

Surveillance

So the state watched its subjects,
and the subjects watched one another.

The effect of this mutual surveillance on the collective mind of Russian society can be readily imagined. No one could allow someone else in his group to improve his lot because it was as likely as not done at his expense.

Self-interest required social levelling.

The Russian was required to denounce and he was eager to do so; indeed, in the early eighteenth century, the only legitimate way a serf had of gaining freedom was to turn in a landlord for concealing peasants from census-takers. Under such conditions, society could neither develop any sense of common cause nor undertake joint resistance against authority.

Richard Pipes,
Russia Under the Old Regime