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Review Of "Russian Rightists And The Revolution Of 1905" By D. C. Rawson

Robert Weinberg

Swarthmore College, rweinbe1@swarthmore.edu

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Review

Author(s): Robert Weinberg

Review by: Robert Weinberg

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270 in France, over 100 in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and 23 in sleepy Portugal. The high percentage of foreign recipients of patents, which declined only slightly from 83 to 77 percent between 1897 and 1904, confirmed the predominance of foreign expertise and technology in the most dynamic sectors of the Russian economy at the turn of the century.

The nightmare of subjugation by foreign technology, reflected in the high percentage of Europeans, especially Germans, who received Russian patents, inspired not only the traditionally xenophobic Moscow merchants but also high officials of the Ministry of Finance, notably A. N. Gur'ev, to demand rigid bureaucratic controls on foreigners seeking patents: "The government was . . . expected to find a solution which would on the one hand encourage Russian invention activity and stimulate the interest of entrepreneurs in improving their production technology [and] on the other hand prevent foreign investors from monopolizing the technology which was important for the development of Russian industry" (138). Tsarism never resolved this dilemma.

To be sure, all governments found it difficult to promulgate patent laws capable of protecting inventors' rights to a fair reward while encouraging the diffusion of innovative technology. Unfortunately, the tsarist bureaucracy failed both to accommodate the dynamism of foreign capitalism and to stimulate the weak entrepreneurial impulses of Russian merchants.

Rejecting the notion that the Russian state overcame structural obstacles to economic development, Aer reiterates the findings of recent historiography, which has stressed the high costs of bureaucratic repression. Jealous of its autocratic power, the bureaucracy viewed the granting of an invention privilege "as a special and exclusive right, an exception to the normal law" (182) rather than a right to be enjoyed by inventors under a system of private property. Bureaucratic arbitrariness led to delays of three to five years in decisions to grant patents to inventors; errors in judging the novelty of inventions, entailing further delays and financial losses; the refusal to create an independent patent office or to join the Paris Convention on the treatment of foreign patents (1883); and the toleration of such confusion that "even the courts could not make sense of the laws" regulating patents (158).

Aer's treatment of Sergei Witte's economic program of October 1893 is particularly useful. This document was first published, in English, in the summer 1995 issue of *Russian Studies in History* in an abridgment annotated by Leonid E. Shepelev of St. Petersburg, who noted the importance of the document in his book on tsarist economic policy some fifteen years ago. Her analysis of the archival document has the added advantage of discussing Witte's recommendations for patent law reform, which did not appear in Shepelev's abridged version.

Finally, this study has considerable relevance for an understanding of Russia's current economic crisis. Lest nostalgic Russians consider Stalin's firm hand a solution to economic backwardness, Aer points out in her last footnote that the Soviet government granted a paltry total of 424 patents from 1932 to 1975, less than one-quarter of the number approved in imperial Russia in 1900 alone (184).

THOMAS C. OWEN
Louisiana State University

Russian Rightists and the Revolution of 1905. By Don C. Rawson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xvi, 283 pp. Index. Plates. Tables. Hard bound. Paper.

In this lucidly written and cogently argued book, Don Rawson examines the formation of right-wing political parties during the revolutionary crisis of 1905. He explores the ideologies, platforms, and activities of the maze of monarchist political parties, groupings, and organizations and argues that the defenders of the old order enjoyed no small degree of public support in certain regions of the empire, which in turn encouraged the autocracy to reassert its authority by 1907. Faced with Tsar Nicholas II's concession of the Duma, the monarchists—no friends of a legislative assembly that limited the prerogatives of autocratic power—realized they had no choice but to or-

ganize politically and join the fray of electoral politics in order to stem the tide of constitutionalism. Rawson believes that the rightists understood all too well the political impasse created by a regime trying to depict the tsar as a “constitutional autocrat” and therefore paradoxically immersed themselves in electoral politics in order to preserve the old order.

Rawson identifies two strains of right-wing politics. The extremists, known best through the Union of Russian People led by A. I. Dubrovin and V. M. Purishkevich, virulently denounced the liberal and radical opposition, gave voice to their Russian chauvinism and anti-Semitic sentiments, and worked to destroy the Duma from within. Seeking to restore the unfettered autocracy, the extremists tried to inflame popular passions against the forces of reform and revolution and did not shy away from extralegal activities such as inciting pogroms and assassinating prominent liberal politicians. The moderate right-wingers, concentrated in the Slavophilic Union of Russian Men, shared many of the same views and values of the extremists but rejected the rabble-rousing and obstructionist techniques and strategies of their compatriots to the right. Instead, they reluctantly accepted the political changes that had already taken place and worked to prevent further reform. Though the moderates often joined forces with the extremists on some issues, they were more often than not willing to form alliances with the Octobrists, thereby expressing their willingness to work within the confines of the new political structures.

Whereas previous studies of the right-wing parties have focused primarily on their activities in the two capital cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, Rawson’s work explores their fortunes throughout the empire. He finds that the right-wing agenda struck a responsive chord in the western borderlands and central agricultural provinces, two regions where issues of nationality and religion and law and order, respectively, dominated politics and elections to the first three Dumas. The rightists played to the fears of rural and urban property owners in the case of the agricultural regions wracked by peasant rebellion, and of Russian nationalists in the ethnically diverse western borderlands where anti-Polish and anti-Jewish sentiments ran high. Most right-wing parties understood the importance of mobilizing popular support for the Duma campaigns and accordingly devoted time and energy to political networking and building local organizations. Overall, the rightists managed to claim only 10 percent of the seats in the second Duma, but they did gain pluralities and sometimes majorities in the second Duma elections in some regions of the central agricultural provinces and the western borderlands. The Stolypin electoral coup d’etat of June 1907 enabled the moderate rightists to fare even better in the elections to the third Duma. In alliance with Octobrist deputies, they formed a Duma majority that engaged in partisan politics designed to preserve the political and social status quo. After the reassertion of autocratic power by mid-1907 and the formation of a Duma loyal to the crown, the rightists, as Rawson writes, “no longer felt as much need to contend against liberal constitutionalism or revolutionary violence, both of which had seemingly been contained” and “faded from prominence” (230–31).

Rawson deserves credit for depicting the shadings of the right-wing movement and putting to rest the myth that the tsarist government actively supported the paramilitary actions of the extreme right. Though the government and the right-wing shared a commitment to the preservation of the autocracy, the tsar’s ministers were careful in the forms of assistance given to the most loyal supporters of the regime. Tsar Nicholas and his closest advisers not only feared that the extralegal activities of the extreme right might add to the turmoil enveloping Russia in 1905–06, but they also distrusted the initiative and independence displayed by the regime’s staunchest supporters. Thus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs monitored and at times curtailed the activities of the Union of the Russian People and other extremist organizations.

In sum, Rawson illuminates an important chapter of the waning years of the Romanov dynasty and offers insights into the political challenges confronting Russian society at the turn of the twentieth century.

ROBERT WEINBERG
Swarthmore College