
REVIEWS

RUSSIA UNDER THE OLD REGIME. By *Richard Pipes*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974. xxii, 361 pp. \$17.50, cloth. \$6.95, paper.

Professor Pipes has earned our full attention when he undertakes to analyze the major problems of the whole of Russian history before 1917, the chief of which he identifies as why "society has proven unable to impose on political authority any kind of effective restraints." In a series of sober and thoughtful monographs on Russian history and in his survey of European history since 1815, he has carefully prepared the ground for a magisterial work of this kind, one which invites comparison with such works as B. H. Sumner's *Survey of Russian History* (1944) and P. N. Miliukov's *Russia and Its Crisis* (1905). The author acknowledges in his foreword that the terminal point for the volume is largely the 1880s. Curiously, he declares that the *ancien régime* "died" then and gave way to a "bureaucratic-police regime" which has been in power "ever since"; later he asserts that in the 1880s the old state underwent a "modernization" which assured its survival into the 1970s. This is surely closer to what he means. Before examining the actual structure of the book, one should state forthrightly that almost all its facts are sound and its explanations clear; it can be confidently recommended both to students who are not supposed to know the story and to faculty who are supposed to know (though neither supposition may always be well-founded), as well as to literate laymen in the field.

The chapters run as follows: Chapter 1 is entitled "The Environment and its Consequences"; under the heading "The State," chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 deal with the "patrimonial" regime—its "genesis," "triumph," "anatomy," and "partial dismantling"; chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, under the heading "Society," treat the peasantry, *dvorianstvo*, "the missing bourgeoisie," and "the church as servant of the state"; the last two chapters, under the heading, "Intelligentsia Versus the State," are entitled "The Intelligentsia" and "Towards the Police State." There are fifty-two illustrations, three maps, brief notes, a chronology, and an index.

Pipes's key concept is that of the "patrimonial state"; he calls it "the principal theme" of the book. In his discussion of the environment, he holds that heavy reliance on farming under adverse conditions was "perhaps the single most basic cause of the problems underlying Russian history" (p. 5). The effect of such reliance on farming was to impel Russians from the Muscovite northeast to colonize better lands to the south, and he traces the true beginnings of Russian statehood to this colonization rather than to the Kievan state crossing the forest-steppe line. Pipes finds the antecedents of his conceptualization in Aristotle, Bodin, and Hobbes in passing but chiefly in Max Weber. At this point he has already considered and seems to have rejected Wittfogel's notion of "Oriental despotism" as a category appropriate for Russia, though for reasons Wittfogel would not have found compelling—and mainly for the fact that Russia had no problem of centralized water control. Marx and Engels considered Russia semi-Asiatic institutionally, but Marx's view is only hinted at once (p. 62), and Engels is not mentioned at all. However, the question of which social theorists are closest to his views does not much interest the author.

The body of the exposition is devoted to the study of the rise of patrimonialism, the challenges to it in the appearance of a society at least partially separate from the state from the late eighteenth century on and in the ideological assertions of the intelligentsia, and to the dialectic by which he sees a "modernization" of patrimonialism occurring in the 1880s. The patrimonial system emerged as a spiritual and institutional reflection of the rule of the Golden Horde. Important milestones in its growth were the destruction of Novgorod and of the hereditary-landowner boyars and the reduction of the peasantry to bondage, along with other developments culminating in the reign of Peter I. Yet, at the same time, Peter's occasional use of the notion of "common good" suggested the possibility of a distinction between state and society. Next comes a discussion of social classes. A harshly negative picture of the peasantry is drawn. Pipes passes over evidence that much of the peasantry in the late nineteenth century chafed under the commune rather than "cleaving to" it, that the legislation of Alexander III to revive it was enacted to counteract peasant disregard of communal bonds, not in response to peasant desires, and that there was substantial and growing peasant acceptance of the Stolypin legislation—in a truly astonishing phrase, Pipes writes that in central Russia the peasants "simply ignored" the Stolypin reforms (p. 19). Less controversial is his treatment of the emancipation of the *dvorianstvo*—and its consequences—and of "the missing bourgeoisie," coupled with a perceptive discussion of trade and manufacturing as carried out by other social groups. The "church as servant of the state" is discussed in a manner that will far from satisfy all readers. Patriarch Nikon is justifiably reproached for provoking a schism over nothing, which lost to the church the vigorous Old Believer communities, but receives no praise for his stubborn opposition to the church's being forced into just that position of "servant" which Pipes taunts it for accepting. Stefan Iavorskii, who steadily resisted Peter's subjection of the church to the state at the sacrifice of his own career, is dismissed without being named, as "a learned but spineless Ukrainian cleric." *The Orthodox church was the last institution to have its independence crushed by the patrimonial state (1721)*. It is therefore puzzling why Pipes attacks the church because it "could have stood up and fought" (p. 244), while the Novgorodians, the boyars, and the peasants deprived of freedom by the state are not objects of similar reproaches. The logic of the author's argument leads him to brush aside the church as a passive and inert factor in the realm of values and ideas—church policies created a "spiritual vacuum" which the secular ideologies of the intelligentsia filled. Though such ideologies first arose in the West, Western influences on the Russian church and the intelligentsia are considered only marginally. From the start (p. xxi) Pipes is committed to finding the roots of the Soviet system in Russia and nowhere else. As a result, the complex indebtedness of the Russian intelligentsia to the ideas of Germany (before Schelling) and Protestantism and to the Russian clergy receives short shrift.

His treatment of the intelligentsia is a masterful summary. Its conclusion, however, is again a bit too neat. The radicals developed a state-service mentality, true; the arts and in part scholarship were valued only for their social utility, true; when some (Social Democratic) radicals finally came to power they repressed artists and scholars who were not utilitarians, true. But the period from the 1880s to 1917, when many Russian intellectuals were passing beyond such attitudes, is omitted. (The final chapter, "Towards the Police State," also omits this period.) Appropriately, much stress is placed here on the capital significance of the judicial

reform of 1864. But following immediately on the failure of the radicals to elicit popular approval in 1873–74, terrorism provoked overreaction from the government. One may agree, though without finding persuasive Pipes's implied dismissal of nearly 1,000 active cases of antistate crimes in 1880 as insignificant because there were "nearly 100 million inhabitants" of the empire. The result was that "all the elements of the police state were present in imperial Russia," though it was probably not "a full-blown police state," for there were too many "loopholes." Still, the repression was enough to "radicalize Russian society." By this is meant the Liberation Movement and the resulting constitution of 1906. And there we are left; even the last remark is in the nature of epilogue. Pipes's story is over.

Despite the emphasis given to the 1880s, there are incautious statements concerning this period: Pobedonostsev was "the power behind the throne,"—a view on which recent research has cast much doubt; Alexander II "was to have signed" the Loris-Melikov "constitution" on March 1, 1881—but he approved it on February 17; the Okhrana (or *okhrannye otdeleniia*) is described as being formed in 1881—as a branch of a unit not created until 1898. However, the main problem is not how Pipes interprets the 1880s, but why he closes the book on prerevolutionary Russia over three decades before the Revolution.

For the author's emphasis on the importance of law—he has an excellent list (p. 289) of measures fundamentally affecting Russian life which were never enacted into law at all or were casually tacked on to other documents—and society, as distinguished from the state, and of the way that Russian history suffered from the weakness of both, we may all be grateful. He has given us a learned and deeply reflective book, and his final assessment may look more balanced to historians in 2075 than it looks to me now. One would like, however, to see in a book about the long history of a great people more sensitivity to positive traits, greater readiness to praise what is at all praiseworthy, and more sympathy and warmth for the human beings discussed, than the author was able to muster in this volume.

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ALEXANDER I: TSAR OF WAR AND PEACE. By *Alan Palmer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974. xxi, 487 pp. \$15.00.

Alan Palmer is one of the best popular writers on the Napoleonic period. After his *Napoleon in Russia* and *Metternich*, we now have his biography of a third major figure of that tumultuous era. As in his earlier works, Palmer writes with verve and shows a wide acquaintance with the memoir literature.

However, almost every cliché of the old historiography rides again in this work. Alexander is portrayed as vaguely liberal, but weak, emotional, mystical, and messianic—and nothing more. So weak was he that the most serious danger to his power at the beginning of his reign was his mother. (Count von der Pahlen, who really was a threat, hectoring and bullying the young sovereign, is hardly noticed.) Not only Alexander's will but also his traditional autocratic power is underestimated. Palmer finds that the nobility had wrung privileges from Catherine II and "Alexander did not dare to take the reins of government away from the old oligarchic families" (p. 48)—as if they had ever had them!

At times the author notes, unawares, actions which do not fit his model. Though he stresses the tsar's inability to accept criticism, he relates that when