

## THE RUSSIAN OFFICIAL AS AN ENEMY OF THE CITIZEN

Richard Pipes



## RICHARD PIPES

is an American historian and political scientist. He is a Professor Emeritus of History at Harvard University and a Sovietologist. He has authored many books on the history of Russia. He previously served as the head of 'Team B' under the CIA, which was charged with the responsibility of investigating the purported 'Soviet threat'. Under the administration of President Reagan, Richard Pipes was a member of the National Security Council (he headed the Bureau on East-European and Soviet Issues).

The books authored by Pipes have also been published in the Russian language, including 'Russia under the Old Regime' (Moscow, 2004), 'The Russian Revolution', published in three volumes (Moscow, 2005), and 'Russian Conservatism and its Critics: Research of Political Culture' (Moscow, 2008)

*RJ* Dear Professor Pipes, in your opinion, does the bureaucracy in Russia, in the West, and in the developing countries of Asia and the Latin

America constitute a real social stratum that is different, on the one hand, from representatives of business, and, on the other hand, from the intellectual class? If so, which characteristic features define this stratum, and do you think it can be considered as a class or simply as an occupational grouping? Do you think that bureaucracy can, to some extent, be identified with the middle class?

In Russia, the bureaucracy has traditionally served the state and not the citizens. It has tended to regard society and the people as enemies, from whom the state needs to be protected. I believe that **contraposition of the bureaucracy and the society within Russia is still relevant and factual even today**. Of course, I don't reside in Russia, but judging by everything that I hear from those who do live in Russia, I have gained the impression that the bureaucracy, just as it was the case earlier, continues to work solely for the benefit of the government and the state. Russian bureaucracy is an extremely corrupt force and it is hardly a new phenomenon. Corruption among Russian bureaucrats has a lengthy history dating back to the 17th century. In Russia, everyone is aware that if you actually want something done, you need to bribe someone because the bureaucrats really are not responsive to people's problems and they are not concerned about the idea that it is their job to resolve them.

*RJ* In your opinion, can President Medvedev, with his pathos with respect to a law-based society, be considered as an ideal example of the Russian rational bureaucrat? Who among the other public officials of the post-Soviet era do you think can be seen as taking bureaucracy as a model?

I don't actually think that bureaucrats have ideals. They are not in search of them. They implement political programs that are developed by someone else. The major difference with bureaucracy is that it does not have its own ideology,

though, of course, it does have its own interests.

A democratic system is the only way to deprive the bureaucracy of an excessive concentration of power. Only under democracy will the bureaucracy understand that it depends not only on the government, but also on the population. The government needs to pay special attention to the enforcement of the rule of the law, because bureaucrats need to understand that they have to respect laws just like all other citizens, and that they cannot put themselves above the law. The development of such a society is a very worthy goal, and I sincerely wish President Dmitry Medvedev success with that.

*RJ* Do you agree with the statement that the ideology of reform in Russia has had as its goal, assuming control over state power structures as well as property by removing it from the bureaucracy? If you agree with this statement, do you think that bureaucratic resistance to market reforms in Russia stems from this very notion? Do you think that, in the absence of other mechanisms of protecting citizens from the market (powerful trade unions, etc.), the bureaucracy in such countries as Russia involuntarily becomes the only force opposing the pauperisation of a part of the population and the demise of a certain production segment?

The Russian bureaucracy does not like the market system, because money means power, and because **the development of a market economy means the appearance of independent sources of power, which are not controlled by the government**. Thus, it is quite natural that Russian bureaucrats do not tolerate rich people, do not tolerate capitalists, and tend to pretend that they are defending the poor and the oppressed. But actually the bureaucrats don't care what happens to the poor, they just need their support in opposing the rich. ■

Richard Pipes was speaking with Yulia Netesova