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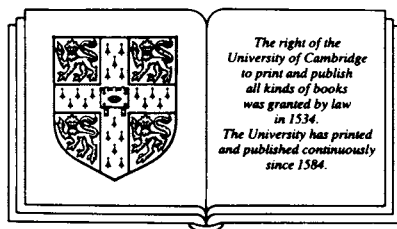
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Russian Officialdom in Crisis

Autocracy and Local Self-Government, *1861–1900*

THOMAS S. PEARSON

Monmouth College



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Preface

Of the four great European empires that met their demise in World War I, the Russian empire surely had the most traumatic initiation into the twentieth century. Beleaguered by famine, workers' strikes, student unrest, and military defeat, the old regime stumbled into the revolution of 1905 and came perilously close to losing its power. Although many causes lay behind this event, the administrative shortcomings of tsarism in the late nineteenth century were undoubtedly among the most important. These failings were particularly noticeable in the government's policy on local self-government, for here Russia's rulers confronted the centuries-old problem of governing a uniquely huge, underdeveloped empire with inadequate human and economic resources and with largely uneducated social classes who, for various reasons, regarded self-government with indifference.

Russian officialdom from the Petrine era on had grappled with the task of devising an effective system of central control over the Russian countryside without stifling all local development, and this dilemma continues to preoccupy Soviet leaders. Time and time again, they have reorganized the local Communist Party apparatus and government agencies to achieve a balance between party control and local economic initiative. Like their tsarist predecessors, Soviet leaders introducing reform have had to steer an unpredictable course designed to overcome official inertia without arousing overly sanguine expectations among officials and the population concerning the scope and tempo of the reform program.¹ In a broader vein, the problems of Russian

¹Such reorganizations occurred in 1918, 1957–62, and 1972. Most recently, the dilemmas of reform at the local level have surfaced in the intense party discussions over the program of the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress (1986) and General Secretary Gorbachev's call for "restructuring" (*perestroika*). For discussions of previous reorganization at the local level, see Mervyn Matthews, ed., *Soviet Government: A Selection of Official Documents on Internal Policies* (New York, 1974), pp. 22–9, 93–102, 112–16; and Jerry F. Hough, *The Soviet Prefects: The Local Party Organs in Industrial Decisionmaking* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), which concentrates on the post-World War II era. For one recent example of the party's effort to educate Soviet people on the limits of reform, see Bill Keller, "Soviet Youth Unit Seeks to Rein In

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local administration discussed in this work have parallels in developing nations undergoing rapid social and economic change. Although the late tsarist regime did not have to deal with the legacy of colonial occupation or to integrate its population into a new national state, it did experience many of the same problems of local administrative development that have haunted developing nations. The Russian government, like other developing states, needed local self-government because the state bureaucracy lacked sufficient personnel and fiscal resources of its own to provide basic services (education, medical facilities, food relief, road construction) to modernize rural areas. Yet, paradoxically, the tsarist state found that illiteracy, poverty, and the lack of an adequate tax base in the countryside were large obstacles to the development of effective local self-government. Caught in this predicament, the Russian government encountered great difficulty in moving beyond its traditional rural functions of maintaining law and order and collecting taxes to a more dynamic role in tapping economic resources, meeting human needs, and mobilizing grass roots support.² Indeed, as with later developing countries, the evolution of local self-government in Russia provided a source of conflict within all levels of officialdom and between the state and public institutions of self-government.³

The problem of local self-government in tsarist Russia nevertheless warrants special attention because postreform Russia came under unusual pressures as a great power and a developing state, and because self-government provided a critical link between autocracy and Russian society. Faced with unprecedented demographic growth and the need for economic change in his realm, Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom and in 1861–4 introduced a series of Great Reforms, among them a system of elected self-government that was to become the most significant local administrative reform in Russian history between the Petrine era and 1905. Although these changes put Russia in the ranks of European states that had established a decentralized system

Political Groups – Internal Report by Komsomol Reflects Wariness on Call for Democratic Moves,” *New York Times*, 8 November 1987, pp. 1, 15.

²Fred W. Riggs, *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society* (Boston, 1964), pp. 365–9, 372–4. On Russia as a model for developing nations see Teodor Shanin, *The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of Century* (2 vols.; New Haven, 1985), vol. 1: *Russia as a "Developing Society."* This is not to suggest that the late tsarist experience with modernization on the local level was identical with that of decolonizing developing nations; indeed, late nineteenth-century Russian officials introduced social and economic change much more reluctantly (and political “modernization” did not really begin in Russia until after the 1905 revolution), whereas many developing nations embarked on a program of modernization explicitly to cultivate political support for the new states. Hence, the programs of rural administrative reform in such states were much more hurried. For the differences in the modernization of Russia and developing nations, see C. E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York, 1967), pp. 119–28. The term “modernization,” as used here, refers not only to industrialization but also to a variety of other developments (population growth, urbanization, increases in mass literacy, professionalization and specialization of the government, administrative centralization, the formation of social classes) as defined by Black, pp. 7, 13–15, 46–7.

³For instance, see Douglas E. Ashford, *National Development and Local Reform: Political Participation in Morocco, Tunisia, and Pakistan* (Princeton, 1967), pp. 12–14, 24–5, 28, 39; Richard P. Taub, *Bureaucrats under Stress: Administrators and Administration in an Indian State* (Berkeley, 1969), pp. 114–16; and Riggs, pp. 382–91, who focuses on the problems of Philippine development.

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of public self-government at midcentury to harness new social forces and perpetuate monarchical rule, the Russian experiment with self-government proved exceptional in two respects.⁴ On the one hand, the creation of elected peasant and zemstvo self-government compounded tensions in the tsarist government – for instance, between central and local concerns and between local public and state officials – that were unmatched in their extent and gravity elsewhere in Europe. This was largely because a strong and active system of public self-government in Russia potentially provided the basis for the development of civil liberties, constitutional government, and religious and national freedom – forces antithetical to the tsarist order.⁵ On the other hand, the Russian experience with local self-government stands out because the tsarist empire was the only European state to reverse its course of decentralization so abruptly in the late nineteenth century, with the same purpose of perpetuating imperial rule and consolidating its social support.

This book focuses on the Russian government's efforts to direct local self-government and its reform from its introduction in 1861 to its bureaucratization under the land captains and zemstvo counterreforms of 1889 and 1890. It seeks to answer two interrelated questions: Why did the Russian government introduce these counterreforms in local self-government? and What does our case study of the administrative reasons for these counterreforms and the bureaucratic politics surrounding them tell us about the nature and viability of the imperial government on the eve of the twentieth century? The origin and elaboration of these counterreforms suggest themselves as a case study of Russian officialdom in crisis on several counts. First, these measures, traditionally overshadowed by the Great Reforms of the 1860s and the revolution of 1905, were the legislative cornerstones of Alexander III's reign (1881–94) and were autocracy's foremost attempt in the postreform era to renovate its rural institutions without relinquishing political authority. A study of local self-government reform under Alexander II and Alexander III provides insight into the Russian government's authority and ability to adapt to changing social, economic, and political conditions – clearly a vital consideration in any assessment of the late imperial regime and its standing among nineteenth-century European powers.

Second, as an issue that involved many state ministries and all estates of the realm (*sosloviia*) and that molded public opinion about tsarism, local self-government linked central and local concerns in a unique way. It repeatedly raised questions about the structure and performance of autocracy at the

⁴For the European setting, see Robert C. Binkley, *Realism and Nationalism: 1852–1871* (New York, 1935); Brigitte Basdevant-Gaudemet, *La Commission de décentralisation de 1870: Contribution à l'étude de la décentralisation en France au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1973); A. D. Gradovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* (9 vols.; St. Petersburg, 1899–1904), especially vol. 5; and N. M. Korkunov, *Russkoe gosudarstvennoe pravo* (2 vols.; St. Petersburg, 1903), vol. 2. The importance of local government in the development of the well-ordered police state in Imperial Russia is discussed in Marc Raeff, *Understanding Imperial Russia: State and Society under the Old Regime*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York, 1984), pp. 58–60, 64, 82.

⁵Paul Vinogradoff, *Self-Government in Russia* (London, 1915), p. 4.

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grass roots level; its potential, by Western standards, for evolving into a more modern, activist government that could provide the local population with essential services as well as order; the applicability of Western political theories on local self-government in Russia; the relationship of autocracy to the traditional social structure in Russia and the future of both; and the direction and pace of socioeconomic change in the Russian countryside at a time when, compared with the turn of the century, tsarism was relatively free from war and diplomatic entanglements and could concentrate on domestic reform.⁶

Beyond these general concerns about rural development and the autocratic order, the reform of peasant and zemstvo self-government raised unique political issues. This stemmed from the fact that in postreform Russia local government consisted of state, corporate (estate), and public institutions. Contemporary officials and writers concurred that the legal separation of the peasantry and the establishment of peasant self-government in 1861 were a necessary alternative to the serfowner's authority in providing the state with administrative and fiscal control over the village. They rightly emphasized that the abolition of serfdom necessitated other reforms in local administration, the judiciary, the universities and school system, and the military. Beyond that, however, they disagreed on nearly everything else regarding elected peasant administration, its relationship to the peasant land commune (*obshchina*) and state authorities, and its impact on village society and economy. Significantly, these issues were at the heart of later land reform discussions during the Stolypin era and the early Soviet period.⁷ In the period under study, top officials were most concerned with the ramifications of peasant self-government reform for the landed gentry and the state. One faction envisioned the inclusion of peasant self-government in a comprehensive system of public self-government and the eventual eradication of all estate distinctions, whereas their opponents (including pro-gentry journalists M. N. Katkov and Prince V. P. Meshcherskii) defended separate peasant self-government under gentry tutelage as the *raison d'être* of the postreform gentry and fitting compensation for their losses in the peasant emancipation.

By contrast, the debate over zemstvo self-government (established in 1864) between the local public and bureaucracy and within those two groups centered on broader political issues. The main question from the Great Reforms era on was whether the zemstvos, as elected institutions of self-government,

⁶Theodore S. Hamerow, *The Birth of a New Europe: State and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983), pp. 261–2. On the connection between international pressures and the tsarist government's structural weakness and growing rigidity after 1890, see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 90–4; and Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860–1914*, trans. Bruce Little (New Haven, 1987), pp. 126–7.

⁷See, for instance, David A. J. Macey, *Government and Peasant in Russia, 1861–1906: The Prehistory of the Stolypin Reforms* (DeKalb, Ill., 1987); Dorothy Atkinson, *The End of the Russian Land Commune 1905–1930* (Stanford, 1983); Graeme J. Gill, *Peasants and Government in the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1979); and Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization* (London, 1968).

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constituted part of the state bureaucracy. One school of thought held that the zemstvos were public institutions that handled local administrative functions such as fire prevention and public health, which had no connection to the tasks of the state bureaucracy. Contrary to the “social” theory of self-government, the “state” theory viewed the zemstvos as adjuncts of the state discharging only those functions that the government, for want of personnel and fiscal resources, delegated to them. Consequently, another question in the minds of officials was whether an autonomous zemstvo might become the nucleus of a public constitutional movement.⁸ Nevertheless, they recognized, as did many others, that peasant and zemstvo self-government were the keys to systematic state administration and control in Russia at the district (*uezd*) level and below. Accordingly, local self-government reform was the litmus issue in domestic politics because it forced tsarism to delineate its administrative priorities, its policy toward the various estates, and its own political future. More than a reorganization of the state bureaucracy, local self-government reform raised or dampened public expectations and required Russian officials to evaluate autocracy’s course vis à vis Western administrative development.

Given these considerations, it is no surprise that scholars to date, almost without exception, have treated the land captains and zemstvo counterreforms as part of a growing conflict between an “all-powerful autocracy” and “oppressed society” (*obshchestvo*) and have concentrated on the political aspects of the legislation. These works depict the counterreforms as part of the government’s reaction to Alexander II’s assassination in 1881 and resulting political pressures, while paying little heed to the concrete activity of peasant and zemstvo institutions. Prerevolutionary “liberal” historians writing circa the 1905 Revolution dismissed the counterreforms and Alexander III’s “new pro-gentry course” in general as an unfortunate step backward in Russia’s constitutional development from 1861 to 1905. In their view the zemstvos were emasculated in 1890 because of their political activism (which these historians exaggerated), not their administrative record (which, with the noteworthy exception of B. B. Veselovskii, they overlooked).⁹ Although Soviet historians in recent years have produced more sophisticated studies of Russia’s “crisis of autocracy” of the late 1870s and early 1880s, they, too, ritualistically emphasize the reactionary political character of the counterreforms, introduced in the wake of the “revolutionary situation of 1878–82” that culminated with Alexander II’s death. Using the paradigm of class conflict, these historians criticize prerevolutionary historians for not emphasizing the gentry “class” nature of the counterreforms. They maintain that

⁸For a good synopsis of the debate, see Neil B. Weissman, *Reform in Tsarist Russia: The State Bureaucracy and Local Government, 1900–1914* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1981), pp. 15–16.

⁹Classic “liberal” works on the subject include I. P. Belokonskii, *Zemstvo i konstitutsiia* (Moscow, 1910); A. A. Kornilov, *Krest’ianskaia reforma* (St. Petersburg, 1905); V. M. Gessen, *Voprosy mestnogo upravleniia* (St. Petersburg, 1904); G. A. Dzhanzhiev, *Epokha velikikh reform; istoricheskie ocherki* (8th ed., Moscow, 1900); and B. B. Veselovskii, *Istoriia zemstva za sorok let* (4 vols.; St. Petersburg, 1911), vol. 3.

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the “bourgeois-capitalist” reforms of the 1860s, in precipitating the political and economic decline of the landed gentry, deprived autocracy of its social support and plunged the government into a crisis marked by revolutionary terrorist attacks and peasant unrest. Consequently the counterreforms and general bureaucratic arbitrariness (*proizvol*) of the 1880s and 1890s, according to Soviet accounts, answered the needs of the government and landed gentry in the countryside and reformed the social alliance between them.¹⁰

Recent Western studies of the elite bureaucracy under Alexander II and Alexander III dispute the view that the government was the landed gentry's instrument and that the counterreforms were mainly gentry legislation. They contend that elite officials of both reigns, as represented in the various ministries and the State Council, were socially and professionally isolated from the landed gentry and polarized into opposing ideological groups over the relationship of law to autocracy, as defined by Western bureaucratic theory set to Russian political conditions.¹¹ These studies are of particular

¹⁰See Iu. B. Solov'ev, *Samoderzhavie i dvorianstvo v kontse XIX veka* (Leningrad, 1973), pp. 3–5, 28–65, 84–92, 106–11, 165ff.; B. S. Itenberg, “Krizis samoderzhavnoi vlasti,” *Rossia v revoliutsionnoi situatsii na rubezhe 1870–1880-kh godov: Kollektivnaia monografiia*, ed. B. S. Itenberg and others (Moscow, 1983), pp. 91ff.; and, more generally, P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Rossiiskoe samoderzhavie v kontse XIX stoletii* (Moscow, 1970); S. N. Valk, “Vnutrenniaia politika tsarizma v 80–90-kh godakh,” *Istoriia SSSR*, vol. 2: 1861–1917 gg. *Period kapitalizma*, ed. L. M. Ivanov, A. L. Sidorov, and V. K. Iatsunskii (Moscow, 1959); L. G. Zakharova, *Zemskaiia kontrreforma 1890 g.* (Moscow, 1968); A. P. Korelin, *Dvorianstvo v poreformennoi Rossii 1861–1904 gg.: Sostav, chislennost', korporativnaia organizatsiia* (Moscow, 1979); N. M. Pirumova, *Zemskoe liberal'noe dvizhenie: Sotsial'nye korni i evoliutsiia do nachala XX veka* (Moscow, 1977); and V. A. Tvardovskaia, *Ideologiia poreformennogo samoderzhavii* (M. N. Katkov i ego izdaniia) (Moscow, 1978). The recent work of P. N. Zyrianov offers some interesting variations on this argument. True, in stereotypical fashion he asserts that the autocracy sought to perpetuate its archaic control and gentry influence by establishing a separate peasant village and *volost'* administration under gentry control and by granting the gentry primary authority in district administration (as opposed to provincial administration where the state bureaucracy dominated). This policy served to counter the penetration of capitalism and the control of the bourgeoisie (kulaks) in the countryside. But more than other Soviet historians, Zyrianov suggests that the land captains counterreform was introduced not so much to prop up the gentry as to improve the *efficiency* of *volost'* administration and to give gentry supervisors the authority to protect the mass of petty and middle peasants from the village bourgeoisie. P. N. Zyrianov, “Sotsial'naia struktura mestnogo upravleniia kapitalisticheskoi Rossii (1861–1914 gg.),” *Istoricheskie zapiski*, vol. 107 (Moscow, 1982), pp. 237–8, 251–2, 262–5, 267, 271, 273–4.

¹¹Daniel T. Orlovsky, *The Limits of Reform: The Ministry of Internal Affairs in Imperial Russia, 1802–1881* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); and Heide W. Whelan, *Alexander III and the State Council: Bureaucracy and Counter-Reform in Late Imperial Russia* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982). The development of bureaucracy in Russia is discussed in Daniel T. Orlovsky, “Recent Studies on the Russian Bureaucracy,” *Russian Review* 34 (October 1976): 448–67; Marc Raeff, “The Bureaucratic Phenomena of Imperial Russia, 1700–1905,” *American Historical Review* 84 (April 1979): 399–411; Walter M. Pintner and Don Karl Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980); and P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Pravitel'svennyi apparat samoderzhavnoi Rossii v XIX v.* (Moscow, 1979). See also the following specialized studies: W. Bruce Lincoln, “Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats and the Problem of State Reform, 1848–1866,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 12 (October–December 1971), 410–21; Walter M. Pintner, “Russian Civil Service on the Eve of the Great Reforms,” *Journal of Social History* 8 (Spring 1975): 55–65; Daniel Field, *The End of Serfdom: Nobility and Bureaucracy in Russia, 1855–1861* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976); Richard S. Wortman, *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* (Chicago, 1976); and two unpublished dissertations: Theodore Taranovskii, “The Politics of Counter-Reform: Autocracy and Bureaucracy in the Reign of Alexander III 1881–1894” (Harvard University, 1976); and Helju A. Bennett, “The *Chin* System and the Raznochintsy in the Government of Alexander III” (University of California, 1971).

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value in showing that the principles behind the Great Reforms provided an ideological context for later debates over local government reform. Likewise, they show that the German concepts of *Rechtsstaat* (rule of law) and *Polizeistaat* (well-ordered police state) were tailored in postreform Russia to ensure that the autocrat maintained his personal authority. Within this framework the tsar used the law and institutions to regulate and coopt society (*Reglementsstaat*) rather than prepare society to play the dynamic role in local development that it did in the West.¹² According to these works, Alexander III, following the lead of his minister of internal affairs, abandoned the legal principles behind the Great Reforms and advocated a return to the personal, discretionary authority that characterized the Russian *Polizeistaat* of the pre-reform period. Yet the tsar and his minister D. A. Tolstoi were thwarted in part by the old reformers in the State Council, who had enough power in the 1880s to water down the counterreform proposals.¹³

Although these writings shed light on the ethos of elite officials in the nineteenth century and bureaucratic politics surrounding the counterreforms, they are similar to Soviet studies in two respects – they draw virtually no connection between the record of local self-government and the counterreforms (as if to prove the isolation of the elite bureaucracy from rural Russia) and they suggest that the late imperial government was doomed by divisions and dysfunctioning at the highest levels.¹⁴ Whereas Soviet scholars attribute the demise of autocracy to its “crisis of support,” Western scholars have tended to emphasize the ideological sterility and conflict of the late imperial regime. In marked contrast, George Yaney treats the land captain counterreform as part of a process of bureaucratic interaction with the peasantry that represented a vast improvement over elected peasant officials in supervising the village and provided a means for government mobilization of rural society. At last the state was bringing law and order to replace the confusion and custom of the peasant world and was enlisting the landed gentry in the

¹²On this theme, see Raeff, “Bureaucratic Phenomena,” pp. 408–9; and the following works by him: *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through the Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 178, 181–8, 198, 214–16; and “The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach,” *American Historical Review* 80 (December 1975): 1234–9. The differences between Russia and the Germanies showed up in the concept of *Rechtsstaat* as well; whereas in German territories *Rechtsstaat* in the early nineteenth century became an antonym of the *Polizeistaat* and a doctrine meaning “rule by law” – with some protection of individual freedom – in Russia it served more as a means for “rule through the law and institutions.” In official debates over the counterreforms, the opponents of the legislation advocated a *Rechtsstaat* in this limited sense. On this point, compare Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition* (Chicago, 1957), pp. 252–61; and Whelan, pp. 87–92. See also V. V. Leontovich, *Istoriia liberalizma v Rossii 1762–1914*. Trans. from German by Irina Illovaiskaia (Paris, 1980), pp. 8–9.

¹³For the clearest statement of this argument see Taranovski, “The Politics of Counter-Reform,” chap. 3.

¹⁴Combining the interpretations of recent Soviet and Western specialists, Becker attributes the counterreforms to the autocracy’s desire to restore traditional paternalistic gentry tutelage in the countryside, as advocated in the 1880s by the *soslovniki* (the gentry in favor of reorganizing local administration along estate lines) and their journalistic champions, Karkov and Meshcherskii. Seymour Becker, *Nobility and Privilege in Late Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, Ill., 1985), pp. 55–62, 130–2.

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process. Yet Yaney's comprehensive studies on rural agrarian and institutional change tend to overlook the interministerial politics that impeded the government's ability to perceive and respond to rural needs.¹⁵

By focusing on elite bureaucratic politics and ideologies or the evolution of the gentry from a social order to a class, recent scholarship has told us more about *how* the land captain and zemstvo counterreforms were enacted, rather than *why*. All of these accounts (including Yaney's) view the arrival of A. D. Pazukhin, the gentry marshal from Alatyř' district (Simbirsk Province), in St. Petersburg in 1884–5 as the beginning of the counterreform process, thereby drawing little continuity between the official discussions of local self-government reform at the end of Alexander II's reign and those that dominated his successor's rule. Nor do they fully explain why it took the government almost a decade to introduce counterreforms that, in their view, were triggered by the assassination of Alexander II (1881) and his son's desire to eradicate self-government in Russia. Similarly, the view of the counterreforms as primarily a means of arresting the landed gentry's political and economic decline raises serious questions. If tsarist officials were guided by reasons of state in establishing public self-government in the 1860s, as most Soviet and Western historians concur, why would the government overhaul it in the 1880s owing to pressure from a splintered, politically weaker gentry? Moreover, even if we assume that the government introduced these counterreforms to promote the interests of the traditional landed gentry as its rural social support, why did these gentry overnight become the leading critics of the legislation?¹⁶ The institutional studies of Whelan and Taranovski are not particularly helpful in answering this question in that they do not address the administrative and social context of the legislation. They do not explain why the tsar's bureaucracy, factionalized and inert, persisted and introduced the land captain and zemstvo counterreforms nearly a decade after Alexander II's assassination.

This study aims to redress the balance and show the interplay of administrative, institutional, and ideological factors, in the provinces and the capital, that led to the land captains and zemstvo counterreforms.¹⁷ By analyzing the interaction of ministerial politics and the grass-roots devel-

¹⁵George L. Yaney, *The Systematization of Russian Government: Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711–1905* (Urbana, Ill., 1973); and idem, *The Urge to Mobilize: Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1861–1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1982). Several articles in a recent collection on the zemstvo focus on zemstvo activity, yet none of them explore the connection between its shortcomings and the enactment of the zemstvo counterreform. The articles focus largely on the post-1890 period. See Terence Emmons and Wayne Vucinich, eds., *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government* (Cambridge, 1982).

¹⁶Becker, pp. 133–4.

¹⁷A similar administrative approach has been used for other periods of Russian history: For 1830–70, see S. Frederick Starr, *Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia, 1830–1870* (Princeton, 1972); and for 1900–14, Weissman. For a valuable forthcoming study of the provincial governors and their crucial role in local administration see Richard G. Robbins, Jr., "The Tsar's Viceroys: Provincial Governors and Governance in the Last Years of the Empire."

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opment of local self-government as the state perceived it, we get a fuller picture of the administrative crisis that faced tsarism and of the practical limits of autocracy in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. By and large, historians agree that the autocracy was in crisis in the late 1870s and early 1880s, as illustrated by terrorist attacks on its officials and its reliance on extralegal means to suppress opposition. The 1890s have also been called a period of crisis because of the outbreak of famine and cholera in the provinces and burgeoning strike activity in the cities. However, the term “crisis” is also warranted in a wider sense, as used here, to characterize the government’s increasing futility at managing rural administrative development with its paternalistic bureaucracy and traditional corporate institutions, and its inability to renovate local government with its ministerial apparatus. In this sense, Russian officialdom experienced what some scholars have called a crisis of “penetration,” which entailed the extension of government control over its territories and social groups and the development of bureaucratic efficiency.¹⁸ To be sure, bureaucratic inefficiency alone does not constitute a crisis. Yet in autocratic Russia, as perhaps nowhere else in Europe, state attempts at rural control through the Great Reforms bred public disillusionment and administrative and economic problems for Russian officials far beyond the routine type. When an activist state (such as Russia following the Crimean defeat) is unsuccessful in managing its broader, more complex responsibilities effectively, the result is often social alienation and bureaucratic rigidity – especially when there is no basis for meaningful public participation in government. These conditions make the regime more vulnerable to political challenges of its legitimacy, such as occurred in Russia during the revolutionary years 1905 and 1917.¹⁹

Along these lines I contend that the land captain and zemstvo counter-reforms, like the local self-government established in the 1860s, were designed to meet specific rural needs and were a product of a ministerial system of government that Alexander II developed with his Great Reforms. This compartmentalized arrangement promoted more professional administration and bureaucratic penetration in the provinces and left the tsar’s personal power intact by allowing the autocrat to choose from different ministerial approaches and ideologies of local development. Unfortunately, it also produced ministerial fragmentation and confusion at all levels and helped put

¹⁸On the crisis of “penetration,” see Raymond Grew, “The Crises and Their Sequences,” *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States*, ed. Raymond Grew (Princeton, 1978), pp. 7, 10–13, 22–5; and Walter M. Pintner, “Russia,” in the above-mentioned volume, pp. 366–8. In a similar vein, see Yaney, *Urge to Mobilize*, pp. 7–8. This type of broad administrative crisis characterized by structural breakdown has been investigated for other periods; for instance, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century,” *Crisis in Europe 1560–1660*, ed. Trevor Aston (Anchor Book ed.; Garden City, N.Y., 1967), pp. 67–8, 77–102; and Riggs, pp. 378–9. For a description of the general crisis in Russia’s autocratic system in the late nineteenth century, see Solov’ev, pp. 3–7; and *Krizis samoderzhavii v Rossii 1895–1917*, ed. B. V. Anan’ich and R. Sh. Ganelin (Leningrad, 1984).

¹⁹Grew, pp. 20, 26, 30; Pintner, “Russia,” pp. 371–5.

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state institutions into conflict with the new zemstvo and peasant institutions. Besides generating reverberations in the provincial bureaucracy,²⁰ these conflicts impeded the work of local self-government and complicated state efforts to modify, not to mention overhaul, the legislation of the 1860s.

Nonetheless, Russian officialdom pressed on and devised the counterreforms for practical statist reasons. I maintain that the government did so following the autocratic crisis of the late 1870s because it was convinced that elected peasant and zemstvo institutions, as established in the 1860s, were mismanaged, insolvent, and politically troublesome to autocracy. Indeed, that crisis revealed that the administrative and fiscal order of the state ultimately hinged on the work of elected institutions outside the government's strict control. Put another way, the state's efforts to control the provinces in the Great Reform era were shown to be inadequate by the political crisis of 1878–82. Yet in the 1880s, as two decades earlier, the state had few options for overhauling local administration owing to shortages of personnel and funds, its distrust of elected officials, and sporadic tensions between local state and public institutions.²¹

Viewed against this backdrop, the counterreform proposals of Minister of Internal Affairs Dmitrii Andreevich Tolstoi and his role in their enactment merit reevaluation. We shall show how throughout the 1880s he insisted that local self-government be depoliticized and bureaucratized in order to fulfill its administrative functions. However, the prospect of all local self-government concentrated under his ministry challenged the ministerial power equilibrium established under Alexander II and violated the principles of Alexander II's reform officials who sat in the State Council. Tolstoi's peers recognized that the balance of power between the capital and localities was a key to state security, administrative order, and their own political status, and thus most of them joined forces and employed various strategies, with some success, to blunt the counterreform measures. By the end of the nineteenth century, as elaborated in the following chapters, public self-government had been repudiated but not fully bureaucratized, leaving a tangled, confused local administration and divided ministerial hierarchy that would come under attack at the turn of the century.

Owing to limitations of the topic, I have passed over or treated briefly certain themes of local self-government. Municipal institutions clearly com-

²⁰Zyrianov, pp. 289–90.

²¹From 1858 to 1897 the population of the Russian empire rose from 59.2 million to 116 million (excluding Finland and the Caucasus). Although the ratio of tsarist officials to population increased from 1:929 in 1851 to 1:335 in 1897, the tsarist empire remained seriously undergoverned at the end of the nineteenth century in comparison with other European states. For instance, at the turn of the century Russia had only 6.2 administrators per thousand inhabitants as opposed to 17.7/1,000 and 12.6/1,000 for France and Germany, respectively. Weissman, p. 111. As shown in the following chapters, the shortage of state personnel was compounded by the limited number of rural people traditionally involved in local self-government from the 1860s to 1905. For the population data, see Ia. E. Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii za 400 let (XVI-nachalo XX v.)* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 113–14; for the figures on the growth of Russian bureaucracy, see Zaionchkovskii, *Pravitel'stvennyi apparat*, p. 221.

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prised a part of local self-government, yet a detailed analysis of town administration would raise issues exclusively urban in nature and of little relevance to the politics of local government reform in the countryside. Moreover, the guiding concepts of the municipal legislation of 1870 and 1892 (which I hope to analyze in later work) were taken from the zemstvo legislation of 1864 and 1890, respectively.²² In addition, I have treated the development of central and local administration in the 1890s (following the implementation of the counterreforms) in rather summary fashion, in part because a detailed analysis of the various state commissions dealing with the rural economy, gentry needs, and local administration would expand this account immeasurably without substantially altering the interpretation of local administrative problems and political conflicts. These records have proved especially fruitful to students of gentry politics and the background of the Stolypin Land Reforms (1906–11), and the reader may turn to several good accounts of these topics.²³ For similar reasons I have confined this study to an analysis of local self-government, as opposed to all of the institutions of local government. State and corporate institutions of local administration are discussed only insofar as they affected, or were affected by, local self-government.

The terminology in this type of study creates difficulties because certain Russian concepts and words (for example, *obsbchina*) have no precise English equivalents on the one hand, and because officials in the debate over local self-government reform frequently used Western terms (separation of powers, decentralization) on the other. I have provided a translation to explain terms of the first type as they appear in the text; the Russian term *dvorianstvo*, however, requires a special note here. The *dvorianstvo* resembled neither a nobility (closed corporation, hereditary privileges) nor a gentry (land as primary source of income) in the true Western sense. I have chosen to render the term as gentry, however, because the focus here is on the landed segment of the *dvorianstvo* and their leadership, or lack thereof, in local self-government and corporate institutions. The Western terms can also be briefly defined here. The decentralists comprised those officials who advocated a diffusion and, in some cases, a devolution of decision-making authority; expanded initiative and autonomy for public self-government; explicit laws protecting these institutions; and separate administrative and judicial branches of government. In contrast, the centralists were those who favored rigid state control over local institutions, the concentration of all authority over local self-government in one central agency, usually the Ministry of

²²The best of the few surveys of municipal reform and self-government are I. I. Ditiatin, *Ustroistvo i upravlenie gorodov v Rossii* (2 vols.; Moscow, 1875–1877); D. D. Semenov, *Gorodskoe samoupravlenie: Ocherki i opyty* (St. Petersburg, 1901); and V. A. Nardova, *Gorodskoe samoupravlenie v Rossii v 60-80-nachale 90-80 godov XIX v.: Pravitel'stvennaia politika* (Leningrad, 1984).

²³Besides Yaney, *Urge to Mobilize*, and Macey (see note 7), see James I. Mandel, "Paternalistic Authority in the Russian Countryside, 1856–1906" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1978). On the zemstvo after 1890, see Emmons and Vucinich, eds., *Zemstvo in Russia*.

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Internal Affairs, and a combination of administrative, judicial, and punitive authority in one set of state officials. In addition, I have used the phrase “ministerial circles” in a general context, referring to top officials as a whole (ministers, State Council members, governors), and in a more limited sense when dealing with specific ministers or ministries. The usage in each case is clear from the text.

All Russian names are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system except for those of the tsars, Witte, and Count Pahlen, which are rendered in the anglicized form. First names and patronymics are given for all ministers in this study, with the initials given for other individuals. All dates are based on the Julian calendar, which lagged twelve days behind the Western calendar during the period of this study. The specific citations and titles of archival *dela* used in this study are given in the notes according to the customary Soviet form: archive, *fond* (f.) [collection], *god* (g.) [year], *opis'* (op.) [inventory], *delo* (d.) [file], *karton* (k.) [box], *papka* (p.) [folder], *list/-y* (l., ll.) [sheet], *oborot* (ob.) [verso]. Citations for *listy*, as for pages, will be given in abbreviated form (for instance, ll. 146–7 for ll. 146–147) except in cases involving the *oborot* of a *list*, where more detailed citations (ll. 146–146 ob.) will be used to avoid confusion.

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