

**Artículo de investigación****Why didn't Russia become a constitutional monarchy in the XIX century?**

Почему Россия не стала конституционной монархией в XIX веке?

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Written by:

**Vitaly Yu. Zakharov**<sup>121</sup>**Anna N. Ivanova**<sup>122</sup>**Irina N. Velmozhko**<sup>123</sup>Elibrary.ru: [https://elibrary.ru/author\\_profile.asp?id=287104](https://elibrary.ru/author_profile.asp?id=287104)**Olga B. Chirikova**<sup>124</sup>Elibrary.ru: [https://elibrary.ru/author\\_profile.asp?id=287104](https://elibrary.ru/author_profile.asp?id=287104)**Abstract**

The article deals with the main problems associated with the possibility of implementing a constitutional alternative in Russia in the XIX century. The authors consider the prerequisites for the development of constitutional projects during this period, including their regularity or randomness, and relationship with previous stages of development of the Russian statehood. They pay particular attention to the subjective factor, i.e. personal views and worldview of the Russian emperors as the main condition for the implementation of the constitutional alternative to the development of the country. The reigns of Alexander I and Alexander II, who were either the initiators of the development of constitutional projects (Alexander I) or did not prevent it (Alexander II), are the focus of attention. The comparative analysis of the main constitutional projects of the XIX century is carried out in this article: of the Letter of Commendation to the Russian people in 1801, the project of M.M. Speransky in 1809, the Charter Diploma of the Russian Empire in 1818-1820, the project of P.A. Valuev in 1863, the grand prince Konstantin Nikolaevich in 1866 and 1880, the P.A. Shuvalov in 1874 and of the M.T. Loris-Melikov in 1880-1881. The projects of the time period of Alexander II are much more moderate than of the epoch of Alexander I and they can be recognized as constitutional ones with a great stretch. It was a step backwards in the development of Russian

**Аннотация**

В статье рассматривается основной круг проблем, связанных с возможностью реализации конституционной альтернативы в России в XIX веке. Авторы рассматривают предпосылки разработки конституционных проектов на протяжении XIX столетия, включая вопрос об их закономерности или случайности, связи с предшествующими этапами развития российской государственности. Особое внимание уделяется субъективному фактору, т.е. личным взглядам и мировоззрению российских императоров как главному условию реализации конституционной альтернативы развития страны. Соответственно в центре внимания оказываются правления Александра I и Александра II, которые по своим взглядам были либо инициаторами разработки конституционных проектов (Александра I), либо не препятствовали этому (Александр II). Проводится сравнительный анализ основных конституционных проектов XIX века: Жалованной Грамоты Российскому народу 1801 г., проекта М.М. Сперанского 1809 г., Уставной Грамоты Российской империи 1818-1820 гг., проекта П.А. Валуева 1863 г., вел. кн. Константина Николаевича 1866 и 1880 г., П.А. Шувалова 1874 г. и М.Т. Лорис-Меликова 1880-1881 г. Обращается внимание на то, что проекты эпохи Александра II

<sup>121</sup> Doctor in Historical Sciences, Professor of the Department of Russian History, Moscow Pedagogical State University, Moscow, Russia; Professor of the Department of History, Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), Moscow, Russia.

<sup>122</sup> PhD in Historical Sciences, Docent of the Department of History, Russian Technological University (MIREA), Moscow, Russia; Docent of the Department of History, Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), Moscow, Russia.

<sup>123</sup> PhD in Historical Sciences, Head of the Department of History, Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), Moscow, Russia.

<sup>124</sup> Docent of the Department of History, Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), Moscow, Russia.

constitutionalism. This is explained by a subjective factor: much more moderate political views of Alexander II and his greater commitment to the autocratic tradition inherited from his father. In conclusion, there are the reasons for the lack of implementation of the constitutional alternative in Russia in the XIX century in this article, they are the following: peculiarities of the social structure of the Russian society, narrowness of the social base of the constitutional reforms, lack of understanding and disinterestedness of the majority of the population in their implementation and necessity, indecision of the emperors.

**Keywords:** Constitutional monarchy, constitutional projects, constitutionalism, history of Russia in the XIX century, political reforms.

## Introduction

The XIX century is the period of the final transition of European civilization to the industrial-capitalist stage of development. A characteristic feature of the functioning of the political sphere of public life was the increase of civil and political activity of the population and, as a consequence, tendency of transition to the constitutional forms of government (constitutional monarchy or republic). This trend was formed during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, and finally became dominant after other revolutions in Europe in 1848-1849, when the majority of European states obtained constitutions. Russia should have developed in the same direction, because in the period of Peter the Great a choice (at least formally) to borrow the achievements of Western European civilization was made. However, the Russian Empire remained an absolute (autocratic) monarchy throughout the XIX century. The purpose of this article is to analyze the factors that prevented the introduction of the constitutional order in the country, although these attempts were repeatedly made, and quite actively, during the reign of Alexander I (project of the Letter of Commendation to the Russian people in 1801, project of M.M. Speransky in 1809, project of the Charter Diploma of the Russian Empire in 1818-1820 of N.N. Novosiltsev, Decembrist constitutional projects), and less actively during the reign of Alexander II

гораздо умереннее проектов эпохи Александра I и конституционными их можно назвать с большой натяжкой. По сути, это был шаг назад в развитии российского конституционализма. Объясняется это субъективным фактором – намного более умеренными политическими взглядами Александра II, его большей приверженностью самодержавной традиции, унаследованной от отца. В заключение исследуются причины нереализованности конституционной альтернативы в России в XIX в.: особенности социальной структуры российского общества, узость социальной базы конституционных реформ, непонимание и незаинтересованность большинства населения в их проведении и в их необходимости, нерешительность императоров.

**Ключевые слова:** история России XIX века, конституционализм, конституционная монархия, конституционные проекты, политические реформы.

(project of P.A. Valuyev in 1863, projects of grand prince Konstantin Nikolaevich in 1866 and 1880, project of M.T. Loris-Melikov in 1880-1881).

## Theoretical basis

There are the following basic concepts used in the study: state, monarchy, constitutional monarchy, constitutional projects, and reasons for the unrealized constitutional alternative in Russia in the XIX century.

## Methodology

The authors in the article use, first of all, logical methods of research: analysis, synthesis, comparison; method of modeling (building a theoretical model of the new political system of Russia in the case of the implementation of one of the constitutional projects); private scientific methods of historical research: historical and genetic (when analyzing the reasons for the non-implementation of constitutional projects), historical and comparative (when comparing the constitutional projects during the reign of Alexander I and Alexander II), historical and typological (to find out what type of constitutionalism the projects can be attributed to). Also, the method of structural and functional analysis was used in the work (for example, when

analyzing the correlation of powers of different branches of authority on the constitutional projects).

## Results

As a result of the research the authors made the conclusion that the transformation of the Russian Empire into a constitutional monarchy was hindered by a combination of objective and subjective reasons. Among the first reasons there were the following: general lag of political and socio-economic development of Russia from the countries of Western Europe; specific social structure of the Russian society with almost complete dominance of the nobility; the need to simultaneously solve the problem of political and social reforms, which made the situation more difficult; narrowness of the social base of supporters of constitutional reforms. The second one is Alexander I's lack of determination, his tendency to hesitate, uncertainty about the correctness of the chosen path, as well as his unwillingness to give up the prerogatives of absolute power in Alexander II.

## Discussion

The Russian Empire entered the XIX century as a militarily powerful country with an absolutist despotic form of government and a complete predominance of feudal-serfdom relations in the socio-economic sphere of public life. At the same time, the majority of modern historians believe that by this time the potential of Peter the Great's model of modernization had been almost completely exhausted. It is clear that it was impossible to use his legacy indefinitely. Moreover, his modernization was one-sided and incomplete, reduced mainly to the borrowing of military and administrative technologies and did not affect the political, legal and social spheres of public life. Partial renewals of Peter's military bureaucratic system, made by Catherine II, did not solve all the problems. Moreover, the countries of Western Europe have moved to the industrial-capitalist stage of development, the pace of economic growth has accelerated significantly. In the Russian economy, however, the feudal-serfdom system, which was finally formed under Peter the Great and was based on strict non-economic coercion, dominated the entire economy. Without material incentives, at the total disenfranchisement of the overwhelming majority of the population, this system knowingly doomed the country to stagnation, slow economic development and loss of competition with the more developed countries of the West. Then, it also threatened to

lose the status of a great power. The most educated and far-sighted representatives of the ruling circles, including the new Russian emperor Alexander I, understood that serious reforms were needed. The question was "how and in which direction"? The answers (may be strange) were given by the French Revolution. It showed with unprecedented clarity what can happen in case of delay with reforms. Any monarchical regime, including the Russian one, became clear: to prevent the repetition of these events in their country, it is necessary to eliminate the remnants of feudalism and move to a constitutional form of government. And both were made by reforms "from above", but under one condition: the presence of political will and desire to carry out these reforms in the ruling monarch. For Russia, it was especially important. The autocratic monarchy, which was finally formed under Peter the Great, was distinguished by obvious despotic tendencies and unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of the monarch ("leaving the question" of the real possibility to use it). Under these conditions, the subjective factors, i.e. monarch's personal qualities, political ideal, and outlook, are very important. For Alexander I, this factor was extremely favorable for constitutional reforms. Under the influence of his mentor, F. Lagarpa, the young emperor was receptive to the progressive ideas of the doctrine of enlightenment, and, unlike Catherine II, intended to implement them seriously. The basis of his outlook was a negative attitude towards serfdom, which was seen as a shameful phenomenon and a brake on the normal development of the country, as well as the idea of the rule of law, which resulted in the desire to clearly define the legal status of the entire Russian people and radically change the system of governance of the country on the basis of the principle of separation of powers, i.e., to introduce the constitution. Moreover, young Alexander, according to his friend and member of the Private Committee, prince A. Chartorizhskiy, considered, that the best form of government is republic (Chartorizhskiy, 1912).

Due to the subjective factor, i.e. personal views and peculiarities of Alexander I's education and worldview that at the beginning of the XIX century there appeared a real possibility of adoption of the constitution in Russia. At the same time, Alexander I could not help but understand that since the leading countries of the world (England, United States, and France) the constitutions had adopted and were implementing, the same thing would happen in less developed countries, including Russia.

Constitutional order is the future, moreover, the political history of Russia was not only the implementation and development of the absolutist-despotic tendency, but also there was a different, restrictive trend since ancient times. We can remember the active role of the people's assemblies in the Old Russian State, activity of Zemsky (Land) Sobor in the XVI-XVII centuries, restrictive records on the accession to the throne of Vasily Shuisky, the Polish prince Vladislav and, quite possibly, Mikhail Romanov during the Time of Troubles, the condition of the Supreme Privy Council of 1730, the constitutional projects of count N.I. Panin in the 1770s-1780s. (Zakharov, 2017). So, the plans to introduce the constitution in Russia in the beginning of the XIX century were not only the borrowing from the West and did not appear for nothing. But all the restrictive projects of the XVIII century were drafted in a secret or semi-transparent atmosphere at the level of private individuals, albeit endowed with power, but without the support of the monarch. A distinctive feature of the projects of the beginning of the XIX century was that they were created not only with the knowledge of the head of state, but also on his initiative. Therefore, in this case it is possible to speak with full right about the government constitutionalism as a clearly expressed internal political course (Minaeva, 1982; Mironenko, 1989; Zakharov, 2011).

During the reign of Alexander I, at least three constitutional drafts were prepared at his direct order: Letter of Commendation to the Russian people in 1801, project of M.M. Speransky in 1809, Charter Diploma of the Russian Empire in 1818-1820. The first of them was preparing for the solemn coronation of Alexander I in September 1801, it was a kind of Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms and was considered as an introduction to the future constitution. The document was developed in July-August 1801 as the Letter of Commendation of the nobility and cities of 1785. The initial version of 20 articles was prepared by the ex-president of the Collegium of Commerce and the future chancellor of the Russian empire (from 1802) A.R. Vorontsov (with the possible participation of his friend A.N. Radishchev, the author of the famous work "Journey From Petersburg to Moscow ") and did not go beyond the typical feudal charter on the model of the English Magna Charta Libertum with the addition of provisions from the Habeas corpus act of 1679. Almost all

the articles were devoted to the restoration of the rights of the nobility and only one article was devoted to the townspeople and peasants. However, after discussion in the Private Committee, the document became of a conventional nature (replacement of the word "landlord" by "owner" (Art. 9), proclamation of the protection of personal property of the entire population, not just the nobility (Art. 7), proclamation of certain rights and freedoms for all "Russian subjects" (Art. 8), etc.), which allows to reasonably consider it a prototype of the introduction of the future constitution, designed for the entire population of Russia, including the serfs (Minaeva, 1982; Zakharov, 2002). However, because of some reasons, the Letter of Commendation was never published.

In 1809, at the direct order of the emperor, his secretary, trustee and advisor M.M. Speransky prepared a full-fledged project of constitution, although in draft form without dividing it into chapters and articles, with the title "Introduction to the implementation of national laws". It was supposed to completely transform the system of public administration in the country on the basis of separation of powers. A four-level system of governance was being developed. The executive power remained entirely under the monarch. It was subordinate to the ministries, which replaced the collegiums in 1802, were subordinate to provincial, district and volost administrations. The supreme judicial authority was the Senate, provincial, district and municipal courts were subordinated to it. Legislative power was divided between the emperor and the people's representation, which consisted, in fact, of two chambers (although it was not directly mentioned): State Council and the State Duma. The emperor retained enormous legislative powers: exclusive right of legislative initiative. There were the rights of absolute veto and to dissolve the lower chamber, but with the obligatory appointment of new elections. However, it lost the right to adopt laws, and now the draft laws had to be discussed in the State Duma and the State Council. It was the limitation of imperial power. At the same time, the State Council had to be fully appointed by the emperor, and the State Duma had to be elected on the basis of high property value (Medushevsky, 2000).

There is the new system of state power under the project of M.M. Speransky:

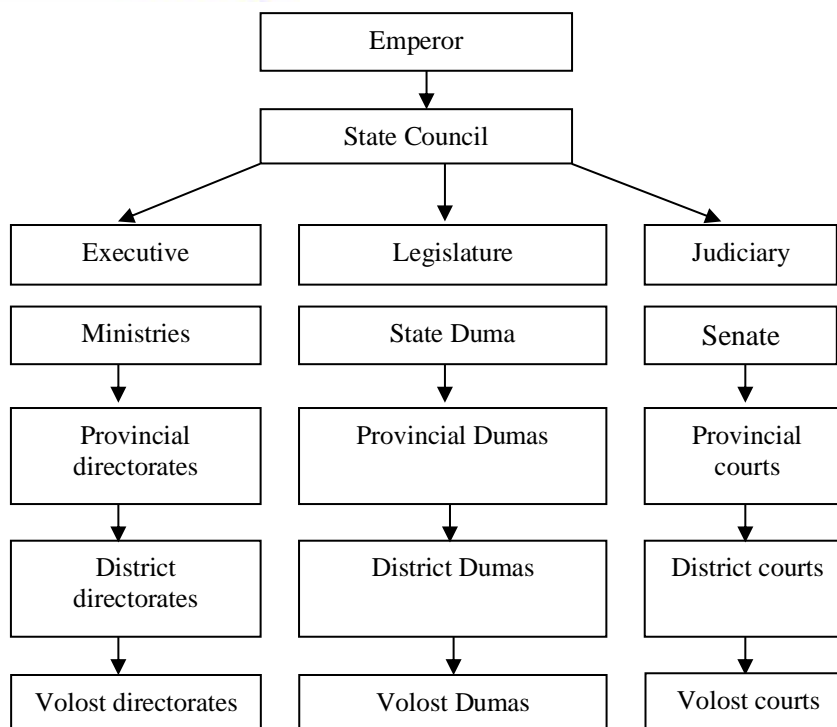


Figure 1. New system of state power

M.M. Speransky, was sure about the successful implementation of his project, as he had prepared step-by-step instruction, at what time functioning of one or another authority under his project should start. It was supposed to adopt a law on the State Council on December 15, 1809, January 1, 1810. State Council had to meet for the first time, by May 1810, it had to develop the regulations on the new structure of executive power, and by August it had to develop the Regulations on the new structure of legislative and judicial power. On August 15, the manifest on the election of deputies to the State Duma had to appear. Finally, on September 1, 1810 the first meeting of the State Duma was to be held. (Zakharov, 2017). However, only the creation of the State Council was implemented, but with a completely different powers than those provided for by the project of M.M. Speransky (law-abiding). The main part of the project was not implemented, and M.M. Speransky was deprived of all his positions under the pressure of conservative noble circles and in March 1812 on the eve of the war with Napoleon was sent into exile in Perm.

However, the development of constitutional projects did not stop there. After the Patriotic War of 1812 and the foreign campaigns of the Russian army (War of the Sixth Coalition), Alexander I returned to the development of constitutional reform. The positive effect of the

"constitutional diplomacy" occurred in the Russian Empire in the Restoration period (1814-1818), played an important role. It was the introduction of constitutions in the countries liberated from Napoleon, which was considered as a necessary concession to public opinion and a guarantee against new revolutions. It was at the initiative of Russia and Alexander I that the French Charter of 1814, the constitutions of Baden, Bavaria, Wurttemberg and other German states of 1815-1818 and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland of 1815 were adopted. We can also speak about Russia's active participation in the development of the constitutional order of the Ionian Islands in 1803 and Finland in 1809. In this regard, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland (territory of big part of the Duchy of Warsaw, annexed to the Russian Empire due to the decision of the Vienna Congress in 1815), which can be regarded as a trial step, experiment on the introduction of the constitutional order in other parts of the Russian Empire. At the same time, there was the following paradoxical situation: Alexander I was a constitutional monarch in Poland and Finland, and in the main part of the Russian Empire he remained an autocrat. Probably, he understood this contradiction.

As a result, in 1818 on the instructions of the emperor the work on the Charter of the Russian empire began in Warsaw, according to which

"legal and free institutions", as Alexander said, were to be extended to the entire territory of Russia. The same commission headed by the ex-member of Private Committee, the N.N. Novosiltsev, was preparing this project till 1820. They also made the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland. This Charter seemed like the Polish one and like the project of M.M. Speransky of 1809. The difference between the last one was that it was fully prepared document meeting all the requirements for constitutions: clear structure and division of legislative material into chapters and articles. It contained 6 chapters and 191 articles (the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland had 7 chapters (titles) and 165 articles). As in the project of M.M. Speransky, there was the principle of separation of powers. The emperor retained all the executive power and considerable powers in the sphere of legislative one. Limitation of his power was only the impossibility to adopt laws alone (Mironenko, 1989; Zakharov, 2011). As well as according to the project of M.M. Speransky, Russia had to become (using modern legal terminology) a constitutional dualistic monarchy.

However, there were significant differences from the Speransky project. Firstly, Russia was divided into 12 viceroys, in which the structure of central authorities was copied (viceroy had the executive power, viceroy and the bicameral people's representation (local Seim) had the legislative power). Thus there was a decentralization of power, and Russia became a

federation. Secondly, the role and functions of the Senate have changed: M.M. Speransky had the judicial power, the Charter was one of the chambers of the Legislative Seim (Article 136). The supreme judicial authority was the Supreme Court. Thirdly, the functions of the State Council divided into two chambers (primary development of draft laws, control over the ministers, and development and primary discussion of the budget (Articles 37-44)) were significantly expanded due to the reduction of the functions of the Legislative Seim (Medushevsky, 2000). According to the project of M.M. Speransky the State Council was to become the upper chamber of parliament, according to the Charter it was necessary to stay above all branches of power, acting as an intermediary between the emperor and the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Finally, another difference was the more conservative electoral system. Elections to the lower chamber (House of Ambassadors) were to be held on the basis of a mixed property and class principle (M.M. Speransky's elections to the State Duma were to be held on the basis of a pure property census). In addition, the principle of the election of deputies was limited by the right of the emperor to select from the list of deputies 2/3 of their composition (Articles 102 and 148). This rule was clearly aimed at cutting off undesirable candidates who did not suit the monarch (Medushevsky, 2000; Zakharov, 2017).

There is the new political system in this figure:

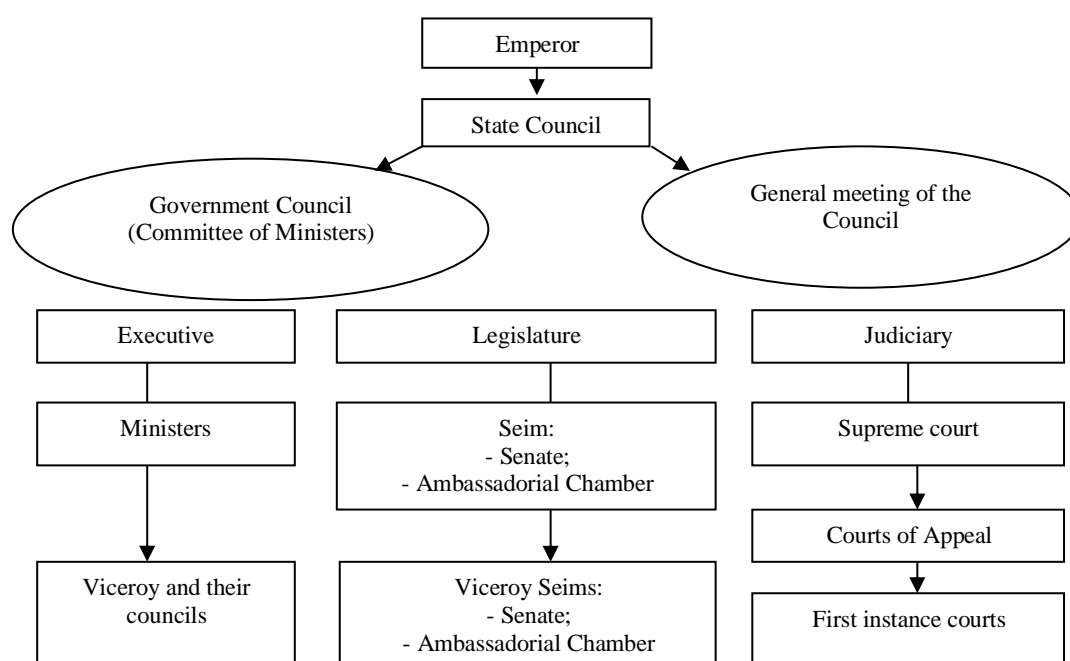


Figure 2. New political system

The Charter of the Russian Empire of 1818-1820 was a fully elaborated constitutional document, prepared for publication, but its predecessors' fate was not realized. We are going to understand why it happened. But before that, it should be noted that at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries, there were two concepts that explained the failure of Alexander I's attempts to introduce the constitution in Russia in quite different ways. They can be defined as the concept of "flirting with liberalism" and the concept of "adapting to new socio-economic conditions". The first one was formulated for the first time in the works of pre-revolutionary historians N.K. Schilder and M.I. Bogdanovich and it dominated for a long time up to the 1980s in the Soviet historiography (the most prominent representatives of this concept are S.B. Okun, M.V. Nechkina and may be M.M. Safonov). Alexander I did not intend to carry out any serious reforms at all. All his liberal statements, including concerning the introduction of the constitution in Russia, were explained by the danger emanating from the dignity of the opposition, which sought to limit the autocratic power in its interests. Coming to power with their direct assistance, Alexander I was dependent on them and was forced, at least in words, to meet their demands. When the danger was over, he refused to implement liberal projects, moving on to a frankly reactionary policy, embodiment of which was the "arakcheevshchina" (system of military and police measures and reforms in the Russian Empire). All the statements about the introduction of the constitution in Russia were a simple deception and pretense, so all the projects of reforming the state system were initially doomed to failure (Schilder, 1904; Okun, 1956; Safonov, 1988). In fact, this concept (as applied to the Soviet historiography) was based on the extremely ideological thesis that the Russian autocracy was an extremely reactionary force and could not create anything progressive.

According to the concept of "adaptation", Alexander I and his entourage in 1801-1820 tried to carry out serious political and social reforms to prevent a social explosion and adapt the Russian model of statehood to the new socio-economic conditions, to make it actual. In pre-revolutionary historiography, its supporters were A.N. Pypin, V.I. Semevsky, A.E. Presnyakov (Pypin, 1900; Presnyakov, 1924), in Soviet historiography there were A.V. Predtechensky (with reservations), S.V. Mironenko, A.N. Sakharov (Predtechensky, 1957; Mironenko, 1989; Sakharov, 1998). N.V. Minaeva and A.N. Medushevsky took an intermediate position, but

closer to the concept of "adaptation" (Minaeva, 1982; Medushevsky, 1997).

As we can see, the representatives of both concepts focus on the sincerity of the Emperor's intentions. In our view, "flirting with liberalism" is biased and contrary to the real facts. It is impossible to explain why Alexander I, apart from 1801, was not the only one who had a "flirting with liberalism". (Letter of Commendation to the Russian people in 1801), at least twice in 1809 (M.M. Speransky's project) and 1818-1820 Charter Diploma of the Russian Empire by N.N. Novosiltsev) returned to the idea of introducing the constitution in Russia and gave instructions to prepare corresponding projects. If in the first case it can still be explained by the pressure of the dignity of the opposition, in 1809 and 1818 there was no serious opposition, most of the nobles were the apologists of autocracy, public opinion was underdeveloped, so Alexander I did not feel any pressure from this side. And all these projects were prepared under the direct order of him. In addition, the emperor's adherence to constitutional views is evidenced by his repeated statements in conversations with A. Chartorizhsky, in letters to V. Kochubey (for example, from May 10, 1796) and F. Lagarpu (for example, from October 27, 1797), and later in conversations with baron de Vitrol and Germaine de Staël in 1814, in letters to the Duke of Richelieu and the Russian envoy in Paris, Pozzo di Borgo (April 1816) (Kiseleva, 1995; Staël, 2003; Zakharov, 2017). Consequently, the emperor's intentions to introduce the constitution in the country can be considered quite sincere.

But then the question about what are the real reasons for the failure to implement these constitutional projects and the constitutional alternative to the development of the country as a whole arised.

In our opinion, the first place should be given to the peculiarities of socio-economic relations (serfdom) and social structure of the Russian society of that period (full political and property dominance of the nobility), which differed radically from the states of Western Europe. Taking into account the fact that Alexander I set the task of simultaneous political (introduction of the constitution) and social (gradual abolition of serfdom) transformations, the situation was really difficult, because one thing contradicted another one. The introduction of the constitution implied the creation of a parliament in which the majority, based on the peculiarities of the social structure of the Russian society of that period, would receive nobility with a pro-slavery

attitude. Alexander I had the opportunity to be convinced of this as early as on May 1801, when he tried to carry out a decree through the Permanent Council banning the sale of peasants without land and received a tough response. As a result, any draft law, at least at any way concerning the issue of serfdom, would have been inevitably blocked by the nobility majority. So, in the specific conditions of Russia, the huge good (constitution, people's representation) could cause great harm and preserve the serfdom. To this main reason the accompanying reasons were added. There was no broad social base for reforms. The main part of the nobility did not support the reform efforts of Alexander I (especially in the peasant issue). Even the bureaucratic elite, with rare exceptions, has not yet realized the need to give up part of the class privileges for the sake of national interests, as it happened before the "great reforms" of Alexander II. As a result, Alexander I was, in fact, alone, which predetermined the overall result of the planned reforms.

In addition, the international situation did not contribute to the success of the reforms in the early XIX century. During the development of the project by M.M. Speransky, Russia was preparing for another war with Napoleon's France, and the temporary weakening of the central government was not appropriate. In 1820, when the emperor was almost ready to sign the Letter of Commendation, a new revolutionary wave (revolutions in Spain, Italy, etc.) began in Europe, which showed that moderate constitutions could not completely prevent the possibility of repetition of new revolutions.

Finally, the subjective factor, i.e. the personal features of Alexander I, who was not a very determined and hesitant person, also played a role. And the more he thought about the consequences, the less he was sure of the correctness of the chosen course. As a result, none of the constitutional projects were implemented.

The next chance to make Russia a constitutional monarchy or even a republic one could be presented in case of the Decembrist revolt victory. According to the projects of the Northern ("Constitution" by N. Muravyov) and Southern ("Russian' Justice" by P. Pestel) Societies it was supposed to publish the constitution. Specific questions about the future form of government and the form of state structure were to be resolved after the Russian Constituent Assembly was convened. In N. Muravyov's project the matter concerns the federal structure, which

echoes the Letter of Commendation of 1818-1820. (Mironenko, 1989). This thing can be explained by the fact that either N. Muravyov knew about the existence of it and he was familiar with its text, or thought in the same direction as its authors, including Alexander I. However, the emperor had moved to a conservative position and refused to carry out further reforms, the Decembrists considered the main obstacle to progress and prepared to overthrow it. In any case, they failed to seize power, and their plans to introduce a constitution were not implemented.

During the long reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855), who held extremely conservative and protective views, there was no possibility of developing constitutional projects both "from above" and "from below".

The situation changed with Alexander II (1855-1881). In general, he held moderate liberal views, but unlike his uncle, Alexander I, he was not the initiator of reforms. In addition, in matters of reforming the political system, he was under the influence of his father and considered autocracy to be the best form of government for Russia. Most likely, that is why the "great reforms" affected all spheres of public life, except for the political one. Russia remained an absolute monarchy with his reign.

Nevertheless, attempts to develop projects that at least remotely resemble constitutional ones were made from time to time. First of all, it is necessary to note the project of the Minister of Internal Affairs P.A. Valuyev "Establishment of the State Council" from November 1863 for the beginning of the implementation of the land reform. According to this project, it was planned to create a congress of state vowels under the state council (181 deputies). There were 101 from provincial land, 32 from provinces where there were no land (Baltic States, Caucasus, Siberia, and Cossack lands), 18 from large cities, and 30 from the emperor. Deputies were elected for three years, as in the land, the session occurred once a year. There were law-abiding functions. The adopted decisions were transferred to the State Council with participation of 14 representatives of the congress. Also the congress received the right to elect two vice-chairmen of the State Council (Constitutional projects in Russia of XVIII - beginning of XX centuries, 2000).

P.A. Valuev proposed to complete the land reform with the creation of an all-Russian advisory body (congress of state vowels), it is a



kind of all-Russian land. However, Alexander II rejected this project as untimely. Why did he do that? We tend to agree with the opinion of B.G. Litvak, who believed that, first of all, Alexander II could be afraid for the peasant reform, which had just begun to be carried out and in case of creation of this representation could be seriously "corrected" by the noble majority in its favor, which could be in conflict with the national interests, cause new unrest of peasants, etc. Secondly, Alexander II with the absolute power did not want to lose it (Litvak, 1991).

In 1866, the emperor submitted a project by his younger brother, grand prince Konstantin Nikolaevich, similar to the P.A. Valuyev's one, was even more moderate. It was supposed to create under the same State Council the land and noblemen's congresses with only legislative functions (Medushevsky, 2000). There was nothing interfered with the implementation of this project. The peasant reform was going on for the fifth year already and no conservative majority of the nobility could turn it back. Nevertheless, this project was overtaken by the same fate as the previous one. The formal reason was the assassination attempt on emperor D. Karakozov in April 1866.

In 1874, the project of P.A. Shuvalov appeared (with the participation of P.A. Valuyev), which was a variation of the two previous projects. It was supposed to create a special commission for the study of the situation in agriculture from the provincial leaders of the nobility and heads of provincial land administrations. In fact, it was a very moderate procreative project without election of deputies, but under certain conditions this commission could turn into a people's representation in the future (Litvak, 1991). Alexander II also rejected this project, sending the influential P.A. Shuvalov as an ambassador to England.

Finally, in 1880-1881, against the backdrop of the terror of the people's wolves, the head of the supreme administrative commission, Minister of Internal Affairs M.T. Loris-Melikov, developed a project called "Loris-Melikov constitution" about the creation of two commissions under the State Council (financial and administrative) to consider the draft laws with only legislative functions (deputies were elected from provincial lands and city dumas). Then the decisions were transferred to the general commission of the State Council with 10-15 representatives (Medushevsky, 2000). In general, it looked like the project of P.A. Valuyev of 1863, but in more moderate form. It was not a real constitution,

although, as in the case of previous projects, it could become one of them in the future under certain conditions. M.T. Loris-Melikov considered it as a minimum concession to public opinion and the "spirit of the time" in order to deprive revolutionaries of sympathy and support for the liberal-minded part of society. A similar project was submitted by grand prince Konstantin Nikolaevich. This time it seemed that Alexander II could be persuaded to make such a concession, and he agreed to sign the project, but a coincidence of circumstances intervened. On March 1, 1881, Alexander II was killed by the people's deputies, and Alexander III, who was very conservative, refused to do it. In April 1881, M.T. Loris-Melikov was retired, and the new emperor announced the inviolability of autocracy and refused any political reforms. As a result, the constitution had to be forgotten, and Russia did not become a constitutional monarchy until the end of the XIX century.

## Conclusion

During the research the authors made a list of conclusions. First of all, the process of developing constitutional projects in Russia in the XIX century rose with sense. It was not the only borrowing of constitutional ideas from Western countries, but the continuation of the development of a restrictive tradition dating from the medieval Russia, and in the XVIII century it was manifested in the "conditions" of the members of the Supreme Privy Council in 1730 and the projects of N.I. Panin in 1770-1780.

Secondly, under the conditions of absolute monarchy in Russia, the elaboration and adoption of the constitution could take place either as a result of political reform "from above" on the initiative of the ruling monarch, or as a result of revolution "from below". An attempt to implement the second option was the Decembrist revolt in 1825, which ended in failure. The first option was more likely. At the same time, the subjective factor played a huge role: personal views, desire to follow the path of progress, agreement to limit own power for the sake of the future. All these conditions were in place during the reign of Alexander I. The emperor was a supporter of constitutional ideas. As a result, the constitutional projects that had been developed before at the private level have moved to the highest governmental level and became the basis for the policy of governmental constitutionalism, which is reflected both in the domestic and foreign policy of the country (the Letter of Commendation to the Russian people in 1801, of the project of M.M. Speransky in 1809, of the

Charter Diploma of the Russian Empire in 1818-1820, the Constitutions of Finland in 1809 and the Kingdom of Poland in 1815). The possibility of turning Russia into a constitutional monarchy under Alexander I was high, but it was not realized because of a number of reasons.

Another opportunity was presented during the reign of Alexander II. However, the projects of P.A. Valuev in 1863, grand prince Konstantin Nikolaevich in 1866 and 1880, P.A. Shuvalov in 1874, M.T. Loris-Melikov in 1880-1881 were much more moderate than the projects of the beginning of the XIX century. Besides, Alexander II did not want to part with the autocratic power.

Thirdly, the main reasons for the failure to implement the constitutional way of development in Russia in the XIX century were the special social structure of the society at the beginning of the XIX century with the complete dominance of the nobility, which in the conditions of the need to simultaneously solve the issue of serfdom led to a deadlock. In the event of the constitution and the establishment of the parliament, the nobility majority would inevitably block any draft law on peasant issues. The narrow social base of the reforms, lack of determination and confidence in the rightness of Alexander I, the overly active foreign policy, and the constant wars that hindered the smooth conduct of the reforms were added. Under Alexander II, a significant role in the failure of constitutional reform was played by the emperor's personal views, which were not in any way comparable to those of Alexander I and were much more moderate in constitutional matters.

The researchers of the reigns of Alexander I and Alexander II face the question, about if the constitutional alternative in case of successful implementation could radically change the direction of political development and prevent the country from sliding down to the revolutionary way of solving the urgent problems? In our view, it is impossible to give an unambiguous answer, but we can assume that the legalization of the forms of political struggle and the experience of peaceful discussion of draft laws within the framework of parliamentary debates could have directed the development of Russia towards the gradual folding of elements of civil society and the rule of law. On the other hand, it is already known what position the first members of the Russian parliament could take. Therefore, no one could guarantee that the constitution for Russia was a progress, and not the other way around.

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