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RUSSIAN POLITICS



RUSSIAN POLITICS

BY

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WITH FIVE MAPS.

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PREFACE.



THIS book attempts to put the English reader in a position to understand the conditions of life and the problems of government that exist in the Russia of to-day. Some knowledge of the aspects of the country, the ethnological descent of its inhabitants, and the story of the rise and maintenance of their autocratic form of government, seems necessary as a preliminary to such understanding, and the first three chapters of the volume are devoted to an exposition of these matters; but since *modern* political life is the subject of the book, they have not been allowed to expand into greater detail than will be helpful to the object in view.

The reforms of the early years of Alexander II. have been treated much more fully, for almost all the political questions of the day in Russia are intimately connected with them and with their subsequent partial abrogation witnessed during the reactionary period of the last quarter of a century.

Finally the chief forces now in operation on the Russian political stage are described, and their relations

to each other discussed; the phenomena of government at present observable are portrayed, and the question is debated as to whether in Russia good government is compatible with autocracy (aggravated by officialdom), and if not, what chance there is in the near future of the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the introduction of constitutionalism.

Chapters supplementary to the main theme of the book have been added to discuss the subjects of the extradition of prisoners to Russia by other states, and the attitude towards questions of Russian internal politics which should be observed by inhabitants of freer countries.

A rather full index at the end of the volume will it is hoped serve in some measure as a small dictionary of the subject of Russian politics. Most of the headings likely to occur to the mind in connection with it will be found there, and if the pages indicated in the text are referred to, the student of the subject will frequently find further references to various authorities on particular points.

A list of many of the books used by me will be found in the index of authors, but I have very generally treated as my principal authorities M. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu's encyclopædic work on Russia, and the oral evidence of my friend Mr Felix Volkhovsky, who has been kind enough to read the book in manuscript and in every chapter to suggest out of the wealth of his knowledge (gathered both from personal experience, and a wide acquaintance with Russian historical and sociological books) notable additions and improvements.

I consider myself fortunate therefore in having had as my two principal guides, men of divergent views, who are yet, both of them, so instructed and so conscientious, that in their accounts of matters of fact hardly any divergence occurs.

The reader may differ widely from me in the conclusions I have drawn from the facts portrayed, but will understand that my object has been to place them fairly before him so that he shall be in no less good position than myself to draw the deductions from them which appear to him appropriate.

A word must be said on the difficult subject of the spelling of Russian names. Like Mr Kennan and others I have attempted to follow phonetic rules though my interpretation of them has not completely coincided with his; (for example where he uses the final *j*, I have used *v*). In the numerous quotations I have made from other writers, I have considered it right to preserve the spelling they have adopted though it has sometimes resulted in the inconvenience of the same name's being spelt in two or three ways, possibly within as many pages. Like Mr Kennan I have not attempted to alter the spelling of names familiar to English readers through long usage (such as Moscow, Cossack, etc.), nor the signatures that have been deliberately chosen by Russian writers in Roman letters (such as that of Madame Novikoff).

In my quotations from M. Leroy-Beaulieu's book, I have not used Madame Ragozin's English version, but have translated directly from the French edition. The frequent curtailments in the English edition make

this desirable, and in the case of the third volume it has been necessary, as that part of the book has not yet been published in its English form.

My thanks are due to my brother Dr A. Hugh Thompson for having helped me to revise the proofs of the book.

HERBERT M. THOMPSON.

September 9th, 1895.

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APPENDIX.

The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom.

(ESTABLISHED NOVEMBER, 1889.)

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF RUSSIAN FREEDOM is a body of men and women whose object is to further the cause of political and religious liberty in Russia by legal and legitimate means.

The existence of a Society in England concerning itself with the internal affairs of another country, although by no means without notable precedent, requires a word of explanation.

Russia is said to be an autocracy. But absolutism in Russia does not really mean government by the will of the Tzar. That stupendous task may indeed be undertaken, but cannot possibly be accomplished by one man. The acts of the Government are determined by officials whose decision are enforced by an enormous army of ignorant and often brutal subordinates.

This bureaucracy is in general excessively corrupt and oppressive. Against large classes of the community its members practise cruelties and barbarities, which are an outrage on humanity. The people of other countries would refuse to passively acquiesce in these if they were properly informed concerning them.

As instances may be cited, THE PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS, of the STUNDISTS (a million Protestant peasants of a type somewhat resembling the Puritans of the 17th century in England), and of all other RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS differing from the Orthodox Greek Church, and THE DISGRACEFUL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS AND EXILES, especially of political prisoners.

Since the reaction which followed the reforms in the early part of the reign of Alexander II., the Government has shown itself not only corrupt, oppressive, and cruel, but doggedly retrograde. What possibilities have Russian

citizens of struggling in their own country against the terrible yoke laid upon them? There is no freedom of speech, of public meeting, or of religion. The press is gagged. The people have no voice in the Government, and they have no means of resisting the evil deeds of those set over them.

Education is systematically sterilized. Arbitrary arrest for political offences is followed by imprisonment and exile, often without any form of trial (by what is called "administrative process"), and when trial is permitted, it is without a jury, and the right of cross-examining witnesses is absolutely in the control of the court.

The prisoners not infrequently die or go mad in consequence of their sufferings. Sometimes they themselves end their miseries by suicide. Those who pass through the ordeal survive only with shattered health. A large proportion of the best of the intellectual classes—professors, teachers, doctors, authors, and promising students, both men and women—are banished to the wilds of Siberia, their lives ruined, and their talents lost to their impoverished country.

What can the outside world do in so desperate a case? Nothing? On the contrary, the events of the last few years show that it can do a great deal.

The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom—

- (1) Aims at supplying accurate information as to the deeds done in Russia, which the strict surveillance of the police in that country succeeds so often in shielding from observation.

Every successful attempt at ventilation does something to dispel the accumulated foul vapours in these dark places. Of this a signal instance has been afforded in the publication of George Kennan's "Siberia and the Exile System."

- (2) It aims at encouraging the Russian liberals and also those who are suffering from religious persecution, by giving them some visible proof that the heart of the rest of the civilized world is with them.
- (3) It aims at keeping public watchfulness alive lest Europe and America should be induced under false pleas to aid and abet atrocities abhorrent to them. As an instance of the need for such watchfulness

may be mentioned the danger of the extradition of political offenders under false claims.

- (4) It aims also at giving such encouragement and aid to Russian political exiles in Siberia as may nerve them to obtain freedom by flight.

To carry out these objects the Society—

- (I.) Supplies authentic and recent information concerning the cause of freedom in Russia by publishing a monthly paper, *Free Russia*, in England, by publishing pamphlets, and by organising lectures and meetings.
- (II.) Collects money for assisting Russian political prisoners and exiles to escape. (Contributors to this fund should signify that they wish their donations to be applied to this purpose).

For all general purposes subscriptions may be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, Dr Spence Watson, Bensham Grove, Gateshead-on-Tyne.

The publication of the Monthly Paper (which is sent free to all members) is in itself a considerable expense. The Society is anxious to be put in a position to maintain special correspondents in Russia, who would add largely to its value.

Membership of the Society is obtained by a subscription of not less than 5s. per annum. BUT A GOOD MANY SUBSCRIPTIONS OF A LARGER AMOUNT ARE REQUIRED IF THE WORK OF THE SOCIETY IS TO BE DONE EFFICIENTLY.

There are also several Provincial Branches working in close sympathy with the mother Society.

It will be seen that the objects of the Society are to secure for Russia the freedom which this country obtained centuries ago, or perhaps we may more justly say, has always in some measure enjoyed. The Society has the support of persons of all shades of political opinion. Several members of both Houses of Parliament—Conservative, Liberal, and Irish Nationalist alike—are members of the General Committee or of the Society, and subscribers to the Society's funds. In fact, the policy advocated makes a strong appeal to every inhabitant of these Islands, for it is the only alternative to TERRORISM—that policy of despair which it seeks to supplant.

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The Society of American Friends of Russian
Freedom

has similar aims. The annual fee for membership is one dollar, and each member is sent the monthly paper, "*Free Russia*" (published in London).

Those interested in the object of the Society are invited to correspond with the Secretary, EDMUND NOBLE, 255 Washington Street, Boston, Mass., or if they desire to become members, they are requested to send their names and fee to the Treasurer—

FRANCIS J. GARRISON, 4 Park Street, Boston, Mass.

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