trust of the young Emperor, [Pobedonostsev] does not let anyone worthy to approach him."<sup>215</sup> But Pobedonostsev's influence was never fully consummated, since throughout his service in Alexander's entourage he remained unable to formulate a clear political programme or decisive plan of action. S.G. Stroganov remarked that Pobedonostsev was an obdurate critic of what must not be done, but had never offered a solution of his own. E.A. Peretts admitted that Pobedonostsev's speeches in the Committee of Ministers were quite effective, "but rather they were the work of a moralist, than the program of a statesman. [...] [They were] demands for greater severity and prudence on the part of the state, and the need of honesty and truthfulness, [that] did not make a great impression on anyone."<sup>216</sup> With Alexander tuned in to Pobedonostsev's critical tirades, the formulation of a political agenda of the new rule was all the more difficult, and eventually contributed to a lessening of Pobedonostsev's influence toward the early 1890s.

I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov was a childhood friend of Alexander III, who, after taking part in campaigns to Caucasus and Turkestan, returned to St. Petersburg to occupy largely ceremonious roles at the court.<sup>217</sup> His appointment as the Minister of Court granted him an enviable, daily access to Alexander, to whom alone he was accountable.<sup>218</sup> The sacking of A.V. Adlerberg, whose family had been in the service of the Russian Empire since Alexander

<sup>214</sup> A.P. Nikolai to the Ministry of Education (1881-1882), M.N. Ostrovskii to the Ministry of State Domains (1881-1893), N.P. Ignatiev to the Ministry of the Interior (1881-1882), N.A. Manassein to the Ministry of Justice (1885-1893), I.D. Delyanov to the Ministry of Education (1882-1898).

<sup>215</sup> A.V. Bogdanovich, *Tri Poslednikh Samoderzhitsa*, (M.: Novosti, 1990), p. 63.

<sup>216</sup> Peretts. *Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa*. p. 63.

<sup>217</sup> "Vorontsov-Dashkov, Illarian Ivanovich" *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar' F.A. Brokgauza i I.A. Efrona*, accessed May 27, 2013, <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Eroshkin, *Vysshie i Tsentralnye Gosudarstvennye Uchrezhdeniia Rossii, 1801-1917*, 146-147.

I's rule and at the Ministry of court – almost dynastic, was looked upon unfavourably in the St.-Petersburg circles. A.V. Bogdanovich reports “the most unpleasant impressions [of Vorontsov-Dashkov] – very unceremonious with the tsar, exceedingly pompous, has no regard for anyone, but has all the markings of a favourite.”<sup>219</sup> In his memoirs, S.Ju Witte recalled Vorontsov-Dashkov to be “no match for Adlerberg, neither by wit, nor by education, nor by culture; in this respect he was considerably weaker than his predecessor. [...] but in today's desolation [at the court] he is, in any case, a remarkable person both by his statesmanlike and political behaviour.”<sup>220</sup> Vorontsov-Dashkov's personal rapport and access to Alexander gave him the clout to become a powerful patron at the court; his clumsy secret-society-cum-recruitment-agency - ‘*Svyashchennaia Druzhina*’ – sought to enlist opponents to the Loris-Melikov's program and populate with them the high ranks of administration; through its ranks rose careerists like the future Minister of Public Domains, M.N. Ostrovskii, and the Minister of the Interior, N.P. Ignatiev. It seems unlikely that the founder of *Druzhina*, I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, intended to foster a coalition attuned to the views of Alexander. In practice, patrons like Pobedonostsev and Vorontsov-Dashkov, competing to colonise ministries to secure desired political outcomes, fairly independently cultivated clientele networks among *Druzhina*'s recruits. While networks of patronage do not, in themselves, present something new – even by comparison with Loris-Melikov's ‘organisation’ of ministries - this section will show how the aims of the patrons, their hierarchical rapport, and the stability of the patron-client relationship can be of essence not only to the stability of the administrative apparatus, but to autocrat's control over it, as well.

This chapter will demonstrate that a highly personal wielding of power – that flattered bureaucrats with access to the tsar (see 3.1) - fostered a competing network of personal

<sup>219</sup> Aleksandra Viktorovna (Butovskaia) Bogdanovich, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhtsa dnevniki A.V. Bogdanovich*. (Moskva: L.D. Frenkel', 1977), 71.

<sup>220</sup> S. Iu Witte, *Vospominaniia: Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II* (Berlin: Knigoizdatelstvo “Slovo,” 1922), 313.

agents, whose short-sighted political ambitions paralysed the state administration; this, by contrast to the hierarchical and coordinated ministerial network with a clear agenda, like the ministry of Loris-Melikov. While Alexander III's conception of power translated into the immediate control of his subordinates, he failed to find a loyal and talented figure to coordinate among the competing agents and thus lost control over administrative processes; whereas ideologically compatible and well-coordinated ministerial groups under Loris-Melikov allowed Alexander II a better grip of the over administration. Under Alexander III individual agents of the tsar colonised ministries with their trusted protégés more to prevent policy outcomes they disapproved than to promote those they sympathised with. In these respects, the ministry of Count N.P. Ignatiev presents itself as a rich paradigm for analysing (i) the repositioning of the Ministry of the Interior within the overall administration and the overall structural change to the administrative apparatus after the accession of Alexander III; (ii) the dangerous instability of patronage networks, fostered by (iii) patrons whose aims under Alexander III were very different from the aims of patrons under the previous rule.

Count N.P. Ignatiev's candidature first to the Ministry of Interior was unexpected for the Petersburg circles, where he was not held in particularly high regard. A celebrated general and a skilful diplomat, responsible for securing Russia's foothold in the Balkan peninsula and on the Prut,<sup>221</sup> advancing Russia's interests in China, the mastermind of the San Stefano treaty – all testimonies to his Pan-Slav and otherwise expansionist bend - Ignatiev had his career eclipsed by the results of the Congress of Berlin, before he was rather dishonourably demoted to Nizhnii Novgorod as its governor-general. Still, his Pan-Slav rhetoric, won him Alexander's sympathies of the heir. Ignatiev replaced Loris-Melikov at the

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<sup>221</sup> "Ignatiev, Nikolai Pavlovich," *Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar' F.A. Brokgausa i I.A. Efrona*, accessed May 30, 2013, <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html>.

Ministry of the Interior as a man Alexander, in his own words, “could quite well rely on,”<sup>222</sup> but with a his lifetime experience in foreign service Ignatiev had a limited understanding of the nature and causes of Russia’s political instability and considered the origins of the revolutionary movement to lay with “the Poles and the Jews,”<sup>223</sup> and the bureaucrats. The section will later show the perils of such appointments – recommended on the basis of trust rather than expertise or experience -, which was common for Pobedonostsev’s proxies.

Ignatiev’s ideological commitments were a matter of controversy throughout his ministerial tenure. On the one hand, Ignatiev’s circular note to governor-generals dated from 6 May 1881 promised to defend the autocracy, to eradicate the sedition, yet, echoing Loris-Melikov’s project, promised to consult “knowledgeable people” in on the needs of the local population. Loris was under the strong impression that “Ignatiev will go further than I [he] did.”<sup>224</sup> But, on the basis of extensive sources, Zaionchkovskii considered Ignatiev to have been under the strong influence of his patron Pobedonostsev, to whose good offices he owed his ministerial appointment. Ignatiev consulted Pobedonostsev on a number of projects prior to their announcement; for instance, the circular note issued to governor-generals on 6 May 1881.<sup>225</sup> Ignatiev courted Pobedonostsev, but did not always act upon his suggestions. I.V. Lukoyanov suggests that “the influence of Pobedonostsev on the Ministry of the Interior was insignificant and reduced to the fulfilment of particular requests.”<sup>226</sup> A considerable portion of Ignatiev’s correspondence with Pobedonostsev concerns itself with trivial matters, related

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<sup>222</sup> Alexander III, Letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev. 30 April 1881. In K.P. Pobedonostsev. *Pobedonostsev I ego korrespondenty: pisma i zapiski*. Moscow: Gos. Izd-vo, 1923.

<sup>223</sup> In August of 1881 and already in the capacity of the Minister of the Interior, Ignatiev explained to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador Gustav Kalnoky the origins of the revolutionary movement: “I will tell you one thing, which I do not like to tell everyone. Would you like to know what gives grounds to the nihilist organisation? - It is the Poles and the Jews”

<sup>224</sup> E.A. Peretts. *Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa*. ed.A.E. Presnyakov and A.A. Sergeev. Moscow-Leningrad: Gos Izd-bo, 1927. p. 72. Entry from 6 May 1881.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 57-58. Also on the project regarding measures of state security and public safety form 9 September 1881, the project regarding the amnesty of political emigrants from 30 October 1881; see: Ibid., 87-88, 62-65 and 69-70, respectively.

<sup>226</sup> I.V. Lukoyanov. “introduction.” in *N.P. Ignatiev i ego vospominania*, ed. I.V. Lukoyanov. Kishinev: Nestor, 2000. p. 36

to Pobedonostsev's activity in the Holy Synod – church administration, religious statutes –, and to some extent with the affairs at the Ministry of Education.<sup>227</sup> At the same time, matters of considerably greater importance – the inclusion of police and gendarmes under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, the reform of the 1861 university statutes, and the convocation of the Zemskii Sobor –, are entirely absent in their surviving correspondence. Considering the tenor of the correspondence and the vagueness of Pobedonostsev's accusations, these issues may have never figured in their letters. In this light, Pobedonostsev's influence on Ignatiev has to be taken with serious reservations.

Ignatiev's first conflict with Pobedonostsev in August of 1881 broke out because of competition with another client of Pobedonostsev's, the Petersburg mayor N.M. Baranov. Both Ignatiev and Baranov rose to power during the same period (winter-spring 1881) and to a considerable extent owed their positions to the patronage of Pobedonostsev, who considered both perfectly tailored if not irreplaceable in their roles: "Baranov is indispensable at the moment [...]" – Pobedonostsev wrote to Alexander – "it is difficult to imagine that anyone could now replace him."<sup>228</sup> Baranov, already the mayor of St. Petersburg, saw a career opportunity for himself in removing the police and gendarme corps from the jurisdiction of Ignatiev's Ministry of the Interior, thus creating his very own Ministry of Police.<sup>229</sup> Exploiting the still recent events of March 1, Baranov's scare campaign that cited new terrorist attacks and a planned assassination on Ignatiev,<sup>230</sup> was an

<sup>227</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev. Letters to N.P. Ignatiev. [1882]. GARF 730/1/3679 (3) 115-133

<sup>228</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev. Letter to Alexander III. 4 May 1881. In *Pis'ma Pobedonostseva k Aleksandru III [Pobedonostsev's letters to Alexander III]*, v. 1. Moscow, 1925. p. 339.

<sup>229</sup> N.P. Ignatiev. "Otryvok iz Vospominanii: Bez nazvan'ia, bez nachala, bez kontsa" in I.V. Lukoyanov, ed. *N.P. Ignatiev i ego Vospominaniya*. p. 88.

<sup>230</sup> On the day of Ignatiev's appointment to the Ministry of Interior, Baranov unsuccessfully tried to convince N.P. to travel around Petersburg with an escort of cossacks and gendarmes – a guard indeed more suitable for the tsar rather than his minister. Three days later Baranov turned up at Ignatiev's home late in the evening to inform him of an assassination plot against him due the next day. To substantiate or rather dramatise his claims, Baranov dispatched entire police units to guard Ignatiev. Baranov then appealed to Pobedonostsev, who was ever anxious about Alexander's safety. In an undated letter Baranov wrote that he "can clearly see that the revolution is plotting a series of assassinations and shocks, particularly in Moscow and in the Krasnosel'skii camp; least likely in Petersburg. Against these plots no action is being taken. [...] Ignatiev lies, assures me that

annoyance for Ignatiev as it questioned his control over security, and managed to persuade only Pobedonostsev. Baranov, after a conflict with his powerful patron, Minister of Court and personal friend of Alexander III, I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, overestimated the backing he would receive. Despite their mutual aversion, Vorontsov-Dashkov supported Ignatiev.<sup>231</sup> Alexander III's chief of guard and drinking companion, P.A. Cherevin, launched a second attempt to sever the police and gendarme corps from Ministry of the Interior again under the patronage of Vorontsov-Dashkov. After an inscenated assassination attempt on Cherevin, was unsuccessful in convincing Ignatiev, Cherevin presented Alexander with an ultimatum and lost. Although Ignatiev owed his victory over Baranov to Vorontsov-Dashkov and remained dependent on Pobedonostsev's good offices in narrowly avoiding his dismissal in December of 1881, Ignatiev was not only unhelpful to his patrons, but did not shy from taking on the offensive. He harassed *Druzhina* through surveillance and accusations of theft and speculation,<sup>232</sup> before banning it to public officials altogether.<sup>233</sup> In a moment of crisis, Pobedonostsev supported Ignatiev, only when confronted with a more serious threat represented by P.A. Shuvalov, who was poised to take the key-Ministry of the Interior: "He [Ignatiev] is all woven from intrigue, lies and chats incredibly. But believe it or not, at the moment there is no-one to replace him. If he disappears from the horizon darkness will settle in – they will put forth Count Shuvalov. That will be the end."<sup>234</sup>

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all is long known to him, and invents stories of his discussions with His Majesty, who one day allegedly does not permit anything and the other completely agrees with Ignatiev's plan; but this plan seems to me not only secret, but like the plan of Trochu, non-existent." I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov. Letter to Alexander III. Not date. As cited in I.N. Lukoyanov. *N.P. Ignatiev i ego Vospominaniya*. p. 42.

<sup>231</sup> In a letter to Alexander III Vorontsov-Dashkov wrote that "Baranov is a liar worse than Ignatiev [...] His would surely be a terrible appointment [to the Ministry of Police]." I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov. Letter to Alexander III. Not date. As cited in I.N. Lukoyanov. *N.P. Ignatiev i ego Vospominaniya*. p. 42.

<sup>232</sup> N.P. Ignatiev. "Note on the Activity of "Svyashennaia Druzhyna"". No date. [1881].GARF 730/ 1/ 1505 1. I.V. Lukoyanov points to an "extensive and very good" monograph on Sviashennaia Druzhyna by M.K. Lemke. However, it remains unpublished and is housed at the Institute of Russian Literature (IRLI), "Pushkin House".

<sup>233</sup> N.P. Ignatiev. "Note on the prohibition of state servants to enter into secret organisations." No date. [1881].GARF 730/ 1/ 1492.

<sup>234</sup> K.P. Pobedonostsev. Letter to E.F. Tyutcheva. 20 December 1881. MS-RSL 230/ 4410/ 1



K.P. Pobedonostsev's unsuccessful client appointments – N.M. Baranov, N.P. Ignatiev, A.P. Nikolai – all of which he eventually had to disavow, show how the instability of the patronage networks as the selection of cadres could often go amiss. Above all, it was difficult to reverse the appointments immediately without undermining the legitimacy of autocracy. This dilemma threatened to paralyse the administrative apparatus during the first year of Alexander III's rule. Competition between clients of the same patron – between whom the latter had to make a choice, or between patrons – when clients acted as pawns in broader or unrelated contexts rendered networks of patronage unstable. During the rule of Alexander III, the conservational aims of the patrons required not merely loyal, but passive clients, in which case an alternative to paralysis is difficult to conceive of. This situation helps explain the reshuffling of ministerial cadres at the accession of Alexander III, having little to do with ideological criteria.

Pobedonostsev himself contributed to the instability of these networks by promoting clients to positions that did not match either their technical skill, experience or, indeed, their desire. A.P. Nikolai, appointed on Pobedonostsev's recommendation, to head the Ministry of Education, tried to dissuade his patron from the move: "Almost all of my life and activity took place in the Caucasus, on the far away borders, therefore I can recognise without any shame that I do not know Russia; I do not know the contemporary needs in public education, the local wishes and necessities."<sup>235</sup> Neither was Nikolai particularly enthusiastic about the position. Raising his daughter alone after the death of his wife, he considered that the appointment would be for him "a most difficult sacrifice".<sup>236</sup> Similarly, Ignatiev was much more comfortable as the Minister of State Domains and drew on his own experience as a landowner. When Alexander offered him the Ministry of the Interior, Ignatiev was reluctant

<sup>235</sup> A.P. Nikolai. Letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev. 21 March, 1881. Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, *K.P. Pobedonostsev i ego korrespondenty: pis'ma i zapiski* (Moskva: Gos.izd-vo, 1923), 156.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

to accept as he “had no idea about internal administration, and was briefly acquainted with it as governor-general of Nizhnii Novgorod, the ministerial staff is completely unknown to me, an am not very fond of dealing with the police since I myself suffered from its hands as a landowner.”<sup>237</sup> Throughout his ministerial tenure Ignatiev strove to ‘transfer’ to the a position more suitable for himself, like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Already in June of 1881, a mere month as minister of the interior, Ignatiev pleaded with the aging Gorchakov to postpone his resignation, raising suspicions within the ministerial circle that the he was seeking to reserve that position for himself. When it transpired that Gorchakov would resign only in favour of his son-in-law, N.K. Giers, Ignatiev began a campaign against the latter, simultaneously considering M.S. Kakhanov and P.D. Svyatopolk-Mirskii as his potential successors at the Ministry of Interior.<sup>238</sup>

M.D. Skobelev’s speech in Paris where he predicted strife between Russia and Germany, was almost disastrous attempt by Ignatiev –who orchestrated the speech together with I.S. Aksakov - to recommend himself for the Ministry of Foreign affairs by showing off his Pan-Slav inclinations, with which he knew Alexander sympathised. Ignatiev’s appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was regarded as highly unfavourable, and justifiably so; his personal ambitions to avenge the Treaty of Berlin, which had so humiliated him, threatened to plunge Russia into a war. Ignatiev himself was spreading rumours of a large-scale European war due to break out in May 1882.<sup>239</sup> Ignatiev’s particularly unsuitable candidature for the Ministry of the Interior suggest that while Alexander III’s personal grip of power through the consolidation of a few trusted agent and their clients gives the impression of greater control over administration, ill-conceived appointments could inflict serious damage to the administration, short of an unwanted European war. After Alexander’s

<sup>237</sup> Lukoyanov, I.V, *Zemskii Sobor*, Nestor (Kishinev, 2000), 79.

<sup>238</sup> P.A. Valuev. *Dnevnik, 1877-1884*. ed. V. Ya. Yakovlev-Bogucharskii and P.E. Shchegolov. Petersburg: “Byloe”, 1919. P. 175. Entry from 25 October 1881.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p. 183-184.

personal reprimand issued to Ignatiev on account of the Skobelev affair, the project of the convocation of *Zemskii Sobor*, identified with Ignatiev, may have been an unfortunate attempt to repair his relationship with Alexander, remembering that in the late 1870s the Alexander Alexandrovich expressed himself positively about the project, but, considering Ignatiev's record of dishonesty, it was most likely a final attempt to consolidate his power within the state apparatus. Unlike Loris-Melikov, Ignatiev conceived the *Zemskii Sobor* as an appointed, and not an elected body; his personal control over appointments would give him extensive powers over legislature.

The draft of Ignatiev's project on *Zemskii Sobor* betrays his imitation Loris-Melikov's 'preparatory commissions' with respect to its place in the legislative process, its consultative nature, in its emphasis on the combination of expertise, representativity and administrative control.<sup>240</sup> Ignatiev's circular note to the governor generals, discussed in detail with Loris-Melikov,<sup>241</sup> resembles the measures intended by the latter in the project signed on March 1. Above all, Ignatiev imitated Loris-Melikov's efforts to position himself above the rest of the ministers, but in a much less methodical way than Loris. His frequent absences in the Council of Ministers where he was replaced by his vice-minister,<sup>242</sup> his demonstrative neglect of legislative procedure that required him to submit projects to the State Council before they reached the Committee of Ministers, and his encroachments on the prerogatives of other ministers further isolated him.

The tumultuous ministry of N.P. Ignatiev reflects a changing nature both of the patron within the highest ranks of administration and of his client. While Loris-Melikov sought a

<sup>240</sup> N.P. Ignatiev. "Chernoviki o neobkhodimosti sozyva Zemskogo Sobora". [n.d.]. GARF 730/1/ 1527-1529.

<sup>241</sup> N.P. Ignatiev. Zapiska N.P. Ignatieva M.T. Loris-Melikovu o neobkhodimosti obr'by s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem (chernovik)". 2 May, 1881. GARF 730/1/ 1442.

<sup>242</sup> State Secretary E.A. Peretts particularly complained about Ignatiev's habit of sending to the Committee of Ministers "that lazy vice-minister Gotovtsev, who often is not even acquainted with the project in question." See E.A. Peretts. Dnevnik E.A. Perettsa, ed.A.E. Presnyakov and A.A. Sergeev. Moscow-Leningrad: Gos Izd-vo, 1927. p. 122. Entry from 29 January, 1882.

proactive reform policy on the basis of empirical inquiry and consultation, and assembled an administrative hierarchy to carry out these aims (whether or not these were ultimately successful), both Pobedonostsev and Vorontsov-Dashkov, despite their very different political persuasions, adopted a reactive manner, seeking to prevent unwanted policies, rather than promoting alternatives. Hence, the different clients were selected on a different basis: while Loris-Melikov eliminated any obstacle to his program and promoted every useful tactic to achieve it, while patrons under Alexander III sought little more than passive, even dependent clients, who would merely rubberstamp their patron's advice into policy. That Pobedonostsev sought such a client for the Ministry of the Interior and though he found him in N.P. Ignatiev, reflects precisely the need "to freeze Russia" expressed by K.N. Leontiev<sup>243</sup> and attributed to Katkov erroneously but not altogether haphazardly. The personal ambitions of Ignatiev and Baranov, and the strength of the political persuasions of Nikolai – which Pobedonostsev underestimated – rendered the networks of patronage utterly ineffective, yet their speedy replacement, considering their high ranks, was bound to dampen the prestige of the overall administrative apparatus. The first, critical year of Alexander III's administration was paralysed by clients, who, appointed to their positions without experience and expertise, did not understand, or refused to understand that they were meant to follow clear directions. Pobedonostsev appears to have learnt this lesson with later recommendations for appointment – M.N. Ostrovskii to the Ministry of State Domains, D.A. Tolstoy to the Ministry of the Interior, I.D. Delyanov to the Ministry of Education, I.N. Durnovo to the Ministry of the Interior. These were either reliable clients, who understood the debt they owed to Pobedonostsev (Ostrovskii, Durnovo, Delyanov) or they were likeminded with the Ober-Procurator (Tolstoy); on the other hand, paralysis appears to have resolved itself merely into dullness.

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<sup>243</sup> Konstantin Nikolaevitch Leontiev, *Vostok, Rossiâ i Slavânstvo: filosofskaâ i politiceskaâ publicistika*: *duhovnaâ proza*: 1872-1891 (Moskva: Respublika, 1996), 246.



## ***MOSKOVSKIE VEDOMOSTI: SETTING THE TONE OF THE NEW RULE***

The changes both in bureaucratic organisation as well as in the ministerial cadres at the accession of Alexander III recall the problem and dangers of any radical transformations to the charismatic authority of the autocrat. Theodore Taranovsky pointed out that the removal of state officials from high ranking positions was also regulated by notions of prestige of the autocratic order, that guarded against too frequent change of cadres lest it detracted from the legitimacy of state institutions.<sup>244</sup> Notable dismissals, particularly the multiple dismissals during the first months of Alexander III, were a clear sign of scrapping the previous policy, which undermined not only the image of his predecessor, but of autocracy as a whole. To manage the public discussion of potentially controversial state decisions, the Chief of the Second Department of H.I.M. Chancery, D.N. Bludov, already in 1858 expressed the need for the state to take discreet participation in press production. By 1860 the idea of semi-official press [*‘ofitsioznaia pechat’*] emerged, which in the definition of V.G. Chernukha, was “a mouthpiece of the state issued under a private or state-owned logo.”<sup>245</sup> By 1864, M.N. Katkov’s successful political assassination of A.I. Herzen on the pages of state-subsidised *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, has shown just the extent of services the semi-official press was able to provide to the state.<sup>246</sup> Censor A.V. Nikitenko noted in his diary that after Herzen’s toppling, both Katkov’s popularity and the state’s need of him were quickly establishing him as Russia’s ‘leib-hof-ober-journalist’.<sup>247</sup> But it was the nature of stable semi-official press organ<sup>248</sup> as a link between the administration and its subjects that

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<sup>244</sup> Theodore Taranovski, “Alexander III and His Bureaucracy: The Limitations on Autocratic Power,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 26, no. 2/3 (June 1, 1984): 213.

<sup>245</sup> V. G. Chernukha, *Pravitelstvennaia Politika v Otnoshenii Pechati 60-70-e Gody XIX Veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 99.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>247</sup> Aleksandr V Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, vol. 2. (Moskva: Gosud. Izdat. Chudozestvennoj Literatury, 1955), 353.

<sup>248</sup> While there are several examples of semi-official organs – ‘*Pravitelstvennyi Vestnik*’, ‘*Golos*’, ‘*Novoe Vremia*’, ‘*Otgoloski*’, ‘*Bereg*’- the following chapter will focus on *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, edited by the M.N. Katkov, as the most stable and widely read organ of the state.

situated *Moskovskie Vedomosti* not just a mouth-piece of the state, but as an organ that was able to formulate the tone of state policy upon the accession of Alexander III. In Katkov's own words, his "name was tantamount to a political program [...] My paper was not simply a paper, but the fortuitous organ of state activity. In it affairs were not merely reflected, in it many affairs were made. [...] My activity was state service, but without salary, decoration or court dress."<sup>249</sup>

The following chapter will show how during Alexander III's accession *Mskovskie Vedomosti* were able not only to provide a discursive lubricant to an otherwise brusque and potentially perilous transition, but also to control and formulate interpretations, and project the tone of an otherwise inarticulate new rule. Specifically, the chapter will show how Katkov interpreted both the regicide and the legacy of Alexander II just as its principles were about to be reversed, as well as the change of ministerial cadres at the accession of Alexander III. The chapter will analyse how Katkov formulated the challenges and aims of the new rule, how he conceptualised the consolidation autocratic power which Alexander III was about to undertake, and projected the symbolism of the new rule.

#### 4.1 Interpreting the Regicide and the Legacy of Alexander II

Despite the several attempts on the life of Alexander II in the last years of his reign, the assassination stunned even the critics of the late emperor. Katkov correctly understood the motivations that stood behind the violent acts of the sedition [*kramola*], which was "seeking not the death of the tsar, but the destruction of the Russian state [...] plunging the state into chaos and amid total confusion grip the power and destroy the state."<sup>250</sup> For the newly acceded Alexander III, the containment of discourses about the regicide was essential lest these give away the vulnerability of the regime or drown out his own clout. The

<sup>249</sup> M.N. Katkov as cited in Katz, *Mikhail N. Katkov* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 170.

<sup>250</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 14 March 1881 (74), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 139-140.

commemoration of Alexander II further complicated the transition because of the imminent need to evaluate the legacy of his rule, with which his successor was unsympathetic, but which could not be criticised openly lest it undermined the institution of autocracy itself. Aware of Alexander III's keenness on Orthodox morality, Katkov endeavoured to shape the representation of the regicide and of the legacy of Alexander II in a biblical language, which appealed to the new monarch, but was entirely uncharacteristic of Alexander II's Western tastes.

As soon as the day after the regicide, Katkov began referring to it solely as 'martyrdom', occasionally referring to it as an act 'for his fatherland' ['otechestvo'],<sup>251</sup> albeit without delving into any detail. Covering the regicide and the ceremonies that followed, Katkov employed profuse religious language that associated him the passion of Jesus Christ: 'мученический венец'<sup>252</sup>, 'мученическая смерть его будет ему оправданием и прославлением'<sup>253</sup>, 'пострадавший и потерпевший мученическую смерть за него [за народ-AC]'<sup>254</sup>. Katkov's coordination of this message with the highest corridors of power is evident from the promptness with which the decision to build a church on the place of the attack had been taken; already on March 9 Katkov announced in an editorial that "the matter was already decided upon" and it will "testify to the martyrdom [of Alexander II]."<sup>255</sup> The idea of the building the Church of the Saviour on Blood ['Спас на крови'] can be traced to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher built on Golgotha hill; the depiction of Christ Pantocrator on their domes is remarkably similar (Cf. Fig. 14, 15) . Another parallel would be to the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome built near the place of St. Peter's crucifixion, the latter analogy being particularly suggestive of Russia's status as the protector of Christianity after

<sup>251</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 8 April 1881 (99), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 175.

<sup>252</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 9 March 1881 (69), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 131. Cf. Matthew 27:29, Luke 15:17, John 19:2.

<sup>253</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 14 March 1881 (74), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 140. Cf. Romans 8:30.

<sup>254</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 8 April 1881 (99), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 175. Cf. John 1:29.

<sup>255</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 9 March 1881 (69), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 130.



Byzantium and Rome. Alexander III's delight at these analogies need only be imagined. The religious interpretation was also given a national tone, Katkov claimed that the monument to 'tsar-martyr' was constructed not only in St. Petersburg, but also in Moscow, "not by Moscow, but by the entire Russian land."<sup>256</sup>



to be

Interpreting the political legacy of Alexander II was more challenging: the conventional accolades had to give way to criticism in order for Alexander III to assume charismatic authority by projecting himself in an act of deliverance. During the first three months of Alexander III's rule, Katkov's praises of the legacy of Alexander II

**Figure 13. Christ Pantocrator, Church of Saviour on the Blood, St.-Petersburg**

diminished, growing steadily into indirect criticism. In mid-March, Katkov launched a non-specific tribute to



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**Figure 14. Christ Pantocrator, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem**

Alexander II for 'the grace of renewal' [*благодать обновления*]<sup>257</sup>, and a "rule that has abounded with the wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence"<sup>258</sup>. But more importantly, he already foreshadowed the 'direct relationship with the people' to which Alexander III subsequently strove: "Nothing could renew the natural connection between power and freedom, between the tsar and *narod* in Russia, - nothing could so strengthen and elevate above all doubts the power of Russia, - than this blow directed by the villainous hand, aiming at its final destruction."<sup>259</sup> The 'direct relationship with the people' meant to

<sup>256</sup>Ibid., 131.

<sup>257</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 14 March 1881 (74), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 139. Cf. Romans 6:4, Jacob 4:6

<sup>258</sup> Ibid. Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:7.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

marginalise the bureaucracy and Katkov's criticism of Alexander II's ministers meant to discredit bureaucracy in no uncertain terms.

Unlike K.P. Pobedonostsev, who only discreetly posited that the Minister of the Interior M.T. Loris-Melikov was responsible for the regicide, Katkov was unceremonious: "great was the [previous] dictatorship [of the heart] with enormous prerogatives to eradicate the sedition!"<sup>260</sup> He explained the impossibility of continuing with the ministerial cast of Alexander II, which he brazenly likened to a branch of the sedition: "What can we say about the government which by itself would begin to participate in deception and under the cover of liberalism would befriend the enemies of the Emperor and the country, not only not hindering, but helping them to demoralise the society and recruit it into the party."<sup>261</sup> Katkov openly blamed the interest group around Loris-Melikov for the thriving sedition movement, hinting that bureaucracy has lost its trust and implicitly justifying Alexander circumventing it in the future. In a private letter to Pobedonostsev, Katkov wrote that the party of Loris-Melikov "was not significantly different from that of the Zheliabovs,"<sup>262</sup> and on the pages of *Vedomosti* called Loris-Melikov's group as little more than "guards of liberalism [who] cast lots for His clothing ['об одеждѣ его мечут жребіи']".<sup>263</sup> If anything, biblical metaphors spoke to Katkov's Reader.

Just as soon as Alexander III made the first decision about the direction of his rule by issuing the Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy, Katkov advanced this direction by issuing a lengthy editorial discrediting Loris-Melikov's program. Although Katkov had a clear understanding of Loris-Melikov's project,<sup>264</sup> he immediately labelled it as a 'Constitution'<sup>265</sup> -

<sup>260</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 19 May 1881 (138), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 242.

<sup>261</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 7 May 1881 (126), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 224.

<sup>262</sup> M.N. Katkov. Letter to K.P. Pobedonostsev, [n.d.], Pobedonostsev, *K.P. Pobedonostsev i ego korrespondenty*, 170.

<sup>263</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 12 March 1881 (72), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 135.

<sup>264</sup> Katkov understood quite well the essence of Loris's plan for a limited representation and correctly saw in the "incompleteness of measure" the prospects of "exciting their [the peoples' - AC] minds and unleashing passions [...] and instead of gratefulness for our desire to please and occupy them, we will bring upon ourselves their

a term entirely unsuitable for the content of the project, but one so fraught with meanings repulsive to autocracy, that it would only reaffirm Alexander in his decision. Yet, Katkov never associated this ‘constitution’ with the late emperor or the quality of his bureaucracy with the competence of Alexander’s choice as he appointed them and maintained them in their offices. Paradoxically, as much as Katkov’s representation of the autocrat was dominated by power, and in the case of the late Alexander II there was an element of Providence, his unrelenting criticism of the bureaucracy gives the impression of utter helplessness, understandably, to absolve the former of responsibility.

By late April, 1881, Katkov’s praise of Alexander II was growing less convincing as it only called into attention the calamities of his rule: “How many times, watching events unravel with a bated breath we were saddened; and how many times we would become amazed and joyfully observed how an event that threatened trouble and failure turned around to be to the glory of our state!”<sup>266</sup> Katkov did not mention the ‘glorious’ events in question, but neither the Crimean War, nor the peasant nor judicial reforms had an aura of glowing state glory even as late as 1881. By late May, Katkov earnestly acknowledged the “difficult legacy that befell on the present heir [to the throne, Alexander III] [...] we are already in a revolution – of course, in an artificial and false one – but still in a revolution. Perhaps a few more months of the previous regime, and the collapse would be inevitable.”<sup>267</sup> Katkov gave a clear reason for the state of revolution, hinting at Alexander II’s fondness of all things Western: “No formulas conceived by life in other countries can be applicable to the relationship between the supreme authority and *narod* in Russia. We made many mistakes in

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hatred and resentment” Katkov also understood that representation would burden the state with the necessity to make compromise or raise displeasure and undermine its legitimacy, since the autocratic state already claimed perfection in representing its subjects from all estates. M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 30 April 1881 (119), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 213.

<sup>265</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 30 April 1881 (119), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 213.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 19 May 1881 (138), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 242.

our administration and these provoked a lot of unrest in our life, paralysing our forces.”<sup>268</sup> By ‘we’ Katkov could not imply any other political agency except the autocrat unless the collective sought to undermine the autocrat over his subjects. This was a bold remark in the address of Alexander II and, by July, 1881, wielding the same pronoun, Katkov was even bolder in his critique of the previous rule: “Now that by our fault, enemy unrest has crept into our domain.”<sup>269</sup>

Announcing the new ministerial appointments following the resignations of Loris, Miliutin and Abaza, Katkov lamented the “legacy that burdened the newly-appointed ministers, who were chosen by the Emperor to rebuild the state, reinstate order and take us out of crisis.”<sup>270</sup> The term ‘crisis’ is essential here. Etymologically, ‘crisis’ stands for a “turning point in a disease, or a vital stage in events.”<sup>271</sup> However, considering the earlier-mentioned process of establishing Alexander’s charismatic authority against the backdrop of a critical build-up, the ‘turning point’ was largely a product of Katkov’s interpretation, rather than of a real watershed no more than the dynastic accession generally is.

#### 4.2 Setting the Tone of the New Rule

With the legacy of Alexander II taking increasingly bleaker hues, the image of the new tsar, Alexander III, as an indomitable patriarch was finally able to emerge. After Alexander’s initial tour de force in the Manifesto of Unshakeable Autocracy, Katkov did not shy from openly explaining the consolidation of autocratic power: “after what happened at the beginning of a new rule [the regicide – AC], it is impossible to think without quaver at the possibility that some of the state’s actions can be interpreted, as weakness and insecurity.”<sup>272</sup>

The Manifesto of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1881, penned by Pobedonostsev and Katkov, briefly

<sup>268</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 4 March 1881 (66), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 128.

<sup>269</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 17 July 1881 (197), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 338.

<sup>270</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 19 May 1881 (138), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 242.

<sup>271</sup> *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, s.v. ‘Crisis’, ed C. T. Onions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

<sup>272</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 6 March 1881 (66), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 128.

reiterated Alexander's autocratic prerogatives, announcing his intention to "vigorously undertake [...] the task of ruling with faith in the strength and righteousness of autocratic rule, which we seek to reaffirm and safeguard from encroachment for the well-being of the people [*narod*]." <sup>273</sup> Effectively, this was the end to his father's plans for a representative organ. Katkov hailed the Manifesto of April 29 as one "returning the Russian Autocratic Tsar to the Russian *narod*." <sup>274</sup> Katkov appeared quite open about the process of consolidation of the new rule days after Loris-Melikov, Abaza and Miliutin handed in their resignations:

"Of what consists the process of forming a state? In nothing but the gathering and the concentration of power. Independent domains are brought into submission, the powerful are stripped of their authority, and everything that has a mandatory character is submitting to the one authority, supreme over the state; this does not stop before a single authority is established over the entire *narod*." <sup>275</sup>

Condemning any form of organisation that would attempt to counterweigh the autocrat, as Katkov perceived the outgoing ministers to have done, he reiterated the dependency of all organs on the supreme authority of the autocrat: "By its very nature, autocracy cannot stand a state within a state, and it is its direct prerogative to eliminate and forbid everything that has this character." <sup>276</sup> In fact, undercutting any form of organisation that may be autonomous from the autocrat's arbitrary intervention, including the judiciary: "judiciary authority should be independent only from the arbitrariness of its constituencies, [...] because all authorities are equally subordinated to their common authority, from which not one of them should be independent." <sup>277</sup>

Katkov's role was not limited to interpreting events and changes that were happening within the highest corridors of power and foreshadow those yet to come; he strove to reformulate civic values and premises of discourse in line with the understanding and the

<sup>273</sup> George Vernadsky, *A Source Book for Russian History from Early Times to 1917*, vol. 3 (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 630.

<sup>274</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 29 April 1881 (118), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 209.

<sup>275</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 7 May 1881 (126), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 224.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 225.

fledgling intentions of Alexander III. Principally, Katkov sought to infuse new meaning into the concept of freedom, which by then had acquired a positive value in the society: “power above power, supreme power above all powers, this is the beginning of freedom,”<sup>278</sup> hinting at the tone and structure of the new rule. Katkov raised questions as to social discipline and freedom of press, which foreshadowed the considerable intensification of control during the rule of Alexander III: “Guarding the public space against physical harm, is the government not supposed to safeguard the society against moral violence? – Systematic lies, are they not moral violence? [...] Can the government abandon the talk of the street without control and give small, weak and dim people to the authority of verbal charlatans?”<sup>279</sup> - Katkov sought, with some success, to establish *Moskovskie Vedomosti* as a moral authority in its sphere.

Aiming to control discourses and shape his very audience, Katkov sought to eliminate partisanship and draw his audience entirely out of political discussion: “May god help us to liberate ourselves from the phantom of conservative and liberal parties. Let us be above all Russian people, loyal to the spirit and history of our fatherland, and abandon sand castles in matter of the state. [...] We shall be liberal in our conservatism and conservative in our liberalism.”<sup>280</sup> Rather, he sought patriotic rallying around historical legacy: “today more than at any other previous time in need of national politics [...] returns us on the solid historical ground indicated by the Imperial Manifesto of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April.”<sup>281</sup>

The question of nationality, perhaps one of the most interesting in Katkov’s repertoire, requires an elaboration that would go far beyond the scope of this chapter. Existing studies of Katkov<sup>282</sup> provide little satisfaction in this respect as they uncritically

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 6 May 1881 (125), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 223-224.

<sup>281</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 6 May 1881 (125), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 223.

<sup>282</sup> V. A. Tvardovskaia, *Ideologiiia Poreformennogo Samoderzhaviia: M. N. Katkov Iego Izdaniia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1978); Katz, *Mikhail N. Katkov*; Karel Durman, *The Time of the Thunderer: Mikhail Katkov, Russian Nationalist Extremism and the Failure of the Bismarckian System, 1871-1887*, East European Monographs no. 237 (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988).

translate ‘*narod*’ in Katkov’s editorials as ‘nation’ in a West European conceptions of nationality; a closer look at Katkov’s treatment of, for instance, the Jewish question on the pages of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*<sup>283</sup> suggests that his idea of *narod* has a strong, if not dominating civic component, defined by monarchic loyalty: “All of us, Russian people, have pledged out allegiance to serve the tsar, and in his person – the Fatherland [...].”<sup>284</sup> On this basis, Katkov understood the sedition as a specifically non-Russian problem: “Only in one part of the Russian state, on the far West, - only in one stratum of the population, among the Polish szlachta, did the conspiracy manage to provoke unrest; but no trickery or lies could bring the sedition into the native Russian *narod*.”<sup>285</sup> The idea that autocratic rule was a distinctly national trait was also an enduring belief of Alexander III, instilled in him, according to Heide Whelan, by his tutor of Russian history, S.M. Soloviev and his ideas of an organic formation of the Russian state.<sup>286</sup>

Ritual, ceremony and their symbolism suggested the tone of the new rule, but to popularise these, press was an indispensable ally. In July of 1881, just months after his accession, Alexander III set out to Moscow, as tsars have traditionally done in critical moments.<sup>287</sup> Moscow stood as a synecdoche for the whole of Russia and its land, juxtaposed to the state machinery in St.-Petersburg, not to mention one populated by scions of German and otherwise foreign families. Katkov saw this concurrence to be one of “antagonism between the interests of *narod* and of the state,”<sup>288</sup> which would be eliminated once the capital would be moved to Moscow and the state would coincide with ‘the land’. Covering

<sup>283</sup> This reference is from my private study of the question, available upon request.

<sup>284</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 16 July 1881 (196), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 336.

<sup>285</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 14 March 1881 (74), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 139.

<sup>286</sup> Whelan, *Alexander III & the State Council*, 25.

<sup>287</sup> Alexander I visited Moscow on the eve of the Napoleonic invasion to shore up the support and the resources from the Moscow landowners, Nikolai I visited Moscow during the 1830 epidemic, Alexander II visited Moscow on repeatedly in 1856, 1858, 1862 to appeal to gather to the support for the emancipation of serfdom, Alexander III visited Moscow not only after the regicide of 1881, but also during the periods of famine in 1891-1893, Nikolai II visited Moscow after the eruption of workers’ unrest, in 1900 and 1903.

<sup>288</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 17 July 1881 (197), *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 338.

Alexander's visit to Moscow on the pages of *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, Katkov interpreted the symbolism of the visit to shed light on the values of the new rule: "for our Emperor, who has just acceded to his ancestral throne, to begin his reign in Moscow. [...] Here [in Moscow -AC] is another moral atmosphere than in St. Petersburg, governed for the most part by our officialdom that is ill with its opinion, where evil was born and where it feeds, where it is for the most part concentrated."<sup>289</sup> Katkov's emphasis on Moscow as the place "where the state was formed,"<sup>290</sup> prepared the ground for the revival of the seventeenth century tradition under Alexander III, which conveyed both his desired rupture with the developments of the most recent reign, and a legitimate alternative with readily available symbolism, vocabulary and set of values. Alexander found it easy to identify himself with the seventeenth century tradition that rested on the pervasiveness of Orthodoxy, the 'direct rule' and a delegated rather than institution principle of administration; but even more unusual appeared the use of such modern communication technologies as mass daily press in orchestrating what essentially amounted to the undoing of the petrine legacy. Above all, just as the newly acceded Alexander III sought to project an image of autocratic power, his dependency press lords like Katkov for doing so, could not make clearer the paradox of autocratic rule on the footsteps of the twentieth century.

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<sup>289</sup> M.N. Katkov, Editorial from 6 March 1881 (66), *Moskovskie Vedomosti* , 128.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.



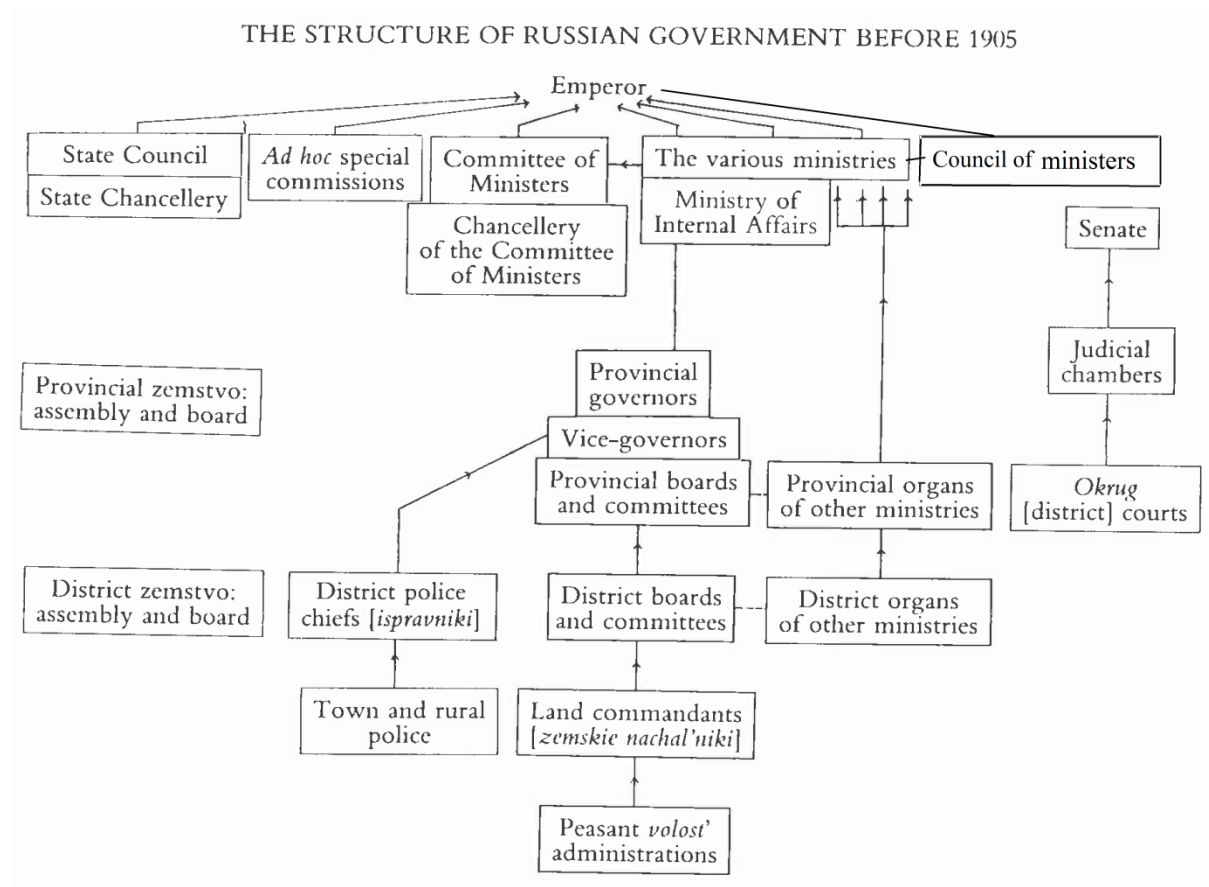
## CONCLUSIONS

Brushing aside the ideological element of Alexander III's accession, this study examines how modes of informal organisation and interaction within the highest corridors of power impacted the political outcomes and produced broad-ranging social change. Aided by alternative categories of bureaucratic organisation, pioneered by Alfred J. Rieber, this study has looked at the functioning patterns of administration that have not been immediately obvious either from the structural dimension of the state apparatus, or from the surface layer of political conflict.

The study has shown that during the rule of Alexander II, the practice of shared power with an individual like M.T. Loris-Melikov, who had experience in multiple areas of administration, created a hierarchical and coordinated administrative machine with a political agenda, which allowed Alexander II considerable control over daily administrative processes. Alexander III, whose values lay above all with a moral sense, appointed high-ranking officials on the basis of their personal behaviour and outlooks, like anti-Semitism, anti-Polish sentiment, affinities to pan-Slavism, and conceptions of autocracy that converged with his own. During the first year of Alexander III's rule, such appointments virtually paralysed the state administration: the careerism that drove Alexander's first appointed ministers enabled them to occupy key positions within the state, but without a plan for governance, they forfeited their own and Alexander's control over dynamic and highly demanding spheres of administration. Even M.N. Katkov, whose moral tone formulated the mythical relationship between the tsar and the people that appealed to many of the views held by Alexander III, had no plan as to how the practical administration of the increasingly complex needs of the empire should proceed. As Alexander undercut his relationship with the bureaucracy, fashioning himself as a seventeenth century tsar, his Nicolaevan grip over officialdom was still possible, but it no longer warranted control over spheres of administration as Alexander

II's shared power had been able to. Alexander III appeared unable to understand for some time into his rule was that on the doorstep of the twentieth century control over administrative outcomes meant sharing power with skilled or experienced managers.

The study has also shown that Alexander III's manner of interacting with the officialdom was a product of multiple formative experiences, including the mode in which he inherited the throne, his education, his rapport with his father and his first frustrations with his father's bureaucrats – all of which appear to have shaped his core values and habits and translated into a highly personal power wielding system at his accession. The economic dilemmas of post-Crimean War Russia brought Alexander III on the side of pan-Slav ideas, promoted by Moscow entrepreneurs, and placed his frustrations with bureaucracy within a broader framework of anti-institutionalism reinforced by Great Russian nationalism into what later manifested itself as a seventeenth-century style of administration. Press lords like M.N. Katkov, eager to maintain their foothold in the imperial entourage, reproduced and enhanced the image of Alexander's charismatic authority as a 'Russian Tsar', predicated on a projection of crisis that aimed to facilitate the emergence of this image.



<sup>291</sup> Lieven, *Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime*, 392.

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