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of Greek religion and should be required reading in every course on ancient Greek civilization.

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*Understanding Imperial Russia.* By MARC RAEFF. Translated by ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. Pp. xix-248. Bibliography, index. \$19.95.

Marc Raeff's interpretive essay examines the effects of the tsars' absolute authority on the institutions of Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the abdication of Nicholas II. By concentrating on this subject Raeff provides a useful tool for understanding Imperial Russia, since, in his view, the absolutist state was the single greatest force for change throughout this period.

The far-reaching innovations begun by Peter the Great attempted to transform Russia following the Western pattern of the "well ordered police state." Raeff argues that Peter shared in the belief that "the fundamental trait of modern man is his determination to organize society rationally for the purpose of achieving ever greater productivity." (p. 26) Peter's efforts to introduce these reforms produced profound changes in Russian society and imperial administration. Rational control and coordination required close supervision of the entire economic and political life of the country, but this was an impossible task for the autocrat alone; the country needed a bureaucracy. Hence the old Muscovite service nobility was transformed into a corps of officials. Peter's reforms were rejected by the common people, while the nobility was divided between supporters of the principles that Max Weber called "tradition" and "rationality."

The logical conclusion of the well order police state would be an independent code of laws universally applicable - a *Rechtsstaat*. Peter, however, wished to preserve his personalized autocratic power whole and undiminished. Surprisingly, the nobility did not demand a legal code; they also preferred relations based on a personalized form of ultimate authority in which they could influence the autocrat. So, on the one hand, there was a long list of powerful court favorites throughout the eighteenth century, while, on the other hand, no autonomous legal code existed. The entire judicial system had no independent status or standards and offered no adequate protection against the arbitrariness of state administrators.

Whereas Peter's approach to the establishment of the well ordered police state was the creation of a centralized bureaucracy, Catherine the

Great used urban elites and provincial nobility to assist in the implementation of imperial legislation at the local level.

Paradoxically, these groups became disaffected and eventually developed into centers of opposition when only limited independences was granted them by the central administration.

In the early nineteenth century an improved educational system, improvements in the condition of the peasants, and a streamlined municipal administration suggest substantial progress during a period that conventional historiography dismisses as stagnant. These developments, alongside increased specialization within the bureaucracy, an improved educational system, the emergence of "thick journals" and literary and artistic circles all indicate a much richer and mature civil society which strove for a greater role in the country's affairs. Nicholas I, however, relied on poor members of the nobility to staff the bureaucracy; the wealthy nobility were too independent and often tainted by participation in the abortive Decembrist revolt. The poor nobility were dependent on their government salaries and entirely more tractable; they became a loyal group of paid, professional bureaucrats. Once again Russia's elite was divided against itself over the issue of participation in the bureaucracy and allegiance to the tsar.

Raeff traces intellectual opposition to the autocracy back to the ambivalent position of the tsars themselves, that is, to their reluctance to share power when the system they hoped to create required, in the name of administrative efficiency, at least some delegation of authority. The deep suspicion of all private initiative, of all independent institutions not under government control suggests an almost pathological anxiety toward the dilution of autocratic power. Not surprisingly, the tsars' ability to effectively rule was severely reduced.

Raeff's account of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is much less satisfactory. The mediocre intelligence and limited abilities of the last two tsars are seen as obstacles to state sponsored change but this interpretation and the cursory manner in which it is developed adds little to our understanding of the period. Although the bibliography and table of important dates at the conclusion of the book are helpful, the infrequent footnotes in the text provide the reader with few clues for further investigation. However, Raeff's analysis, particularly of the eighteenth century, serves as a useful guide through the frequently conflicting efforts to organize Imperial Russia rationally, enlist the nobility to this end, and to preserve autocratic power intact.

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