In the Wake of Emancipation

RESPONSES TO THE LEGISLATION OF 1861

Immediate reactions to the emancipation were hostile. 'On reading the [General Statute],' wrote Herzen's collaborator Nikolai Ogarev, 'the first question you involuntarily ask yourself is: for whom is it written?' 'Least of all,' he believed, 'for the peasants.' The length and complexity of the document were such that 'not a single literate peasant will master it and not a single illiterate peasant will listen to it. A statute for peasants has to be written on a single sheet of paper.' The one thing the serfs did understand was that they were not yet free. Because their relations with the landlords were to remain unaltered for at least two years (while charters were drawn up describing the obligations they were supposed to redeem), they believed that the government had cheated them. Disturbances occurred in forty-two of the forty-three provinces to which the legislation applied. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (which admitted that its statistics were highly approximate), 647 incidents took place between April and July 1861. The sharpest clash occurred in the village of Bezdnia in the eastern province of Kazan', where a certain Anton Petrov began claiming that the statutes really did grant wholesale freedom. Thousands flocked to him, soldiers fired on the crowd, dozens died, and Petrov was executed.

The gentry were almost as dissatisfied as the peasantry. On the right of the spectrum, nobles in the province of Tula lamented the effect of emancipation on their economic interests and sought a way of preventing the central administration from overriding their interests in the future. To this end they proposed that gentry representatives be summoned from all parts of the empire to a national commission which 'should have the right to present its drafts of proposed laws directly for consideration' by the tsar. The equally conservative nobles of Smolensk echoed Tula's belief in the need for joint discussions with 'representatives from other provinces', while the nobles of Tver', one of the few gentry groups to espouse the cause of immediate emancipation rather than the conversion of serfs into temporarily obligated peasants, argued that the new laws had been botched, that 'the
reforms so urgently required cannot be achieved by a bureaucratic order', and that the 'convocation of elected representatives from all the Russian land represents the only means for a satisfactory solution'.

Radical intellectuals were the most disenchanted of all. The Bezdnia affair evoked an indignant response from Afanasiy Shchavop, a graduate of Kazan' Ecclesiastical Academy who began teaching Russian history at Kazan' University in November 1860. 'I enter the university department of history,' Shchavop declared in his inaugural lecture, 'not with the thought of statehood, not with the idea of centralization, but with the idea of nationality (narodnost) and of regionality.' Five days later he illustrated his radicalism by lecturing sympathetically on the Decembrists. At the Kazan' requiem for the victims of Bezdnia (which took place in the emotionally charged atmosphere of Palm Sunday) he stepped forward at the end of the service with a commemorative address in which he referred to the dead peasants as 'friends, killed for the people.' The history of the Russian people', wrote Shchavop from prison a month later, 'fills our heart with the belief and the hope that sooner or later a time must come for the Russian people when it acquires political self-consciousness and, as a result, political self-government.'

If opinions like those of Shchavop could emerge in remote Kazan' - they were partly generated, it seems, by members of the local ecclesiastical hierarchy - it was hardly surprising that the more sophisticated radicals to be found in other places expressed even greater disillusionment with the government's performance. In London Herzen pointed out that not even the eighteenth-century rebel Emelian Pugachev had been shot 'on the spot like Petrov.' All but one of the five parts of Ogarev's provocatively entitled 'Analysis of the New Serfdom' concluded with the ringing declaration that 'The people have been deceived by the tsar.' Anonymous writers began calling for action. A Great Russian' put out a flyer in St. Petersburg in July 1861 which argued that 'The educated classes must take the conduct of affairs out of the hands of the incapable government and into their own'; otherwise, 'patriots will be compelled to call upon the people to do what the educated classes refuse to do.' A long letter to The Bell argued that expecting Russia's 'educated classes' to solve the country's problems was futile. What Russia needed was revolutionary cells with roots among the people and contempt for abstract theory.

The so-called 'Great Russian' - by this time a committee - put out two more pamphlets in September 1861, only to be upstaged by the simultaneous appearance of a much more forthright proclamation. To the Young Generation averred that 'We do not need a tsar, or an emperor, or the Lord's anointed, or a robe of ermine covering up hereditary incompetence'. The authors wanted an 'elective and limited' executive, the abolition of censorship, 'the development of the principle of self-government', equal rights, and the collective ownership of the land. If necessary, they were prepared to 'call for a revolution to help the people.' The Bell had asked in July, 'What do the people need?', and had answered its own question by saying 'It is very simple, the people need land and liberty.' 'Land and Liberty' became the name of an amorphous political movement which operated in various parts of the Russian Empire between 1861 and 1863 and strove to convert the radicalism engendered by the emancipation into action. In March 1862 the novelist Ivan Turgenyev satirized Russia's revolutionary youth in Fathers and Sons, but the fires that devastated St. Petersburg two months later led many to suppose that radicals were tough enough to engage in arson. At the moment the fires began, Petr Zaichevskii, a twenty-year-old Moscow University student who had been in prison since the previous year, managed to publish Young Russia, 'the most bloodcurdling and extreme' of all the calls to action which circulated in the wake of the emancipation. Unlike the 'Great Russian' and the authors of To the Young Generation, Zaichevskii made no bones whatever about using violence. Rather, he looked forward to the day when those who sympathized with him would 'kill the men of the imperial party without pity'. As the summer of 1862 began, the regime seemed to be under serious threat.

The authorities had compounded their unpopularity among radicals by appearing to draw back from reform after publishing the emancipation statutes. Without conceding that the gentry of Tula, Smolensk, and elsewhere were justified in calling for an assembly which would give them a chance to vent their spleen, Alexander II seemed to be no less frightened than they by the enormity of the changes he had sanctioned. At the end of April 1861 he dismissed two of his brightest stars - Sergei Lanskoi and Nikolai Miliutin, the Minister and Acting Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. In June he replaced an enlightened Minister of Education with an admiral who had conducted the Russian mission to Japan during the Crimean War and was identified in the public mind with oriental despotism. The incoming Minister of Internal Affairs, Petr Valuev, had been accounted a liberal when he criticized the state of the empire at the time of the Crimean War, but had apparently become less enthusiastic about change with the passage of time. In 1858 he had moved from the Government of Kurland to a position in the Ministry of State Properties, an institution which had forsaken the sympathy for reform which it had displayed under Kiselev. By 1861 observers considered Valuev to be the creature of M. N. Murav'ev, his benighted Minister, and of Viktor Panin, Rostovtsev's conservative successor as chairman of the Editing Commission. When Valuev became Minister of Internal Affairs Dmitrii Miliutin wrote that 'The landowning party had every justification for counting on [him] for the realization of their views'. At the end of June 1862, not long after Young Russia and the fires in St. Petersburg - and immediately after an attempt on the life of the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich - Valuev produced a paper on the internal condition of the empire in which he admitted the many difficulties under which the government was labouring but proposed no more than converting the State Council into a somewhat more representative body and bypassing the judicial system to deal with radicals more speedily.
government's main concern now seemed to be stifling dissent before it became intractable. Enacting further reform was apparently far from its thoughts. A historically inclined contemporary might have been tempted to compare Alexander II's outlook in mid-1862 with that of Alexander I in 1805 or Nicholas I at the end of 1830. In different degrees, both the earlier tsars had devoted their first years on the throne to improving the condition of the empire, but one of them had been distracted by Napoleon and the other by foreign war and a rebellion in Poland. Neither had succeeded, to any great extent, in returning to the path of reform. By legislating for the emancipation of the serfs Alexander II had achieved more than either of his immediate forebears, but he had also upset peasants, nobles and intellectuals. He had revealed a capacity for giving with one hand and taking away with the other. Many indicators suggested that reform was too dangerous to be allowed to continue and that the tsar's capacity for embracing change had been exhausted.

The regime recovered, however, from the immediate aftermath of the emancipation, and continued to work on modernizing the empire's institutional and social structure. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the difficulties it faced in 1861 and 1862 were as great as they look, and it is highly unlikely that the tsar decided in 1861 to substitute conservatives for reformers at the heart of the imperial administration.

Peasant disturbances were numerous in the spring and early summer of 1861, but declined sharply thereafter. P. A. Zaitchikovski calculated for the period June 1861 to December 1863 that even if the number of incidents in which troops were used against peasants is doubled or tripled (which may be a legitimate procedure in view of the possibility of underreporting), no more than 4 per cent of the places where peasants lived were affected. It is sometimes thought paradoxical that, when part of the rationale for emancipating the serfs was the elimination of disorder in the countryside, the legislation of 1861 increased it. In fact, violence soon diminished. Once serfs began paying redemption dues they discovered that their new taskmaster, the state, was less efficient and less demanding than the gentry. Even if the authorities had wanted to rule the countryside with a rod of iron they were in no position to do so. The regime did not employ the equivalent of the landlords' bailiffs. As the peasants put it, 'God is high and the tsar is far away'. More to the point, the pre-emancipation budgets of the gentry were less well able to sustain a deficit than the post-emancipation budget of the regime. Both were unbalanced, but the former reached breaking point sooner than the latter. Peasants under serfdom tended to be forced to fulfill their obligations. When pressed too hard, they rioted. After 1861 (or rather, after they started making redemption payments), 'Peasants could and did accumulate huge arrears without any definitive confrontation with the authorities'. Alexander II was well advised, at the point of emancipation, to plan an elaborate security operation, but he did not have to maintain it indefinitely.

Nor did he have to worry for long about hostility on the part of the gentry. A combination of minor adjustments to the statutes of February 1861 and a show of determination enabled the tsar to quench aristocratic demands for participation in government. In April 1861 even the head of the Third Department thought that the regime would be forced to grant a constitution, but he added that 'not only would the emperor not make up his mind to assent to the gradual introduction of constitutional forms, but he had even spoken out firmly against it very recently and had evidently not changed his mind on the question'. Alexander's resolution led on the one hand to the arrest of liberally orientated nobles in Tver' and on the other to the last of his propaganda campaigns in the countryside. 'Just as his 1858 trips had made known his commitment to emancipation, those of 1862 showed his determination to preserve the prerogatives of the autocrat.' In September 1862, for example, Alexander ran a risk when he visited Novgorod to celebrate the thousandth anniversary of the putative foundation of the Russian state. Since the province was a hotbed of gentry resistance to the emancipation, confrontation looked a real possibility. As the royal ship tied up on the river Volkov, however, the courage of the assembled nobles deserted them. When Alexander addressed the nobles the next day they were practically eating out of his hand.

The regime was less keen to placate intellectuals than it was to calm the gentry, but despite the alarming pronouncements of 'the Great Russian' and the authors of To the Young Generation and Young Russia, it had less need to do so. Thinking people agreed on the need for a radical liberalization of the empire's social and political structure, but disagreed about the means of achieving it. Relatively few intellectuals took the view that the regime should be kept under constant pressure. The perceptive Boris Chicherin spotted as early as 1858 that The Bell was 'better at throwing government and society into confusion than at suggesting the precise path they should follow'. After visiting Herzen in London he accused him of substituting passion for reason. 'By moderation, caution, and the rational discussion of social questions', he wrote, 'you could make the authorities trust you; at the present time you are merely frightening them.' At the end of 1862 Chicherin gave his letter to Herzen a wider currency by assigning it pride of place in a book of essays on the principal political questions of the day. By then other intellectuals had come out against the radicals. In the autumn of 1861 the Slavophile Ivan Aksakov tried to dissuade students from engaging in disturbances by urging them to return to their books and to 'study Russia and the Russian nationality (narodnost), in order to fill the gulf which still separates us from the people'. The writer Nikolai Leskov, who at the time of the emancipation was far from hostile to the cause of change, launched a virulent attack on contemporary 'liberals' in May 1862. 'Alarmist and badly educated people', he wrote, 'do not understand that it is possible to be an outright enemy of the entire contemporary order without being a liberal'. Leskov was prepared to accept the utility of the term 'liberal', but only if it referred to advocates of moderation. 'For people who take a sober view of life', he said, 'a person is liberal who is prepared not
to take thought for his personal interests but to expend all his energy on standing up for the juridical independence of every citizen and the freedom of every action which does not undermine the well-being and the tranquillity of society. The key words were the last. Leskov believed that 'undermining the well-being and tranquillity of society' was the principal object of the intellectuals whom he sought to put in their place. In the case of his bètè-noire, the literary critic Nikolai Chernyshevskii, he was right. The two men's inability to make common cause illustrated one of the main reasons why the government had less to fear from oppositionists than the radical manifestos of 1861–2 appeared to suggest.

Even if intellectuals outside the government had been agreed on the way forward, it is unlikely that they would have been successful in generating widespread enthusiasm for their opinions. The authorities were quite prepared to intervene against radicals, and radicals were inexperienced in the ways of conspiracy. In June 1862 the government imposed an eight-month ban on The Contemporary, the journal which published Chernyshevskii. Herzen's suggestion that it continue in the West created more problems than it solved. His circle had been penetrated by an informer. An emissary from London to St Petersburg was picked up at the imperial frontier and a large number of compromising letters fell into the hands of tsarist investigators. Not only Chernyshevskii but also the leading light in the St Petersburg branch of 'Land and Liberty' were arrested. Although Chernyshevskii lived another twenty-seven years, he never again walked the streets of the capital. The key figure in 'Land and Liberty', Nikolai Sem-Solov'evich, died in Siberia in 1866. Until radicals grasped the need to conduct their affairs in absolute secrecy, their chances of conspiring effectively were remote.

Their views might have attracted wider sympathy if the regime had been engaging in repression across the board, but although the tsar appeared to move to the right when he appointed Valuev to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Admiral Putiatin to the Ministry of Education, he was very far from abandoning the cause of reform. He was determined to restore order in the countryside, to avoid giving the impression that nobles could force him into concessions, and to silence the most determined of his critics, but he neither abandoned the task of implementing the emancipation statutes nor fought shy of enacting the additional measures to which freeing the serfs gave rise. The appointment of Valuev was not quite the retrograde step that some contemporaries thought it to be. The worst that can be said of the new minister is that he 'undoubtedly possessed a definite political programme, but he was too cautious and too indecisive to carry it out'. It is true, as Sergei Solov'ev pointed out, that 'Fate did not send [Alexander II] a Richelieu or a Bismarck', but neither did it send him a Metternich. In September 1861 Valuev wrote a long paper on the progress of emancipation which concluded by acknowledging that 'Sometimes the need arises to legitimize things which have not been and could not have been envisaged by a law'. The paper contained many suggestions for streamlining the way in which change was taking place in the countryside. It implied, furthermore, that the regime had to approach the reform of local government and the law courts with a much greater sense of urgency. Although most of the adjustments Valuev proposed to the statutes of emancipation appeared to favour the gentry at the expense of the peasantry, one of them, the abolition of the peasant commune, might have had the opposite effect, and none of them was designed to turn the clock back.

State agencies other then the Ministry of Internal Affairs, furthermore, either had become convinced that the government would run more risks by abandoning reform than it would by continuing with it, or were acquiring ministers whose commitment to change was actually greater than that of their predecessors. The Third Department recommended in an official memorandum of 1861 that the government strive 'to retain in its own hands the standard of the progressive movement which it itself has started'. When Putiatin rapidly proved a dismal failure at the Ministry of Education, the tsar replaced him with the much more enlightened Aleksandr Golovnin. Viktor Panin gave way at the Ministry of Justice to Dmitrii Zamiatin. Murav'ev lost the Ministry of State Properties. Nikolai Miliutin's brother Dmitrii became Minister of War and Mikhail Reitmen Minister of Finances. The new appointments, all made at the end of 1861 or the beginning of 1862, bespoke a regime that was about to make further changes. The emancipation of the serfs had been drawn up at a time when most of the tsar's principal advisers belonged to the age of Nicholas I. Within a year of the promulgation of the statutes, most of the chief posts in the empire were held by people whose sympathy with the new social order was greater than that of the emancipators. The chances of further liberalization were considerable.

M I L I T A R Y  A N D  F I S C A L  R E F O R M

Slowly, the rate of change began to accelerate. In 1862 the regime was hesitant about addressing itself to the broad governmental and social implications of the emancipation of the serfs, but new developments in the military and fiscal spheres signalled that its enthusiasm for reform was returning.

In respect of the army, something had been achieved already. Although Dmitrii Miliutin's predecessor as War Minister, General Sukhozhanet, had been considered an unimaginative choice for the position at the time of his appointment in 1856, he had instigated or been obliged to accept 'literally hundreds of changes' in the conduct of military affairs. Most of them were paltry, but a few made plain that Alexander II's attitude to the army differed from that of his father. Large numbers of soldiers were demobilized.
The draft was suspended between 1856 and 1859. Military colonies which supplied infantry (but not those that supplied cavalry) were dissolved in 1858. In the same year, the tsar involved himself personally in the foundation of the reformist journal *Military Miscellany*. In 1859 he formalized Nicholas I's reduction of military service from twenty-five years to fifteen. Above all, Alexander overrode his cautious War Minister in the one region of the empire where troops were still on active service. By making his close friend Prince Aleksandr Bariatinskii Viceroy of the Caucasus and ordering him to take all necessary steps to bring the campaign against Shamyl to a successful conclusion, the tsar gave an innovator scope for the exercise of his talents. Bariatinskii captured Shamyl in 1859 after introducing 'greater independence for local commanders, more practical training for officers and men, and more stringent criteria for promotions'. He had shown what a little flair might do for the army as a whole. Since, in the year of Shamyl's capture, a partial mobilization of Russian troops on the empire's Galician frontier took five months, the regime had every reason to extend the lessons it learned in the Caucasus to the rest of the military machine.

Well placed at the time of Alexander II's accession, Dmitrii Miliutin had been a penetrating analyst of the empire's military weaknesses at the beginning of 1856. The appointment of Sukhozanet distressed him, but he served as Bariatinskii's chief of staff in the Caucasus and was the real architect of his triumph. Success in the Caucasian war and the friendship between Bariatinskii and the tsar restored him to favour at the centre and gave him the chance of putting his ideas into practice. Though committed to reform, he was no radical. His political opinions were probably more right-wing than those of his brother Nikolai. 'Reform', he wrote, 'can be undertaken here only in an authoritarian manner (ulast'ya). Popular initiative was to be deplored: 'any revolution which smacks of fanaticism, a violent revolution, a people's revolution ... merely destroys without creating anything new'. Within clearly defined limits, however, Miliutin believed in change. On 15 January 1862 he submitted proposals to the tsar which became 'the basic blueprint' for his multifarious activities at the War Ministry.

The new minister had long known why Russia's military outgoings were larger than those of her competitors. 'The main reason for the size of the [military] budget', Miliutin wrote in 1862, 'is the number of troops'. Before the emancipation of the serfs the government had been reluctant to return peasants to the countryside after they had served in the army, for fear that they would use their training to promote discontent. In effect, soldiers in the pre-reform army served for life. After emancipation the state could transform recruitment by enlisting more people each year but putting them on the reserve list much sooner. Miliutin pointed out that if 125,000 men were enlisted annually but required to serve for no more than seven or eight years, in seven years the country would possess a trained reserve of 750,000 men. If annual recruitment were higher still, recruits could be released earlier and the reserve would be larger. The War Minister was already thinking in terms of extending the obligation to serve in the army from the peasant estate to the community as a whole.

He also had strong views on the way in which the army was organized. As things stood when he became minister, the empire created wholly new regiments and divisions when it expanded its forces in wartime. Miliutin rightly believed that this practice gave rise to major administrative complications. His alternative was to increase the army's number of permanent divisions from thirty-one to forty-seven, to maintain them at a relatively low level in peacetime, but to triple them in size on the outbreak of war. Summoning troops from the reserve would be easier if the formations in which they were to be deployed existed already. Suddenly creating new formations was a recipe for administrative chaos.

These were only the most important of Miliutin's ideas, some of which took effect very quickly. Between 1862 and 1870 the size of the reserve went up from 210,000 men to 553,000. The division of the empire into fifteen military districts in August 1864 made possible the more efficient call-up of reservists in wartime and the partial transfer of decision-making to local commanders. The induction of recruits became a more civilized process in September 1862 when Miliutin declared that their heads need not be shaved and that they ought to be conducted to the barracks in everyday clothing rather than clothes that made them look like convicts. Military education ceased to be a sort of 'royal secret' and became the preserve of the War Ministry. A commission established in October 1862 created gymnasias for aspiring officers in which the curriculum hardly differed from that of secondary schools for civilians. In future, officers received specialist military training only after they had been educated in the round. Miliutin had begun not only to reduce expenditure, but also to introduce military personnel to the spirit of post-emancipation society.

Like the War Minister, Beireit at the Ministry of Finances accelerated the introduction of changes which had been in the air since 1855. A committed member of the circle of reformers which centred on the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, he spent four years in the second half of the 1850s investigating the financial procedures of various western European countries and the United States. Before he returned home, another economist with experience of foreign practices, V. A. Tatarinov, set in train the changes which came to a head in 1862. Tatarinov argued that all ministries and other governmental institutions should be obliged to produce detailed estimates for the year ahead at the time they submitted their annual accounts. In this way the centre could compare past and future. He advocated a unified central approach to budgeting and recommended above all that the State Control, the regime's auditing body, be given access to the accounts of all government agencies. The tsar had good reason to listen to the advice of his financial experts, for not only were his finances in a desperate state but also he could not easily borrow on western markets so long as the empire's accounting procedures remained inadequate.

Many of the contemporary suggestions for improving the management
of the empire’s finances bore fruit during Reitern’s first year as minister. The state began publishing its accounts. The government tried to drive out inflation by announcing that it was prepared to exchange paper money for specie. The tsar improved the Ministry of Finances’ chances of introducing economies by ordering that state agencies would have to prepare detailed estimates of their future expenditure. A decision was taken in principle to require agencies with independent sources of income to transfer them to the central treasury. The rights of the State Control to check accounts began to increase. Above all, Reitern presided over the abolition of tax farming. Only one farm remained, for vodka, but abolishing it was a major step in view of the fact that it was the source of about two-fifths of the state’s total revenue. Because merchants paid enormous sums for the right to sell vodka, the imperial government had long been prepared to overlook their chicanery at the point of sale. St Petersburg had become increasingly aware, however, of the corruption to which imperial officials fell prey as a result of their involvement in the merchants’ activities. The authorities were particularly anxious, moreover, to prevent the recurrence of rural disturbances like those of 1858 and 1859, when peasants had boycotted the taverns and rioted because vodka had become too expensive for them. As early as 1860 it could be said that the abolition of tax farming was ... official Imperial policy. Two years later, under Reitern, the decision was taken to replace the vodka farm with an excise tax. When the tax came in at the beginning of 1863, vodka became cheaper and more readily available, state revenues held up, and the former monopolists of the retail trade began to invest their accumulated capital in railways, banks and mines. In financial and administrative terms the reform proved to be one of the greatest successes of the 1860s. Indirectly it also constituted the biggest single indication, in the immediate aftermath of the emancipation, that the imperial authorities were still interested in altering the relations between social classes. Although the War Minister had considered imposing conscription on members of the privileged estates, he had not yet dared to recommend it. Centralizing revenue collection and publishing the empire’s accounts had won Reitern the respect of financial experts, but had not done much to earn him the applause of the community at large. The excise, on the other hand, benefited the poor. Although the government changed its way of profiting from the sale of drink mainly for negative reasons – to stave off rural unrest and reduce under-the-counter payments to civil servants – the abolition of the vodka farm looked like a victory for the common man.

The work of Miliutin and Reitern made plain that the Russian government retained its commitment to reform even in the immediate aftermath of the emancipation. Having addressed themselves to the army and the treasury, the authorities turned to the Orthodox Church. Ecclesiastical dignitaries had been contemplating certain reforms of their own, but pressure for a radical approach to the church’s problems had been generated by a rank-and-file priest and by laymen. The priest, Ivan Belliuin, devoted a lengthy manuscript to the wretched lives of the non-monastic clergy. Their education, he said, was irrelevant to their duties, their poverty such that they had to spend most of their time keeping body and soul together. Bishops were unlikely to help them, for ‘Whatever the cost, even if it means the destruction of the church, [bishops] try to preserve that power and significance which prelates possessed in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries’. Belliuin called upon the tsar to circumvent the ecclesiastical hierarchy and breathe life into the clerical estate. A minor clergyman from the province of Tver’ appeared to have little chance of influencing the government, but Belliuin was in touch with Mikhail Pogodin, the longstanding apologist for Nicholas I who had discovered a capacity for criticizing the regime in the course of the Crimean War. Via Pogodin, Belliuin’s diatribe was published in Paris in 1858. Under the title A Description of the Rural Clergy, the book circulated widely in Russia and impressed important people. Even the highly conservative Procurator of the Holy Synod, A. P. Tolstoi, thought many of its arguments justifiable. In 1859 the tsar intervened personally to prevent church leaders from consigning Belliuin to a monastery in the White Sea. The Description alarmed the regime because of its implications for the maintenance of order in the countryside. If the condition of the rural clergy was as bad as the book claimed, who was to speak for the government in the provinces? The secular authorities needed priests who could attract the loyalty of their parishioners. Valuev had been critical of the ecclesiastical hierarchy since at least 1855, when he asked why the church needed the physical force of the state to prevent schism and re-convert dissenters. By the end of the 1850s the state had an additional reason for addressing itself to the fate of priests. In the western provinces, where the Christian population was overwhelmingly Catholic or in communion with Rome, peasants were refusing to fulfil the economic obligations which they owed to the Orthodox clergy. Ever sensitive to the possibility of internecine strife among the nationalities of the empire, the tsar compelled the Holy Synod to consider ways of resolving the matter. It reported in mid-1861, but suggested only that the peasantry of the western provinces fulfil their obligations in cash rather than labour. By this time the government was of the opinion that difficulties which arose in relations between clergy and peasants sprang not merely from the economic arrangements on which the livelihood of priests
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depended, but from the priests' character. Only better priests could achieve satisfactory relations with their parishioners, and producing better priests meant giving thought to the clerical estate as a whole.

As Minister of Internal Affairs, Valuiev was by this time in a position to act. In August 1861 he made clear that he wanted to move beyond the problem of the western provinces to the problem of priests in general. The Orthodox clergy and Church in the western area, he said, 'will not assume the status appropriate to their rank so long as this same clergy at the very centre of the state remain in their present condition and on their present level.' Though the tsar remained principally interested in solving the riddle of the western provinces, he allowed his minister to broaden the debate. Nikolai Pomialovski’s fictional Seminary Sketches, which began to appear in The Contemporary in mid-1862, put part of the case for church reform to a wider public. Despite resistance from successive heads of the Holy Synod (who resented the intrusion into their business of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), Valuiev secured the establishment in December 1862 of a commission to investigate the life of the church: 'the emancipation of the clergy' had begun.⁴⁹

HIGHER EDUCATION

While the ecclesiastical commission was deliberating, the government put its mind to resolving the complex set of problems which had arisen in the universities. Soon after ascending the throne Alexander had relaxed the constraints on higher education which his father had introduced in the wake of the European revolutions of 1848. In the second half of the 1850s the Ministry of Education abolished enrolment quotas, exempted the badly off from the payment of fees, readopted the principle of despaching promising scholars to western Europe for postgraduate training, allowed women to attend lectures, ended the practice of monitoring students’ off-campus behaviour, reintroduced contentious subjects like west European law and the history of philosophy, and appointed broad-minded officials to the headships of the empire’s educational districts. Above all, the ministry effected a radical transformation of the professoriate. Of the staff employed in universities at the beginning of 1854 50 per cent had left their posts by the end of 1862.⁴⁴ Afanasi Shchapov of Kazan University was perhaps the most radical of the new appointees, but most of the newcomers differed sharply from their predecessors. Quondam dissidents joined the establishment. The Ukrainian federalist Mykola (Nikolai) Kostomarov, who had been banished to Saratov after the exposure of the Kirillo-Methodian Society in 1847, became a Professor of History at St Petersburg University in 1859. Boris Chicherin joined him as a Professor of Law in 1861. Since St

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Petersburg University also employed Konstantin Kavelin (the prime advocate of conferring land as well as liberty on the peasants), Vladimir Spasovich (an enthusiastic Polish nationalist), Aleksandr Pypin (a cousin of the trenchant journalist Nikolai Chernyshevsky) and Boris Utin (a former associate of Mikhail Petrashevsky), it could have been said to represent almost all the forward-looking opinions of the day. At Moscow University, where the political economist I. V. Vernadskii found ways of advocating the emancipation of the serfs even before discussion of the subject was officially permitted, the staff changed so much that the liberally inclined Sergei Solov’ev began to look like a conservative. At Kiev the historian P. V. Pavlov captivated students by dwelling on the putative democracy and federalism of pre-Petrine Russia. The appointment of the famous doctor and educational theorist Nikolai Pirogov to the headship of the Odessa educational district in 1856 demonstrated that under Alexander II enlightened academics could not only serve in educational institutions, but also run them. Only at the University of Dorpat, in Estonia, did the intellectual atmosphere change rather slowly.

From the point of view of the authorities, revitalizing the universities was a policy fraught with danger. Politically motivated intellectuals tended not to fall silent on receiving official positions but to capitalize on their prominence. Shchapov was only one of the newly appointed professors whose inaugural lecture hinted at a political programme. Kostomarov expressed an almost identical antipathy to the state in his inaugural lecture of November 1859. Boris Chicherin’s (very different) political opinions found equally clear expression in his inaugural of October 1861. Students, meanwhile, grew in number and changed in character. The student body was still tiny (just under 3,000 in 1854, just under 5,000 in 1860), but the rate of growth outpaced administrators. The removal of entry quotas encouraged young people who had been denied access to universities in the last years of Nicholas to enter them under Alexander, with the result that students tended to be older and more politically engaged than they had been in the past. Because undergraduates could engage in off-campus activities without being supervised by the university authorities, they began to play a more significant part in society at large. Although about two-thirds of students still came from the gentry estate, an increasing proportion of them seem to have been poor. Many took advantage of the new regime’s financial generosity. 'By 1859,' for example, 'two-thirds of all registered students at Moscow University were exempt from fees.'⁴¹ In short, the government’s liberality turned universities into a powder-keg. Staff spoke out and students began to organize. The lectures of the former and the associations of the latter appeared to be serving not only academic and economic purposes but also the promotion of political instability.

Which of the many recent changes played the major part in the university disturbances of the early 1860s is unclear. Patrick Alston emphasizes the students’ poverty, Regina Eimontova their political opinions, Daniel Brower the interaction of the two.⁴² Incompetence at the Ministry of Educa-
tion certainly lit the touch-paper. Before leaving the ministry in mid-1861, the sensible Evgraf Kovalyevski came up with a programme for reducing the volatility of the universities which might have been effective if it had been introduced gradually. The new minister, Admiral Putiatin, acted on the programme forthwith. Abolishing the remission of fees, prohibiting student meetings, taking over student loan banks and closing student-run libraries alienated not only the students but also their professors. Even Chicherin, whose inaugural lecture recommended deference to the state, called the ban on student associations ‘a preposterous thought’ and the non-remission of fees ‘impolitic’.43 Most of the leading professors at St Petersburg University resigned their posts. By the end of 1861 the university had been closed. With the professors’ backing, disaffected St Petersburg students tried to set up a ‘free university’ at the beginning of 1862, but they gave up the attempt after a month when the government arrested a professor for lecturing in a supposedly provocative manner on the upcoming national millennium. The fires of May 1862 only confirmed the authorities in their antipathy to students. Since the St Petersburg pattern was repeated at universities elsewhere in the empire (except at Dorpat), the higher education system appeared to have fallen apart. In June 1862 a four-hour session of the Council of Ministers which suspended The Contemporary and decided to open only one section of St Petersburg University in the coming academic year left the liberal Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich ‘deeply sad’.44

In view of the way in which the government treats universities in 1861 and 1862, the law of June 1863 which redesigned their modus operandi preserved a remarkable degree of the generosity towards them which had been evident in the second half of the 1850s. If there was a sphere in which the authorities had a certain justification for retreating from the policy of reform (and in which they could have afforded to act without alienating a numerically significant part of the population), it was that of higher education. Yet the tsar replaced Putiatin with Golovnin, appointed a commission which ‘conducted the most extensive investigation into the idea of a Russian university ever undertaken by the old regime’,45 took advice even from the liberal Professor Kavelin, and introduced a law which improved the funding of universities, gave professors a large degree of control over university affairs, maintained the principle that universities were open to all classes of the community, and allowed universities to go on dedicating themselves, first and foremost, to the study of the liberal arts. As James Flynn says, this was ‘in most important respects a faithful return to the statute of 1835’,46 which sounds like a dubious compliment until one remembers that Nicholas I’s supposedly restrictive statute on universities actually preserved most of the enlightened principles of the statute of 1804.

By mid-1863, therefore, the regime had given several indications that its interest in remoulding the state’s institutions had survived the shock of emancipating the serfs. Its confidence appeared to be growing, for in 1864 the tsar enacted three measures that were second in importance only to the emancipation itself.

The first of these dealt with local government. As we saw in Chapter Five, even in the reign of Nicholas contradictory principles had informed the autocracy’s attitude towards administration. The growth of the tsar’s chancery had embodied a ‘personal’ principle, whereas the abolition of the majority of governors-general had implied adherence to a ‘ministerial’ principle and the reform of the municipal government of St Petersburg had intimated sympathy for a ‘representative’ principle. In Nicholas’s lifetime the personal principle prevailed over the others, but once his successor embarked on emancipation the other two had to be considered more seriously. Severing the umbilical cord between landlords and peasants vastly increased the proportion of the population for which the centre was directly responsible. Before 1861 the state had left most rural tasks to the gentry, but nobles who had been deprived of their serfs had no reason to think of themselves as agents of the government. How could the centre ‘maintain its administrative ties with the masses to ensure adequate national defense and tax collection’?47 It was unreasonable to suppose that an enlargement of Nicholas I’s ‘personal’ principle could fill the vacuum in the countryside, for when the serfs were free they were even more likely to misinterpret dictates from the centre than they had been as bondmen. The logical alternative was to promote the ‘ministerial’ principle by strengthening the chain of command which led from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the provincial governors. But although the imperial bureaucracy was growing in size, it was too small to take over all the duties for which landlords had been responsible. Nor was it well enough coordinated to give the Ministry of Internal Affairs a clear run. The third and least well developed principle, the ‘representative’ principle, began to come into its own. Frederick Starr calls the second and third principles ‘decentralization’ (which involved giving local officials more power but preserved the notion of bureaucratic or ‘ministerial’ hegemony) and ‘self-government’ (which meant introducing representative organs and giving non-bureaucrats in the provinces a larger say in the management of their affairs).48 These were Alexander II’s only real choices, but before he decided between them the notion of tying the provinces more closely to the centre had to be ruled out of court.

At the beginning of the reign the tsar seemed to favour decentralization (the ‘ministerial’ principle). In a decree of October 1856 he strengthened the hand of provincial governors. They and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were delighted, but other ministries with outposts in the countryside objected to the new constraints on their freedom of action. In the first months
of 1858 conservatives at the centre proposed the reinstatement of Nicholas I’s ‘personal’ principle. They believed that, instead of conferring greater powers on provincial governors, the regime should create an additional network of provincial administrators who would owe their allegiance to the tsar and whose prime purpose would be the maintenance of order rather than the fostering of local initiative. Military governors-general were to be put in charge of groups of provinces throughout the empire, not just in the imperial borderlands and in St Petersburg and Moscow. At the district level new officials, ‘district captains’ (uezdnye nachal’niki), were to be introduced to enact the decrees of the governors-general. In accepting Murav’ev’s proposals the regime made plain that, although it had just committed itself firmly to the emancipation of the serfs (in the Nazimov Rescript), it was not yet prepared to adopt the principle of decentralization or to move towards provincial self-government.

Nikolai Milutin was appalled. The vitriolic anonymous letter he dispatched to The Bell in the summer of 1858 had much less to do with the half-hearted way in which the government was handling the question of emancipation than with the way in which the regime proposed to run the empire after emancipation had been achieved. Military rule, he believed, would wreck the country. If the proposals of early 1858 reached the statute book, ‘The whole of Russia will turn into nothing more than a military colony (obratissia v odno voennoe poselenee), and who will save it from the new Arakcheev who is emerging in the person of Iakov Ivanovich Rostovsev?’

Fortunately, from Milutin’s point of view, the 1858 project aroused extreme dissatisfaction among the gentry. If it had been implemented they would have lost not only their control over the peasantry but also virtually all authority in provincial affairs. In view of the emergence of an unlikely alliance between reform-minded bureaucrats and provincial noblemen, the government abandoned the idea of running the countryside autocratically. When, on 25 March 1859, the tsar announced the principles on which Russian local government was to be based in the future, he acknowledged that provision had to be made for involving the public. The representative principle that had superseded the ministerial and the personal. Two days after changing tack, Alexander set up a Commission on the Reorganization of Provincial and District Institutions to work out how the new principle was to be embodied in legislation. Plans for the reform of local government were now in step with those for the emancipation of the serfs. Just as the regime had decided, by 1859, to make land available to serfs (not merely to emancipate them), so now it grasped that strengthening the centre’s authority in the countryside ran counter to the policy of increasing the freedom of its subjects.

From March 1859 it was clear that, when the empire’s local government was put on a new footing, people other than bureaucrats would be participating in it. What was not clear was the manner or the extent of their involvement. In view of the fact that Milutin was made chairman of the new local government commission the prospects for a generous solution looked good, but the commission made little progress in the first year of its life. Milutin himself was at fault. However strongly he objected to military governors-general, he also believed strongly in the maintenance of law and order. As a result, he devoted more attention to the question of policing the countryside than to the creation of local representative institutions. ‘In 1857, in [Voronezh], a province that covered almost 14,000 square miles and sheltered more than 950,000 people, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had at its disposal only 244 policemen.’ Since other provinces were no better off, policing was a major issue; but spending time on it impeded the development of representative institutions. In April 1860 the Minister of Internal Affairs presented ‘Temporary Rules on District Land Offices’ to the State Council, but in June the tsar returned them to the ministry to await the preparation of a Statute on Provincial Institutions. The reconstruction of local government was to take place only after the serfs had been liberated, by which time Milutin’s days at the Ministry of Internal Affairs were numbered.

Inadvertently, Milutin not only impeded but positively retarded the coming of local representative institutions, since the Commission on the Reorganization of Provincial and District Institutions proposed the introduction of ‘peace arbitrators’. The idea behind these was beneficial. They were to be elected by peasants from among the ranks of the gentry in order to defend peasant interests in the wake of the emancipation. In due course, after the ties that bound nobles and peasants had been finally severed, they were to become elective Justices of the Peace with jurisdiction over all estates of the realm. In conception they were a ‘first step toward further reforms in the field of local administration and the courts.’

In the event, however, they were appointed rather than elected and usually served the interests of the gentry estate. Charged in 1861 with supervising the charters of peasant obligations which had to be drawn up immediately after the emancipation, in most cases they sanctioned charters from which the gentry profited. Peace arbitrators thus came to epitomize not the ‘representative’ but the ‘personal’ or the ‘ministerial’ approach to the management of the countryside.

Another part of the emancipation legislation appeared to do more for the cause of local representation, but proved to create as many problems as it solved. Legislators believed that although peasant communes were well qualified to take decisions about the planting and harvesting of crops and the repartition of peasant landholdings, they were imperfect instruments for the conduct of administrative and judicial affairs in the countryside. The emancipators thought a commune could serve administrative and judicial purposes only if it embraced a coherent area of peasant settlement. Since the gentry had tended to buy and sell land without reference to the administrative cohesion of the parcels they exchanged, two or more communes often existed side by side in a single centre of rural population. From the point of view of the emancipators, ‘where a settlement consisted of various estates and more than one commune, there, evidently, two units had to exist ...: one economic (the land commune), the other administra-
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tive'. To bring the second of these into being, the authors of the 1861
determination created a level of local administration below the levels which
existed already. Small peasant communities were grouped for administrative
and judicial purposes into cantons or 'volosts'. The office-holders and agen-
cies which ran the new units – the elder, the clerk, the executive board, the
assembly, the court – were elected by the peasants whom they served, but
it is only with considerable reservation that volosti can be said to have in-
creased the representative character of the imperial polity. The ancient
word 'volost' meant 'authority' (in modern Russian, ulost). Introducing a
new source of authority in the countryside was the principal reason why
the emancipators believed volost had to be created. Although the new
level of provincial administration gave peasants an additional form of self-
government, its real purpose was the improvement of St Petersburg's line-
management. Because there were fewer volosts than communes, the
former could be pressurized more easily than the latter.

Even in so far as volosts marked a victory for the principle of represen-
tation, they did so without improving relations between the different
estates of the realm. Indeed, because they were exclusively peasant institu-
tions they actually widened the gap between peasants and privileged. To
make the principle of representation effective, the regime had to create in-
stitutions in which the various social orders interacted with each other.
Ironically, it was the cautious Valuiev rather than the enlightened Millutin
who brought such institutions nearer. In Valuiev's opinion new local as-
semblies would reward the gentry for parting with their serfs and enable
the government to buy off liberals. Neither of these reasons for creating as-
semblies at the district and provincial levels implied a desire to make them
broadly representative or to give them much clout, but as the draft legis-
lation passed through the upper reaches of the government keen reformers
got their hands on it. When, on 1 January 1864, the tsar legislated for the
creation of the new assemblies – 'zemstva' (or, if the plural is anglicized,
'zemstvos') – they seemed not only to represent provincial society as a
whole but also to possess considerable authority. Delegates to the district
zemstva were elected for a period of three years by three categories of
voter voting separately: landowners, property-owners in the towns, and
delegates from the volosts. Delegates to the higher assemblies were elected
by the lower. Assemblies met only once a year but set up permanent ex-
ecutive boards. Zemstva could raise taxes and had the right to make represen-
tations to the central government. They were explicitly instructed to
involve themselves in local economic affairs, education, medical care,
prisons and road maintenance. They were supposed to 'function inde-
pendently within the sphere of activity entrusted to them'. On paper, they
were the most significant addition to the structure of Russian local govern-
ment since Catherine the Great's reconstruction of provincial administra-
tion in 1775. Their creation appeared to mark a clear victory for the
'representative' approach to administration at the expense of the 'personal'
and the 'ministerial'.

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Zemstva made an immediate difference to the prospects of Russian primary
education. Neither Catherine the Great's Commission on Popular Schools
of 1782 nor the education statutes of 1804 and 1828 nor the foundation of
elementary schools by the Ministry of State Properties and the Holy Synod
had succeeded to any great extent in promoting the cause of peasant lite-
tracy. The empire contained many more primary schools in 1850 than in
1780, but fewer, relatively speaking, than the countries with which the Rus-

ian Empire was competing. When, in 1856, Nikolai Pirogov began to write
about educational matters in the press, the government responded by re-
establishing the long-dead Academic Committee of the Ministry of Educa-

tion. In 1858 the committee started preparing a primary education statute,
but between 1859 and 1862 the most striking development in respect of
primary schools owed its origins to private individuals. First in Kiev, then
in St Petersburg and elsewhere, Sunday schools appeared like mushrooms.
'Within three years there were 500 literary clinics in operation without a
noble's expense to the state'. In theory, the Ministry of Education wel-
comed schools which it did not have to pay for and in which the instruc-
tors – student volunteers – confined themselves to teaching adult illiterates
how to read and write. In practice, however, the authorities viewed Sunday
schools with considerable suspicion. By the end of 1860 the education
minister was reflecting darkly on the fact that one of the Kiev schools was
in teaching history and one of the Moscow schools both French and German.
Since the Third Department had convinced itself that Sunday schools were
hotbeds of sedition, it was hardly surprising that in June 1862 the govern-
ment closed them down.

The rate at which Sunday schools sprang up nevertheless strengthened
the authorities' conviction that they would have to make better provision
for the education of the masses. Between 1860 and 1863 the Academic
Committee of the Ministry of Education produced three versions of a
statute. Although it sought to make schools accessible, it also held that at-

tendance at them should be voluntary, that pupils should pay for the in-
struction they received, that public education should be developed
gradually rather than immediately, and that, although schools would still
be run by different agencies, societies and private individuals, they should
teach the same things and be managed identically. The main weakness of
the programme was that schooling could hardly be called accessible when
those who were supposed to benefit from it had to pay for tuition. The
proposed legislation also failed to commit the authorities to a definite pro-
gramme of school-building and put forward an extremely unambitious cur-
riculum. Primary education was to cover only religion, reading, writing and
arithmetic. The full course of study was to last only a year. Admittedly, the
draft legislation made provision for a more demanding sort of primary edu-
cation in parts of the country which expressed a desire for it, but the likeli-
hool of this superior version taking root was small in view of the poverty of the peasants who would have to pay for it.

Despite its highly unambitious character, the version of the statute which reached the State Council was toned down still further. References to a 'higher' form of primary education were cut out. Instruction in languages other than Russian was prohibited. Sunday schools were legitimized, but required to teach boys and girls separately (with the result that they needed extra buildings and instructors). Advocates of the view that primary education should be placed in the hands of the clergy failed to win their case, but priests were given entire control of religious instruction and assigned a major role in the new provincial schools councils.

One scholar holds that the many 'changes and corrections [to which the statute on schools was subjected] confirm that the government had no serious intention of promoting even the most elementary primary education among the people'.77 This conclusion needs to be modified in the light of the changes in local government. Late in the genesis of the law on zemstva, the new assemblies were permitted to use their resources for schools. They were not supposed to play a part in managing them, but it soon became clear that they would do so. When the final version of the law on schools was enacted in July 1864, zemstva representatives received two places on the newly created school boards. Other agencies received only one. Although the extra representation for zemstva did not arise out of St Petersburg's enthusiasm for local government (but out of the determination of central agencies to prevent any one of their number dominating the rest), it nevertheless ensured 'a large dose of decentralization' in primary education and gave primary schools a better chance than they would have had otherwise.78 A law on secondary schools which followed in November 1864 gave further evidence of the government's preparedness to devolve certain sorts of power from the centre to the provinces. Since universities had become relatively autonomous in 1863, the authorities' general attitude towards education seemed to indicate a readiness on their part to give up some of the prerogatives of the central bureaucracy.

COURTS

The reform of the courts in November 1864 reduced the power of the centre much further, but the origins of this striking development were even more remarkable than its outcome. What turned out to be the most far-reaching of all the post-emancipation measures of Alexander II derived, ironically, from the government's concern for the gentry. The court reform is sometimes thought to have originated in concern for the peasantry. One scholar writes that whereas before 1861 'a Russian serf had been a legal nullity', afterwards he received 'entirely new legal entitlements and obligations extending into every basic transaction of everyday life',79 with the result that the government had to redesign the empire's judicial system in order to integrate the peasantry into the community at large. Another scholar claims that since the government was trying to create a class of peasant smallholders, it had to safeguard the peasant's person, his property and his entrepreneurial activity; 'Securing these conditions without an apparatus of justice was impossible'.80 Though logical, these arguments are inaccurate. The government did indeed make new judicial arrangements for the peasantry, but it made them in 1861. The statutes which brought serfdom to an end introduced new courts at the level of the volost' which dealt solely with the affairs of the peasantry. The authorities did not intend to give peasants legal parity with the other estates of the realm, but to continue treating them as a separate estate. Although 'the designers of the [volost'] court viewed it as a transitional form of rural justice',81 volost' courts remained outside the general judicial system of the empire until 1912.

Why then, if the government dealt with the problem of peasant justice at the time of the emancipation, did it reconstruct the empire's legal system in 1864? It is true that enlightened officials and liberal members of the intelligentsia were pressing for change. It is true, too, that reform was necessary. Nicholas I had put some order into 200 years of imperial legislation by publishing the Complete Collection and Digest of the Laws, but he had done nothing to alter judicial procedure. Herzen believed that the reputation of the courts suffered more from the way in which they transacted their business than from the verdicts at which they arrived. 'A man of the humble class who falls into the hands of law', he wrote, 'is more afraid of the process of law itself than of any punishment. He looks forward with impatience to the time when he will be sent to Siberia; his martyrdom ends with the beginning of his punishment'.82 The unreformed legal system was both slow and malign. In civil cases it was designed to protect the interests of debtors (the gentry). In criminal cases the accused was guilty until proved innocent. There were no juries or lawyers. Judges sat behind closed doors and took only written evidence, basing their decisions on the records of preliminary investigations conducted by the police. The executive arm of the administration interfered constantly.

In view of these deficiencies, it was hardly surprising that the reformers who centred on the Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich addressed themselves to transforming the courts very soon after Alexander II ascended the throne. Until 1861, however, their victories were few. Viktor Panin, the longstanding Minister of Justice, and Dmitrii Bludov, the equally well-established head of the Second Department (the body which codified Russian law in the 1830s), resisted the thought of root-and-branch change. Bludov was prepared to adjust the existing system, but not to substitute adversarial for inquisitorial justice or to introduce barristers, juries, open courts and elected Justices of the Peace. Dmitrii Zamiatin, the deputy Minister of Justice, and Sergei Zarudnyi, Bludov's assistant at the Second
of justice that are swift, equitable, merciful, and equal for all our subjects, to elevate the authority of the judiciary, to give it the independence that benefits it, and in general to strengthen among our people ... respect for the law. The statutes established a five-tier system. District zemstvo assemblies elected Justices of the Peace (JPs) to deal with minor offenses. They had to be twenty-five years old, to have received at least secondary education, and to be substantial property-owners. Joint sessions of JPs constituted the second tier of the new judicial administration. Although judges were appointed by the authorities at the remaining levels (circuit courts, judicial tribunals, and the Senate, which acted as a court of appeal), they could be dismissed only if they broke the law themselves. Because they were well paid, they were disinclined to take bribes. Their independence reduced the executive’s capacity for interfering in the legal process. Elements of the old inquisitorial system of justice survived in the appointment of examining magistrates to collect pre-trial evidence (a practice sanctioned by French judicial procedure), but the creation of the profession of barrister turned trials into open adversarial contests on the pattern of judicial procedure in Britain. The most startling innovation was the introduction of juries. The framers of the ‘Basic Principles’ sought above all to generate a sense of law in the mind of the public. The involvement of the executive in the unreformed courts had led people to believe that the law was their enemy. Juries tended to dissipate this feeling. Although conservatives believed that juries were appropriate only in societies whose population had already achieved a degree of sophistication, reformers argued that they could promote the social responsibility from which they were supposed to emerge. Time was to prove the reformers right.

THE PRESS

Unlike the movement for judicial reform, which owed much to the right of the political spectrum but finished on the left, the government’s attitude towards freedom of the press began by reflecting the views of the left of the political spectrum but finished on the right. The ‘Temporary Rules on Censorship and the Press’ of April 1865 plumped for constraint at the expense of glASNOST. When, in December 1855, the tsar abolished the notorious Committee of 2 April 1848, he implied that he would be treating the press with a new generosity. His first Minister of Education, Avraam Norov, began contemplating censorship reform in March 1857. Briefly, in the first half of 1858, the government seemed to lift press restrictions altogether (with the result that Kavelin was able to publish his plea for emancipation with land). In January 1859, however, the cause of press reform took a turn for the worse when the tsar appointed a Committee on Press Affairs which
smacked of the committee of 1848. The following month Alexander complained to his brother of 'the unbridled character of our reckless literature, which ought to have been reined in long ago'.66 The 1859 committee was dissolved a year later, but only because the government had decided to treat the press with greater sublety. No one in authority thought of abolishing censorship altogether. Enlightened bureaucrats sought to put it in the hands of a newly created ministry; conservatives proposed transferring it from the liberal Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. An influential official argued in January 1860 that although glasnost was laudable, 'it must always have an indissoluble link ... with the bases and forms of the State and civic structure'.67 In 1861 the benighted Admiral Putiatin, Minister of Education, not only supported the idea of transferring censorship to the Ministry of Internal Affairs but also proposed the approach to the press that eventually found its way into law. Offending works, he thought, should be suppressed after they had been published rather than when they were in manuscript. This sounded like an improvement on the status quo, but it turned out to be a two-edged sword.

Between 1861 and the beginning of 1863 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs ran censorship jointly. Gradually, the latter prevailed over the former. Even a sympathizer conceded that Aleksandr Golovnin possessed few qualifications for heading the education ministry.68 He enjoyed a number of successes in respect of the new statutes for universities and for primary and secondary schools, but where the press was concerned he was unable to turn his liberal inclinations into workable edicts. He tried to persuade editors of journals to back the government, but made clear that he would prosecute them if they refused. This was 'a difficult and devious policy to implement'.69 Some of the problems he faced were not of his own making. Censors were having to deal with an unmanageable number of publications. In the past they had reported to the tsar every month, but by the end of 1861 newspapers had complicated their task to such an extent that they were reporting daily.70 The press seemed to be full of stories about the fractious behaviour of students, the circulation of revolutionary appeals to the population, the degeneration of relations between Russians and Poles, and the fires in St Petersburg. In the view of the government, discussing such matters in print made resolving them harder. In May 1862 the authorities issued a set of press rules which enabled them to suspend The Contemporary and a number of other journals. In July 1862 Valuev persuaded the tsar to inaugurate a campaign of press management. State publications were to be instructed and private publications 'stimulated' to present the activities of the authorities in a favourable light.71 In January 1863 Golovnin acquiesced in the outright transfer of responsibility for censorship to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

After the usual lengthy period of gestation, the government produced the 'Temporary Rules' of 1865 (which remained in place until 1905). Superficially, they made publishing easier, for editors of the country's leading periodicals received permission to print their material without seeking prior approval. What the government gave away with one hand, however, it took back with the other. Under the old system editors, writers and printers were technically free from the threat of punishment if, by hook or by crook, they managed to defeat the censor. Under the rules of 1865 they remained responsible for their publications after they had seen them into print. Editors still had to submit their material for inspection (after it had been printed, but before it was distributed); they could be penalized both by indictment in the courts and by direct action on the part of the Minister of Internal Affairs; and they had to lodge monetary bonds with the authorities to facilitate the payment of fines if the government moved against them. Nikolai Ogarev correctly divined that 'the censorship reform constrains the press more than it liberates it'.72 Some editors believed they would be better off if they refused to take advantage of the new rules and continued to let the censor see their material in manuscript. Valuev foresaw this possibility and let it be known that, in so far as preliminary censorship continued to be available, it would be harsh. Aleksandr Nikitenko believed that Valuev had embarked on 'an enormous plan ... to destroy any tendencies in literature which he considers harmful'.73 In 1868 Valuev admitted as much. He had been trying, he said, to arm the government with 'preventative, defensive, and repressive measures which were no longer to be found in the earlier legislation on censorship'.74 The minister's one regret was that he had not been able to implement his scheme in full.

THE WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS OF THE REFORMS OF THE 1860S

It did not take sophisticated powers of analysis to deduce from the new rules on the press that the government's reform drive was at an end. Although the tsar emancipated the state peasants in 1866, increased the representative element in the administration of the empire's cities in 1870, and introduced universal military service in 1874, he was much less willing to countenance innovation in the last sixteen years of his reign than he had been in the first ten. None of the later reforms implied that he was seeking fresh fields to conquer. The emancipation of the state peasants was an extension of the emancipation of the serfs, the reform of municipal government a corollary of the introduction of zemstva, the introduction of universal military service a logical consequence of Miliutin's desire to reduce the size of the active army and increase the size of the reserve. Having acquiesced in radical change in the first half of the 1860s, Alexander appeared to confine himself, in the later part of his reign, to tying up loose ends. The death of his eldest son in 1865 probably sapped his morale; an attempt on his life in April 1866 certainly inclined him to view further re-
form with disfavour, and Prussia's startling victory over Austria at the battle of Sadowa on 21 June / 3 July 1866 required him to devote more time to the changing balance of power in Europe. With the exception of Reitern at the Ministry of Finances and Dmitrii Miliutin at the War Ministry, most of the reform-minded officials who attained senior positions in 1861 and 1862 gave way to conservatives in the second half of the decade. Dmitrii Tolstoi replaced Golovnin at the Ministry of Education, K. I. Pahlen succeeded Zamiatin at the Ministry of Justice, Aleksandr Timashev replaced Valuev at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Third Department became even more oppressive under Petr Shuvalov than it had been under Dolgorukov.

Alexander may have felt by 1865 that he had completed his programme, but the sudden end of the reform drive also supports the hypothesis that he was not much of an innovator in the first place. Since, in the build-up to the emancipation, he had been slow to accept the need for letting peasants acquire land, and since, after the emancipation, his enthusiasm for change lasted a mere four years, it may be that his reputation as the 'Tsar-Liberator' is ill deserved. Even his victories can be made to look like defeats. The flaws in the emancipation of the serfs mentioned at the end of Chapter Eight can be explained in terms of the constraints on the emancipators' freedom of action, but peasants nevertheless remained the poorest and the most heavily exploited section of the population. Those who engaged in agriculture were not only short of land but also saddled with redemption payments. Those whose principal activities were non-agricultural hardly benefited at all. Communes were supposed to protect the former serfs against their former landlords, but they proved unequal to the machinations of the gentry arbitrators and tended to prevent energetic peasants from striking out on their own. After collating the evidence for the emergence of peasant individualism in the immediate aftermath of the emancipation, Boris Mironov concluded that 'for the time being' collectivism remained the predominant characteristic of the peasants' mentality. By retaining the poll tax and introducing voistov courts the government made plain that it had no intention of granting the peasantry fiscal or juridical parity with the other estates of the realm. The question of abolishing the poll tax cropped up in 1870 and the voistov courts were subjected to detailed scrutiny between 1871 and 1874, but the regime fought shy of additional legislation. The fact that by 1881 the overwhelming majority of peasants had moved from 'temporary obligation' to redeeming their land was not a measure of their enthusiasm for the statutes of 1861 but the result of pressure on the part of the gentry. From the point of view of the peasants, it could be said that the world which the emancipation brought into being barely improved on the world that it brought to an end.

It is also possible to level damning criticisms at most of the reforms that ensued. The government waited a decade before rendering the gentry liable to military service because it feared the consequences of another attack on their interests. When Reitern tried to stabilize the currency he depleted the state's metal reserves so rapidly that the attempt was soon abandoned. The authorities succeeded in changing the way in which the state raised money from vodka but experienced enormous difficulty in persuading the former monopolists of the retail trade to pay off the mammoth credits they had been granted under the system of vodka auctions. Reitern took six years to reorganize the state's revenue-gathering activities and failed to extend his more rigorous accounting procedures either to the state's management of its investment in railways or to the management of financial relations with foreign powers (two of the most significant areas of financial activity). Direct taxation remained inequitable. The poll tax, from which the gentry were exempt, not only survived but was 80 per cent higher in 1870 than it had been when the reforms began. Although it expired a few years after Alexander II's death, the imperial regime legislated for the introduction of an income tax only in 1916.

Church reform took place long after Valuev initiated it in 1862 and hardly embodied the goals for which he had been striving. Between 1867 and 1869 a series of measures on seminaries, ecclesiastical academies, the overpopulation of the clerical estate and the overmanaging of churches seemed to reflect a desire on the part of the authorities to rescue clergics from the conditions described by Belliusin; but in reality the state was trying to modernize the church without troubling itself about the majority of the church's servants. The ultra-conservative Dmitrii Tolstoi (who combined the post of Minister of Education with that of Procurator of the Holy Synod) saw merit in rendering the church better able to promote the interests of the state, but cared little for the clerical rank-and-file. His purpose was to create circumstances in which talented priests would prosper but the weakest go to the wall. Even if the measures of the late 1860s had achieved their purpose, they would have brought misery in their train. In the event they 'slightly ameliorated the material condition of a few clergymen', but 'left the Church little better – if not worse – than it was in 1825'.

Wearing his other hat, Tolstoi was hardly the man to breathe life into the universities statute of 1863 or the statutes on primary and secondary education of 1864. He recognized the importance of primary schools and encouraged their growth by creating teacher training colleges and a government inspectorate, but he failed to press for mandatory primary education, he spent only about 6 per cent of the Ministry of Education's budget on the schools themselves, and he stifled local initiatives by intervening more vigorously than his predecessors in the management of the primary network. Admittedly, the decisions he had to make about allocating the funds at his disposal were painful, in view of the fact that the state devoted less than 1 per cent of its total outgoings to the needs of the educational system. He was obliged, furthermore, to pay special attention to secondary and tertiary education, because the government depended on the upper levels of the educational system to produce the requisite number of civil servants. At the secondary and tertiary levels, however, Tolstoi allowed his political prejudices to prevail over the country's need for a highly trained workforce. In 1871 he secured imperial confirmation of the principle that aspir-
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The zemstva became nests of gentry. Remarkably, Valuev claimed in the mid-1860s that ‘in the zemstvo assemblies ... preponderance has been granted to the peasants’. Nothing could have been further from the truth. If the government had indeed created local representative assemblies with the object of including the newly emancipated peasants in the political nation, it would have established them in the western provinces as well as in the imperial heartland. Because it knew perfectly well that they were a means of compensating the gentry for the influence they had lost in 1861, it waited nearly fifty years before bestowing them on a region where the peasants were manageable but the gentry were recalcitrant Poles. Boris Chicherin (who was moving to the right) admired zemstva precisely because they were socially exclusive. His longstanding involvement in the district and provincial assemblies of Tambov left him with ‘nothing but happy memories’ because ‘The zemstvo is the flower of the gentry’. Theoretically, of course, peasants could have played a larger part in the activities of zemstva if they had chosen to do so (which is perhaps what Valuev had in mind when he represented the new assemblies as a concession to the peasants’ interests), but in state-designed talking-shops the former serfs were unable to rid themselves of the habit of deference to their former masters. If zemstva had existed at the level of the volost as well as at the levels of the district and the province, peasants might have considered that they were worth taking seriously on the grounds that they stood a chance of penetrating to the grassroots of society. At the level of the district and the province, however, the new assemblies were too remote from the peasants’ concerns to justify the risk of throwing caution to the winds.

If altruistic gentry had taken the zemstva in hand, they might have turned them into constructive devices for the amelioration of local condi-

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tions. Only a few gentry were noted for their altruism, however, and the government had been careful to ensure that their chances of exploiting the zemstva were minimal. In the eyes of the government, zemstva were fund-raising bodies rather than forums for political discussion. The word ‘self-government’ (samoupravlenie) found no place in the legislation of 1864 (though it appeared in the parallel statute of 1870 which increased the involvement of the public in the running of cities). Although the chairmen of zemstvo executive boards were elected by zemstvo assemblies, they had to be approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The authorities forbade zemstva to collaborate with each other. Because zemstva lacked the power of enforcement they found it difficult even to collect local taxes. In Anna Karenina, which came out in the 1870s, Lev Tolstoy’s liberally inclined hero Konstantin Levin called his zemstvo ‘nothing but a plaything’ and ‘a means for the local coterie to make a little money’. These criticisms were nearer the mark than the impression created by Chicherin’s enthusiasm.

If the government’s commitment to local assemblies was less than wholehearted, its reconstruction of the judicial system probably eroded on the side of utopianism. In respect of the courts the empire’s plight was so parlous that reformers more or less started from scratch. Neither the administration nor the public was ready for the ultra-sophisticated blueprint which resulted. The attempt on the tsar’s life of 1866 took place at the very time the new courts were opening. Although ‘elements of adversarial procedure’ figured in the prosecution of the culprits, the commission which dealt with the affair ‘acted quite independently of the judicial statutes’. The case was heard behind closed doors in the Peter and Paul Fortress and the press was forbidden to discuss the matter. Even if the authorities had accepted the new constraints on their freedom of judicial action, they faced the enormous problem of convincing a mistrustful citizenry of the value of judicial procedure. Jeffrey Brooks points out that although bandits figure prominently in Russian popular fiction of the period 1861–1917, the Russian bandit was no Robin Hood. His ‘realm is not that of justice and equality’, for Russian peasants were keener on freedom than order. Persuading them to look for redress in the courts was not something that could be achieved at the stroke of a pen. The government might have had greater success in fostering respect for the law if it had dovetailed peasant courts with the rest of the new judicial system, if it had withdrawn the stipulation that officials could be indicted in the courts only with the consent of their superiors, if it had been committed to forsaking the sweeping punishments at its disposal, and if it had remained true to the principle of jury trials when political violence began to mount in the 1870s, but a society whose legal consciousness was minimal in the 1860s needed decades of tranquility to digest the unfamiliar notion of abandoning direct action for reliance on lawyers and judges.

Although the zemstva and the transformation of the courts left much to be desired, they were significant enough innovations to render the administration of the Russian countryside yet more complicated than it was al-
between various groups in the Russian polity was in no way altered.\textsuperscript{92} Although, in November 1861, Alexander gave formal status to the Council of Ministers he had established in 1857 (thus hinting that he might be prepared to work with a cabinet, if not with a parliament), and although he allowed the notion of a central representative body to be aired in public in 1865, it was not until the very end of his reign, when he was under severe pressure from terrorists, that he broke up the imperial chancery which Nicholas I had made the linchpin of royal authority and accepted modest proposals for involving society in the activities of the central government. Perhaps Valuev was right to complain, in an unguarded moment, that ‘our government rests on no moral foundations and acts with no moral authority.’\textsuperscript{93} Since the tsar still made law on his own, it may be that the reforms of the 1860s were a grand illusion. In theory, they could have been reversed at any time.

Conceptually limited, poorly executed, incomplete, unsustained and insecure, the measures enacted by Alexander II nevertheless transformed the Russian Empire. The tsar wrought better than he knew. Alfred Rieber, who believes that Alexander’s objectives were narrowly military and fiscal, admits that ‘the emancipation undermined the whole legal and institutional structure which had existed in Russia since the seventeenth century.’\textsuperscript{94} Alexander Gerschenkron, who makes much of the difficulty of tracing a direct link between the abolition of serfdom and the industrial awakening of the Russian Empire (on the grounds that the latter took place twenty years after the former), admits that after 1861 the country possessed a larger ‘reservoir from which entrepreneurial talent could emerge’, that agricultural output improved on large estates, that ‘through the mechanism of redemption payments the role of the money economy was greatly increased’, that gentry whose fortunes declined were those whose outlook was ‘traditionally averse to industrial development’, and that ‘Above all, the psychological impact of the abolition of serfdom was immense.’\textsuperscript{95} It is not possible here to trace in detail the many respects in which, despite their obvious failings, the new laws of the 1860s improved the empire’s prospects. To do so would necessitate going way beyond 1881. By way of concluding the chapter, however, it is perhaps worth considering two of the major criticisms levelled at the ‘Great Reforms’ and seeing whether they can be countered: first, the proposition that peasants were no better off after the 1860s than they had been before, and second, the view that the prime beneficiaries of the reforms were the gentry.

Most authorities have stressed the respects in which the peasants’ economic fortunes declined as a result of the emancipation, but James Y. Simms, Heinz-Dietrich Löwe and Stephen Wheatcroft have begun to put a different view.\textsuperscript{96} In a study of the province of Orel between 1861 and 1890 Christine Worobec asks whether the maintenance of the peasant commune damaged the economic fortunes of the peasantry to the extent that it is customary to argue.\textsuperscript{97} The population explosion of late imperial Russia, usually included on the negative side of the peasants’ ledger, may have been a
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paradoxical indicator that their lot was improving. Peter Gatrell's explanation of the rise in population turns mainly on the fact that Russian peasants traditionally married young and had large numbers of children. This fails to explain why the rate of increase was much more rapid in the last half-century of the old regime than it had been in the last half-century of serfdom. Without comparing rates of population increase in the pre- and post-emancipation periods it is difficult to grasp that the later rate may have reflected the success of the reform. Gatrell acknowledges that in certain parts of the empire land was available to peasants in the aftermath of the emancipation. He concludes that improved nutrition (though not an improvement in medical services) reduced the perinatal mortality rates of the peasants' children. He discusses the greater ease with which emancipated peasants could leave the land to find work in the cities. But he does not look hard enough for the difference between the pre- and post-emancipation worlds. As we saw in Chapter Five, enlightened Russians sometimes argued prior to 1861 that serfdom ought to be abolished because serfs were dying out. The argument was probably ill founded, but the fact that it could be put indicated contemporary uncertainty about the population's rate of increase. No such uncertainty was possible in the decades after 1861. Something other than peasant traditions had intervened to make the imperial peasantry one of the fastest-growing communities in the world. The accelerated rise in the peasants' numbers created many difficulties for them, but also testified to improvements in their circumstances and to the fact that they were taking a new view of their opportunities.

After the reforms of the 1860s the peasants' opportunities included the chance to receive an education. Between 1856 and 1878 the number of Russian primary schools increased from just over 8,000 (with 450,000 pupils) to nearly 25,000 (with more than 1 million pupils). Although it failed to make primary education compulsory, the tsarist regime seems to have remained true to the educational commitment it expressed in the statute on universities of 1863 and the statutes on primary and secondary schools of 1864. Admittedly, the number of primary schoolchildren in the imperial population as a whole rose only from seven per thousand in 1856 to twelve per thousand in 1878 (when full enrolment would probably have meant achieving the figure of ninety per thousand), but despite the fact that Dmitrii Tolstoi invested little money in primary schools he appears to have brought significant numbers of schools into being.

In reality the state was not the prime mover in the growth of primary education. In a magisterial book, conveniently summarized in a hard-hitting article, Ben Eklof has demonstrated conclusively that in the generation immediately after the reforms of the 1860s the peasants themselves, not the authorities, took the initiative in developing the lower reaches of the Russian educational network. In the light of Eklof's work it seems unreasonable to relate the growth of Russian primary education to the reforms of the 1860s. The two developments appear to have happened at the same time but not to have been causally linked. It certainly cannot be argued that the government was responsible for the growth of primary schools by virtue of the fact that it created zemstva, for one of Eklof's main points is that the zemstva did not act energetically in the sphere of education until the 1890s. If primary education took off after the emancipation, it took off because of pressure from below rather than in the wake of imperial legislation. In a sense the growth of primary education can even be said to reflect the failure of the reforms, for another of Eklof's points is that peasants sought the ability to read and write in order to prevent themselves being duped by official decrees. They were not interested in education as an abstract good. 'Overwhelmingly, they adopted a survival rather than a profit-maximization approach to schooling'.

It is wrong, however, to make too sharp a distinction between the growth of rural education and the activities of the government, and it is unwise to exaggerate the utilitarianism with which peasants looked upon schools. The first tendency overlooks the fact that, although Alexander II's bureaucrats did little to promote popular schooling, they rarely tried to stand in its way. Not only the community at large but also the government experienced the 'psychological impact of the abolition of serfdom'. The regime was too strapped for cash to increase the peasants' well-being, but it passed facultative legislation and permitted a wider range of social developments than it had been prepared to tolerate earlier in the nineteenth century. In the Russian context, toleration amounted to encouragement. The second tendency (exaggerating the utilitarianism of the peasants' attitude to education) needs to be set in the context of the work of Jeffrey Brooks, who has made clear that between 1861 and 1917 peasants developed an enormous appetite for reading fiction. Brooks's work implies that some of the peasants who learnt how to read in order to protect their traditional interests moved on to higher things, a development which, even without further support, bespeaks a people whose instincts were far from wholly defensive. What peasants read, moreover, strengthens the impression that in the wake of emancipation their aspirations were changing. They tended, for example, to think of 'Success' as something to be achieved in the city. Brooks goes so far as to claim that analysis of the common people's reading matter shows their 'values ... were more consistent with the growth of a market economy in Russia ... than were those of their more educated compatriots'. Literacy remained low in the nineteenth-century Russian Empire — it stood at 21 per cent in the census of 1897 — but after 1861 it was growing rapidly among the young, in the cities, and in the rural as well as the urban parts of the central provinces. Contemporary entrepreneurs were quick to perceive that enlightenment might be profitable. The number of bookshops in the empire went up from 63 in 1864 to 611 ten years later. Book production went up 400 per cent between 1855 and 1881 and was accelerating four times more rapidly in the provinces than in Moscow and St Petersburg. The newly emancipated may not have read Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but their interest in literacy seems to have gone well beyond the desire to scrutinize official edicts.
Population growth and the peasants' interest in education were signs that, whatever privations the common people suffered in the wake of the emancipation, they believed life had more to offer than it had offered in the past. Neither of these products of the legislation of the 1860s constituted a stated objective of the government, but both owed something to the administration's activities. In some ways, therefore, peasants can be said to have benefited from the regime's innovations. Nobles, meanwhile, may not have been the reforms' main beneficiaries. At first sight, of course, their gains were considerable. They retained the lion's share of agriculturally profitable land; they were well paid for the land they lost; and they quickly came to dominate the zemstva. By 1905, however, they owned 40 per cent less land than they had owned in 1861. Some of those who sold up did so because they had found better ways of investing their wealth, but most had discovered that they were unable to run their estates when they had to pay for labour. The civil service, furthermore, became even less of a noble preserve in the second half of the nineteenth century than it had been in the first. The rapid expansion of the bureaucracy in the post-emancipation decades created a demand for educated manpower which the classes legally eligible for enrolment in the civil service [predominantly the gentry] were unable to satisfy. Just as non-nobles bought land, so non-nobles continued the process, already well under way, of undermining the gentry's hold on the empire's administration. Non-nobles, moreover, continued to penetrate the gentry estate and to water it down. The edicts of December 1856 which prevented civil servants from achieving ennoblement until they had reached rank four on the Table of Ranks were designed to please the traditional nobility, but failed to prevent entryism. Because, in 1857, there were only 857 civil servants in ranks one to four, it looked as if there were not going to be many opportunities for people to achieve nobility by promotion within the civil service. By 1903, however, there were 3,765 holders of the first four ranks. The government had simply increased the number of offices which carried entitlement to nobility.

If, despite appearances, the reforms of the 1860s can be said to have improved the prospects of the peasantry and reduced the authority of nobles, there can be little doubt that they marked a radical break with the past. There can be little doubt either that improving the prospects of the peasantry and reducing the authority of the gentry was the subtext of the principal reformers' activity. None of the enlightened bureaucrats of the reign of Alexander II was a social revolutionary, but all of them sought greater social fluidity. Like the tsar, they were determined to maintain order, but they were also anxious to discover new sources of energy. If the authorities had been able to forget about rehabilitating the empire in international affairs, and if they had been able to prevent the radical intelligentsia from believing that they could be pressurized into making further concessions, they might have been more obviously successful in their domestic endeavours. As we shall see in Chapters Ten and Eleven, however, these were respects in which their record was poor.