The press policy of Alexander II's government offers an excellent example of the dilemma produced by the Era of Reforms. The government had launched reforms for the sake of efficiency and modernization. It envisioned literature's role during this period of regulated change as that of an onlooker who might suggest and approve reforms. The task of the press authorities was to see that literature and the periodical press stayed within these limits. Concretely what this policy required was the use of gentle restraint on material for the educated classes so that the spread of information and enlightenment might continue even while public opinion was being restricted. On the other hand, the less educated classes were to be quarantined from dangerous ideas. The task of the press authorities was not impossible, but it was more difficult than a blanket prohibition of information and it became more difficult as ideas began to percolate down to the newly educated classes. Nevertheless, during the reign of Alexander II, the government's formula for maintaining the delicate balance it sought between "enlightenment" and "absolutism" stood. The study of press policy offers a prime example of that delicate balance of change and stability that marked Alexander II's reign.

This article will give a short survey of the sources and literature on the history of press policy during the reign. A thorough study of the subject has yet to be published. Both Soviet and pre-revolutionary commentators have tended, with few exceptions, to present material about press policies as if the conclusions were self-evident.1 Almost none has tried to do what Benjamin Rigberg has recently done with press policy under Nicholas II, to analyze the regulations

1. N. E. Engel'gardt, "Tsenzura v epokhu velikikh reform, 1855-75," Istori-cheskii vestnik (September-December 1902); N. A. Engel'gardt, Ocherki istorii russkoi tsenzury v sviazi s razvitiem pechati 1703-1903 (St. Petersburg, 1904).
and evaluate the efficiency of the censorship institutions. However, the material that has been collected and published does provide the basis for that kind of study.

When Alexander began his reign in 1855, he experimented with press policy, at first giving some scope for the expression of opinion on public questions. Later he withdrew many of these concessions as he came to fear the "license" of the press and literature. The Temporary Press Laws of 1865, the fruit of some four years of deliberations, combined restraints with a new freedom. The freedom was represented by the liberation of periodicals in the capitals and books of more than 160 pages from prior censorship; the restraints by the system of administrative warnings, censorship after publication but before issuance, and the unlimited authority of the Minister of Interior to issue supplemental decrees.

For a few years the press authorities were satisfied with the new laws but eventually they regretted the legal restrictions on their powers. For this reason a Commission headed by Prince Urusov was formed in 1869 to consider the press laws. After two years the Commission presented its project. The Minister of Interior ignored the project after he won, in 1872, the right to confiscate dangerous works by a simple decision of the Committee of Ministers. This ruling was one of many special press edicts which guided the press


3. See the following official sources for press policy from 1855 to 1862: Istoričeskiia svedenija o tsnzure v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 1862) in three editions. Of the two editions printed at the press of the Naval Ministry, one has a history of the censorship from Peter the Great's reign to 1862 and three supplements containing edicts from 1862; the second lacks the supplements. A third abridged edition was printed at the press of F. Person. See also Sbornik postanovlenii i rasporiaženii po tsnzure s 1720 po 1862 god (St. Petersburg: Naval Ministry press, 1862); Sbornik stat'ei nedozvolených tsnzuroi v 1862 g. (St. Petersburg, 1862); Proekty i zapiski o tsnzure (n.p., n.d.). This last volume, found in the Library of Congress, was prepared for the Minister of Education and contains a number of titles that are often listed as separate publications.

4. For deliberations see: Proekt ustava o knižopechatanii (St. Petersburg, 1862); Proekt ustava o knižopechatanii (St. Petersburg, 1863); Zhurnaly vysochashcheї uchrezhdennoi komissii dlia razmotreniia proekta ustava o knižopechatanii (St. Petersburg, 1863). (I have not seen this last source, but it is the journal of either the first or second Obolenskii Commission whose projects are listed in the preceding citation.); Kratkie obozrenie napravlenii periodicheskikh izdanii i otryvov ikh po vazhneeim pravitel'ствennyim i drugim voprosam za 1862 g. (St. Petersburg, 1862) and also in Sochinenija grafa P. I. Kapnista, 2 vols. in 1 (Moscow, 1901), II, 429-509; Sbornik rasporiaženii po delam pechati s 1863 po-1-e sentiabr' 1865 goda (St. Petersburg, 1865).

5. Materiaľy sobrannye osoboiu komissiiu vysochashcheї uchrezhdennoi 2 noiabria 1869 goda dlia peresmotra deistvuiuchikh postanovlenii o tsnzure i pechati (St. Petersburg, 1870), 5 vols. in 4; Zhurnaly osoboi komissii vysochashcheї uchrezhdennoi 2-go noiabria 1869 goda dlia peresmotra deistvuiuchikh postanovlenii o tsnzure i pechati, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1870). (The catalogue of Harvard Law School has an entry for this source, but it was not located on the shelves.); Proekt ustava o pechati i tsnzure (St. Petersburg, 1870).