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978-0-521-10173-8 - Capitalism and Politics in Russia: A Social History of the Moscow Merchants, 1855-1905

Thomas C. Owen

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Frontispiece. Top left: Andrei P. Shestov (1783–1847), who served as the mayor of Moscow from 1843 to 1846. Top right: Vasili A. Kokorev (1817–89), who was a liquor-tax concessionaire and the founder of railroad, steamship, and oil companies. Bottom left: Nikolai A. Naidenov (1834–1905), a cotton dyer, banker, Moscow Duma member, editor of historical records on Moscow and the merchants, and the president of the Moscow Stock Exchange Committee from 1877 to 1905. Bottom right: Grigori A. Krestovnikov (b. 1855), who was the son-in-law of Timofei S. Morozov, the leader of the Commercial-Industrial Party in 1905–6, and president of the Moscow Stock Exchange Committee from 1905 to 1915.

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A social history of the Moscow
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Thomas C. Owen

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Preface

This study began as an inquiry into the social transformation of the Moscow guild merchants under the initial impact of industrialization. My doctoral dissertation, “The Social and Ideological Evolution of the Moscow Merchants, 1840–1870” (Harvard, 1973), sought to explain an apparent paradox of Russian social history: that the movement to foster local self-government, individual rights, and constitutional restraints on the state’s autocratic power developed within the *zemstvos* under the leadership of the gentry, whose economic strength was gradually declining, while the increasingly wealthy industrialists remained largely indifferent to liberalism as a political creed. The present work traces the development of the merchants’ ideology beyond 1870 to a crucial political watershed, the Revolution of 1905. This study describes the “prehistory” of the Russian industrialists’ role in the struggle among autocracy, liberalism, and radicalism in the 1905–20 period and is offered as a contribution to the comparative social and political history of modern revolutions.

Moscow was chosen as the geographical setting of the study for several reasons. First, practical considerations made it necessary to limit the investigation to one major economic area – in this case, the Central Industrial Region of Russia, over five-eighths the size of France¹ – without considering in detail the peculiarities of such subsidiary areas as the Baltic cities, Russian Poland, the Ukraine and Black Sea littoral, the middle and lower Volga, the Ural region, and Siberia. Second, in the mid-nineteenth century, the ideological evolution of the industrialists proceeded further in Moscow than in any area other than St. Petersburg, and the industry of the Central Region was free from dependence on direct state purchases, unlike that of the northern capital. Therefore, the experience of Moscow promised to show best the political limits beyond which the Russian industrialists would not go. Finally, even as economic growth gradually enlarged the scope of possible political development, cultural traditions played a large role in determining the direction of that development. Moscow, “the heart of Russia,” was the center of the country’s native culture; and more merchants lived in Moscow province than in any other. This

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area therefore seemed the most logical setting for a study of the cultural and ideological changes that occurred within this social group.

The focus on the merchants cannot, of course, be justified in terms of their numerical importance, for they remained a small part of Russia's predominantly peasant society. Rather, it must be stressed that their limited numbers were no measure of the degree of their significance in public life. Elites, especially newly emerging ones with great wealth, have often played a crucial role in history, and the Moscow merchant leaders are best understood in this light. Within the merchant estate, moreover, the wealthiest families tended to take a more prominent place than the less affluent, so that the narrative at times reads like a collective biography of the twenty families whose extensive intermarriages are illustrated in the Genealogies in the Appendix. Several responses can be made to the objection that the cultural, economic, and political behavior of these leaders might somehow have been atypical of the Moscow merchant estate as a whole. First, the wealthy leaders were elected by their more humble fellows to important positions in the estate organization, the municipal government, and the stock exchange (see Appendix, Tables I and II), and they therefore deserve to be considered as spokesmen for the merchants as a group. Second, while it was generally the wealthy merchants who left what little documentary evidence there is, the available memoir literature, which is not contradicted by other sources, supports the hypothesis that the less affluent followed the lead of the rich in the affairs of the merchant estate in Moscow.

The question of the typicality of certain individuals and organizations within the Moscow merchant estate cannot be separated, therefore, from the problem of the reliability of existing source materials. A few voluminous works by Russian and Soviet authors do cast light on particular aspects of merchant life such as philanthropy, art patronage, and the labor question. However, merchants rarely committed their political opinions to paper, either in policy statements or in memoirs, and so the historian of this social group must use a variety of peripheral and obscure sources.² The present study draws on rare memoirs and family histories, some previously unavailable outside the Soviet Union. It is also based on evidence from selected Moscow archives, particularly those of industrial leaders and intellectuals who participated in what is called here *the merchant-Slavophile alliance*. As far as possible, the following narrative presents a balanced overview of the Moscow merchants' public activities in the half-century before 1905 and a general introduction to the role of capitalists in Russian political life.³

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A tripartite terminology has been employed to represent the cultural, economic, and political evolution of the Moscow merchants in this period. The *traditional* merchant way of life persisted well into the nineteenth century. Only under the impact of West-European technological innovations in the 1840s did there emerge from the wealthiest traditional families a new group of merchant leaders, whose economic practices deserve the Weberian label of *capitalist*, and whose dynamic new view of the world is termed here *the merchant ideology*. Finally, after several decades of increasingly important activity by the capitalist merchants in the public life of the Russian Empire, leadership in Moscow passed to a younger group of merchants, who emerged from the Revolution of 1905 with a genuinely class-conscious ideology defined here as *bourgeois*. The rationale for these three terms is given at appropriate places in the narrative, and it is for the reader to decide whether they are useful or whether a different periodization and terminology should be sought. The major point made here is that the Moscow merchant estate was in fact neither a genuine class nor a bearer of liberalism before 1905, but achieved a rather comfortable place within the Russian old regime. Of the various theoretical conclusions that flow from this observation, the two most important are that the Marxist term *Russian bourgeoisie* appears to be a contradiction in terms for the nineteenth century, and that the theory of modernization, insofar as it posits a direct link between economic development and political liberalization, fits modern Russian history no better than does Marxian theory.

Except for a single digression in Chapter 2 into contrasts between the Moscow merchant ideology and that of the West-European bourgeoisie, the comparative aspects of this study remain implicit because of space constraints. However, the essential features of the Moscow merchants' economic role, social position, estate and class consciousness, and political activity are described here, so that the major contrasts between West-European and Russian patterns will become clear when this study is read in conjunction with works on the European bourgeoisie and liberalism.⁴

My debts to previous historians, both Russian and Western, are made clear in the notes. The pioneering work of several scholars, however, deserves special mention: the Menshevik writers Osip A. Ermansky (alias A. Gushka) and Pavel A. Berlin; the former merchants Pavel A. Buryshkin and Vladimir P. Riabushinsky; Roger Portal; and the Soviet historians Iosif F. Gindin, Ksana S. Kuibysheva, Vladimir Ia. Laverychev, and G. F. Semeniuk. I received valuable comments from Richard Pipes, my dissertation advisor, and from Edward Keenan, Charles Timberlake, Samuel Baron, and several anonymous readers. Special thanks are also

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due the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), under whose auspices I worked in Moscow archives and libraries in 1971–2; Nina S. Kiniapina, my advisor at Moscow State University; the Russian Research Center at Harvard; my department chairman at Louisiana State University, John L. Loos, and the LSU Council on Research; and the staff of Widener Library at Harvard and the Inter-Library Loan librarians at LSU, Janellyn Kleiner and Olar Bell. The late Ethel R. Derby kindly provided a secluded residence in the Vermont hills, where most of the study was written over several summers.

My wife, Sue Ann, provided endless encouragement throughout the slow and often difficult process of investigating and attempting to explain the curious behavior of the Moscow merchants. The book's thematic consistency owes much to her high standards of research and writing and her excellent critical sense.

Any errors of fact or interpretation remain, of course, my own responsibility.

The perennial problems that plague the Russian historian in transliteration and chronology have been dealt with in the following manner. All Russian words are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system, minus diacritical marks, with several minor exceptions: in the names of people and places, soft and hard signs are omitted; the final *i* in masculine names is dropped (e.g., Dmitri); and *-sky* and *-tiev* replace *-skii* and *-t'ev*. European names are given in the original Roman spelling whenever possible (e.g., Goujon, Heiden, Knoop, and Zindel – not Guzhon, Geiden, Knop, and Tsindel), but the names of all cited authors of books and articles in Russian (Witte excepted) are transliterated without modification for the sake of bibliographical accuracy (e.g., Katts, Kizevetter, Rozental, and Vistengof – not Katz, Kiesewetter, Rosenthal, and Wisenhoff). Dates are given according to the Julian or “old-style” Russian calendar, which lagged twelve days behind the Gregorian or “new-style” European calendar in the nineteenth century and thirteen days in the twentieth.

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Abbreviations of organizations

CTM	Council of Trade and Manufacturing (<i>Sovet torgovli i manufaktur</i>), formed 1872 in St. Petersburg.
MIS	Moscow Industrial Society (<i>Obsbchestvo dlia sodeistviia uluchsbenniu i razvitiuu manufakturnoi promysblennosti</i>), formed 1889 in Moscow.
MSCTM	Moscow Section (<i>Moskovskoe otdelenie</i>) of the CTM, formed 1872.
MSEC	Moscow Stock Exchange Committee (<i>Moskovskii birzhevoi komitet</i>), formed 1839.
MSES	Moscow Stock Exchange Society (<i>Moskovskoe birzhevoe obshchestvo</i>), formed 1870.
MSMC	Moscow Section of the Manufacturing Council (<i>Moskovskoe otdelenie manufakturnogo soveta</i>), formed 1829.
MSRIS	Moscow Section of the Russian Industrial Society (<i>Moskovskoe otdelenie Obsbchestva dlia sodeistviia russkoi promysblennosti i torgovle</i>), formed 1884.
PSM	Petersburg Society of Manufacturers (<i>Obsbchestvo dlia sodeistviia uluchsbenniu i razvitiuu fabrichno-zavodskoi promysblennosti</i>), formed 1893 and chartered 1897 in St. Petersburg.
RIS	Russian Industrial Society (<i>Obsbchestvo dlia sodeistviia russkoi promysblennosti i torgovle</i>), formed 1867 in St. Petersburg.