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**Russian Liberalism and the Closing of the 1867 St. Petersburg Zemstvo**

We are not rebels,” declared Nikolai Fedorovich Kruze, chairman the St. Petersburg Zemstvo Executive Board in the January 14, '67, session of the annual provincial assembly. He was referring to the attitude of the zemstvo toward the tsarist government. Exactly 50 days later Kruze and several other zemstvo members were exiled, and St. Petersburg Zemstvo Assembly was closed, and zemstvo activities in that province were suspended. This action ended an effort to give a local self-government to control its finances, and thus provided a typical example of the struggle between liberalism, Russian nationalism, and autocracy, bureaucratic style. A description and analysis of the 1867 St. Petersburg Zemstvo Assembly and the public reaction to its closing will throw more light on both the early history of the zemstvo and the problems of liberals in Russia.

The meaning and place of nineteenth century Russian liberalism has been both a controversial and yet somewhat neglected topic. The aspect of this problem is the perennial difficulty of ascertaining the connection between ideological developments in Russia and their counterpart in Western Europe. Without attempting to offer a solution to this vexing question, a satisfactory approach within the confines of the 1860’s is to delineate the contemporary setting of Russian liberalism.

The proponents of liberalism at that time were drawn almost exclusively from the gentry. Hence it is natural to look to those institutional bodies in which they played a major part. In the 1860’s these organizations were primarily the gentry and zemstvo assemblies. Gentry meetings of 1861-62 best illustrate both the content of gentry liberalism and its changing emphasis under the impact of the

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For an informative study on this point see Terrence Emmons, *The Russian Gentry and the Peasant Emancipation of 1861* (Cambridge, 1968).
Emancipation and other projected reforms. The demands of the gentry were no longer concentrated exclusively on the securing of civil rig but now included political representation on the national level. There was a movement away from the type of liberalism termed Rechtsstaat to constitutional liberalism. The link in the change emphasis was opposition to the tsarist bureaucracy. To the bulk of the gentry this bureaucracy, whether centered in St. Petersburg or the provincial capitals, acted in a most arbitrary fashion and in a way detrimental to the interests of the gentry and the entire Russian people. Concern for class interests and demands for protection of civil rights and a political voice in national affairs formed the mainstream of liberal ideology in the 1860's. The primary enemy remained the bureaucracy; the answer as to how to put an end to bureaucracy tutelage, however, varied.

Economic necessity, a desire for more efficient local administration and the new social and economic situation created by the Emancipation forced the tsarist government to reformulate the structure of local government in the early 1860's. Given the autocratic nature of Russian Empire, how much authority could be delegated to or shared with local elected officials? The bureaucrats who formulated Zemstvo Statute, especially Minister of Interior P. A. Valuev, did its best to hedge the independent power of the zemstvo. Above all, zemstvo was to have no political power. The relationship between new zemstvo institutions and the central authorities was well defined in Article 6 of the Zemstvo Statute. "Zemstvo institutions within circle of affairs entrusted to them act independently. The law defined the cases and the legal form in which their actions and decrees subject to the approval and observation of the general government.

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5. Emmons, pp. 368-381, 388-393; also Н. И. Иорданский, Конституциональное развитие 60-х годов (СПб., 1906), стр. 134-140. The Tver' gentry were the most outspoken in these "constitutional" demands.
6. One exception to this anti-bureaucratic attitude was expressed by the known professor and legalist Boris Chicherin. See his О народном представительстве (М., 1866).
7. А. И. Коцелев, Какой исход для России из нынешнего ее положения (Лейпциг, 1862); В. Н. Чичерин, Несколько современных вопросов (М., 1862) О. Н. Трубetskой, Князь В. А. Черкасский: Материалы для биографии, 2 (М., 1901-1904), Приложение № 17, 101-128.
8. The background to the Zemstvo Reform of 1864 is presented in B. V. Garb Подготовка земской реформы 1864 года (М., 1957) and in James Malloy, "The Zemstvo Reform of 1864: Its Historical Background and Significance for Tsarist Russia," unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University.