

Reprinted from

**THE CALCUTTA HISTORICAL
JOURNAL**

Vol. V

No. 2

JANUARY—JUNE, 1981

ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION OF 1905.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLITICIANS AND PROFESSIONALS, 1893 - 1900.

H. S. VASUDEVAN

Members of Russia's elected local self government—the zemstva*—were important figures in the Revolution of 1905. They were prominent in the "Liberation Movement" which led to the Revolution. The major events of the "Liberation Movement" took place in Russia during 1904-1905. The directing body of the Movement was the Union of Liberation, formed in 1903. The Union organized a broadly based public opinion campaign for constitutional reform of Russian central government. It developed local agencies and formed the major clerical and professional unions which were to make up the "Union of Unions". The Union of Liberation was mainly organized by the elected assembly members of the zemstva and by zemstvo professionals: it was the outcome of many illegal meetings of zemstvo members during between 1901 and 1903. The activities of the Union, together with the strikes, mass demonstrations and agrarian disturbances of 1905, constituted and caused the Russian Revolution of 1905.¹

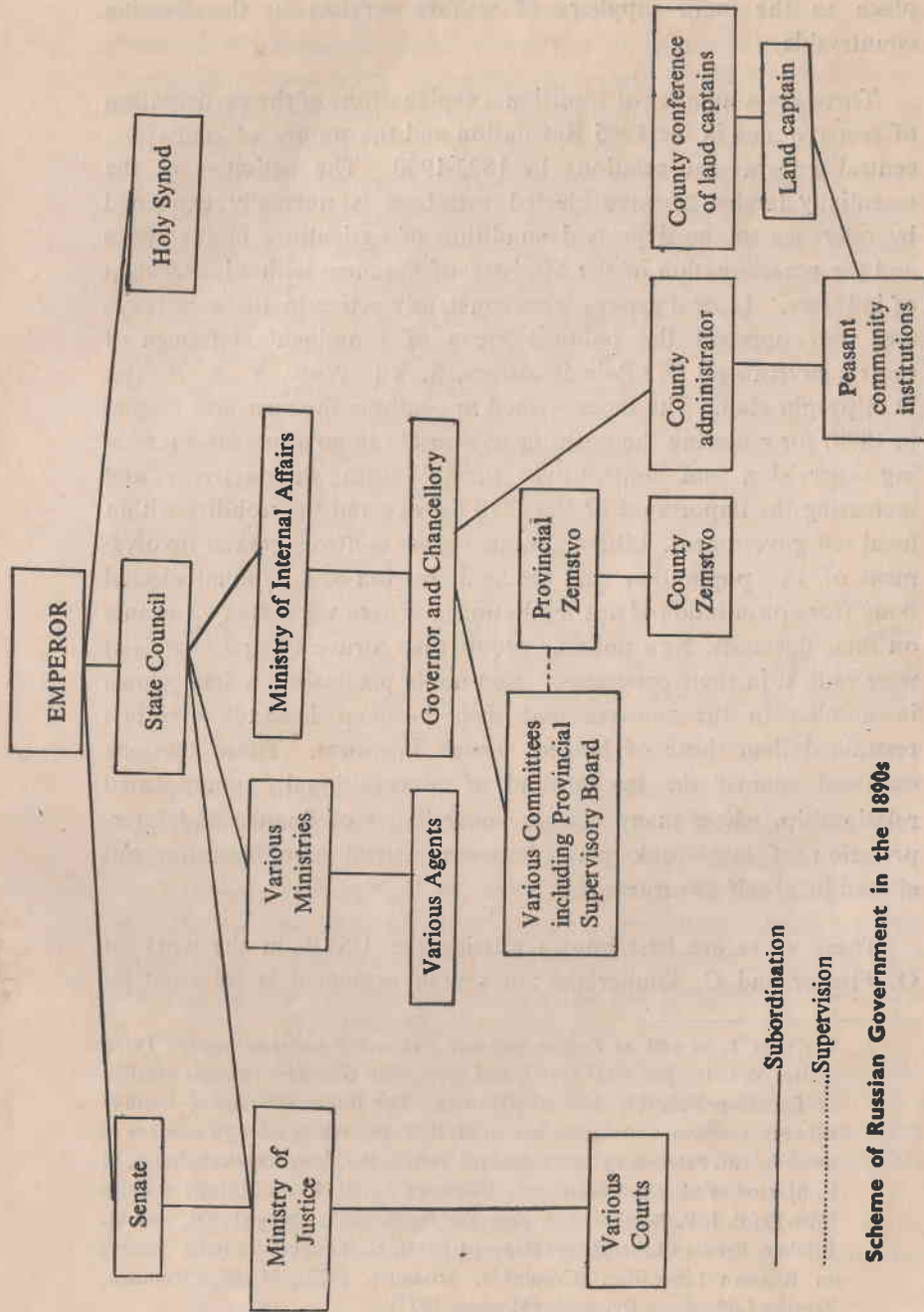
This paper is concerned with the causes of the behaviour of zemstys in 1901-1905. The analysis covers the period 1893-1900. Certainly, the events of 1901-1905 had a momentum of their own—and zemstvo men became involved as various meetings took place.

* "Zemstvo" is the singular of "zemstva". The common name given to a zemstvo worker or assembly member was "zemets" (pl. zemstys). An agent of central government was popularly referred to as to as a "chinovnik".

1. M. T. Florinsky, *Russia. a History and an Interpretation*, Vol. 2
S. Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia 1900-1905* (Cambridge
1973).
E. D. Chermenskiy, *Burzhuziia i Tsarizm v pervoy Russkoy Revoliutsii*
(Moscow 1970).
I. P. Eroshkin, *Istoriya gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdeniy dorevoliutsionny*
Rossii (Moscow 1968).
G. Yaney, *The Systematization of Russian Government* (Illinois 1973)

But there remains the problem of why persons were inclined to be involved, and this is the focus of enquiry here. That there was discontent before 1900 is clear : from memoirs, newspapers, archival documents and the reports of committees of the Conference on the Needs of Agricultural Industry (which met shortly after this period). Moreover, there are a number of points which make the 1890s of specific interest. Rapid industrialization took place under the policies of Minister of Finances, S. Yu. Witte. The period followed the Famine of 1891-1892, when zemtsy had been very active. The major law on Zemstvo had just been passed (in 1890). The Liberation Movement is associated with the founding of the journal "Liberation" in 1901. The analysis therefore closes around 1900.

The administrative position and functions of zemstva are well known (see Chart on p. 49). In 1893-1900, within thirty four provinces of European Russia, these elected bodies of local self government—originally constituted in 1864—organized major sources of medical assistance, primary education and veterinary aid. They ran a compulsory scheme for insurance against fire as well as other insurance schemes. The zemstva were the major elected assemblies of Russia. Counties had their zemstvo assembly (elected and selected from all social classes) : these assemblies elected the provincial zemstvo assembly ; both had welfare departments and issued bye-laws. The overall tax burden for provinces and counties was essentially distributed by these zemstva. Other elected assemblies included municipal councils and peasant community bodies (the latter specifically for those legally designated as "peasants"—*krest'yane*) : these affected comparatively few (in the case of the councils) or were poor and had few major functions (in the case of the peasant community bodies). All these institutions were supervised by nominated bodies of the central government : these were run by the Imperial Civil Service. Nominated institutions of central government (the State Council, the Ministries) framed all general legislation in Russia—with the Tsar's approval. The zemstva were dominated by members of the land owning nobility and opinions held by zemstvo men cannot be considered representative of more than this tier of Russian provincial society. Nevertheless, the bodies remained important as the indicators of opinion of the politically active members of the landed nobility and for their



———— Subordination
 Supervision

Scheme of Russian Government in the 1890s

place as the main suppliers of welfare services to the Russian countryside.

There are a number of traditional explanations of the participation of zemstvo men in the 1905 Revolution and the nature of zemstvo—central government relations in 1893-1900. The activities of the essentially landed zemstvo elected members is normally explained by reference to the depressed condition of agriculture in the 1890s and the preoccupation of the Ministry of Finances with advancement of industry. Liberal groups were constantly active in the zemstva—and they opposed the political views of prominent statesmen of central government (K. Pobedonostsev, S. Yu. Witte, V. K. Plehve, D. Sipyagin etc.). The latter wished to continue the measures (begun in 1890) for recasting the position of zemstva in government, increasing supervision and control over them, limiting their activities and increasing the importance of the Civil Service and the nobility within local self government. Liberals wanted fewer controls, greater involvement of the population and the final creation of a national elected body (for consultation if not legislation). There were many variants on these demands. New political groups (like Struve's Legal Marxists) were radical in their programs. Non-noble professionals had grown in number in the zemstva and their political demands were less restrained than those of landed elected members. These tensions occurred against the background of a traditionally complicated relationship, where many clashes—over issues of finance and interpretation of law—took place between central administration and elected local self government.²

These views are best known outside the USSR in the work of G. Fischer and C. Timberlaké : a similar argument is followed by

2. See note 1, as well as *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoy Imperii* Third Series, Vol. 10, No 6927 (1890) and the article *Gosudarstvennaya Sluzhba* in *Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar'* (Granat). The interpretations of conflict between zemstva and centre are in B. B. Veselovskiy, *Istoriya zemstva za sorok let* (St. Petersburg 1909), and his article *Dvizhenie Zemlevladetsev*, in L. Martov et al. *Obshchestvennoe Dvizhenie Rossii*, 4 vols., (St. Petersburg 1909-1914), I. P. Belokonskiy, *Zemskoe Dvizhenie in Byloe* (1907), and G. Fischer, *Russian Liberalism* (Harvard 1958), C. Timberlake (ed.) *Essays on Russian Liberalism* (Columbia, Missouri, 1972), N. M. Pirumova, *Zemsko-Liberal'noe Dvizhenie* (Moscow 1977).

S. Galai in his history of the Liberation Movement. Essentially, these are restatements of the views of I. P. Belokonskiy and B. B. Veselovskiy—pre-1917 historians of zemstvo. There was some disagreement then about how far, in zemstvo circles, liberal ideology was more important than landed interest or more general class interest. V. I. Lenin, in his political tracts, stressed the latter. The attention to ideology and economic tensions (by Belokonskiy and Veselovskiy) was itself a little novel. The normal approach of earlier writers on local government—such as B. N. Chicherin and A. D. Gradovskiy—had been to lay emphasis on the administrative imbalances in relations between zemstva and central government. Deal with these and political problems would be solved. The view implied a faith in the impartiality and balanced nature of government and law—a faith characteristic of early Russian Liberalism of the 1850s and 1860s. This approach to political problems was well discussed in Russia, where the opinions of the German political scientist, Gneist, were attracting much attention. While partly justified, perhaps, the faith was over optimistic. No real questions were asked about whether change was possible and why the imbalances existed. It was assumed that the tensions had no deep seated causes. That it was a naive approach has been stressed in N. M. Pirumova's recent well-researched monograph.³

The bulk of B. B. Veselovskiy's argument still remains valid: but some important problems require to be raised. As L. G. Zakharova, P. A. Zayonchkovskiy and N. M. Pirumova have shown, the nature of state policy on zemstvo was nowhere as coherent or through as has been assumed.⁴ There was good reason for this incoherence. The influence of the zemstva was too substantial and the Tsarist police apparatus too weak for government to follow

3. N. M. Pirumova op. cit. pp. 16-23. Gneist considered that political institutions were very important in shaping political behaviour. Where democratic government did not exist, it should be begun in a limited manner (e. g. elected local government). This would lead to a healthy political tradition, and pave the way for further changes.

4. L. G. Zakharova, *Zemskaya Kontorreforma* (Moscow 1968).
P. A. Zayonchkovskiy, *Rossiyskoe Samoderzhavie v kontse XIX stoletiya* (Moscow 1970).
N. M. Pirumova, op. cit, pp. 26-53.

another course. Complete neglect of agriculture, again, was impossible. External trade would have been disastrously affected—as would the foundations of the foreign credit on which Finance Minister Witte's policies depended.

Much evidence exists on these areas. And the old case stands less firmly. Here the paper sets out a more qualified argument, with new stresses in some cases. The major departure from traditional historiography is the argument for more rigorous caution when stock is taken of tensions in the zemstvo-centre relationship. There is no need to spell out the implications of this argument: by itself it is ample comment on the future stability of autocratic institutions and policies—and on the cohesion of movements depending on zemstvo assembly members and personnel.

The argument is arranged as follows. Section one deals with the administrative and legal position of zemstvo bodies and the tensions proceeding from this; in section two, note is taken of some of the government policies which exacerbated these tensions; the policies originated in views on administration and finance held in central circles, and were implemented against a background of tensions between agrarians at large and central institutions (section three). Questions remain to be asked about how deep these tensions went: these are taken up in sections four and five.

*

As was the case before 1891, so too during 1891—1900, as a result of the legal and administrative position in which the zemstvo local self government bodies found themselves in Russia, there was tension between their members and the functionaries of central administration. The essential priorities the two groups of institutions had to follow were very different. Zemstva, were composed of county and provincial assemblies (*uezdnye* and *gubernskie sobraniya*). The county assemblies were composed of members elected by electoral meetings; and peasant representatives also participated. Wealthy ratepayers and landowners voted directly in electoral meetings. Small landowners and those paying low rates joined to select someone to participate in the electoral meeting for a number of their group. Electoral meetings

took place with the participants divided into two curiae—noble and non-noble. Each curia returned a fixed number of assembly members. Representatives from the peasantry were designated by the provincial Governor. These county zemstvo assemblies then elected provincial assemblies. The two assemblies had different functions. Both assemblies elected executive councils (*upravy*) and employed professionals and administrators to deal with the welfare services. In the long term, the course followed by the institutions was naturally determined by provincial political alliances. Central administrative personnel, on the other hand, and the policies they implemented, followed the principles governing in the central bureaucracy. There were some areas of activity that were common to both sets of institutions. Police were supervised by provincial noblemen who were not in government service (those concerned being the land captains or *zemskie nachal'niki*); members of the province's local government bodies or class organizations were employed in supervisory boards set up by central government. So, in the case of school councils and provincial supervisory boards (the *gubernskoe prisutstvie*, the highest provincial body for appeals on administrative decisions), Marshals of the Nobility and nominees of the zemstva were found working side by side with local agents of central administration.⁵ Land captains were chosen by the Governors in accordance with their own preferences, however, and the boards where civilians participated were weighted in favour of bureaucrats. In fact, central institutions were such that a fundamental difference existed between them and the local self government bodies—a difference which was not balanced, as in France, Germany, Austria-Hungary or Britain by the presence, at the highest level of government, of an elected institution which might both have calmed provincial elites and controlled the bureaucracy. An important lack of governmental sympathy existed in Russia between local self government and central administration. The highest Imperial bodies of appeal—for administrative matters—were the Ministries and the State Council. When matters were decided here, Ministers and

5. The "class organizations" referred to are the organizations of the "official classes"—"noble", "bourgeois" and "peasant". Information on government is from I. P. Eroshkin, op. cit. pp. 235 ff. Also *Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar'* (Brockhaus), article *Uchilishchnye Sovety*.

administrators had direct access, while no allowance was made for complainants. The State Council was dominated by civil servants and military officials.

Had the two sets of institutions not been thrown together often, there might have been comperative peace in zemstvo-centre relations, and the differences of personnel counted for little. As it was, the a position of "live and let live" was impossible. The zemstva were meant to be in charge of local matters only. They could issue bye-laws only within the framework of existing general central legislation. The Ministries in St. Petersburg, together with the State Council, had a monopoly of law making in the broad sense. Moreover, every aspect of local life in zemstvo charge had some legislation connected with it. On many occasions, local government bodies had to appeal to the Ministries or the State Council. The dependent position of the zemstva was further reinforced by the nature of the police in the Empire. The police cadres were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Frequently, zemstva had to turn to ministerial agents to have bye-laws properly implemented.

The situation was more tense because of the duties and range of central administrative institutions. By the statute of 1890 June, the Governor, the central government's most important local agent, was empowered to interfere with zemstvo actions if he thought the actions conflicted with the interests of the community. The administration in his charge gave the Governor all the expertise he desired, should he wish to maximize the use to which he put the legal power thus granted. His chancellory (*pravlenie*) contained Insurance, Medical and Veterinary Sections, and he could call upon the provincial and county school inspectors (agents of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment) if he required information regarding education. Local Statistical Departments and local agencies of the Ministry of Finances also existed—increasing the Governor's range.⁶

Zemstvo men could, of course, appeal administrative decisions. Officially, Russia was a limited Autocracy. The bureaucracy and the

6. I. P. Eroshkin, *op. cit.* The Empire's appellate structure is clear from his charts.

Tsar had to abide by law and precedent. But appeal meant a long wait. Appeal had to proceed through a number of instances, most of which were committed to taking a decision against the zemstva. The initial instance was the Provincial Supervisory Board, weighted in favour of central agencies. It contained two to four permanent nominated members, the local fiscal administrator (Ministry of Finances appointment), a Ministry of State Domains appointee, the provincial Procuror, a member of the regional court (*okruzhnyy sud*), the zemstvo council President, the Provincial Marshal of the Nobility and the Governor. Only after the next appeal instance (the Minister of Internal Affairs) did matters pass on to the equivalent of the Imperial Supreme Court—the Senate.

Inevitably the zemstvo men felt severely constrained. Thus, during the course of the committees of the Conference on the needs of Agricultural Industry, in 1902, a Khar'kov committee complained that :

“...the zemstvo exists in such an atmosphere of distrust and (its) very activity is so decisively limited within the tight margins of bureaucratic regimentation that it is impossible to be surprised at (the difficulties zemstva encounter)...”

Orel and Poltava committees called for greater trust from the central administration, and for greater freedom for the zemstva to work. The Moscow committee complained of the existing limitations on zemstvo activity, and in Kostroma there was a call for more freedom for local organizations. A Chernigov committee thought that the centre should recognize that if the zemstva were to work effectively, they must have much greater freedom from supervision by state departments. The committees showed quite clearly, overall, that they considered that the zemstva lived under far too much close surveillance. Occasionally, they called for revisions of the zemstvo statute of 1890, which was considered partly responsible for the unwelcome situation.⁷

7. *Vysochayshe uchrezhdennoe osoboe soveshchanie o nuzhdakh sel'skhozaystvennoy promyshlennosti. Svod trudov mestnykh komitetov. Zemstvo.* (St. Petersburg 1904). Many zemtsy were present.

*

In fact a central government policy of cautious discrimination against the zemstva was well established by 1900. When the Census of 1897 was conducted, for instance, the central government departments did not call upon the statistical sections of the zemstva for assistance. This was a source of irritation for zemstvo assembly members and professionals: their statistical sections had been organizing the information for tax distribution in the countryside for decades and their knowledge of the various problems of collecting statistics was incomparable. Deliberate discrimination was clearly involved.

Again, when a meeting of zemstvo council Presidents decided, at Nizhniy Novgorod in August 1896, to organize annual meetings of a similar nature, and to set up a bureau which would prepare the agenda for such meetings, the Ministry of Internal Affairs forbade the project.⁸

From the end of the 1880s, this policy of containing the zemstva had been popular in St. Petersburg. The law of June 1890 reflected the trend. Whereas by the law of 1864, zemstvo actions could only be challenged on the grounds of legality, this law extended the authority of the Governor over the zemstva and required that all zemstvo Presidents now be persons who had placed on the Table of Ranks, i.e. should have served in government service at some time. In important areas of zemstvo work, moreover, extra supervision had been introduced. Zemstvo work on education was brought under the control of the Church and the centre. Until the 1890s, the zemstva had established a number of schools alongside the government and Church schools. State supervision over the zemstva had been through the local school councils (*gubernskie* and *uezdnye uchililishchnye sovety*). These were chaired by the Marshals of the Nobility (elected by local assemblies of registered noblemen) and had present either the Director or the Inspector of People's Schools (*narodnykh uchilishch*) and representatives of the eparchal administration, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that of Public Enlighten-

8. I. P. Belokonskiy, *Zemskoe Dvizhenie*, *Byloe*, op. cit., and S. Galai, op. cit., p. 43.

ment together with one or two zemstvo representatives. These councils had to confirm teachers in their positions and supervise education at county and provincial levels. In 1892, the government required the zemstva to transfer their elementary schools (*shkoly gramoti*) to the jurisdiction of the Church (though they continued to help in their organization). This was the first of other blows. In 1894, zemstvo representation on the school councils required bureaucratic approval before they took their places. In 1896, the centre actually increased the quota of nominated members in school councils by including land captains among them. Some zemstys naturally objected. Petitions were presented calling for an increase in the zemstvo representation on the school councils. These were eventually rejected.⁹ Such steps taken by central government could not but be badly received in the provinces. Zemstvo activists took their responsibilities for the sake of the interest these responsibilities possessed or the patronage and money they might bring. Removing authority from the zemstva, while permitting them to continue, merely led to frustration. Of course, there were a good number of zemstvo assembly and council participants who wished to minimize the amount of work done by the organizations. The Krupenskiys of Bessarabia, A. A. Arsenev of Tula and D. V. Khotyaintsev of Nizhniy were the type of zemstys who saw political motivation behind any attempt to do anything in the zemstva.¹⁰ Once he was involved in zemstvo politics, however, the powers and the funds the organizations possessed tended to have an impact on conservative-minded persons also. The interests the zemstva touched on led to bargaining and counter-bargaining—as Lev Tolstoy was only too aware. Moreover, the same powers acted as the incentive for the local nobleman or petty politician to become deeply involved in the organization. Local government connections might lead to a great fortune, as it did in the case of the Orel Marshal of the Nobility, Sheremetev, who obtained a railway concession for the zemstvo and was responsible for placing it in the hands of the railway constructor, P. I. Gubonin, with substantial profit to himself. The increased interference and regulation by central elites was bound to cause excitement in this

9. B. B. Veselovskiy, op. cit., *Istoriya*, Vol. 1.

10. Ibid. Vol. 4, in the short case studies of Bessarabian, Tula and Nizhniy zemstva.

quarter and also to affect the conservatives who were seduced by the maze of locality politics.¹¹

When criticized, members of the State Council and Ministries responded that zemstva were not permitted to co-operate and that even when entrusted with critical administrative duties, the zemstva had proved sadly incompetent. The first point merely begs the question, while the second was even then a matter of debate. The reason for the hostility to zemstva must be sought elsewhere, clearly, and a more solid cause for it is to be found in the political attitudes of the major chinovniki of St. Petersburg.¹²

*

Alexander III's coterie of advisors and Ministers were to continue to dominate central policies throughout this period before 1900. This was to be so despite the accession of Nicholas II in 1894. The central figure of this group was K. Pobedonostsev, the Procuror of the Holy Synod and a close friend and advisor of Nicholas II. He was supported by the young and efficient Minister of Finances (1892-1903) S. Yu. Witte, who had been a protege of Alexander III's trusted Minister of Finances, Vyshnegradskiy. No worthy opponents of the group existed in Ministerial circles. Goremykin was indolent as Minister of Internal Affairs (1895-1899). His successor, D. Sipyagin (1899-1902) was trusted by Pobedonostsev. I. D. Del'yanov and N. P. Bogolepov, at the Ministry of Public Enlightenment (1882-1897 and 1898-1901) were also friends of Pobedonostsev. Only A. S. Ermolov, Minister of Agriculture, stood out, but he was too weak to impress himself in matters of policy.¹³

11. L. Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*.
B. N. Chicherin, *Vospominaniya, Zemstvo i Moskovskaya Duma* (Moscow 1934) p. 46.
12. S. Yu. Witte, *Samoderzhavie i Zemstvo* (Stuttgart 1901) pp. 86-87. The debate on efficiency is clear in R. Robbins, *The Famine in Russia, 1891-1892* (Columbia 1975) and V. I. Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past* (Stanford/Oxford 1939) pp. 56 ff.
13. P. A. Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*
S. Yu. Witte, *Vospominaniya* (Leningrad 1924)
R. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev. His Life and Thought* (Indiana 1968).

During the 1890s, Pobedonostsev was an established opponent of elected representative institutions. He had closely associated himself with Alexander III's rigid adherence to autocratic principles, and had been a close friend of the group that had been publicly connected with the Tsar's illiberalism (persons such as D. Tolstoy, M. N. Katkov, and V. P. Meshcherskiy). Pobedonostsev had been a public opponent of principles of elected representation. In his article, "The Great Lie of our Time", the statesman elaborated on his reaction :

"...one of the most deceitful of political principles is the principle of popular power, the ideas, unfortunately held since the time of the French Revolution, that every type of power proceeds from the people and has its basis in the will of the people ... From here it is that the theory of parliamentarism emerges—a theory which, until this moment, has led the mass of the so-called intelligentsia into confusion and which has made its way into mindless Russian heads."

Inevitably, holding the views he did, Pobedonostsev had supported the re-organization of zemstvo institutions in 1890 (placing the institutions more firmly under control of central agents). Even after this, however, he had not been completely satisfied. In 1897, he was to write to Witte that :

"...zemstva institutions in their present form introduce immoral and unruly tendencies into central government practice, impairing recognition of duty..."¹⁴

Witte showed sympathy in the matter. When in 1898, the Minister of Internal Affairs, I. L. Goremykin, introduced a measure for extending zemstvo into the Western Provinces, Witte thought it fit to oppose the measure. He wrote to the Tsar on the matter. He argued that autocracy and self government were incompatible concepts. He pointed to the experience of Western European countries. To him, this showed clearly that the introduction of self government at a local level inevitably led to its conquest of central power. The history of self government in Russia itself showed it was incapable

14. P. A. Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
Krasnyy Arkhiv, 1928, 5 (30), No. 15.

of living with autocracy he argued. The memorandum read as an attack on the zemstva.¹⁵

Such views were natural to the central administration in this period. The enthusiasm for representative institutions had abated considerably in central circles after the establishment of zemstva in 1864. The introduction of rival principles of government were considered to have made for confusion in the internal administration of the Empire. The Kakhanov Commission, meeting in 1880-1885, had considered the fault of the zemstva precisely this administrative confusion.¹⁶ The view continued to hold. It was probably what Pobedonostsev referred to when he spoke of the unruliness the zemstva introduced into government. It was certainly in Witte's mind when he wrote to the Tsar on the issue of introducing zemstva into the Western Provinces. Proper government, he contended, required good administration, and :

“...such administration is possible only when one and the same principle is firmly introduced in all administrative bodies ... Zemstvo bodies cannot satisfy such a need for administrative unity within an autocratic system of government...”

Central government was almost compelled to keep the zemstva in check with such views dominating in its as sanctum-sanctorum.

Close surveillance and zemstvo-centre tension did not proceed solely from this essentially administrative confrontation. The problem had a more ideological and financial side to it. By the end of the 1890s, the centre was convinced that the zemstva posed a considerable threat to the very principles for which men such as Pobedonostsev stood. In turn, these persons were dismayed by the influence of such men as Pobedonostsev. The zemstva contained constitutionalists who subscribed wholly or partially to that “great lie” Pobedonostsev so hotly attacked. Such, for instance, were the liberal leaders of the so-called “left” faction in the Tver’ zemstva (I. I.

15. Yu. Witte, op. cit., *Samoderzhavie*.

16. S. F. Starr, *Decentralization and Self Government in Russia* (Princeton 1972) M. V. Islavin, *Obzor Trudov Vysochayshey utverzhdennoy pod predsedatel'stvom Stats-sekrtarya Kakhanova Osoboy Kommissii* (St. Petersburg 1908).

Petrunkevich, F. Rodichev) and the 80 or so zemstvo activists who were to belong to the Constitutional Democratic and Octobrist parties in the First Duma including names such as A. V. Vasil'ev (Kazan), S. A. Muromtsev, Prince G. G. Gagarin, F. F. Kokoshkin (Moscow), E. I. Kedrin, V. D. Nabokov, A. S. Lomshakov (St. Petersburg), V. K. Obninsky (Kaluga), I. P. Aleksinsky, K. K. Chernosvitov and M. G. Komissarov (Vladimir). A part of the record of zemstvo activity, as Witte pointed out in his memorandum, indicated a fundamental political antagonism to autocracy.¹⁷

The suspicion occasioned among the ranks of the central administration by the presence within zemstvo circles of a number of constitutionalists was by no means ill-founded. Suspicion of political disloyalty to autocratic principles was natural when that disloyalty was openly shown. The liberals within the zemstva ranks had constantly called for extension of the scope given to the representative principle within Russian government. During 1878-1881, a number of petitions had been forwarded to the central administration calling for the consultation of popular representatives in the everyday work of the central government. The same (albeit in less forceful tones) had happened in 1894, when, on the occasion of the coronation of Nicholas II, zemstvo addresses had requested such concessions.¹⁸ Zemstvo activists such as I. I. Petrunkevich and I. P. Belokonskiy were convinced democrats, while more moderate persons in the zemstvo, such as D. Shipov, considered that broader powers should be delegated to elected self government. Such views were in total contradiction to the official views adopted by the centre, that autocracy was prime, that power did not emerge from the will of the population and that elected self government was merely one among many institutions. In fact, by the end of the 1890s, convinced supporters of autocracy had double reason to fear the zemstvo constitutionalists. Their range of activity had broadened and their grounds for opposition to existing government increased. Zemstvo professionals grew in number in the bodies. Moreover,

-
17. B. B. Veselovskiy, op. cit. *Istoriya*, Vol. 4.
M. N. Boivich, *Chley Gosudarstvennoy Dumy, 1-ogo 1-yy sozyv*.
S. Yu. Witte, op. cit., *Samoderzhavie*.
 18. S. Yu. Witte, op. cit., *Samoderzhavie*.

constitutionalists were now leaning towards more radical groups—such as Struve's Legal Marxists.¹⁹

These tensions now assumed a new aspect. By the end of the 1890s, Ministers of central government were contemplating fundamental changes in the powers of rating at a disposal of the zemstva. This was by no means popular within local government circles. When, eventually, steps were taken over the matter, by a law of June 1901, there was considerable resentment. During a conversation with the local government activist, D. Shipov, in 1902, Witte was to mention the issue as one of those around which zemstvo opposition to the centre focused.

At the end of the 1890s, the problem of zemstvo power to rate was very much at the forefront of central thinking about the provincial self government bodies. Both Witte and Pobedonostsev were intent on limiting the powers the bodies had, whether the latter approved or not. At the time, the zemstva possessed the right to levy rate without limit, over different categories of immovable property. These included immovable property in the country areas and townships, dwellings and woodland. Rate was to be levied in accordance with the market value of the property and the income it brought.

The zemstva also received a sum from the payments made on trade and industrial licenses, though the % they could take of these payments was fixed. Both Pobedonostsev and Witte considered these powers excessive. Thus, while Pobedonostsev railed against the unruliness zemstva introduced into central government, he also noted that they impaired :

“...the indispensable fixedness and capacity for regulation of economic affairs...”

Clearly the Minister considered that central planning was impossible given existing zemstvo authority. In his memorandum to the Tsar, Witte complained of the recent high expenditure by the zemstva—a clear criticism of the financial system that permitted it.

19. P. Miliukov, *Russia in Crisis*, (Chicago, 1905) B. B. Veselovskiy, op. cit., *Istoriya*, Vol. 3. G. Fischer, op. cit., R. Pipes, *Struve, Liberal on the Left* (Harvard 1970).

Such complaints were to be expected in central circles. The principle of rate power without limit had been questioned in St. Petersburg for some time. A commission meeting in 1885-1890 had decided that some limit had to be established. By the mid-1890s, the problem had become more acute. In 1894, the British Consul in St. Petersburg noted the following concern of central authorities :

“According to the opinion expressed in the Report of the Minister of Internal Affairs, on the financial position of the zemstva, it will very soon be necessary to place at the disposal of the territorial bodies some new source of revenue, seeing that already in 10 provinces, zemstvo rate reaches 10-20%, in 5 provinces 20%, in the province of Perm 30% of the productivity of the land.”

In 1899, The State Council commented that it was necessary to place different sources of revenue at the disposal of the zemstva and required the Minister of Finances to report on the matter.²⁰

Many zemtsy were relatively unconcerned. They considered that their powers were being used well (for the prosperity of the population). Zemstva increased their rates over the 1890s, showing their lack of concern for the centre's views. Zemstvo men were devoted to these powers: they were the only manipulable independent financial source at their disposal. Many zemstvo workers and professionals considered welfare work in the countryside to be of fundamental importance. Having seen the stark problems of peasants during the Famine of 1891-1892, they were concerned to find some solution to peasant poverty. In these conditions, the desire to maintain and increase rates—in order to assist the peasant—was not unusual.

20. D. Shipov, op. cit., Chapter 6.
 S. Yu. Witte, op. Cit., *Samoderzhavie*, pp. 160-161 (Note).
 House of Commons Bills and Reports (hereafter HCBR), Consular Report for 1895, pp. 24 ff.
 B. B. Veselovskiy, op. cit., *Istoriya*, Vol. 1.
 Krasnyy Arkhiv, 1928, 5 (30), No. 15, for Pobedonostsev's statement.
 Zemstvo views on economic policy in N. M. Pirumova, op. cit., pp. 138 ff.
 and H. S. Vasudevan, Russian Provincial Politics, Central Government and the Tver' Provincial Zemstvo, 1897-1900, (Unpublished Cambridge University Ph. D. thesis, 1978), Chapter 4.

Central government officials could not ignore the behaviour of these zemstsy. Zemstvo rating cut into the Empire's tax base at the very time when the central administration itself was seeking more funds²¹ with minimum burden to the taxpayer. Moreover, given the careful financial policy and stimulation of industry that Witte had been following, he was bound to resent the power in the hands of the zemstva to levy rates without limit (affecting industrial immovable property as any other). This was especially so when the zemstva showed their intention to use the powers extensively. The Minister had already shown his desire to exercise control over zemstvo funds. Early in his term, he had required all zemstvo funds to be kept in state treasuries (with payment being made by the zemstva). Witte furthermore emphasized his reservations regarding uncontrolled expenditure in his Budget Report for 1897. He remarked on this occasion that :

"...the desire to extend the activity of government for the good of the population deserves every sympathy of course. It is excusable to some extent under the conditions in our country—a country comparatively young in culture and developing rapidly. But if the needs are innumerable, the means of satisfying them are limited."

By 1899, Witte was busying himself with the task of steering a measure through the State Council which would place a limit on the amount by which the zemstva could increase their rates : they were not to be permitted to levy more than a fixed percentage of what they had levied in immediately previous years.²²

These strains on zemstvo-centre relations ran parallel to the Minister of Finances' obsessive concern with creating the correct conditions for the development of industry. Many policies undertaken by Witte did not please the agrarian lobby in Russia. As is clear from the accompanying Table, this lobby dominated zemstvo

21. *Archives Nationales, F12 6602. Ministère Des Affaires Etrangères, sous-administration des affaires commerciales au Ministre du Commerce, 30 July 1898*

22. T. H. von Laue, *op. cit.*

N. A. Egiazarova, *Agrarnyy Krizis kontsa XIX v. v Rossii* (Moscow 1959).

N. A. Proskuryakova, *Razmeshchenie i struktura dvoryanskogo zemlevladieniya Evropeyskoy Rossii v kontse XX c veka. Istoriya SSSR, 1973.*

assemblies. The dissatisfaction was only too natural. The Famine of 1891-1892 had shown that the state of agriculture required attention. Russia was only just recovering from the agrarian crisis of the 1880s and early 1890s. Protection in France and Germany, and low prices for agricultural goods, in regional and international markets, caused widespread depression. Debts of farmers and landowners increased. After 1891, many blamed Witte's policies for slow recovery. A document representing the views of the agrarian lobby showed the broad ranging nature of criticism. It attacked Russia's adoption of the gold standard in 1897—a cherished part of Witte's policies, creating as it did confidence in investments in Russia. This was understandable. It had been tantamount to a revaluation of the currency; credit became more difficult to obtain and imports expensive. Given the scarcity of good agricultural machinery in Russia, this was bound to cause resentment among agriculturists. Criticism was also generally levied against the lack of any firm policy to boost production of and trade in agricultural goods.²³

Sympathy from Witte was difficult to come by when the converse of these policies clashed with what he thought was essential for the well-being of Russia's industry, and when the agricultural lobby took little notice of his pains to nurture industry. Agrarians acted provocatively. In 1894, when the Minister of Agriculture enquired about what landowners considered the needs of agriculture, the reply was :

“...to ease the conditions the agriculture (it is necessary) to transfer a portion of the taxes onto trade and manufacturing industry...”

23. *Archives de la Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Correspondance consulaire et commerciale, St. Petersburg, Vol. 51.*

Table of landholdings (in dessyatins) of provincial zemstvo assembly members.

Province	(No. of assembly members)	below 200	200- 500	500- 1000	1000- 5000	5000 and above
Vladimir	(48)	4	25	13	4	1
Kaluga	(48)	1	21	9	14	2
Tver'	(61)	3	15	23	13	2
N. Novgorod	(51)	—	15	15	13	4
Novgorod	(38)	—	5	8	22	2
Smolensk	(52)	—	16	17	17	1
Voronezh	(62)	3	24	13	18	2
Kursk	(60)	—	22	20	15	1
Orel	(60)	1	22	18	18	1
Tula	(56)	4	17	20	10	—
Tambov	(57)	2	16	18	16	5
Kazan	(36)	—	16	8	6	3
Penza	(46)	5	13	8	16	4
Simbirsk	(43)	4	13	9	12	3
Bessarabia	(36)	—	9	11	13	3
Ekaterinoslav	(34)	2	8	11	10	2
Tauride	(28)	—	2	4	9	6
Kherson	(45)	—	3	7	21	4
Poltava	(62)	2	21	19	18	2
Samara	(40)	4	7	9	15	3
Ufa	(28)	1	6	7	7	3
Vyatka	(48)	15	2	8	4	—
Perm	(30)	2	3	2	—	2
Vologda	(29)	6	6	10	5	—
Olonets	(13)	5	—	1	1	1
Total	1111	64 (6%)	297 (27%)	292 (26%)	297 (27%)	57 (27%)

Source : N. M. Pirumova, *Zemsko Liberal'noe Dvizhenie* (Moscow 1977) pp. 76-81*

* Information on county assemblies is apparently difficult to obtain.

Table of origins of zemstvo assembly members (1890)

	Nobles (or bureaucrats)	Non-nobles	Peasantry
Counties	5647 (55.2%)	1415 (13.8%)	3174 (31%)
Provinces	1448 (89.5%)	141 (8.7%)	29 (1.8%)

Source : *Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar' (Granat) Zemstvo.*

The exact implications of these tensions are difficult to assess. Friction led to discontent : but that it was responsible for the creation of almost irreconcilable positions is less certain.

Pobedonostsev's hostility to the zemstva was a curious one and it is impossible to be sure that he would have taken firm steps to alter their essential structure. In part, his hesitations proceeded from a fear of possible unrest if major changes were made. Indeed, in response to the introduction of the land captains, there had been unrest in villages of Ekaterinoslav province, in Smolensk and Ryazan ; troops had had to be called in occasionally ; in the hamlet of Ignatovka*, peasants refused to accept the law, saying it betokened the return of seigneurial authority. It was against this background that Pobedonostsev had explained his objections to some of the more critical suggestions put forward before 1890 by D. Tolstoy, the Minister of Internal Affairs. Writing to the Tsar, he explained that he sympathized with many of Tolstoy's views, but :

"...it is my profound conviction (and one) shared by very many others, that (Tolstoy's projected law) can lead to only harm and that it will not only not sustain order, but will lead to disorder, causing a confusion of authority and an acute tangle of relationships..."

Moreover, no matter what Pobedonostsev's sympathies for Tolstoy, he had more deep-seated misgivings about his ideas. When asked to agree to a proposal, put forward by Tolstoy, essentially reducing

* Ekaterinoslav province.

the zemstvo councils to organs nominated by the centre, he disapproved.

"I do not see that it is at all fitting to or beneficial to alter the fundamental principle of the zemstvo institutions, making them part of the complex of state institutions, by nature servitor-bureaucrat and rank oriented. This is why—I do not expect any benefit from the conversion of the zemstvo councils into local boards, which will undoubtedly be endowed, according to the suggested plan, with bureaucratic characteristics."

Pobedonostsev did not in any way wish for a broadly based local government. His suggestions to Tolstoy included ideas such as the decrease in number of electors and the nomination of assembly members. Yet, for all that, he considered that the organs should be permitted "a measure of freedom" to attract local interest.²⁴

Witte's position regarding the zemstva is also uncertain. Although his memorandum was widely construed as an attack on them, he later asserted he was merely trying to clarify matters for the Tsar. Perhaps, while stressing his antipathy to extension of the zemstva, he did not have any decisive opinions on the matter. His political opposition to the institutions might well have been a ploy to entrench himself more securely in central administration (a necessity when his policies were being received with such violent criticism.).

Again, "constitutionalism" was not a dominating trend among zemtsy. As indicated earlier, there were many conservatives in the assemblies. Though not advocates of centralization and nomination, they were opponents of "liberal" critics of autocracy.

The "liberalism" of the 1860s and 1870s, moreover, had evolved a more conciliatory group. These persons were active in zemstva. In the 1890s, while requiring reform, D. Shipov called for close co-operation with the central government and for due attention to existing laws. Differences of opinion prevented unity among critics

24. S. Bensidoun, *L'agitation paysanne en Russie de 1881 a 1902* (Paris, 1975) pp. 348 ff.

N. M. Pirumova, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

P. A. Zayonchkovskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

of autocracy. In Tver' province, during 1897-1900 zemstvo term, the veteran liberal, I. I. Petrunkevich, called upon his friends and sympathizers to condemn the nomination of the provincial zemstvo council—and to refuse to co-operate with the council. He received little outright support. Those associated with his faction argued that though nomination was disagreeable, the civil servant concerned had acted in accord with the laws, and little could be done.

Zemstvo professionals were not all "democratic". True, some were sympathetic to ideas of political reform. Over time, institutions which were considered seditious (such as the Imperial Free Economic Society, in sections, the N. I. Pirogov Moscow—St. Petersburg Society of Doctors, and the St. Petersburg and Moscow Literacy Committees) had come to play an active role among zemstvo professionals. They organized conferences and distributed literature. Also, some professional zemtsy were distinctly politically inclined. In Balashevsk county of Saratov, for instance, the zemstvo doctor, V.D. Chernykaev organized a group which considered to be carrying on "antigovernmental and antireligious propaganda". But this itself did not indicate a broad ranging antipathy to existing institutions among zemstvo professionals. The disinterested, isolated and almost "superfluous" character of zemstvo workers was also noteworthy at this time. Many disassociated themselves from any political connections. A good deal might be lost through such flirtations: fixed salaries, provident benefits occasionally, and a comfortable place in provincial society. A case arising in the Tver' Provincial Zemstvo Insurance Department is telling. The Department had been dominated by the zemstvo "liberals" (i. e. members of the so-called "left" associated with A.A. Bakunin and I. I. Petrunkevich) from the 1870s. When the zemstvo council of 1897-1900 victimized a senior insurance worker with liberal affiliations, there were many resignations. But the core of the agencies continued to function, and there was no sympathetic action among zemstvo insurance agents.²⁵

25. S. Galai, op. cit.

D. Shipov, op. cit.

H. S. Vasudevan, op. cit.

N. M. Pirumova, op. cit., pp. 111 ff. and pp. 121.

A.P. Chekhov's stories frequently deal with these new "superfluous men."

A good example is *Po delam sluzhby*. He used "superfluous." in this sense in his story "Superfluous People" (*Lyshnye Liudi*).

The same complex aspect to central policy (and to the position of those involved in zemstvo circles) was to be seen at the level of economic issues.

After 1892, prices ~~falls~~ for agricultural goods recovered slightly. Now, as before, landowners often managed to avoid the full effect of price fluctuations. Prices fell, peasants were unable to pay rents and arrears occurred. But this merely led landowners to organize their estate management on different lines. As one landowner of Pskov explained, it was possible to overcome difficulties by "adjusting oneself to circumstances as they took shape". R. P. Belavenskiy, the magnate concerned, dealt with cropping of all fallow land personally and let out the remainder of the estate. He thus made "clear profit, without risk". He employed share croppers. The general impoverishment of the population meant it was dangerous to rent for money. Moreover, tenants willing to pay in cash were few—while those willing to share-crop were many. Land management on these lines, despite general difficulties, was profitable. There is also evidence that in certain areas (for instance in Tambov) landowners cultivated some land intensively and sold their produce competitively. The demand for land increased as a result, and the landowner could charge high rents for the rest of his estate.²⁶

The Minister of Finances did not totally neglect agriculture: he could not disregard the interests of agrarians. The policy of stimulating Russian industry with the aid of foreign investment required healthy internal economic conditions. Production and export of raw materials needed attention. Cash crops received protection. In 1894, the state took measures to stimulate cotton cultivation in Bokhara and Khiva. The import duty on American cotton was raised. From the same year, a Sugar Syndicate was established. Production was limited, a reserve stock established and special arrangements made for small producers. Further legislation treated flax production and export. As with other cash crops, prices had fallen here owing to low freight costs and intensive cultivation elsewhere. Demand was especially slack, however, as call for linen sail-work decreased.

26. N. A. Egiazarova, op. cit.

A. Anfimov, *Krupnoe Pomeschich'e Khozyaystvo Evropeyskoy Rossii* (Moscow 1969), pp. 88-90.

The area requiring most attention was grain production and trade—both because of the numbers it concerned and its overall importance in the economy and Russia's export trade. To assist grain producers, fertilizers and agricultural machinery were substantially exempt from import duties. Serious consideration was given to control of the grain market—to establish some control over price fluctuations. Small granaries were to be set up in grain producing areas to collect grain from the peasantry; grain elevators were to be established at river wharfs and ports, at centres of the grain trade in the provinces; prices of various areas were to be posted at strategic points. The government was concerned to improve the competitive position of the grain trade abroad—and wished to establish a maximum percentage of dross for grain for export. The Ministry of Finances also wished to set up Exchange Committees to fix standards of purity for grain designed for export.²⁷

*

Aspects of this rather complicated situation are easily explained—and have been to an extent. Some further comment remains to be made about the political pressures operating on central government functionaries.

Central government functionaries had to be wary of antagonizing institutions such as the zemstva—given the provincial strength of these bodies and the weakness of the central government's own agents.

By the end of the 19th century, the zemstva were the greater part of what rural Russia had in the way of a welfare system. Their personnel were one of the most ubiquitous elements in the provinces. Their legislators were equally so. In the Empire, backwardness and abdication by the state of responsibility had had their inevitable repercussions: local government was the only agency capable of attracting professionals to the poverty stricken countryside. Private enterprise, the norm of Western European welfare, was restricted for the most part to major urban areas. Populist enthusiasm, the increase of education and the over-staffing of the capital areas had provided the

27. HCBR op cit., Consular Reports for 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.

zemstva with their necessary personnel, and the sophistication of rating, the funds to pay them. These developments had stimulated the zemstva to extend their activities. It was thus that by the end of the 1890s, these institutions had a significant monopoly over certain key rural services.

An anniversary volume of the Union of Insurance Companies was to remark that :

“Of properties in the countryside, immovable property is insured very rarely (by the companies) ; the greater part of the buildings are insured by mutual insurance (of the zemstvo, the state, the Polish government or the Caucasus Military Government).”

From the statistics on the amounts for which properties were insured, it is clear that, among the sources of mutual insurance, the zemstva were the most important, their closest rivals being the Town Councils. The statistics understate the zemstva's importance, moreover. The companies stand out well when compared with the zemstva because they undertook the insurance of large firms and urban properties mainly. Most of the zemstva's policy holders were only capable of paying small premiums, and hence the sums they insured for were very small also. Even so, the zemstva's position was a strong one.²⁸

Insuring Agencies	Insurance Sums (’000s of Rbls.)
Joint Stock Companies	9,459,905
Urban Mutual Societies	1,141,371
Zemstva and equivalents	3,399,465
Other	1,178,545

Another source of the zemstva's provincial strength were the medical services organized by them. The extent of the latter is evident from official statistics. Doctors working in local government numbered 2630 in 1880 (1818 zemstvo doctors). Of the 9891 remaining 2629 were military and naval doctors. Non-zemstvo medical personnel were not evenly distributed. Over 3500 personnel were in worked in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw and Odessa. Hospital

28. *Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar'* (Brockhaus), *Strakhovanie. Aktsionerhoe strakhovanie ot ognya v Rossii, 1827 - 1900* (St. Petersburg, 1912) p. 146.

statistics of 1892 further substantiate the importance of the zemstva in the countryside. In the zemstvo provinces, there were 2462 hospitals of different types with 67337 beds. Of these, 1162 were zemstvo hospitals (33088 beds).²⁹

The statistics took into account all state institutions (including Prison and Military hospitals) and all private institutions (including those for the Jews). Considering the hospitals which the general public used, only, the position of the zemstva stands out even more clearly. Of 1337 hospitals (43784 beds) 1146 (30130 beds) belonged to the zemstva. The other institutions in the original list included homes for the mentally retarded and other specialist institutions. Appendix Table (1) gives a more detailed breakdown of zemstvo medical service.

By 1900, zemstva provided cheap and accessible medical facilities in the countryside. Local government had its own hospitals and special G. P.s in the counties. The latter either held regular consultancies at their place of residence or travelled around a fixed treatment area. Treatment and medicine were often dispensed at low cost (Rb. -/005 or Rb. -/010), with special concessions for the poor. Some zemstva had proceeded further. The Moscow zemstva had ended payment by 1900 in all but Volokolam and Klin counties (where it persisted for the more wealthy).

Zemstva also provided the countryside with veterinary facilities and elementary education. An idea of veterinary services is to be found in Appendix Table (2). The following figures give an indication of the zemstvo role in elementary education.³⁰

Expenditure on Elementary Education

Source	Sums (in Rbbs.)	
	1894	1900
Treasury	1362539	2610888
Zemstva	6099659	9003510
Municipalities	3357202	4644705
Peasant Communities	4523849	5416478
Other	2828490	4443815

29. Grebenshikov V. I., *Bol'nitsy grazhdanskogo vedomstva v Rossiiskoy Imperii*. (St. Petersburg 1892).

30. B. B. Veselovskiy, op. cit., *Istoriya*, Vol. 1, and N. Hans, *A History of Russian Educational Policy* (London 1935).

For all the achievements of the zemstva, there were certain factors which might well have made the central administration think twice about giving their activities too serious a consideration. While active, the zemstva remained elitist institutions which commanded only a limited authority among the peasantry. This is clear from an analysis of zemstvo society.

The class bias of zemstvo institutions was only too plain. The noble landowning class was given a disproportionately large representation. Nor was it possible to force substantial participation from the peasantry. Regulations stipulated penalties if persons who had been voted to the status of assembly members did not duly present themselves. The travel involved was, however, a clear burden. Peasants could not escape from the first nomination to the county assemblies. They were nominated by the Governor from a list of eligible persons presented by the peasant community bodies. Few of them took the interest required to assure election from this level to the provincial zemstvo assembly, however. The threat of election probably encouraged them to remain silent during the course of county assembly debate. The resulting overall bias towards the property-owning classes (especially in the provincial zemstvo) is clear from the figures cited above, even though there are important qualifications to be borne in mind in the consideration of these. The importance of the figures for peasant returns is further limited by the election procedure in the villages. Drink flowed freely and no one was certain of what was going on. The figures for the returns from the landowning nobility also must be viewed with caution. In electoral meetings, absenteeism was very high.³¹

The class element also played a part in alienating the zemstvo professionals from the rural population. The inevitable product of fine ways and education was resentment and suspicion. One of the correspondents of the Moscow zemstvo's Statistical Department

31. N. Blinov, *Zemskaya Sluzhba* (St. Petersburg, 1881)

Svod svedeniy o lichnom sostave zemskikh uchrezhdeniy po dannym na 1900-1903.

pointed out, during a survey on peasant attitudes towards the zemstva, that the population :³²

"...consider that there is no benefit to be had from novelties, and it will be necessary to pay new taxes for everything. Generally, peasants do not feel that 'learned gentlemen' can help them : they fear them and avoid the zemstva."

By the end of the 1890s, however, practical achievement and rural social stratification had assuaged the suspicion of zemstva. It is noteworthy that 71% of the Moscow Statistical Department survey answers were of a different kind—enthusiastic and positive.

Zemstva would not have been so important if the police had been effective. They were not. Supervision was undertaken by the Okhrana, the Gendarmerie and the administrative police. The main burden of supervision in the rural areas fell on the latter, as did the bulk of the job of collecting information on any form of unrest. Unfortunately, they were not up to their task.

The most important section of the provincial administrative police (peasant Constables and Hundredmen) were dismally corrupt. The Senatorial Inspections of 1880—1881 had produced a gloomy picture of them. These officials of the peasant community bodies were :

"...illiterate, and with few exceptions not in receipt of any remuneration whatever for their services, the Hundredmen and Constables not only do not execute those several duties which are theirs by law but for the greater part, do not even have an idea of what those duties are ; not only do they neither assist members of the ordinary police in the discovery of transgressions, nor aid them in seeing to order, security and propriety in the rural areas, but, on the contrary, they not infrequently busy themselves about concealing, from the eyes of the state police traces of transgressions and disorderliness in the rural areas..."

The position had changed little two decades later, indicating a particularly clinging problem. In 1901, the Minister of Internal Affairs collected information on the officials and concluded that the

32. A. Smirnov, *Krestyane i zemstvo in Ekonomicheskaya Gazeta*, 1st May 1905.

peasant communities felt themselves burdened by the necessity for the election and maintenance of the last. Normally, the lazers of the community, the abysmally poor or the crippled or those to be punished, were appointed to these posts. They were rarely trusted. In his comments on the Hundredmen and Constables, A. I. Novikov, who had served extensively in the provinces' non-official administration, was to dismiss them as persons whose conception of crime changed with the drink they were given or the morsals they were fed. The development was inevitable. Treated as menials, the peasant police became despicable through being despised. They were corrupt and generally resentful—constantly bearing a heartfelt loathing of their superiors.

The position might have been improved somewhat had there existed respectable and responsible instances which could check the shortcomings of the peasant police. This was not the case. The nature of the higher police officials, drawing salary, left much to be desired. Few had received secondary or higher education. Worse still, poorly paid and expected to maintain a high standard of living, including the education of children at urban schools, senior officials of the salaried state police slid into malpractice and corruption. The choice between comparative penury and lapse, which faced police, officials, was described by Novikov in his notes on the Regional Police Officers (uryadnik) :

"...the Regional Police Officer received Rb. 40/ per month. For the money, he must maintain his family in house and home, horses with stables, feed himself on his tours and have an immaculate uniform and, for appearance before important officials, a uniform fresh from the peg. The salary is insufficient for him since his needs are not those of a peasant... It is natural, because of this, that he gets used to feed himself for nothing and his horse for nothing. But it is worthwhile to begin along the slippery path of malpractice and it is difficult to stop oneself. The insufficiency of pay forces him to 'takings' (*vzyatki*)."³³

33. I. P. Eroshkin, op. cit.

N. Brzhskiy, *Natural'nye povinnosti krestyan i mirskie sbory* (St. Petersburg, 1906) pp. 70 ff.

A. I. Novikov, *Zapiski zemskago nachal'nika* (St. Petersburg 1899) pp. 115 ff.

Upper administration, (gubernatorial chancelleries, ministerial agencies and the civil service generally) was somewhat better. Tsarist institutions were organized to permit constant exchange or information. The bureaucracy attempted often to obtain the best persons for service ignoring social status. A Civil Service Commission of 1896 laid down that appointments should be decided more by education than by social origin. Only 250 or so officials of a group of over 2000 officials of the highest ranks (2nd and 3rd), in 1905, owned substantial estates. A respectable salary was well assured. In 1905, 91204 persons of a service of 397082 and more belonged to the earning elite (i. e. earned over c. Rb. 100/- per month).

General and critical weaknesses persisted however. Government was very slow to change itself: for instance, there had been calls for police reform from the 1870s, but nothing had been done. Deficiencies such as over attention to detail continued. More centrally, there was a lack of faith, in the upper bureaucracy, regarding the competence of the Civil Service to govern. Even the centre's great achievement—its use of a number of 'link' institutions—was deficient. Those meant to supervise generally and pass information were overburdened. Inevitably, in such circumstance, care was essential in the handling of critically placed institutions such as the *zemstva*.³⁴

*

These political considerations and uncertainties still left the impact of the difference dealt with earlier. Traditional administrative conflicts could not be resolved without some major reforms, and the impact of these tensions were more severe when statesmen in St. Petersburg were mistrustful of employing *zemstva* in adminis-

34. *Vysochayshe utverzhennaya kommissiya dlya peresmotra ustava o sluzhbe grazhdanskoy*, *Zhurnal*, 1896, April.

Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar' (Granat), op. cit., Note 1.

V. I. Gessen, *Voprosy mestnago upravleniya* (St. Petersburg 1904) Prince Urussov, *Memoirs of a Russian Governor*, (London, 1908). *Krasnyy Ankhiv*, op. cit., Note 15. And V. I. Gurko op. cit., for indications of the lack of faith confidence in the bureaucracy.

tration. Such actions were bound to be resented. There were many opponents of autocracy in the zemstva. And many zemstvo assembly members were drawn from the ranks of a disgruntled if still privileged agrarian interest.

But it is far fetched to proceed from this to talk of a fundamental lack of sympathy between zemstvo members (professionals and assembly members) and Russian Civil servants. Just as it is unwise to ignore the implications of the opposition which existed at this level. In a world where Chekhov's characters could easily confuse zemets and chinovnik, the step from opposition to revolution was yet to be taken. And when it was taken, it was a step that was all the more peculiar for this limitation. But the transformation was certainly to take place; and there were enough accumulated grievances that were to lead to its occurrence.

Appendix Table I

(Source: B. B. Veselovskiy, *Istoriya Zemstva za sorok let*. Vol. I)

Province	Doctors	Hospitals	Non-specialists	
			1.*	2.†
Bessarabia	52	39	55	1
Vladimir	71	23	59	3
Vologda	31	32	88	57
Voronezh	69	43	164	1
Vyatka	73	59	119	61
Ekaterinoslav	66	56	161	—
Kazan	57	44	70	2
Kaluga	46	33	37	—

Province	Doctors	Hospitals	Non-specialist	
			1.*	2.†
Kostroma	47	35	67	21
Kursk	96	33	32	—
Moscow	112	87	2	1
Nizhniy	43	27	46	8
Novgorod	61	47	81	38
Olonets	27	22	78	37
Orel	59	45	64	—
Penza	34	21	58	8
Perm	89	67	75	11
Poltava	111	74	258	2
Pskov	45	23	59	11
Ryazan	61	35	34	11
Samara	81	62	47	—
Saratov	92	59	98	3
St. Petersburg	57	48	75	5
Simbirsk	44	37	99	1
Smolensk	62	34	22	3
Tauride	75	42	112	8
Tambov	77	58	93	9
Tver'	79	52	32	5
Tula	49	30	11	—
Ufa	42	24	35	4
Khar'kov	86	59	155	48
Kherson	81	53	50	—
Chernigov	114	47	199	14
Yaroslav	44	17	45	17

* fel'dsher † midwife

Appendix Table 2

Source : B. B. Veselovskiy, *Istoriya zemstva za sorok let*, vol. 1
Treatment Centres for cattle, in 1906.

Kostroma	9
Voronezh	19
Kursk	2
Tambov	4
Šaratov	17
Tula	1
Vladimir	7
Moscow	10
St. Petersburg	8
Tver	2
Poltava	9
Kherson	19
Pskov	3
Smolensk	projected
Bessarabia	2
Chernigov	6
Vyatka	5
Novgorod	5
Nizhniy	3
Ufa	1
Tauride	2
Ekaterinoslav	2
Khar'kov	3
Samara	Projected
Perm	3

The major period of growth in several provinces (Saratov, Moscow, Petersburg, Novgorod, Ekaterinoslav, Samara, was between 1900 and 1906.