

ALEXANDER III (1881-1894)

”Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Russification”

Background: Influenced by his Tutor (and later his Advisor) Konstantin Pobedonostsev who was very reactionary:

- True believer in Autocracy
- Against Democracy
- Orthodox (Procurator of the Holy Synod = lay supervisor of the Orthodox Church)
- Against all other religions and sects
- Anti-Semite: “*One third of the Jews should be killed, one third should be forced to emigrate and one third should be assimilated*”
- Russian! Against all minorities of Russia ...

Restrictions against the Zemstvo/Dumas (local administrations) and the courts

- Land Commandants – a new office introduced by Alexander III in 1889
- Land Commandants had to belong to the nobility
- Land Commandants sat in the local administration (Zemstvo/Dumas) and had senior administrative and judicial power – over-riding the authority of the local administration
- Land Commandants replaced the Office of Justice of the Peace in local courts

More restrictions of the local administrations - Laws 1890 and 1892

- Restricted the popular vote to the Zemstvo/Dumas
- A list of candidates to the local administration replaced the previous ability to freely vote for Zemstvo/Duma deputies
- The suggestions and proposals from the local administrations were often obstructed and undermined

Restrictions against Elementary and Higher Education

- The influence of the local clergy (Orthodox Church) in elementary schools expanded a lot during the reign of Alexander III – In 1897 over 79% of the population was illiterate
- 1884 – Law that limited the administrative autonomy of Higher Education
- 1887 – Tuition fees were raised

Other signs of “REACTION”

Russification. This now included areas that had relative autonomy - therefore they had been loyal to the Tsar: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia... The attempts of Russification did not lead to more obedience – rather the opposite; resistance and cries for total independence!

EX: Finland

1899 – The Finnish Diet was deprived of nearly all their legislative rights – protests...

1903 – The Russian Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov was given dictatorial power so he could crush the opposition

1904 – Bobrikov was assassinated – this could have led to repression but...

1904-05 – Russo-Japanese War / Bloody Sunday / 1905 Revolt / Manifestos...

1905 – Finland temporarily got the old constitution back

Anti-Semitism. Why – Jews had participated in the Polish Rebellion 1863 and one of the assassins of Alexander II was Jewish (Hessia Helfmann). Methods:

- Ghettos for Jews were created in urban areas
- 1881-1905 – over 215 cases of “pogroms” (= persecution of Jews)
- Jews were forbidden to make any new settlements in rural areas
- Jews were not allowed to trade on Christian holidays
- Special quotas for Jews in schools and higher education
- Kiev 1886 + Moscow 1891 – all “illegal” Jews were expelled from the city

REACTION: Several Jews emigrated. Other joined the Zionist movement or became revolutionaries. In 1897 “**Bund**” was founded (part of the Socialist Movement in Russia and also part of the Russian Social Democratic Party which was founded the year after – 1898)

More signs of “REACTION”

- The liberal Minister of Interior Loris-Melikov was replaced by Nikolai Ignatiev who later was replaced by Dmitry Tolstoy...
- Lenin’s brother Alexander was executed in 1886 accused of plotting to kill the Tsar
- Supervision of Universities and Courts
- Censorship and supervision of the Press

ECONOMY

Industrialization...

- Development of railroads – linked major areas of industrial development to important markets + linked the areas of agricultural production with the ports of the Black Sea
- 1883 – the Batum–Baku railroad. Linked the Caspian Sea with the Black Sea. This increased the Russian oil production a lot!
- 1891 – Start of the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad

Tariffs:

- In the 1870’s low tariffs
- Late 1870’s – tariffs began to rise
- 1891 – the “*Great Protective Tariffs*”. These tariffs especially protected the Russian coal and pig iron production

Sergei Witte became Minister of Finance 1892

- More protective tariffs
- Foreign investments and foreign capital in Russian industries
- Russian currency put on the Gold Standard

W.O. Henderson (Economic Historian) – “*The Russian economy was still backward in some respects, it was also true that vigorous state action, foreign capital and foreign machinery had given Russia a powerful impetus on the road to industrialization*”

Lenin (1899) – “*If we compare the present rapidity of development with that which could be achieved with the modern level of technique and culture, the present rate of development of capitalism in Russia really must be considered slow*”

November 1st 1894 – Alexander III died! His son Nicholas II took over at the age of 26. His first comment when he heard his father was dead was: “*What am I to do? I am not prepared to be Tsar. I know nothing of the business of ruling*”.