CASUALTIES OF A RECURRENT REVOLUTION

Stenka Razin and Pugachev (above) were leaders of revolts of the Cossacks and the peasants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were executed by the government. The Tsars Alexander II and Nicholas II granted certain reforms, agrarian and other, particularly in the eighteen-sixties and in 1905, but were killed by the revolutionists

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RURAL RUSSIA
UNDER
THE OLD RÉGIME

A History of the Landlord-Peasant World
and a Prologue to the Peasant Revolution of 1917

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CHAPTER V

THE EMANCIPATION

As life runs, the downfall of serfdom and the triumph of social revolution in Russia do not stand far separated: in 1926, nine years after the Revolution, the writer lived for some weeks in a provincial household where the soup and the samovar were brought in each day by a spry old babushka who had been a serf — the goose-girl on a neighboring estate. During the period of revolution and civil war, this town had been occupied and re-occupied by various groups of Reds and Whites; some of its buildings were still in ruins, a Communist Club was quartered in the House of Nobles, and on one occasion the writer happened to see a goat looking out through the empty window of a neighboring mansion; but the old babushka lived on in another age: she still resented, and volubly disapproved of, any attempt of the mistress of the house to lend a hand in the kitchen — to those old eyes this was still a thing most unbecoming and unseemly.

But the Emancipation and the Revolution are joined by much more than mere proximity in time. One September day in the fateful year 1917, by a roadside in the south-central step, a man climbed a telephone pole, and cut the minute thread of communication which joined a manor-house on the northern horizon with the towns, the police-offices, and the barracks along the railway line to the southward. In one sense, this manor-house now stood quite alone; but not really so, for within sight of its groves there were several peasant villages. Thus the two elements — peasant and propertorial, were left momentarily to react upon each other in isolation; and within a few hours the estate had been looted, the mansion was in flames, and somewhere within the fiery circle the master of the house lay dead.1

From the day when the servile system was still in the making, fire had smouldered in the Russian village, and several times a hurricane of fire had raged through the country, never sweeping the

manors clean, but never quite extinguished. On the eve of the Emancipation, the smell of smoke was strong enough to alarm the Tsar-Liberator himself, and the air was by no means cleared by his "Great Reform." In very much that it preserved, even in much that it created, the Emancipation of the 'sixties contributed powerfully to the making of the Revolution of 1917; the meaning of the Proclamation of 1861 did not become altogether clear until it was illuminated by the glare of that great conflagration.

If the reader will consider the peasant reforms of the 'sixties in terms not of law but of life — if he will think of an individual peasant in his long coat, his feet in plaited bark slippers and his legs wrapped to the knee with strips of linen; of his crowded log house, the whitewashed interior and the great brick stove, the cluster of outbuildings around the court, and the scattered strips of plow-land; of the village with its grass-grown street as wide as a field, where wheel-tracks wander in deliberate confusion and the peasant assembly forms its triple circle of bearded householders, grave-faced women, and scooting, tumbling children — if the reader will think in such terms as these, he will be impressed by the fact that very much of the old life survived the changes of the time.2

The peasants on the lands of the State and of the Imperial family were made the subject of special legislation, but it was the bound people on the private estates who were most deeply affected by the reform. "The right of bondage over the peasants settled upon the landlords' estates, and over the courtyard people, is forever abolished" — so declared the first article of the General Statute of Emancipation. Among the private bondsmen, it will be convenient to deal first with the plowmen of the villages, and to leave the non-agricultural bondsmen for later consideration. The Statute of 19 February 1861 provided not only for the emancipation of these millions, but for their endowment with land, and for their social-economic organization. These laws of 1861 were so verbose, so full of variables, so loaded down with qualifications and exceptions, and in general so astonishingly involved and complicated, that it is difficult to understand how any serf could ever by any possibility have known what rights might be hidden in this legislative haystack. As late as 1906, the Ministry of the Interior could still quite properly report to the Council of Ministers that the provisions of the peasant land-laws were "incomplete, inexact, and in some instances even contradictory." 3 In certain respects, the
regulations for the three Little Russian gubernias of Chernigov, Poltava and Kharkov, and for the western gubernias from Kiev and Podolsk to Kovno and Vitebsk, differed from those about to be described. No attempt will be made here to deal with the peculiarities of the former Emancipation-settlement, but in the case of the more numerous western gubernias several important points of variation will be indicated hereafter.

Under the Statutes of Emancipation, the former serf was not simply offered an allotment; he was required to accept it, in one form or another, at least for the time being. Because of the obligations attaching to it, he might think this allotment a liability rather than an asset, and might therefore wish to renounce it outright; but it will presently be shown that there were serious obstacles to such a renunciation — obstacles which were quite often insuperable. If instead of wishing to "throw away" his allotment, the former serf desired rather to transfer it, and perhaps to receive some sort of compensation for his land-right and for his improvements, he was faced with difficulties which varied with the character of his tenure (either hereditary or repartitional), and will presently be discussed. The point to be made here is that there were important obstacles to the sale of the allotment — even to its being "thrown away"; and this fact is inseparably bound up not only with the subject of peasant organization under the reform, but also with the question (to be considered later) of the economics of the Emancipation.

The Great Reform did not effect a revolutionary change in the internal organization of the peasantry on the private estates: on the contrary, for the purpose in part of securing the payment of the excessive charges laid upon the emancipated serfs, the government shored up and strengthened with legal guarantees those basic institutions of peasant life — the household and the commune. Even a glance at the Statutes of Emancipation will show that they deal primarily in terms, not of individuals, but of groups and group-functions.

The question as to the character of the property-relations within the peasant household is one of the most vexed problems in Russian agrarian history. Between the claims of the household as a group, and those of the head of the household as an individual, neither the law of the Emancipation nor the custom of the village gave always and everywhere the same decision, but the weight of peasant practice and of legal interpretation is on the side of the opinion that the allotment was assigned to the household as a collective, and that each member had the right to share the common use of this allotment and of the implements and animals necessary for its cultivation. The household was subject to a joint responsibility for taxes and for redemption-dues — a responsibility so strict, that in case of a default, any member might be put to compulsory labor. The land and its agricultural equipment were to be employed under the control of the household, in the interest of the group, and the members and their side-earnings were likewise under his control; but under certain conditions (and with the approval of the commune) the juniors might divide the allotment and establish an additional household, even against the opposition of the original head of the house. In the use, division, or alienation of the allotment, the household was subject to many external restrictions, which varied with the character of the tenure, and at the same time he himself and the other members of his household were closely restricted in their personal right of movement. Some of the details as to all this hobbling and tethering will be given presently, in the discussion of land-tenure and of the commune, but the matter at issue just here is the internal constitution and the general importance of the household — and the point to be made is that it was difficult for the household to get rid of the allotment if it were a burden, or to sell it if it were an asset; that the personal mobility of the peasant was also seriously hampered; and that these restrictions upon property and person helped to preserve and stabilize the household as a basic integer of peasant society.

Before the Emancipation, the neighboring households on the estates had usually been connected in various ways by common interests in the land, and the General Statute of 1861 recognized this as a proper basis for the economic and political organization of the emancipated peasantry when it said that "the village-community" or selskoe obschestvo, as now officially constituted, should consist of peasants who shared in the use of one or more kinds of land, or had "other economic interests in common." This principle was vague enough; for example, it did not indicate what was to be the basis of organization when, as often happened, two groups of peasants were entirely distinct, the one from the other, in respect to their plow-lands, but were joined as common holders of lands of some other kind — perhaps a natural pasture, or a wood-lot. What was to be done, in other words, when an interest in different hold-
ings attached the same household to different, non-coincident groups? It would seem that the accepted principle might have been developed quite logically by providing that the household which shared in any specific holding should be recognized as a commune with respect to that particular holding — and so on with respect to each other holding in which a common interest was involved. Under such an arrangement, a given household might be a shareholder in several non-coincident corporations or collectives, each with its definite sphere of activity and its recognized organ of control.

But to assume a logic in the law on this question, is to set up an insuperable obstacle to the understanding of the legislation of 1861. Instead of building upon its own recognition of the pre-existent common interests in the land, the General Statute confused and confounded this principle with two others. In the interest of those large landowners who wished to deal with all the emancipated serfs on each estate as a body, the Statute provided that the village-community should be composed of “peasants settled upon the land of a single landlord”; and under this provision, separate land-groups of peasants who had previously had no general interest in common, were in many cases joined in a single official community. Again, the Statute said that when there were no more than twenty “male revision souls” on a given estate, these peasants should be joined with others in the neighborhood to form a single community; and thus, in the interest of convenience in administration, the law created still other conglomerations of previously independent groups.

Finally, quite regardless of any difference between a given official community which coincided with an old land-group, and one which included, say, two distinct groups of peasants with separate plow-lands which they had been accustomed to redistribute separately, the General Statute called all the official groups by the same name (that of sel'skoe obshchestvo or “village-community”), and constituted for each of these communities a single parliament of its householders for the governance of its economic and political affairs (the sel'skii skhod or “village-assembly”). For the land-commune as such, and for the traditional land-assembly of its householders, the Statutes of 1861 had no clear recognition and no name, and the same confusion existed under the laws which subsequently extended the reform to the State peasants.

An interesting problem was now posed for practical solution:

where the official village-community did not coincide with the traditional land-commune, would the old organization be dissolved and absorbed in the new? The answer was given, in the long run, by the strength of peasant custom, and the mountain weight of peasant numbers. In most cases of non-coincidence, the villagers preserved the identity of the separate land-communes and their holdings, and exercised in group-assemblies the functions of land-control which had been officially assigned to the assembly of the village-community as a whole.

In the face of this situation, the fuddling and fumbling which had characterized the drafting of the Statute became characteristic also of its official interpretation and enforcement; and yet, when a period of sufficient length is brought under observation, it is evident that there was a certain tendency toward the official recognition of peasant practice. The Ministry of the Interior, in recording the land-census of 1877, employed as its collective unit, not the sel'skoe obshchestvo (the official “village-community”), but the krestianskaia obshchina or “peasant commune.” The report of the census defined the krestianskaia obshchina as a group of peasants who had received their allotments at the time of the Reform under a single documentary grant (regardless of whether the allotments were held in heredity by the separate households under this grant, or were subject to periodic redistribution); and the census-report also said that in any given case the “peasant commune” might be identical with the “village-community,” or form only a part of it.

In 1884, the Governing Senate (the supreme interpreter of Russian law) declared that the control of each of these separately documented group-holdings belonged, not to the assembly of the community as a whole, but to a separate assembly of the holders. On the other hand, in examining the project for the law (of 1899) on the partitioning of peasant families and their allotments, the State Council discarded a proposed clause which gave to the sub-assembly (where such existed, on the basis of a documentary grant) an authority co-ordinate with that of the general meeting of the community, in respect to this particular matter. However, a few years later, the Senate not only in effect restored this clause by interpretation, but declared that the right of decision in this matter of family partitions belonged exclusively to the smaller assembly.

But not only did the land-group and the official community often fail to coincide; sometimes it happened, too, that in practice
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ever-present obligation to draw distinctions between the one and the other—an obligation which in many circumstances cannot be fulfilled. The only honest course, in the premises, is to adopt a neutral term; and accordingly the word “commune” will be employed here to designate both the political group and the land-group, with no implication as to their coincidence or non-coincidence in any particular time or place or in respect to any particular interest or function.

The Emancipation not only preserved and strengthened the communal basis of peasant life; it also preserved the two historic forms of tenure which defined the land-relationships among the households of each commune, and still served to divide the communes themselves into two major types—first, those with the right of periodic quantitative repartition; and second, those with hereditary household tenure—a form of holding which was confined almost exclusively to the western and southwestern gubernias.13

Even in the communes with hereditary household tenure (pozvosnoe polzovanie or vladenie), the households were joined by varied and complex land-relationships. The lands were allotted to the commune, and a house-and-garden lot in the village, together with a share of land in the fields, was then assigned to the household in heredity and was not subject to quantitative repartition upon the order of the communal assembly. However the household allotment of plow-land did not normally consist of a single plot, but of a number of separate strips scattered among the fields around the village; and in the actual or supposed interest of the commune as a whole, the exploitation of these strips was to a certain extent controlled by the communal assembly. Under the direction of this assembly, all the householders were required to follow a common crop-cycle (that is, they all planted and harvested simultaneously their strips in each particular field), while after the harvest and in fallow years all the strips were used alike as a common pasture for the animals of the commune; and in order that there might be no artificial obstacle to the free movement of the cultivators and of their cattle, and no reduction in the area of pasture, the holders were prohibited from building upon or enclosing their strips without the consent of the assembly. In addition to the house-and-garden lots and the open fields with their tangle of intermingled strips, there were almost always still other lands (natural pastures, and the like) which remained undivided, and were used by all the households of the commune under the regula-

If this sketch properly represents the state of affairs at the center of government, what must then have been the uncertainty and confusion of the local bureaucracy and the local courts? When the land-commune and the village-community were identical, the relationships among the households were complex enough—but that is another problem. The question here is: where, and when, and to what degree, did the land-commune exist and function apart from the official village-community? The student interested in the realities of peasant life is bound by a desire to assign each common interest and each collective function to the group which actually shared that interest and exercised that function; but to do this would require an interminable study, such as has never yet been made, of the actual practice of the peasants, as more or less modified and aborted by the agrarian laws, the interpretations of the Senate, the rulings of the local courts, and the actions of the local bureaucracy. It may be said that as a general rule the political functions were in the hands of the village-community as a whole, while the land-functions were exercised by separate land-communes and their assemblies wherever the basis for this arrangement existed in a holding which was factually distinct; but in any detailed discussion, the continued employment of the terms “village-community” (selskoe obschestvo) and “land-commune” (zemelnoe obschestvo or pozemelnaia obschina) involves an
tation of its assembly. Finally, the emancipation of the lands and persons of these allotment-holders commonly involved substantial redemption-payments to the landlord — payments which might be covered either by the households acting separately, or by the commune. The law declared that from the beginning of the redemption-process, the character of the tenure would be governed by the method of redemption: that is, the redemption of hereditary allotments by the commune as a whole would involve a collective responsibility for the payments, and a conversion of the allotments into repartitional communal holdings. In the great majority of the communes with hereditary allotments, the redemption was actually undertaken by the commune as a whole, and the administration and the courts became involved in a maze of confusion and contradiction respecting the tenure of the holdings so redeemed. The prevailing tendency of officialdom was to deny in such cases a collective responsibility for redemption or a liability to repartition, and in general (though certainly not always consistently) to preserve the hereditary character of these allotments against the collectivist provisions of the redemption-law. The process of redemption will be discussed in some detail below, but its effect upon the land-relation within the communes of hereditary holders is a subject that had of necessity to be mentioned here.

The next question is: how and under what conditions might the land-linkages be dissolved, in a commune of hereditary holders? A final apportionment among the households of any land hitherto undivided might be arranged by a two-thirds' vote of the assembly, but on the other hand, the law did not specifically provide a means for making a general consolidation of the scattered strips of plowed land into a unitary farm for each household and thus eliminating the common crop-cycle and the common pasture-right. In fact, the general provisions in regard to the character of the hereditary tenure were usually interpreted as prohibiting such a wholesale re-location of strips without the unanimous consent of the holders.

Under certain conditions, the individual householder with an hereditary allotment might act independently to alter or terminate the land-relation with his neighbors. If he remained a member of the commune, it was theoretically possible for him to renounce the allotment with all the obligations attaching to it, but in most of the gubernias the statutes made prerequisite requirements (for example, the independent purchase of a given area of land) which the great majority of the peasants were economically unable to ful-

If the householder withdrew from the commune, the surrender of the allotment was not only permitted (without condition, after 1870) but required; but the personal withdrawal itself was possible only after the fulfilment of conditions which will be described hereafter. However, all this applied only during the period before redemption was begun in any particular case, and most of the hereditary holders were very soon involved in the redemption-process (for one thing, a special regulation of 1865 made redemption compulsory in nine of the western gubernias); and once this process had been initiated, there could no longer be any possibility of the outright rejection of an individual allotment, but only of its transfer to someone who would assume the debt upon it. When the commune as a whole engaged in the redemption of the land, with the help of a loan from the State (and this was the usual process under hereditary tenure), the question as to who then controlled the transfer of the allotments was of course involved in the general question as to the effect of collective redemption upon hereditary tenure, but the prevailing tendency was apparently to recognize in the householder the same rights of transfer or retention that he would have acquired under an entirely independent redemption. In case of an independent redemption, it was specifically provided that after 1870, the holder who remained a member of the commune was free to transfer the allotment with any debt upon it to anyone inside or outside the commune, without regard to the wishes of the assembly. If the allotment were in process of separate redemption with State aid, and the householder wished to withdraw personally from the commune, he was obliged not only to meet the general requirements for a personal separation but either to pay off the entire debt or to find someone who would take over the allotment with its obligations. If the separate redemption of the allotment were completed, the withdrawing holder might either transfer or retain the land. Such were the laws governing the right of the holder to dispose of the allotment; but it not seldom happened that the redemption-debt exceeded the actual value of the holding, and thus defeated any attempt to find anyone who would accept the land together with its obligations; and sometimes it also happened that a householder who wished to withdraw personally from the commune was unable either to find a taker for the allotment with its debt, or to pay off the debt himself, and was therefore unable to effect the personal separation. If the householder wished to consolidate the scattered strips of his
allotment and thus to render his farming operations independent of the common crop-cycle and the common pasture-right, the change might be accomplished only with the consent of all the other householders whose strips would be displaced — an agreement usually impossible to secure.

In general, it must be said that in the Statutes of Emancipation and in the subsequent interpretations of the administrators and the courts, the question of the nature of the hereditary household tenure (podvornoe vladenie) and of the apportionment of rights under this tenure between the commune and the household, was befogged and befuddled by omissions, inconsistencies, and outright contradictions. The task of describing this tenure in a few paragraphs is therefore difficult and hazardous in the extreme; and yet it is at least clear that under this hereditary tenure the land-relations of the households were by no means so intimate as under the repartitional communal tenure now to be discussed.

In the communes with repartitional tenure (obshchinnoe pospovanie or vladenie), the house-and-garden plots were assigned to the several households in heredity, and neither their size nor their location was subject to subsequent adjustment by the communal assembly. On the other hand, the assembly might by a two-thirds' vote repartition periodically among the households the other lands allotted to the commune. The assembly itself was to decide the rules under which each distribution should be made, and was required only to apply these general rules fairly and equably to each of its member-households. In these communes, each household usually held (subject to redistribution) a number of scattered strips of plow-land and meadow; and here, as in the communes with hereditary tenure, the intermixture of the strips of plow-land involved a common crop-cycle and a common pasture-right. And finally there almost always remained still other lands (most often a natural pasture) which the assembly preferred not to divide, even temporarily, but reserved for common use under its own immediate control. In other words, the lands of the repartitional commune were ordinarily of three kinds: those allotted in heredity to the households, those allotted temporarily to the households and subject to repartition, and those held undivided for common use. For the first nine years after the confirmation of the Statutes, the commune was prohibited from disposing of land to anyone outside its membership; and thereafter, while any part of the redemption loan remained unpaid, the commune might make such an alienation only with the consent of certain authorities of the gubernia. In the repartitional communes, as in those with hereditary tenure, the completion of the Emancipation usually required the payment of a considerable sum to the landlord, but here the land could be redeemed with State aid only if all the households of the commune acted as a unit and accepted a joint responsibility — and in a vast majority of the repartitional communes, the allotments were actually redeemed in this way.

In the repartitional communes, the individual householder was strictly limited in his right to alter the land-relation. The consent of a majority in the assembly was required before a household and its holding might be divided for the purpose of establishing an additional household and providing it with an allotment. Only with the consent of the assembly might an allotment (with its obligations) be transferred by a holder who remained a member of the commune; and in any case, such a transfer was legally effective only until the time of the next general repartition, when as far as the law was concerned the rights and duties of the original holder and of the transferee were exactly what they would have been if no transfer had taken place. Before redemption was begun, the obstacles to the renunciation of the entire allotment by the householder who remained a member of the commune, or withdrew from it, were similar in a general way to those that existed under hereditary tenure and have already been described. If the holder effected a separate redemption of the house-and-garden plot only, he might then renounce the remainder of his allotment, but there were serious economic difficulties in the way of such a separate and partial redemption. During the process of collective redemption with State aid (the usual procedure), the holder who remained in the commune might renounce or transfer the allotment only with the consent of the assembly, and only temporarily (that is, until the next general repartition). If the holder undertook to withdraw from the commune while joint redemption was still in progress, he was obliged not only to meet the general conditions for a personal separation, but to pay half the debt still due on his allotment, and to surrender the land to the commune, with the doubtful privilege of knocking his buildings down and hauling them away, or of selling them either to the commune's next allottee, or to someone else for removal; and in this situation the commune on its own part might refuse to assume the balance of the debt, and thereby prevent the holder from either surrendering his
allotment or effecting the release of his person. Where the joint redemption-loan had been repaid, or the commune had cleared its holdings without the help of such a loan, the holder who retained his membership was still subject to the restrictions already mentioned respecting the rejection or transfer of the allotment, while in case of a personal withdrawal he was required to meet the usual general conditions and to divest himself of his allotment in the manner “prescribed by local custom”—a rule under which the retiring member might control the transfer of his house-and-garden plot, but was more or less at the mercy of the commune in respect to his remaining land-rights.  

Speaking now in general and summary terms, it may be said that in the repartitional communes, membership and allotment-holding were inseparable. So long as the land remained in repartitional tenure, it was the duty and the right of the commune to offer the allotment—and it was the right and the duty of the household to receive it; so it had to be, if the system of repartition were to operate when the allotment was a burden, as well as when it was an asset. If membership and allotment-holding were bound up together, just so the termination of membership and the divestment of land were interlocked, and any difficulty in the way of either of these operations was therefore at the same time an obstacle to the other. That is to say, the general restrictions upon personal withdrawal acted as an additional check upon the alienation of allotment-rights, while on the other hand, the difficulty of disposing of the allotment (the difficulty of getting rid of an overburdened allotment under any condition, or of disposing of a profitable one at a fair value) was by all odds the most important artificial barrier to the personal separation of the peasants from the commune.

All this applies to the communes with repartitional tenure; but the law also provided certain means for changing these conditions fundamentally by altering both the nature of the tenure and the physical arrangement of the holdings. If the change were to extend throughout the commune, the decision must rest with the assembly. By a two-thirds’ vote, this body might divide the lands of the commune into hereditary holdings (each bearing its appropriate share of any redemption-debt which might still be outstanding); and at the same time, or thereafter, the assembly might consolidate the scattered strips and establish a unitary farm for every household. In other words, it was in the power of the assembly to convert the repartitional tenure into an hereditary household tenure identical in most particulars with that established in some of the communes at the Emancipation, and already described above; and through consolidation, the assembly might also dissolve the common crop-cycle and the other like connections associated with the physical intermixture of the allotment-strips.

Finally, in a commune where both the repartitional tenure and the physical arrangement of the holdings remained in general unaltered, it was possible, at least theoretically, for a single household to secure, even without the consent of the assembly, a separate hereditary title to his allotment, and perhaps even its physical consolidation. The repayment of the loan incurred under joint redemption with State aid was expected to require ordinarily almost half a century, and during this period of repayment, the holder might obtain an hereditary title only if he paid off in advance the full share of the redemption-debt assignable to his allotment—a condition which the peasant was rarely able to fulfil. When the hereditary tenure of a single allotment was so established, the holder lost all rights and duties under any subsequent reparation of the other allotments in the commune, and his position and land-relations were now substantially the same as those of a peasant who had belonged from the first to a commune with hereditary tenure and had completed the separate redemption of his allotment. The member of a repartitional commune who thus through pre-redemption obtained an allotment in heredity was privileged, however, to go still farther than this in the direction of individualization: that is, he might also compel the commune to give him in exchange for the scattered strips of his allotment, a holding of the same quality and extent, but consolidated “in so far as possible” in one place. Where the repartitional commune had acquired its allotment-lands without governmental aid, or had already completed the repayment of the joint redemption-loan, the holder might demand both a separation of tenure and a physical consolidation of an allotment proportionate in size—in case there had been a redemption—to the total amount of the redemption-payments made by the household; but when some years had passed after the Emancipation and the dues (as well as the lands) had been repartitioned several times, it was usually impossible to determine the total amount which the household had paid toward redemption—and besides this, the commune had the option of retaining the land and indemnifying the claimant.
Such then was the original character of the land-tenure within the two types of commune (the relation of holder with allotment; of allotment with allotment; of holder with holder); and such were the obstacles to the alteration of these relations, and especially to the economic disentanglement of one allotment from another. To complete the picture, it must be added that the communes were often involved with one another, and even with private proprietors, by the common tenure or the physical intermixture of certain of their lands.

Whatever might be the nature of his relation to the land, and whatever changes this relation might undergo, the ex-serf was still for political-administrative purposes a member of the commune. All-inclusive as far as the peasants were concerned, the commune was closely organized and high-walled against every other class; the neighboring landlord remained an alien, even though the avenue of his park opened directly upon the village street, and the priest who often lived in a log house beside the church in the very center of the village, was still not a member of the corporation.

The affairs of the peasant commune were to be conducted by an assembly of the heads of households, and by the starosta or "elder" and the other officers elected by this assembly. All the members bore a joint responsibility for taxes, and it was one of the functions of the assembly to apportion this burden among the households, and to levy additional assessments for its own local uses. With the abolition of immediate personal subjection to the landlord, there were transferred to the peasant commune — in theory at least — the bulk of the public-law powers which the masters had formerly exercised upon their serfs. For example, the peasant assembly might put to forced labor any member of a household whose public obligations were in arrears, and might even sentence to banishment any peasant whom it adjudged guilty of "vicious" conduct. A passport was necessary for temporary absence at any considerable distance, and certain officers elected by the peasants had the right, not definitely limited by law, of denying passport-applications. If it were a question not of a temporary absence, but of a full and permanent separation from the commune, the obstacles were much more serious: If the candidate for separation were a junior member of a household, he had to have the consent of his father; if any taxes charged against the household were in arrears, their payment was required; as a rule the candidate for separation was required to produce evidence that some other commune had already voted to receive and register him as a member; and finally, if he were a household with an allotment, he was usually called upon to divest himself of this land under conditions which have already been described — conditions which very often could not be fulfilled and therefore made the personal separation quite impossible.

Just as a number of households formed a peasant commune, so a number of such communities formed a volost — again a purely peasant organization, with assemblymen, judges, an "elder," and other officials, elected directly or indirectly by the householders of the voivode. The elder was answerable for the maintenance of order, while the judges had jurisdiction over minor delinquencies and might sentence an offender to a small fine, a short term of imprisonment or of hard labor, and even a flogging with as many as twenty blows with rods. This same elective court also dealt with most of the civil disputes which did not involve members of other classes, and in civil matters it was to be guided by peasant custom rather than by written law. Finally under a statute promulgated in 1804, but put into effect only gradually, and never in all parts of the Empire, certain all-class organs of self-government, the zemstvos, institutions, were set up in each uyezd and gubernia, with assemblies in which the peasant communes, the individual landed proprietors, and the richer townsfolk were to be represented in proportion to the extent of their lands, or (in the case of the townsfolk) the value of their urban property.

In addition to the purely peasant institutions and to the zemstvos, there still existed a vast hierarchy of appointive officials, with wide and illy-defined powers, in control of the police, and answerable in the last analysis only to the central government. The zemstvos sometimes protested against, and even tried to resist, the intrusions and depredations of this bureaucratic army, but when the volost and the commune were attacked, resistance was impossible. The organs of peasant self-government had in practice no choice but to execute the commands delivered in the name of higher authority, by the booted and spurred police who clattered through the countryside more importantly than ever, now that the landlords' immediate power over the peasants was so much reduced.

But to say that the volost, the commune, and the household had no really effective guarantee of independence, is not to say that they had no functions and no force. It is particularly true of the commune and the household, that however much they might be
checked or driven from without, they were moved also from within; and in their actions, forced or voluntary, was embodied a large proportion of the villagers' life. So it had been in the days of serfdom, and so it continued now to be.

But how is one to interpret the great official solicitude for the preservation of the household and the commune? Is it to be taken as a sign that the nobility (the group most influential in the government) were especially devoted to these institutions, in and for themselves? And as for the households and the communes—were they in need of such solicitude? Would the peasants have dissolved these bodies, if they had been entirely free to do so? A prerequisite to any attempt to answer such inquiries, is a study of the work which these institutions had now been set to do—above all, the work of guaranteeing the redemption of the peasant's allotment at a price so high that it in fact included a redemption of his person also. Under these circumstances, the household and the commune might usually be looked upon as burden-bearing groups; and so long as they maintained this character—so long as they were employed as engines of an over-priced redemption, the circumstances were hardly favorable for a peasant plebiscite upon their value. But whether it was official solicitude, or popular desire, that was chiefly responsible for the survival and strengthening of these institutions, in any case their existence drew out and developed, or gave expression to, a capacity for collective action— for doing things in common—which helped most powerfully to shape the course of a peasant history in the catastrophic time to come.

The serf of the manorial village did not become, under the terms of the Emancipation, a free-moving, landless man. It has been shown that he was far from free, but it still remains to inquire more closely into the condition under which he was given—perhaps it would be better to say, required to accept—a plot of earth. In this connection, there are three matters of first and last importance: the social apparatus of allotment and redemption, the size and quality of the holding, and the weight of the redemption-payments. The functions of the household and of the commune as recipients and payors have previously been discussed, and it is now appropriate to ask what it was that the peasantry received, and at what cost.

The Statutes of Emancipation provided that the allotments were to be assigned on the basis of the number of "revision souls" found in each commune in 1858—that is, the number of males of all ages recorded in the census of that year. Throughout the greater part of the country, local maximal and minimal norms were established for the allotment per soul, the minimum amounting in each case to one-third of the maximum. In the extreme South, as well as in the Southeast, only one statutory norm was set up for each locality. The norms having been established, it was provided that the size of the allotments might be fixed by voluntary agreement between the landlord and his peasants, with this general restriction: that the old pre-reform allotments might not be diminished to less than half the maximal or statutory norm, and might not be reduced at all where they already stood below this level.

Where the landlord and the peasants did not reach an agreement, there were certain regulations which in a measure determined the size of the allotment. In the South, the peasants were supposed to receive allotments according to the statutory norm, but on the other hand, the landlord was free to retain one-half of the non-waste land of the estate, no matter how much this might limit the area of the peasant lands. In the black soil and the forest, the landlord had the choice of cutting off from the former allotments any surplus above the maximal norm, or leaving the surplus in the hands of the peasants, if the terms they offered were sufficiently attractive. If, on the other hand, the former allotment fell below the statutory minimum, the landlord might make a proportionate reduction in the dues, or (if the peasants did not object) he might increase the amount of the land to the minimal norm. Where the old allotments fell between the norms, there was to be in general no change in their size, but special regulations deprived many of the peasants of the forests which they had been using. And finally (whatever effect this might have upon the realization of the other conditions just mentioned) each landlord of the black soil and the forest was free to reduce any and all allotments as far as the minimal norm, if this were necessary in order to enable him to keep in his own hands one-third of the non-waste land of his estate.

For nine years after the confirmation of the Statutes, or at any time when redemption was begun with State aid, an allotment already granted might be reduced by mutual agreement to a legal minimum fixed for the district—usually not to less than one-third of the maximal or statutory norm. Under certain conditions the peasants might redeem the house-and-garden plot, or usadba, sep-
arately from the remainder of the allotment, but if the landlord refused to come to terms in the matter of the price, there were special financial difficulties in the way of such a fractional redemption. If the peasant did redeem the usadba separately, he could, after 1870, refuse to hold any longer the remainder of the allotment, unless the landlord had in the meantime enforced a redemption. If the landlord exercised at any time his right to compel redemption, the peasants on their part might refuse to buy out more than the legal minimum. If, on the other hand, the landlord were willing to surrender all claims for dues, services, and redemption-payments, and to make an outright gift of an allotment equal to one-fourth of the maximal or statutory norm, and the peasants were willing on their part to accept such an allotment, a final settlement might be arranged on this basis; the grants offered under this provision, the "beggarly allotments," were accepted by about six per cent of the peasants as a means of avoiding the excessive charges on the larger plots. But among all these complications, the most impressive fact is that whenever during the first nine years a decision in respect to the size of the allotment was to be made not by mutual agreement but by a one-sided choice, the right to make that choice belonged to the peasants only in the case of enforced redemption; otherwise it belonged to the landlord, who would usually make his decision with an eye to the dues and services which the law would permit him to extract, in exchange for a given acreage assigned to the peasants.

The size of the allotment was not the only crucial point; its quality was also a matter of the first importance. In spite of the peasants' essential need for timber and fuel in this country of white winters, log-walled houses, and huge stoves, forest-lands were seldom included in the new allotments. The superior position and influence of the landlords, and in particular their right under the conditions already described to make "cut-offs" from the peasants' former holdings, and to demand a reallocation of the holdings in order to eliminate the intermixture of the peasants' lands with their own (the peasants on their side did not possess the latter right)—all this made it possible for the landlords to impose numerous inconveniences in the arrangement of the allotments, and even sometimes to leave the peasants without such essential elements of village economy as water-courses and meadow lands.

For an indeterminate period of "temporary obligation," the whole area of the estate was to continue to be the property of the landlord, while the peasants were to hold of him their revised and officially approved allotments, and to render in return such services or payments as were mutually agreed upon, or were prescribed by the Statutes of Emancipation when no agreement was arrived at. The peasants were given the option of passing from the system of labor-dues to that of money-payments or obrok, and for reasons to be explained hereafter— the statutory rates for payments in this latter form affected profoundly the course and the outcome of the whole reform.

The two most conspicuous characteristics of the official rate-schedules were: first, that the charges usually exceeded the rental value of the allotments; and second, that this excess was not equitably distributed among the allotments of a given district, or among the districts of the country. For each district, the official schedule provided a maximal annual charge, to correspond with the maximal allotment per peasant soul; but in most of the districts the charge was not diminished in full proportion when the amount of land fell below the maximum, and where the allotment stood at the official minimum, the rate often amounted to double as much per acre as was assessed upon maximal allotments in the same locality. A second method of comparison, not between small and large allotments in the same district, but between different districts as a whole, makes it apparent that the official rates were often inversely proportional to the rental value of the land, and stood at higher levels for a given acreage in some of the clay-soiled central-industrial gubernias, than in the rich black-soil gubernias farther south. These apparent inconsistencies did not arise by chance; if the payments were disproportionately high when the allotments were small, it was because there went with the smallest allotment, as well as the largest, not only the house-yard but the person of the peasant; if the rates were at a maximum in the thin-soiled industrial gubernias, it was not because the land was here more valuable (actually it was less so), but because the person of the peasant had here a greater value, by reason of the greater development of side-earnings in the household crafts and in wage-work in the towns. For the time being, the peasant was really renting not only his land but his own person from his former master.

If this condition of affairs had affected only the period of "temporary obligation," the emphasis here put upon it might be spared; but actually the weight of these current charges was of the first
importance in determining what sums the peasant would have to pay in order to terminate the "temporary obligation," and free himself and his land once and for all from his former master.\textsuperscript{44} The government had declared that it would not permit so much as a discussion of the ransoming of the persons of the serfs; but when the treasury assisted financially in the redemption process, the land had to be evaluated before the State loan could be advanced, and this basic valuation was fixed by capitalizing at six per cent the peasants' current payments, which under the official schedules commonly exceeded the rental value of the land.\textsuperscript{44} The resultant basic redemption value was usually much in excess of the market value of the land, and included a substantial price upon the peasant's head.\textsuperscript{46}

So far as the law was concerned, the period of temporary obligation might be prolonged indefinitely; but wherever redemption operations were actually initiated, the government stood ready to make an immediate advance to the landlord in interest-bearing bonds, and to recover from the peasants concerned the amount of this advance plus interest, ordinarily distributed in annual payments over a period of forty-nine years. If the peasants were to buy out all the land which they had held during the period of temporary obligation, the advance was to amount to eighty per cent of the basic value of this land, as determined in the manner already indicated; if the allotment were reduced in size when redemption was begun, the advance was then to amount to seventy-five per cent of its basic value.\textsuperscript{46}

Redemption was left to be initiated locally in one of two ways: The peasants and the landlord might reach a voluntary agreement, fixing the redemption-price quite independently of all regulations if there were to be no government loan, or providing for the acceptance of the loan of an amount officially determined in the manner already described, and perhaps calling also for additional compensation to be paid by the peasants directly to the landlord. Or, until 1870, and under certain circumstances thereafter, the landlord might act alone, compelling the peasants to undertake the redemption of at least the legal minimum of land, in which case the landlord would receive the amount of the State loan as officially determined, but could not obtain any additional compensation.\textsuperscript{47} The real significance of all this is apparent only when the steps are retraced from the beginning: the peasants' current dues under the official schedule were often in excess of the rental value of the land (and why should the landlords have voluntarily accepted less?); the official valuation of the land was based upon the dues; the amount of the State loan was based upon the valuation; and at the demand of the landlord (whatever the peasants might say) the government would advance to the landlord the scheduled amount of the loan and undertake to collect this amount willingly from the peasants. Thus the law provided the possibility of enforced purchase for a specified sum, and in spite of all that was said on the subject of voluntary agreement, there was thus established a minimum price for the protection of the landlords. From the allotment of the land to the projected repayment of the last ruble of redemption-money sometime early in the twentieth century, the chain was complete.

The western gubernias, extending from Kiev and Podolsk to Kovno and Vitebsk, were in part excepted from the general system of allotment and redemption. In these gubernias the allotments and the obligations of the serfs had been previously defined by inventories, and in the greater part of this territory these inventories were made the basis for the Emancipation.\textsuperscript{48} Most of the peasants of this region were Lithuanian, White Russian, or Little Russian, while the majority of the landlords were Polish either by descent or by cultural assimilation. With the special stimulus of the uprising of 1863 in Russian Poland proper and among the Poles of the neighboring Russian territories, the government revised the Emancipation arrangements at the expense of the landlords of the western gubernias, making substantial reductions in the peasants' obligations and directing that redemption should begin at once.\textsuperscript{49} In Russian Poland proper, where there had been an ineffectual emancipation without land in the time of the Napoleonic Grand Duchy of Warsaw, the landlords were deep in the black books of the Russian Government, and the reform of 1864 was far more favorable to the Polish peasants than had been the Statutes of 1861 to the Russian. Under the reform of '64, the landed peasants received the full acreage which they had previously held of the landlords, and some of the landless peasants were also provided with allotments. For the compensation of the landlords, the previous dues and services (somewhat diminished for the purpose of this calculation), or the annual net revenues of the allotment-lands, were capitalized at six per cent, the capital sum was paid over in interest-bearing securities, and provision was made for recovery, not through levies on the redeemed lands alone, as had
been the case in Russia, but through the taxation of all the immovable property in Poland. At the same time, manorial jurisdiction was abolished and the peasants were given a form of organization much like that of the Russian villagers, except that the Polish gmina was not to be a purely peasant institution like the Russian voivod with which it corresponded, but was to include all persons of whatever class within a given territory; and in the elections of the gmina all who held a certain minimum of land were to have an equal suffrage. Even more than in Russia, the elected officers were dominated by the police, but in so far as the administration of the gmina was directed from within, the character of the suffrage put it under the control of the peasants rather than the landlords; and in this, one sees the clearest possible evidence of the attempt of the Russian Government to ally itself with the peasantry against the Polish nobles.

In Transcaucasia the reform followed the general pattern laid down in the Statutes of 1861; but whereas in the western gubernias of European Russia and in Poland, the government had shown unusual favors to the peasantry, here in Transcaucasia all its mercies were extended to the landlords, and it is probable that nowhere else in the Empire were the serfs confronted with arrangements so unfavorable to their interest.

Such in brief was the character of the Great Emancipation; and the terms being what they were, it was hardly to be expected that the peasantry who had stormed so many manor-houses in the name of land and liberty, would be universally content with what was offered them at the price they were asked to pay. Just after the publication of the Statutes, the villages swarmed with rumors of a fuller liberation still tocome, or already granted but kept hidden from the peasants by officialdom and the landlords. During the four months following the publication of the manifesto announcing the reform, the Ministry of the Interior recorded 647 instances of rioting among the peasants—a situation "demanding in the course of the year 1861 the employment of the military forces in 499 instances, with the killing, wounding and maiming of peasants, with condemnations to run the gauntlet, and above all with beatings with rods."

Within a year, the more active forms of peasant opposition had been nearly everywhere suppressed, but passive opposition was more widespread and more persistent. Thus in 1880, about fifteen per cent of the ex-serfs still remained in the state of "tempe-
than twenty-five per cent of the former holdings of the serfs. If these figures are brought into connection with those for market-prices and redemption-loans, the general economic character of the Emancipation will be somewhat illuminated — for it will become apparent that (except in the western guberniias with their objectionable Polish squires) the government advanced to the landlords, and undertook to recover from the peasants, a sum much greater than the value at current prices of the land to be redeemed; and this over-valuation was especially conspicuous in the northern non-black-soil region, where the allotments were sometimes so generously enlarged: 68

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value at market prices of 1863–1872 of land under redemption</th>
<th>Original redemption-loans of Government to landlords (to be recovered by Government from peasants)</th>
<th>Excess (+) or shortage (−) of redemption-loans as compared with market value of land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-black-soil guberniias</td>
<td>170,000,000 R.</td>
<td>242,000,000 R.</td>
<td>+ 72,000,000 R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-soil guberniias</td>
<td>255,000,000 R.</td>
<td>341,000,000 R.</td>
<td>+ 86,000,000 R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine western guberniias</td>
<td>184,000,000 R.</td>
<td>185,100,000 R.</td>
<td>− 100,000 R.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>647,000,000 R.</td>
<td>866,500,000 R.</td>
<td>+ 218,500,000 R.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus in the black-soil belt, where the land was well worth keeping, the landlords cut the peasants off with reduced allotments, to be redeemed at a moderate premium; in the North, the allotments were more ample, but the price upon them was nearly doubled for redemption purposes. North and South, the scales were weighted against the peasant; he was coming forth from the Emancipation with limited rights and little land, but abundant obligations; and behind him was a history that showed him not always passive in his discontent.

This was the Great Reform, as it was applied to the plowmen of the manor-lords; but besides these, there were two other important groups of private bondsmen to whom the Emancipation was extended. It will be remembered that there were on the estates, besides the village peasants, many landless "courtyard people" who served in and around the manorial establishments, while on the eve of the Emancipation the industrial enterprises of the country were still operated in part by the forced labor of serfs whose connection with the soil was often so attenuated that they held only a minute strip of plow-land and sometimes only a house-lot and garden. As a result of the Emancipation, the industrial peasants were in general left with allotments even smaller than those of their agricultural neighbors — sometimes with none at all, while the "courtyard people" became for the most part landless men and drifted away to the slums and factories of the towns — the recruiting ground of the new industrial army. 70

Opposite the mass of proprietary serfs, there stood the even more numerous peasants of the State. In 1858 the personal rights of State peasants were extended to the bound people (including about 826,000 registered males) who lived on the lands of the Imperial family. 71 Under a special statute of 1863, these Imperial peasants received allotments approximating in extent the maximal norms established for the private estates of the districts in which they lived, and were required to begin within two years a forty-nine-year cycle of redemption-payments. The effect of the reform was to place the Imperial peasants in a better position than the former proprietary serfs, in respect to both the size and the price of their allotments.

Far more important, because it involved a much larger mass of humanity, was the settlement made for the other peasants of the State — a subject involved in endless complications, partly by reason of the fact that on the eve of the reform there existed more than thirty categories of these peasants, varying so widely in their rights and duties that any general statement respecting them is in danger of doing violence to the facts of history. 72 The Statute of 24 November 1866 laid down the terms of the land-reform for the great majority of these peasants, and its general principles were subsequently extended to a number of the minor groups, while still other minor groups were dealt with independently.

The peasants affected by the Statute of 1866 were to receive as permanent allotments all the lands, excepting the forests, which were at the time in their continuous employment; if the area so employed had not already been definitely delimited, the peasants were to keep not more than fifteen desiatinas per male soul in the districts where State lands were abundant, or eight desiatinas per soul where there was a shortage of such lands. In return, the peasants were to pay an annual obrok to the State at fixed rates generally somewhat higher than those previously in force, and usually based, not alone upon the value of the land, but upon the total amount of the peasants' income, whether from agricultural or industrial sources. 73 Because they had previously had larger allot-
ments, and because these allotments were now subject to "cut-offs," only in exceptional cases, the State peasants entered the new era more liberally provided with land than were the former serfs, while at the same time their annual dues per acre were materially lower than those of the latter group. In the matter of redemption, the law provided that if the peasants would surrender interest-bearing government securities to the public treasury, their annual payments would be reduced by the amount of the interest on these securities. This plan for clearing the land of obligations had little practical result, and finally in 1886 the collection of the poll-tax was stopped, and the obrok was replaced by an annual redemption charge, materially larger in amount, which would terminate in 1911, leaving the State peasants then in unburdened possession of their allotments. As these words are written, this terminal date has just now arrived, but the redemption scheme, like many other plans of mice and men...

In apparent harmony with the preferential treatment which the State peasants had usually received, the average redemption-price per acre of their lands was, under this arrangement, only about one-half the average amount advanced by the government on each acre redeemed by the former serfs in gubernias other than those of the West. This takes no account of any supplementary redemption-payments made by the former serfs directly to their masters, but on the other hand it also fails to take account of the fact that most of the land redeemed by the State peasants was situated in the north-central and northern gubernias where values were normally lower than they were farther south.

Like the private serfs of the nine western gubernias, the State peasants of this region were dealt with by special legislation; the Statute of 16 May 1867 placed them in a favorable position in respect to the size and price of their allotments, and required that redemption should begin at an early date. In Siberia, where almost all the land had remained the property of the State, and in the gubernias of Transcaucasia, the era of reform brought no fundamental change in the land-relations of the State peasants, who continued as before to occupy the State domains and to pay dues to the treasury. In Poland the reform of 1864, already discussed in its application to the peasants on the private estates, was applied under approximately the same terms to the peasants on the Crown domains.

Among the State peasants of Russia, just as among the emancipated serfs, the old form of organization in household and commune was preserved and strengthened. Under the law of 18 January 1866 and other enactments of the period, all the State peasants except those of the Caucasus were assimilated to the household-commune, and volost-structure prescribed for the emancipated serfs in the General Statute of 1861; and like the serfs, the State peasants were given representation in the zemstvos. The law of 18 January carries the usual provisions for the several and joint liability of the household and of the commune, and fixes for temporary absences and for final separation approximately the same general conditions that had already been established for the former serfs. In sum, it may be said that the assimilative processes of the reform produced one great class of villagers—a class marked off from the remainder of the population by special institutions and governed in part by laws quite peculiar to itself.

The laws of 24 November 1866 and 16 May 1867, extending the land-reform to the great majority of the State peasants, were drawn in the familiar terms of the household and the commune, and in general they preserved that form of peasant tenure which they found already in existence — whether the hereditary or the repartitional. In the great majority of the communes affected by these laws, the land was assigned in repartitional tenure, and the land-relations among the State peasants here resembled in most respects those already described as existing in the repartitional communes of the former private serfs. The intermingling of strips, and the possibility of their periodic repartition by a two-thirds' vote; the common holding of undivided pastures; the collective redemption of the land; the communal control over the division of households; the serious obstacles to the renunciation of an allotment; the general inseparability of membership and landholding — these are some of the familiar features met with here again. One especially burdensome requirement was not repeated, however, in the case of the State communes — the requirement that the peasant who wished to withdraw from membership during the redemption process must surrender his land, pay half the outstanding debt upon it, and await the agreement of the commune to assume the other half. A member withdrawing from a repartitional commune of State peasants was nevertheless required to divest himself of his allotment in the manner "determined by local custom" — and it would seem that under such a rule, the commune might impose conditions which would make it next to impossible to transfer the
land, and therefore practically impossible to effect the personal separation. For a dissolution of the land-ties throughout the commune (through the substitution of hereditary tenure for reparation, and the assembly of scattered strips into unitary farms) a two-thirds' vote of the assembly was required, and for the separation and consolidation of a single allotment, a similar vote was necessary. That is to say, the individual State peasant did not share the right of the former private serf to compel the commune to grant him a consolidated allotment with an hereditary title, if he first advanced his full share of the redemption-dues.87

The Cossacks stood apart from these general arrangements, but in view of the role which they had already played and would still play in peasant history, some account must be given of the settlement made for them. The major groups of the Cossacks were called armies, each of which was divided into a number of stanitsas; and each of these was in turn composed of a number of villages. Both the village and the stanitsa had their assemblies of heads of households. Down to the end of the 'sixties, the common land of the Cossacks was regarded as the possession of the whole army, although boundaries had been established in practice between the stanitsas, but a law of the reform period (1866) called for the allotment of about two-thirds of all the Cossack lands to the stanitsas, or to the separate villages. These lands were given in communal tenure, for periodic reapportionment among the householders who were themselves to have no alienable right in the allotments. The remainder of the Cossack land was kept for the common use of the army, or held in reserve for future allotment, or assigned in full property to the Cossack administrative and military officers. In return for their unusually generous endowment of land, the Cossacks were required to perform twenty years of military duty, in active service and in the reserve, and to provide their own horses and their own arms and ammunition.88 By a combination of generosity and compulsion the government had disciplined the whirlwind; these fighters-on-horseback who were once the terror of the landlords had now become the scourge of a discontented peasantry.

If the government had need of such retainers, it was largely because of the conditions created or perpetuated by the Great Reform. It has been the attempt of this chapter to review these conditions under which the masses of the peasantry were mobilized, marshalled and equipped for their march into the new time—the former serfs with diminished lands and exorbitant obligations, the former State peasants with more generous allotments but with burdens heavier than before, and all alike with their historic forms of organization unbroken, but with severe restrictions upon the disposition of their persons and their property. The conditions were not altogether favorable to good morale, and some of the observers who looked on, in those not-very-distant decades, must have recalled that more than once before, this peasant army had been in mutiny—not a reassuring recollection.
CHAPTER VI

THE HUNGRY VILLAGE

During the decades that followed the Emancipation, the Russian peasantry carried on a desperate struggle with a desperate situation—a struggle for existence which reached a preliminary crisis, but certainly was not resolved, in the great jacquerie of 1905 and 1906.

The fecundity of the peasant families was prodigious—and it was said that every hand that held the sickle, must hold also the wooden spoon. That is, for every new worker in the field, there had to be also a new place at the table; but too often the place could not be found. Within less than four decades after the Great Reform (during the period between 1860 and 1897), the peasant population of the fifty gubernias of European Russia increased from fifty millions to seventy-nine millions—that is, there were more than half again as many wooden spoons to fill.

The combined area of the allotment-lands of the proprietary serfs before the Emancipation and the State peasants before the reform of 1866, was apparently something more than 113,000,000 desiatinas. As the result of "cut-offs" at the time of the Emancipation, the area declined to 111,629,000 desiatinas in 1877, but by 1905 it had increased again to 123,183,000 desiatinas. Just as the former proprietary serfs had been most injured by the cut-offs, so they were least benefited by the increase after 1877, the additional allotment-lands going for the most part to the former State peasants. For the period 1877–1905, and all the more for the whole stretch of time between the Emancipation and the Revolution of 1905–06, the increase in the allotment-lands did not by any means keep pace with the growth of the peasant population, and the trend of the times was reflected in the shrinkage in the average size of the household allotments from 13.2 desiatinas in 1877 to 10.4 in 1905. In other words, there was an increasing dearth of the peasant's chief source of subsistence.

But the peasants had not only somehow to feed themselves; even at the cost of going hungry, they had to meet their public obligations. They had to make annual payments on the lands which in very many instances they were redeeming at an excessive price; and in addition, they taxed themselves for the common purposes of the village, and were taxed still further by the zemstvos and the State. There were no adequate early data for the amount of self-taxation in the village, and attention must therefore be limited to the assessments of the zemstvos and the State. In the period 1871–75, in the fifty gubernias, the average annual sum of these latter assessments upon the land and person of the peasant (including the redemption-dues, where redemption had begun) amounted to one ruble and forty-four kopeks for each desiatina (2.7 acres) of allotment-land. According to data collected by an Imperial commission of the early 'seventies, the annual levies on the lands of the private proprietors (chiefly the estates of the nobility) amounted to only fourteen and one-half kopeks per desiatina, or one-tenth as much as the peasants were asked to pay. The two sets of figures are not properly comparable, since the total for the peasants includes not only perpetually recurrent taxes, but redemption payments which would some day cease. Still, when all due allowance is made for this circumstance as well as for the probable inaccuracy of the estimate of the levies on the non-allotment-lands, and for the fact that the allotments were more largely made up of plow-land than were the private holdings, it is still obvious that in proportion to their agricultural resources, the public obligations of the peasants were enormously in excess of those of the private proprietors. Indeed an official investigation showed that in many cases, even in the rich black-soil gubernias, it was entirely impossible for the peasant to meet his obligations if he had no income other than that derived from the cultivation of his allotment. The outcome was inevitable: in spite of the attempts of the peasants to draw upon every sort of supplementary resource, their arrears increased; at the end of the period 1871–75, the sum of arrears in payments due to the State, amounted to twenty-two per cent of the average annual assessment for the period; during the next five years, the average annual assessment increased, but the sum total of the arrears increased still more rapidly, and amounted at the close of the year 1880 to twenty-seven per cent. So critical was the situation that in 1881 and again in 1884 the government made a reduction in the total redemption-debt charged against the former proprietary serfs; in 1886 the poll-tax on all peasants was abol-
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ished; 19 and under laws of 1896 and 1899 some of the redemption payments were deferred, and portions of the debt were cancelled outright. 13 These steps were taken by sheer necessity; but in spite of the reduction of the sum of State and zemstvo dues from an annual average of one ruble and forty-four kopeiks per desiatina in 1871–75, to an annual average of one ruble and twelve kopeiks in the period 1896–1900, the accumulation of arrears in the payments assessed by the State (much heavier assessments than those of the zemstvos), amounting in 1875 to twenty-two per cent of the average annual assessment for the period 1871–75, had increased by the end of the century to one hundred and nineteen per cent of the average annual assessment for the period 1896–1900. In other words, the total accumulation of arrears (118,695,000 rubles) in payments due to the State had finally come to exceed by a substantial margin the average amount of the current assessments (99,541,000 per year in the period 1896–1900) which the State was attempting to collect. 14

In 1903 the annual direct charges per desiatina upon the allotment-lands were still greatly in excess of those upon the private non-allotment-holdings; 16 but it was one thing to assess such sums, and quite another to collect them. By 1904, the arrears in the redemption-payments alone amounted to at least 150,000,000 rubles, 17 and it was during this year that the government initiated a new series of financial concessions partly inspired, in the beginning, by the widespread peasant disturbances of 1902, and soon driven to unexpected lengths by the great uprising of 1905.

In all that has been said here of the peasants' obligations, no mention has been made of indirect taxation. The national revenue from this source was increasing very rapidly, and in 1899 the treasury realized from it more than three and one-half times as much as from redemption-dues and direct taxes combined. The proceeds of indirect taxation were drawn chiefly from levies on such things as vodka, sugar, tobacco, kerosene, and matches, and from import duties on tea, cotton, iron, and the like. In other words, the burden rested chiefly upon articles of general consumption, and was therefore borne in considerable part by the peasant mass. 17

If during the decades which followed the Emancipation, the growing peasant population were to be fed, and the demands of the tax-gatherers satisfied — if the standard of living were to be maintained (to say nothing of its improvement), there had to come from somewhere a very substantial increase in peasant income.

THE HUNGRY VILLAGE

Theoretically the peasant might have found this increment in a more intensive cultivation of his allotment-land, or in an extension of his farming operations to rented or purchased fields; or through a development of animal husbandry, or of household craft production; or through wage-work, whether agricultural or industrial; or through definite removal to the city or to some area of colonization. It will be necessary to give brief attention here to each of these theoretical possibilities, and to the extent of its actual fulfilment.

In European Russia in 1877 the average allotment of a peasant household (dvor) was 13.2 desiatinas or about thirty-five and one-half acres; in Poltava, where the allotments were smaller than in any of the remaining forty-eight gubernias, the average stood at sixteen and one-half acres. 18 In France in 1884, the average size of all holdings, great and small, was less than nine acres — far below the average for peasant allotments alone in Russia; and three-quarters of all the holdings in France were less than five acres in area. 19 Whatever allowance may be made for the difference between the number of human beings dependent upon the Russian household-allotment, and upon the French holding, it appears that by West-European standards the Russian peasant was not badly off, in so far as the mere extent of his acres was concerned. If he could only have made his fields produce as did those of Western Europe, these pages would have had a very different history to recount; but whatever were the possibilities of the Russian soil and the Russian climate, the peasant did not and could not realize them to full advantage. Thorough fertilization, deep plowing, a complex diversification and rotation of crops, were for the most part beyond his power — even beyond his knowledge and desire. He lacked the stimulus of a large urban market, and his individual activities and movements were to a considerable extent controlled by his commune, with a uniform crop-rotation usually necessitated by the intermixture of his strips of land with those of his peasant neighbors. In the repartitional commune, there was always the possibility, too, that any strips of land which he fertilized and improved would later be assigned to someone else. And besides all this he was very often too poor to lay out anything on new equipment, or to take the risk of trying new methods and new crops. 20

At any rate, the fact is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the primitive routine of cropping the land year after
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year to the point of exhaustion, and then leaving it unseeded for ten years or more, was still extensively employed in the far north and in the newly developing regions of the southeastern step; nearly everywhere else, and especially in the central black-soil region, the somewhat less primitive three-field system continued to be the prevailing one; and although the peasants succeeded in reducing somewhat the proportion of land annually left fallow, it still amounted each year, in European Russia, to about one-third of all the plow-land of the allotments (37.07 per cent in 1881, and 32.21 per cent in 1903).21 A greater improvement was made in the productivity of the acreage actually seeded; for example, the average annual yield of grains on the peasant allotment-lands of the fifty gubernias of European Russia increased from twenty-nine puds per desiatina in 1861–70 to thirty-nine puds in 1891–1900.22 However, the peasant was still unable to get as much wheat out of an acre of land as did the neighboring landlord,23 and both fell far behind the cultivators of Western Europe. Even the American farmer, with his casual methods, showed a yield per acre half again as great as the general average for European Russia.24

According to an official calculation, in every one of forty-seven gubernias studied at the beginning of the twentieth century the number of workers found in the villages exceeded the number required for the cultivation of the allotment-lands under the prevailing system of tillage. The excess was greatest in the central, west-central, and southern gubernias, and for all forty-seven gubernias together it was estimated to amount perhaps to almost four-fifths of the working-strength found in the villages.25 On the other hand (according to the same estimate) in the north-westward two-thirds of European Russia, above a line drawn roughly through Podolsk, Poltava and Nizhni Nogovorod, the supply of grains and potatoes produced by the villagers on their allotment-lands was at this time inadequate to provide for their own subsistence and for the re-seeding of their fields; in the fifty gubernias as a whole the production of these foods on allotment-lands appeared to fall short of these requirements by about 11.5 per cent.26 These estimates are of dubious value, partly because they involve in the one case a norm for the day’s work, and in the other a subsistence norm, both naturally somewhat theoretical in character. Nevertheless the results may be taken to indicate that the peasants did not or could not make adequate use of their labor on the allotment-lands, or draw from these lands an adequate supply of food. With a third of their plow-land still turned wild each year to recuperate, and their fields still producing but a slender harvest, they had not found in intensive agriculture an exodus from their economic Egypt. Perhaps they could not conceivably have found it there; but inasmuch as they had failed, there was a tremendous pressure upon them to seek elsewhere for relief.

Instead of applying new methods to the old allotments, it was much more natural for them to attempt to extend the old methods to new fields; and just here centered their hopes of a literal and figurative Promised Land. The conduct of farming-operations, as most of the peasants understood them, required a certain balance between plowed fields, natural hay-lands, and pastures, and of the last two there was a special dearth.27 Thus the peasants’ allotments appeared to them to have both qualitative and quantitative shortcomings; and whatever might have happened theoretically, what most often happened historically, in the black-soil region, was that the peasants swarmed across the boundary-lines of the neighboring estates. With small reserves of capital, or none at all, it was far easier for them to rent than to buy, and in the black-soil step their rent-holds attained a prodigious figure. There are indications that in the ‘eighties, more than one-third of the peasant households of the fifty gubernias were renting non-allotment-lands, exclusive of pasturage;28 and according to an official estimate, the area of all the non-allotment rent-holds of the peasants at the beginning of the twentieth century was about nineteen and one-half million desiatinas.29 The peasants were therefore renting about one desiatina for every six in their own allotted holdings.

The chief factor in the development of non-allotment renting by the peasants appears to have been their desire somehow to make good a relative shortage of land. It is true that the poorest peasants with the smallest allotments sometimes did not rent additional land for their own use, but (partly because of their lack of animals and implements) leased their own allotments to their neighbors, and then hired themselves out as wage-workers; and it is also true that the well-to-do peasant with a large allotment sometimes rented additional land in order to extend his operations beyond the scope of mere production for a livelihood. But in general, the less land the peasants owned in a given district, the greater was the number of peasant tenants and the more land they took in rent from non-peasant holders; and further than this, the peasant rent-
holds were prevailing small in size. According to the theory of...

The rent-term was usually so short as to give the maximum ef-
flect to competitive bidding, and in the absence of all legal, con-
tactual and customary guarantees to the tenant of a return for
y any improvements he might make, it was naturally to his imme-
diate interest to take out of the soil everything that he could get
out of it, during the short period for which it was at his disposal—
that is, it was to his interest to practise an "economy of destruc-
tion." 

Not only the soil was ravished under this system, but the cul-
tivator also. That the desire for food operated more effectively than
the desire for profits to make renters out of the peasants, would
seem to be indicated by the weight of the rents themselves. Upon
the basis of an odd assortment of data, gathered up from scattered
periods and districts, the peasant's average net income per year
from a destiatta of his own allotment plow-land (due allowance
being made in most of the data for wages for all the labor ex-
spent) appears to have been something more than four rubles,
whereas in 1901 the average money rental which the peasants paid
for a destiatta of non-allotment plow-land was nearly five and one-
half rubles per year under long-term contracts, and above nine rubles
where the land was taken for one year only. Serious as are the
shortcomings of these statistics, they hardly fail to confirm the
striking statement that in a great many instances after the pay-
ment of the rent "there did not remain for the renter even so much
as the customary wage for the labor he had expended in the cul-
vation" of the rented plot. "Consumption-renting" was hardly the
term appropriate here; "hunger-renting" would have been a
better name.

During the decades following the Emancipation, the peasant was
a buyer as well as a renter of lands. In the 'sixties, peasant pur-
chases averaged 91,500 destiattas a year; during the 'nineties,
nearly eight times as much. In 1885 the Peasants' Land Bank was
founded by the government to provide credit for land-purchasing
operations, and although the scope of the Bank's activities fluct-
uated considerably, there was a marked tendency toward expan-
sion, and in the period 1887-1903 assistance was given in the pur-
chase by peasants of more than five and a half million destiattas. Whether purchased through the Bank or without its help, some of
the land acquired by the peasants was of course resold to non-
peasant buyers, but sales of this kind by no means kept up with
peasant purchases, and the total amount of non-allotment-land
remaining in peasant hands increased from 6,552,000 destiattas in
1877 to 23,642,000 destiattas in 1903. It is a strange and stirring
experience to examine for the first time the statistical tables which
deal with this subject of the agglomeration of landed property in
the possession of the villagers. The returns are confessedly incom-
plete, but there can hardly be a question as to the tendency they
indicate; the condensed tabulations undertake to show whether
the non-allotment-lands in the possession of the villagers increased
or decreased in area as a result of purchase and sale, in each of
forty-five gubernias during each ten-year period from 1869 to
1902. This means four entries for each of the forty-five gubernias
—one hundred and eighty entries in all, and among them there
are one hundred and seventy-five instances of increase, and only
five instances of decline; and the detailed tabulations for the years
1903 and 1904 also present an almost unbroken record of expansion
along the line. In the vast sweep of this change, there is
something not quite human — something that suggests the move-
ments of inanimate nature; but there is something very human in
the thought of so many millions of men in so many thousands of
villages, sweating and straining at the same laborious task.

The urge of peasant buying naturally helped to advance the price
of land. For lands purchased with the help of the Peasants' Bank, the average price was 36.5 per cent higher in 1896-1900
than in 1885-1889, while the average of the prices registered by
the public notaries for land-sales of every kind during the decade
1888-1897 was 60.4 per cent above the average for the preceding
decade, and exceeded by 122.5 per cent the average for 1868-1877.
The data from these two sources do not by any means coincide, and the notarial reports are known to be neither accurate nor
complete; nevertheless, taken in the large, the figures leave no
doubt as to the heightening of the price-wall which stood between
the peasant and the land which he might wish to purchase.
Just as was the case with the redemption of the allotments, so in the purchase of non-allotment-lands, many of the peasants fell behind in their payments. Where the transactions involved the Peasants' Land Bank, the percentage of arrears decreased somewhat with the expansion of the Bank's activities, but the absolute sum in default continued to increase.41

It has already been shown that the increase in allotment-land did not by any means keep pace with the growth of the village population; and it is easily demonstrated that non-allotment-holdings were not added in a sufficient quantity to restore the balance. If the peasant non-allotment-holdings had been distributed pro rata, the total amount of land per peasant would still have been much smaller in 1905 than it was on the eve of the Reforms of 1861 and 1866; and even in the later decades, between 1877 and 1905, the figure would probably have diminished.42 The point is, however, a somewhat academic one, for — as will be shown hereafter — the distribution of the non-allotment-lands held by the peasants was anything but uniform.

During the early part of this period of rising land-values, the price of the principal product of these lands was in decline. In the period 1881–1885, grain prices were high, but during the next three five-year periods, they were fairly stable, at much lower levels (except that rye advanced during the famine-period of the early 'nineties, and then returned to its former price). In the period 1901–1905, grain prices were again at higher levels, though still well below the figure for the early 'eighties.43 In Russia, where so many peasants were buyers rather than sellers of the rye which formed their principal food, the price of this cereal was of critical importance; and this was most particularly true in the case of the poorest peasants. It is therefore a fact of very special interest that during the decade which preceded the Revolution of 1905, the price of rye increased in every region of European Russia;44 but the significance of this fact will become fully apparent only when it is hereafter brought into connection with the data on the wages of agricultural labor.

By increasing the money-obligations of the peasants, the Emancipation had put them under an increased pressure to raise and sell those cereals which were the one great product of agriculture as traditionally understood in the villages. However, the peasant was prompted to leave the closed circle of natural economy not only by external pressure, but by external attraction, and as time passed, more and more of his wants (for clothing and shoes, for example) were satisfied through purchase in the market. The growth of exchange and of a money-economy was of course facilitated by the building of railroads,45 but neither this nor any subsequent development placed the peasants of European Russia in a position to compete on favorable terms, in the international grain-market, with the plowmen who were now turning up fresh soils overseas, and in Siberia. If the Russian peasant had grain to sell, he was obliged to enter a market in which the prices were fixed, in the last analysis, by international competition; if, on the other hand, he wished to buy manufactured goods, he had to purchase them in a market where the prices were maintained at high levels by the increasing protectionism of the government.46

If the peasants of European Russia had all been producers of a grain-surplus for the market, the decline in prices would have been a hardship upon them all; but actually many millions of them did not produce enough grain for their own subsistence, and therefore appeared in the market primarily as purchasers rather than as sellers of cereals.47 In very many cases, however, the peasants had a more intimate and active relation with the grain-market than was required by the existence of a surplus or a shortage in their own individual production. They sold wheat, and bought rye for their own consumption; or, in the pinch of need for ready cash, they often sold grain in the glutted Autumn market, only to buy back the same kind of grain later on, at a much higher price, in order to feed themselves until the succeeding harvest — a practice which aggravated the surfeit of Autumn and the shortage of Spring, and so affected the seasonal swing of prices that its sweep was wider in the rural districts than in the towns.48

Among the many symptoms of the peasants' economic weakness, one of the most serious was the increasing dearth of domestic animals. The Russian peasant knew little of the hand-cultivation of minute plots of land; he lived chiefly by the sowing and reaping of grain-crops, and without the help of animals, the human frame can hardly drag the load of such a culture. It is, then, no mere matter of detail that in proportion to the number of peasant households, the number of their work-horses diminished, until at the end of the century there was approximately one of these work-animals for each household. In other words, for each peasant house that had two horses, there was somewhere another household that had none.49
Whether by choice or by necessity, the peasants were often something more than farmers — sometimes not farmers at all, for millions of them were engaged, at home or in the cities, for a part or all of their time, in self-directed non-agricultural work of some sort, or in agricultural or industrial wage-labor. Among all these activities, the handicrafts of the forest gubernias have held a very special interest for students of peasant life, for the reason that these craft-industries belonged in a peculiar sense to the peasantry themselves. The crafts were not free from external influence, and yet in their methods and their products they were still a rich repository of peasant science and peasant art. The workers produced an endless variety of work in wood, bark, cloth, leather, felt, clay and metal, varying in quality from the crudest articles of mass-consumption (wooden snow-shovels, brooms made of twigs, unglazed milk-jars, thick felt boots, heaped up by hundreds in the village markets), to silver ornaments and religious pictures which sometimes fully merited the name of works of art. Production was carried on sometimes quite independently in the peasant’s home; sometimes at the order of an entrepreneur who distributed the raw materials to many home-workers, paid for the labor at a piece-rate, and collected and disposed of the product; sometimes, too, in a small shop set up co-operatively by an artel of workers, or maintained by a master who hired other craftsmen to work under his direction. The entire household, men, women, and children, often worked through the short winter day and well into the night, for a beggarly return; but when the brief agricultural season did not yield a living for the peasant family, then to work for less than a subsistence through the long winter months was better than to be altogether idle — and perhaps to be buried in the spring. Strong traditions of the village, close legal restrictions upon the mobility of the peasant, favored an attempt on his part to find a source of side-earnings in the handicrafts rather than in some distant factory. The craft-industries might still live, even though they did not produce a living: they were generally supplementary to agriculture and, in effect, subsidized by agriculture, and it was this, above all, that enabled them to maintain a footing in a country where the Industrial Revolution was now well under way. Some of the craft-industries had not yet been subjected to factory-competition, some survived in spite of competition, some collapsed and disappeared. Exactly what was happening, will never be known, in terms of statistical accuracy; the number of persons engaged in handicraft-production, though perhaps diminishing toward the turn of the century, still very much exceeded the number employed in the factories; and yet the crafts could not be called prosperous, nor did they offer opportunities of increasing promise to a peasantry hard-pressed to find help in one direction or another.

Wage-work in agriculture and other rural non-industrial occupations was also an important source of peasant income, and the census of 1897 enumerated in the fifty gubernias 1,837,000 persons who made this work their chief occupation, and were usually engaged in it throughout the year. It is in the very nature of the highly specialized, grain-producing Russia, that for brief periods it demanded whole armies of extra plowmen and especially of harvesters, but of these short-term workers, the census took no account, nor does there exist a dependable estimate of their number. If there were more than a million and a half of long-term laborers, those hired for the harvest alone probably counted several millions more.

The level and trend of agricultural wages was therefore a matter of vital concern to millions of the peasantry. During the harvest, when wages were at the maximum, the male day-laborer received in the period 1901–1905 an average of fifty-eight kopecs a day with subsistence, or seventy kopecs without, and from the fact that the difference allowed for rations is twelve kopecs, or about six cents, one may gather something as to the standard of living at the time. In the ‘nineties, the average wage paid to male workers hired for the entire year was sixty-one and one-half rubles with subsistence, or about one hundred and twenty times as much as was paid during this decade for a single day's work during the harvest season. The general low level of these wages is impressive enough, but still more striking, perhaps, is the difference between the maximal daily rate and the annual rate of pay. The fact that men would work for a year for one-hundred-and-twenty days' harvest wages, indicates the highly specialized and seasonal character of Russian agriculture and the sad situation of every villager who had to work for others when the demand was slight, as well as in the height of the season.

The data on the movement of wages show that in the period from 1882–1905, the agricultural day-wage first declined, in the time of declining grain-prices, and then began to rise again in the early 'nineties. A more detailed examination of the data will make it evident that between 1895 and the earliest years of the
new century there was an increase in the money-wage in each of the thirteen regions of European Russia. During this same period, the price of rye also increased in each of these regions, but in general at a slower rate, with the result that in ten of the thirteen regions the wage increased not only in terms of money, but also in terms of the worker's principal food. For the last years of this decade, there is, however, an entirely different story to tell: in 1901 or shortly thereafter, the money-wage turned downward nearly everywhere, and in 1904 it stood below its maximum for the decade in twelve of the thirteen regions, and even below the level of 1895 in two regions. During this period, the rye-wage also declined in twelve of the thirteen regions, and generally at a more precipitate rate than the money-wage. As a result, the earlier gains were outbalanced almost everywhere, and in eleven of the thirteen regions the rye-wage of 1904 was lower than that of 1895.\(^{58}\) This one grain is by no means an adequate medium for the measurement of "real wages," but on the showing of these data one is perhaps justified in saying that for the poorer peasants who produced leas for themselves, and were most dependent upon wage-work and the food which they bought with their wages, the period which immediately preceded the Revolution of 1905 was one of more than usual distress.

With agricultural wages not only at a low level, but varying widely from place to place, and with a more liberal reward offered in many branches of mining and manufacturing,\(^ {69}\) it was only natural that many of the peasants who were looking for work should try to find it, not on the next estate, but at the end of a much longer road. The question as to what force set this great economic pilgrimage in motion, is hardly one to be separately discussed; the answer is implicit in all that has been said about the conditions of life in the village. Nevertheless it may be appropriate to quote a summary of some thousands of answers given by the peasants themselves to this question, as it was put to them by official registrars in the Trans-Volgan gubernia of Samara, in 1899: Why had they come (many of them from other gubernias) seeking work? One cause was mentioned twelve thousand times — too little land at home; ten thousand times — there had been a bad harvest; nearly eight thousand — there was not enough work to be had in their own communities; seven thousand — they were loaded with debts and obligations-in-arrears.\(^ {60}\)

It is impossible to determine with any degree of accuracy the number of peasants who made periodic journeys away from their villages in search of wage-work in agriculture or in industry; but that they were counted in millions there is no doubt, and the rapid increase in the number of short-term passports issued each year indicates that "going-away work" was enlisting a growing army of laborers.\(^ {61}\)

It was the villagers of central and northern Russia, who were most given to these labor-excursions; and the most mobile of all were the peasants of the "central-industrial region," stretching from the northern limits of the steppe to beyond the upper Volga. In this region, the periodic movement from the village sometimes included practically the entire male population of working age, with many women besides, and was directed chiefly toward the cities, and most of all toward St. Petersburg and Moscow. The second great source of the labor exodus was the broad belt of agricultural gubernias lying south of, and parallel with the forest-step boundary, and extending from Kiev on the southwest to the middle Volga on the east; but from this source, the main stream of labor flowed, not toward the industrial centers of the country, as was the case farther north, but outward toward the more sparsely-settled lands of the south and east, where farm-work might be had.\(^ {62}\)

Along the muddy roads and the swollen rivers of Spring, armies of agricultural workers hurried southward to be first at hand when men were wanted for the plowing; and later there followed other armies of reinforcements for the harvest. Often almost destitute, even at the beginning of the pilgrimage (of 910 workers questioned on their way to Crimea in 1891, 260 had five rubles or less); frequently travelling on foot, in carts, in row-boats, directly along the lines of railways and river-steamers on which they could not pay for passage; feeding themselves sometimes "with Christ's name" (that is, by begging); following the road for a few days only, or for a month or more — after all this, these pilgrims often wandered helplessly about without finding the sacred thing they came to look for; or if they found it, they were frequently obliged to work so much as sixteen hours a day, to sleep in the open, or in quarters no better than stables, and to feed on a veritable barnyard ration.\(^ {63}\)

Among the masses who swarmed into the industrial centers, the desperate competition for employment kept the average wage of
the workers in the mills and factories down to something like eighteen rubles a month (the figure is for the year 1900). It appears that toward the end of the century, not only the industrial money-wage but the real wage also was rising; but the fact that it still stood very often at the level of sheer misery, is attested by various investigations of living-conditions among the workers.64

When the first general census of the population was taken, in 1897, more than five million “villagers” were found in the cities of European Russia.65 As this census was taken in the winter season, this five million probably included most of the peasants who left the village periodically for industrial wage-work, but it certainly included also many who had broken all vital connection with village life and settled permanently in the towns.

In the period just following the Emancipation, most of the peasant-workers in industry lived and labored a part of the year in their own villages, and left their families behind them when they went away in search of work. However, with the increasing mechanization of industry, and the piling up of capital investments in machinery, the employers began to demand a more regular operation of their plants, and to impose penalties to check the migratory tendency of their employees. Partly by compulsion, and no doubt partly by their own desire, the peasant-workers’ connection with the village was slowly weakened, as is evidenced by the decline in the proportion of short-term passports (for from one to three months) issued in the central-industrial gubernias in the seventies and the eighties;66 and by the beginning of the new century, a majority of the peasant artisans had established themselves and their families in the neighborhood of the factories, and now lived there throughout the year.67 But this certainly did not always signify that all connection with the village had been cut: as a rule these peasants continued to carry village passports, and among some 2,600 craftsmen, factory-operatives and unskilled workers of St. Petersburg whose relations with the countryside were investigated in 1900, eighteen per cent returned to the village in the Summer season, fifty-two per cent sent money to the village, and 69.4 per cent were still holders of allotment-lands.68 If in the case of a certain proportion of the peasant-workers, the connection had become very much attenuated, it is to be remembered that on the other hand the number of peasants working in the cities had been greatly increased. The extent to which one of these factors balanced the other, it would be difficult if not impossible to determine; but even so, there is no doubt of the persistence of a lively intercourse between the log-built villages of the Russian forest, and the tenements and factories of Russia’s largest cities.

That these tenements and factories were multiplying, is one of the most conspicuous facts in the history of the time. Between 1888 and 1897 the rural population of the Empire, exclusive of Finland, increased by about two-thirds, while the urban population, reflecting the growth of industry and commerce, approximately doubled. If at the end of the period Russia was still overwhelmingly an agricultural country, with only some thirteen people in a hundred living in the towns, still the Industrial Revolution was well under way, and the village was sending both volunteers and economic conscripts into the industrial armies.69

It was not only by going away temporarily for agricultural or industrial work, or by settling finally in the cities, that the peasants sought to better their lot, or to find an exit from their difficulties. In increasing numbers they turned also to the colonization of the farther step which lay toward and beyond the Asiatic border. From the Emancipation down to 1889, colonization was hampered not only by all the general checks upon the mobility of the village population, but by special official obstacles to this particular kind of movement. However, the weight of enforcing the burdensome regulations was too much for the bureaucracy to carry; in the seventies and the eighties, the colonists who emigrated without sanction were much more numerous than those who received the official permit, and the total number of emigrants to Siberia and Turkestan during the first quarter-century after the Emancipation was about 300,000. In 1889 the official policy took a turn in the direction of assisting those colonists whose removal had been approved, and in the nineties the building of railways in Siberia and the granting of State lands and the State loans to settlers helped to stimulate emigration.70 During the years 1894–1903 new settlers moved into the Asiatic domain at an average rate of nearly 115,000 per year—about three times the annual average for the preceding decade;71 but even for the years 1897–1900, inclusive, when the stream of colonization was running higher than in any other like period between the Emancipation and the Revolution of 1905, the natural increase of the rural population of the fifty gubernias was nearly fourteen times as great as the net loss which these gubern-
nies incurred through emigration to Siberia. Thus the colonization movement had done, and was doing, comparatively little to solve the agrarian problem in European Russia.

These, then, are the general outlines of the peasants' situation. Almost half a century had passed since 1861, and the air still buzzed with arguments designed to prove that the free peasant was — or was not — economically better off than he or his father had been in the days before the Great Reform. But when all was said and done, the means did not exist (nor do they now exist) for determining, year by year, during the decades which preceded and followed the Emancipation, the total "real" income of the peasantry; nor is it possible even now to measure cumulatively all the changes in their economic situation. There are no all-inclusive data; the best that can be done is to select certain measurable factors, which appear to focus and reflect the general condition:

Among a poor agricultural population, where a certain degree of economic equality exists, and where the number of persons competing for supplementary wage-work is directly affected by the economic condition of the families to which they belong, the level of the local day-wage in terms of rye (the laborer's chief food) may perhaps reflect in some degree not only the condition of the laborers themselves at the moment, but the general economic situation of the community. At any rate, one may recall here, for whatever it is worth, the fact that the rye-wage was considerably higher in the early 'nineties than it had been a decade earlier, but lower in 1904 than it had been in 1895.

Or better still, in the search for an economic index, one may reconsider the question of dues and taxes. The peasant's obligations to the public treasury were a contributory cause of his distress, but the statistics as to the amount of these obligations are worthless, by themselves, as an index of the peasant's situation, for the reason that their total sum and all their fluctuations might conceivably have been compensated by other economic factors. On the other hand, the data regarding the arrears in these public payments are altogether of a different order. What then is the significance of these arrears; is the default sometimes nothing more than an indication of unwillingness to pay? The answer may be found through even the most casual inquiry into the methods of collection. The seizure of property was not the only possible procedure when the payments were not met; the peasant and his family might be put to forced labor, and sometimes the whip was employed.

In this discussion of peasant life after the Great Reform, the talk has been all of averages; but the question may be raised as to the legitimacy of recreating by statistical method an "average peasant," and writing for him a statistical biography. How many of the peasants really lived this average life, rather than something better, or something worse? And is it not important to draw distinctions, not only among the peasants, group by group, but among the several regions of the country?

The first observation to be made in answer, is that the total of peasant wealth is so small, and the number of peasants so great, that there is hardly room for any sizable number of very rich peasants, unless there stand opposite them an enormously larger number of paupers. The sum of the wealth of one day-laborer and one millionaire is very considerable; and this sum divided in half, produces for these two men an "average" wealth which is quite meaningless. If the sum were one thousand times smaller, and the number of possessors one thousand times as great, the "average" might perhaps have some significance. In the case of the Russian peasantry, the sum is comparatively limited, and the system of landholding set up by the Emancipation made it certain that for a long period a vast majority of the peasants would be possessed of at least something. With millions of small peasant farmers, and an average of hardly more than one peasant work-horse to the household, it is not in the nature of things to suppose, for example, that the ownership of peasant horses was highly concentrated. The employment of averages may therefore be more defensible than at first appears.

However, the question as to differentiation is a legitimate one, and some attempt must be made to deal with it here. That economic differences existed between peasant and peasant on the eve
of the Revolution of 1905, there can be no doubt; but the question as to whether these differences were diminishing or increasing has long been a bitterly controversial one.\textsuperscript{74} One important original factor of differentiation was the granting to the State peasants of allotments much larger, on the average, than those assigned to the private serfs. It has already been indicated, too, that the Statutes of 1861 left a wide latitude for variation in the size (per male person) of the allotments finally obtained by the communes and by their households, even where the recipients were immediate neighbors and the lands were of identical quality — and this was in some degree true also of the land-reform allotments of the State peasants. After the fixing of the reform allotments, there was a further opportunity for differentiation to appear spontaneously as the individual families and communities increased or diminished in numerical strength. Only a thoroughgoing system of periodic redistribution among neighboring peasant communes and among the households of each separate commune, could have preserved between man and man the proportionate relation set up by the reform; but as a matter of fact, there was no general provision for later readjustments between communes, and where the original grants were made in hereditary household tenure, there was also no provision for any subsequent reapportionment among these households. The only mechanism of readjustment in wide use was that within the repartitional communes. These communes included the greater part of the peasant population and of the allotment-area of the country, but even here, the reallocation of lands was sometimes unfairly conducted under the influence of the richer members of the community, or was perhaps omitted altogether for decades at a time at the option of the peasant assembly.

Such — speaking of the allotment-lands alone — were the original factors of differentiation, the spontaneous changes which promised a further variation from the original norms, and the limited means provided for the restoration of the balance. But besides all this, there were restricted opportunities for equalization or differentiation through the purchase and sale of allotments. The original regulations of 1861 governing such transfers have already been described, but in the case of the hereditary allotments, new legal difficulties arose at a later date. After 1882, there was no means available for the official registration of the transfer of those hereditary allotments which were still under redemption, and the purchasers therefore had no real security of title. Again, it was provided in 1893 that no hereditary allotment might thereafter be sold except to someone who was already a member of the seller's own commune, or became a member at the time of the purchase.\textsuperscript{75}

In the case of the repartitional communes, the laws and court decisions provided that in general a household allotment might be transferred only with the consent of the communal assembly, and that any allotment so transferred must nevertheless be pooled with the other lands of the commune in the next general repartition. As a matter of fact, the holders of repartitional lands sometimes made informal "sales" which were authorized, or simply tolerated, by the commune. In case there were no general repartition thereafter, such transfers were permanently effective, and even where a general repartition was carried out, the communal assembly sometimes honored the "sale" by the assignment to the purchaser, in addition to the usual allotment, of an amount of land proportioned to his purchase. Sometimes, too, the equilibrating land-system of the repartitional commune was deranged by the withdrawal of an allotment from a household which had failed to meet its dues and taxes, or by the division of an existing family without an assignation of land to the members who withdrew to set up a new household.\textsuperscript{76}

Finally the peasant commune as a body might alienate allotment-lands through sales to outside purchasers, but only with the permission of the local or central administrative authorities.\textsuperscript{77} In any attempt to explain how it was that at the beginning of the twentieth century some peasants had large allotments, some had small ones, and some had none at all, it is necessary to take all these conditions and possibilities into account.

In 1905, two per cent of the peasant households with allotments belonged to communes showing an average of less than one desiatina of allotment-land per household; 2.9 per cent of the households belonged to communes averaging between one and two desiatinas per household; and altogether nearly one-quarter (25.8 per cent) of the households were included in communes with an average of five desiatinas or less per household — and this in a country where intensive agriculture was as yet little developed. These 2,857,000 households (the 25.8 per cent) held altogether nine million desiatinas of land,\textsuperscript{78} while at the other extreme there were 25,560 households — about one-fifth of one per cent of the total
number — belonging to communes with an average of more than one hundred desiatinas per household and total holdings of nearly 3,600,000 desiatinas. It must be understood that in these returns there is no comparison of household with household in the terms of their individual status, but only of commune with commune, upon the basis of the average amount of allotment-land per household in each — an average obtained by dividing the total allotment-area pertaining to each commune by the number of the allotment-holding households.

In many districts, however, the semstvos recorded the area of the peasant allotments, household by household, and the tabulations of these returns also show a considerable variety in the size of the holdings. For example, among the 16,043 households in one of the uceds in the gubernia of Pskov, in 1897, 573 had no allotments, while 1,169 had more than fifteen desiatinas. Again, in one uced in the gubernia of Ekaterinoslav, in 1898–99, the total of 52,269 households included 2,687 without allotments, 853 with less than one desiatina, and 2,136 with more than fifteen desiatinas each. Whatever allowance may be made for differences in the quality of the land and in the size of the holdings, these data undoubtedly indicate a certain degree of economic inequality among the peasants.

All this relates to the allotment-lands and to them alone. Whether the purchasing of non-allotment-lands by the peasants was tending to strengthen the weak, or to make the strong still stronger — to separate the extremes, or to draw them nearer together, it is perhaps impossible to determine, because of the difficulties involved in the Russian land-statistics. Nevertheless there are certain possibilities of a round-about approach to this question.

In 1905 the non-allotment-holdings of the peasants of the fifty gubernias totalled about 24,597,000 desiatinas, of which 13,874,000 desiatinas were personal property while 11,723,000 desiatinas were held by peasant collectives. The villagers who joined in making collective purchases from the Peasants' Land Bank, were usually the previous possessors of small or very moderate-sized holdings; and one may perhaps be justified in drawing from this fact the conclusion that collective purchasing in general — whether or not it was made through the Bank — was strengthening the position of some of the poorer peasants. On the other hand, the distribution of the individual non-allotment-holdings of the peasants in 1905 was such as to leave no doubt that, although a large majority of the purchases as such had been in small amounts, the bulk of the acreage had gone to the larger buyers and had contributed to the strength of those already strong. In 1905, there were less than half a million of these individual non-allotment-holdings, against more than twelve million household-allotments; in other words, only a small proportion of the peasants were concerned in any way with these holdings. Almost two-thirds of the properties in question were ten desiatinas or less in area, but altogether these small properties included less than one-tenth of the non-allotment-land owned individually by the peasants; the remaining third of the properties included nine-tenths of all the acreage. To the class of holdings above 100 desiatinas in size belonged 4.4 per cent of the individual holdings of non-allotment-lands, with 56 per cent of the acreage of these lands. Hence, whatever may be said of the collective holding of non-allotment-lands, the individual holding of such lands was much more highly concentrated than that of the allotments, and served as the clearest of all indications of the existence of economic differences among the peasants.

Another such indication is to be found in the data for the distribution of work-horses. The proportion of households without horses was growing; in 1899–96, 58.7 per cent of the households had two or more horses each, 29.1 per cent had one horse, and 32.2 per cent had none. In the southwestern gubernias, oxen were much used and the dearth of horses has little meaning; but elsewhere the percentage of peasant establishments without horses runs from 4.2 in Kurland to 40.7 in the gubernias of Voronezh and Nizhni Novgorod. In this grain-growing country, the existence of millions of farms without work-animals is a fact that assails the imagination with suggestions of every sort of hardship.

That the situation of the peasantry was especially serious in certain particular regions of European Russia, was demonstrated and emphasized by the Department of Direct Taxes in the materials prepared for the Imperial Commission set up after the turn of the century to inquire into the economic condition of the peasants. The conclusion reached by the Department was that conditions were "extremely unsatisfactory" throughout a broad belt of gubernias stretching along and below the forest-steppe boundary from southwest to northeast and expanding in middle Russia to include the whole Central Agricultural region. But this does not mean that individual differences were absent in this area of special crisis;
in the Central Agricultural guberniia of Tambov, for example, nearly a third of the peasant households had no work-horses, while more than a third had two or more apiece.89

Serfdom was gone, but poverty remained: the mark of it was stamped upon the bodies of the people. The peasants formed the bulk of the population and of course furnished the bulk of the military conscripts, and among all the youths of all classes called for military duty in the years 1899–1901, more than one-fifth were found temporarily or permanently unfit for service.89 Again, the death-rate was higher in the villages than in the cities, and in the first years of the twentieth century the annual rate for European Russia as a whole stood at 3.12 per thousand, against 1.96 in France and 1.6 in England.90 Whole masses of the peasantry were dragging along so near to the margin of subsistence that a crop-failure meant starvation — and so came the great famine of 1891 and the lesser famines of earlier and later date. Whether the general well-being of the peasantry had shown improvement or decline — whether there had been within the peasant mass a tendency to draw together or to draw apart — still, as the day of revolt approached, there was no doubt of the existence in the countryside of a morass of penury sufficiently large, an antithesis between poverty and plenty sufficiently sharp, to give rise to whatever results might legitimately be bred and born of economic misery and economic contrast.

CHAPTER VII
THE PEASANT WORLD

Population and production, taxation and redemption, colonization, industrialization, equalization, differentiation — the color has all been twisted out of such words as these; and how impatiently one turns from them, sometimes, to remember a certain stretch of step-land within a limitless horizon, reclaimed and humanized by intricate strips of peasant cultivation; a certain village of plaster walls and thatch, with the smell of straw-fires drifting from the chimneys; a certain wise old man with deep eyes and the beard and dignity of a prophet, talking of crops and pastures, asking finally whether Americans really walk, feet-upwards, on the underside of the world.

"Not to laugh at the actions of men, nor yet to deplore or detest them, but simply to understand them" — that is all that the historian may strive for, and more than he can at best accomplish. Lines laid down upon cross-section paper will perhaps contribute to this understanding, and in so far as they may do so, they are good; but there is so much of truth that cannot be caught within this net! Historical generalization is not simply what the word implies; it is falsification too, since the truth about the actions of men cannot be compressed, without undergoing in the process a qualitative change. The statistics on the death-rate in the villages — what empty things they are, unless one remember a certain village near Tambov, a certain house with broken windows and rotted thatch, and the sound of wailing that went on all night.

One's task is to try to tell all the truth, but the thing cannot be done. And somehow the method of generalization seems particularly inadequate when one attempts to deal with things so much alive as the household and the commune. More and more, in the post-Emancipation period, the peasants were going away for wage-work, and the conditions which attracted or compelled them to do this were operating on the one hand to dissolve the old structure
of rural life, and on the other hand to stabilize and preserve it. So many temporary absences from the household and the village had in the nature of things a disintegrating influence, but at the same time certain counteracting forces were at work. It was generally believed that the larger households were economically more stable, that they could more easily and profitably divide their forces between farming and wage-work. The earnings of the members, present or absent, belonged to the common fund, and the head of the household would naturally be reluctant to liberate a wage-worker whose earnings contributed to the support of the household. The junior worker might not leave the district without a passport, and the authorities would not issue a passport against the protest of the house-father. If the house-father desired to compel the return of an absent member of the household, the police would deprive the absentee of his passport and send him home.

The government was particularly concerned with the household as a tax-responsible organization, and as the arrears piled up, the official solicitude became more manifest. Under a law of 1886, applying only to repartitional communes, the division of a family and its allotment was made contingent upon the consent of the householder in all but exceptional cases; and now the approval of a two-thirds' vote of the peasant assembly—not of a simple majority, as before—was also to be required. In addition, an attempt was made to provide for the bureaucratic review of each proposal for the division of a family with a repartitional allotment.

In spite of all this, the number of dissolutions actually effected was enormous. Very often the step was taken entirely without the consent of the administrative officials, and toward the end of the century there were frequent expressions of concern over the decline of patriarchal authority and the break-up of the old household system. Actually, the division of old households and the establishment of new ones was apparently running ahead of the growth of the village population; in 1870, the average number of persons in a village household was 6.4; in 1900 it was 6. The latter figure includes only the approximate number of persons actually present in the village about the end of the year 1900; if allowance were made for the number of wage-workers temporarily absent, but still maintaining full membership in rural households, the figure for 1900 would approach much more closely to that for 1870. The old system had not disappeared; the household-communes, large or small (sometimes with even as many as fifty
members), with their joint allotments, their collective enterprises, and their common funds, still continued to form, in law and in practice, the foundation of peasant society. 9

The solicitude of the government for the maintenance of the status quo is shown also in a new limitation placed upon the sale of hereditary allotments: under a law of 1893, such allotments might not be sold to any except peasant purchasers.

In this period the peasant commune, like the household, was subjected to new influences, and to new regulations designed to secure its stability. The alienation of allotment-land by the commune as a body, was restricted more closely than before by a law of 1893 which specified that transactions of this kind involving more than five hundred rubles might be effected only with the approval of certain ministers of the central government. The question of the withdrawal of household-allotments from repartitional tenure and communal control was also revived. Under the Statutes of 1861, any household among the former private serfs might convert its share of the repartitional land into a consolidated hereditary holding, even against the wish of the assembly, if this household first paid in full its share of the redemption-dues. This possibility of acting against the vote of the assembly had never been open to the former State peasants, and from the year 1893 it was closed to the former serfs. In the repartitional communes which owed redemption-payments to the State (whether these communes were composed of State peasants or of former serfs), the separation and consolidation of an allotment hereafter required in every case the consent of the peasant meeting. 7 Inasmuch as the acts of this assembly were subject, after 1889, to review by the zemstvi chief, a local representative of the bureaucracy who was sure to be dominated by the official solicitude for the preservation of the commune, it is apparent that permission to withdraw land was not likely to be easily secured. The path of separation, strait and narrow in the beginning, had since become still more difficult. Down to the end of the year 1906, the total number of individual householders who had pre-paid their share of the redemption-dues and had in this way converted their repartitional allotments into hereditary holdings, was only about one hundred and fifty thousand; and because of the indifference of many of these holders, and the practical obstacles set up by many of the communes, these separations of tenure were very rarely accompanied by a physical consolidation, and the separated allotment therefore still consisted
almost always of a number of strips scattered among those of the repartitional holders, though no longer subject to quantitative re-
adjustment. Further than this, the new hereditary holder usually
did not receive a separate section of the natural pasture or of any
other lands which had previously been in undivided use, but con-
tinued to use such lands in common with his neighbors. In other
words, the individual separations of tenure here described did not
usually involve a thorough-going economic disentanglement of
the holding from the other lands of the repartitional commune,
or was the number of individual separations effected through pre-
redemption, or by other means, really consequential in so vast a
population. However, under the circumstances, it would be diffi-
cult if not impossible to say whether the principal check upon
separation and consolidation was the preference of the peasants
for the old land-system, or the difficulties which stood in the way
of their escaping from it.

Besides the provision for the separation of the allotments of sin-
gle households, there had also been a provision that, by a two-
thirds' vote, any repartitional commune might make a general
division of all its lands into hereditary allotments. But that com-
paratively little use was made of such opportunities as existed for
retail or wholesale dissolution, is suggested by the land-returns for
1877 and 1905; in 1877, in forty-nine gubernias 74.8 per cent of
the peasants-with-allotments were listed as repartitional holders,
while in 1905, in fifty gubernias, this system included 76.7 per
cent of the allotment-holding households; the remainder of the
allotment-holders fell in both cases under the system of hereditary
household tenure. It is known that these returns are not altogether
accurate and that they do not fully reflect the changes which took
place during the period in view, and yet these data are at least in
harmony with other evidence which goes to show that between the
Emancipation and the Revolution of 1905 there was no wide-
spread dissolution of the repartitional tenure. In 1905, in the Bal-
tic gubernias, there was no repartitional tenure; in the western
and southwestern regions only about one-fourth of the peasants
held land under this system, and in the step gubernias next to the
eastward, about two-thirds. Everywhere else — that is, throughout
the whole North, Center, East and Southeast — the repartitional
system was almost completely in control and embraced in each of
the seven census-regions into which this territory was divided, not
less than 96.9 per cent of the peasant households.

The major distinction between repartitional tenure and heredi-
tary tenure was the possibility in the case of the former of a peri-
odic redistribution of the communal lands among the constituent
households. Where such redistributions were not made, the distinc-
tion lost much of its practical significance. If there had been no
official interference with the repartitions, their character and
frequency would have been the best index of the innate vigor or
obsolescence of the commune; and even in the presence of a cer-
tain amount of official manipulation, this same test is still perhaps
the most informing. In a commune where repartitional tenure ex-
ised, the majority required for the ordering of a repartition was
the same as that required for a final dissolution into separate house-
hold plots. That is to say, a two-thirds' vote might bury the system
once for all by a final dissolution, or might, on the other hand, re-
ew that function (of periodic repartition) which showed the
commune most vigorously alive. The manner and frequency of
redistribution were at first wholly within the control of the com-
mune; but in 1893 a new law prescribed that at least twelve years
(four crop-cycles, under the three-field system) must elapse be-
tween distributions. Where reallocations had been more fre-
quent, this provision acted as a check upon the local practice; but
another section of this same law appears to have had the opposite
effect (of stimulating redistribution) in communes where it was
rarely or never initiated by the peasants on their own account.
This section gave the zemskii chiefs a special power over the deci-
sions of the village in this matter; and it appears that these offici-
als very often converted the law's twelve-year limitation into a
positive command, and insisted that the peasants make a new par-
tition where twelve years had elapsed since the last re-deal. Hence
the weight of official influence was on the side of maintaining not
only the system of common holding, but, with restrictions, the
practice of redistribution also — a fundamentally important prac-
tice which tended to check the development of economic inequality
among the peasants. This preventative practice was certainly not
everywhere effective, however, and toward the end of the pre-
ceeding chapter, in the paragraphs on economic differentiation
among the peasantry, something is said of the special conditions
under which inequality in allotment-holding might arise even
within a repartitional commune.

Described in the peasants' phrase, the redistribution took land
from the dead, and gave it to the living — took it, that is to say,
from those households which had diminished in size since the last partition, and assigned it to those which had increased. But the peasants' estimate of the size and land-worthiness of the household had no uniform foundation; it might be based upon the number of males of any age, or the number of workers of both sexes, or the total number of "eaters" in the household, or some combination of these or other factors; and in place of a complete reallocation of the strips in the several fields, there might be simply a slicing-away here, and an addition there, or only a partition of the holdings of a family that had become extinct, or the reallocation of only a few strips to produce a qualitative, but not a quantitative, equalization; or there might even be a minor shifting of persons from one household to another, to produce the same equalizing effect as a reallocation of the lands.  

The rich variety of these customs makes a summary treatment almost impossible. Unfortunately no complete statistical record was kept of the workings of the peasant repartitions, or even of the number of communes which reapportioned their lands, in one way or another, during the decades which followed the Great Reform. There are indications that toward the early 'nineties, repartition was increasingly resorted to, at least among the former State peasants in both European Russia and Siberia, but certainly the practice was by no means universal.

According to an unofficial estimate, the communes which did not practise redistribution, or had made only inconsequential readjustments since the Emancipation, included toward the beginning of the new century something like one-fifth of all those peasant households of European Russia which held their lands in repartitional tenure. A later official estimate would make it appear that more than one-third of such peasant households belonged to communes which made no fundamental redistribution between the granting of their reform allotments and the Revolution of 1905. The accuracy of this last estimate has been called in question, but if it even loosely approximates the truth, it would indicate a considerable degree of inertia in communal life.

But where there was no repartition, even where there existed the hereditary tenure which would not permit it, the roots of the peasant households were still interlocked. The evidence of this fact lay everywhere around the villages, in the very aspect of the fields. The system under which each household held its allotment-land in many (sometimes even a hundred) scattered strips, pre-
here, is clearly indicated by the following table of peasant holdings of non-allotment-lands in 1877 and in 1905:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1877</th>
<th>1905</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Holders</td>
<td>5,788,000 des.</td>
<td>12,671,000 des.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations</td>
<td>765,000 des.</td>
<td>3,074,000 des.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6,553,000 des.</td>
<td>23,642,000 des.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For every five-year period from 1869 to 1897, a decreasing percentage of peasant purchases were individual, and an increasing percentage collective, and the weight of evidence in respect to the purchase and holding of non-allotment-lands thus lies clearly on the side of a strengthening of collective action among the peasants.

It is not to be forgotten that the commune had also its political-administrative side, and that a personal withdrawal from membership required not only the fulfilment of a number of general conditions, but in certain cases a transfer of the allotment-land. This original interlocking of membership with landholding has already been discussed in some detail in the chapter on the Emancipation, but two new developments require to be mentioned here. For one thing, new legal difficulties were placed in the way of the sale or hereditary allotments, by the change made in 1882 in the system of sales-registration and by the law of 1893 which prohibited the purchase of such allotments by non-peasants. On the other hand, with the general increase in land-rents and land-values, and the progressive reduction of the balance due on the redemption-debt, it became somewhat less difficult, economically, to transfer the allotment, or to complete a separate redemption and thus to secure the right to keep the land in case of a personal withdrawal from the commune. Otherwise the conditions governing individual transfers under each of the two forms of tenure remained substantially unchanged, and it is safe to say that the difficulty of getting rid of an overburdened allotment or of realizing the value of a profitable one, continued to be the chief legal obstacle to the personal separation of the landholders from the commune, and helped to make these separations comparatively rare.

Thus far it has been the chief object of this chapter to outline the changes which took place between the Emancipation and the end of the century, in the laws which dealt with the internal relations of the household and of the commune, and to show how these institutions actually changed within this legal framework. The history of the commune was characterized during this period by a comparative stability of membership, by the rarity of dissolution of repartitional tenure, by a still greater rarity of physical consolidations, perhaps by an extension of the practice of repartition, and certainly by an increasing activity in the renting and the purchase of non-allotment-lands. How much of its life the commune derived from official sources, and how much from the desire and urge of the peasantry themselves, it will perhaps be forever impossible to say. Like the question as to whether the commune was official or popular in its origin, this question as to whether it now drew its energy chiefly from above or from below, was at this very period, and has not yet ceased to be, a matter of bitterest controversy. But whatever may have been the primitive and present sources of the commune’s strength, it is beyond dispute that it still played a part of the greatest importance in the life of the peasantry. Whatever the cause, whatever the result, the commune was; for history, that is the outstanding fact.

But collective action was not confined to the communes and land-associations, as functional groups, or to such activities as the holding, renting, purchasing and distributing of the land. Collectivism, in one form or another, also appeared, though much less commonly, in the actual labor of production. In the early nineties, Engel Witte, already powerful in official circles and at that time a partisan of the repartitional commune, said: “In arsels or cooperative groups, the peasants plow the land, and sow, harvest and thresh the grain; . . . sow hay, cut down forests and brushwood; cut reeds, rent land . . . construct enclosures, common threshing floors, grain-kilns, gist-mills, drying-rooms, baths, bars, pasture-enclosures, bridges, dams, roads, ponds, and ditches. In arsels they buy horses and machines, hire blacksmiths, and so forth. Finally, the commune works as a collective group in supplementary non-agricultural enterprises: in hunting, salt-distilling, stone-breaking, lime-extracting, fishing, and so on; and in communes and arsels the peasants build breweries, break stone, construct barriers along the rivers, and set up shelters for use when they are hunting and fishing.”

This rather ill-arranged enumeration by no means exhausts the scope of the villagers’ collective activities. The peasants who
went away to look for agricultural work, usually hired themselves collectively, in labor *artels,* and peasant colonists often combined in the sending of scouts to Siberia, and later in the emigration itself and in the establishment of new settlements. In fact, history cannot go back to the beginnings of peasant collectivism, or measure even approximately the variety and extent of these activities.

The co-operative movement, formally organized and called by this specific name, had its beginnings in Russia in the early sixties, and during the period between the Emancipation and the Revolution of 1905, its development was not especially impressive. At the end of this period, there were in existence about fourteen hundred savings and credit societies, devoted chiefly to peasant needs, and nearly one thousand consumers' groups (about two-fifths of them in the villages). In addition, there were more than eight hundred rural associations organized primarily to educate the population in improved methods of agriculture, but these associations often functioned in the purchase of implements and in the sale of farm-products for the peasants; and finally there existed co-operative creameries and other such productive undertakings, the number of which it is impossible to determine. The traditions and customs of village life had prepared the peasants to fall in quite naturally with these new enterprises, but as yet the co-operative movement gave hardly a hint of the huge development which was soon to follow.

**The Traveller of our own day who has journeyed across-country in Russian peasant wagons; watched the plowing, harvesting, and threshing; eaten from the common bowl, heard the peasant songs, and felt the rhythm of the peasant dances, can hardly help but think of the Russian village as a world apart; and yet times have changed, and already at the end of the nineteenth century many influences were at work to break the circle of the peasants' isolation. Certainly the village had not ceased to be the chief repository of the past: there was ample evidence that this was so, in the primitive land-system; in the organization of the household and the commune; in the peasant folk-lore, with its occasional traces of a panegyric officially abandoned nearly a thousand years ago; in the material arts, which still created many a fine thing in the old tradition—a rich embroidery, a carved stair-rail, a door- or window-frame of skilful brick-work in excellent proportions.**

Some of the peasants still stood apart from the upper classes of society in religion also; the old schismatics and sectarianists persisted in their activities, and the new sect of Shundistya spread the dangerous doctrine that all men are equal and that the lands and goods of this world should be divided equally among them. In spite of the fact that a toleration-law was published in 1883, the government still persecuted many of the dissident communities, even sometimes taking the children from the parents and prohibiting the sectarians from meeting for any kind of religious service.

Still arrayed against all these separatist tendencies, was that great cultural assimilator of races and classes, the Eastern Orthodox Church. Somewhere within almost every horizon its walls and towers were seen (sometimes in the step, when there is not one house or tree or any other thing to break the surface of the land, one sees the domes of half-a-dozen scattered churches, rising from the valleys near and far where their villages are hidden). The Church was carrying on, with steadily increasing reinforcement from the school. In 1897, the village population of European Russia, including those officially so classed but found in the cities at the moment of the census, numbered eighty million persons of all ages; of these, 11,431,000 males and 3,923,000 females were literate. Thus the proportion of literates remained less than one-fifth; the channel of written communication was not very wide, but it was widening, and through this channel the flow of ideas moved almost exclusively in one direction—from the city to the village.

That it was the literate peasants who were doing most to develop the contact with the city, is proved (if it requires proof) by the fact that among those villagers who were found in the towns at the time of the census, the percentage of literacy, in the corresponding age and sex-groups, is very much higher than among the villagers who were registered at their rural homes. Just what may have been the effect upon the village of the peasants' labor-experiments to the cities, it would be difficult to estimate. Very often the migratory laborer was a petty farmer in his own right at home, with a family who kept the farm-work going in his absence. Experience as a hired laborer, side by side with other peasants from distant villages, and with still other workers who were already completely urbanized, may have developed in him something of the proletarian spirit; but it is not to be forgotten that his earnings served very often to maintain, and no doubt some-
times to strengthen, his own position as a farmer. What was he, then—a farmer or a laborer? And what might one expect his economic and social attitudes to be?

The duality of this situation was less conspicuous in the Central Agricultural gubernias, from which the periodic labor-migration moved chiefly toward the grain-fields farther south. In all the gubernias below the forest boundary, there was much less contact with the cities than in the forest region, much less opportunity for the infiltration of new customs and new ideas. Specifically, there was less experience of the iron discipline of the machine and of the mass organization of the factory, less opportunity for the inoculation of the revolutionary theories which were finding their way underground along the city streets. If this discipline and this knowledge were the fundamental stuff of revolution, would the jacobie then break out first and burn most hotly in the forest villages which sent their surplus labor to the towns?

But perhaps there would be no more great uprisings. After the outbreaks which followed the announcement of the terms of the Emancipation, there followed a time of comparative quiet in the villages; a police-report of the period tabulates three hundred and thirty-two peasant disturbances which occurred in the Empire during the years 1881–1888, and then remarks that apparently "... peasant disorders in Russia have at the present time reached a more or less stable norm, in respect both to their number and to their territorial distribution. There is no reason to fear a strong development of this elemental phenomenon of the people's life—at least not in the immediate future; but on the other hand, there is no ground for the hope that the number of peasant disorders will decrease of itself, unless there is a real change in the existing organization of peasant life. In the present extent of their development, the peasant disorders do not threaten the State with any special danger; but because of certain of their characteristics— their persistence, and their infectiousness—they should be given attention immediately and in good time." 40

The peasant movement did not remain forever at this stable norm; in the first years of the twentieth century the jacobie again flamed out across a wide horizon. It might be said that the Revolution of 1905 began in 1902, but it will be appropriate to postpone the account of the preliminary terror, and to ask now what had been happening, all this time, in the manor-house where the old barin was living out his span of years.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DECLINE OF THE NOBILITY AND THE RISE OF THE THIRD ESTATE

In view of the large degree of control which the landed nobility exercised over the Emancipation, and the heavy, sometimes ruinous, terms which were imposed, by them or in their behalf, upon the peasants, it might perhaps have been expected that the Great Reform would introduce a period of prosperity for the manor lords of Russia. However, in the long run at least, such was certainly not the case. If the landlords were most often responsible for the initiation of redemption proceedings, it was partly because they were anxious to realize at an early date the over-charges to be exacted from the peasantry, and partly because they were urgently in need of funds to pay their debts and to set their farming operations on a more thoroughly capitalistic basis.1 The extinction of their debts to the treasury alone, took nearly half of the advances made by the government on redemption-account during the first ten years of this huge operation.2 In the black-soil region, where the forced-labor system had prevailed and the peasants had usually employed their own horses and implements in the cultivation of the manorial fields,3 the landlord's authority was so diminished during the period of "temporary obligation" that it was sometimes difficult to secure the performance of this work;4 and once redemption was begun and the peasants were relieved of corvée, the southern landlords found themselves not only on a new footing in the matter of labor, but also without the inventory necessary for the cultivation of their lands. In the non-black-soil gubernias, where the landlords had drawn their income for the most part not from the direct manorial exploitation of the reluctant soil, or at second hand from its exploitation by dues-paying peasants, but rather from levies on the non-agricultural earnings of these peasants—here, when the government had advanced the sum of the redemption-payments, there was little to tempt the