Alexander Iii Essay, Research Paper

Considered Russia s last true autocrat, Alexander III was the epitome of what a Russian Tsar was supposed to be. Forceful, formidable, fiercely patriotic, and at 6 4 towered over his fellow countrymen. He was the embodiment of the fabled Russian bear. He came to power at a critical point in Imperial Russian History. The Industrial Revolution had finally come to Russia and capitalism was taking root. Foreign investment within the country was at an all time high. His father, Alexander II was within hours of granting the country its first constitution. Ironically, Alexander III was not born heir to the Russian throne.

Born in St Petersburg on February 26, 1845, he was the second son of Alexander II, the Tsar Liberator who had freed the serfs. His older brother and heir to the throne, Nicholas, died in 1865. The young Grand Duke was greatly influenced by his tutor Constantine Petrovich Pobedonostev who instilled into him conservative fundamentals of autocracy, Orthodoxy and nationalism that were required to govern the Russian Empire. Pobedonostev believed that all opposition to the government be ruthlessly crushed and viewed liberal ideas as constitutions and free press as a threat to the state. It was also Pobedonostev that taught Alexander III to be anti- Semitic and view the Jewish community of the Empire as Christ Killers .

The reign of Alexander III began in tragedy. On March 1, 1881, on the eve of the signing into Russia s first constitution, two assassins threw bombs at the Tsars carriage in St Petersburg. Alexander II was mortally wounded and died shortly thereafter. Russia s hope for a constitution also died that day. One cannot fault the reaction to his father s death. His father, the Tsar Liberator, had freed the serfs, predating Lincoln s Emancipation Proclamation by two years. One can only imagine the rage he, his wife and children felt as they watched the Tsar bleed and die in a St Petersburg palace. This event solidified the reactionary tone of his 13- year reign.

As a result of the assassination, Alexander III would not consider granting the constitution. He tightened censorship of the press and sent revolutionaries to Siberia. In his Accession Manifesto, he declared his intension to have full faith in the justice and strength of autocracy that he had been intrusted with. Any liberal proposals in government were quickly dismissed. Alexander was determined to strengthen autocratic rule as a god given right. His reign is often referred to as the AGE of Counter Reform.

At the beginning of 1894 Alexander III was 49 years old. It was believed that he had, bearing assassination, many years left to his reign. As the year progressed, his health deteriorated at an alarming rate. Alexander Alexandrovich Romanov, Tsar of all the Russia s, died of Nephritis on October 20, 1894 at the summer palace in Lividia in the Crimea. He left behind an incomplete legacy, his work unfinished, and an heir unprepared to rule.

In conclusion, Alexander III only accomplishment was strengthening the autocratic rule at the expense of the working class and peasantry. To his credit he stabilised the Russian government and maintained peace with his European and Asian neighbours. Alexander III had no idea that the cared for and the means in which he obtained them would cause the eventual destruction of the way of life and government he cherished so deeply. His cancelling of the planned constitution set into motion events that would eventually take Russia to the brink of annihilation. The Tsars inability or unwillingness to prepare his son Nicholas at an early age to rule as absolute autocrat further exacerbated the future events that would sweep over his Empire. Finally, Alexander was hopelessly out of touch with the emerging realities of a modern industrialized Russia.