

# CATHERINE THE GREAT AND FREEMASONRY IN RUSSIA

*by Robert Nairn*

## Introduction

Madariaga<sup>1</sup> gives her opinion that ‘Nowhere else in Europe did Freemasonry play such a significant a role in the development of the cultural life of three or four generations as it did in Russia’. However, whatever Freemasonry did for Russia, the history of Freemasonry itself is turbulent, as is shown below:

- Started about 1730 during reign of Peter I (the Great);
- ‘Voluntarily’ closed by Catherine II in 1794;
- Ban confirmed by Paul I in 1796;
- Grew again but banned once more by Alexander I in 1822;
- Ban confirmed by Nicholas I in 1826;
- Started again in 1905/6 under Nikolai II;
- Did not survive long after the Bolshevik revolution 1917; and
- Started again in 1995.

Freemasonry is alive and well in Russia today after being almost inactive for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, except for a brief reappearance in the early 20th century. This paper concerns early Freemasonry in Russia mainly during the rule of Catherine the Great from 1762 to 1796 and her son Paul I and grandson Alexander I, and it discusses the reasons why it was proscribed.

NB Names of known or alleged Freemasons are shown in bold italic letters.

## Early Freemasonry in Russia

The earliest reliable information about Russian Freemasonry is a record of a session of the Grand Lodge of England dated 24 June 1731 regarding the appointment of Captain **John Phillips** as Provincial Grand Master of Russia and Germany in 1731 but it is not known if he founded any lodges there.

Regular Freemasonry in Russia really began when **Lord James Keith** was made Provincial Grand Master for Russia on 28 March 1740 by the Grand Lodge of England, although Masonry initially embraced only expatriates. In 1756 the first truly Russian lodge, the Lodge of Silence, was consecrated in St Petersburg. The members of this lodge included many men who later became famous: **Alexander Petrovich Sumarokov** (author), **Prince Scherbatov** (historian), **Dimitriev-Mamonov** (philosopher),<sup>2</sup> **Prince Dashkov**, **Prince Golitzin** (an early companion of Catherine’s), **Prince Troubetzkoi** (field marshal) and **Prince Meschersky**.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the English rite, which Catherine apparently found quite acceptable, different orders and rites of Freemasonry in Russia soon began to proliferate:

- In 1762 the Templar rite of Melesius, consisting of higher orders;
- In 1765 the Strict Observance rite; and
- In 1765 the Zinnendorf System, a Christian Order from Germany.

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1 *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, Isabel de Madariaga, 1919, particularly chapter 33, ‘The Role of Freemasonry’, Yale University Press, ISBN 0-300-02515-7.

2 One of the empress’s paramours, Aleksandr Matveevich Dmitriev-Mamonov, a distant relation of the omnipotent Potemkin  
<<http://www.highbeam.com/library/docfree.asp?DOCID=1G1:75162015&ctrlInfo=Round19%3AMode19b%3ADocG%3AResult&ao=>>

3 Refer to Derzhavin’s *On the Death of Prince Meschersky* (1779).

## Catherine the Great

Catherine married *Grand Duke Peter* in 1745 as a young bride, only to find him at least temporarily impotent so she could not fulfil the role that would make her, a German, most secure—that of mothering an heir to the throne. The marriage rapidly deteriorated.



Catherine II 'The Great'



Peter III

It is alleged<sup>4</sup> that the Empress Elizabeth<sup>5</sup> urged her to have an affair, with the result that her first-born, Paul, later *Paul I*, was said to have been fathered by Catherine's first lover, Grigory Orlov. However, Catherine records in her memoirs<sup>6</sup> that Madam Chogloкова urged the affair, no doubt on behalf of the Empress and it is more likely that Paul was fathered by *Count Serge Saltykov*. She records her pique at him missing a tryst because he was 'dragged by *Count Roman Vorontsov*<sup>7</sup> to a meeting of Freemasons'. Paul was nevertheless raised as Peter III's son and heir but was taken from Catherine soon after birth by Elizabeth so Catherine had few chances to rear him, although she supervised his education. It was alleged that her daughter Anna was sired by Count Poniatowski.<sup>8</sup>

Peter III is said to have wanted her out of the way so that he could marry his mistress. So Catherine, soon after the death of Elizabeth, fearing for her life and that of Paul, staged a coup in 1762 with the help of army officers, had Peter III held in custody and later murdered.

Despite this inauspicious start to her reign, which made her always cautious of her position, she became one of Russia's most imaginative and competent rulers. She directed foreign policy, reactivated domestic reform begun by Peter I, extended the empire through the Ottoman wars and through annexation of parts of Poland and cultivated the arts so that Russia emerged as a major European power for the first time in its history.

## Reforms of the Class System

The various classes or 'estates' in Russia included hereditary royalty, other royalty, other land-owners, military and naval officers, public servants, the church, peasants and serfs. Despite very clear-cut social demarcations in this class system, Freemasonry cut across these distinctions and even included former serfs. See Appendix 1.

Although many of the royalty were hereditary royals, the 'Table of Ranks',<sup>9</sup> which was created by Peter I,<sup>10</sup> 'also awarded The Great', to replace birth with state service as a basis for royal rank, allowed many to gradually become royals through long service in the army or navy, or in public

4 Madariaga, op cit.

5 See Appendix 2 for a list of the Romanov dynasty.

6 *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, Mark Cruse and Hilde Hoogenboom, ISBN 0-679-64299-4.

7 Count Vorontsov, as Elizabeth's Vice Chancellor, acted as intermediary with Catherine at a time when Catherine, in fear of her life, had requested Elizabeth to be sent home to Germany.

8 Cruse, op cit.

9 See Appendix 1 for Table of Ranks.

10 *Peter the Great – His Life and World*, Robert K Massie, ISBN U-345-29816-3.

service or even in industrial enterprise. Royals were expected to serve the State, but were exempted from taxes. Hereditary royals, of course, abhorred the accession of newcomers into their ranks.

Royals and others, whose land had been granted by the crown, comprised the rural and urban landowners. Serfs were not owned by masters, like slaves, but were bound to the land and could not relocate. They paid taxes and typically worked three days a week for the landowner and three days a week for themselves and to pay the taxes. Serfs could be drafted for military service.

Much of Catherine's domestic reforms in the early part of her reign were aimed at protecting the serfs from cruel landowners, who administered their own justice on their land. These reforms included increasing the strength of regional government administration, which provided more opportunities for public servants to climb the Table of Ranks and thereby to gain royal status, much to the disgust of the hereditary royalty. Thus her relationship to the many powerful hereditary royals was at times precarious. The reforms did not, however, give the serfs any greater freedom, just some protection against cruelty.<sup>11</sup>

### **Secular Reform of the Churches**

Catherine, originally Lutheran, converted to the Russian Orthodox faith before her marriage<sup>12</sup> but, while she needed the support of the Church, which helped her accession to the throne, was faithful but very pragmatic and not spiritual. Her earliest reforms were, nevertheless, in the Orthodox Church but concerned secular matters such as reducing its land and property and its assignment of serfs.

Fully believing that the State came first over religion, she was wary of any sect which was controlled from outside Russia. It was, therefore, not long before she came to grips with Rome. She sided with the Jesuits, which the Pope at that time was trying to ban, because she is said to have admired their education system. She limited the number of Catholic priests in Russia, arranged their parishes, and named their Bishop (even later got him promoted to Archbishop). When Poland was partitioned (Russia took parts of Poland on four different occasions) she exerted continual control over Catholic properties and appointments, much to the consternation of Rome, in the name of uniform administration throughout Russia. She had few concerns about the Protestant sects, although the Anglican Church was, of course, nominally controlled from Britain.<sup>13</sup> However, the Russian 'Old Believers'<sup>14</sup> were, since the time of Peter I, influential at court and were intensely conservative on religious matters.

She enacted legislation about religious tolerance, particularly after the annexation of part of the Ottoman Empire as the Tartars were mainly Moslem. Although anti-Semitism was rife following the pogroms of Peter I's rule, she gradually admitted Jews into Russian life and eventually into Moscow. This further alienated the churches.<sup>15</sup>

### **Public Services**

Catherine was a great builder and the first town planning in Russia emerged during her rule. She dramatically reformed and encouraged education and health services and built canals. Again following the example of Peter I, she built a Russian navy and merchant fleet to encourage external trade on favourable terms. She greatly expanded the empire and its foreign influence, both by military and political means.

### **The Arts**

Catherine understood fully the role that the arts played in supporting her court. She purchased many of the paintings now on display in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.<sup>16</sup> She sponsored poets, composers, authors and playwrights, and wrote plays and poetry herself. She expanded the role of women and appointed a severe personal critic, Princess Pushkin, to lead the arts portfolio.

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11 Madariaga, op cit.

12 Cruse, op cit.

13 Madariaga, op cit.

14 A breakaway sect of the Russian Orthodox Church which resisted some of Peter the Great's modernising changes.

15 Madariaga, op cit.

16 Acknowledged in the Hermitage Museum.

In 1783 she stopped the State and Church monopoly on printing and opened up the press to private printers, provided that the books were first passed by the police. This greatly expanded the opportunities for educated people of all walks of life to communicate and to understand the dramatic changes taking place in Russian culture. Under her patronage, Russia emerged as a cultured country, able to hold its head high in Europe. Even today Russia is intensely proud of its film industry and its music, opera and ballet corps.

### **Freemasonry under Catherine**

In this environment, it is hardly surprising that Freemasonry initially flourished in Russia under her rule. In 1772, *Elagin*,<sup>17</sup> a court favourite of Catherine II and her son Paul's tutor, was made England's Provincial Grand Master, a position he held until 1784. Elagin was married to a former lady-in-waiting of Empress Elizabeth and became a Senator and Chief Secretary. The two *Panin*<sup>18</sup> brothers, also influential at court and tutors of Paul, were members. Count Nikita Panin was foreign affairs Minister under Catherine. Elagin had, incidentally, previously been arrested on charges trumped up by court rivals during the last years of Elizabeth's reign but was exonerated.

Most of the Russian lodges consisted of the members of the best Russian families who were shaping the destiny of Russia, not only at court and in the various government departments, but also in the military and in artistic achievements. It was also tending to reshape the structure of Russian society on more egalitarian grounds.

*Nicolai Ivanovich Novikov*,<sup>19</sup> a man who was to become one of the most influential Russian Freemasons, joined Freemasonry in 1775. Novikov was a member of the regiment that had put Catherine on the throne and also a member of Catherine's Legislative Commission. His portrait hangs in the Tetyakov Gallery of Russian Art in Moscow.

By 1776 the English lodges were united with the German Zinnendorf System under the overall direction of *Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick*, who was no favourite of Catherine's. In 1777 *Gustavus III* of Sweden visited Catherine and brought with him papers for the consecration of the Swedish system of strict observance, which purported to be a revival of the Templars, under *Prince Gagarin*, a friend of Paul's.

Under Novikov's leadership, lodges in Moscow broke away from the Swedish system, became the first ideological class movement of the Russian Aristocracy, and opposed the agnostic ideas permeating into Russia from France. However, they later came under the influence of a Transylvanian, *I G Schwartz*, whose real sympathies were with the Rosicrucians, whose leaders were attached to the court of the Crown Prince of Prussia. Masonic lodges in Moscow, perhaps without their knowledge, were then paying subscriptions to Prussian Rosicrucianism. There were about 60 lodges in Russia at this time.

Novikov turned against the Rosicrucian occult movement and he proposed the formation of a purely Christian and philanthropic Order. With profits from his printing operations, borrowed funds, and donations from his lodges, Novikov set up grain stores during the 1787 famine and provided grain and seed corn to about 100 private and state-owned villages, and he established other enterprises which were aimed at benefiting the serfs as well as himself. However, Catherine became suspicious of the activities of the Freemasons and of these philanthropic works, believing they had some political motive.

Thus the Masonic movement in Russia was becoming internally disjointed and misdirected. Their internal dissention was playing into the hands of the Jesuits, the Catholic Church and the 'Old Believers', all of whom Catherine had to placate, and it was sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

### **Religion and Freemasonry**

When Catherine permitted private printing presses to operate in 1783, she intended it to be a measure to assist the cultural development of Russia and, in this regard, it was very effective. However, the

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17 The Elagin Collection describes the first stage of the development of Freemasonry in Russia, dating back to the mid to late eighteenth century

18 Count Nikita Panin was ambassador to Denmark. He opposed Catherine's coup, supporting Paul instead.

19 Catherine's interest in English-style satirical and provocative journalism encouraged Novikov.

Holy Synod Press, which had a monopoly, complained to Catherine about the large volume of religious works being produced by the secular press. In response, in 1787, Catherine prohibited the printing of all religious works except by the authorized presses. In Moscow alone, 313 religious books had been published by secular presses; 166 of these were printed by Novikov, and many of these were Masonic works.

One of the investigators, Platon, a favourite and lover of Catherine's who was trying to consolidate his power at court, listed twenty-three of Novikov's books which he believed sought to introduce religious error. Although Novikov survived the subsequent investigation, the books were banned, although not on political but on religious grounds. As a result, and also due to a subsequent argument with Novikov, Catherine determined not to renew Novikov's lease on the Moscow University Press when it should expire in 1789.<sup>20</sup>

Novikov further angered Catherine by criticizing the Jesuits in 1784, accusing them of being a political order and portrayed them as 'faithless, power-seeking, aiming to set up a state within a state'. Catherine sided with the Jesuits. She closed down the Masonic printing presses and finally the Moscow authorities had Novikov arrested in 1792.<sup>21</sup>

However, her attitude to Freemasonry had already changed to contempt following the visit of the fraudulent Italian Count Cagliostro, who allegedly tried to recruit her into his form of 'Egyptian' Masonry, which included healing, séances, alchemical experiments, magic displays and also included women as members. She wrote several plays ridiculing the Craft, in which Freemasons were represented as promising their victims philosophic gold, the elixir of life, and contact with the world of spirits as Cagliostro had done.<sup>22</sup>

The attacks were not limited to Novikov but included other Russian Freemasons, such as *Alexander Nicolaevich Radischev*, who wrote what is argued to be the first anti-Tsarist book, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, which incensed Catherine.<sup>23</sup> He was sentenced to death, but this was later commuted to exile in Siberia. He, like Novikov, was later pardoned by Paul.

### **The American and French Revolutions**

Fear of a peasants' uprising in Russia was fuelled by the Pugachev<sup>24</sup> revolt in 1773–75 but the American war of independence was hardly felt in Russia, although Russia had treaties with France occasioned by Britain's naval blockade at the time. Catherine had, nevertheless, outlawed all secret societies, exempting Freemasonry, in 1782.

The French revolution, however, was a very different matter, particularly after the death of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in 1793 and the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden, albeit an enemy of Catherine's, in 1792. It took no Einstein to realise that this form of revolution had no borders, and Catherine held very real fears that the events in France could spark a serfs' revolt in Russia. She urged Prussia and Sweden to wage war on the Provisional French Government in order to restore the monarchy to the French princes in exile.

### **Censorship of the Press**

In 1793 the Russian borders were sealed and all books entering Russia had to be inspected by the Police. Any book dealing with the French Revolution in any way or containing any matter which could be construed as inciting a wish for freedom of the serfs was confiscated and burned.

### **Paul's role**

Although it is said that Paul never openly incited treason, nevertheless there was sufficient court intrigue, particularly after his successful marriage, to give weight to Catherine's fears that he might avenge his 'father' Peter III and stage a coup to take the throne. Catherine had not usurped the throne

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20 Madariaga, op cit.

21 Madariaga, op cit.

22 Madariaga, op cit.

23 Cruse, op cit.

24 The Russian Cossack soldier Emelyan Ivanovich Pugachev (1742–1775) led the peasant rebellion in Russia in 1773–1775

to act as a Regent for Paul but to rule in her own right.

Paul is also said to have remained faithful to his bride and lived a relatively moral life in contrast to Catherine's many lovers. This appealed to Church leaders, Orthodox, 'Old Believers', Catholic, Protestant and Muslim, who, despite her religious tolerance, were already at a distance because of Catherine's secular control and because of the immorality of her court.

Paul's court also contained many of those whose careers had suffered under Catherine, or because of the favours granted her lovers. He was popular with some of the army officers and is said to have drilled squads of soldiers at a very young age.

It is alleged that Paul was a Freemason, having been initiated during his travels in Prussia. Freemasonry was seen as an alternative to the 'profane' life of Catherine's Court. The movement in Russia was intensely philosophic and esoteric, in contrast to Catherine's rather earthy views. Freemasons sought a solution to human bondage and an escape from banality, mortality and immorality. This led to an involvement in politics, which eventually brought suspicion and persecution from the authorities.

Apart from being aware of the risk from Paul, Catherine considered Paul to be mentally unstable and unfit to rule. Following the precedent of Peter the Great, who did not name his eldest son as his successor, she considered bypassing Paul in favour of her grandson Alexander. This became known to Paul and did not strengthen the family ties.

Paul's sympathies in foreign policy were, like those of Peter III, with Prussia, whereas Catherine's foreign policy favoured Austria, her ally in the Turkish wars. The Prussian (Rosicrucian/Masonic) influence on Paul may also have influenced Catherine against Freemasonry and, just as Austria closed down the lodges in 1794, so she also considered that secret meetings were too suspicious and finally acted to seek the voluntary closure of the lodges in Russia in the same year.

### **The reasons for Catherine's turning against the Craft**

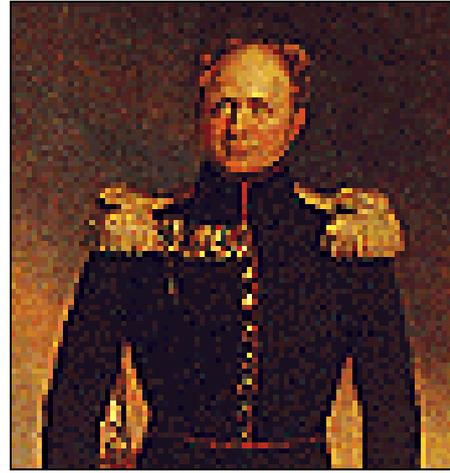
It seems odd that Catherine should suppress a group supporting loyalty to the sovereign and teaching morality and a belief in God and one whose members held prominent positions in her cabinet and who had done so much for the enlightenment of Russia. But Freemasonry had involuntarily become associated with personal enemies of the Empress.

- First, her husband Peter III had allegedly been a member of the Craft and Catherine was suspicious of anybody who might have been loyal to him;
- Freemasons in Russia had the support of her son Grand Duke Paul, who became an enemy of the Empress, and became a Mason;
- Some of the Russian Freemasons were aligned to Germany and Frederick the Great was an enemy of Catherine's Russia;
- The Empress also had been offended when Gustavus III of Sweden attacked her school program and some lodges were of the Swedish rite;
- The Empress wanted overall control of everything in Russia and was suspicious of anything controlled from outside its borders;
- Novikov's Freemasonry was opposed by and opposed to the Jesuits, who were Catherine's favourites;
- Novikov's Freemasons were also opposed to the French Enlightenment, because a part of French Freemasonry was agnostic and opposed to the Church, but Catherine looked to France for cultural stimulation;
- Novikov's religious publications angered the Churches, which Catherine had to placate;
- Novikov's charity and famine relief was believed to be for ulterior political purposes; and
- The fraudulent Count Cagliostro's brand of Freemasonry created ridicule.

Catherine died in 1796 and Paul became Emperor. Immediately on his accession to the throne he summoned prominent Freemasons to a conference, promising to lift the ban. All seemed well and several lodges recommenced labour until, for no apparent reason, Paul confirmed the ban in 1796. Perhaps Catherine was right in considering him mentally unstable.



Paul I



Alexander I

### The 19th Century

Paul was killed in a palace revolution in 1801 and his son *Alexander I*, who had been largely educated by Catherine, but had grown in her later years to abhor the immorality and court favouritism under her reign, ascended the throne.

It is reported that evidence exists that Alexander became a Mason in 1803 and was a member of a lodge in Warsaw. Masonic lodges were officially allowed in 1810 and new lodges appeared in St Petersburg and Moscow, and also in Siberia and the Crimea. Freemasonry spread rapidly but by 1815 another break occurred. Some lodges remained as adherents to the Swedish system and supported the Provincial Grand Lodge of Sweden but the majority of lodges united in a new Grand Lodge Astrea, which was formed in 1820 with 24 lodges.

This Grand Lodge was formed with many different rituals: an English rite, Zinnendorf's rite, Strict Observance rite, Swedish rite, and Fessler's modified English rite. The Deputy Grand Master was Lt-General *Igor Kushlev*, who sought to unify the lodges under the Swedish rite without success. Eventually, in 1821, in frustration, he wrote, seeking a solution, to the Emperor Alexander. However, the Spanish rebellion of 1820 and the mutiny of the Semenovski Guard Regiment in the same year had unsettled Alexander and he came to the conclusion that secret societies could not be tolerated, so he enacted a ban in 1822.

Although there were attempts to resurrect Freemasonry, the ban was confirmed by Nicholas I in 1826 following the Septembrist revolution in 1825 and Freemasonry ceased to exist in Russia until early in the 20th century.

### The 20th Century

In 1905 Czar Nikolai II declared limited constitutional freedoms, and two new provisional lodges, 'The Polar Star' in St Petersburg and 'Regeneration' in Moscow were formed in 1908 under the Grand Orient of France. The Grand Lodge of France established two lodges also, 'Phoenix' in St Petersburg and one in Moscow, and two more lodges followed.

These two French Grand Lodges were not in amity and it must have seemed that internal bickering would again appear in Russia. However, they suspended work in 1909 when the Russian Government discovered their existence.

Resuming activities in 1911, the lodges grew in number to 30 under the Grand Orient of France; these were politically active and are said to have supported the 1917 March revolution and the organization of the Provisional Government.

Priahin<sup>25</sup> reports that 'Approximately half of the places in the provisional government were taken by Masons . . . The first cabinet of the provisional government included nine Masons'—including the leader, *Kerensky*.

After the Bolshevik revolution various attempts were made to revive the lodges in various parts of

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25 'Freemasonry in Russia' Andrei Priahin, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and the Yukon website.

the country from Vladivostok to Warsaw, but by 1920 no lodges were operating in Russia. Despite the fact that *Vladimir Iyich Ulyanov* (Lenin), the founder of the Communist party, was allegedly a member of 'L'Union de Belleville' Lodge of the Grand Orient of France and *Lev Davidovich Bronstein* (Trotsky), his right hand ideologist and organizer of the Red Army, had allegedly been a Freemason for several months when he was 17 years old, the lodges in Russia did not survive for long after the Bolshevik revolution, particularly when, in 1922, the Fourth Communist International declared that Masonry was contrary to communist ideology. Zeldis<sup>26</sup> reports that 'Four years later, a strange request from the Mason *Astromov* to the dictator Stalin, to allow Masonry to operate under official sanction, resulted in the arrest, torture and imprisonment of known Masons'. Some Russian lodges transferred to France and Germany, where they worked until into the 1930s but closed under the Nazi regime.

## Revival

Russian Freemasonry began again with the formation of a Lodge 'Harmony' in Moscow in 1992. Three more lodges in Moscow, St Petersburg and Voronezh followed in 1993. The Grand Lodge of Russia was consecrated in June 1995 under the auspices of the National Grand Lodge of France [GNLF]. It was recognised by the United Grand Lodge of NSW & ACT in 1997 and has appointed its representative to that Grand Lodge. The author was not able to contact the Grand Secretary during a visit to Moscow in September 2005.

## Conclusions

Some of the troubles of Freemasonry were caused by internal jealousies between different rites, some of which had excessively esoteric ambitions such as alchemy, etc, or were agnostic rather than requiring a belief in God (most Russian lodges were Christian). Some of these rites were controlled externally in a nation that was striving to elevate its culture to rival that of the best in Europe, yet retain a Russian identity in a very mixed and multi-cultural society. Because of this, external political influences, such as the Austrian alliance, Catherine's attitudes to Sweden and Prussia, and the French revolution, all helped unintentionally to undermine Freemasonry.

Catherine's social reforms in Russia affecting the status of the nobility and the serfs, together with secular reform of the churches, played a major part as well, since Masonry was seen as taking the social reforms too far and as undermining the moral authority of the Churches.

It is ironic that Catherine II, who believed in strong autocratic rule, but strove to create a Russia which would be fully consistent with Masonic principles, and whose court contained many influential members of the Craft, should turn against it. Further, her immediate successors, both Masons themselves, both banned the Craft. It is also ironic that Lenin and Trotsky, founders of the Communist Party, which could not tolerate Freemasonry, were both allegedly members of the Craft.

Novikov's Freemasons saw themselves as participating in social reform and creating a progressive civic culture, but it is obvious that they showed little constraint when involving themselves in politics and criticising religion and the Jesuits. They showed little understanding of the pressures under which the Empress had to rule and her attitudes to her 'enemies'. Conversely, Catherine appears to have totally misunderstood the helpful social and philanthropic directions that the Craft was taking, and became suspicious and then contemptuous of their behaviour.

Freemasonry in the United States of America survived many different and difficult crises—the War of Independence, the Morgan Affair, and the American Civil War—but the history of the Craft in Russia tops the lot. We in Australasia, who have never faced the same crises, sometimes worry about the declining membership of Freemasonry in our part of the world without really understanding how resilient the Craft can be. The repeated resurrection of Freemasonry in Russia should help us to understand that the principles of the Craft will survive political persecution and even internal bickering. There will always be people willing to support those principles and overcome the hurdles fate places in our way. It is likely that we will always be subject to misunderstanding unless we find new ways to explain ourselves to the world.

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26 'Freemasonry in Russia', Leon Zeldis website.

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The portraits in this paper are photographs of portraits in galleries and museums in Moscow and St Petersburg taken by the author. It is now possible to obtain copies of Masonic records from the Rymantzev and other libraries, which came from the NKVD (more recently the KGB), but it is understood that these only date from the 20th century, so are not particularly relevant to this paper.

### *Appendix 1*

<b>The Russian Social or Caste System</b>
The Czar—nominated by predecessor
Hereditary Royals
Royals by achievement (after Peter I) granted land and serfs to work it
Other land owners (including urban)
Military or Naval Officers
Public servants
Church dignitaries
Peasants—could work for pay
Serfs—bound to the land

<b>The Table of Ranks during Catherine's Period</b>		
<b>Class</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Civil</b>
1	Field Marshall	Chancellor
2	General in Chief	Vice Chancellor
		Actual Privy Counsellor
3	Lieutenant General	Procurator General
		Privy Councillor
4	Major General	Actual State Councillor
5	Brigadier	State Councillor
6	Colonel	Collegiate Councillor
7	Lieutenant Colonel	Court Councillor
8	Major	Collegiate Advisor
9	Captain	Titular Councillor
10	Lieutenant Captain	Collegiate Secretary
11		Naval Secretary
12	Lieutenant	Government Secretary
13	Second Lieutenant	Provincial Secretary
14	Standard Bearer	Collegiate Registrar

*Appendix 2*

<b>The Romanov Czars</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Lived</b>	<b>Reigned</b>
Michael I	1596–1645	1613–1645
Alexei	1629–1676	1645–1676
Fedor III	1661–1682	1676–1682
Peter I (The Great)	1672–1725	1682–1725
Catherine I	1684–1727	1725–1727
Peter II	1715–1730	1727–1730
Anna Ivanova	1693–1740	1730–1740
Elizabeth I	<b>1709–1761</b>	<b>1741–1761</b>
Peter III	<b>1728–1762</b>	<b>1761–1762</b>
Catherine II (The Great)	<b>1729–1796</b>	<b>1762–1796</b>
Paul I	<b>1754–1801</b>	<b>1796–1801</b>
Alexander I	<b>1777–1825</b>	<b>1801–1825</b>
Nicholas I	1796–1855	1825–1855
Alexander II	1816–1881	1855–1881
Alexander III	1845–1894	1881–1894
Nicholas II	1868–1918	1894–1917