

PHENOMENON OF AUTOCRACY IN RUSSIA

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The article considers the autocracy as a monarchical form of government in Russia, in which all power, including in the legislative sphere, belongs to the Tsar or the Emperor. The features of autocracy that distinguish this form of government from other European monarchies are considered. Also, the authors actively use examples from the history of the Russian state, namely the events of the dependence of the Ruu lands on the Golden Horde, and also link the reasons for the emergence of autocracy in Russia with difficult climatic conditions. According to the authors, the turning point in the formation of autocracy in Russia was the wedding of Ivan IV to the kingdom in 1547, which helped to confirm the idea of the continuity of monarchical power given by God. So the process of sacralization of the supreme ruler of Russia was completed, which implied the assignment of special features to the tsar, by virtue of which he began to be perceived by the people as a supernatural creature endowed with divine qualities. The article discusses the historiography of the problem of autocracy. The authors note that until now there is no official unambiguous understanding of the term "autocracy". In conclusion, the authors note that it was autocracy that contributed to the transformation of the Moscow Duchy into a powerful state.

Keywords: mentality, Russia, autocracy, the tsar

Autocracy is a monarchical form of government in Russia, in which all power, including in the legislative sphere, belongs to the Tsar or the Emperor. Competences of the autocrat in the field of management strive for inclusiveness.

In this connection, we would like to note several features distinguishing the Russian autocracy from any other similar phenomena of Western or Eastern history. The fact is that the ability of the Russian person to work, in particular the Russian peasant, is largely determined by natural geographic conditions. Having a long winter, spring and autumn, often similar to winter and too short summer, the Russian peasant is forced to work with great intensity in order to grow and harvest at least some kind of harvest. A peasant, unable to produce marketable bread, often sells the product he needs, so he does not "live", but "survive". That is why Russia has for centuries fought the threat of famine, which was exacerbated by the slightest socio-economic or political destabilization. That is why, in need of an aggregate surplus product, the state in Russia had to become very strong, similar to oriental despots. This is the economic reason why autocracy is Russia's specifics.

Certainly, the presence of 300 years of dependence on the Golden Horde, the current institution of "hostage", the long-term presence of members of the princely family in the khan's headquarters, as well as the penetration of Eastern traditions into Russian culture, the destruction of the urban veche system, contributed to turning away from democratic manifestations system of ancient Russia, and had a strong influence on the formation of a new form of power relations and the emergence of a regime of unlimited power in Russia XVI-XX centuries. Here we agree with the opinion of

S.A. Kislitsyna, G.N. Serdyukova, I.O. Ionov, that the relations between the Russian princes and the Mongol khans were built according to the type of citizenship and service, i.e. "Ministeriality", and not according to the type of contractual relationship, i.e. "Vassalitet", which later turned into a "despotic autocracy". The state organization of the Golden Horde, without encroaching on the foundations of the spiritual life of the Russians and Orthodoxy, became a kind of model for creating a powerful state. V.V. Shulgin believes that "Russia borrowed from the Mongols their highest achievement and their strongest weapon, namely, the khanat, that is, autocracy. The eastern hordes, assembled in one hand, could not be opposed to the gnawing system of specific-feudal eternity among themselves" [14].

And, of course, it would have been impossible to build up autocracy without that special type of mentality that existed in the Russian community. In Russia, there was no characteristic emphasis on personalities and personal origins for the West; there were no ambitions associated with private property. There was a "world" in Russia, and the Russian peasant thought in the category "we". The community consent was higher than the law, higher than the personality, as Aksakov and others said. But, I would like to note the ambivalence inherent in the community. On the one hand, the community had protective functions: there was social responsibility, collectivism, a certain relation to the poor, the impoverished, the arrested, the orphans who suffered from natural disasters, etc. On the other hand, it was the community that monitored the payment of taxes and fees, the execution of punishments and the like. Feudal lords were afraid to encroach on a certain autonomy of the community, but

it was beneficial and necessary for the system. The community, helping to improve the position of the peasants, at the same time weakened the pressure on them, between the peasants and from the peasants. It was included in the state system: the community was the state mechanism of influence on the peasant, the intermediary between power and man. This provided conservatism and community vitality. And in the future, this communal mentality, this feeling of self not as “I”, but as “we” was easily transferred to the state and attitude to it.

Perhaps, this idea is confirmed by the fact that the state would not have been able to withstand the conditions of the deepest crisis of the Troubles, if not for the support of the people. An important feature of the emerging ideology was patriarchalism and state awareness of the highest value, compared with which the fate and freedom of a single person did not matter. On the other hand, the people constantly sought protection from the state, which was personified in the figure of the sovereign. Indeed, in spite of the large number of uprisings, the peasants and the people were not against the sovereign or the state, but against the boyars, landlords, officials, etc. The very emergence and spread of such an institution as “imposture” testifies, as noted by many researchers, not about the decline, but just the opposite, about the growth of authority of the royal power. In the tsar, the people saw a true defender, directly addressing him with petitions: for example, in 1606 to Falsdmityr, in 1648, in 1662 to Alexei Mikhailovich. The very fact of such appeals to the tsar testifies to the existence of a certain notion of the indissolubility of the authorities and the people, on the one hand, and the impossibility of limiting the power of the tsar, or something else, on the other. Thus, there is an evolution in the direction of the king – “autocrat” and autocracy. In the autocrat, the people wanted to see a defender capable of repulsing an enemy who does not pay tribute to anyone who does not depend on anyone, i.e. who is sovereign. However, the autocrat not only ensures external security, but also internal order, justice and related judicial and legislative issues.

The people do not believe in the force of law, they expect more from the autocrat than the law can give them. People need truth, and the law is not capable of becoming an expression of truth. Folk proverb says: “The law is that the pole: wherever you turn, there it went”. Also, the power of the autocrat is inextricably linked with the power of God. Representing God’s power before the people, the autocrat represents the people before God.

The turning point in the establishment of autocracy in Russia was the wedding of Ivan IV to the kingdom in 1547, which promoted the idea of continuity of monarchical power given by God. Thus, the process of sacralization of the supreme ruler of Russia was completed, which implied that the tsar was conferred with special features, due to which he began to be perceived by the people as a supernatural being endowed with divine qualities.

Russian sovereigns in the XVI century, XVII century and the XVIII century titled themselves autocrats. So, for example, in 1716, in the interpretation of the 20th article of the Military Code, it was noted: “His Majesty is an autocratic monarch who should not give anyone in the world an answer in his affairs; but power and authority has its own states and lands, like a Christian sovereign, to govern by his own will and grandeur” [3, p. 50]. A little later, in the “Spiritual Regulation” compiled by Feofan Prokopovich, it was stated: “Monarch power is autocratic, which God Himself obeys for conscience” [4].

We agree with the opinion of pre-revolutionary historians that the autocracy in Russia was thus primordial. N. M. Karamzin found signs of “autocracy” already in the Kiev state and, accordingly, in the Moscow state since its inception [6]. The historian S. M. Solovyov speaks of the existence of an absolute monarchy in Russia. The historian believes that the formation of an absolute monarchy takes place during the reign of Peter I. The merit of S. M. Solovyov is the scientific justification of the historical necessity of Peter’s reforms. Peter’s reforms for the researcher were seen not as a violent break with ancient Russia and the introduction of foreign practices and customs, but as a natural and necessary development of Russian history [9].

The student of S. M. Solovyov, V. O. Klyuchevsky, unlike his teacher, found autocracy under Ivan IV, and possibly even under Ivan III [7, p. 125-126].

And historians are monarchists at the beginning of the 20th century. distinguished autocracy from eastern despotism and western absolutism. “The autocracy ... lived among the people and in the Church. Absolutism has risen above both of them. Absolute, i.e. The Sovereign, estranged from the people, is obscured by an absolute bureaucracy, which, having created an infinitely complex state mechanism, under the name of the Tsar, under the sacred slogan of autocracy, works according to its program, growing and growing and entangling both the Tsar and the people ...” [5, p. 760]. Thus, the

authors of the turn of the XIX-XX centuries. nevertheless agreed that in the XVIII century. Russian monarchs had absolute power.

In the 1920-1930s. the problems of the history of autocracy and absolutism were discussed through the prism of the views of the historian M. N. Pokrovsky. Mikhail Nikolaevich associated the establishment of absolutism with the name of Ivan the Terrible. An important reason for the emergence of absolutism in Russia, according to M. N. Pokrovsky, was the economic development of the country in the XVI–XVII centuries. “A modification of feudal economy under the influence of commodity economy was absolutism, more precisely, the bureaucratic monarchy” [8, p. 498]. After the death of M.N. Pokrovsky, a lively criticism of his views developed.

Most Soviet scholars also did not share the concepts of “absolutism” and “autocracy”. So, for example, Professor S. V. Yushkov argued that the terms we have designated are synonyms [15]. Another researcher S.O. Schmidt believed that absolutism in Russia took shape during the era of the Moscow kingdom, under Ivan the Terrible, but ceased with the death of the tsar, after which it was revived in the 17th century. During the reign of Mikhail Fedorovich [13, p. 311]. The look of L.V. Cherepnin is also peculiar. He allowed the simultaneous coexistence of two forms of state under Ivan the Terrible at once: autocracy in the oprichnina and estate-representative monarchy in the zemstvo [11, p. 182].

It should be noted that among the Soviet historians there was a rather sharp discussion on the pages of the journal “History of the USSR”. The discussion as a whole turned out to be quite fruitful. A significant array of new sources was introduced into scientific circulation, the main approaches to identifying the social and political essence of the Russian autocracy, the stages of its formation and development were determined.

In particular, A.Y. Avrech distinguished the following features of the Russian autocracy that brought him, in the researcher’s opinion, closer to Asian despotism: the predominance of illegal methods of managing society and, above all, the personal arbitrariness of monarchs; the predominance of state ownership of land and communal land use; underdevelopment in Russia XVII – XVIII centuries. third estate [1, p. 81-89].

Another Soviet historian called the time of the appearance of absolutism in Russia of the XVIII century. – S.M. Troitsky. He argued that “the transition from a class-representative mon-

archy to an absolute one began in the 17th century and ended mainly in the first quarter of the 18th century” [10, p. 24] A.L. Shapiro also believes that the autocracy that has developed in Russia XVI-XVII centuries. – this is one, and absolutism of the XVIII century – something else [12, p. 69-82]. The modern historian E.V. Anisimov also does not separate the concepts of “autocracy” and “absolutism”: “So in the course of the state reform, Peter I...” strengthened “autocracy in Russia for a long period” [2, p. 292].

Thus, up to the present, there is no official unambiguous understanding of the term “autocracy”. Also, the modern understanding of autocracy by Russian historians suggests a qualitative difference from the absolute monarchy, which is as follows. An absolute monarchy is characterized by the highest degree of centralization, a developed, fully dependent on the monarch bureaucratic apparatus, and a strong regular army. The army, in addition to its primary internal function of suppressing unrest and uprisings, performed other functions. Since Peter’s time, it has been widely used in public administration as a coercive force. The practice of sending military teams to places to force the administration to better implement government orders and directions has become widespread. But sometimes the central institutions were put in the same position, for example, even the activity of the Senate in the first years of its creation was under the control of guard officers. Officers and soldiers were also involved in the census, collecting taxes and arrears, etc.

Along with the army, absolutism also used punitive bodies specially created for this purpose – the Preobrazhensky order, the Secret Chancellery, etc. to suppress their political opponents.

In the first quarter of the XVIII century the second pillar of the absolute monarchy also arises – the bureaucratic apparatus of state administration.

The establishment of an absolute monarchy in Russia was accompanied by a wide expansion of the state, its invasion in all spheres of public, corporate and private life. Peter I pursued a policy of further enslavement of the peasants, which assumed the most severe forms at the end of the 18th century.

Summing up, we note that it is the religious consciousness of the Russian people that is associated with the state consciousness in general, and the development of autocracy, in particular. And autocracy, in turn, contributed to the transformation of the Moscow Duchy in a powerful state.

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