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THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN FAMINE OF 1891-92:

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

by

James Young Simms, Jr.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1976

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Arthur P. Mendel, Chairman
Professor Horace W. Dewey
Professor Daniel R. Fusfeld
Associate Professor William Rosenberg

To my parents, wife and children

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Preface

Historians--both Western and Tsarist--consider the Russian Famine of 1891-1892 one of the most dramatic events in the history of Russia in the last half of the nineteenth century. In many ways, they view it as being as important as the Crimean War in denoting a turning point in the domestic-social-economic-political life of Russia. Until recently, however, the famine has remained virtually unexplored by scholars who have expressed their confidence in the significance--especially economic--of that event. This dissertation is an attempt to fill this void in Russian historical scholarship, by examining in depth the actual impact of the Russian Famine of 1891-1892.[1]

My interest in the Russian Famine of 1891-1892 began with a Master of Arts thesis "The Russian Famine of 1891-1892: A Chapter in Russian-American Relations." The limited examination of primary and secondary sources, in doing research on this topic, convinced me that the famine had had great social and economic consequences for Russia. Thus my conclusions concurred with those held by historians and observers of the famine. However, subsequent research into the problem tended to suggest another, somewhat startling, conclusion, i.e., that the impact of the famine was not nearly as significant as alleged, and this in turn prompted further investigation to prove the new hypothesis.

That investigation led to the conclusion that the famine of 1891-

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[1]This statement is correct despite the recent publication of a study of the famine by Richard G. Robbins, Famine in Russia 1891-92 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), whose emphasis pertains almost exclusively to government reaction to the famine, and the efficacious way in which the government met the crisis. The economic-social-political consequences were not described and indeed were not part of what he set out to study.

92 itself did not have any real economic significance--long-term or short-term for Tsarist Russia. Indeed, there was "hunger" in Russia, but not starvation. Contrary to majority opinion, the economy of Russia in 1891 and in 1892 felt very little impact from the famine. While the government suffered losses due to the famine, they were quickly recovered. Thus in terms of the stability and solvency of the government, society and economy, the famine had little impact. Nevertheless, the famine did have a very great impact on Russia.

The impact of the famine, and thereby its significance, is to be found in the perception of the contemporary and the historian of what the famine was and did. The reality of an historical event and the perception of that event can be two very different things. The famine is an excellent example of where the contemporary image and the reality of the event are in conflict. It is true that in history the contemporary perception of an event is the basis for action, and thus, far more important in the short-run than the reality of the incident. In the search for historical "truth," however, one must separate the real from fantasy. The articulate left of Russia in the 1890's was seemingly quite unable to separate the real from the ideal, especially in terms of the famine. From the hindsight of the present, it is clear that the famine did have a great impact on articulate Russia, in particular the most articulate segment of Russian society, those alienated by the system, i.e., the Marxists and the Populists.

The evidence shows that the perception of the famine by the "left" was warped because of their overt prejudice against the Tsarist system. The famine confirmed the biases of the older generation of the intelligentsia, such as Plekhanov, Nikolai-on, Lavrov, and Stepniak. In addi-

tion, the famine appealed to biases of the younger generation, such as Struve, Martov, and Dan, by convincing them of the accuracy of the judgments made by their elders. For these young men, the famine was the obvious proof of the failure of the Tsarist system, which the left had been espousing all during the 1880's.

The "left", however, was not in universal agreement concerning the implications of the famine; the famine was "all things to all people." Virtually this entire side of the political spectrum viewed the famine as a priori evidence that Russian agriculture was in a state of crisis and inevitable decline. But some people, essentially the Populists, said that the famine proved that capitalism could not come to Russia because Russian agriculture was so destitute as to be unable to form the market necessary for the development of capitalism. For a number of Marxists, the famine demonstrated how backward Russia was and the necessity of industrialization in order to bring Russia up to the level of the West. This, of course, is the response taken by the Tsarist government under Witte's direction. Finally, Lenin and Nikolai-on see the famine as proof of the poverty of the countryside which is a result of the development of capitalism in Russia. In this sense, the significance of the famine lies in the relationship of the famine to the various models of Russia's development visualized by the contemporaries. To repeat, irrespective of the model, the famine was evidence for a premise common to all these models namely, that Russia was in the throes of an ever deepening agricultural crisis.

The image of Russia's agricultural development, the famine and the rural crisis held by the articulate "left" of Russia has unfortunately been inherited by modern historians, particularly vis-a-vis the famine

as both cause and effect of Russia's agricultural crisis. They see the famine as largely a result of the agricultural decline of Russia at the turn of the century, and at the same time argue that the famine had a significant detrimental impact on agriculture which subsequently culminated in the Revolution of 1905. It is clear, therefore, that the famine is intimately connected in the minds of contemporaries and modern historians to Russia's great agricultural crisis.

Since the modern historian and the contemporary of the famine of 1891-1892 have established a relationship between the famine and the agricultural crisis, an analysis of the validity of that connection is included in this dissertation. The evidence suggests that the perception of the agricultural crisis is as incorrect as the image of the famine. Russia did not experience a deepening agricultural crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. Quite the contrary, the evidence strongly suggests that conditions in Russia, including agriculture, were improving rather than deteriorating. The implications of these findings are obvious for any student of nineteenth century Russian history, for these findings bring into question the accepted interpretation of the outbreak of the Revolution of 1905.

Therefore, this study will examine the famine from two perspectives: (1) the impact of the famine in the short-term, and (2) the relationship of the famine to the agricultural crisis of the 1890's. It should be pointed out that the interpretation found herein does not involve the introduction of radically new evidence; in fact, the conclusions are based on the same evidence used to support the view of the famine and the agricultural crisis generally accepted by modern Scholarship.

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CHAPTER I

THE RUSSIAN FAMINE OF 1891-1892

"Such an extreme measure has not been adopted since the Crimean War."[1] The Times.

"and there is a kind of heaviness in the head and heart. Spring, Spring! Long will I remember this spring with snow bound villages, and cramped huts filled with peasants raising their hands to be checked off for aid."[2] V. Korolenko.

"Yes, God forbid another such year."[3] V. Korolenko.

"Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa"[4] D. Mordovtsev.

Famine has constituted a serious threat to the existence of man throughout history. By 1800, however, the threat of starvation or famine had become a historical relic, and was no longer a factor in almost all of the western world. Crop-failures as such had become a rarity. But, exceptions can be found, and in the western world the major exception to the rule was the Russia of the Tsars.

Crop-failures and famine have plagued Russia throughout her long history, being so severe on occasion as to bring about changes in the ruling faction, e.g., the downfall of the Godunovs. The chronic

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[1] The Times (London), August 12, 1891, p. 5.

[2] Vladimir Korolenko, V Golodnyi God: Nabliudeniia Razmyshleniia, i Zametki (Petrograd: Tipographiia Pervoi Trudovoi Arteli, 1915), p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 53.

[4] D. Mordovtsev, "Deistvitel'nyia Prichiny Samarskogo Goloda," Otechestvennyia Zapiski, No. 4 (April, 1874), 365.

famine problem of Russia is indisputably demonstrated by the frequency that famine or major crop-failure occurred in Russia. From 1100-1900, Russia averaged seven to eight major famines per century. In the nineteenth century, serious famines,[1] more accurately called crop-failures since actual starvation was very infrequent, extending over several provinces of the huge Empire were reported in 1801, 1808, 1811, 1812, 1833, 1840, 1860, and 1861. Russia was so vast that minor crop-failures affecting only one or a few provinces occurred almost yearly.[2] Indeed, the Russians had two words for famine: (1) golodovka--meaning, a localized famine, and (2) golod--referring to a major famine.[3]

A brief survey of harvests for the years before and after the crop-failure--"famine" of 1891 also reveals that Russia had a constant harvest problem whether large or small. From 1875, hardly a year passed without a crop-failure--"famine", occurring in one or more provinces.[4] In 1885, the province of Kazan had a severe famine. In 1888, crop-failures occurred in Orenburg, the Volga provinces and

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[1]Modern scholars continue to use the word famine, even though "crop-failure" would be more appropriate.

[2]E. J. Dillon, "Famine in Russia," The Fortnightly Review, L (November, 1891), 637. See also H. H. Fisher, The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1927), p. 475; and Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, Efron and Brockhaus, IX (1893) 102-104.

[3]E. J. Dillon, Russian Characteristics (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1892), p. 560. E. J. Dillon was very familiar with conditions in Russia, being a close friend and adviser to Witte. See Theodor Von Laue, "The High Cost and the Gamble ofthe Witte System," Readings in Russian History, ed. Sidney Harcave (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), p. 66.

[4]Fisher, p. 475.

southern districts.[1] The following data shows the distribution of good and bad harvests in twenty-five provinces within the Black Earth region from 1889-1898, compared to the average harvest of the previous fifteen years: 1889--eight provinces had harvests below 50% of the average, seven 50-75% of the average; 1890--two below 50%, five 50-75%; 1891--thirteen below 50%, six 50-75%; 1892--six below 50%, eight 50-75%; 1893-1896 was a period of good harvests; 1897--four below 50%, eight 50-75%; 1898--five below 50%, one 50-75%.[2] As suggested by the above data, the most disastrous crop-failure--"famine" in the last half of the nineteenth century was that of 1891-1892.

The famine of 1891-1892 began in the late spring and early summer of 1891 and lasted until the spring harvests of the following year. The famine was a result of the failure of both the winter and summer harvests in 1891. The winter harvest was unsatisfactory due to the extremely dry weather of the autumn of 1890. In many instances the fields had little growth, and in other cases the fields were left unsown. In addition, the winter of 1890-1891 was mild and there was little snow to cover the winter crops to protect them from the cold and the frost of the winter. In the spring and summer, a severe drought destroyed the spring crops and thereby ruined the summer

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[1]E. J. Dillon, "Russia Finance: The Racking of the Peasantry," The Fortnightly Review, XLIX (February, 1891), 198.

[2]Geoffrey Drage, Russian Affairs (London: John Murray, 1904), p. 135.

harvest.[1] The total harvest of all cereals in 1891 was only 80% of the average annual harvest of the years 1883-1887.[2] The harvest of the two principal cereals, rye and wheat, was drastically affected, being 63% and 79% respectively of a normal year.[3] Within the famine district itself the deficit in the harvest of cereals between 1891 and 1890 approached 50%.[4]

Closer examination of the harvest of 1891 reveals that not all of the European provinces of Russia suffered a crop-failure. European Russia was divided into thirteen agricultural zones in 1891, and the crop-failure per se was located in the Central Agricultural, Middle Volga, and Lower Volga regions--essentially the Central Black Earth district. On the other hand, the harvest of grain in such areas as Little Russia, New Russia, Southwestern Russia, the Baltic provinces,

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[1]See Trudy: Imperatorskago Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva. "Besedy I," Vol. I (St. Petersburg, 1892), p. 72, 75, 80, 81. Cited hereafter as Trudy: IVEO.; U. S., Congress, House, The Miscellaneous Documents of the House of Representatives, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., 1891-92, "The Russian Farm Products in 1891," XXXVIII, 321-22. Cited hereafter as Documents of the House of Representatives; Charles E. Smith, "The Famine in Russia," The North American Review, CLIV (May, 1892), 544.

[2]M. E. Levasseur, La Récolte de 1891 en Russie. A report to the National Society of Agriculture of France, December 23, 1891 (Paris: Chamerot and Revouard, 1891), p. 27; The Times (London), December 28, 1891, p. 3.

[3]Documents of the House of Representatives, "Grain Crops of the World, 1891," XXXVII, 163. For similar data, see also Levasseur, p. 27.

[4]Levasseur, p. 38. See Tables 3 and 4, p. 245, which point out the significant shortage in the harvest of cereals in Russia for 1891.

and the northern Caucausus were fair to excellent.[1] The harvest was so good in these regions that Vyshnegradsky argued that Russia would have sufficient food to carry Russia until the next harvest.[2]

As the initial rumors of a major crop-failure began to spread throughout Russia, and even the world, a great deal of confusion ensued concerning the success or failure of the harvest of 1891. In the middle of May, 1891, newspapers and periodicals had begun to talk about the existence of a famine in Russia.[3] Nevertheless, the early crop estimates were very contradictory. In May, the official governmental statements were favorable concerning the harvest prospects, whereas the trade journals of Europe were rather skeptical about these predictions.[4] In early June, the government acknowledged that the prospects for the coming harvest were bad, as well as the fact that the winter crop harvest had been dismal.[5] As of June 19, 1891, the Tsarist government officially recognized the existence of the famine, and the Minister of Interior formally asked all governors to report

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[1]Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104; Documents of the House of Representatives, "Grain Crops of the World, 1891," XXXVII, 172-74; Documents of the House of Representatives, "Russian Farm Products in 1891," XXXVIII, 321-22.

[2]G. Plekhanov, "Vserossiiskoe Razorenie," Sotsial Demokrat, IV (Geneva, 1892), 82; Ivan Sergeevskii, Golod v Rossii: So Vvedeniem i Noslesloviem P. Lavrov. (Geneva: Published by the Society of Old Populists, 1892), p. 27; Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104. For a more detailed discussion of this point see Chapter II.

[3]Sergeevskii, p. 12.

[4]U. S., Department of Agriculture Reports, Reports of the Statistician, "Report on the Condition of Winter Grain," No. 84 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), pp. 222-23.

[5]Free Russia, Vol. I, No. 12 (New York: July, 1891), 3.

on the condition of the harvest within their respective provinces.[1] In early July, reports coming from Russia indicated that in a number of provinces there was great destitution and people were indeed starving.[2] Nevertheless, even as late as August, 1891, the severity of the forthcoming tragedy remained in doubt, although everyone agreed that a crop-failure had occurred.[3] This ambivalence concerning the degree of the tragedy was found even within the liberal press of Russia, which argued that the most accurate data had reduced the size of the shortage expected that year.[4]

The Tsarist government began to consider taking appropriate action vis-a-vis the crop-failure toward the end of June, 1891, when the government initiated a program of action and involvement which was to last until midsummer 1892.[5] In early July, Sergei Witte made a suggestion, which was enacted, that the railroads lower their inter-provincial rates, to facilitate the transport of grain to the people. Also in early July, the Minister of Imperial Domains promulgated a circular which stated that the people could freely avail themselves of the pastures and gather mushrooms and wild fruit on the imperial

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[1]Ibid., Vol. II, No. 1 (New York: August, 1891), 12. For the most complete discussion of government efforts to deal with the famine, see Richard G. Robbins, Famine in Russia 1891-1892 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

[2]The Times (London), July 8, 1891, p. 5.

[3]U. S., Department of Agriculture Reports, Reports of the Statistician, "Report on the Condition of Crops," No. 87 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), p. 411.

[4]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, Vol. IV, 1892, 69-70.

[5]Sergeevskii, p. 27.

estates.[1] In August, the government authorized the purchase of grain at current prices both for seed and as food for the starving peasants.[2] Finally, also in August, the government took its first drastic action in dealing with the famine when the Tsar issued an Imperial Ukaz prohibiting the exportation of rye, rye meal and every kind of bran. This measure, promulgated 11 August became effective on August 27, and closed all the ports on the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Sea of Azov as well as the western land frontier to the shipment of rye.[3] The magnitude of this action was not lost as the London Times stated on 12 August 1891, "such an extreme measure has not been adopted since the Crimean War."[4] Other cereals could still be sold abroad, in particular wheat, which was Russia's main cereal export.

The severity and extent of the famine provoked additional Imperial decrees prohibiting the exportation of other cereals. On September 8, 1891, the Tsar ordered that the exportation of "spirits" be stopped.[5] The second major Ukaz restricting grain exports appeared on October 28, while the Tsar was vacationing in Fredensborg, Denmark. In addition to extant restrictions on rye and rye flour, the government placed an embargo upon the exportation of potatoes and all other

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[1] The Times (London), July 8, 1891, p. 5. See also Russia, Polnoe Sobranie Zaknonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Vol, XI, 1891 (St. Petersburg: Tipographii Gosudarstvennoi, 1894), 545.

[2] "The Russian Famine," Spectator, LXVII (August 15, 1891), 215.

[3] Russia, Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Vol. XI, 1891, 545-46.

[4] The Times (London), August 12, 1891, p. 5.

[5] Russia, Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Vol. XI, 1891, 552.

cereals and their by-products except wheat.[1] Some three weeks later, November 15, the Tsar included wheat on the list of restricted exports, and thereby ended all exports of cereal foods from Russia.[2] Collectively, these decrees were significant not only for Russia, but also for the European grain market because Russia was a major grain exporter and the world's second largest exporter of wheat.[3]

The famine raged in south-central Russia through the fall, winter, and spring of 1891-1892. It reached its worst depths in that winter, which was unusually severe. Through mid-winter the other nations of Europe were still confused as to the severity of the crop-failure. An editorial that appeared in the Manchester Guardian on January 23, 1892, explains the situation.

> The most striking fact about the famine in Russia is that so little is known about it. If the statements that have been made are trustworthy, a whole population, to be counted by millions, is in danger of starvation. Such a calamity is beyond the power of the imagination to realize. It ought to call forth the combined exertions of all civilized nations to avert it. But Europe is accustomed to know nothing of the inside of Russia, and does not greatly distress itself over sufferings of which the accounts may be exaggerated.[4]

By late spring and early summer of 1892, the famine conditions had waned perceptibly. As the situation improved the government began to lift the restrictions on the export of cereals. On May 12, 1892, the Tsar lifted the restrictions on the exportation of maize

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[1]Ibid., 573-74; U. S., Department of State, Dispatches from U. S. Consuls in St. Petersburg, 1803-1906, No. 181 (November 4, 1891).

[2]Ibid., pp. 589-90.

[3]Peter I. Lyashchenko, History of the National Economy of Russia, trans. L. M. Herman (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949), p. 518.

[4]Manchester Guardian, January 23, 1892, p. 7.

and oats.[1] This constituted the first official indication that the famine was abating.[2] An Ukaz of June 16, virtually ended prohibition on grain exports because it permitted the exportation of all cereals except rye and bran of any type.[3] July 1, 1892, probably marks the end of the "famine," because as of that date the government refused to accept any more donations for famine relief.[4] Russia's problems were not over, however, for as the famine dissipated, a cholera epidemic began.

One of the difficulties in studying the famine of 1891-1892 is to form an accurate estimate of its extent--in area and population. In a dispatch of October 22, 1891, the American ambassador to Russia, Charles Emory Smith, stated that "the great question of the moment . . . is to know the extent of the calamity. The estimates made by the different branches of the administration differ sensibly among themselves."[5] The estimates of the number of provinces suffering from the famine varied from thirteen to thirty, although the consensus of

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[1]Russia, Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Vol. XII, 1892, 317.

[2]U. S. Department of State, Russia, Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 183 (May 16, 1892). Cited hereafter as Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White.

[3]Russia, Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, Vol. XII, 1892, 395.

[4]Free Russia, Vol. II, No. 2 (New York: September, 1891), 7.

[5]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 183 (May 16, 1892).

sources seems to be sixteen to eighteen.[1] A. Vendrikh, the government official who supervised the emergency grain shipments via the Tsar's railroads during the famine, stated that in the summer of 1891 seventeen provinces were in a state of famine.[2] The lists of the provinces which constituted the famine district vary, although there is general agreement on fifteen or sixteen. Pravitelsvennyi Vestnik on February 24, 1892, listed the following provinces within the famine district: Kazan, Nizhni-Novgorod, Orenburg, Orel, Penza, Perm, Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Tambov, Tobolsk, Tula, Ufa, Viatka, and Voronezh--all part of the Eastern Black Earth Zone.[3] Ambassador Smith's list essentially agrees with the above, although he separates the provinces into two groups, those who suffered complete crop-failure and those that endured a partial failure. The thirteen provinces that suffered a general famine were: Kazan, Nizhni-Novgorod, Orenburg, Penza, Riazan, Samara, Saratov, Simbirsk, Tambov, Tula, Ufa, Viatka, and Voronezh.

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[1]For example see: Levasseur, p. 35, who says 13 provinces suffered from famine; Free Russia, Vol. III, No. 4 (New York: November, 1892), 6, and Olga Novikov, Russian Memories (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1917), p. 127 mention 16 provinces; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 170, and "Vnutrennee Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, I (February, 1892), 852 mention 17 provinces; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 423, and I. Gofitetter, "Vodka ili Khleb," Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 180, and I. Korsakov, Golod v Sovietskoi Rossii i Ego Prichiny (Iur'ev: K. Mattison, 1922), p. 42 mention 18 provinces; "Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891), 222 mentions 22; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 65 mentions 22+; Free Russia, Vol. II (August, 1891), p. 3 mentions 26; and Leonid Shishko, Gore Russkago Pakharya (St. Petersburg, 1902), p. 8 mentions 30.

[2]Alfred Vendrikh, Otchet po Uprovleniya Perevozkami (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Putei Soobshcheniya, 1896), p. 2.

[3]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 542.

The partially damaged provinces were: Kursk, Olonets, Orel, Perm, and Taurida.[1]

The majority opinion of articulate society in Russia was that the famine was a "terrible calamity."[2] Plekhanov stated that "everyone is agreed that the tragedy, which has overtaken our country this year, is huge and unparalleled in the annals."[3] Two of the leading liberal journals, the Russkoe Bogatstvo and the Vestnik Evropy, also reported that the famine of 1891-92 was indeed exceptional in scale over previous crop-failures that had occurred since the Emancipation of the serfs.[4] Even the so-called arch enemy of the people, Count Sergei Witte, refers to the tragedy of 1891-92 as that "terrible famine."[5] There were, however, a few voices who claimed that the famine might not have been as serious as alleged.[6]

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[1]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, Vol. 42, No. 142 (January 11, 1892). See also F. Stefanovski, Materialy dlya Izucheniya Svoistv "Golodnago" Khleb; Dannyia po Izsledovanniye Obraztsov, Sobrannykh v 1891-92 v Volzhko-Kamskom Krai. (Kazan: University of Kazan, 1893), p. 61; Leon Dru, La Disette en Russie en 1891 et L'Exposition Francaise de Moscou. A report given to the National Society of Agriculture of France on December 16, 1891. (Paris: Chamerot and Renouard, 1891), p. 4; Levasseur, p. 35 and Plehkanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 65, for similar lists of provinces within the famine district.

[2]Free Russia, II (New York: August, 1891), 3.

[3]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 65.

[4]To cite just a few of the available references, see: "Obezpechenie Narodnago Prodovol'stviya v Svyazi c Khlebnoi Promsyshlennost'u," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (March, 1892), 126; "Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 391, 394.

[5]Abraham Yarmolinsky, trans. and ed., The Memoirs of Count Witte (Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday and Page, 1921), p. 48.

[6]V. A. Troinitskii, "Neurozhai v Tobol'skoi Gubernii 1891," Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 542. To be discussed more fully below.

The famine region covered an immense area of Russia, lying basically to the east and south of Moscow. From north to south, it extended 400 to 500 miles, and even further from east to west.[1] Using only the thirteen provinces that Smith designated as part of the famine district, the area stricken by dearth comprised an area one-third larger than Germany in 1891, almost double the size of France, and equal to the entire eastern seaboard of the United States from Georgia to Maine.[2] If one includes the five partially damaged provinces within the famine district, it encompasses an area equal to the Mid-West, from Ohio to North Dakota.[3] In the context of area alone, this was a tragedy of immense proportions.

Estimates as to the size of the population strickened by the disaster vary depending upon the source, the more liberal the persuasion the greater the figures. The population of the famine area was between 30-40 million people, depending upon how many provinces one includes in the famine district.[4] Some of the sources claim that virtually the entire population was in need of food. For example, Plekhanov argued that 40,000,000 people required provisioning on the

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[1]U. S., Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, No. 120, (October 22, 1891), p. 746.

[2]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, Vol. 42, No. 142 (January 11, 1892); Levasseur, p. 35.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Smith, The North American Review, (May, 1892), 542. See also: William Barnes Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity: The Russian Famine; An Appeal for the Russian Peasant (London: F. Griffiths, 1922), pp. 2, 6; Levasseur, p. 35; Vendrikh, p. 2.

part of the state.[1] This estimate seems to reflect political bias rather than historical accuracy. The government bureaucrat, A. Vendrikh, stated that only approximately 13,000,000 people, or 39% of the population of the famine district actually received government aid.[2] There seems to be a consensus on this figure in that a number of the contemporary newspapers and periodicals stated that between 13,000,000 and 15,000,000 people needed aid from the state.[3] Thus, again in terms of the number of people who were in great need, the famine-crop-failure constituted a disaster for Russia.

The preceding discussion has attempted to outline the physical limits of the famine of 1891-92, in terms of area and masses of people on relief. However, it is not "cold" data that engenders the kind of massive public response, in behalf of the starving people of Russia, that took place in Russia during that terrible winter. It was the personal--the individual description--of conditions which greatly stimulated famine relief in Russia and in England and the United States. Thus in order to understand the very important question of famine relief, one must first examine conditions in the famine district which certainly played a great role in shaping contemporary articulate society's image of Tsarist Russia, both in terms of famine relief and

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[1]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 65; See also: Sergeevskii, pp. 14, 31; "Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (1891), 227; Free Russia, III (November, 1892), 6.

[2]Vendrikh, p. 2.

[3]Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X, (1891), 183; Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, Vol. 42, No. 142 (January 11, 1892); Dru, p. 4; Steveni, p. 2.

the long-term view of the future of the Tsarist state.

The famine received tremendous coverage in the media of the day--the newspapers, periodicals and, subsequently, books. A cursory examination of the literature would quickly demonstrate this statement, this being in fact the safest generalization that can be made about the famine. The famine was such "big news" that it literally drove the discussion of a possible Franco-Russian detente, based on the visit of the French fleet to the Kronstadt Naval Base in July, 1891, from the pages of the newspapers.[1] With this kind of coverage, which created additional interest in the famine, news about this event and conditions in Russia were readily available to any literate person in Russia, England, and the United States.[2]

As one might expect, Russian periodicals devoted considerable time and energy in covering the famine. As early as June, 1891, reports of hunger and actual death from starvation began to filter in from the famine areas.[3] In an article in Vestnik Evropy for October, 1891 Vladimir Solov'ev states that everywhere the peasants eat, instead of bread, a mixture of substances made into bread, in which rye meal comprised only about 20%. He also states that the substances added to this meal were designed only mechanically to

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[1]"Inostrannoe Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, VI, No. 12 (December, 1891), 828.

[2]My research has shown that interest in the famine was virtually world wide. This is proven by the fact that donations for famine relief came from France, Germany, England, and the United States. See below p. 59 ff. Even people in South Africa followed events in Russia. See Free Russia, II (September, 1891), 8-9.

[3]Sergeevskii states that at the beginning of the summer the press of Russia began writing about the famine, p. 21. This apparently took place as early as mid-May, 1891.

fill the stomach and thereby cheat hunger.[1] This "hunger bread" was one of the main items described by observers in order to stress the horror of starvation in the famine district, in that the starving peasant made bread out of whatever was available. Among the ingredients found in this bread were wild arroch, straw, leaves, bark, ground acorns, bits of potato, and sometimes rye flour.[2]

The peasant also made "hunger bread" from a weed called goosefoot--in Russian lebeda.

> They make one pood of lebeda with boiling water--the result is something like mud, with a heavy smell,--then they empty the meal and bake bread. The result is a bread with an earthy color, with an unpleasant heavy smell. They say, that if they eat this bread warm, then one goes quite out of his head; dogs and cats do not eat it, and chickens die from it. . . .[3]

> In the hut occupied by Timothy Metchariakof I was shown some lebeda flour which the peasants often mix with rye or maize flour thinking that it gives nourishment to the bread. The fact that there are quantities of lebeda this winter is another sign of famine. Whenever the crops fail the weed from which the grains of lebeda are thrashed is found in abundance.
>
> In spite of what the peasants say about satisfying properties of these seeds, the doctors consider the flour made from them most injurious to the health. All sorts of stomach complaints can be traced to the consumption of bread of which it is an ingredient.[4]

In the November issue of the Vestnik Evropy one finds the following descriptions of famine conditions:

> With a large part of the peasantry there is

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[1]Vladimir C. Solov'ev, "Narodnaya Beda i Obshchestvennaya Pomoshch," Vestnik Evropy, V (October, 1891), 780.

[2]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 546.

[3]Cited by Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 66.

[4]Novikov, p. 133.

> enough bread for only a month or two, and that only with mixing to the meal--goosefoot, whereas with some there is nothing at all . . .; in general poverty comes like an invasion. . . .[1]
>
> The need here is terrible, . . .; the people eat what animals refuse to eat. Bread is prepared from goosefoot, with a mixture of chaff and a small quantity of rye.[2]
>
> In certain localities . . . the need has reached a terrible degree; the population is nourished by bread, resembling earth, and cruelly suffer from the usual satellite of national hunger--typhus.[3]

This same article stresses the loss of livestock because of starvation or because cattle and horses were sold at ridiculously low prices due to the shortage of and the high cost of feed.[4]

The Russkoe Bogatstvo, for February, 1892, presented the following picture of conditions in the northern districts of Samara, where the situation was very aggravated.

> In one of any number of villages the situation is personally well-known to me. In the village are 49 householders. At the present time 20 of these householders have sold everything they have: poultry, horses, cattle, sheep, everything except a few hens. From the remaining households 15 are on the same path. The last 14 are able to maintain their cattle. In addition to everything else there is typhus. In December, 35 souls are bedridden, victims of the typhus epidemic, the need, the exhaustion becomes prolonged. The people waste away. . . . I saw these gloomy, as if limpid, emaciated people; I looked into these large, wide-opened eyes. The people waste away before my eyes, they continue to waste away in the spring, and together with the snow, many will

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[1]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 417. Lebeda or goosefoot was the most frequently mentioned component in hunger-bread. See: Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 66-67; Korolenko, p. 354. Sergeevskii, p. 11; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 174.

[2]Ibid., p. 418. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., pp. 417-18; Dru, p. 7.

forever leave this inhospitable land.[1]

In the preceding month, the editors of the Russkoe Bogatstvo noted the widespread newspaper accounts of the description of conditions in the famine district.[2] This particular issue stresses how the peasants were forced to sell livestock, personal property, and even the "braids" of the old women in order to acquire food. In fact, things were so bad in one of the villages of Orlov province, that one observer was unable to find bread made even from goosefoot. This same observer also testified to the fact that peasants simply gave up hope and "laid down" to await death.[3]

In Perm Gubernia it was reported that masses of peasants from the villages, dressed in rags, flocked to Ekaterinburg to beg for bread. They had fled from the villages in which the peasant had sold his household articles, cattle, and clothing.[4] "Here is a characteristic case in the village of Prokrovsky, 80 versts from Ekaterinburg: a mother of 4 children went to a priest and confessed, and said, that she intends to slaughter the children, since she is not able to watch them die from hunger. The priest gathered something and went to feed them, but was too late: after they ate three of the children died from

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[1]"Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 150. For additional evidence on this general subject see also: N. A. Karyshev, "Prodovol'stvennoe Delo i Sel'sko-Khoziaistvennoe Strakhovanie," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 2; M. Stasulevich, "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, No. 2 (March, 1892), 442, 444.

[2]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 174.

[3]Ibid., pp. 174-75. [4]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 66.

convulsions."[1]

Among the many people to visit the famine district and subsequently to write about his experiences was Vladimir Korolenko. His book, V Golodnyi God, contains numerous poignant accounts of what he witnessed in the famine district. Korolenko himself says that in traveling in the famine district an infinte number of examples appeared before him of the terrible suffering, so that he filled whole pages of his notebook with them. He also points out that in order not to bore the reader, he would cite only those incidents expecially engraved on his memory.[2] Within the pages of the book, one finds descriptions of a child so weak that he vomits the very food he has just eaten,[3] an urchin trying to find forage for his starving horse, the boy being pale, emaciated and having a scab-like crust on his lips,[4] beggars traveling from village to village seeking food for their families--"and you know they also love their wives and children,"[5] a visit to a chimneyless hut, with the master suffering from syphillis, two horribly thin women, one pregnant and the other holding a child, and in bed asleep is a 7 year old girl who had walked 24 versts to a village to beg bread. After the visit to the latter hut, Korolenko states, "I refused to go into another hut."[6]

Begging it would seem had become a way of life within the famine

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[1]Ibid., p. 67. Similar descriptions are found also on p. 66 and 68.

[2]Korolenko, p. 355. [3]Ibid., p. 354. [4]Ibid., p. 222.

[5]Ibid., p. 233.

[6]Ibid., p. 242. For additional descriptions see: pp. 353-56, pp. 220-22, pp. 239-42.

district. Korolenko recounts being in a hut when two boys, age 9 and 5 entered.

> The elder boy took off his cap, his gaze wandered till he found the holy image on the wall; then he made the sign of the cross in an earnest orderly manner, and said, in a recitative, the usual beggaring prayer.
>
> The younger . . . repeated his movements and the words of the prayer, as if it were a lesson: . . .
>
> "Good lord . . . Jesus Christ . . . Son of God . . .,"
>
> The hostess looked at the little ones with deep emotion. "Oh, the misery!" she said, nodding sadly. "I don't suppose the mother ever expected to have to send such youngsters out to beg . . . Yet it has come to that. . . . This one does not even know how to say his prayer properly; what can such a duck get? . . ."
>
> This simple scene, with its touch of melancholy ritualism which, so to say, tended to tidy up the usual drama of the Russian village, made a strong and deep impression on me.[1]

Baron Korf, the President of the Imperial Free Economic Society, noted that those areas where one could still live by begging were considered well-off.[2] Whereas in Samara it was reported that newly impoverished people were not adept at begging and found themselves bargaining with beggars for food.[3]

The conditions in the countryside for those who suffered from hunger were indeed terrible. A. A. Kornilov, in his book Sem

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[1]Vladimir Korolenko, "In the Famine Year," Free Russia, X, No. 3 (March, 1899), 19,20. See also Vladimir Korolenko, "In the Famine Year," Free Russia, X, No. 2 (February, 1899), 11, 12.

[2]P. L. Korf, "Poezdka v Neurozhainyia Mestnosti Kursk Gubernii," Trudy: Imperatorskago Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva, No. 4 (July-August, 1892), p. 112.

[3]Sergeevskii, pp. 12, 14. For his full account of conditions, see pp. 11-19.

Mesyatsev Sredi Golodaiushchik Krest'ian, devotes approximately twenty pages to descriptions of the suffering in the famine district.[1] Again, he cites cases of children dying from eating poor food.[2] He points out that the luckier children survived, but were forced to sell their clothes in order to buy food, and thereby could not attend school.[3] Kornilov, as did Baron Korf, also notes the drastic loss of livestock.[4] Korf stresses the over-all impact of destitution and how this left the suffering people with dazed and dumb expressions on their faces.[5]

Some of the sources went to great lengths to describe the suffering--the dead, the dying and the weeping.[6] The suffering was so great as seemingly to break down the moral fabric of society. In August, 1891, Free Russia stated that in addition to living on grass and boiled water, parents advertised their children for sale in order not to see them die from hunger.[7] In December, this same periodical reported that Mothers are killing their children rather than see them starve to death.[8] Some people apparently asked to be put in jail in

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[1]A. A. Kornilov, Sem Mesyatsev Sredi Golodaiuschikh Krest'ian (Moscow: D. I. Inosemtsev, Arbat, and D. Karmsky, 1893), pp. 17-35.

[2]Ibid., p. 20. [3]Ibid., p. 23.

[4]Ibid., pp. 12, 18, 22; Korf, p. 114.

[5]Korf, p. 110; Novikov, p. 126.

[6]For example see: G. A. Fal'brok, "Glavnyi Mery Bor'ba s Golodom kak Neobkhodimym Posledstviem Neurozhaya u Nas v Rossii," Trudy: Imperatorskago Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva, No. 6 (November-December, 1892), pp. 253-54;Sergeevskii, pp. 12, 13; Free Russia, II, No. 2 (New York: September, 1891), 9-10.

[7]Free Russia, II, No. 1 (August, 1891), 3.

[8]Ibid., II, No. 5 (December, 1891), 5; see also: Sergeevski, p. 16.

hopes of getting enough food.[1] Others, however, did not stop at asking to go to jail, but committed crimes so that they would be jailed and thereby alleviate their suffering. Instances of murder were reported, and the judicial register in some localities was overloaded with cases pertaining to the theft of food. There were even instances of sons robbing from fathers and brother from brother.[2]

The following quotation can be considered typical and act as a summary of conditions in the famine district.

> Paul Axenoff is the head of a family of nine, comprised of two old people, Axenoff and his wife, and five children. They were receiving aid from both the authorities and the committee, but they had run through everything except three pounds of bread that was to last them for some weeks to come. The same thing happened to them last month, and in spite of all their efforts to secure food they ate nothing for three days prior to the last delivery of the month's flour.
>
> The horse and cow have both been sold, and the outhouses pulled down and used for fuel. Straw is usually employed in Russia for heating, but this year there is none, so the peasants are glad to find anything to burn. There is very little wood in this part of the country, and what there is is young, and evidently been planted by the landowners. With the exception of a sheepskin cloak worn by one of the boys who came in from school while I was in the hut, the members of Axenoff's family had nothing to wear but the rags in which they stood.[3]

As indicated above, some famine-strickened peasants did considerably more than just passively endure the prospect of hunger. Small scale crime, however, was not nearly as dangerous to the social order as the "hunger" riots, which took place in the first few months of the

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[1]Sergeevskii, p. 13.

[2]Ibid., p. 15, 16; see also Free Russia, II, No. 3 (October, 1891), 6.

[3]Novikov, p. 130.

of the famine. Riots took place in Russia as early as June 1891, as peasants ransacked granaries and openly fought troops sent to restore order.[1] These distrubances took place largely in western provinces, i. e., Kovno and Vilna, against grain exporters, to keep grain from being exported.[2] Paul Lavrov and Ivan Sergeevskii felt that these riots forced the government to prohibit the export of grain. In any case, disturbances in western provinces declined in October, when the news came of the prohibition on rye exports.[3]

Famine disturbances, however, were not confined to the western provinces, as the cry of Stenka Razin was again heard in Samara and Saratov.[4] In October, 1891, thirty-eight peasants of the village of Smorodinovka in Samara ransacked the mill of a certain Kosimtsev, and took thirty-eight poods of wheat and rye meal belonging to a landowner named Arsimovich. The local government investigated the affair, and the peasants said that extreme need drove them "to it," and if they did find themselves in jail, at least they would eat.[5]

In the famine district such disturbances probably continued into the winter, and did in fact continue in Tobolsk into the spring of 1892.[6]

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[1] Free Russia, II No. 1 (August, 1891), 13.

[2] Ibid., II, No. 2 (September, 1891), 7.

[3] Sergeevskii, p. 17.

[4] Ibid., p. 18; see also: K. Vlasov, "Golod v Sibiri i Kniaz Golitsyn," Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 130.

[5] A. B. Skapkarina (ed.), Krest'ianskoe Dvizhenie v Rossi v 1890-1900 (Moscow: Obshchestvo, Ekonomika, Literatura, Izdatel'stvo, 1959), pp. 146-47; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 419.

[6] Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 136.

In one village in Tobolsk peasants fought so savagely among themselves, that some of them were killed. This particular incident took place in the courtyard of a village elder, where bread was being distributed to the peasants. After the outbreak of violence the elder, terrified, jumped upon a horse and galloped off to make a report to the officials. When he left there was only one dead peasant, but when the police arrived at the village they found the courtyard covered in blood and eight bodies, including three men, two women, and three children about seven to eight years old. At the same time the acting governor was investigating a riot in which the mob killed the volost elder and ransacked his money box.[1] Thus it would appear that not all the peasants stricken by famine passively endured their burden.

The news media in England and the United States also gave extensive coverage to the famine. The propagandizing of the famine in the West is important because it generated a relief movement abroad in the same sense that news coverage did in Russia. In this case, however, there seems to be more emphasis on the bizarre aspects of the famine than is found in the Russian accounts. Westerners seemed particularly impressed by the large numbers of beggars that they saw, especially since these destitute beings were seeking aid on the streets of Moscow.[2] When begging did not suffice, the desperate peasants turned to thievery to alleviate their conditions, and as the London Times stated

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[1]Vlasov, pp. 141-43.

[2]W. C. Edgar, The Russian Famine of 1891 and 1892 (Minneapolis, Minn.: The Millers and Manufacturers Ins. Co., 1893), p. 39; Jonas Stadling, "With Tolstoi in the Russian Famine," The Century Magazine, XLVI (June, 1893), 252.

with the hope of being sent to jail and thereby fed.[1] Articles, such as the one entitled the "Horrors of the Russian Famine" which appeared in the New York Tribune, stressed the devastation and the fact that people were dying by the hundreds.[2] One Western observer who went to Russia said that mothers killed their children in despair and then committed suicide.[3]

Apparently the most popular proof of the dearth in Russia was the accounts of the sale of children. As early as July, 1891, the New York Times reported that the newspapers in Russia contained advertisements of children for sale.[4] The same incident was also reported on the other side of the Atlantic, when the London Times reported that in Kiev children are being sold by their parents: 8 year old girl--6 r., a five year old girl 3 r.[5] Under the title "Desperation in Russia," one of the most gruesome of all human acts was reported--cannibalism. "Three peasants enticed a shoemaker named Levarovsky into a forest near there. When the party had reached a point where it was thought Levarovsky's cries could not be heard, the three peasants murdered him and robbed his body. They then cut the body into pieces and half

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[1]The Times (London), April 18, 1892, p. 3; New York Herald, February 2, 1892, p. 7.

[2]New York Tribune, February 13, 1892, p. 5; Christian Herald, XIV (August 19, 1891), 519.

[3]Stadling, The Century Magazine, XLIV (June, 1893), 252.

[4]New York Times, July 13, 1891, p. 6; Christian Herald, XIV (August 19, 1891), 519.

[5]The Times (London), April 7, 1892, p. 5; see also: April 18, 1892, p. 3.

burned them. The pieces remaining unconsumed were found by a workman, who ate one of them, and telling some of his comrades that he had found roasted meat in the forest led to the discovery of the affair."[1]

The following quotes, all taken from Westerners who personally observed the effects of the famine in Russia, give further proof of the terrible conditions during the famine, and are "objective" substantiation of the testimony of Russians concerning the situation in the stricken provinces. One should note that the following description is admittedly of a poorer than average hut.

> We entered and were greeted by a sight we trust we shall never see again. Imagine a room, perhaps ten by twelve feet, not even a board floor, furniture consisting of two bunks, bedded with straw, a wooden bench, a dilapidated chair, and this room served as the abode of sixteen people, one family, father, mother, and five children, another father, mother, and four children, and a third, a mother and her babe, besides the old grandmother, of probably 80 years of age. . . . All looked hungry.[2]

The next quotation deals with a village in Riazan province.

> I went from house to house through parts of the village. . . . In izba no. 1 I found one cow, three elderly persons, of whom one was sick with Typhus on top of the oven by the side of two children who were in the last stages of the black small pox, an elderly man sick with typhus, and two women whose bodies were swollen. No cattle; all starved to death. No fuel, no food. In no. 3 my eyes met a curious sight. . . . As I was about to go, I heard heavy breathing and a sound as of sweeping coming from the oven, and all at once I saw a pair of feet, wrapped round with rags, sticking out of the oven, and in a moment a big muzhik came out of the opening of the oven. (The muzhiks who had no fuel did this to protect themselves from the cold.) . . . In no. 4 were two grown people and two children both sick. Taking away the rags which covered the body of one of the children, the

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[1] New York Times, December 19, 1891, p. 1.

[2] Rudolph Blankenburg, Philadelphia and the Russian Famine of 1891 and 1892 (Philadelphia: 1892), p. 42.

> the mother burst into tears, while I saw large drops rolling down the cheeks of the poor disfigured girl herself. . . . I entered no. 5 where I found a woman disfigured by a disease shockingly common among the peasants, and two sickly and forlorn children. In no. 6 were three families, one cow, one horse, two sheep crowded together to protect themselves against intense cold.[1]

One very intriguing aspect of the famine was the fact that the Russians were interested in the American view of their country. In an article entitled "Mnenie Amerikantsa o Rossii," there is a review of a book written by an American of his visit to Russia during the famine. The review recounted a number of impressions of the suffering and hardship in the famine district cited by the American, from which the following is taken.

> He cites two episodes, which touched him deeply. One of these was told to the author by one of the members of the Kursk trusteeship. "During the inspection of my section" he said, I had to visit one of the village schools. How many pupils do you have, I asked the teacher, a young man, with a pale--sick look. There now remained 50, he replied, there had been 90, and immediately began to solicit about the delivery of his salary saying he was in great need of it. I explained, that in this I was not able to help, and I asked, why he so early dismissed the pupils. He was embarrassed and answered, that since up to the holidays remained an entire three weeks, he considered it better to send 1/2 of the children to their homes, and once again repeated his request about the salary. I became annoyed at such obvious unconscientiousness, and I left the school with firm intention to petition so that the teacher would be removed, when along the road I met a child, who shyly turned to me with the question: "Did you give the salary to the teacher?" I with perplexity said "No. And what business is it of yours?" The little boy's eyes began to fill with tears. "We all will die from hunger," he said, and "if it were not for the teacher, it would have been bad for us this winter." "Is it he that feeds you?" "Yes, he feeds us all, and from the time, when he did not have enough for all, he dismissed 1/2, in order not to see us starve." . . . "You can imagine, how shamed I was for my

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[1]Stadling, The Century Magazine, XLVI (June, 1893), 259.

injustice."[1]

Without question the above descriptions of destitution, starvation, death, riots, and crime, point out vividly the trauma experienced by Russia in 1891-1892. Even allowing for exaggeration and distortion, conditions must have been abominable for that segment of Russian society stricken by the famine. With such descriptions being printed in newspapers, periodicals and books, there is little wonder that the famine of 1891-92 has been considered one of the great tragedies of the late nineteenth century in Russian history.

Historically, one of the most important aspects of the Russian Famine of 1891-92 was the famine relief program, which attempted to meet the needs of the stricken people. The relief program is important because it clearly suggests that contrary to the standard interpretation, the Tsarist government was deeply concerned for the people of Russia and was quite efficacious in this moment of tragedy.

The Tsarist government began a year long program of famine relief, as shown above, in July and August of 1891. These actions, especially the August decree prohibiting the export of rye, were obviously a result of the appeals for aid emanating from the famine district. In July and early August, the Zemstvos of several provinces began to petition the government for assistance.[2] For example, in mid-July, Kazan petitioned the central government for a food-

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[1]"Mnenie Amerikantsa O Rossii po Knige Edgar's 'The Russian Famine'," Russkoe Obozrenie, VI (Moscow, 1893), 763.

[2]Sergeevskii, p. 22; Free Russia, II, No. 2 (September, 1891), 6.

supply loan of 5,000,000 r., and also asked for a moratorium on the collection of taxes.[1] A day later, the Zemstvo of Nizhni-Novgorod requested a subsidy of over 8,000,000 r.[2] Similarly, Samara and Tobolsk made requests of 8,000,000 and 4,000,000 r., respectively.[3]

Initially the government was very cautious in response to these requests, and sent only a small portion of the total amount requested.[4] The government also asked the Zemstvos to re-evaluate their estimates and in some cases sent special emissaries to the stricken provinces to ascertain the degree of need.[5] Nevertheless, as the year wore on and the seriousness of the situation became more apparent, the government began to commit itself decisively to famine relief.[6] By October, the government had dispatched to various Zemstvos 32,000,000 r. for famine relief.[7] By November, this sum had reached a figure of 56,000,000 r. The following provinces received at least 3,000,000 r. each, and would tend to indicate the provinces which had the greatest need: Kazan--6.6

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[1] The Times (London), July 18, 1891, p. 5. See also: Sergeevskii, p. 22, who states that several Zemstvos asked for a delay in the collection of taxes.

[2] Ibid., July 21, 1891, p. 5.

[3] See: "Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 392; V. A. Troinitsky, "Neurozhai v Tobol'skoi Gubernii 1891," Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 540.

[4] Free Russia, II, No. 2 (September, 1891), 6; Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 540.

[5] Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 540.

[6] Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (1892), p. 747.

[7] Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo X (October, 1891), 1.

million r., Samara--6.4, Saratov--6, Simbirsk--5, Penza--5, Tambov--4.7, Nizhni-Novgorod--3.5, and Orenburg--3.[1] By December, Tobolsk had been assigned 4,700,000 r. for relief efforts.[2] The Zemstvos used the money allotted them to purchase grain which was then dispensed to the needy ones.[3]

As indicated, a number of Zemstvos petitioned to delay or place a moratorium on the collection of taxes, which normally took place in the fall of each year. Nonetheless, because the Tsarist government did not believe in the seriousness of the crop-failure, the tax collector began to gather the tax receipts as usual, which sometimes resulted in protest riots by the peasants.[4] Eventually the government was forced to comply with the wishes of the Zemstvos, and stopped the collection of taxes.

Returning to the positive aspects of the government's famine relief efforts, one finds that it did considerably more than just allocate funds and prohibit exports. For example, in September, the Ministry of Finance issued a decree pointed toward the relief of the excess population problem in the famine district. It stated that all persons who wanted to leave the distressed area could travel on the

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[1]Levasseur, pp. 53-54.

[2]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 543.

[3]Levasseur, p. 54.

[4]See: Shapkarina, pp. 114-121; E. J. Dillon, "Famine in Russia," The Fortnightly Review, L (November, 1891), 640; W. C. Edgar, "Russia's Conflict with Hunger," The Review of Reviews, V, No. 30 (July), 692.

railroads at one-fifth of the third class fare.[1] In the same month a Ukaz abolished the "Spirit" bounties.[2] The Tsar eliminated all court balls for the season, and donated the funds used for such functions to the relief program.[3] The Empress donated 20,000 r. to the relief fund.[4] The government also sponsored a series of public lotteries, the proceeds being allotted to famine relief.[5]

In late October, the government, through the Pravitelstvennyi Vestnik, summarized the relief efforts to date by stating that the following measures were in force in the effort to ameliorate the tragedy of the famine: (1) the governors have called special conferences, which included Imperial and Zemstvo representatives; (2) District officials and other local administrative offices have been asked to take an active part in famine relief; (3) grain and bread depots have been established by the Zemstvos for the distribution of food at cost price or below; (4) the government has issued detailed regulations on how to provide assistance; (5) the government has established cheaper railrates for the transportation of foodstuffs; (6) the peasants have been allowed to pasture cattle on crown lands; (7) special public works have been organized for the unemployed and distressed; (8) the government has started to make loans to the Zemstvos in order to

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[1] The Times (London), September 10, 1891, p. 3.

[2] Ibid., September 19, 1891, p. 5. [3] Ibid., October 6, 1891, p. 3.

[4] Free Russia, II, No. 4 (November, 1891), 3. The editor of Free Russia considered this donation a paltry sum in view of the dire need of Russia.

[5] "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 176.

fulfill this program.[1]

One of the most important measures in the organization of famine relief was the creation by Imperial rescript of December 8, 1891, of a Special Committee headed by the Tsarevitch and charged with the overall direction of famine relief. The composition of this committee reflects its importance: General Kaufmann, K. P. Pobedonostsev, Minister of State Domains Ostrovsky, Head of Police V. K. Plehve, and the Minister of the Imperial Household Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, vice president of the committee. This committee had four objectives: (1) to unify relief activities, (2) to direct private donations into effective channels, (3) to remedy any defects in administration, and (4) to provide work for the peasants who needed employment.[2] It was also authorized to transport food and other supplies for the peasants on all railroads. These shipments were given priority over other freight.[3]

The work of the Special Committee was extremely important in the overall organization of famine relief. For example, it received individual donations, some of which were valued at thousands of rubles.[4] The relief administration also had to cope with a sizeable refugee problem from the stricken areas. In January, 1892, the

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[1]Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (1892), p. 747.

[2]Ibid., December 5, 1892 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 362; Edgar, Review of Reviews, V, (July, 1892), 693.

[3]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 549. In addition see Edgar, The Review of Reviews, V (July, 1892), 693.

[4]The Times (London), December 22, 1891, p. 3.

Prefecture of Police in St. Petersburg began billeting refugees from the stricken areas with the wealthier citizens of that city, who were to feed and house them.[1] The following month at least 16,000 more peasants arrived in the city.[2] The Special Committee also played the dominant role in the most important aspects of relief--the organization and distribution of food. By June, 1892, the Committee had provided 46,000,000 poods of cereal for needy peasants in seventeen provinces. It had in reserve another 23,000,000 poods of cereal for the forthcoming planting and a remaining 13,000,000 poods was provided to feed the peasantry until the next harvest.[3]

The Special Committee also instituted a public works program under the direction of General Annenkov.[4] Initially the Committee for social or public work was allotted 1,500,000 r., but an additional 10,000,000 r. were assigned for this program.[5] The membership of this special "sub-committee" again reflects the importance placed on ameliorating the famine condition by the Tsar's government. It was composed of the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Finance, the State Comptroller, and was under the chairmanship of A. A. Abaza of the State Council, with General Annenkov being the executor of committee

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[1]Ibid., January 7, 1892, p. 5.

[2]Manchester Guardian, February 15, 1892, p. 8.

[3]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 204 (June 21, 1892).

[4]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 176; Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 549; "Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 390.

[5]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 176; Levasseur, p. 54.

decisions. This council authorized the following kinds of public works: working in the state forests; improvement of roads and the construction of highways; the building of Churches, grain elevators, and a few reservoirs; river work on the Volga and the construction of harbors near Samara; the construction of a road between Tobolsk and Samara.[1] Parallel to this and partially related to the public works was the ongoing railroad construction program.[2] While this broad program clearly represents the best intentions of the government, it engendered criticism, especially concerning the fact that it would employ only a few hundred thousand men, whereas millions of men were in need of relief.[3]

With the exception of the public works program, the actual administration of the aid sent by the central government was carried out by the governor of the province and by the Zemstvo of that province. The relief organization on this level was quite elaborate, which an examination of famine relief structure in the province of Samara reveals. This province had a Benevolent Committee which received all gifts designated for the province, bought and distributed the needed food for the seven districts, and settled all disputes involving two or more districts. The Governor, who acted as the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 176-77, 179-80; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat IV (1892), 86.

[2]Ibid. Ibid., Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1313), 546.

[3]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 177-78; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 86; George Plekhanov, O Zadachakh Sotsialistov v Bor'be s Golodom v Rossii (Geneva: Sotsial Demokrat, 1892), pp. 22-24.

chairman, the Vice-Governor, the Bishop, the Provincial Marshal of Nobility, the President of the Zemstvo board, and the Dean of the Cathedral made up this committee. A selected executive committee from the main committee actually conducted the business subject to the approval of the Governor. Samara contained seven districts and each district had a district committee composed of the Marshal of Nobility, chairman, the senior clergyman of the district town, the local police official (ispravnik), the district member of the regional court, the President of the district zemstvo, local doctors, schoolmasters, and any gentlemen and merchants that volunteered.[1] The next lower level of administration was the volost (county) whose relief committee actually performed the distribution of grain and controlled the reserves. This committee was made up of the local clergyman, schoolmaster, doctor, and resident owners, with the Land Captain (Zemsky Nachalnik) presiding. Individual villages had boards of charity which supervised the free soup kitchen and bakeries.[2]

The Land Captain was the real supervisor over the dissemination of aid on the local level. One must point out that the Land Captain, established by Alexander III and considered by many to be a reactionary move, played a very significant role in famine relief. One particular Land Captain, Alexander Novikov, "had under his charge no less than 33,000 men, women, and children, all dependent upon him to find them

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[1]N. Shiskoff, "Famine Relief in Samara," The Nineteenth Century, XXXI (March, 1892), 493. See also Korf, p. 116, which describes a similar relief structure in Kursk province.

[2]Ibid.

food.[1]

The population of Samara in 1888 was 2,266,384. In the winter of 1891-92 approximately 1,360,000 were destitute and relied entirely upon relief for their existence.[2] In Samara the Zemstvo fed about 940,000 peasants, roughly 42% of the province.[3] Table 1 shows the amount of provincial relief by district or uezd.[4] The Zemstvo provided aid to

TABLE 1

ZEMSTVO RELIEF PROVIDED IN SAMARA

Uezd	No. of Sufferers	No. of Months Relief Lasted	Per Cent of Population That Received Aid	Allowance No. of Poods
Samara	114,400	6 mos.	48	603,700
Stavropol	52,800	6 "	22	159,700
Buguluk	189,600	9 "	45	1,181,900
Buguruslan	73,600	7 "	22	346,600
Bugulma	79,800	6 "	31	302,200
Nicholaresk	250,000	10 "	61	1,852,000
Novozenisk	204,000	9 "	54	1,111,500
Total	964,200			5,557,600

[1]Novikov, p. 125.

[2]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 547.

[3]W. Barnes Steveni, Through Famine Stricken Russia (London: Sampson Low, Maiston and Company, 1892), p. 168.

[4]This table is a composite made up of statistics found in Steveni, Through Famine Stricken Russia, p. 120 and Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 547.

the districts of Samara during an average of almost eight months, distributing approximately five and one-half poods or 198 pounds of flour per person. This, however, is in marked contrast to the 348 pounds normally consumed by an individual in a similar eight month period.[1] Nevertheless, this did keep most of the peasants from succumbing. Those not included in the aid to the Zemstvo received help from public charity.[2]

A brief discussion of the changes brought about in the railroad transportation and administrative system will also illustrate the effort made by the Russian government to help the stricken provinces. The source for this information is Alfred Vendrikh, the man in charge of the railroads during the relief program. In general his evidence substantiates the proposition that the government was active in trying to combat the famine. He states that the famine placed a tremendous burden upon the Russian railroad system, as food supplies were shipped from the areas of good harvest to those of no harvest. An indication of this increase is shown by just one line--the Vladikavkaz--where in one month food supples made up 1,397 wagons of the cars shipped prior to August, from August to September, 7,741 wagons, from September to October, 9,960, and by the first of November, 11,525 wagons.[3] A circular from the Department of Railroads stated on October 29, 1891, that the transportation system was inadequate as a result of the simultaneous demands of the famine-stricken provinces, the needs of the army

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[1]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 547. [2]Ibid.

[3]Vendrikh, p. 5.

in the Moscow district, and factory owner's demands for coal.[1] A special meeting was held with representatives from the Ministry of Ways and Communication, Military, Interior, and Imperial Domains, which established a priority list for the cargoes. The Zemstvo cargoes received 50% of all wagon space, the army 10% of the available space, and private senders, who used their space primarily for coal, 40%.[2]

On November 29, 1891, the Tsar appointed Vendrikh, of the Military Engineers, as an administrative trouble-shooter over the railroad transport system. At the time of his appointment, some of the wagons were backed up three months waiting for delivery. He possessed unrestricted power in order to accomplish the successful delivery of grain from the North Caucasus, where the harvest of 1891 was abundant, to the famine district. He arrived at Rostov-on-Don on December 5, and immediately began his work.[3] The government rented 565 extra locomotives in 1891-92 to meet the needs of the peasant.[4] According to Vendrikh, in one month after his appointment, overall efficiency had improved to such a degree that a train covered over 250 versts in twenty-four hours rather than 100 versts.[5] By January 9, 1892, he notes that the Zemstvos, the Army and the private senders were satisfied with the service.[6] In addition, the government repealed Article 27 of the General Railroad Code, which had prevented the loading of wagons on festival days.[7] The effects of these measures can be seen from Table 2 which

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[1]Ibid., pp. 5-6. [2]Ibid., p. 7. [3]Ibid., p. 10.

[4]Ibid., p. 25. [5]Ibid., pp. 39-40. [6]Ibid., p. 167.

[7]Ibid., p. 41.

TABLE 2

SHIPMENT OF GRAIN FROM SEPTEMBER, 1891, TO MARCH, 1892

September	16,510,000	Poods
October	15,930,000	"
November	13,990,000	"
December	19,000,000	"
January	21,900,000	"
February	24,000,000	"
March	23,000,000	"

shows the delivery of food by all the railroads that took part in the relief.[1]

One of the more unseemly aspects of the government's famine relief efforts was that of corruption. The presence of graft and corruption within the government may explain why many Russians would not donate to publicly sponsored relief societies, but preferred private organizations. For example, there was a great deal of mistrust of and contempt for the Red Cross Society of Russia, which was closely affiliated with the government.[2] The New York Tribune reported the discovery of embezzlement in the Moscow Red Cross Society amounting to 120,000 rubles.[3] Ambassador Smith's communique of February 15, 1892, contains a description of the Russian Red Cross and its operation. He wrote that "it would be wrong to withhold from you knowledge of the fact that the

[1]Ibid., p. 161.

[2]Anton Chekhov, The Letters of Anton Tchekhov, trans., Constance Garnett (London: Chatto and Windus, 1920), p. 285.

[3]New York Tribune, January 7, 1892, p. 3.

highest confidence does not prevail here in the workings of the Red Cross. It is not doubted that the society is inspired by lofty purposes, and that there are noble and efficient representatives in its ranks, but with much that is good there is also that which excites distrust. . . . This feeling is shared not only by the foreigners located here, but by the Russians as well."[1]

As we have seen, the government allocated funds to the Zemstvos and the Zemstvos, in turn, made their distribution of famine relief in the form of loans which the peasants were expected to repay.[2] The bureaucracy attempted to make up lists of which families were most in need. The Zemstvo issued circulars to the village authorities, who were expected to fill them in with information on who was or was not in need.[3] The lists were turned over to the Land Captain, who had the power to revise the list.[4] Each villager agreed for himself and his fellow villagers to repay this loan from a future crop. Clearly, food was not given to the people; it was loaned.[5] In every province except

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[1]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, Vol. 42, No. 148 (February 15, 1892).

[2]See: "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 105; M. Stasulevich, "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (December, 1892), 870; M. Stasulevich, "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 441; Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 549; Edgar, The Review of Reviews, V, No. 30 (July, 1892), 693.

[3]Jonas Stadling and Will Reason, In the Land of Tolstoi (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1897), p. 31; Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 130.

[4]Korolenko, pp. 215-18; Edgar, The Review of Reviews, V, No. 30 (July, 1892), 693.

[5]Edgar, The Review of Reviews, V, No. 30 (July, 1892), 693.

Tobolsk, the aid was dispensed in the form of grain. In Tobolsk, the provincial government dispensed aid by distributing money as well.[1]

As an integral part of the famine relief program, the Zemstvo established the amount of bread to be handed out to the peasantry, and, in general, who among the peasantry that would receive this food. Obviously, not all peasants received aid or were in need of aid.[2] As early as September, 1891, the Zemstvo began issuing food allottments to the stricken peasants. In Nikolaevsky district in Samara, the dole was initially set up at 10 lbs. of grain per person a month.[3] By October, the food supply loans in Nikolaevsky had been raised to 18-20 lbs. per man per month. This was not considered enough food to sustain life throughout the month. One must remember, however, that the state aid was supplemented by private philanthropy, which together brought the Russian people through the winter.[4]

In late fall, that is by November, the Zemstvos were handing out food on a basis of 30 lbs. of grain per man.[5] This apparently became the norm throughout the famine district, and lasted until the spring of 1892, although some areas gave less.[6] In addition to Samara, Kazan

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[1]Levasseur, p. 54.

[2]For example see: Stadling and Reason, p. 44, who list certain categories of peasants as being ineligible for aid.

[3]Shapkarina, p. 146.

[4]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 442.

[5]Ibid.

[6]See Korf, p. 113; Shapkarina, p. 155; "Khronika Vnutrennei, Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 172. It was reported that in Tambov the Zemstvo gave out 25 poods per man per month after January, 1892. See: Kornilov, p. 36; Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 6.

Tobolsk, and Tambov issued grain in the winter of 1891-92 on a basis of 30 lbs. of grain per man per month.[1] There was criticism of the Zemstvo dole. At least one reporter complained that the 30 lb. dole was made up of 15 lbs. of grain and 15 lbs. of dust, which he claimed was impossible to eat.[2]

Initially, food was distributed on a very restricted basis. On orders from the Minister of Internal Affairs, food was given out to those in need, excluding children and workers.[3] The sources disagree somewhat, but it would appear that as of December, 1891, children up to five years of age and peasants between the ages of 18-55, who were capable of work, were excluded from Zemstvo aid.[4] In mid-winter 1891-92, the food list was extended to include children between the ages of 2-5,[5] and toward the end of January, the Zemstvos began to enlarge the limits of which peasants could receive aid.[6]

In the long run the program of famine relief through the dispensing of food-loans succeeded in preventing a crop-failure from becoming a total disaster. Nonetheless, adverse criticism was proferred against

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[1]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 75; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Knroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 420; Kornilov, p. 16; Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 140.

[2]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 444.

[3]See Korf, p. 113; Fal'bork, p. 261; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 420; Shapkarina, p. 146; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 86; Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 140; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 172.

[4]Kornilov, p. 16; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 75; "Knronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 172.

[5]Kornilov, p. 36; Fal'bork, p. 261.

[6]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 443.

the repayment aspect of the food-loan system. Some people believed that the peasants must be made to repay the value of the food supplies, in order to prevent the decay of their moral fiber. This morality approach was rejected by many, who argued that the peasant was too destitute to reimburse the state for the help that he had received.[1] Another criticism of food-supply loans centered on the very negative aspect of the loans themselves. Money borrowed in a tragedy is consumed and is not used to invest and thereby expand the general income of the peasant. Again, since the peasant has become poorer, he should not be made to further lower his net income, after the famine is over, by the repayment of these loans.[2]

A very interesting splinter issue in the famine relief effort has to do with the controversy over the introduction of a new form of economic organization for the rural sector called communal ploughing, artel tillage, or public tillage. A number of provincial zemstvos attempted to premise the distribution of food loans on the condition that in order to receive these loans, a village would have to adopt public tillage.[3] For example, it was stated that Samara, Saratov, Nizhni-Novgorod, Penza, and Kursk initiated the adoption of public

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[1]L. Slonimsky, "Neurozhai i Narodnoe Bedstvie," Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 359-60.

[2]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 7-10. Apparently the Tsarist government did make efforts to collect these loans. See: Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, VI (December, 1892), 870.

[3]Fal'brok, 261; Free Russia, II (February, 1892), 12, mentions Samara.

tillage.[1] Apparently, in some cases the program was only contemplated, and in no instance was it introduced universally throughout a province.[2]

The applicability of public tillage was discussed at some length within the debates of the Imperial Free Economic Society. Public tillage, or communal ploughing was a form of landownership in which all the communal ploughland and meadowland would be combined into an indivisible unit. The work was to be performed by the entire village commune.[3] It was proposed to divide the harvest in the following manner: (1) most of the harvest would be divided among the members of the artel in relation to the contribution to the harvest; (2) part of the harvest would be set aside for seed; (3) the remainder would be used to pay taxes, and various petty cash expenditures undertaken by the commune at large; (4) and for the repayment of food-supply.[4]

There did exist considerable sympathy for this type of agrarian organization.[5] However, the overwhelming consensus of opinion--within the evidence used in this account--revealed that the peasantry at

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 187.

[2]Ibid., 186-88.

[3]Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda II," Vol. I, No. 1 (1892), 139. Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda III," Vol. I, No. 2 (1892), 182-83. Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda V," Vol. 1, No. 3 (1892), 338. It seems very similar to the collective farm of the 1930's.

[4]Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda V," Vol. I, No. 3 (1892), 338; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 187.

[5]Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 360-61; Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda II," Vol. I, No. 1 (1892), 139; Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda III," Vol. I, No. 2 (1892), 191.

large, as well as some landowners and intellectuals, were inalterably opposed to the introduction of public tillage.[1] It would seem that in many instances the village communes refused to accept food-loans rather than change their economic structure.[2] In part the introduction of public tillage was designed to ensure the repayment of the food-supply loans to the zemstvo.[3] The peasants, however, clearly felt that public tillage implied some sort of variant of or a return to serfdom which obviously they opposed.[4] To the proposition that public tillage--communal ploughing--should be introduced by compulsion, one observer noted that peasant opposition could not be overcome even by the "whole force of the Russian army."[5] The deep insight and accuracy of this prediction, in view of the repercussions of Soviet collectivization of agriculture in the 1930's is rather astounding.

In addition to the extensive governmental structure of famine relief, the next most important source of aid rendered the suffering peasants came from private organizations and individuals--in particu-

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[1]To cite only a few of the available references, see: "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 187; "Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 150; Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda III," Vol. I, No. 2 (1892), 195,203.

[2]"Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 150; Fal'bork, p. 261.

[3]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 187; "Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 150.

[4]Fal'bork, p. 262; Free Russia, II, No. 7 (February, 1892), 12.

[5]Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda V," Vol. I, No. 3 (1892), 374.

lar, the landed proprietors.[1] Initially, however, the government attempted to hinder and even prevent the establishment of private aid.[2] Jonas Stadling, a Swedish visitor to the famine district, remarked that in St. Petersburg, the government closed a privately operated relief kitchen which was feeding 500 people daily.[3] The case of Madame Morozov attracted considerable attention, in that in the fall of 1891, the authorities turned down her offer to feed 10,000 peasants.[4] Chekhov wrote on October 25, 1891, "I have not gone to Nizhni as I meant to, but am sitting at home, writing and sneezing. Madame Morozov has seen the Minister, he has absolutely prohibited private initiative in the work of famine relief, and actually waved her out of his presence."[5] A month earlier, the educated circles in Moscow asked a prominent and influential government official for permission to set up a famine relief program. He refused, stating that the organization of relief for the famine-stricken must be left to the government.[6]

V. G. Korolenko's book on the famine deals with this problem at some length. He found that the question of private aid was decided differently in different regions, some districts encouraged it and some districts did not. In Nizhni-Novgorod, he noted that the Gover-

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[1]Edgar, The Review of Reviews, V, No. 30, 695.

[2]There are a number of references to this fact. See: Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 25; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 89; Vasili A. Maklakov, Iz Vospominanii (New York: Chekhov, 1954), p. 154. Vladimir A. Obolensky, Ocherki Minuvshago (Belgrade, 1931), pp. 197-98; Free Russia, II, No. 4 (November, 1891), 4; Free Russia, II, No. 5 (December, 1891), 5.

[3]Stadling and Reason, p. 92. [4]Ibid.; Sergeevskii, p. 24.

[5]Chekhov, p. 275. [6]Ibid., pp. 285-86.

nor, General Baranov, prohibited private groups from dispensing aid in November, 1891.[1] In December, 1891, however, the Special Committee issued orders that private initiative vis-a-vis famine relief would not be prevented or hampered, and this became the uniform policy throughout Russia.[2]

Closely related to the government's attitude toward private relief, is the limitations placed upon the Russian press to discuss the famine. The Russian government was initially quite sensitive to periodical accounts within the famine district and made efforts to censor the press.[3] The periodical publications within Russia were directed to speak cautiously and to avoid "'all strong expressions, which might excite the public mind; not to mention the famine otherwise than as insufficiency of corn,' 'bad harvest,' and the like . . ..'"[4]

A cursory examination of periodical literature indicates that the government was not very successful in the late summer and early fall of 1891, in restricting the use of such words as famine and famine-stricken in the press.[5] Prince Obolensky, another observer of the famine, argues that reporting of the famine fell to the foreign

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[1]Korolenko, pp. 40-41; Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 26; Free Russia, II, No. 4 (November, 1891), 4.

[2]Korolenko, pp. 41-43; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 176; Korolenko also noted, however, that in one district of the province of Nizhni-Novgorod, the district officials violated the official policy of the state and continued to hinder private philanthropy. See pp. 41-43.

[3]Maklakov, pp. 146, 164; Sergeevskii, p. 11.

[4]Free Russia, II, No. 4 (November, 1891), 4; Obolensky, p. 197; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 65.

[5]See Russkoe Bogatstvo and Vestnik Evropy for July-December, 1891.

press and an "illegal literature' within Russia, and eventually the government yielded in its attempt to control the press vis-a-vis its reporting of conditions within the famine district. Obolensky called this the only concession to public opinion made in the reign of Alexander III.[1] Censorship did not disappear completely, however, as the censors interdicted William B. Steveni's book on the famine called Through Famine Stricken Russia.[2]

The desire of the Russian public to participate in ameliorating conditions within the famine district took shape soon after it became apparent that a famine existed in Russia. This private philanthropic interest in helping the famine-stricken peasant emerged as early as September, 1891. The educated and well-to-do members of Moscow society formed a "circle" for the express purpose of finding means to get around government restrictions on private aid and thereby send aid to the famine district.[3] Already in August, the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg had established a committee for collecting donations for the starving people of Russia.[4] Eventually the Holy Synod sent special aid to the village clergy who resided within the famine district.[5] From such small scale beginnings emerged one of the greatest public philanthropic responses to any incident in Russian history. Charitable projects were formed throughout European Russia, for example, in St.

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[1]Obolensky, p. 197.

[2]Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity . . ., p. 7.

[3]Chekhov, p. 285.

[4]Free Russia, II, No. 3 (October, 1891), 6.

[5]Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 180.

Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev. Newspapers printed special instructions for volunteers who were prepared to go to the famine district and help distribute supplies.[1]

Many witnesses to the public relief efforts testify to the outpouring of humanitarian response on the part of Russian society to the tragedy of 1891. From all strata of society came donations or the offer of services to help the famine-stricken, from the clergy, doctors, professors, nobility, soldiers, bureaucrats, and workers.[2] Persons working within the government service supposedly donated 1% to 3% of their salaries for famine relief.[3] In addition to lectures, plays and concerts were also given for the benefit of the suffering.[4] The The response of society ultimately engendered another "going to the people" movement, especially among the students.[5] Korolenko called these youthful humanitarians "new people."[6]

These youthful humanitarians flocked to the famine district, and in terms of numbers probably constituted the largest group to participate in famine relief.[7] Martov, himself a student, noted that hundreds of young people interrupted their "studies and set forth to the village, in order to organize, in the service of the zemstvo, food supply and

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[1]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 424.

[2]Korf, pp. 116-17; Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo. X (October, 1891), 180; Sergeevskii, p. 23; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 126.

[3]Sergeevskii, p. 23. [4]Obolensky, p. 198; Sergeevskii, p. 23.

[5]Obolensky, p. 198; Donald W. Treadgold, Lenin and His Rivals (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), pp. 3, 7, 8.

[6]Korolenko, p. 348. [7]Kornilov, p. 89.

sanitary aid for the starving peasants."[1] Prince Obolensky also noted the flow of the youth to the country from the city.[2] Within the universities, the students also made collections and thereupon donated the money for famine relief.[3]

The nobility and intellectual elements played the predominant role in dispensing aid to the suffering ones. Within the ranks of those who helped to fight the effects of the famine, one finds some of the most prominent names in Russia: in Tambov--the historian A. A. Kornilov and two daughters of Count Vorontsov-Dashkov;[4] in Tula--the Bobrinsky family maintained hospitals, soup kitchens, bakeries, and orphanages;[5] and in Nizhni-Novgorod--V. G. Korolenko, A. I. Guchkov and his brother.[6] Women, it would seem, took a particular interest in famine relief. In addition to the Vorontsov-Dashkov sisters mentioned above, there was a daughter of Leo Tolstoi, Princess Volkonsky, Baroness Ikskul, A. M. Sibiriakovoi, Princess Davidov and Princess Venevitinov.[7] These volunteers gave more than just their time to work in the famine district. In the dead of winter and when hunger typhus

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[1]Y. O. Martov, Zapiska Sotsialdemokrata (Berlin: Z. I. Grschebin, 1922), p. 86.

[2]Obolensky, p. 209.

[3]Obolensky, p. 200; Maklakov, pp. 146-150.

[4]Kornilov, p. 102.

[5]Francis B. Reeves, Russia Then and Now (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), p. 57.

[6]Korolenko, pp. 120-22; A. I. Guchkov is very likely the same A. I. Guchkov that became the leader of the Octobrist Party.

[7]"Mnenie Amerikantsa o Rossii . . .," Russkoe Obozrenie, IV (1893), 760; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 125.

was rampant, their efforts could result in great sacrifice. Several philanthropists became seriously ill and some actually died from typhus, etc., in the cause of mankind.[1]

Excluding gifts from the Imperial Family and the large benefices of Madame Morozova, individual donations for the benefit of the starving people reached thousands of rubles. In January, 1892, the Special Committee had collected 250,000 rubles from wealthy people who gave not less than 5,000 rubles per person. This included 100,000 r. given by the Emir of Bokhara.[2] The Vestnik Evropy reported that one nobleman gave 30,000 r.[3] The Governor-general of Moscow donated 1,000 r. at a concert given in behalf of the famine-stricken.[4] The Moscow assembly of Nobility voted a 25,000 r. donation in late October.[5]

Despite the fact that there was a great outpouring of monetary and service aid for the suffering ones, there did exist criticism of the magnitude of the Russian response to the famine. Writing in the Novoe Vremya, a correspondent suggests that the American response to the famine was more generous, in proportion, than the Russian. He also notes that some provinces in Russia did not give any aid at all.[6] As

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 123; Obolensky, p. 209; Fal'bork, p. 257.

[2]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 126.

[3]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1892), 422.

[4]Maklakov, p. 150.

[5]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 73.

[6]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 125-26.

of mid-winter, Plekhanov was complaining that Russian society collectively was making an insignificant sacrifice to meet the exigencies. He was critical of the amounts given by the well-to-do and states that "a significant share of this insignificant sum consisted in donations from workers and poor."[1]

Within the private sector, the people set up their own organization for dispensing aid, that supplemented the efforts of the zemstvo administration and the land captain. These private, local committees were called "trusteeships," and undertook to establish free soup-kitchens and other programs of famine relief. The local trusteeships were made up of priests, teachers, volost elders, and peasants.[2] In addition, there were numerous individuals who set up soup-kitchens, etc., on their own volition in order to succor the needy.

The soup-kitchen or dining-room became a very important method of rendering aid to the hungry peasants of Russia, and was the most common method used by local trusteeships and private individuals. Furthermore, the aid given by the private sector included feeding and replacing horses, and caring for those who were sick or had lost their homes through fire.[3]

Soup-kitchens were characteristic of famine relief throughout the famine district, i. e., in Tambov, Nizhni-Novgorod, Simbirsk, Penza,

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[1]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 73.

[2]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1892), 420-21; Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 442.

[3]Kornilov, pp. 190-93.

Riazan, Kursk, Tobolsk, and Samara.[1] A soup-kitchen differed from the general form of governmental food-loans, in that it was a place where the hungry peasants could come for a meal. One American observer described a soup-kitchen as follows:

> We entered an old dilapidated building. It consists of three divisions (I came near saying rooms); in the first one two women are engaged preparing the soup for the day; in the other two were assembled, closely huddled together, some 200 of the most wretched looking beings a vivid imagination can picture.[2]

In this kitchen the names of each person were called; they then presented a ticket and each one received a pint of soup and one-half pound of bread.[3] The fare at these soup-kitchens varied but included beets, gruel, potatoes, peas, cabbage soup, porridge and bread.[4] In some instances more than one soup-kitchen would be opened in a given village.[5]

People such as V. G. Korolenko opened and maintained soup-kitchens.[6] In his book on the famine, Korolenko reported that Count E. N. Strugovshchikov operated a large soup-kitchen capable of feeding 250 people.[7] Prominent people, however, were not the only ones to establish and operate soup-kitchens. In Kursk, Baron Korf stated that a local post master and his family were running a free dining hall.[8] In the

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[1]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1892), 420; Kornilov, pp. 192-93; Korf, p. 6; Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 545; Korolenko, p. 369; Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1893), 442.

[2]Blankenburg, p. 38. [3]Ibid.

[4]Kornilov, p. 49; "Iz Zapisnoi Knizhki Arkhivista k Biographii L. N. Tolstogo," Krasnyi Arkhiv, XCVI (1939), 221.

[5]Kornilov, p. 43. [6]Korolenko, p. 369.

[7]Ibid., p. 105. [8]Korf, p. 117.

province of Tambov, the historian A. A. Kornilov noted that private philanthropists opened 121 soup-kitchens in thirty villages, for 6,256 people, and issued 661,287 dinners from the fall of 1891 until May, 1892. These figures do not include the special soup-kitchens established for the children.[1] It should be noted that such private operation received aid from the Zemstvo, the Russian Red Cross, and the Tsarevich's Special Committee.[2] In Tula, the Bobrinsky family maintained hospitals, soup-kitchens, bakeries and orphanages.[3] W. Barnes Steveni, a special correspondent to Russia for the London Daily Chronicle reported that the aristocracy of Penza took an active part in famine relief, with the Governor establishing thirty-five free kitchens himself.[4] Steveni pointed out that the Zemstvo bread was unpalatable, being highly adulterated with sand and pig-weed. The nobleman's, on the other hand, was much better in quality.[5] Finally, private philanthropy set up special bakeries and a variant of the soup-kitchen, called school-kitchens, which were apparently designed to take care of school children.[6]

A great deal of material has been published concerning the work of Count Leo Tolstoi during the famine of 1891. These sources provide one of the most detailed pictures of the operation of private relief

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[1]Kornilov, pp. 192-93; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, IV (November, 1892), 422.

[2]Kornilov, pp. 229-30. [3]Reeves, p. 57.

[4]Steveni, Through Famine Stricken Russia, p. 75.

[5]Ibid., pp. 34, 37.

[6]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 445; Kornilov, pp. 192-93; Obolensky, p. 208.

organizations in the famine district. For this reason the following brief account of Tolstoi's work and the government's reaction to this work is included in this thesis.

Count Leo Tolstoi was one of the first great landowners to begin a full-scale operation of famine relief. To aid the peasant during a famine was not a new experience for him. He had been active in the famine of 1873. He was also destined to help the peasant again during another crop-failure in 1899.[1] It was at the beginning of the latter famine that he wrote an article in which he stated that if by the term "famine" one means insufficient food, which does not cause immediate death, but permits the sufferer to die slowly or degenerate, then such a condition has existed in the Black Earth region for twenty years.[2] In any case, the famine of 1891 was the most severe, and the one in which he put forth his greatest effort.[3] One of Tolstoi's biographers claimed that his work in this great tragedy "evoked more widespread sympathy and warm approval than almost any other incident in his career."[4]

Tolstoi began seriously to consider organizing famine relief in September, 1891. In concert with other noblemen, in particular I. I. Raievsky, Tolstoi decided to open free dining-rooms or soup-kitchens

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[1]"L. N. Tolstoi i Pomoshch Golodaiushchim," Krasnyi Arkhiv, VI (1924), 243.

[2]Drage, p. 134. [3]Krasnyi Arkhiv, VI (1924), 243.

[4]Aylmer Maude, The Life of Tolstoi (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1910), p. 428.

for the peasants.[1] Prior to this decision to participate actively in famine relief, Tolstoi had written several articles about the famine. His articles and deeds disturbed the governmental officials, who thereupon ordered a surveillance of Tolstoi, in order to insure that he would not incite the dissatisfied people to rebellion.[2] The orders sent by the Director of Police to the Governor of Riazan stated that he was to assemble knowledge concerning Tolstoi's charitable activities.[3] These reports make it evident that his activities were so extensive that it was necessary to request reenforcements for his continued surveillance.[4] Three hundred rubles were allocated for the specific purpose of enlarging the watch placed upon Tolstoi and his family. The officials were not only concerned about his soup-kitchens, but also the books which he distributed to the children and other possible propaganda activities.[5]

I. I. Raievsky, a close friend of Tolstoi, was instrumental in getting Tolstoi to set up free dining-rooms. Raievsky opened six soup-kitchens before Tolstoi joined him in the work.[6] Tolstoi's operation of relief centered in Begichevsky Village, Dansky District, in Riazan, but he established soup-kitchens throughout that province. On November 1, in Ivansky District, Tolstoi opened a free soup-kitchen which could feed 100 of the poorest inhabitants. At this kitchen, they served

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[1]Reminiscenses of Lev Tolstoi, trans. Margaret Wettlin (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), pp. 66-67.

[2]Krasnyi Arkhiv, XCVI (1939), 221. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 222. [5]Ibid., p. 224.

[6]Reminiscences of Lev Tolstoi, p. 200.

dinner and supper consisting of bread, hot porridge, potatoes, beets, and gruel.[1] This was probably the fare of most soup-kitchens established for the peasant. By December 13, 1891, Tolstoi had eight dining-rooms operating in three villages and daily fed 400 men, which was only the beginning.[2]

Tolstoi's entire family helped in the relief work. His sons worked in Tula and Samara, his daughters helped in Riazan, and his wife, in Moscow, saw to the procurement of food-stuffs and sent them to her husband and sons.[3] Relief work had a damaging effect upon Tolstoi's family. One of his daughters, Tatiana, had to leave the famine district because of her health.[4] One of his sons, Lev, also suffered from very poor health as a result of his efforts in the famine stricken regions.[5]

Tolstoi's friend, I. I. Raievsky, lost his life while engaged in relief activities. He died from an attack of influenza on November 26, 1891, incurred as a result of his work in the famine district. In addition to his work in direct famine relief, he attended the Zemstvo sessions of the district and zemstvo.[6] While traveling to and from two successive meetings in very cold weather thirty and forty miles from his home, he became sick and died.[7]

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[1] Krasnyi Arkhiv, XCVI (1939), 221.

[2] Ibid., p. 223. [3] Ibid., p. 43.

[4] Nathan H. Dole, The Life of Count Lyof N. Tolstoi (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1911), p. 340.

[5] Stadling and Reason, p. 111.

[6] Krasnyi Arkhiv, VI (1924), 244-45. [7] Maude, p. 249.

Tolstoi continued Raievsky's work by feeding the people of four districts until 1893.[1] By the end of July, 1892, his relief program had reached 246 soup-kitchens, feeding 10,000-33,000 people, and 124 kitchens for 2,000-3,000 children.[2] In addition, he provided fuel for the peasants and food for livestock. Seed grain and stock replacement were given to the peasant in the form of a loan. The object was to prevent another famine in the following year.[3] The above figures do not include the extent of the work performed by his sons in Tula and Samara. The son in Samara, Lev, organized almost 200 soup-kitchens and several food distributing depots, which daily fed 20,000 people.[4] A dispatch from the American Embassy to Secretary of State Blaine estimated that by the end of May, 1892, the Tolstoi family had received 1,000,000 rubles or $500,000 in money and goods for their work.[5]

A very interesting domestic and international incident arose from the famine relief work of Tolstoi. It concerned his rumored arrest on the orders of the Emperor. The story behind this reported arrest is rather complex and confused. Tolstoi wrote several articles dealing with the famine, published both in Russia and in other countries. The London Daily Telegraph published an article by Tolstoi on the famine in February, 1892, and the Moscow Gazette translated it into Russian. The tone of the article printed in the Gazette implied that Tolstoi was

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[1]Ibid., p. 430. [2]Ibid., p. 441.

[3]Stadling and Reason, p. 46.

[4]Jonas Stadling, "Famine in Eastern Russia," The Century Magazine, XLVI (August, 1893), 568.

[5]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 191 (May 25, 1892).

inciting the peasants to rebellion.[1] Tolstoi's enemies clamored for his confinement. The rumor spread at home and abroad that he had been arrested. It should be noted that the article as translated in the Gazette did not coincide with his original article.[2]

Tolstoi's reputation was such that even a rumor of arrest brought forth an immediate international reaction. On March 7, 1892, the London Times stated that the confinement of Tolstoi removed any remaining sympathy felt by the German government toward that of Russia.[3] The story was also important enough to reach the United States. The New York Tribune stated that the reported punishment of Tolstoi created a sensation in Moscow.[4] In an effort to reassure the Emperor, Countess A. A. Tolstoi, the aunt of Tolstoi, had an audience with the Tsar. The meeting proved successful and no action was taken against Tolstoi.[5] This shadow across his reputation, however, affected his relief work, because many influential people stopped sending him contributions while he was in disfavor. In spite of a plea from his wife, Tolstoi refused to publish an explanation.[6]

The peasants heard of this incident and believed that Tolstoi was under arrest. When General Annenkov, the man in charge of the Public Works Program, arrived in Tolstoi's district, the peasants surrounded Tolstoi's living quarters at Begichevka to protect him.

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[1]Blankenburg, p. 55. [2]Maude, p. 443.

[3]The Times (London), March 7, 1892, p. 6.

[4]New York Tribune, March 13, 1892, p. 16.

[5]Maude, pp. 446-47. [6]Ibid., 449.

Tolstoi allayed their fears and the matter ended.[1]

The widespread news coverage of the famine of 1891-92 stimulated humanitarian sympathies in countries outside of Russia, which resulted in a significant foreign relief effort to help the suffering peasants within the famine district. The Tsarist government had two policies toward the acceptance of relief from foreign countries, dividing that aid into public and private. In general, they accepted private aid, but refused direct assistance from a foreign government. Baroness Olga Novikov explained the distinction made by the Tsar's government: private aid carried no obligation, whereas officially sponsored aid would carry moral obligations of some type.[2] Russia subsequently received private philanthropic assistance primarily from the United States, France and England.[3]

Famine-relief drives were organized in each of the above countries. The fund campaign in England was essentially a result of efforts put forth by the Society of Friends in England, even though a general call for donations appeared in London as early as October 1, 1891.[4] The Society sent two men, F. W. Fox and E. W. Brooks, to Russia to ascertain the extent of the famine. Upon learning of the state of affairs within Russia, they issued an appeal for help, such as that pub-

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[1] Reminiscences of Lev Tolstoi, p. 218.

[2] "Baroness Novikoff's Explanation," The Christian Herald, XV (March, 16, 1892), 167.

[3] Free Russia, II, No. 11 (June, 1892), 14.

[4] Ibid., II, No. 3 (October, 1891), 3.

lished in the Manchester Guardian on January 25, 1892.[1] The Friends' Society authorized E. W. Brooks and Herbert Jones in Russia to supervise the distribution of the aid donated to the Quakers. They returned to London in May of 1892. While the agents of the Quakers Society were in Russia, Prince Obolensky went to them seeking aid for a particular village in his charge and was blithely given 5,000 rubles.[2] Ultimately, the Society of Friends' gift to Russia as of September, 1892, was approximately 37,000 pounds or 370,000 rubles.[3] Over $10,000 of this sum was donated by American Quakers to the fund drive of their English brethren.[4]

Another major source of aid for famine-stricken of Russia that originated in England was Madame Olga Novikov's Fund, which was organized by the periodical, Review of Reviews. W. T. Stead, the editor of this periodical, opened a subscription list in December, 1891, and maintained that fund until the following July. The magazine sent all contributions to Madame Novikov's son in Tambov. This fund reached well over 1,000 pounds in donations to the starving peasants of Russia.[5] In addition, the British Russian Famine Fund collected 3,000 pounds and the British community living in Moscow donated another 2,000 pounds for

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[1]Manchester Guardian, January 25, 1892, p. 8.

[2]Obolensky, pp. 209-11; The Friends' Review, XLV (May 19, 1892), 679.

[3]The Friends' Review, XLVI (September 1, 1892), 92.

[4]Ibid., XLV (June 13, 1892), 766 and (July 7, 1892), 788.

[5]The Review of Reviews, V (January-June, 1892), 408.

famine relief.[1] One Russian observer believed that England responded more enthusiastically than Russia itself. He pointed out that an English firm sent to the province of Samara forty cart loads of grain, opened approximately thirty kitchens, and sent a doctor and nurse at its expense to deal with the threat of typhus.[2]

The only other European country to send aid to Russia was France; the other countries such as Germany, Italy, and Spain were essentially indifferent.[3] All indications are, however, that this gift was not nearly as large as that of England. In fact, the sources mention only one subscription list originating in France. These contributors sent a total of 6,021 r. and 45k. to the relief program of Kornilov.[4] There were, however, other donations made by the French for the benefit of the starving. For example, part of the receipts taken in at the French Exposition in Moscow were donated for famine relief.[5] Nonetheless, the French charitable effort was considerably below that put forth in England and the United States.

It was in the United States that the most generous famine relief program outside of Tsarist Russia evolved. American generosity was revealed at its best, when an outburst of humanitarian sentiment, which was subsequently transformed into deeds, swept across the country in the fall and winter of 1891-92. The American response was of such mag-

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[1] Free Russia, II, No. 12 (July, 1892), 7.

[2] "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 125.

[3] Free Russia, II, No. 11 (June, 1892), 14.

[4] Kornilov, p. 146. [5] Dru, p. 6.

nitude that it stands out as a great human interest story in the historical heritage of both Russia and America.[1]

At the time of the famine, Russia was relatively well-known to literate America. This was largely a result of the visit of the Russian fleet during the Civil War, the publication of George Kennan's book, The Siberian Exile System, and the newspaper coverage of Jewish persecutions in Russia in the 1880's. Thus, the news of a famine in Russia appealed to an awareness that already existed.

Americans first heard of the crop-failure in Russia as early as July 1, 1891, when the New York Times informed its readers that a famine was expected in Russia, and that it might be the worst on record.[2] Throughout the summer, interest in the famine remained academic, but in the fall the Weekly Northwestern Miller, a miller's trade journal published in Minneapolis, became particularly concerned with the impact of the Russian famine upon the international grain market. Out of this deep vested interest in the market, there developed the truly humanitarian American Famine Relief Movement.

The Northwestern Miller started work on a famine relief project on November 20, when the Miller sent a telegram to the Russian Embassy in Washington, D. C., proposing a plan to help the Russians stricken by famine, and asking if the Russian government would accept it. Upon receiving no reply, the Miller sent another telegram on November 27.

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[1]Because of this fact, a lengthy discussion of the American response to the Russian famine of 1891-92 is included. For a more detailed discussion, see Merle Curti, American Philanthropy Abroad (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1963).

[2]New York Times, July 1, 1891, p. 6.

The Russian Embassy forwarded the request to St. Petersburg, and on December 4, 1891, the Embassy notified the Miller that its offer had been accepted.[1]

On that same day, December 4, 1891, the American Famine Relief Movement was born, as a full page article appeared in the Miller appealing to the millers of America to donate 1,000,000 pounds of flour to help the Russians.[2] This constituted the first national appeal made in the United States to send aid to Russia. Prior to this, there had been two local requests for aid. One had occurred in Boston on November 13. Miss Frances E. Willard, as President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in its annual report, asked for donations to aid Russia. The delegates at the convention donated $200.[3] Also in the fall the Siberian Exile Petition Association had called for a donation of a bushel of corn from each of its 1,000,000 members, for the benefit of the starving Russians.[4]

December was also the month that the American National Red Cross began to take an active interest in the famine. On the 14th, Miss Clara Barton, the President of the Red Cross Society, sent a letter to the Secretary of State, James G. Blaine, which he forwarded to Mr. Greger, the Russian Chargé d'affairs, on December 16. The letter requested permission from the Russian government for the Red Cross to

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[1]Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 5.

[2]Weekly Northwestern Miller, XXXII, No. 23 (December 4, 1891), 781.

[3]B. F. Tillinghast, "A Far Reaching Charity I," The Midland Monthly, I (April, 1894), 328.

[4]John W. Hoyt, Report of the Russian Famine Relief Committee of the United States (Washington, D. C.: Rufus H. Darby, 1893), p. 7.

send aid to Russia.[1] Alexander Greger had an interview with Miss Barton, in which he confirmed the fact that Russia was suffering from a famine and that his government would accept relief from charities. In addition, Greger asked the St. Petersburg government to allow a United States Red Cross agent to go to Russia.[2] On the 16th, Blaine received a message from the Chargé d'affairs which stated:

> 1. In regard to the question of transportation, I will say that we are willing to forward from New York to Russia all flour, grains etc. donated to the famine stricken population of some of our provinces.
>
> 2. On the subject of the second question, I will call your attention to the fact that the Russian Government has already answered to an offer of aid which came from the millers of Minneapolis, instructing our Legation to say that the Imperial Government 'accepted with gratitude their generous offer.'
>
> 3. No tariff restrictions will prevent the free shipment or distribution of the donated goods.
>
> 4. a. The needs are real and great. b. The distribution of relief could be properly secured through the Red Cross branches of Russia and America, through the channel of our legation and the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[3]

December thus marks the real beginning of the American Russian relief movement.

The American Russian relief program faced a number of major obstacles at the outset of its campaign. The major obstacle centered on the

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[1]Letter of Clara Barton to Secretary of State James G. Blaine, December 14, 1891, Clara Barton Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.), Box 29. Cited hereafter as Barton Papers.

[2]U. S., Department of State, Russia, Notes from the Russian Legation: September 1, 1889 to December 31, 1895 (December 16, 1891).

[3]Ibid.

very bad press given the Tsarist government in the United States.[1] In the summer and fall the attack on the Tsarist government concentrated on the treatment of the Jews.[2] Eventually, the opposition of the press to the Tsar focused on the following points: (1) callousness of the Tsar's government; (2) failure to take ordinary precautions; (3) mishandling of the relief work and the hampering of foreign missions; (4) continued collection of taxes from the peasants in spite of the famine; (5) the corruption that existed within the bureaucracy and the nobility.[3] The adverse press attitude toward the Tsarist government was significant because, as one functionary with the relief movement noted, it slowed the flow of donations.[4]

The attitude of George Kennan, one of the leading experts in America on Russia, was a further handicap for the American relief effort, in that initially he opposed the idea of sending aid to Russia. He expressed his opposition to the relief effort in an interview with the New York Times on January 3, 1892. Although Kennan felt that the primary cause for the famine was the failure of the crops, he believed that the indirect causes were the corruption and mismanagement of the Tsarist government. When asked if he thought that the United States should send aid, he replied that if it must pass through the hands of

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[1]For example see the comments in the New York Tribune, December 10, 1891, p. 6; Ibid., January 4, 1892, p. 1; Ibid., January 7, 1892, p. 3; New York Times, December 15, 1891, p. 1; Ibid., January 7, 1892, p. 2.

[2]New York Times, September 6, 1891, p. 1.

[3]Thomas A. Bailey, America Faces Russia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 153.

[4]Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 10.

the Russian officials, it would not be worthwhile.[1] Apparently, Kennan subsequently changed his mind concerning aid for Russia because he sent a $100 check to Clara Barton for famine relief.[2]

In spite of the adverse commentary of the press about the Tsar and his government, and the initial opposition of influential people like George Kennan, an extensive relief program developed in the United States. Why? John W. Hoyt, the chairman of the Russian Famine Relief Committee provides an answer.

> Happily the New World had been blest with bountiful harvest, and Russia's millions could properly turn to us in silent appeal for help. Moreover, independent of these sufficient reasons of humanity, and of the traditional friendship between the two nations, there were well known special grounds for such an appeal; since, besides what we have in common in respect of resources, experience and aspirations, on the one hand, and of contrast politically and socially on the other, the people of this country find a ground of deep and lasting obligation in the shining fact that, when the fate of the American Union hung trembling in the balance, it was Russia that silently moored her fleets within call of either shore, and let it be understood that she was there as the friend of the Great Republic.[3]

Once the famine relief movement was under way, the press of America became part of the popular tide to help the Russians and, in general, refrained from further attacks upon the Tsarist government. In fact, many periodicals and newspapers, particularly those of Philadelphia and New York, contributed a great deal to the relief crusade. These publications ran donation lists, covered the progress of various relief projects, and in general enthusiastically supported these humanitarian efforts.

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[1] New York Times, January 3, 1892, p. 13.

[2] Letter to Clara Barton, March 8, 1892, Barton Papers, Box 29.

[3] Hoyt, p. 1.

Another major obstacle to the famine relief movement in America was the transportation of their donation, which was largely grain products, rather than money, to Russia. It was initially hoped that the government of the United States would appropriate funds to pay the cost of transporting the gift from the people of America to Russia. After considerable debate the government refused to appropriate the necessary funds, and the leaders of the relief organization were forced to turn to another source, which was the generosity of the American people.[1] Ultimately five ships--the "Famine Fleet"--were procured and carried the American gift to Russia.

Within an hour after the appeal by W. C. Edgar on December 4, 1891, for the millers of America to donate 6,000,000 pounds of flour, the millers of Minneapolis had contributed 420,000 pounds of flour. Governor W. R. Merrian of Minnesota appointed a relief commission, headed by W. C. Edgar.[2] On December 11, 1891, the Miller declared that the Relief Commission had become a national movement. Each issue of the Miller included a subscription blank as well as a subscription list of donors. As the popularity of the relief movement grew, societies and organizations in addition to the millers created Millers' Relief Funds, e.g., schools and churches.[3] The following quotations taken from Edgar's book, The Russian Famine, provide an impression of the level of response of the American people.

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[1]See the U. S., Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Session, 1892, XXIII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), for a full discussion of the debate.

[2]Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 6. [3]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

Aikin School, Paris, Tex. Feb. 4th, 1892.
Editor Northwestern Miller

Enclosed find post office order for the sum of $5, sent by the pupils and myself to aid you in your efforts to alleviate the suffering Russians. I read to my classes an account from the Review of Reviews (sic) and had them reproduce it for a language lesson. Finding the young hearts ready to respond, we send you the enclosed sum. We wish you "God Speed" in your long journey to the land of the Tsar, and hope you will be very successful in your efforts to carry food to the starving.

Again, with best wishes, we beg to remain yours cordially,

Pupils of the eight Grade,
and Frances Hardin, Teacher.

Cherry Creek, N. Y. Feb. 5th, 1892.
Editor Northwestern Miller:

Don't throw aside this small donation to the starving Russians, I am not a miller, neither am I the wife of one, but the lone widow of a house; but accidently one of your circulars came to me, so I send you $5 in money. Please buy what you can with it and send it in the ship. It will feed one Russian if he gets it. Now may God watch over this mite till it crosses the Ocean and reaches the starving ones.

Amy A. Shattuck
Seventy-five years old.[1]

The second major philanthropic movement was founded only two days after the appeal published in the Miller. On December 6, B. F. Tillinghast, the editor of the Davenport Democrat, urged the enlargement and rapid development of relief for the starving Russians.[2] The state of Iowa aligned itself with the American Red Cross and chose that agency to handle the donations gathered there, and the two organizations thereupon worked in conjunction to send a shipload of grain to Russia.

It was at this time that a National Famine Relief Committee was

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[1]Ibid., p. 8.

[2]Tillinghast, The Midland Monthly, I (April, 1894), 328.

formed. John W. Hoyt, the chairman of the committee stated that its "efforts should be expended in arousing the country to successive appeals through the public press, as well as by means of correspondence and by personal efforts of its chairman and other members, to the end of a systematic national movement for the sending out of a succession of ships to Russian ports until the end of the famine."[1] The "United States Russian Famine Relief Committee" issued appeals to the governors of the various states, to mayors, and city councils of each city in the nation, to the Chambers of Commerce, to proprietors and editors of public journals, to the farmers of America, etc. This committee was not intended for the collection of food or money, but acted as the campaign manager for the Russian Famine Relief Movement.[2] It was comprised of many prominent men in the United States, including ex-president Rutherford B. Hayes, the Vice-President of the United States, the Chief Justice, fifteen Senators, the Speaker and other members of the House, twenty-eight Governors, etc.[3] Thus by January 1, 1892, the Famine Relief Movement in this country was becoming a large and popular movement.

Philadelphia was the locale of the third major relief program, taking an active interest in the latter part of January, 1892.[4] Although the program of Philadelphia began later than the first two relief projects, it developed more rapidly, and their shipload of grain was the first one of the "Famine Fleet" to sail. In Pennsyl-

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[1]Hoyt, pp. 8-9. [2]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[3]Iowa State Register, December 25, 1892, p. 5.

[4]Public Ledger (Philadelphia), February 1, 1892, p. 3.

vania and Philadelphia the relief program followed much the same path as in Iowa and Minnesota. Donations came from a wide variety of people.[1] The response of the people within the Quaker state was so great that two days after one ship arrived in Russia, the Philadelphia Russian Famine Relief Committee decided to dispatch another shipload of grain to Russia. As one observer stated: "Rich men gave of their abundance, widows of their mites, churches of all creeds, societies of all sorts, Sunday schools, enumerable children of public and private day schools, in a word, almost everybody helped with glowing zeal."[2]

The New York State Chamber of Commerce founded a relief fund that did not actually send a ship to Russia, but was intimately involved in famine relief work. In the monthly meeting of February, 1892, the Chamber of Commerce met to discuss the prospect of starting a famine relief fund. Despite the opposition of some of the members, the Chamber of Commerce decided in favor of a relief program. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller were among the committee of fifty appointed to handle subscriptions.[3] The Chamber of Commerce designated J. P. Morgan as treasurer of the fund.[4] The New York Tribune published the appeal of the Chamber of Commerce for subscriptions on February 6, stressing the fact that the distress was indeed serious.[5] This relief committee played an important role in sending a sizeable

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[1]Ibid., February 17, 1892, p. 3; Philadelphia New England Society, 12th Annual Festival of the New England Society of Pennsylvania: December 22, 1892, An Address by Mayor Stuart, p. 38.

[2]Reeves, pp. 6-7. [3]New York Times, February 5, 1892, p. 8.

[4]Ibid., February 18, 1892, p. 9.

[5]New York Tribune, February 6, 1892, p. 4.

amount of aid to Russia. Their campaign lasted well into the spring and the total donations of the Chamber of Commerce of New York reached at least $51,333.65.[1]

The Christian Herald of New York City sponsored the last ship sent to Russia. The Herald became interested in the famine in August, and followed its development throughout the winter of 1891-92. Finally on March 23, the periodical announced that it would accept donations from its readers for the purpose of buying foodstuffs for the Russians.[2] In each issue thereafter, appeared a subscription list of donors. The Herald made a sizeable contribution to the cargo of the second ship sent from Philadelphia. By late April, their donations had been so large that the Herald contemplated sending its own shipload of flour to Russia.[3] The original goal of the Christian Herald relief fund had only been 100,000 pounds of flour. Donations, however, were so great that they sent a cargo of flour totaling over 2,000,000 pounds.[4]

The gathering of donations was only the beginning of an exceedingly complex process. The commissioners of the various relief committees were faced with the difficult problem of getting their donations to New York and Philadelphia and then sending them to Russia. Again the generosity of the American people rose to the fore and virtually every process was donated to the commissioners free of charge. For example, most

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[1] New York Times, May 8, 1892, p. 20.

[2] "Russia's Cry for Bread," Christian Herald, XV (March 23, 1892), 177, 181.

[3] "God Speed the Conemaugh," Christian Herald, XV (April 27, 1892), 256-65.

[4] Christian Herald, XV (April 27, 1892), 264. See also Christian Herald, XV (May 4, 1892), 280.

of the existing railroad companies hauled the grain to New York or Philadelphia at no charge.[1] The use of four of the ships of the "Famine Fleet" was given free of charge.[2] Only the Christian Herald paid for a ship to carry its gift to Russia.

The following account of free services given the Millers' Fund and the Iowa Famine Relief Fund further illustrates the enthusiasm of Americans for the relief movement. The Millers' Famine Relief Fund received free telegraph service for 500 to 600 telegrams from the Western Union Telegraph Company.[3] The grain destined for the Missouri's hold was stored at no expense in Buffalo and New York.[4] Other services freely donated to the Millers' Fund include the labor of stevedores, who worked night and day loading the Missouri, the pilot and tug boat services, coal for the ship, necessary supplies for the ship, and the cost of insurance.[5] The Marine Insurance Companies gave the premium on $75,000 to the Millers' Fund.[6] An almost identical situation is found in the development of the Red Cross and Iowa Famine Relief Fund. Their entire quantity of foodstuffs was gathered without personal payment, and unloaded, inspected, stored and insured without expense in New York. The freight brokers donated their commission of $156, while the steam-

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[1]Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 9; Tillinghast, The Midland Monthly, I (April, 1894), 334,336; Reeves, p. 5.

[2]See Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 12; Clara Barton, The Red Cross in Peace and War (Meriden, Conn.: The Journal Publishing co., 1912), pp. 177-78; Reeves, p. 4; Public Ledger (Philadelphia), March 19, 1892, p. 1.

[3]Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 9. [4]Ibid., p. 12.

[5]Ibid., p. 15. [6]New York Herald, March 13, 1892, p. 16.

ship agents did the same for $212.[1]

Philadelphia sent the Indiana on February 22, 1892 and the Conemaugh on April 23, 1892.[2] The Millers sent the Missouri on March 16, 1892.[3] The Tynehead was dispatched on May 3, 1892, by the Red Cross and Iowa.[4] The last ship of the "Famine Fleet," the Leo, her cargo gathered through the auspices of the Christian Herald, set sail for Russia on June 13, 1892.

Each ship of the "Famine Fleet" received a marvelous reception upon its arrival in Tsarist Russia. The Indiana and Missouri arrived at Libau on March 16 and April 3 respectively. Riga was the port of debarkation for the Conemaugh and the Tynehead, on May 13, and May 27 respectively. Leo, the last ship to go to Russia, sailed up the Neva River and docked at St. Petersburg on July 14, 1892.

The Russians, in conjunction with the American Ambassador, had everything arranged so that the ships could be quickly and efficiently unloaded and then loaded on the waiting trains, which had priority over other traffic, and dispatched to the interior. Count A. A. Bobrinsky of the Tsarevich's Special Committee was personally in charge of supervising the reception and delivery of the American donations.[5] All in all there were great ceremonies, with American flags waving, and bands

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[1]Tillinghast, The Midland Monthly, I (April, 1894), 336.

[2]Public Ledger (Philadelphia), February 23, 1892, p. 6. Ibid., April 23, 1892, p. 6.

[3]Edgar, The Russian Famine, pp. 13, 15.

[4]New York Herald, May 3, 1892, p. 13.

[5]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith Vol. 42, No. 160 (March 23, 1892).

playing the "National Anthem" and "Hail Columbia."[1] From the contemporary accounts, the reception of the American ships must have been an exciting and magnificent moment in the history of Russia and the United States.

The total monetary value of cargo and cash donations given by America for the relief of famine stricken Russians was at least $800,000 or roughly $1,600,000 r.[2] To this figure one must add the numerous free services--especially those given by the railroads--and the time and effort that went into planning and organizing the relief program. A more exact estimate of the importance of American aid can be made concerning the impact of the foodstuffs, delivered in Russia. Approximately 24,000,000 pounds of foodstuffs, flour and corn, reached the famine district. Dividing this by the Zemstvo dole of thirty pounds per man per month, this amount would feed 800,000 people for one month, 266,000 people for three months, or 133,000 people for six months.

The impact of the Russian Famine of 1891-92 upon the United States resulted in one of the great humanitarian stories in history. The spontaneous and enthusiastic relief drive which swept across the eastern two-thirds of the United States, is all the more remarkable when one realizes that Russia was America's major grain competitor for the European market. Yet, the American people, especially the Millers and farmers were willing to freely render aid to this competitor in his moment

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[1]Edgar, The Russian Famine, pp. 24-26.

[2]This is my own estimate. Other estimates set the value of American aid at $1,000,000. See Curti, p. 115; George S. Queen, "American Relief in the Russian Famine of 1891-1892," Russian Review, Vol. 14, No. 2 (April, 1955), 148.

of distress. Indeed, this was generosity in the very best sense.

The famine came to an end in the spring and summer of 1892. Although the winter crops of that year were satisfactory in the main, it is noteworthy that out of the ten provinces suffering a bad harvest in 1892, seven--Riazan, Saratov, Tula, Voronezh, Kursk, Kherson, and Kharkov--were part of the great famine district of the year before.[1] In other places, however, the harvest of 1892 brought relief from the tragedy of 1891, and in general, according to Prince Obolensky, the peasant life style "returned to its rut."[2]

Russia's problems in 1892 did not surcease with the harvest of 1892, for a cholera epidemic swept across Russia from Persia. The Ministry of Interior first heard about an epidemic in Hurat in northern Persia, in February, 1892, and it dispatched doctors to the border in an effort to contain the disease. In May and June, the Russian border cities such as Astrakhan began reporting cases of cholera.[3] By late spring the disease was spreading up the Volga, and the Tsar sent Witte to study the problem and report back to him.[4] As summer approached the

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[1]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 208 (June 25, 1892). See also: Free Russia, III, No. 2 (September, 1892), 4-5; Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, VI (December, 1892), 869 ff., which discuss the poor harvest of 1892.

[2]Obolensky, p. 227; Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), p. 151.

[3]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 209 (June 27, 1892); Obolensky, p. 223.

[4]Sergei Witte, Vospominaniia, Vol. I (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Sotsial'no-Ekonomicheskoi Literatury, 1960), p. 263.

tide of cholera had spread well up the Volga into central Russia.[1] On July 10, 1892, the government officially designated the outbreak of cholera within Russia an epidemic, an epidemic which had moved north to Saratov, Samara, and Kazan quite rapidly.[2] The cholera epidemic was so widespread that it even reached St. Petersburg in August.[3]

Society again responded energetically to the need for doctors and nurses to care for the sick and stem the tide of disease.[4] With the coming of fall the epidemic was brought under control and ceased harassing the much harassed Russian people.[5] One observer noted how enthusiastically doctors and medical students went off to the country to deal with the cholera epidemic.[6]

There was, however, a very unfortunate side effect of the cholera epidemic, which testifies to the overall backwardness of Russia, which critics of the Tsarist regime must bear in mind when evaluating the Tsar and his government. The lower classes, both in the cities and in the countryside, reacted violently to the attempt by the authorities to cope with the disease. Rumors spread across Russia along with the cholera, that they were planning to kill people. Crowds rioted and

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[1]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 547; Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 151.

[2]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 217 (July 10, 1892).

[3]Ibid., No. 238 (September 7, 1892). [4]Chekhov, p. 309.

[5]Vikentii Veresaev, Vospominaniia (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1946), p. 347; Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 238 (September 7, 1892); Free Russia, III, No. 2 (September, 1892), p. 9.

[6]Veresaev, p. 344.

destroyed hospitals, and attacked doctors and medical students, some being severely beaten and even killed.[1] The ignorance of the Russian people must have been extremely frustrating for these young people, who had come to help them.

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[1]Veresaev, p. 344; Chekhov, pp. 286, 309; Obolensky, p. 223; Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 217 (July 10, 1892).

CHAPTER II

THE GREAT DEBATE

"Crop failure . . . always produces a harvest of liberal chatter."[1] Vestnik Evropy

Aside from the magnitude of the crop-failure and obvious suffering experienced within the famine district, the most characteristic feature of the famine was a conflict of opinion among the contemporaries. The conflict of opinion, which tended to polarize Russian society, involved disputes on such topics as the cause of the famine, the severity of the famine, and the character and extent of the government's response. One expects discussion about causation when dealing with any subject, but to find a lively debate over whether a famine actually occurred in Russia in 1891-1892 produces something of shock.[2]

Even V. G. Korolenko emphasized the fact that a debate on this question flourished, and as a consequence, allotted considerable space in his book on the famine to discussing this very issue. The fact that a major crop-failure had occurred in 1891 was not a point at issue. The

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[1]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 431. This is not a statement made by Stasulevich, but is cited by him as a view representative of conservative opinion in Russia.

[2]Not one modern historian used in this dissertation mentioned the fact that a lively debate took place on the question of whether a "famine" really existed in Russia in the winter of 1891-92. Modern scholarship has simply accepted the existence of a severe and tragic famine as a proven fact.

crux of the matter was whether the crop-failure had evolved into a famine; this in turn is predicated on what one means by the word "Famine."[1]

Korolenko's discussion of the famine of 1891-92 is illustrative, since he also states that the present famine did not equal the great famines of the past. He says that in reading his book, the reader might ask more than once, "Where is the famine?" Where, indeed, were the images of a famine which turns man into an inhuman being? Korolenko relates that someone defined famine as being a condition in which mothers will devour their own childrren. During the tragic reign of Boris Godunov such conditions supposedly existed and even human meat was sold on occasion. However, Korolenko states quite emphatically that the famine conditions at the end of the nineteenth century were not that bad, and that he did not see one person die from starvation. In addition, he says that there was not one case of a mother eating her children.[2] Thus it would appear that the use of the word famine in 1891-92 meant at the outset, extreme malnutrition and starvation, but did not generally imply death.

As Korolenko noted, many observers of the crop-failure refused to accept the fact that famine existed in 1891-92, even according to the above definition of famine. For example, the director of a district food-supply commission in Nizhni-Novgorod Province denied that a famine existed in his district. Many gentry within the district dwelt

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[1]It is the author's opinion that to the Russian of 1891, the word "famine"--golod--implied more than simply malnutrition. As it was used in 1891, the word suggested at least severe hunger and even outright starvation.

[2]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, pp. 7-8.

upon the well-being of their district rather than the destitution caused by crop-failure.[1] People who denied the existence of the famine Korolenko called "peasant-haters." Apparently, there were a great many such "peasant-haters" because, according to Korolenko, many people from the provinces supported the proposition that the famine did not exist in Russia. Korolenko says that these people denied the obvious facts of the famine.[2]

Until February, 1892, Korolenko would have included M. M. Baranov, the Governor of Nizhni-Novgorod, among the "peasant-haters," and as one who played down the severity of the famine. However, at that time the Governor changed his mind and began to stress the fact that a famine existed.[3] Apparently it was the conflicting evidence which raised doubts about the existence of the famine and caused people to waiver from one viewpoint to the next. For example, in October, 1891, Dr. D. O. Reshetillo prepared a report for the Nizhni-Novgorod Province, in which he argued that there was neither famine nor famine typhus in the province. He stated that the peasants had money to spend on "spirits" and luxury items. Later, however, he changed his mind and reported that typhus did exist in a particular village in November. The Provincial administrators then sent an inspector to the same village, who then reported no typhus whatsoever. Paradoxically, Reshetillo also signed this report. Finally, Governor Baranov visited that village and did find typhus.[4] This example should demonstrate quite clearly the difficulty of resolving the major questions that relate to the famine.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 13, 17. [2]Ibid., p. 16.

[3]Ibid., p. 19. [4]Ibid., p. 351.

Proponents of the view that a serious tragedy had struck Russia, found it difficult to cope with the evidence that would deny the existence of a famine. The market-place in the village of Pochinki, described by Korolenko, is an example of such evidence, evidence which suggested that the famine was not as extensive as alleged. He visited the market-place in the early spring of 1892, and found many cartloads of oats for sale, this in a market-place in a district of the famine zone. Korolenko states that accounts of the market-place of Pochinki became part of every report from that district, and the local officials took visitors to the market-place as proof that famine conditions were exaggerated in their district. These visitors, it seemed, were disturbed when they saw a flourishing trade in oats in this village.[1]

After recounting the paradoxical situation of obvious "plenty" in a time of famine, Korolenko digressed into a rhetorical discussion whether indeed a famine did exist and whether one can ever really prove one's conclusion. He says "was there indeed a famine, was there really a terrible crop-failure, was there a necessity to aid the population of twenty provinces?"[2] Some people, he argues, will say that without doubt there was a famine; others will argue that the famine was only a plot of the liberals in Russia.[3]

Korolenko provides another example of the ambivalence created by attempts to determine the truth about the famine. The noted author received a letter from someone who had sent him a donation for famine relief. The letter writer was trying to make up his own mind about the reality of the famine, noting that he had seen examples of hunger-bread,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 106-107. [2]Ibid., p. 107. [3]Ibid., p. 108.

but that the authorities had told him that these samples of hunger-bread were purposely baked to defraud the governmental officials as to the degree of need. The peasants protested to the Land Captain that they had no grain, but these officials and the letter-writer himself had actually visited some homes and found grain.[1] This was not an isolated incident; the Governor of Tobolsk at the time of the famine, also reported that peasants deliberately baked bad bread and took it to officials to deceive them concerning the degree of need.[2]

While the letter-writer seemed to be skeptical about the existence of famine, Korolenko's attitude was not altered at all. He states that the evidence cited by the letter-writer was biased. Korolenko says that the statement "visited some homes and found wheat," might mean only one-half of all the homes or possibly only one or two houses. He thus tends to refute the above argument on the grounds of insufficient evidence.[3]

Korolenko provides another example of why there was consternation in the minds of the contemporary Russian concerning the existence of the famine. While in the city of Nizhni-Novgorod, Korolenko met a nobleman who was very happy to learn that there was no real famine in Russia. This particular landlord came to this conclusion because of the following incident. It seems that he believed in the existence of the famine until he met a peasant whom he knew was a "poor" peasant and had received hunger loans. The landlord told Korolenko that this same peasant came to him to buy a horse. The nobleman, wondering where he had

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[1]Ibid., p. 109.

[2]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), pp. 542-43.

[3]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 109.

acquired enough money to buy a horse, told the peasant that the horse would cost 35 rubles. He was greatly surprised when the peasant produced the requisite sum. "There is your suffering people!" he tells Korolenko in conclusion.[1]

It is clear from the number of pages in his book devoted to a discussion of whether a famine existed, that Korolenko was deeply concerned with this problem. He was particularly upset by the fact that he found a growing skepticism relating to the famine in his travels within the famine area. This observer noted that someone would report seeing this and someone else that. From such individual observations, Korolenko complained that incorrect conclusions were drawn. Korolenko says that "one single fact, which a man saw himself, at once closes his mind to a thousand facts, which are trustworthy, but about which he only read about, or others saw."[2]

Korolenko is also chagrined by the reaction to another incident which he felt proved how bad conditions were, but which others felt proved the contrary. In order to provide bread for a soup-kitchen, Korolenko bought 275 poods of grain from a peasant at what he considered to be an exorbitant price. He felt that this demonstrated how serious conditions were if food was so scarce that the peasant had to pay such high prices to obtain it. The common response, however, to this story was "a peasant with 275 poods! Well, this is how they are suffering."[3]

Korolenko admits that at first he was amazed at such a negative

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[1]Ibid., pp. 109-10. [2]Ibid., p. 110. [3]Ibid.

response to a condition which seemed to him evidence for his case.[1]

Korolenko recounts other examples of peasants having grain to sell within the very districts stricken by famine. He argues, however, that the fact some peasants had grain to sell does not change the fact that there were also peasants with nothing to eat. Some people felt that the peasants were being fraudulent, because they asked for loans, and yet had grain to sell. But, he states, that the peasants who sell grain are not the same peasants who are on relief. The problem, according to Korolenko, is that when someone sees one peasant he judges all peasants according to that one incident, and thus the liberal viewpoint was judged quite harshly. If they see a drunk they begin to shout "here are the Russian people! Drunkards and dunces. The Russian people become drunk, they are not hungry, but squander their loans on drink."[2]

People asked Korolenko if he had been to the famine district, and whether he had seen the famine. He says that this question implies a simple answer, but a simple answer to the question does not exist. Again, the answer apparently depends on individual experience and personal bias. The noted author uses the following example to illustrate his point. Ivan Ivanovich, he states, was convinced that famine existed in a given volost after he visited that area. However, Semeon Semeonovich visited the same volost and did not find any evidence of famine. On the contrary, the peasants were getting drunk and singing dirty songs.[3]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 112. The fact that some peasants had grain to sell does diminish the overall picture of the famine tragedy.

[3]Ibid., pp. 112-13.

Korolenko stresses the fact that testimony of such observers makes it very difficult to establish whether indeed a severe famine did exist. When a provincial inspector arrives in the famine district and finds a market with cartloads of oats for sale, he naturally reports that conditions were not that bad. Korolenko believed that such incidents happened in every crop-failure province, which spread many doubts pertaining to the famine. Korolenko himself attempted to refute the significance of the evidence, by arguing that while there was a large harvest of oats, which were found in the market for sale, it did not replace the tremendous shortage in the rye crop.[1] In any case, Korolenko asks is it any wonder that there was vascillation and doubts within the Russian public on the question--is there or isn't there a famine. He concludes that the observer uses only those statistics which he feels are advantageous to his own position.[2] In other words, the entire picture of the "severe" famine is predicated on the political-personal bias of the observer.

In addition to the Pochinki market, Korolenko presents more material which also suggests that the famine was not as severe as has been traditionally alleged. In his travels he visited villages within the famine district which were not stricken by famine.[3] Furthermore, in a conversation with his coachman on one of his trips in the famine district, he learned that marriages were on the rise rather than on the decline, a seeming paradox in view of the famine. Korolenko answers the paradox by stating that the reason marriages are increasing is because the cost of girls has declined and thus poorer peasants could

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[1]Ibid., pp. 114-15. [2]Ibid., pp. 116-17. [3]Ibid., p. 6.

afford to marry.[1] His argument is very weak because if a man could marry he had to have at least some money and food to feed a wife. Thus despite his efforts to explain away evidence that raised doubts about the severity of the famine, there was indeed a basis for these doubts and the debate over the famine that flourished in Russia.

Korolenko was hardly the only barometer of the debate concerning the degree and even the existence of famine in Russia in the fall of 1891. The pages of the Vestnik Evropy also monitored and reflected this debate. In November, 1891, this important periodical reported that "it is impossible any longer to doubt the fact that for a significant zone of Russia famine threatens in the complete sense of the word."[2] Obviously, this statement indicates that a debate of some type was taking place within Russia. Paradoxically, this same article presents material concerning the well-being of at least some of the peasants, which certainly raises questions pertaining to the severity of the famine.[3] The Vestnik Evropy did demonstrate a sense of objectivity by presenting arguments and evidence in late 1892, which clearly refuted the image that a severe and tragic famine had been visited upon Russia. It cited this material, however, from conservative sources like the Moskovskii Vedomost, and only did this in order to denounce such

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[1]Ibid., p. 118.

[2]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), p. 417. See subsequent pages in this article for reports from the famine district emphasizing that famine was about to descend upon Russia.

[3]Ibid., p.423.

positions as sins against the truth.[1]

In late 1891, the editors of Vestnik Evropy devoted considerable article space to the question--is there or isn't there a famine. This article was monitoring the attitudes toward this question in a number of prominent newspapers across Russia. For example, the Moskovskii Vedomost presented arguments on both sides of the issue. Novosti, stated that up to mid-winter 1891, there were no real signs of famine in the historical and psychological sense. In its view, reports of deaths due to starvation were definitely exaggerations. Correspondents sent by Novosti to the famine district did not find famine but only "aggravated need;" these observers did not find starving people in the villages, but only the well-known agricultural proletariat. Novosti concluded that "in Russia there is no famine, in the strictest sense of the word, and there exists only a chronic need."[2] This periodical also argued that as soon as the government had decided to render aid to the famine district, such prosperous districts as Poland, New Russia, and even the Caucasus began to scream famine and seek aid.

> And now the word famine is everywhere the means to move the government to pity, with the goal of obtaining from the government bounties and favors. In any case it is difficult to understand, where the constant need of the people ends and where, as a kind of accessory to it, the crop-failure begins.[3]

Russia in the view of Novosti was a huge sponge which could easily soak up a very serious tragedy. "Any tragedy is swiftly distributed and diluted in the general total well-being of the country."[4] Such

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[1]See Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, VI (December, 1892), 869-70.

[2]"Vnutrennei Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, I (February, 1892), 857.

[3]Cited in Ibid. [4]Cited in Ibid.

chronic tragedy was generally unnoticed and only comes to the surface under the influence of a great crop-failure. Thus, in the pages of Novosti, there was no famine, only "aggravated, sporadic need."[1]

The editor of the Vestnik Evropy counters the above argument by postulating that the newspaper correspondents from the urban centers were not able to really understand the true conditions in the countryside. In his opinion, one should disregard their view and turn to more valid testimony given by people with greater experience with the agricultural situation in Russia than city correspondents, people who "well acquainted with its customary sight," were "accustomed at recognizing the various degrees of [the agricultural] needs."[2] Such people were the native inhabitants of the village, the priests, doctors, land captains, zemstvo assemblies, and even governors, who acknowledged the existence of a famine at the very outset of the fall. The Vestnik Evropy defines the word famine as follows:

> Famine, in the physiological, historical, social and any sense, ---is the aggregate of objective phenomena and subjective sensation, which is produced . . . as a consequence of the shortage of nourishment, a consequence of a sharp breach of the balance between decline and profits, between expenditure of strength and its replenishment. Those starve, who eat only bread with a strong admixture of lebeda or chaff; those starve, who must be satisfied with a half a pound of bread, ...[3]

The editor goes on to say that the psychological threat of famine is probably more serious than the actual physical status of the peasant. From the current level of famine, everyone is very much aware that it is but a short step to outright starvation, if not today than possibly tomorrow. The Vestnik Evropy then cites evidence to prove how bad con-

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 858. [3]Ibid.

ditions were, so bad that even middle peasants and landlords have been hard hit by the crop-failure.[1] Indeed, famine did exist in Russia. Contrary to some views, the word famine did not represent a conspiracy to move the government into humanitarian gestures. In addition, the editor feels that Russia was not some sort of collossal sponge that absorbs such a tragedy. Such arguments, it was felt, only encouraged a very superficial response to the national tragedy.[2]

Similarly, in March, 1892, the Vestnik Evropy takes to task the view, which was in general vogue in the press, that "famine" conditions have abated to considerable extent from what they had been two months earlier. In attempting to refute this point of view, M. Stasulevich ironically presents an argument that raises more questions about the seriousness of conditions than it answers. He states that "the picture of the tragedy is clear only to those who look at it closely, intently and for hours."[3] The obvious question here is how serious are conditions if one must spend hours or months looking for them. One cannot, according to Stasulevich, really fathom the true situation by swiftly passing through the famine district--from one district to another--asking questions of local officials. If, on the other hand, one stayed a few months or weeks in the same village and visited each peasant family to find out how these families fared throughout the entire month, he predicted that they would come to a different conclusion about the extent of the famine and the need in the village. Stasulevich implies that many observers only see a village the day after the distribution

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 859.

[3]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, II (March, 1892), 440.

of food and that that village presents a far different image than it does prior to food distribution. "To see it only at the former minute--means one will form a completely incorrect notion about the degree of need."[1] As an example , he cites the experience of a Miss Davidov, who traveled from one hut to another and saw a picture of extreme misery. Stasulevich argues that it was because she visited each hut and only stopped at a small number of villages--in other words she had indepth knowledge--that she obtained a truer picture of conditions in the famine district.[2]

According to Stasulevich, there were additional circumstances which changed the external view of a village and made it difficult to determine the degree of need. He says that the news that a high official is coming, enlivens a village and changes beyond recognition its everyday characteristics. Thus Stasulevich feels that an observer only sees a village when it is at its brightest. Hence, he believes that this accounts for the very moderate and calming reports which emanate from observers of the famine scene.[3]

In this same acticle, Stasulevich makes a very interesting rebuttal to a report from the province of Samara in which an observer, making the report, saw no trace whatsoever of the infamous "hunger bread" in the rural areas. This observer did, however, see samples of it in the cities like St. Petersburg and Samara. It seems that "hunger bread" had existed in August, but could not be found after the food loans had been

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 441.

[3]Ibid., p. 440. That the editor of the Vestnik Evropy would allot considerable print to this debate is primae facie evidence that an extensive debate did occur.

given out. Stasulevich argues that the obvious implication of this report is fallacious. Indeed, the bread made from various admixtures did disappear because all supplies of "hunger bread" elements were exhausted. Thus the only thing available for making bread was the comparatively clean zemstvo relief supplies and this accounts for the existence of good bread and the absence of "hunger-bread." He was personally satisfied of the accuracy of this argument because in December of 1891, it was almost impossible to find bread baked with lebeda in Riazan. However, he also feels that "hunger bread" was still being baked for a considerable length of time.[1]

Korolenko and the Vestnik Evropy were not the only witnesses that testified to the lively debate that centered on the question of whether there was a famine in Russia in 1891-92. The writings of the famous Marxist, George Plekhanov, also validate the existence of the debate. He indicates that as early as the late summer of 1891, there was considerable doubt concerning the seriousness of the famine and the extent of the famine district.[2] In addition, the newspaper Free Russia states in January 1892, that "people sometimes ask whether there really is a famine in Russia, or whether the reports about its intensity and the inefficiency of the government have not been exaggerated by the opposition."[3]

Jonas Stadling, another westerner who visited the famine district,

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[1]Ibid., p. 441.

[2]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV, (1892), 69-70.

[3]Free Russia, II (January, 1892), 8. This periodical joins in the debate and attempts to resolve the issue on the side of those who argue that a catastrophe has befallen Russia. Ibid., p. 9.

stated that the majority of the upper classes with whom he came in contact did not consider the famine as formidable as was alleged.[1] Some observers claim that the reports deprecating the seriousness were simply a result of direct orders by the central government to local officials, who were sent to the famine areas with the specific mission to find newspaper accounts and other reports exaggerated.[2]

The following excerpts from a small pamphlet written by Tolstoi in 1898, concerning the rather serious crop-failure of that year, reflects the difficulty and dilemma of accurately ascertaining a precise image of the severity of the famine in 1891. To emphasize the point made by Korolenko, it seems to be a matter of personal bias rather than concrete evidence which determines one's view of whether there was indeed a famine in Russia. As Tolstoi indicates, it becomes a matter of definition. He states:

> Here is exactly the position in which the Russian peasant of the black earth center finds himself. Thus, if one means by the word "famine" such malnutrition, in consequence of which directly [follows] sickness and death, . . ., then such a famine did not exist either in 1891, or at present.
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> If by the word famine one means malnutrition, not to the degree, from which directly people die, but in which people live, but live badly, prematurely dying, mutilated, not propagating, and degenerating, then such a famine has existed for twenty years for the majority of the black earth center . . ..[3]
>
> There is not hunger, but there is chronic underfeeding of the whole population. . . . There is not famine, but there is a seri-

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[1]Stadling, The Century Magazine, XLVI, p. 252.

[2]Sergeevskii, p. 28.

[3]Lev N. Tolstoi, Golod ili Ne Golod? (Essex, England: Vladimir Chertlov, 1898), p. 10.

ous situation.[1]

As indicated above, those who questioned the severity of the famine could cite considerable evidence in support of their position. The prevalence of drunkeness among the peasants within the famine district constituted evidence of this sort, and was frequently referred to as proof that the horrendous accounts emanating from the stricken areas were exaggerated. The evidence indicates that the peasants not only spent their own money on drink, but even the money or food given them as part of the famine relief program.[2] The reports of drunkeness were so common that even the London Times stated that peasants spend money on alcohol, rather than buy food.[3] In a report to the Imperial Free Economic Society, G. A. Fal'bork, a man who believed in the seriousness of the famine, indicated that the consumption of alcohol was a serious problem. He stated that many petitions were sent to Zemstvos, especially in the famine district, asking that the pubs be closed.[4] It is relatively safe to conclude, as did some of the observers, that if the peasants have enough money or grain to purchase "spirits," then indeed, the famine was not as extensive as claimed.

The liberal community was particularly sensitive to the charge of laziness and drunkeness which was reported by state officials, who

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[1]Ibid., p. 15.

[2]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8, (1913), p. 543.

[3]The Times (London), November 5, 1891, p. 5.

[4]Fal'bork, p. 248 ff. See also Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 182.

visited Saratov.[1] The Vestnik Evropy in November, 1891, made a counter charge by arguing that drunkeness had actually declined.[2] In October, 1891, the Russkoe Bogatstvo ran an article which reflects the extent to which some observers went to "square the circle." The article dealt with the problem of the production of alcohol in Russia, and in essence acknowledged that drunkeness did exist within the famine district. However, the author of the article believed that such conduct was justified in view of the tragedy that had befallen Russia. He states, "one must not forget that every tragedy in general interests the people in drunkeness, thanks to primordial habit of the Russian people to 'seek comfort in wine.' The sad confirmation of this old truth we find in numerous correspondence from famine stricken localities, telling how peasants carry the loans received from the zemstvos to taverns and pubs; the people drink not only, because they ignore the famine, but often . . . drink because they are hungry."[3] In other words, things were so bad that the peasant sought relief through the tavern. Despite the appeal of the argument presented by the Russkoe Bogatstvo, such analysis seems to be unsatisfactory in that alcohol does represent a luxury and if the peasant could afford alcohol he must have already met his subsistence needs as regards food.

Korolenko also provides evidence that many people who visited the famine district saw peasants in an inebriated condition. According to

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[1]Sergeevskii, p. 28.

[2]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 423.

[3]Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 182.

Korolenko, one letter writer to the Moskovskii Vedomost states that the peasants near his estates are consuming more alcohol than usual. The famous author tended to ascribe such reports to reactionary gentry.[1] Despite his protest, governmental statistical data suggests that alcohol consumption remained high in view of the dire picture of famine stricken Russia portrayed by some newspaper reports and especially the articulate left.[2]

There are other eyewitness reports pertaining to the general level of destitution within the rural sector which also conflicts with the vivid portrait of the universal tragedy that had been visited upon Russia. One finds, rather than universal destitution, blatant efforts for middle and upper peasants to fawn poverty in order to qualify for famine relief, or the existence of households that did not need help of any kind. For example, we find in a letter to the Russkoe Bogatstvo, a picture of peasants standing at a railroad station, who were gay and attired in new sheep-skin coats. When the observer asked what they were waiting for, they replied that they were waiting for the bread ration. The incredulous reporter then scolded the peasants for not selling their coats which would provide them with enough income to see them through the winter. "They cast down their eyes.--Why not take, when it is given

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[1]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, pp. 14, 15, 18, 11-12, 351.

[2]See N. O. Osipov, "O Nekotoroi Zavisimosti Mezhdu Tsenou Khleba i Postupleniem Aktsiznykh Sborov za Poslednee 10-letie," Vliianie Urozhaev i Khlebnykh Tsen na Nekotoriia Storony Russkago Narodnago Khoziaistva, ed. A. I. Chuprov and A. S. Posnikov (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1897), II, 375, which shows that alcohol consumption per soul changed very slowly, dropping only 4.3% from 1890 to 1891, and did not change in 1892 compared to 1891.

freely?'"[1]

Similarly, there was an incident in Tambov province in which a landlord was to provide rye seed for sowing to a particular commune. However, the proper time for sowing passed, and no one came for the seed. Then gradually peasants began to appear to obtain their food loans. When asked by the landlord whether they had sown their fields, the peasants replied that they had already done so. When asked, why they bothered to take a loan, they replied that they would have to pay for the loans granted to others, so why not get their share.[2] This conduct reflects the basic customs of Russian peasant agriculture. Group solidarity and joint-responsibility of the household, in particular in meeting the financial obligations of the commune, went back at least four centuries in Russian history, and were especially evident after emancipation. Thus, it is not surprising that given the existing conditions, these peasants would act in accordance with that tradition. Other peasants were less blatant in attempting to qualify for food loans, in that they buried their supplies of grain so that its existence would not be discovered by the officials.[3]

Obolensky spent a considerable amount of time in the famine district, and he presents testimony that also raises doubts about the intensity of the famine. On one of his trips through the famine zone,

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[1]"Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 149.

[2]Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda V," Vol. I, No. 3, (St. Petersburg: V. Demakov, 1892), 361.

[3]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 420.

he failed to see any signs of the tragedy which had supposedly devastated part of Russia. At the train stations he saw unusually dense, gay crowds, with painted women and snack bars filled with young gentlemen. It was only now and then that he saw the naked rafters of roofs, because the straw had been fed to the cattle to keep them alive. Upon arriving in the much talked about Nikolaevsky district, in Samara, Obolensky did not find what he had expected to find. Instead of destitution, he found relative prosperity.[1] In another incident, Obolensky recounts how he worked out a procedure for eliminating those peasants, who did not need loans, from receiving aid.[2] In addition, he did not witness one single case of death due to starvation.[3]

Even Count Tolstoi was somewhat skeptical about dispensing money and food as gifts to the people. He says that the zemstvo officials bustle about in order to ascertain which peasants were really in need and which were not. All the peasants were definitely not in need. But, he warns that once the peasantry knows that the government is dispensing gifts, the non-needy peasants will pretend or even make themselves needy so that they could receive allowance.[4] Well-to-do peasants were getting so much help during the famine year that at least one observer complained that government regulations made it difficult for poor peasants to get

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[1]Obolensky, pp. 201-202. However, an American observer stated that the further one moved away from the railroads, the worse conditions appeared to be. Blankenburg, p. 45.

[2]Ibid., pp. 208-209.

[3]Ibid., p. 206. See also Novikov, p. 136, who states that they did not anticipate an overwhelming disaster in Tambov.

[4]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 184.

famine relief loans, which went more often than not to those who were less in need.[1]

There were apparently relatively well off peasants in the famine district visited by Korolenko. Korolenko was very upset by the actions of a local government official--whom he considered to be corrupt--when he reduced the size of the relief allottments and cut down the number of people who could receive aid. The government official claimed that in his investigation of the district he discovered supplies of grain hoarded by the peasants.[2]

However much Korolenko attempts to rationalize he nevertheless acknowledges that there were numerous incidents of concealment. He states that the more solvent peasant expected to have to repay the food-supply loans because of collective responsibility of repayment and thus they felt they had a right to these loans and therefore lied about the extent of their personal property.[3]

William Barnes Steveni visited a village in Samara in mid-winter with Tolstoi's son and recorded his findings to show the severity of the famine. The following table summarizes the results of his visit and it shows that while people might have been suffering from some sort of winter flu epidemic, one cannot consider conditions in the village, in one of the most stricken provinces, catastrophic.[4]

hut 1--an old ill woman, who said that the zemstvo had overlooked

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[1]"Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891), 227.

[2]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, pp. 215-18.

[3]Ibid., p. 109.

[4]Steveni, Through Famine Stricken Russia, pp. 143-152.

her case.

2--a well-to-do peasant. Three of his family were ill with headaches and fever. However, they had plenty of food.

3--an entire family ill but who were recovering.

4--an entire family recovering from illness.

5--an entire family recovering from illness.

6--all well.

7--one child ill.

8--one old man ill.

9--all had been ill, but had almost recovered.

10--an entire family had been ill.

11--an entire family (5) recovering from sickness.

12--sixteen people, and all but 3 suffering from typhus and influenza. They were farm laborers and received no help.

13--nothing to eat, 1 child very ill.

14--only 1 person very sick.

15--two women very sick.

16--several people, but nothing to eat.

17--all were ill, but some were recovering.

18--all were ill for four weeks.

19--the mother of four little girls was dead.

20--all were well.

21--an entire family (8) were ill.

22--six had been sick, but were now recovering.

23--a woman and child with nothing to eat, because they had given their allotment to pay a debt for borrowed food.

24--all were well.

25--all had recovered from illness.

26--this family received no relief from the Zemstvo because they had a horse.

27--one person had died.

28--twelve people who were all laborers and thus received no aid.

29--there was neither food nor fuel.

30--two young children extremely sick, with the calves and chickens living inside the hut with the family.

31--one out of five was sick.

32--a well-to-do family.

33--all had been ill but now getting well.

34--all had been ill but fully recovered.

35--one person out of four sick.

While this was not one of the most stricken villages, it was well within the famine zone.[1] The impression created, however, is not that intended by Steveni, but rather that this is not a village ravaged by starvation and death--poverty and sickness, yes, but not a people rent asunder by the famine of 1891-92. One wonders if a survey of this type in any given winter would have shown a marked difference from that conducted by Steveni in the winter of 1892.

Another index, which in the minds of the skeptics created doubts about the severity of the famine, was the apparent unwillingness of peasants--supposedly in dire need--to take advantage of work offered them by the state. This issue irritated some conservative elements very much because they believed in the principle that the peasant should work

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[1]Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity . . ., p. 22.

in return for the state help.[1] Again, this was a "hot" issue in the debates that surrounded the famine and again the liberals did attempt to answer the charge that conditions could not have been that bad if the "starving peasants" were unwilling to work.

A perusal of the source material clearly shows that peasants refused to take work on some of the specially created work projects. As a matter of fact, the conservatives argued that there was plenty of work for those who wanted to work.[2] Baron Korf, the President of the Imperial Free Economic Society, visited the famine district and in his report to the society talked about this problem. He states that he has often heard the complaint since returning that the peasants were not willing to work, but only wanted to receive a free ration.[3] This opinion was so common in Russia, that as early as November, 1891, the London Times stated: "the Russian moujik quite naturally justifies a more than usual laziness on his part by declaring--'that why should he do any work before the next harvest since the government is going to feed him.'"[4]

There was a well-publicized incident that occurred in Kursk Pro-

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[1]See: "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizhi," Russkoe Botagstvo, I (January, 1892), 186; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 108; "Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 149.

[2]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 110. There existed a widespread belief that the peasant was simply lazy. "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 181.

[3]Korf, p. 115; "Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 149; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 422.

[4]The Times (London), November 5, 1891, p. 5. The Moskovskii Vedomost reported that peasants, upon taking employment, complained a great deal and quit. Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 14.

vince pertaining to peasant unwillingness to work, and captures the essence of the problem. The most destitute peasants of Rozhdestvensky Volost, Kursk district, of the Province of Kursk were given work cutting firewood for the Kursk-Kiev railroad, at 1 ruble per unit of cut wood. On 14 December 1891, fifty-eight men showed up for work, but they went home after working four days.[1] In response to this action, the governor of the province, von Valya, sent a circular to the land captains in the province summarizing what had happened and outlining the current policy for the province.[2]

The circular stated that the governor had instituted an inquiry into the incident and he had arrived at a number of important conclusions. The governor found out that the peasants in the course of their employment had cut a ridiculously small amount of wood, that they worked quite slowly, and spent most of their time complaining about low wages. However, the governor stresses that the railroad itself only paid 80 kopecks for such work and landlords 75, compared to the 1 ruble offered by the state. When it was a matter of one's very existence and the existence of his family, the governor considered debates as to the profitableness or unprofitableness of the labor as inappropriate, and he considered it a criminal act.[3]

The governor informed the land captains that he had ordered these men arrested and held for ten days on bread and water. The police offi-

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 181; Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 23.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 22.

[3]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 181; Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 23.

cials were ordered to escort these prisoners each day to the work they had abandoned, whereupon they would proceed, under surveillance, to cut wood. The prisoners were paid for their work, with most of it being sent to their families. In addition, von Valya ordered that any other peasants who would not work, would not receive food-supply loans, either for themselves or their families.[1]

The sources that recounted the above incident used it to show the perverse nature of the Tsarist government, which in their minds tolerated people being arrested because they refused to work.[2] They did not see this anecdote as evidence which indicates that some peasants did indeed refuse to work, and thereby does bring into question the severity of the famine. How destitute are people if they can refuse work and still survive? One of these primary observers did acknowledge that the evidence relating to the famine is so broad and contradictory that almost any interpretation can be espoused. Diametrically opposed conclusions were simply a matter of ones political perspective.[3] In sum it is not a matter of fact but of interpretation and open debate.

Other observers who upheld the existence of the famine attempted to rationalize and to explain the rather awkward situation in which so-called starving peasants refused to take available employment. Such an attempt to explain peasant unwillingness to work was made in Nizhegorod

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 181-82; Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., pp. 23-4.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., pp. 24 ff; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 182-83.

[3]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 185.

Province. The Nizhegorod governor, Governor-General Baranov, complained at length about the fact that the public works program was in essence a failure in his province. Having allocated 50,000 r. for jobs in the state forests, it seems that none of the surrounding peasants came to the district, did the work, and left with the money. Baranov thus considered the peasantry lazy and somewhat demoralized by free loans.[1]

A number of contemporaries challenged Baranov's view of the peasant and the peasant's reluctance to seek employment. On the one hand, they did not find increased laziness. On the other hand, it was argued, "laziness often becomes confused with loss of strength from poor food. . . ."[2] In addition, one observer noted that the district in which peasants could find extra work did not suffer from crop-failure, and that the peasants of this district were not in need of the extra earnings. This is the reason that the peasants of the district did not take advantage of the available jobs.[3] While this argument might answer General Baranov's complaints about famine relief, it also clearly indicates again that some areas within the famine district were relatively well-off.

Another effort to refute the criticism dealing with peasant laziness and unwillingness to work was made by Baron Korf in his above mentioned report to the Imperial Free Economic Society. He states quite emphatically that peasants did want to work, and this is shown by the fact that thousands of peasants went south to search for work. As

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[1]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 422.

[2]Ibid., 423. [3]Ibid.

regards the often heard reports that peasants refused to work for the railroads, he strives to exonerate them. Korf states that working conditions were so bad and wages so low that he did not blame the peasants for rejecting such employment.[1] However, does a starving, destitue and desperate being quibble over wages and salary? It is obvious that efforts by Korf and others to resolve the doubts of the skeptics were unsatisfactory.

The above discussion suggests a very different interpretation of the famine of 1891-92, than that which has become part of the modern historical record. All historical references to the famine emphasize the tragic dimensions of the crop-failure. While there was indeed human suffering, it would seem that the scale of that suffering has been called into question. One does not find in modern historiography any hint of the debate that took place over whether a famine indeed existed in Russia, nor does one find in modern historiography any acknowledgment of the evidence--drunkeness and peasant unwillingness to work--that support the view that perhaps there was no general devastating "famine" in 1891-92. There is no attempt to look at Tolstoi's pamphlet Famine or No Famine? and see the implication that famine in the Russian historical sense and in the generally accepted sense, did not occur in Russia in 1890's.[2]

The controversy that surrounded the degree of severity of the

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[1]Korf, p. 115.

[2]For a more complete discussion of the image of the Russian famine in 1891-92, see below pp. 218 ff.

famine was not as great as the discussions pertaining to the causes of the famine. There seems to be a general concensus that the famine was a result of a combination of factors, i.e., meteorological, the backwardness and exhaustion of Russian agriculture, and the general economic-social-political conditions of the Tsarist state.[1] Within these broad categories, however, there was considerable difference in emphasis and as a result there appeared a great amount of literature which examined the causes from the most diverse viewpoints.[2] In general however, the spectrum of debate excluded drought as the critical factor in bringing about the famine and concentrated on such topics as soil exhaustion, lack of fertilizer or the tax policies of Vyshnegradsky. Only a small minority of articulate society considered the famine the result of a mere meteorological misfortune. The vast majority of Russian and Western society tended to view weather conditions as only the precipitative cause, whereas the real, underlying cause was to be found in the social-political-economic ediface of Tsarist Russia. Crop-failures, it was argued, are caused by droughts, but famines have much

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[1]For example see: N. A. Karyshev, "Prodovol'stvennoe Delo i Sel'sko-Khoziaistvennoe Strakhovanie," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 10, who says that the famine was the result of a totality of causes. The modern scholar, Richard Pipes, in Struve: Liberal on the Left 1870-1903 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 60, makes a similar statement. See also James Mavor, An Economic History of Russia, II (2nd ed. rev.; New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), 147. This is also my view, based on the examination of 50 odd references pertaining to the causes of the famine of 1891-92.

[2]Nikolai-on, "Nechto ob Usloviyakh Nashego Khoziaistvennago Razvitie," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV (April, 1894), 1; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 108; Stasulevich, in Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 431, notes that the conservative press pointed out how a crop-failure always "produces a harvest of liberal chatter."

deeper causation.[1]

One school of thought stressed the general inadequacy--backwardness--of Russian agriculture as the basic cause of the famine. In an article in Russkoe Bogatstvo, one observer stresses that the peasants are very stubborn about adopting new techniques in agriculture and especially proper fertilization. Thus, the crop-failure or famine was primarily caused by the exhaustion of the soil.[2] Similarly, Baron Korf argued that the causes of the famine are fairly well-known by everyone. In addition to unfavorable weather conditions, he emphasizes the shortage of land, and over-population in rural areas, improper use of the land, and backward farming techniques.[3] Contemporary Western observations essentially agree with those made by Baron Korf.[4] W. C. Edgar, however, laid particular stress on the communal system of land tenure, which he felt encouraged poor farming techniques.[5]

The Russian Social Democrats placed special emphasis on the economic and social backwardness of Russia, as the critical factor in the

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[1]A. I. Skvortsov, Ekonomicheskie Etiudy (St. Petersburg: I. N. Skorokhodov, 1894), p. 1. This is the same conclusion that I have drawn based on my examination of the material used in this dissertation.

[2]"Pisma iz Derevni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (February, 1892), 152, 154.

[3]Korf, pp. 117-18.

[4]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV (May, 1892), 544; Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity . . ., p. 19.

[5]Edgar, p. 43; "Mnenie Amerikantsa o Rossii po Knige Edgar's 'The Russian Famine,'" Russkoe Obozrenie, VI (Moscow, 1893), 760; W. C. Edgar, "Russia's Land System: The Cause of the Famine," The Forum, XIII (March-August, 1892), 576-77.

famine.[1] George Plekhanov was the chief spokesman for the Marxists during the famine, and he devoted a great many pages, in his famous essays written in 1892, to the causes of the famine. In his first essay, Plekhanov states that people of very different backgrounds essentially agree on the causes of the famine--that is, the disorder in Russian agriculture.[2] The question is what caused this disorder in Russian agriculture. Plekhanov seeks the answer in Russia's historical past, and finds that the peasant was severely exploited by the state, through serfdom and then exploited via heavy taxation after 1861.[3]

More specifically, Plekhanov placed the blame for the famine of 1891 in the exhaustion of the soil due to backward farming techniques.[4] In his second essay in 1892, he excluded the climatic factor as a cause of the famine out of hand, and stressed the absence of fertilizer and the resulting deterioration in the productivity of the soil. The only salvation for Russia is not "artificial rain" but in "the introduction of better agricultural techniques."[5] Rather than improvements in technique, Russian agricultural methods have gotten worse and the peasant has become ruined. Plekhanov stated that indeed crop-failures have become the custom in Russia. The infrequent good harvests, which are the result of accidental atmospheric conditions, have only delayed the

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[1]Leopold H. Haimson, The Russian Marxists and The Origins of Bolshevism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 51.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 3.

[3]Ibid., pp. 5, 10; see also P. B. Akselrod, Etiudy i Vospominaniia (Leningrad: State Publishing House, 1925), p. 22.

[4]Ibid., pp. 14-17.

[5]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 90. Italics in original.

coming deluge, which had occurred in 1891.[1]

Vladimir Solov'ev also raised the question whether the tragedy of 1891 was a chance happening. Like Plekhanov, he concluded that, on the contrary, crop-failure was becoming the norm, and that good harvest years, such as that of 1888, were the accidental occurrence. He says that from the beginning of the 1880's, a number of writers have shown that if Russian agriculture continues to evolve as it had in the past, then Russia would be transformed into a desert. Russia's primitive economy has exhausted her soil and that is the cause of her tragedy.[2] Russia needs to introduce better farming techniques to prevent such tragedies in the future.[3] The belief expressed by both Solov'ev and Plekhanov, that the gradual decline in peasant husbandry and the exhaustion of soil was the underlying cause of the famine, was definitely not unique with them.[4]

The above attitudes toward the causes of the famine have come largely from individuals with liberal feelings or from westerners. In like manner, the newspaper Free Russia played down the meteorological factor and blamed the famine on the deterioration of the rural sector. In January, 1892, Felix Volkhovsky, a prominent radical and later editor of Free Russia, argued that the present famine "was due to the general

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Solov'ev, Vestnik Evropy, V (October, 1891), 781, 82, 84.

[3]Ibid., p. 784.

[4]In addition to the above citations from W. C. Edgar, Plekhanov, and Solov'ev, see also: Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 346; E. Van Der Bruggen, Russia of Today, trans. M. Sandwith (London: Digby, Long, and Co., 1904), p. 171; Drage, 140.

exhaustion of the country, the unfavorable climatic conditions having been only the last grain which upset the equilibrium."[1] In a long editorial in July, 1892, reviewing the course of the famine Stepniak said: "It has become a common truism in Russia that the famine of 1891-92 was merely the consequence of previous general exhaustion. More terrible famines will come, inevitable as death, if the exhaustion of the land and the people go on as before."[2]

Closely related to the attitude that the exhaustion of Russian agriculture was the underlying cause of the famine, is the charge that deforestation of the Volga basin and other areas seriously aggravated the moisture problem in the central black earth provinces. In particular, some sources felt that deforestation was a basic cause of drought in Russia, bringing about a drop in water levels of rivers and swamps and loss of moisture in the soil.[3] Moisture was lost from the soil because, without vegetation to act as a wind-break, winds increased in force, and even though the rainfall might remain constant, the evaporation from the earth was quicker.[4] The forests were cut down, in part, as a result of pressures to expand the farming areas, because the older

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[1] Free Russia, II, (January, 1892), 6.

[2] Ibid., II (July, 1892), 5.

[3] Levasseur, p. 37; Dru, p. 15; Skvortsov, p. 2; Pavel A. Khromov, Ekonomika Rossii Perioda Promyshlennogo Kapitalisma (Moscow: Akademiia Obshchestvennik Nauk pri TsK KPSS, 1963), p. 52; Solov'ev, Vestnik Evropy, V (October, 1891), 781; see also: Solov'ev, Vestnik Evropy, II (November, 1892), 355; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 179; Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 348-49.

[4] Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda II," p. 110.

lands were supposedly becoming exhausted.[1] In any case, it is an interesting viewpoint and makes a connection between the decline in agriculture and meteorological factors as an explanation of the contemporary status of Russian agriculture. In almost all of the references cited, however, it should be recognized that deforestation constituted only a part of their overall discussion of the general agricultural crisis, and was not offered as a single explanation for the famine.

The vast majority of the references pertaining to the causes of the famine of 1891-92, blame it on the social-political-economic ediface of the Tsarist system--which obviously would include the entire spectrum of arguments concerning what brought about the famine.[2] The emphasis here is also on the general factors rather than "chance" factors as the essential cause of the great tragedy.[3] As Korolenko stated: "No one, it seems, disputes the position that the present tragedy is a result of not one spontaneous happening."[4] "The tragedy . . . is the result of the interaction of spontaneous chances and organized disorder."[5]

The articulate left and especially the populist community picked

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[1]N. A. Karyshev, "Letnye Vpechatlenie Padenie Khlevnykh Tsen," Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 56; Solov'ev, Vestnik Evropy, V (October, 1891), 781.

[2]For example, see Fal'bork, p. 269; "Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 390, 395; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 109, 111; P. B. Struve, "My Contacts and Conflicts with Lenin," The Slavonic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 586.

[3]Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 353.

[4]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 375. See also "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 108.

[5]Ibid., p. 379.

up the famine as a crusading issue against the Tsarist system, because, as Lavrov stated, the crisis of 1891-92 was a direct result of the development of capitalism in Russia. Autocracy and capitalism provoked sharp crises, which brought about the chronic hunger that had become characteristic of the Russian scene.[1]

In like manner, Nikolai-on argued that "for everyone, who followed the development of our socio-economic life after 1861, the famine of 1891 was not an unexpected phenomenon."[2] The cause of the deterioration of Russian agriculture was the transition from a "natural" economy to a "money" economy.[3] Another populist, N. A. Karyshev held somewhat similar views.[4] The radical wing of the left groups--the People's Will Party--also stated that rain was not the critical factor in bringing about the famine. On the contrary, they felt that the system had exploited the peasant so much that he had become weakened and had succombed to the tragedy of drought.[5]

This view of the causation of the famine became so much a part of the left viewpoint that over a decade later the populist Leonid Shisko expressed the same sentiments.[6] Similarly, a well-known Soviet

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[1]Sergeevskii, pp. 3, 4, 7, 8. Sergeevskii (Rusanov) blames the famine on the exhaustion of the soil, p. 33.

[2]Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV (April, 1894), 1.

[3]Ibid., Nikolai-on expressed this same theme in other writings. See: Nikolai-on, "Apologiia Vlasti Deneg, kak Priznak Vremeni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895); and Nikolai F. Danielson, Ocherki Nashego Poreformennago Obshchestvennago Khoziaistva (St. Petersburg: A. Benke, 1893), pp. 322-23.

[4]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 10.

[5]Shapkarina, p. 155. [6]Shishko, pp. 7-9.

economist-historian stated in 1963: "frequent crop-failures are not only a consequence of unfavorable natural conditions. The cause of systematic crop-failures lies in the character of the social structure. Crop-failures lead to famines. Famines were part of those economic contradictions which Russia experienced after the reform of 1861."[1]

Some westerners joined in blaming the famine on the social-economic-political structure in general rather than simply the exhaustion or backwardness of agriculture.[2] On January 3, 1892, one of the most illustrious English-speaking observers of the Russian scene, George Kennan, gave an interview for the New York Times.[3] In this interview he stated that "the primary cause of the famine is, of course, the failure of the crops. The indirect cause is the corruption and mismanagement of the government. There is probably no other country in Europe where, after the failure of the crops for a single year, the peasants would be reduced in less than two months to living on roots, bran and weeds, and this destitution is almost wholly the result of the conditions under which they live. These conditions are wholly created by bad government."[4]

Writing for the May, 1892 issue of Cosmopolitan magazine, another American, Murat Halstead, stated "the famine is a crime chargeable largely to the form of government that takes from men the incentives to exertion, discourages the intelligence that is prescient, and executes

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[1]Khromov, p. 53.

[2]We have already seen the opinion of W. C. Edgar and Ambassador Smith on this subject. See above p. 107.

[3]New York Times, January 3, 1892, p. 13.

[4]Ibid.; also cited in Free Russia, II (February, 1892), 7.

and cultivates a fatal submission.[1] A prominent American scholar, Isaac A. Hourwich, essentially agreed with Halstead. In addition to the backwardness of agriculture, the cause of the famine was deeply rooted in her present economic, legal, and financial organization.[2]

The British held largely the same opinions as expressed by some Americans concerning the causes of the famine. In 1892, E. F. D. Law wrote a British Foreign Office Report on Russian Agriculture and the Failure of the Harvest of 1891. Mr. Law concluded in this consular report that the famine was not an accident of weather, but a tedious foreseeable outcome of years of mismanagement and exhaustion of the soil.[3] "The true, fundamental causes of the bad conditions of Russian agriculture lie . . . in the social and political system, which is based upon the pitiless and reckless exhaustion of the farmers."[4] According to Stepniak, who was very much impressed by Law's study, "Mr. Law's report presents a faithful picture of this monstrous system, of which the tax-collector and the public usurer are the two integral parts."[5]

The causes of the famine apparently are resolved beyond doubt in the minds of modern western scholars, and thus very little can be found on this subject. Nevertheless, a few scholars do state an opinion and this opinion is basically that expressed by the contemporaries. Hugh

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[1]Cited in Free Russia, II (May, 1892), 13. See also Murat Halstead, "Politics of the Russian Famine," The Cosmopolitan, XIII (May-October, 1892), 80-83.

[2]Issac A. Hourwich, "The Crisis of Russian Agriculture," The Yale Review, I (February, 1893), 432.

[3]Free Russia, III (October, 1892), 7.

[4]Ibid., IV (November, 1892), 6. [5]Ibid.

Seton-Watson saw the fiscal policies of the government as the basic cause of the famine because it deprived the peasant of food and cash reserves, which undermined his resistance to crop-failure.[1] Likewise, Lionel Kochan, in his book Russia in Revolution blamed Vyshnegradsky's fiscal policies for the absorption of all the grain reserves in Russia. In the event of a crop-failure "the consequence was the famine of 1891."[2] A noted scholar of American history, Merle Curti, devoting part of a chapter on American aid to Russia in 1891-92 in his book on American Philanthropy Abroad, also attributed the causes of the famine to the social-political ediface of Russia rather than simply the drought.[3]

By far the best discussion of the causes of the famine examined in the process of researching this dissertation, took place during the meetings of the Imperial Free Economic Society--a semi-professional society founded in the reign of Catherine the Great. As significant and as comprehensive as the debate was, as important as the society was, it is very interesting to note that there is absolutely no reference to this debate in the modern scholarship that deals with the decade of the 1890's in Tsarist Russian history. Because the implications of the discussion are significant as evidence for the kind of debate engendered by the famine and the general development of Russian agriculture, it will be discussed in considerable detail. In following the arguments presented below, one must be aware that they represent opinions of scholars as

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[1]Hugh Seton-Watson, The Russian Empire 1801-1917 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 512-13.

[2]Lionel Kochan, Russia in Revolution 1890-1918 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1966), p. 9.

[3]Curti, pp. 99-100; Queen, p. 148.

well as opinions of the very experienced large landholders. One should also note that what follows is not the views of a group of alienated radicals with very biased opinions, but rather the feelings of a relatively moderate segment of society.

The Imperial Free Economic Society was divided into a number of divisions or sections. The First Section had to do with agriculture and on November 13, 1891, the chairman of the First Section, V. I. Kovalevsky, outlined the agenda for the session which was to examine the causes of the great tragedy of 1891. The agenda for the discussion was as follows: (1) to ascertain the causes of the crop-failure of 1891--whether they were due solely to meteorological or technological factors, (2) to determine whether the crop failure struck both the farms of the landowners and of the peasants, (3) to put forth measures to prevent repetition of such a tragedy.[1] The First Section of the Imperial Free Economic Society considered the question of the causes of the famine to be so important that they decided to change the normal format of their meetings which was to hear reports; they were going to discuss the issue at length.

The first speaker of the session was A. I. Voeikov, who began with a detailed discussion of meteorological factors, including spring frosts, and his findings were that the main responsibility for the current crop-failure, in climatic terms, was the summer drought.[2] F. N. Korolev followed and essentially agreed with Voeikov, stressing meteorological factors like the spring frosts as causing the famine. Korolev supported his arguments by pointing out that where rain did fall within the gen-

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[1] Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda I," pp. 69-70. [2] Ibid., p. 71.

eral area of the famine district, the harvest was remarkable. This he believed was one of the reasons so many contradictory reports were coming from the famine district.[1]

Professor P. A. Kostychev spoke after Korolev. He elaborated somewhat on the meteorological arguments espoused by the preceding speakers, and argued that the frosts were the main cause of the destruction of the winter crops. However, he also blamed the failure of the winter crops on the absence of fertilizer. He then stated that the third factor in bringing about the crop-failure was the drought which destroyed the spring crops. He states, "this I observed in the province of Samara. . . . When I arrived there the spring crops were splendid, but after some 3-4 weeks, they were unrecognizable."[2]

N. A. Khvostov basically agreed with the above speakers, in emphasizing the drought and winter frost--meteorological conditions--as the basic cause of this year's crop-failure. The importance of water was made clear by the fact that in a small strip of Orlov, where a large amount of rain fell, the harvest was good. He concludes from this that, "in central Russia in Orlov province, and other provinces, the crop-failure resulted purely from meteorological causes and under such conditions, the farmer could do nothing. No kind of treatment and no kind of fertilization could help."[3]

As an estate owner, Khvostov made a great deal out of the fact that no matter what the level of technology, the drought was so severe that it still ruined the harvest. Despite the fact that his own fields were deep-ploughed with a steel plough and planted with seed-drillers, his

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[1]Ibid., p. 72. [2]Ibid., p. 74. [3]Ibid., p. 76.

crops failed just the same as the peasants' failed. Khvostov added that the drought was so severe that the "oldtimers" do not remember anything like it in the past 30-40 years. Even the trees could not survive the drought. "This was by all means, a most exceptional year."[1]

Khvostov was followed by A. E. Filipchenko, who talked at length about the size of the harvest and the climatic factors which were so detrimental to a successful crop year. He, however, stressed the winter and spring frosts as being a more critical factor in the destruction of the rye crop, than the drought. Nevertheless, his basic conclusion was similar to Khvostov's, in that he argued that the level of technology had virtually nothing to do with the size of harvest within the famine district.[2] "We do not have any data to support the statement that the more improved farms have borne the present disaster better; in some cases there is even a contrary indication."[3] "Differences in the quantity of harvest between the peasants and the landowners are not noticeable. The evident variations in the harvests are quite adequately explained by altogether different, purely incidental circumstances."[4]

Filipchenko complained about the use of foreign seeds--adopted apparently in an effort to improve the level of productivity--because they were not as resilient to the stringent weather conditions in Russia as were native seeds. He pointed to the sunflower, a purely Russian plant, which that year despite the frosts and the drought, prospered.[5]

The statements made by Filipchenko and Khvostov concerning the meteorological conditions as the only cause of the famine despite the

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., pp. 76-79. [3]Ibid., p. 79.

[4]Ibid., pp. 79-80. [5]Ibid., p. 80.

level of technology, brought forth an immediate rebuttal by F. N. Korolev. As has been shown, in his initial statement in the discussion, Korolev had emphasized the climatic considerations. Now, however, he seemingly contradicts himself by stating that the main causes of crop-failure in peasant farming was a result of poverty and ignorance. His observations were based on visits to a number of provinces in the famine district, and he feels that the land requires considerably more th he kind of treatment given it by the peasants. For example, he did not see any planting tool except the wooden plough, which in his opinion, was not adequate for proper cultivation of the soil. The result, he says, means that landowners got a much higher yield than did the peasants. "It is not news that the depth of ploughing has a very large effect on the size of the harvest. In general, the landowners' farms still come through with much better harvests than the peasant farms."[1]

D. P. Semenov joined in the discussion at this point. He was primarily concerned with ascertaining which one of the climatic factors was most responsible for the crop-failure. Was it the autumn drought of 1890, the spring frost, or the summer drought? He arrived at the unshakeable conclusion that the principal meteorological factor was the summer drought of 1891. Basing his judgment on a meteorological report for 1891, published by the government, he points out that "in Kazan, the drought period lasted 79 days, in Kozlov-64 days, in Tsaritsyn--96 days. With such a prolonged drought, the destruction of the crops was inevitable."[2]

A. S. Ermolov countered Semenov by arguing that the chief cause of

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[1]Ibid., p. 81. [2]Ibid., p. 82.

the crop-failure was not the result of one climatic factor, but was the result of "an extremely unfavorable combination of a whole series of extremely unfavorable meteorological conditions."[1] Ermolov intimated that the area of the famine district was too large for only one weather factor to account for the destruction of the crops. In some areas the winter and spring frosts were the main culprits; in other areas, it was the fall or summer drought.[2]

Ermolov then moves on to the question whether the crop-failure was produced by meteorological conditions alone or whether "cultural" technology would make any difference. "In this context I must repeat what was already said by others, i.e., that this year no efforts by the farmer, no kind of technical improvement, no kind of treatment and fertilization of the soil, would have made any noticeable difference in the localities stricken by the crop-failure."[3] He did not feel that because the tragedy of this year could not have been prevented by any means, meant that future technological developments would not help.[4] He then proceeded to talk about different cultivation techniques that might alleviate the impact of drought in the future, and the planting of crops less vulnerable to lack of moisture. This estate owner and farmer acknowledges that on the average that estates practicing improved methods of farming do in fact have a better harvest than is derived on peasant lands. But, one must not forget that the year 1891 was terribly abnormal and "has indeed levelled us all."[5]

Thereupon, I. N. Shiskov offered an extremely interesting argument

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[1]Ibid., p. 83. [2]Ibid., pp. 83-84. [3]Ibid., p. 85.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid., p. 87.

to the discussion by implying that technology can even be a detriment to the harvest. For example, given the unfavorable climatic conditions in the famine district, seed drillers constitute something of a menace because this machine places all the seeds at an equal depth. If the weather is adverse for the harvest, then the entire harvest is lost. On the other hand, seeds planted with wooden implements are sown unevenly and "subsequently, while some [of the seeds] under unfavorable conditions--may perish--others may survive--but with seed drillers, all the seeds would perish."[1]

I. I. Shidlovsky plunged boldly into the general discussion, agreeing with those who argued that culture made no difference in the harvest results. He states that:

> The present crop-failure cannot be charged to anything else than the drought with which this year was afflicted. There are many proofs for that. No kind of culture, no kind of improved soil treatment, could help; everything led to one result--complete crop-failure. True, in this total crop-failure, we do come across some harvest oases, but they cannot be credited to better culture, they appear to be entirely accidental manifestations; where with lack of good culture, it would seem that the worst possible result could be expected, the harvest in reality was good and this was because on those places, rain fell in time. Therefore, the 1891 crop-failure cannot be charged to any kind of imperfections in our culture.[2]

Shidlovsky qualifies his statement somewhat, when he says that the above statement is only relevant for the year 1891. In other years, improved technology did have an impact in that improved farms suffered less from crop-failure than did other lands.[3]

This speaker also provides an interesting insight into the peasant view of what is and what is not hunger. He states that because the rye

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[1]Ibid., p. 88. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

crop was sold from Ekaterinoslav province, the peasants would be forced to eat wheat and barley. While not constituting hunger, it does involve a change in the eating habits of the people. "That such a change is not easy is shown by the following example: a party of Byleorussian workers were hired in Ekaterinoslav province; to keep them content they were given mutton and what happened? A week later, they came and said that they were dying of hunger because they cannot stand even the odor of mutton."[1]

A. E. Reinbot picked up the argument concerning which one of the climatic elements was the most important in bringing about the crop-failure. His choice was the drought in the fall of 1890, and not the frosts.[2] As regards the influence of culture, he is rather ambivalent. He notes that cultural methods did not have any real impact on the level of the harvest when it was destroyed by frost. In fact, he states that "there are indications of the contrary, namely, that rye sown arbitrarily had survived whereas the rye planted on improved lands--perished."[3] However, "as regards the drought, there are indications that improved farms gave better harvests."[4] Specifically, he meant the use of irrigation.[5]

The next speaker, P. S. Ikonnikov, was also somewhat ambivalent in his approach. On the one hand, he argues that weather conditions--especially the drought--was the cause of the current crop-failure. But proper techniques of cultivation can fight the effects of drought, and therefore culture is not completely powerless. In addition, he felt that

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[1]Ibid., p. 90. [2]Ibid., pp. 90, 91. [3]Ibid., p. 92.

[4]Ibid. [5]Ibid.

the landowners could better fight the drought than the peasants.[1] Nevertheless, despite the various methods he suggested for the retention of moisture, he admits that in the summer of 1891, not enough moisture fell to make the rye grow no matter what they did.[2]

Mr. V. V. Cherniaev was a native of Kharkov province and had made a trip along the Kama-Volga River system in the middle of August, 1891. About his trip he states that "I, myself, am of the steppe, a native of Kharkov province, consequently I am familiar with the southern climate, but not once in all my life did I see the steppes in such a cheerless condition as I observed from the Saratov to the Samara provinces. I recall arid years even in the Kharkov province, but the picture of the steppes had never been so sad by far."[3] In his view the drought brought about a crop-failure which had ruined the farming population along the whole Volga basin. Nevertheless, he does not feel that the crop-failure was due exclusively to climatic adversities. On the contrary, in his opinion it appears that poor cultivation methods also were a factor in bringing about the crop-failure.[4]

While visiting Simbirsk, Cherniaev formed the conviction that crop-failure was experienced primarily by peasant lands. Landowners had harvests 30% larger than did peasants. He concludes that since the climatic conditions were the same for both the landlords and the peasants, and that there was a definite shortage in productivity in peasant lands, then it must have been technology that made the difference in the overall impact of the drought.[5]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 93-95. [2]Ibid., p. 94. [3]Ibid., p. 95.

[4]Ibid., p. 96. [5]Ibid., p. 97.

In reply to those who had argued that in many provinces the drought was so severe that technology made no difference in the harvest, Cherniaev states, "in all these localities the farmers were not concerned as much with better treatment of their lands, as with the ploughing up as much land as possible and getting it planted."[1] In other words, these landlords, he feels, did not practice improved methods of farming and thus one can easily understand why there was no difference in the harvest of peasant and these particular landlord lands. "I repeat once more: no matter how powerful the influence of the meteorological conditions on the sad results of this years harvest, the poor culture of peasant farming play in it no less an important role and to that we must relate with all possible seriousness."[2]

Finding someone in support of his position, F. N. Korolev spoke out again. As to the accuracy of his statement, he feels that one can judge for himself. He says, "almost all of the preceding speakers have confirmed the results of the surface observations indicated by me, i.e., that even with a very bad harvest in the current year, improved soil treatment had its influence and the harvests of the landowners' farms turned out to be higher than the harvest of the peasant farms. The chief misfortune of the peasants lies in their poverty and ignorance. . . ."[3]

The advocates of climatic factors were stung into quick rebuttal by remarks of Cherniaev and Korolev. P. A. Kostychev began the counter-attack and insisted that the chief cause of the current crop-failure was drought.[4] But the staunchest proponent of the meteorological causation argument, N. A. Khvostov, launched a rather lengthy attack against Cher-

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 98. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 100.

niaev's position. He simply could not agree with Cherniaev when he stated that there was considerable difference between the harvest of peasant and landlord land. "My farm may be regarded as an ordinary good landowner's farm. . .. The soil treatment is all by plough, with a 10-field farm, one wedge a year is manured . . ., sowing is done with drill seeders and despite all of that, in 1891, my fields presented the same desert appearance as the neighboring peasant fields whose grain perished equally on the close-by manured fields as well as on the poor lands beyond the ploughed strips. The drought and the March frosts levelled everyone."[1] He willingly acknowledged, however, that in other years, that improved farming techniques do make a difference in the harvest results. But "this year, everything perished everywhere."[2]

Khvostov made some additional comments on behalf of the technology of peasant farming in general, and on the wooden plough in particular. This landowner argued that the wooden plough is an excellent tool for peasant use, but not for the landowners. The reason he preferred the steel plough for the landowner was because it did not require as much effort on the part of the hired workers and therefore reduced the amount of supervision of the workers by the landowners. The wooden plough, did as good a job, but he apparently felt that only the owner of the wooden plough and of the land would put forth the steady effort needed for successful tillage of the soil. In any case, Khvostov believed that the wooden plough could do as good a job as the steel plough.[3]

While the wooden plough does a satisfactory job of ploughing, it

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[1]Ibid., p. 101. See also Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda II," pp. 133-34.

[2]Ibid., p. 102. [3]Ibid.

also had many advantages that the steel plough did not. For example, the wooden plough was a number of instruments in one, and if he got rid of the wooden plough, the peasant would have had to acquire a whole inventory of other instruments which he could ill-afford. Khvostov argued that the wooden plough was also the best tool for embedding the seeds, and "I would burn up my drill seeders and do the embedding with a wooden plough if I could be assured that the work with the wooden plough would be done on time and as it should be."[1] He concluded his remarks with the opinion, that if there was a difference in productivity of peasant and landlord lands, it should be attributed to the use of fertilizer and the timing of soil preparation rather than the use of particular instruments.[2]

Prince V. I. Masalaky was the fourteenth speaker of the evening, and countered the remarks of the previous speaker. He said that despite the evidence presented as to the meteorological causes of the famine, he had to agree that even in this year, the quality of farming did make a difference. "In general, comparing the peasant harvest with the landowners, we find that the peasants in Tambov province gathered only 73% of what was harvested by the landowners in 1891."[3]

The meeting essentially ended when A. S. Ermolov made the last remarks of the evening concerning the causes of the famine. Mister Ermolov, a proponent of climatic causation, agreed that even in 1891 there was a difference in the magnitude of harvests from peasant and landlord lands. He also conceded that it cannot be denied that improved farming techniques lead to better harvests. "However, this

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[1]Ibid.; Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda II," pp. 132-33.

[2]Ibid., p. 103. [3]Ibid., p. 104.

data does not disprove the facts as was mentioned here, that this year, culture did not come to the rescue. . . . Therefore, it must inevitably be recognized that the chief factors of the present crop-failure were the climatic conditions."[1]

Admittedly, the above account of the discussion of causes of the famine, held by the First Section of the Imperial Free Economic Society, is somewhat tedious. Nevertheless, it does show the importance placed upon this subject and it clearly arrives at some kind of consensus, if the opinions of only fourteen individuals can ever be considered as constituting a consensus. Of those who ventured an opinion on the subject of causes, five definitely felt that the meteorological factors were so severe as to over-ride any consideration of technology as being a factor in causing the crop-failure. Two speakers were ambivalent about technology making a difference, and leaned toward the meteorological. Only two men who spoke on this occasion clearly held that the level of technology played an important role in the outcome of the harvest. In essence, the breakdown of those arguing the climatic position decisively outnumbered their opponents approximately three to one. This debate offers a far different insight into the famine than has existed heretofore.

In the third meeting of the First Section of the Imperial Free Economic Society, held in January 30, 1892, I. N. Tolstoi offered his opinion in support of those who argued that the drought levelled all the farmers. He states:

I am a landlord in the locality [Samara] described to us by the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 104-105.

> reporter. If the Section wishes to know the position of the landlords there, I can briefly describe my farm. Of arable land I have 1,200 desiatins. Half of this land goes for leasing to the peasants, and the other half--I work myself with farm labor, with large expenditures for equipment and capital. Incidentally, I have Sack and Dere plows for working the land, as well as the introduction of all other improvements. As a result, this estate which formerly brought 10,000 rubles per year, this year gave a deficit of 7,000 rubles. As you can see, not only the peasants, but the landowners too in our locality are suffering. . . .[1]

In the second session dealing with the famine, held on December 5, 1891, the First Section of the Free Economic Society discussed the measures which ought to be taken to prevent serious crop-failure in the future.[2] A significant part of the discussion centered around the evolution of Russia's climate. A. I. Voeikov began the discussion, as he had done in the session on November 3, 1891, concentrating on meteorological factors. On the question of whether there is less rain in Russia than there used to be, he says no. However, he says that droughts were coming more frequently because of deforestation and the loss of moisture which resulted.[3]

P. A. Kostychev disagreed with Voeikov, and argued that droughts were not occurring more frequently, but when they did occur they were having more of an impact. Kostychev held this view because he believed that the old ploughed lands were becoming less adept at retaining what moisture was in the soil.[4] The solution for the problem of sufficient moisture in the soil, was not irrigation, which he considered impossible for the Steppes of Russia, but proper tillage of the soil. If the soil

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[1] Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda III," p. 203.

[2] Ibid., "Beseda II," pp. 107-108.

[3] Ibid., p. 110. [4] Ibid., p. 111.

was ploughed at a given time than sufficient moisture would be retained to circumvent the effects of dry seasons.[1] Mr. A. A. Ginken agreed with Prof. Kostychev that virgin lands retained the moisture better than old ploughed lands.[2]

A. E. Filipchenko also agreed with Kostychev, that Russia's climate has not changed noticeably, and that the atmospheric effects of rain and sun have remained the same. Similarly, he attempted to show that the decline in productivity was not due to climate but to soil conditions. Without doubt, in his view, the soil was becoming dryer--noticeably dryer. He blamed this on more extensive tillage of the land which has destroyed forests and other natural elements that helped to keep moisture levels in the soil higher.[3]

Both Kostychev and Filipchenko acknowledge that the various techniques that they outlined for retaining moisture in the soil would not work on peasant land.[4] Concerning the peasant economy, Filipchenko uttered what seems to be a classic statement for anyone familiar with trying to fathom the complexities of peasant agriculture. This observer says:

> First of all, let me note that it is difficult to project any kind of measures for the improvement of the peasant economy because the very concept about the peasant economy appears to be extremely undetermined. Indeed, what do we, in general, mean by peasant economy? I really do not know and the conditions of the peasant mode of life are so varied that without determining this concept more accurately, there is nothing to be said about measures to improve the peasant economy.[5]

The most forceful speaker in the first discussion, N. A. Khvostov,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 112-115. [2]Ibid., p. 116. [3]Ibid., pp. 118-19.

[4]Ibid., pp. 115, 121. [5]Ibid., p. 121.

now won the floor and began to offer a counter opinion. He argued that from all that has been said here and in other sessions, it would appear that "science is unable to give us a direct answer to the question: did our climate change or not?"[1] There apparently was no scientific observatory, no data of any kind upon which to make a finding. Thus he concluded that, for the farmer, one can only draw upon one's memory in making a determination.[2]

Khvostov stated that he can remember conditions in the province of Orlov since 1855. He felt quite emphatically that the climate in Russia had changed and that there was less rainfall in Russia. They explained the change in the weather because of the deforestations which began in the 1860's. Fifteen years ago, his zemstvo had set up a special commission to study the change in the weather and it had laid the blame for this change on deforestation.[3]

Mr. Khvostov's view was immediately challenged by P. S. Ikonnikov, who argued that he has seen no change in the climate for the past twenty years. However, he did feel that the effects of the drought were indeed more severe than they had been in the past because the soil was deteriorating in terms of nutrition and humus, substances which help retain moisture in the soil. However, he disagreed with the techniques suggested by Kostychev, and offered his own techniques for retaining moisture in the soil.[4] Seemingly tiring of the issue of moisture in the soil and climate in general, the discussion turned more toward the relative backwardness of peasant agriculture and its ability to adopt modern

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., pp. 121-22. [4]Ibid., p. 124.

techniques.[1]

Another issue for debate in the fall and early winter of 1891-92 was whether there was enough food in Russia to see the population through the tragic crop-failure of the preceding summer. As the Russkoe Bogatstvo stated in January, 1892, the question of supplying the needy people with food takes precedence over all other questions. The newspapers were filled with data pertaining to this problem.[2] A number of observers took offense at governmental assurances that there was enough food in Russia to prevent outright starvation, and questioned the veracity of these statements. As can be expected, other contemporaries essentially agreed with the official prognostication.

One of the most vocal observers of events and conditions in Russia in 1891-92 was George Plekhanov. He was among those who had serious doubts whether Russia had sufficient food until the next harvest. For example, Plekhanov was extremely skeptical of statements made by the Minister of Finance, Vyshnegradsky, in the fall of 1891, when he publicly stated that there was no shortage of food in Russia. The Vestnik Finansov thereupon supported the Finance Minister's statements with "indisputable statistical data."[3]

Plekhanov claims that Vyshnegradsky made his statements in reply to an article published by Tolstoi entitled "The Terrible Question,"

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[1]Ibid., pp. 128-44.

[2]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 170-71. Essentially the same thing is said in Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 180.

[3]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 82-83.

in which Tolstoi postulated the idea that no one knows whether there is sufficient food in Russia to feed the people until the next harvest. While not specifically claiming that the government is incorrect, Plekhanov does say that even if there is enough food, the price is so high that the strickened peasant could not afford to buy it anyway.[1] Plekhanov was convinced that the government would never provide the 300-400,000,000 rubles which, in his opinion, were needed to help the 40,000,000 people of the famine stricken areas.[2]

There were at least two other observers, like Plekhanov, who would not go as far as to say there was a drastic shortage of food in Russia. Nevertheless, they would agree with Plekhanov that even if there was adequate food, this did not mean that it would get to the people who needed it. In October, 1891, I. Gofitetter expressed the belief in the Russkoe Bogatstvo that the high prices of grain and other foods creates famine for the poor elements, who would be unable to buy the food.[3] In another article in the Russkoe Bogatstvo in November, the author questions whether the food that was in Russia could in fact be brought to the areas that were desperately in need of it.[4] Stepniak was so skeptical of the food supply problem that he questioned how it was possible for the government to feed all the starving people of Russia even after it had been done.[5]

Other observers were more emphatic than Plekhanov and stated point

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[1]Ibid., p. 83. [2]Ibid., p. 100.

[3]Gofitetter, Russkoe Bogatstvo, X (October, 1891), 181.

[4]"Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891), 224.

[5]Free Russia, III (November, 1892), 6.

blank that there was insufficient food in Russia to sustain her population until the summer. In September, 1891, M. Stasulevich, in the Vestnik Evropy argued that the existing demands for food until the next harvest and the demands for seed for planting the next crop greatly exceed existing supplies.[1] A. E. Reinbot, in the debates of the Free Economic Society agreed with the position of Stasulevich. Reinbot stated:

> An average harvest in the past years comprises 1,799 million poods, while this year's harvest equals only 1,220 million poods, consequently the deficit comprises 570 million poods. If, in addition we take into account that the population during these five years has increased by 6-7 million persons, and consequently the demand for bread has risen by 70-80 million poods more, then the deficit will appear to be quite substantial. And, if we had not exported even a single pood of grain, this year's harvest would still be insufficient for feeding the people.[2]

G. A. Fal'brok was also of the opinion that there was a definite shortage of food in Russia for 1891 in the fifty European Provinces. In a report given in January, 1892 to the Free Economic Society, Fal'bork stated that his calculations showed a deficiency of at lease 340 million poods, and that does not take into consideration the very uneven distribution of remaining supplies. Assuming that Russia only has six months until the next harvest, he recommended that Russia import 150 million poods of grain.[3]

Part of the reason that a few people seriously questioned the amount of food supplies available for famine relief was because they made their estimates on a twelve month basis in contrast to Fal'brok.

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[1]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 427.

[2]Trudy: IVEO, "Beseda I," pp. 92-93.

[3]Fal'bork, pp. 238-41.

This was an erroneous judgment.[1]

Within the context of research for this dissertation the majority of the sources clearly acknowledged that there did exist enough food to carry Russia through until the harvest in the spring of 1892. The United States Ambassador to Russia, Charles Emory Smith, filed a report on the question of food supply, which implied that Russia would survive. He cited official government reports to the people that the stock of cereals was sufficient to see Russia until the forthcoming harvest. The government also claimed that the treasury had sufficient reserves to pay for relief measures, and that despite the famine and the curtailment of exports, Russia would still have a favorable trade balance of exports over imports.[2]

Smith also included an article published in Novoe Vremya which tended to disagree with the point of view expressed by government circles. This newspaper pointed out that there was a marked deficit in the amount of wheat and rye, in terms of demand. However, it did acknowledge that the deficiency will just be made up by the harvest of oats and barley. The question remained would the people in distress receive the needed relief in view of the speculation and hoarding that was going on.[3] This was apparently true, as far as it goes, in that the United States Charge D'Affairs reported that the collapse of grain prices in the spring of 1892 disclosed a great hoard of grain held by

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[1]"Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 390; Free Russia, III (November, 1892), 6.

[2]Diplomatic Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, No. 130.

[3]Ibid. It has already been pointed out that "Bor'ba c Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891), 224 made essentially the same point.

speculators.[1]

A Frenchman, M. E. Levasseur, made a report to the National Society of Agriculture of France on December 23, 1891, in which he discussed at some length the problem of provisioning Russia through the winter of 1891-92. He stated that Russia will have difficulty making up the deficit, but concluded that it was quite possible. He argued that the state would be able to do this by cutting down on exports, alcohol consumption and the feeding of livestock, although he did feel that Russia would have to import rye if the people do not consume other grains in its place.[2]

Three very close observers of the famine district supported the view that there was enough food. After his visit to the famine district, Baron Korf concluded that there was sufficient food in Russia and that there would be no famine.[3] Ironically, two men who clashed publicly through the writing of articles years after the famine did agree, although not intentionally, on the fact that there definitely was food in Russia. In discussing the famine in Tobolsk Province, the former Governor complained that the government did not give him enough money to buy the barge loads of grain available in his province.[4] Vlasov, the protagonist of Governor Troinitsky, also stated that the traders in Tobolsk had grain, but wanted extortionate prices to sell it to the state. However, a special government emissary, Prince Golitsyn,

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[1]Curti, p. 118.

[2]Levasseur, pp. 42-46. [3]Korf, p. 119.

[4]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 540-41.

was successful in forcing down the price of grain.[1]

From a historical perspective this particular debate is a dead issue. Since there was no great importation of cereal and, as Stepniak himself stated, "since cases of actual starvation were rare and quite isolated," there must have been enough grain in Russia to sustain the population until the next harvest brought relief.[2] Thus, even though some elements in Russia disbelieved the claims of the government, its estimates of the true needs of Russia in the time of the famine, were quite accurate. There were apparently large reserves of rye in Russia as of 1890. This rye reserve was accumulated in 1887 and 1888, when a great deal of the rye harvest was not exported due to the low market price on rye. The presence of these reserves lightened the task of providing supplies for the famine district in 1891.[3]

Closely related to the above discussion and a very significant part in determining food per person ratios was a minor controversy over how much food it took to sustain a "soul" for one year. The question was rather important in view of determining whether existing supplies were adequate. Estimates ranged from 12 to 20 poods of rye as the necessary minimum for sustaining life. Actually the 12 pood estimate considered necessary for bare subsistence was an arbitrary figure used by Korolenko and Stepniak to make sure that their computations were not exaggerated on how much food was needed to feed the millions who were

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[1]Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 132.

[2]Free Russia, III, (November, 1892), 6.

[3]Russia, Ministerstva Finansov, The Industries of Russia, III (Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, 1893), 105. Cited hereafter as The Industries of Russia, 1893.

starving.[1] It would seem that in fact approximately 13-14 poods of grain were sufficient to enable the average man to survive for a year at subsistence.[2]

Professor A. I. Chuprov states that the Central Statistical Committee used the figure 13 poods per soul in computing the minimal amount of governmental aid necessary in a crop-failure to sustain life.[3] The Efron and Brokhaus Encyclopedia states about the harvest for 1891-92, "that in general in Russia there is for each soul incomparably more than those 14 poods, which was then indicated as sufficient for the provisioning of souls in the course of the year."[4] As a matter of fact, the governmental estimates might have been slightly in excess of the minimum for sustaining life. Chuprov cites evidence which indicates that the poorer peasants only consumed 12.6 poods of grain a year.[5]

There are, however, a number of references which state higher figures as the minimum number of poods needed to sustain life. Some argue that 16 poods of grain was the requisite amount of bare subsis-

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[1]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 115; Free Russia, III, (November, 1892), 6.

[2]This was the conclusion of the excellent study under the editorship of Professors A. I. Chuprov and A. S. Posnikov, (ed.), Vliianie Urozhaev i Khlebnykh Tsen na Nekotoriia Storony Russkago Narodnago Khoziaistva, Vol. I (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1897), I, II; See also Fal'bork, p. 238.

[3]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. II.

[4]Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104.

[5]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. II.

tence.[1] An observer within the famine district postulated that not less than 18 poods of grain would suffice.[2] This was the figure considered by Chuprov as the average consumption of grain per soul in Russia in a decent harvest year.[3]

The most exaggerated estimate was made by a scholar very familiar with the Russian scene, and possible reflects a perverse bias rather than scholarship. Talking about the consumption levels of the Russian peasant in his book Russia and Its Crisis, Paul Miliukov states:

> the fact is that on an average his yearly consumption is still below the necessary minumum. He gets only about twenty-three to twenty-six Russian poods of grain, and sometimes even as little as fifteen, while the soldiers are entitled to not less than twenty-nine poods.[4]

Also in the same work, he says that twenty poods is the necessary minimum to maintain subsistence for the peasant.[5] Given the opinions cited, this estimate by Miliukov would seem to be in error and roughly a 30% exaggeration when compared to the official figures of 13 poods per person. In addition, the use of the phrase "below the necessary minimum" is nonsensical in that it suggests that somehow one can live by consuming less than the absolute minimum and still survive.

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 113; Mavor, p. 293.

[2]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 172. Queen, p. 140 cites 19 poods.

[3]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. II.

[4]Paul Miliukov, Russia and Its Crisis (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 322-23.

[5]Ibid., p. 328.

The above discussion has attempted to demonstrate that the famine engendered a myriad of controversies which evolved into open debate. These debates dealt with very significant issues: (1) whether there really was a famine, (2) what caused the famine, and (3) was there enough food in Russia to sustain the people until the next harvest. Resolution of these debates had great implications beyond the famine per se. The conclusions one drew as a result of the debates determined one's willingness to work for or against the system, which either caused or greatly ameliorated the famine depending upon one's point of view. For example, one's view of the famine might stimulate a drive for industrialization, etc. Thus it is important to recognize that the resolution of the discussions surrounding the famine had vital implications for the political, social, and economic future of Russia.

It is also important to note that the existence of these lively and interesting debates have been completely overlooked in the modern scholarship. One might conclude from reading the modern works that the contemporary view of the famine was in universal agreement.

CHAPTER III

IMPACT OF THE FAMINE ON THE RADICAL AND LIBERAL INTELLIGENTSIA

"The barrenness of our literature is merely a reflection of the emptiness of our daily life."[1] P. Miliukov

"We must wish and hope that this calamity may be the beginning of the end, and that the Russian people may give up their dumb patience, and, following the example of other nations, rise and sweep away once and for all a system which is the source of such endless miseries."[2] Stepniak

"Russian People! Do not betray the Russian People! Russian People! Together we will overthrow our enemy."[3] Sergeevskii

In the preceding chapters it has been shown that the famine of 1891-92 evoked an enthusiastic and well-organized program of famine relief and an intense academic debate. The famine also had a more significant and long term impact on Russian society. The famine acted as a catalyst in Russia as no event since the Crimean War, and awakened Russia from ten years of stagnation experienced since the death of Alexander II. From the perspective of the present it is indeed relatively easy to see that the famine marked a turning point in Russian intellectual life. It was an event of such magnitude that even the

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[1]Paul Miliukov, "Russia," Athenaeum (July 4, 1891), p. 29.

[2]Free Russia, II (August 1, 1891), 4.

[3]Sergeevskii, p. 48.

contemporaries were aware of the renaissance taking place in Russia.

That a renaissance was actually occurring in Russia, there can be no doubt. No less an authority than Paul Miliukov substantiates the rebirth of Russian intellectual life. Writing for the periodical Athenaeum, in July, 1891, Paul Miliukov reported that for the past few years Russian literature seemed to be experiencing a blight. "The barreness of our literature is merely a reflection of the emptiness of our daily life."[4] However, in July, 1892, in another article in the same periodical concerning Russian cultural activity, Miliukov pointed out a renaissance of Russian intellectual life. He stated that this year he could not again reproach Russia for the vacuousness of her literature. Not only in literature but the whole tone of intellectual life in 1891-92 had undergone change. He noted that a transition period had set in; that the famine of 1891 "has stirred up the educated classes of Russia, and stimulated them to great efforts, and centered their activity upon a well-defined common object."[2] The Russkoe Bogatstvo said it more poetically by stating that the crop-failure in 1891 and especially its consequences had "stirred up the quiet surface of our life," like a stone thrown in a pond.[3] Many of the educated class had only talked about public welfare. "Now, for the first time, [they] saw a real village and learned something of the life that goes on there."[4] Thus the

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[1]Athenaeum (July 4, 1891), p. 29.

[2]Ibid., (July 2, 1892), p. 25.

[3]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 108.

[4]Athenaeum (July 4, 1891), p. 29.

famine made Russia a reality to those who had only dealt with Russia on a theoretical basis--especially as regards social problems. On the other hand, many people who were indifferent to the theoretical considerations of social problems became involved in the real needs of Russia. All in all, the famine awakened Russia from the lethargy of the previous decade, just as the Crimean War had done in the 1850's.[1]

One of the most important results of the famine of 1891-92 was that it rekindled the Russian revolutionary movement and brought it back to life, after the doldroms of the 1880's. In terms of the opposition movement, the 1880's was a decade of severe reaction, dreadful depression and an epoch in which the intelligentsia was disillusioned, wallowed in hopelessness, and lost belief in itself and its ideals.[2]

The decade of the 1880's has been called the "Epoch of Social Narrowmindedness," in which the social policy of the intelligentsia was "small deeds." Dull evolutionary change was the theme rather than revolutionary reform. Indeed, some members of the intelligentsia--Gleb Uspenskii, Saltykov, and Mikhailovsky--did try to dislodge Russia from her narrowmindedness, but were unsuccessful.[3] Nevertheless, in general the epoch of the 80's was "intermediate," in that one can say "before this decade certain things happened and after it certain things; the decade in itself is a void." Thus, Ivannov-Razumnik, in his book

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[1]Ibid. See also Athenaeum (July, 1894), p. 22; Free Russia, II (March, 1892), 3; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 100.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 39.

[3]V. Ivannov-Razumnik, Istorii Russkoi Obschestvennoi Mysli (4th ed.; St. Petersburg: M. M. Stasulevich, 1914), p. 323.

[4]Ibid., p. 325. See also Athenaeum (July 1, 1893), p. 27.

Istoriia Russkoi Obshchestvennoi Mysli, considered the 1880's an ideological interregnum between populism as the major expression of the opposition movement in the 1870's and the advent of Marxism in Russia in the 1890's.[1]

In the 1890's the Russian social movement clearly rejected the men and ideas of the 1880's, and was "preparing itself for fresh and increasing efforts."[2] Out of the so-called narrowminded social ideology of the eighties emerged the new bold concepts of the nineties. The obvious reason for this break with the past was the famine of 1891-92, which aroused society from the inactive theory of "small deeds."[3]

The older generation of liberal-radicals pounced upon the famine as a great opportunity to appeal to the radical young and thereby to awaken society to begin the overthrow of the Tsarist system. In August, 1891, in the emigre newspaper, Free Russia, Stepniak wrote:

> We must wish and hope that this calamity may be the beginning of the end, and that the Russian people may give up their dumb patience, and, following the example of other nations, rise and sweep away once and for all a system which is the source of such endless miseries.[4]

Similarly, in January, 1892, there appeared in Russia a proclamation of the Narodnaya Volya, which stated that the Tsarist government had brought the country to bankruptcy and ruin and that now was the time to be organizing the ranks to enable the party to overthrow autocracy at

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[1]Ibid., pp. 323, 325. [2]Athenaeum (July 1, 1893), p. 27.

[3]Ivannov-Razumnik, pp. 325-26. For essentially the same view see also Miliukov, pp. 236-37; Theodore Dan, The Origins of Bolshevism, ed. and trans. Joel Carmichael (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 189-90.

[4]Free Russia, II (August, 1891), 4.

the proper moment.[1]

Statements urging the overthrow of the Tsarist system also came from abroad, where, of course, large emigre colonies existed, as well as some of the most important revolutionaries--in particular Paul Lavrov and George Plekhanov. Plekhanov wrote two important essays in 1892 concerned with the famine and especially with the tasks of the revolutionaries as a consequence of the famine. In his first essay, " "Vserossiiskoe Razorenie," Plekhanov stated that the famine of 1891-92 was a significant as the Crimean War, and thereby history demanded that the people conduct a reform program which the government could not implement. He outlined the following program: (1) immediate provisioning of starving people at a cost of 300-400,000,000 r., (2) restore agriculture to prosperity and end exploitation of the peasant by officials, and (3) revamp the entire tax system.[2]

Plekhanov was well aware that if the people did act on this program then it would mean the overthrow of autocracy in Russia. Since the government would not act, the people must act in spite of the government. The people must agitate for the calling of a Zemsky Sobor, which would build a new foundation for Russian society. Each faction within society should do its own business, implement its own program.

> A new Social-Political order will be the result of the heterogeneous efforts, which in any case will be a great bargain for all parties, except the party of whip and stick which is already sufficiently disgraced.
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> Then what we suggest here, is not utopia which is contrived in exile, unearthed from native soil, but vital inevitable business.

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[1]Ibid., III (September, 1892), 10.

[2]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), pp. 100-101.

> You are able, if you wish, to ridicule our position today. But your apathy does not solve the terrible question. If not now, then in a year, if not in a year, then in a few years, you [society] will have to take up this question. And then, as now, before you will be placed only one means of action: struggle with Tsarism.[1]

In his second publication on the famine in 1892, Plekhanov outlined the tasks of the comrades in relation to the great tragedy. He began by arguing that the terrible famine had awakened even the most insensitive hearts to the true conditions of the people. In this context, the socialists must act more energetically in declaring an unmerciful war on the exploiters of the people. The Russian "socialist" party must take advantage of this historical moment and fearlessly defend the interests of the people.[2] Russia, he argued, had no other choice but to wrest control of its fate from the hands of bankrupt Tsarism, or perish.[3]

Plekhanov contended that it was the working classes--the growing proletariat--which was the key to the overthrow of Tsarism. Having become acquainted with the actions of the proletariat in the West, the Russian worker was imbued with a deep hatred of Tsarism and despotism. Thus in his view the nineties seemed more ripe for revolution than did the seventies.[4] Now, he stated, "the old economic structure of Russia crumbles. . . . Now all of us, the enemies of the existing order, feel, at last, firm soil under our feet. Now our time has arrived!"[5] Plekhanov felt quite strongly that to engage in revolutionary activities was a moral duty for the young comrades, especially since the famine

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[1]Ibid., p. 101. [2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., pp. 1, 2.

[3]Ibid., p. 30. [4]Ibid., p. 40. [5]Ibid., p. 42.

"represents the economic prologue of the impending political revolution."[1] Thus in both of these works Plekhanov saw the famine as an opportunity to work for the overthrow of the system and urged the young comrades in Russia to participate in that action.

Turning from the leading Russian Marxist revolutionary, one finds the leading Russian populist also urging his followers to take this opportunity to destroy the Tsar's government. There is, however, a very sharp distinction between Plekhanov's and Lavrov's exhortations to the revolutionaries abroad and to those in Russia. Lavrov appears more of an extremist, concerned with the ultimate realization of the end, i.e., the revolution. While desiring the overthrow of the Tsarist system, Plekhanov was also very much concerned with the needs of the people during the famine and urged the young comrades to help them as well as work for the revolution.[2]

In January, 1892, Lavrov read a pamphlet to an assembly of socialists in Paris written by Ivan Sergeevskii (N. S. Rusanov) in Russia and smuggled out of the country. Lavrov appended an introduction and an epilogue to this document when he delivered the address. Lavrov began by saying that they were "gathered together today because of the terrible tragedy which has struck the fatherland."[3] The mission of the socialist in the crisis taking place in Russia was to make use of it in undermining the state.[4] Thus far there is very little basis to separate Lavrov from

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[1]Ibid., p. 43.

[2]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), p. 100 and O Zadachakh . . ., p. 2 which suggest social commitment as well as revolutionary commitment. See Akselrod, p. 21.

[3]Sergeevskii, p. 3. [4]Ibid.

from Plekhanov's attitude to the repercussions of the famine.

Lavrov is preoccupied with the idea that the socialists should concentrate on the revolution and not weaken their efforts by engaging in philanthropy. He stated that they should not "forget, that philanthropy is possible only through scandalous inequality of property against which we struggle. . . . Indeed did we forget that the sole recourse from tragedies, . . . is a call to the people increasingly more irritated against the existing system, [which makes possible] the final struggle between labor and capital, the ensuing Socialist Revolution?"[1] As socialists, they cannot involve themselves or placate themselves by doing "good deeds" in helping to feed two or three people. The socialists are concerned for all the future generations which would be doomed by the present system. Thus, while they sympathize with those currently suffering the misfortune of famine, all their energies must be directed against social conditions within Russia. "The only 'good deed' possible for us, is not a charitable deed, but a revolutionary one. Our only 'duty' is to hasten the fall of capitalism and the triumph of the social revolution."[2]

This theme of "make revolution, not charity" is repeated a number of times in the speech made by Lavrov. For example, he condemns those socialists helping to feed the people because it aids the enemies of the people--the capitalists. Any socialist who takes part in charity is a traitor to his socialist convictions, "for you [the socialist] there is no truth in your war against the capitalist regime, there is no sincerity in your proclaimed struggle of the classes."[3] If a socialist was to

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[1]Ibid., p. 4. [2]Ibid., pp. 4-5. [3]Ibid., p. 5.

fulfill his "duty," his only "duty," he must hasten the fall of capitalism and the triumph of social revolution.[1] Philanthropy per se does not have any moral significance for the socialist.[2] Thus, it is clear that Lavrov believed that the socialists should close their hearts to the suffering of the Russian people and open their hearts to the overthrow of the Tsarist government for the benefit of a yet unborn generation.

In the epilogue to Sergeevskii's pamphlet Lavrov continued to call for a revolution in Russia as he recounted the past history of the populists, and stated that socialists have conditions in the 1890's similar to those which excited their predecessors in 1874. However, today's socialists could not count on a major uprising of the peasants because they were unorganized. Therefore the socialists must lead and organize the struggle against autocracy; they must overthrow the "vampire" from the body of the Russian people.[3] All socialists agree that they must establish socialism in Russia, but disagree as to method. This is the inevitable program of all those who love their fatherland.[4] He concludes his presentation with the exhortation: "Russian People! Do not betray the Russian People! Russian People! Together we will overthrow our enemy."[5] Thus it is evident that the older radicals saw in the famine an opportunity to begin the overthrow of the Tsarist system, and urged the young socialists to set this revolution in motion. The famine had revived in their minds the belief in the physical destruction of autocracy, and thereby had a considerable impact on their view of conditions and problems within the fatherland.

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[1]Ibid., p. 6. [2]Ibid., p. 7. [3]Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[4]Ibid., pp. 42-43. [5]Ibid., p. 48.

Another prominent figure of the "liberal" establishment, who used the famine to do more than simply appeal for aid, and who publicly urged society to embark on a crusade vis-a-vis the famine, was Vladimir Solov'ev. In October, 1891, he wrote an article about the famine, its consequences, and what should be done to alleviate the suffering then and in the future. While Lavrov and Plekhanov were concerned with the revolutionary aspects of the famine, and Struve, Skvortsov and Nikolai-on were very much involved in the economic consequences of the famine, Solov'ev approached the famine from a moral or ethical world view. In examining the moral implications of the famine, he concluded that Russian society had a moral obligation to render cultural aid to the suffering classes.[1]

In calling for cultural aid for the peasant which would help solve the great problems of Russian agriculture, he attacked the educated people for not doing "their duty" as regards their obligations to the underprivileged--uneducated--people of Russia. The cultured class was not using its mental and material advantages correctly as seen from Solov'ev's moral world view. Rather, educated society looked on their education as "egotistical privilege" and therein, he believes, lies the bankruptcy of Russian culture. Instead of taking practical steps to help the lower classes, he soundly condemns the intellectuals for intellectualizing--for positing absurd scholastic models about whether "culture" is harmful or beneficial. Solov'ev argued that all of this passive contemplation and theorizing interferes with and betrays our instinct of

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[1]Solov'ev, Vestnik Evropy, V (October, 1891), 785.

[2]Ibid., p. 786.

love.[1]

"Love that remains only a subjective sensation . . . is a fraud."[2] Solov'ev argues that if one really feels "love" than he should engage in famine relief activities, and the general effort to enhance the well-being of the suffering people. Society or "culture" is the vehicle through which love is expressed and the general well-being is achieved. "Culture namely is the totality of all historical means and tools for the durable securing and comprehensive improvement of human life, i.e., life of all the people. If at the beginning of moral activity . . . [there] is love, and this goal is a boon for all, then culture is the system of necessary means for the full manifestation of love as the moral beginning and for the full achievement of the general well-being as a moral goal."[2] Thus in his view, a true culture exists for the general welfare of everyone; a culture that places some interests above others is a false culture.[3]

In Solov'ev's opinion the famine has revealed the extreme failure or bankruptcy of Russia's half-cultured society and her uncultured people. He says that this failure is obvious in that not only has the general standard of living not improved, but it has deteriorated to a ruinous state, even to starvation. The people have reached this semi-starved state because of their lack of culture, which Solov'ev reiterates is the fault of educated society. That the intellectuals have helped the peasant cannot be doubted, but it also cannot be doubted that they could do much, much more, "if they had had a clearer consciousness

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 787.

of the main goal."[1] Solov'ev emphasizes the fact that he is not calling for individual acts of philanthropy, but is striving for the mobilization of society to help the people.[2]

The general deterioration in the well-being of the Russian people was not from a shortage of good intentions, nor from a shortage of resources, but rather from a lack of organization of these forces. Solov'ev argued that Russia had a well-organized church structure, looking after national interest. However, "the organization of society, i.e., the other union of free individual forces, solidly and consciously active for the improvement of national life, for national progress--such an organization . . . does not exist with us, and consequently, there is no society in the positive sense of the word."[3] He felt that the time had come for a true society to emerge in Russia; it is time for this to happen because of the extreme danger which now confronts Russia. In order to preserve its existence, all the disjointed social elements of Russia must "be organized into a single society for helping the people."[4]

The creation of the new society and the guaranteeing of the well-being of the Russian people can only be done first by the organization of aid for the people. Russia needs people who are willing to declare their faith in and love for the Russian people. Solov'ev concludes his article with the admonition that now is the time to demonstrate the true meaning of patriotism, to emphasize its positive aspects--which does not mean hatred of the foreigner, but rather patriotism for a Russian means

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[1]Ibid., pp. 787-88. [2]Ibid., p. 791.

[3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 792.

love for the suffering people.[1]

As Plekhanov and Lavrov, Solov'ev saw the famine as a tragedy, but he also saw in it the possibility or opportunity for significant change in the Russian scene. The former urged their followers to work for the overthrow of the Tsarist system and the creation of the new order. Solov'ev too argued for and urged Russians to overthrow the false culture of Russia, and create a true society. While their goals were somewhat the same, the means were considerably different--violence vs. love. In a very real sense then, we have two philosophical extremes within the "left segment" of society as regards positive action toward the famine and possible consequences of the famine for Russia. Whatever the basic philosophical differences, all three men were strongly urging Russian articulate society to respond to the famine of 1891-92. The question now at hand is what was the impact of the famine and the exhortations of people like Plekhanov, Lavrov, and Solov'ev upon the more articulate sector of Russian society, particularly the younger generation.

The revival of society and subsequently the revolutionary upswing actually begins from the moment that the government allowed society to take action to ameliorate conditions in the famine district.[2] It is important to emphasize that the famine itself was a very significant factor in the revial of the opposition movement, and that this revival was not solely a result of revolutionary propaganda. Writing forty years after the event, Struve stated that:

> Our generation had been greatly impressed by the famine of 1891-92. Those impressions gave birth to that movement of public thought which came to be known as "legal Marxism." I emphasize the fact

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[1]Ibid., p. 793. [2]Maklakov, p. 154.

> that it was born not from books but from impressions of life. . . . The younger generation received such impressions from the famine of 1891-92.[1]

Nevertheless, "old-time" radicals, upon becoming convinced of the magnitude of the famine, immediately put forth the cry for Russia to awaken. Indeed, the Russian people did rise up, but not to overthrow the system, but as shown above, to aid the victims of the famines. As in the seventies, there was another "going to the people" among the young students as hundreds of them set out for the famine district.[2]

Not all the students and young people reacted to the famine with the same response. Within the "left" itself there were also various attitudes toward coping with the famine and dispensing aid to the victims of the famine. Since many of the radical students viewed the famine as a direct result of policies of the government, they were faced with a dilemma. If they gave aid to starving ones they were also giving aid to the government which they hoped to overthrow. Therefore, some students decided that they would not give aid to the starving in the hope that the tragedy would force the peasants to overthrow the system.[3] This was the most extreme view. The more moderate revolutionaries felt that it was necessary to help feed the starving ones, but at the same time they should use this opportunity to start propagandizing the peasants.[4] The third general view among the students and the revo-

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[1]Struve, Slavic and East European Review, III (April, 1934), 585-86.

[2]Martov, p. 86; Obolensky, p. 229; Miliukov, p. 237; Athenaeum (July 2, 1892), p. 25.

[3]Obolensky, p. 199; Martov, pp. 86-87; Pipes, Struve, p. 95.

[4]Obolensky, p. 199; Martov, p. 86; Miliukov, p. 237.

lutionaries was that they should not use "hunger" for political ends, but that they should help the people because they are hungry.[1] If this was the initial response of students to the outbreak of the famine, the next question to deal with is how did their exposure to the organization of famine relief and conditions in the countryside affect them. Let us turn then from the general to the particular.

Peter Struve, who subsequently became one of the leading figures within the left and the intelligentsia, was one of that generation of students greatly influenced by the famine. In 1908, he wrote that "as far as I am personally concerned, the hunger of 1891-92 made much more of a Marxist out of me than the reading of Marx's Capital."[2] One should note, however, that Struve's alienation from the system existed prior to the famine.

In the 1880's, being a very young man, Struve, along with what he calls the "educated Russian youth," had become passionately involved with Freedom. The passion for freedom evolved to maturity by the time Struve was fifteen, in 1885, and he considered himself to be a political liberal at that time. Gradually, socialism became a component of his political philosophy, and by 1888 he had become "by conviction only, a Social Democrat."[3] "By conviction only; for socialism, however it be understood, never inspired any emotions in me, still less a

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[1]Obolensky, pp. 199-200. Obolensky notes that the students on the "right" were not bothered by this dilemma, and helped the peasant out of purely humanitarian motives, p. 220.

[2]P. Struve, "Na Raznye Temy," Russkaya Mysl, No. 3 (March, 1908), Pt. 2, 211, cited by Pipes, Struve, p. 61.

[3]Struve, Slavic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 575-77.

passion."[1] Thus, by 1890, Struve had joined in his outlook the basic premise of a need for freedom, with the desire to improve the economic conditions of the people.[2] As stated above, it was the famine that made his conversion to socialism more than just an academic association, and for the next decade made him a leading figure in the Marxist movement, in particular a legal Marxist.[3]

Another giant in the social democratic movement in Russia was Yuri O. Zederbaum-Martov. Yuri Martov was slightly younger than Struve and at the outbreak of the famine he had been admitted to the University of St. Petersburg. Thus much like Struve, he was a student as the nineties began, and also like Struve, his alienation existed prior to the outbreak of the famine.[4] The famine gave this young student a chance to express his ideas, and in the fall of 1891, Martov cultivated his own solution to the problems of Russia, a solution which tended in the direction of mass peasant riots. At one of the many student circles in Russia in December, Martov entered into the discussion about the significance and consequences of the famine. This being his first public speech, he argued that the famine would lead to spontaneous peasant riots, which would inevitably end in a march on the cities. The task of young radicals, in his opinion, was to organize a strong revolutionary

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[1]Ibid., p. 577. [2]Ibid., p. 578.

[3]Ibid., pp. 578, 585-86. Struve does, however, acknowledge that Plekhanov's writings, as well as other emigre writings had considerable impact on the young "legal Marxists;" see Samuel Baron, Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 142.

[4]Haimson, pp. 65-66; Israel Getzler, Martov (Melbourne, Australia: Cambridge at the University Press, 1967), p. 11.

party, "united with workers and soldiers, and in a fitting moment, when the state will be disorganized, to perform a revolution in their capital, in order to overthrow autocracy and seize power."[1] Within the year, however, Martov had altered his political ideas considerably.[2]

The outbreak of cholera in the spring and summer of 1892, which resulted in wild riots along the Volga River, was a critical factor in shift of Martov's opinions. Martov stated that these riots were very disillusioning and undermined even the romantic enthusiasm of youth, and caused him to drop his grandiose ideas; little remained of the ideas "from my naive riot period."[3] He concluded that Russia was not ready for a mass revolution, and that the famine year would not be a year of revolution. However, he became acquainted with the writings of Plekhanov and Akselrod concerning the famine and was greatly influenced by their works. This caused him to read a French translation of Capital, which changed his entire approach to revolution. He states, "to me it suddenly became clear, how superficial and groundless up to that time was the whole of my revolutionism and how subjective political romanticism is dwarfed before such philosophical and sociological heights, to which Marxism rise."[4] This ultimately led to the formation in December of 1892 of the Petersburg Emancipation of Labour Group, which stressed the connection of Martov and his circle with the social democrats in Geneva.[5] Thus Martov was very much affected by the famine of 1891, in that it helped shape his political attitudes for the remainder of his life.

Akselrod was another social democrat who attests to the signifi-

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[1]Martov, p. 94. [2]Ibid., pp. 136-37. [3]Ibid., p. 137.

[4]Ibid.; see also Baron, pp. 142-43. [5]Getzler, p. 16.

cance of the famine of 1891-92 in shaping Russian social democracy and the youth of Russia. In his memoirs, Akselrod stressed the impact of the famine and Plekhanov's ideas upon himself and the younger generation of emigres. The first time that Akselrod had the occasion to hear Plekhanov speak was in the winter in 1891 in Zurich. He states that at this time the young were definitely turned against social democratic doctrines and were generally antagonistic to Plekhanov himself. When Plekhanov came to speak about the famine in Russia, Akselrod stated that the Russian emigres in Zurich attended the lecture.[1]

Prior to Plekhanov's speech, the social democrats abroad had tended to be against philanthropy because that seemed to be against revolutionary action, and viewed the famine as speeding up the proletariatization of the village. As pointed out above, the father of Russian Marxism was favorably disposed to philanthropy, which he considered a moral duty of the social democrats in view of the plight of the peasant.[2]

According to Akselrod, George Valentinovich described in great detail conditions in Russia, and laid the blame for the tragedy largely on the system of autocracy. His speech was so moving that many in his audience began to weep. The second half of his lecture was dedicated to outlining the tasks of social democrats in the struggle with famine. After the lecture, which lasted two hours, there was a discussion in which the populists, who were present, challenged Plekhanov's interpretation. In the speech and in the debate period, according to Akselrod, Plekhanov so devastated his opponents that he acquired a number of con-

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[1]Akselrod, p. 20. [2]Ibid., p. 21.

verts to social democracy, and to the revolutionary movement in general.[1] Thus the visit of Plekhanov to Zurich and his speech apparently had a great impact on Akselrod and on the emigre colony in Switzerland. For these people, who could not go to the famine district, the propaganda efforts of radical leaders was more important than the actual first-hand impressions made by the famine.

Lenin, himself, was also very much affected by the famine of 1891-92. In the latter years of the eighties and in the nineties prior to the famine, Lenin accepted and espoused the ideas of the People's Will Party. In particular, he believed in a sudden coup as the instrument which would overthrow the Tsarist government and thus associated with the more radical elements of the People's Will. While he read Capital in 1889, there is no evidence to suggest that he leaned toward the social democratic faction, which was developing a following along the Volga in 1890. At this time he shared none of Marx's admiration for capitalism's historic accomplishment. However, this was to change.[2]

The famine of 1891-92 seriously undermined the revolutionary world view held by Lenin upon graduation from the university in 1891. Lenin, thinking that all was not well in the village, began a systematic study of agriculture based on zemstvo statistics, and concluded that a form of class differentiation was indeed developing in the country. It was at this time that Lenin became a Marxist and severed his association with the People's Will Party.[3] It is again obvious that the famine was extremely important in shaping Lenin's life, and thereby the subsequent

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[1]Ibid., p. 23. [2]Pipes, Struve, p. 129.

[3]Ibid., pp. 129-30; see also Baron, p. 143.

course of Russian history.

The famine of 1891-92 had a considerable impact on members of the left other than the Social Democrats, although in terms of numbers and prominence the SD's seemed to be the most affected segment of the left. One such member of the left was Victor M. Chernov, the famous leader of the Social Revolutionary Party. Like Lenin, Chernov was from the Volga, and in particular from Saratov, which was in the heart of the famine district. He attended the Saratov gymnasia and formed friendships with a number of students who were arrested with him in 1892—Keller, Likhtrammer, Epifanov, and Yakolev.[1] These young men probably were also very much affected by the famine.

In his memoirs, Chernov states that after finishing his formal education in 1891, he went home with a diploma in one hand and a revolutionary proclamation entitled "The First Letter to the Starving Peasants" in the other.[2] In the summer of 1892, young Chernov was a keen observer of the cholera riots, and the young radicals who wanted to shift the direction of these outbursts from the doctors to political goals. As a matter of fact, the crowds, in their anger, did on occasion attack police stations. But these attacks were incidental to basic flow of peasant fear, hostility and frustration. By and large the students were unable "to take possession" of the peasant movement, and thus the young radicals emerged from their efforts tired, stunned,

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[1]Victor M. Chernov, "K Istorii Partii Narodnago Pravda," Krasnyi Arkhiv, I (1922), p. 92.

[2]Victor M. Chernov, Zapiski Socialista Revolutsionera (Berlin: Z. I. Grzhebina, 1922), p. 92.

and prepared for a "scolding" from the older generation.[1]

With the denouement of the revolutionary situation, many young populists organized a new party in order to win a constitution from the state, called the People's Rights Party.[2] Chernov was a member of the party, and was persuaded to join it by one of the older generation of radicals, P. F. Nikolaev. He participated in an effort undertaken by the party to distribute leaflets to the peasants, such as the one entitled "Letters to Starving Peasants" and designed to indoctrinate them.[3] Chernov makes a very interesting point when he divides the radical youth of the 1890's into two groups, one attracted to Marxism, and the other group attracted to the People's Rights Party. The young radicals who thrust themselves into the village hoping to incite revolution, were psychologically prepared for indoctrination and conversion to Marxism. The other element of young radicals, who were better acquainted with the peasant and did not expect an immediate revolution and were prepared patiently to cultivate the peasant, stubbornly resisted Marxism, and tended to join the People's Rights Party.[4] It was through his association with the People's Rights Party that Chernov was arrested in April, 1894, along with thirty-nine other young men.[5] Here again, the famine played a significant role in launching the career of one of the most important revolutionaries in Russian history in the last years of the Tsar.

The above constitutes a selection of some of the most important

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[1]Ibid., pp. 95-96. [2]Haimson, p. 50.

[3]Chernov, Zapiski, pp. 156-57. [4]Ibid., p. 158.

[5]Chernov, Krasnyi Arkhiv, I (1922), 282.

members of the new generation of the left, who were definitely affected by the famine. However, it is clear that the famine itself did not bring about their alienation from the system; in fact, no one became a revolutionary simply because of the famine. Young men like Chernov, Struve, Lenin, and Martov were alienated from the Tsarist system prior to the famine. The famine only convinced them of the merit of their position. In addition, the famine played the same role for the older generation of radicals--Plekhanov, Akselrod, Lavrov, Vorontsov, and Nikolai-on--in that it confirmed their preconceived attitudes about the Tsarist system and its future.

In addition to outright radicals, many prominent people of a "liberal" world view were greatly affected by the famine. One of these people was the noted writer V. G. Korolenko. He acknowledges that he went to the famine district seeking tearful scenes and the terrible effects of the famine, and what he saw made a deep impression upon him.[1] For example, Korolenko saw the task of famine relief as almost hopeless, a task in which they poured "out drops of aid for a sea of need."[2] The dilemma of such tremendous need and the limited amount of supplies must have seriously distrubed a sensitive man like Korolenko. He states that he will long remember that spring, depressed in body and spirit, as they were forced to cross names off their lists, who needed food but who could not be fed. "God forbid another such year."[3] As cited above, his reaction to the suffering reached such a point that he refused to inspect another hut containing stricken peasants. His feelings of being

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[1]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 220.

[2]Ibid., p. 226. [3]Ibid., pp. 226-27.

conscience-stricken emerge when he states how wealthy and splendid his entourage must have seemed to the poor Russian peasants.[1] The impression made upon him by the famine was so deep that it was still sharply defined fifteen years later.[2]

The famine made the same indelible impact on Vladimir Obolensky. Writing in 1921, Prince Obolensky states that the horrible famine of 1921 brought to mind images of the unprecedented famine of 1891.[3] As in most of our other examples, Obolensky was a student at the University of St. Petersburg, and was very much invoved in the student "going to the village" movement.[4] His exposure in the famine district was extensive and it was the kind of experience which left its image burned on his mind thirty years later. Indeed, the famine was an event of such magnitude that its impressions were apparently forever etched in the minds of the eyewitnesses.

The article, "Golod v Sibiri i Knyaz Golitsyn," written by K. Vlasov twenty years after the famine, further illustrates this point. He had wanted to publish his article prior to 1913, but did not do so until most of the participants had died. Vlasov was a young teacher in 1891, and lost his job because the school closed as a result of the famine. After twenty years he still remembered the "terrible condition of the unfortunate people," the "picture of hunger horror" which "changed at every minute," and riots so serious "that the authorities

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[1]Ibid., pp. 242-43. [2]Ibid., p. 118.

[3]Obolensky, 195. It is interesting to note that Obolensky considers the famine of 1921 far more serious than the famine of 1891-92.

[4]Ibid., p. 198.

began to speak about national riots."[1]

To some the above evidence might not seem overwhelming documentation for the argument that the famine did have a great impact on contemporaries either directly or indirectly. But one can only actually measure the written evidence, which constitutes a minute expression of what was probably felt by the hundreds of young and old who did not record their impressions for the historian. One can readily surmise, however, that an entire generation of Russian students, who matured in the early 1890's, like Lenin and Struve, must have been affected by the overall impact of the famine. For example, the intellectual revival of the 1890's, caused by the famine, had to have a great impact on Berdyaev, who was attending the University at this time. Yet, he apparently left no record revealing the degree of impact that the famine had on him.[2] Theodore Dan would be another example of a contemporary, who had to be affected directly and indirectly by the famine, but who does not indicate this fact specifically in his memoirs. He does state, however, how very important the famine was in itself and how important it was in bringing about the growth of the Marxist party and the famous Marxist-Populist debate.[3]

The individuals who did record their impressions concerning the famine also imply that the actual "going to the village" was a formative experience unto itself. A. A. Kornilov speaks at some length about what

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[1]Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 129-30.

[2]Donald A. Lowrie, Rebellious Prophet: A Life of Nicolai Berdyaev (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp. 31-33.

[3]Dan, pp. 188-89.

a great experience it was to work with the people in the village, and that being city people they learned a great deal. He recommended this experience for young men who planned careers in government.[1] Possibly one of the deepest impressions made upon the city people by the exposure to the village was the terrible ignorance of the peasant. Obolensky discusses in considerable length the credulous nature of the peasantry who viewed the students that came to help them as either the Tsarevich and his entourage, English spies, or the anti-Christ and his servants. The peasants simply would not believe or comprehend that these people had come to give them aid.[2]

As a result of the "going to the village," Stepniak saw great possibilities in the closer contact between the peasant and the educated classes, in that greater understanding existed between these classes than ever before. All previous liberal movements had floundered on the reef of suspicion and antagonism, but the famine relief effort and the close association of the educated elite with the peasant had drastically reduced this obstacle.[3] Stepniak states that:

> The educated classes have learned to know the peasants, not from books, but from real life. They have seen them face to face in their wretched hovels . . . and have measured their misery. Such experiences can never be forgotten. The stream of feeling will only be a fore runner of the stream of ideas, which in both classes will tend to the end. The peasants of today are not the same mass of homogeneous ignorance as they were a generation ago. They can learn and think. They are apt pupils, and they will surely profit by what is the great lesson of the calamitous year.[4]

With the renaissance of vibrancy within Russian society, especially

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[1]Kornilov, pp. 230-31. [2]Obolensky, pp. 211-13.

[3]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 5. [4]Ibid., p. 6.

in the opposition movement, there emerged a furious debate between Populists and Marxists concerning the meaning or significance of the famine and concerning the future for the Russian economy.[1] In particular, the famine of 1891-92 focused attention on Russis's agricultural crisis--thereby the crux of Russia's economic problems--and almost immediately after the famine, special studies on the economy and agriculture began to appear.[2] It would seem that the majority of these studies were written by members of the left--Marxist and Populist--especially the legal Marxists and legal Populists.

Before turning to the debate between the Marxists and Populists, one very important point should be brought out, and that is that much of the Russian economic world view of the late 19th century was divorced from reality. There is, as Professor Gerschenkron has noted, a cleavage between the intellectual history of Russia and its economic history.[3]

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[1]The debate between the Marxists and the Populists has been discussed at considerable length by a number of historians--in particular, see: Haimson, The Russian Marxists and the Origin of Bolshevism; Pipes, Struve; Arthur P. Mendel, Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); Richard Wortman, The Crisis of Russian Populism (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1967); James Billington, Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958); Alexander Gerschenkron, "The Problem of Economic Development in Russian Intellectual History of the Nineteenth Century," Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, ed. E. J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 11-39; Solomon M. Schwarz, "Populism and Early Russian Marxism on Ways of Economic Development of Russia," Continuity and Change in Russian Soviet Thought, ed. E. J. Simmons (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 40-62; Richard Pipes, Social Democracy and the St. Petersburg Labor Movement, 1885-1897 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[2]Athenaeum, (July 1, 1893), p. 6.

[3]Gerschrenkron, Continuity and Change, pp. 33-34. See also: Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 43; Wortman, pp. 160-61, 164.

> The road of Russian economic development was rarely illuminated by the strong brilliance of prevision and prescience. . . . It is tempting to suggest that what must appear to those interested in literature, sociology, perhaps philosophy, as the golden age of the Russian intelligentsia appears far from brilliant to the economist. The point is not that the prophets of the Russian intelligentsia kept revealing verities that did not materialize. . . . They are exposed to a different charge. They proved unable to grasp the nature of the forces that were pushing the country's economy in a direction which was so repulsive to them. Much as they had thought about the peculiarities of Russia's economic evolution, they remained blind to those peculiarities which so greatly increased the chances of successful industrialization.[1]

It will be evident below, that there was indeed a divorce between economic imagination and economic reality.

The ideological split within the opposition movement occurred in the 1880's, wherein the Populists considered the commune to be the basic building block of the future socialist order, while the Marxists viewed the commune as a remnant of an outmoded economic historical stage. The commune, according to the Marxists had to be destroyed, if the true development of capitalism was to take place.[2] It was within this general ideological setting that famine occurred, and paradoxically enough, both the Marxists and Populists used the famine to enhance their respective interpretations as to the future of the Russian economy.

The populists considered the famine of 1891-92 as corrobative proof of their analysis and prophesies concerning the Russian economy, made in the 1880's. In their opinion, the development of a capitalist economy and the governmental fiscal policies had impoverished the peasant and the famine was prima facie proof of their position. Since the peasant was impoverished, and he was obviously unable to serve as a market for a capitalist system, capitalism on the western model could

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[1]Ibid., p. 34. [2]Seton-Watson, p. 512.

not possibly develop in Russia. This general interpretation was held by leading Populists, in particular, Vorontsov and Nikolai-on.[1]

After the famine of 1891-92, N. F. Danielson (Nikolai-on) enlarged his work of 1880, the Outlines of Our Post-Reform National Economy, and published it in 1893 under the same title. This work was one of the most forceful restatements of the Populist position. All during the 1880's, Nikolai-on had gathered data designed to prove the utter insanity of the government's policies, as well as the unsuitability of capitalism for Russia.[2] The famine of 1891-92 seemingly confirmed for him the accuracy of his interpretation, especially that capitalism was a detriment to Russia.[3]

The basic theme in the publication of the Outline was that the development of manufacturing in Russia undermined the peasant domestic industry, which thereby helped to impoverish the peasant and in turn, eliminated the peasant as a market for these manufactured goods.[4] Part I of the Outline was designed to demonstrate the "capitalization" of agriculture in the 1870's, and was reprinted almost without change. Nikolai-on believed that this was the decade which saw the beginning of a new socio-economic ediface in Russia--the era of capital.[5] The second part of Nikolai-on's work is a study of the impact of the capitalization

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[1]Billington, p. 164; Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 43; Pipes, Struve, pp. 60-61.

[2]Pipes, Struve, pp. 79-80.

[3]Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895), 155-56.

[4]Nikolai-on, Ocherki Nashego Poreformennago Khoziaistva (St. Petersburg: A. Bepke, 1893), pp. 334-35.

[5]Ibid., pp. XI, XII.

of productivity upon the old natural economy.[1] The purpose of his essay was to analyze and describe the basic course of Russia's new economic life and compare it with what had happened in the West.

It would seem that the famine of 1891-92 was a primary consideration in prompting him to republish his work. Nikolai-on says that some scholars wish to avoid unpleasant facts like the famine, but the famine forces Russia to study these unpleasant facts because of its tragic impact upon Russia---its high cost in money, ruination of tens of thousands of farmers, and the general lowering of the economic viability of the population.[2] "Our conclusions from the phenomena of the economic life which surrounds us are broad, but they are correct."[3]

Nikolai-on was possibly the leading Russian expert on Marxism for his day, corresponded with him at length, and based his view of the Russian economy largely in Marxist terminology and from a Marxist viewpoint.[4] In particular, he notes how "capitalization" has taken place within the handicraft industry in the agricultural sector, and how industry has removed this type of production from the hands of the peasant.[5] Thus each year the peasant loses income from the production of household articles because of competition with the cheaper manufactured articles. He is thereby forced to exploit the agricultural component of his economic life, in order to buy things he once produced

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[1]Ibid., p. XII.

[2]Ibid., pp. XIV, XV; see also: p. 257 for more on the role of famine as a catalyst in spurring studies on agriculture.

[3]Ibid., p. XVI. [4]Pipes, Struve, pp. 79, 80-83.

[5]Nikolai-on, Ocherki, pp. 258-64, especially pp. 258-59.

for himself as well as pay his taxes.[1] The result was impoverishment. This destitution in the Russian countryside, Nikolai-on argued, was clearly reflected in the rising "arrears" and relative decline in state income from direct taxes--which ultimately induced the state to lower the redemption payments and to abolish the poll tax.[2]

This model which describes the destructiveness of industrialization upon peasant agriculture, and thereby undermines the whole fabric of the Russian economy, is predicated on the Marxian theory of labor--labor being the determinant of value. Nikolai-on stresses that the amount of labor necessary to produce a good determines the value of exchange of that good, when demand has not changed.[3] He states that in Russia productivity was becoming capital intensive, i.e., that capitalization of production reduced the amount of labor in a given product and therefore lowered the value of exchange in society. In addition, peasants driven out of the market found themselves with reduced income.[4] The peasant is simply expropriated from the means of production.[5]

Labor theory is also found in his discussion of the effects of American grain competition upon the Russian peasant. Here again the value of the bread is determined by the amount of labor time expended in its production. "This is a general law. In proportion to the increase in the productivity of labor, in a particular branch of industry, in proportion to the spread of the application of machinery in the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 258, 322-23. [2]Ibid., pp. 259, 262.

[3]Ibid., pp. 260-61; on pp. 261-62 Nikolai-on uses the term surplus value.

[4]Ibid., pp. 261, 258. [5]Ibid., p. 262.

production, in proportion to the decrease in the expenditure of human labor time, the time socially needed for the production of a product . . . is decreased, and consequently its value."[1] This theory was a major component of the second part of his book, which was written in 1892.

Nikolai-on's book had a tremendous impact on the intelligentsia, both Populist and Marxist. It has been called the most important theoretical work of all populist literature.[2] The Marxists, who were well aware of Nikolai-on's expertise on Marxist thought, were particularly stung by his work, and began an assault on his ideas. In turn, Nikolai-on responded to his critics in a number of long articles. The essential ideas of the book are repeated in two essays printed in the Russkoe Bogatstvo in 1894 and 1895, and he again emphasized the significance of the famine as proof of the deterioration of Russian agriculture under the impact of the spread of capitalism.[3] In addition, the connection between labor theory and the decline of peasant agriculture is also evident in his later work.[4] Thus it is clear that the famine of 1891 did have an impact on the thinking of Nikolai-on, but only as proof of theories and ideas already formulated--that capitalism had ruined the only market available to it in Russia and its continued development was

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[1]Ibid., p. 130. See also p. 131 for more labor theory.

[2]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, pp. 46-47.

[3]Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV (April, 1894), 1; Nikolai-on, Russkoe Botagstvo, VI (June, 1894), 117; Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895), 155, 185.

[4]Ibid., Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895), 177-78.

impossible.[1] Nikolai-on held these basic theories concerning the possibility of capitalism and the deteriorating condition of Russian agriculture at least until the turn of the century.[2]

If one examines the writings of other Populists, one observes the famine playing much the same role as it did in the thinking of Nikolai-on, corrobative rather than catalytic. Possibly the most authoritative Populist spokesman was Vasilii P. Vorontsov, a Populist "economist" who as early as 1880 had formulated his ideas vis-a-vis the state of the Russian economy.[3] In 1882, in his famous book The Fate of Capitalism in Russia, he too emphasized the point that the development of capitalism was impossible for Russia. Like Nikolai-on, Vorontsov joined in the fight with Marxists after the famine of 1891-92, and restated this idea in 1895. Vorontsov was more dogmatic in his ideas than Nikolai-on, in that he stressed the impossibility of capitalism rather than the impracticality or futility of it as Nikolai-on had done.[4] What is very important, in the context of this dissertation, is the fact that his economic theories were predicated upon the distress in the agricultural sector--in that the destitution and exhaustion of the Russian peasant inhibited the development of a domestic market which, of course from his point of view, was a prerequisite for the full development of capitalism in Rus-

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[1]Ibid., Ocherki, pp. 322-23; see also Pipes, Struve, p. 83; Gerschenkron, Continuity and Change, pp. 32-33.

[2]Mendel, p. 278.

[3]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 45; Wortman, p. 160.

[4]Ibid., pp. 45-47; see also Wortman, pp. 160-69; Mendel, pp. 43-47; Billington, p. 164.

sia.[1] Thus the famine had no influence in the formation of Vorontsov's ideas, but it did provide "absolute" proof of the dire condition in the Russian countryside, and thereby the impossibility of capitalism, which was such an important component of the populist economic world view.

In 1893, the Populist, S. Yuzhakov, published an article in the Russkoe Bogatstvo which expressed the same kind of ideas noted above. In discussing the international grain trade, he described the fall in the price of grain and the detrimental impact this had upon Russia and also America. He expressed a labor theory in the same context as Nikolai-on, in that the amount of labor time determined the value of the product. Russian agriculture, he stated, was in a state of crisis, which the famine of 1891 clearly proved. In addition, he saw the development of capitalism as unlikely for Russia because Russia was already too exhausted to adopt new methods, and even if adopted, capitalism would cause the destruction of the agricultural sector, which had already happened in his opinion, in America and England.[2] In any case, the famine again offered evidence of the weakness of the Russian economy, and thus the inappropriateness of the capitalist system for Russia.

Another Populist, N. A. Karyshev, followed much the same line in an article printed in the populist journal Russkoe Bogatstvo in 1894. In joining the debate about the condition of the Russian countryside,

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[1]Wortman, p. 164; Mendel, pp. 46-47.

[2]S. Yuzhakov, "Voprosy Ekonomicheskago Razvitya v Rossii," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XII (December, 1893), 203-04. In 1896, they were still discussing the nature of the crisis in Russian agriculture--see "Sel'sko-Khoziaistvennyi Krisis i Prodovolstvennaya Nuzhda v Pskovskoi Gubernii," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1896), 188-97.

Karyshev shows how the fall in grain prices had affected the peasant.[1] But more importantly, he shows how the peasant need for money had increased, due to the pressure from the government, which needed money to pay for the industrialization of Russia, and, in his view, the growing use of money causes a reduction in the personal consumption of the peasant.[2] In addition, the demand for money caused the peasant to exploit the soil and therefore led to the ruin of agriculture.[3] Thus while he does not actually say it, he clearly indicates that the advent of capitalism was disastrous for Russian agriculture. In an article in the same periodical in 1893, Karyshev stressed the overall impact of the famine of 1891-92 and the fact that it was the result of deep-seated causes which existed long before the tragedy struck.[4] Thus, for the populist, the famine of 1891-92 offered proof of the agricultural crisis which indicated the improbability of the development of capitalism for Russia. The Marxists, on the other hand, drew a completely different conclusion from the famine.

In the 1880's the domination of economic theory within the opposition movement, held by the Populists, was challenged by a "new" group in the left, the Marxists.[5] The Marxist argument held that capitalism was not only possible for Russia, but inevitable, and that the destitution in the countryside was a result of the scarcity of that development. In the 1880's, however, the avant garde Marxists were definitely a minority

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[1]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 43-71.

[2]Ibid., p. 61. [3]Ibid., p. 54.

[4]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 1-11.

[5]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 47.

faction within the opposition groups, with most of their works being published abroad.[1] After the tragic events of 1891-92, the relative situation changed considerably, as the Marxists began to challenge the Populist view of Russia's national economy. In the years immediately after the famine, "Social Democracy in Russia became transformed from a secret doctrine into a distinct movement."[2]

In 1894, the monopoly of the legal press held by the Populists was broken, when P. S. Struve legally published his work Critical Observations on the Prospects of Russia's Economic Development.[3] Struve stated that "my book, published in September, 1894, had a very great success, and within a few weeks turned me from a 'promising' young student, hardly known to anyone outside a very limited circle of the Petersburg intelligentsia, into a well-known writer who at once became 'the principle representative . . . of legal Marxism' of that period, at least according to Lenin."[4] Struve was motivated to publish this work by the famine of 1891-92 and the discussion of the famine found in the writings of A. I. Skvortsov.[5] Like the Populists, the famine did not convert Struve to a particular philosophy, in this case Marxism, rather the famine confirmed for him the Marxist world view vis-a-vis the Russian economy which he had accepted in the mid 1880's.[6]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 54-56. [2]Pipes, Struve, p. 79.

[3]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 56.

[4]Struve, Slavic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 581.

[5]Pipes, Struve, p. 60; Struve, Slavic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 581.

[6]Ibid., p. 61; Ibid., p. 577.

Struve viewed the famine of 1891-92, not as proof that capitalism was impossible or futile for Russia, but proof that capitalism was a necessary development for Russia in order to prevent such tragedies in the future. At the very outset of his work, Struve suggested a greater grasp of reality and perspective, when he acknowledged that he was simply offering an interpretation; that he was not interested in gathering additional statistical data; and that he called himself a "doctrinaire."[1] In other words he recognized that his interpretation of Russia's economic development is an opinion steeped in bias and is not the "truth" which was handed down by many other writers of that day.

The misfortunes that have befallen Russia were, according to Struve, a result of Russia's backwardness, and heritage of serfdom, and not due to the rise of capitalism.[2] Countries who are in a natural or semi-natural stage of development are condemned to lower productivity than those countries who shift to a money economy and the development of industry.[3] "Therefore, overpopulation, i.e., the abundance of agricultural population, in connection with the heritage of a natural economy, the technical irrationality of peasant agriculture, by which is caused its low productivity--this is the basic cause of peasant impoverishment."[4] The creation of a rural proletariat, stated Struve, and the differentiation among peasants had already begun to take place as a result of the growth of a money economy.[5] Thus agriculture capitalism

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[1]P. B. Struve, Kriticheskie Zametki k Voprosu ob Ekonomicheskom Razvitii Rossii (St. Petersburg: I. N. Skorokhodova, 1894), p. IX.

[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., pp. 115-16.

[4]Ibid., p. 238. [5]Ibid., pp. 138-39.

had arrived in Russia, and he cited considerable evidence to prove his case, especially the progressive agricultural developments in privately owned farms.[1] Capitalism--money economy--was simply inevitable for Russia because "of the economic insolvency of the natural economy itself, and the inability of it to satisfy the immediate needs of a growing population."[2] In sum, Struve was observing the very same ruination of the Russian peasant, as was Nikolai-on, but he drew radically different conclusions.[3] Struve would acknowledge that agriculture was in relative decline or crisis, but this was only a transitory stage to a general uplifting of the level of the economy.[4] In effect, he felt that the advent of capitalism in agriculture meant the survival of the most fit and the worthless elements would be squeezed out.[5]

Struve was among the first to admit that from a particular world view capitalism may be considered an evil. However, capitalism developed because it was the natural and necessary form of raising the productive strength of a given country. "Capitalism is not only an evil, but a multifaceted factor of cultural progress, a factor, which not only destroys, but also creates."[6] This dual aspect of capitalism, Struve emphasized, was well understood in the West. He was sympathetic

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[1]Ibid., pp. 240-41; see pp. 240-45 for a more detailed discussion of this view.

[2]Ibid., p. 239.

[3]Ibid., pp. 242-43; Struve clearly acknowledges that a large share of the peasantry had been ruined by the late 1880's, and that there is a crisis in Russian agriculture.

[4]Ibid., p. 244. He is citing Zemstvo statistics.

[5]Ibid. [6]Ibid., p. 287.

to the suffering of the masses, but felt that the cause of their suffering was the lack of culture, and the only remedy was more capitalism, not less.[1]

Struve, in 1894, was responding to the same tragedy that had spurred Nikolai-on to publish his views on the economy, but had arrived at completely different hypothesis concerning the economic future of Russia.[2] The famine demonstrated that indeed agriculture was in the throes of differentiation and that capitalism was in the ascendency.[3] Struve had negated the Populist theory of Russia's "original economic development" and asserted "that Russia had long ago set out on the path of capitalist development."[4] As indicated above, the Populists were outraged at his assertions. On the one hand, they were outraged because he had viewed the famine as a regrettable episode on the evolution of progress in Russia, and on the other hand, because he recommended that Russia acknowledge her backwardness and throw in her lot with capitalism.[5]

The development of a full-fledged debate between the Marxists and the Populists marked the full flowering of Russian Marxism in Russia. Much of this was due to the publication of Struve's book and other legal

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[1] Ibid., pp. 287-88.

[2] For the impact of the famine of 1891-92 on Struve, see above pp. 153-155.

[3] Pipes, Struve, p. 61.

[4] Struve, Slavic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 581.

[5] Pipes, Struve, p. 94; Billington, p. 165; Schwarz, Continuity and Change, pp. 56-57.

Marxist publications.[1] The young Marxists worked very diligently at gathering data, statistics, etc., and passionately attacked the Populists.[2] To this extent, the Populists lost the struggle for the younger intelligentsia, who became convinced that the Marxist world view and the benefit of capitalism for Russia were closer to reality than the hypothesis held by the Populists.[3] Lenin was a member of that generation who, alienated by the Tsarist system, was prompted to turn from Populism to Marxism, the famine of 1891-92 being the catalyst for his intellectual conversion.[4]

Struve's work, however, created consternation and angry response in the Marxist camp as well as the Populist. He had gone farther than any other Marxist writer to that day in stressing the importance of capitalism to Russia's cultural, political, social and economic development. "He was the first among them to regard it as the indispensible precondition of all further progress. In this respect he exceeded even Marx, who . . . was prepared . . . to allow a country like Russia to bypass it."[5] Within the Marxist movement, Lenin reacted very critically to the disturbing hypotheses of Struve. For example, in 1895 Lenin published an essay which criticized Struve for "extreme objectivism" and

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[1]Baron, pp. 144-45.

[2]Dan, pp. 190-92. Dan stresses that it was the famine of 1891-92 which turned Social Democracy from a minor faction into a significant opposition movement, pp. 188-89.

[3]Haimson, p. 51.

[4]For a discussion of the impact of the famine on Lenin, see above, p. 158.

[5]Pipes, Struve, p. 94.

that he paid insufficient attention to the basic class antagonisms and conflicts which the objective historical process engenders.[1]

Lenin's response to the ideas of Struve are not, for the purposes of this dissertation, as significant as his response to the famine of 1891-92.[2] After an intense study of the problem of Russian agriculture and capitalism, Lenin published his views in 1893 in the work On the So-Called Question of Markets, which he expanded into The Development of Capitalism in Russia in 1899. While Lenin might quarrel with the "philosophical" approach of Struve, he would seem to be in basic economic agreement as to the advent of capitalism in Russia. In these works Lenin was primarily concerned with the issue of whether a domestic market could evolve in Russia to support capitalism, a basic point at issue in the Marxist-Populist debate.

In his essay published in 1893, Lenin takes issue with both Vorontsov and Nikolai-on. Like the Populists and Struve, he sees a growing differentiation among the peasantry, but he concludes from this that Russia is in transition from a natural economy to a capitalist economy.[3] He would agree that the peasants in general are becoming impoverished, but rather than hinder the development of capitalism, their poverty fosters the growth of a market economy. "Capitalism needs the free laborer," and impoverishment consists in the petty producers being converted into wage-workers. The impoverishment of the

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[1]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 58.

[2]V. I. Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question," Collected Works, Vol. I (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1963), 107, 122, ff.

[3]Ibid., p. 108.

masses is accompanied by the enrichment of a few exploiters; the ruin and decline of small establishments is accompanied by the strengthening and development of bigger ones. Both processes facilitate the growth of the market because the "impoverished" peasant, who formerly lived by his own farming and made his own articles of consumption, lives by "earnings," i.e., by the sale of his labor power; he now has to purchase essential articles of consumption.[1] In effect, the deterioration of the rural sector has resulted in an increase in productivity, not a decrease, in that there is greater consumer demand.[2]

Differentiation of the rural sector, or in Lenin's term commodity producers, into capitalists and proletarians is the critical element in Lenin's thesis that capitalism is already extant in Russia. In the agricultural sector, Lenin stated that the mass of the peasants were relinquishing their land and becoming proletarians. Some peasants, however, were buying and renting land and hiring laborers to work their fields. The "community" of peasants had been split, from Lenin's view, into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat. The same phenomenon was also evident in the destruction of the small scale handicraft industry. "The existence of these two polarizing trends among our petty producers clearly shows that capitalism and mass impoverishment, far from precluding, actually condition each other, and irrefutable proves that capitalism is already the main background of the economic life of Russia."[3] While it might seem a paradox, the actual situation was, according to

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[1]Ibid., pp. 102-23. [2]Ibid., p. 103.

[3]Ibid., p. 109. For the evidence Lenin uses to prove this thesis, see pp. 111, 125.

Lenin, that a decline in Russian farming did in fact mean the growth of the market and thereby capitalism.[1]

The Marxist-Populist debate over whether capitalism was possible gradually ended in the late 1890's, with the publication of Tugan-Baranovskii's work The Russian Factory and Lenin's The Development of Capitalism in Russia. There was no longer any argument because the capitalist stage had arrived.[2] The Marxist view of the early 1890's had been proven correct, and thereby they gathered in the harvest of the young intelligentsia. What is remarkable about this victory was that it took the intelligentsia so long to finally accept it. "It took the magnificent development of the nineties to open the skulls of the intelligentsia to the comprehension of a process that had been going on for almost four decades."[3]

As indicated previously, the major portion of the intelligentsia had divorced Russia's intellectual history from its economic history. There was a "glaring discrepancy between prognostication and event."[4] This was the particular feature of Populist thought, especially that of Vorontsov and Nikolai-on. While the intellectual models may be difficult to challenge logically and emotionally, the evidence is clear that their models simply were not grounded in reality. This was the case

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[1]Ibid., p. 124. Lenin developed more fully these same ideas in his most scholarly work The Development of Capitalism in Russia. See V. I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia: Collected Works, Vol. III (4th ed. Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960), pp. 70-185, and in particular pp. 149, 173, 181-85. The earlier work was used in the discussion above because it is more relevant in terms of the famine of 1891-92 and the initial stages of the Marxist-Populist debate.

[2]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, pp. 60-62.

[3]Gerschenkron, ibid., p. 100. [4]Ibid., p. 33.

because of personal prejudice, and not a reflection of their innate intelligence. The Populists were so biased in their research that they were incapable of arriving at "objective" findings. For example, Vorontsov proudly admitted that he was unlearned in economics, but argued that "such knowledge was of little use for the student of Russian conditions."[1] As one scholar states, "Vorontsov's conception of capitalism, . . . was unconditionally ahistoric."[2] Vorontsov blatantly refused to acknowledge the validity of the factual material that existed.[3] The very same criticism can be made against S. N. Yuzhakov, in that he also refused to submit his findings to anything except blunt statements of belief. In 1883, he asserted that the commune "ignores history, does not know or come to terms with external legislative law, and is directed exclusively by ideas of higher justice."[4]

N. A. Karyshev is another example of a Populist whose ideas are based on questionable economic premises. In a lengthy article published in 1894, in which the central theme is the detrimental effects of the need for money upon agriculture, he devotes a number of pages to a discussion of the average peasant budget in Voronezh province; he is particularly interested in the influence of the form of income--natural or monetary--upon family consumption. The average peasant family of "8 souls and two workers" spent, according to Karyshev, 53 r. 05 k. per soul per year. This expenditure is divided into two categories--expenditures for personal consumption and expenditure upon the satisfaction of economic need. The following chart will illustrate the nature of expen-

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[1]Wortman, p. 161. [2]Ibid., p. 163.

[3]Ibid., pp. 160, 163. [4]Ibid., p. 172.

diture and consumption of this peasant family, as determined by Karyshev.

	From Natural Expenditure	From Money Expenditure
On personal consumption is spent	17 r. 60 k.	8 r. 10 k. = 25 r. 70 k.
On economic need is spent	9 r. 18 k.	18 r. 17 k. = 27 r. 35 k.
	26 r. 78 k.	26 r. 27 k.

This chart indicates that twice as much is spent on "personal consumption" from natural expenditure as from money expenditure. From this information Karyshev draws the conclusion that "the monetary form of expenditure promotes the curtailment of consumption. It is clear, . . . that as money began to occupy a central place in the peasant economy, the personal consumption of the worker is curtailed."[1]

Without question, this is a display of rather dubious economic thinking. For example, there is no definition of terms, i.e., what does "economic need" entail. If he means by "economic need" expenditure for seed, plows, fertilizer, then is this not ultimately designed to enhance personal consumption and therefore money spent for the purchase of these items benefits the peasant and in no way undermines his economic well-being. Karyshev simply cannot draw the "significant" conclusions that he does from the evidence presented. The structure of his argument is to a great extent nonsensical. With built in biases such as this, is it any wonder that the Populists refused to acknowledge the progressive industrialization of Russia.[2]

Nikolai-on must also be included in a critique of the warped view

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[1]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 61.

[2]See Ibid., pp. 43-71 and especially pp. 60-62.

of the intelligentsia which somehow separated the economic ideal from the real. As noted above, Nikolai-on was essentially concerned with demonstrating that capitalism was destroying Russian agriculture and therefore its full development in Russia was unlikely.[1] A critical part of his argument centers on the capitalization of agriculture. Since the peasant's domestic production was curtailed by the production of manufactured goods, he was forced to purchase items that he once produced for himself, and in order to get money for those items he had to sell more and more of his agricultural products, which implies lower personal consumption. At the same time, Nikolai-on argued that his tax burden increased because of the indirect taxes on the goods he now purchased. The curtailment of the peasant's gross income, through the decline of his handicraft production, and the increase in indirect tax burden were the factors involved in the economic tragedy within Russian agriculture.[2] Superficially this model makes logical sense, in that if the peasant has to buy what he once produced for himself he is worse off, but it overlooks one very important aspect, that is the rationality, in an economic sense, of the individual consumer. Very simply if the individual stopped making his own shirt, nails, etc., and purchased them, he did this ultimately because it was advantageious to him; it was more rational than the other choices open to him. In addition, Nikolai-on overlooks the fact that many peasants became laborers and earned money in order to purchase the kinds of goods they once produced.

In like manner, one can criticize Nikolai-on's overview of the

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[1]See above pp. 167 ff.

[2]Nikolai-on, Ocherki, pp. 258-64; see especially pp. 258-59.

impact of the international grain trade upon the Russian peasant. In this situation he again is very steeped in labor theory of value, in that the real value of a bushel of grain is predicated on the amount of labor time used to produce it. On the international grain market, the Russian peasant competed with the American farmer. According to Nikolai-on, the latter sold his grain above its local value on the international market, while the former sold his grain well below its local value. This is because the labor of the American farmer produced double the grain that the Russian peasant could produce. In theory the Russian peasant, because his production is labor intensive, was forced to sell his grain on the international market below its relative cost.[1] Again, this is an example of incorrect thinking. While the Russian peasant did produce less than the American farmer, it did not mean that it was disadvantageous for him to sell his grain on the international market. Assuming that the peasant conducted his economic activity rationally, he simply would not sell his grain below cost over an extended period of time. Labor intensive though it might have been, the sale of his grain was more advantageous than other options open to him or he would not have so acted.

There is no attempt here to suggest that the peasant was as well off as the American farmer. We are only trying to argue that if the peasant sold his grain he did so because it was more advantageous for him relative to other economic options open to him. The labor theory of value, which underlies Nikolai-on's discussion of the deterioration of Russian peasantry due to the capitalization of Russian agriculture,

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[1]Ibid., pp. 129-31.

as well as his view of the international grain trade, might make a logical model on paper, but it rapidly dissipates when subjected to common sense. The entire basic premise of his economic world view was simply inadequate to describe the economic phenomena of the late nineteenth century. One might make the same criticism of Struve, Lenin, and Skvortsov, but they somehow did not let labor theory entirely warp their interpretation of the evidence at hand, and thus they were able to view more accurately the Russian economic scene, vis-a-vis the development of capitalism.

The fact that there exists a separation between the Russian intelligentsia's perception of their intellectual history and economic history, is not the only criticism that can be made of the intelligentsia thinking in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Hard fact, the actual development of capitalism, demonstrated the lack of perspective and prognostication of the Populist community.[1] But in addition, the economic thought of the intelligentsia per se was far behind the economic thinking current in Western Europe. Thus not only did the intelligentsia mishandle the factual data, they also were "out of date" in terms of theory.

As shown above, the basic premise within the Populist and Marxist economic world view was the labor theory of value. In the 1870's a new school of economic thought--the Marginalist--was already evolving to

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[1]Gerschenkron, Continuity and Change, p. 101; Alexander Gerschenkron, "Problems and Patterns of Russian Economic Development," The Transformation of Russian Society, ed. Cyril Black (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 46.

replace the Marxian principles of economics.[1] This school of economics based its hypotheses on the evolution of the capitalist system, which simply did not function in accordance with labor theory of value. Labor theory of value did not explain the very complex operation of the modern economy.[2] Three different economists, Karl Menger of Austria, William Stanley Jevons of England, and Leon Walras of France, simultaneously yet separately worked out the concepts of marginal utility in the 1870's. "The new principle was a simple one: the value of a product or service is due not to the labor embodied in it but to the usefulness of the last unit purchased."[3] Thus the majority of Russian economic thinkers were approximately two decades behind the latest Western theories in economics.

Another significant advance in economic thought occurred in 1890, with the publication of Alfred Marshall's major work, Principles of Economics.[4] Whereas the early marginalists were concerned with the motives behind demand, and labor theory primarily dealt with supply, Marshall reconciled the two ideas and insisted that economic value is predicated upon supply and demand. However, Marshall laid greater stress upon demand in determining value than cost of production; "the basic pattern of production was determined by the myriad independent decisions of

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[1]Daniel Fusfeld, The Age of the Economist (Glenview, Ill.: Scott Foresman, and Co., 1966), p. 72.

[2]Martin G. Giesbrecht, The Evolution of Economic Society (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1972), p. 196.

[3]Fusfeld, p. 73.

[4]Giesbrecht, p. 262. Giesbrecht describes Marshall as one of the world's greatest economists, p. 201.

millions of individual consumers."[1] The individual consumer became the focal point of the economic system which revolved around his needs.[2] The concept of marginal utility is one of the most important contributions to economic thought, and has essentially remained triumphant within economic analysis for the past one hundred years.[3]

Perhaps it was the failure of the Russian intelligentsia to perceive the peasant as an individual consumer, because of the labor theory of value, which accounts for the separation of fact and fiction in Russian economic thinking. Certainly both the Populists and Marxists were prone to view the economy in terms of laws and forces and not as millions of individuals making decisions based on their relative advantage to a given individual and not in accordance to universal laws. Whatever the answer, intelligentsia thinking was to considerable extent out of touch with the reality of conditions in Russia, and in addition, it was out of touch with the most relevant economic thought evolving in the West. If the intelligentsia was so outside the conditions in Russia in terms of the development of capitalism and the more sophisticated eonomic thought, then possibly their entire conception of the political-social-economic scene in Russia was warped. In particular, it raises doubts about whether their view of the "agricultural crisis" in Russia in the 1890's was indeed correct.

While the propensity to misinterpret the factual evidence, and

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[1]Fusfeld, p. 74.

[2]Ibid., p. 75. For additional information on the marginal school of economics, see Jacob Oser, The Evolution of Economic Thought (2nd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1970), pp. 200-288.

[3]Oser, p. 200; Giesbrecht, p. 212.

the apparent backwardness of Russian economic thought can be debated, there is no doubt whatsoever that there did exist deep antagonism within the liberal intelligentsia against the Tsarist system of the late nineteenth century. This very obvious antagonism--antipathy--was directed against the Tsar and his government for what they represented, largely it would seem for past offenses. In addition, there was considerable enmity against the government concerning the conduct of famine relief, in particular the public works program, food-supply loans, and the general disorganization of the relief program.

It could be argued that "criticism" would be a better word to describe the reaction to the Tsarist government's relief efforts, but the criticism was so intense as to reflect hostility. For example, the critical comments of the left intelligentsia were not generally intended to help the Tsar and the government to cope more effectively with such tragedies. Rather the radical intelligentsia made its critical observations with a view toward demonstrating what an inept and corrupt government ruled Russia. It was destructive as opposed to constructive criticism, reflecting hostility rather than togetherness or friendship.[1] One should note that the people expressing their antagonism during the famine relief program, were hostile to the Tsarist system prior to the famine. This suggests the possibility that the Tsarist government's actions were not given a fair judgement.

In general, liberal society held the conviction that the government was not only unable to handle famine relief, but also would not

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[1]This statement is a value judgment which I made as a result of reviewing the evidence used for this dissertation.

properly organize a famine relief program.[1] This view is reflected in the pages of a hostile emigre periodical, Free Russia, published principally in England and the United States. As noted previously, the principle editor of this periodical at the time of the famine was arch-enemy of the Tsarist system--Stepniak. In June, 1891, prior to the acknowledgement of the famine, the paper referred to the "evils of the bureaucratic despotism in Russia" and the "horrors perpetrated in the Empire of the Tsars."[2] Later, when the famine had become known to the world, the editor acknowledged that the government was bound to come to the assistance of the starving peasants, and states, "we are sure that the present rulers of Russia, though deaf to everything, will not remain insensible to considerations of the state, and will do at least enough to prevent the present famine from becoming a firebrand rebellion. We wish they would move. But in view of this new horror, is it not time for all Russians, . . . to think of the monstrosity of a system which makes such calamities unavoidable?"[3]

In the same issue, August, 1891, the Tsar and his government are held responsible for the deplorable conditions of the agricultural sector which transformed a crop-failure into a major tragedy. It was also claimed that the Tsar deliberately prevented progress and education,

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[1]George Fischer, Russian Liberalism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 72.

[2]Free Russia, XI, (June, 1891), 1. The significance of this periodical for articulate society can be seen by simply listing some of the founders of the periodical in the United States--Samuel L. Clements, William Lloyd Garrison, Julia Ward Howe, George Kennan, and James Russell Lowell. Ibid., p. 3.

[3]Ibid., II (August, 1891), 3.

and furthermore spent money on the military which could be used for solving domestic problems. At this point the periodical took the government to task for doing nothing except collecting the taxes as usual and "making enquiries and forming commissions."[1]

As the news from the famine district grew more unpleasant, the hostility toward the "system" became more evident. An article in the September number of Free Russia, stressed that the pressures of the famine were only making more and more apparent the ineptitude and bankruptcy of the state. For example, the periodical pointed out that the government gave the Zemstvos only a tiny fraction of what was requested. In addition, the prohibition of rye did not have much effect on the starving ones because the peasants did not have any money with which to buy the grain which could not be exported. And finally, according to the article, the price of rye did not fall as expected because of the great degree of grain speculation which took place prior to the announcement of the prohibition of rye exports.[2] The editors believed that the government was too preoccupied with persecuting Jews to effectively combat the famine. "It [the government] cannot even persecute with dignity."[3]

In November, the enmity shown toward the government did not abate. "Autocracy as a government cuts--to say the least--as poor a figure in the present crisis as the imperial family. It has shown itself abso-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 3, 14.

[2]Ibid., II (September, 1891), 6-7. The same arguments were used to attack the prohibition of wheat by the government. See Ibid., II (December, 1891), 6.

[3]Ibid., II (October, 1891), 7.

lutely unequal to the emergency, not so much for want of the material means . . . as on account of its intellectual and moral indigence, its ignorance, inefficiency, and want of confidence in anyone, its own agents and high officials included, and its incapacity to depart from a certain traditional routine, even in cases when that routine has proved not only obnoxious but disastrous."[1] The government was called "mean" because it refused to allow the press freedom in its coverage of the famine, and blocked the development of private relief while 25,000,000 people were destitute.[2]

In 1892, the attacks on the government within the pages of Free Russia were not as frequent as they were in 1891. They were, however, just as vitriolic. For example, the Russian government was still viewed in May, 1892, as a form of asiatic despotism, although it was given credit for feeding the people through the duration of the famine. This grudging compliment was qualified with the pointed remark that the government did so only on a starvation diet.[3] When the government attempted to raise money for famine relief by means of a lottery, it was roundly castigated because such activities appealed to the greed of the Russian people and denied them the opportunity to display their generosity.[4] The periodical softened the general enmity toward the government as the famine ended in the summer of 1892, and in certain instances the Tsarist government was given a limited amount of indirect praise for

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[1]Ibid., II (November, 1891), 3.

[2]Ibid., p. 4; see also Ibid,, II (December, 1891), 5.

[3]Ibid., II (April, 1892), 4.

[4]Ibid., II (March, 1892), 8.

finally allowing private organizations to participate in relief work.[1]

Free Russia was not the only external observer of the Russian scene, whose judgments reflected a basic antagonism of the Tsar and his government. George Plekhanov was another outsider who keenly perused the situation in Russia. In April, 1892, in his first publication on the famine, "Vserossiiskoe Razorenie," he accused the government of simply not caring about its people or whether there was sufficient provisions for the populace, and he insinuated that it had been actions of the government which brought millions of people to the brink of starvation. In Plekhanov's view, the Tsar, whom he refers to as the "crowned ignoramus," and his government had initially misjudged the extent of the famine, and thus were culpable for the bottleneck in the transport of grain to the stricken areas. Furthermore, he charged that the state refused to grant the peasant the option of mortaging his allotment land to purchase grain, because it would undermine an important source of tax revenue.[2]

Plekhanov's deeply felt feelings of hostility are revealed when he pointed out the unique brutality and inhumanity which was characteristic of the Russian government. He is also very antagonistic to the establishment of the Special Committee, which he stated Alexander III created in an ungrammatical rescript. "As members of the committee were chosen such popular persons, as Pobedonostsev, Durnovo, and von Plehve, Vorontsov-Dashkov and Count Stroganov. A gloomy, half-crazy wild fanatic, two police detectives and two court intriguers under the chairman-

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[1]Ibid., V (June, 1892), 5-6; Ibid., (July, 1892), 4, 5, 7, 15.

[2]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 81, 82, 84, 85.

ship of the sick heir--here are the people who are given the main leadership of the business of public philanthropy."[1]

In his second important essay on the famine, O Zadachakh Sotsialistov v Bor'ba s Golodom v Rossii, Plekhanov maintained the same venomous tone in his hostility toward the system, that he was forced to flee. Here one finds that the Russian governmental bureaucrat was considered more disreputable than even the Turk. He states, "this is an absolute idea: the barbarian Turk never would be able as often to fleece the peasants, as his Europeanized Russian bureaucrat."[2] Plekhanov considered the Tsarist system to be the "most police of all police states."[3] It was a police state in which the police intervened in Russian society in an extremely stupid and insufferable way. It is a state that oppresses the people more than it supports them--does more harm than help. In general, Plekhanov felt that the government was incapable of rescuing the Russian peasant from tragedies such as the famine of 1891-92. Tsarism was bankrupt.[4] Thus, given the fact that the bureaucracy was disreputable, and the government had overtones of a police state, the father of Russian Marxism considered the Russian state to be an Asiatic regime.[5]

There was also considerable antagonism expressed toward the Tsarist system within the boundaries of Russia as well as out. The comments made were not as abrasive in tone, but just as critical in content. Such critical observations were made by liberals like V. G. Korolenko.

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[1]Ibid., p. 88; see pp. 89, 96, 99 for additional examples of Plekhanov's hostility toward the state.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 7; Plekhanov was particularly antagonistic toward Russian bureaucrats. See pp. 27, 28, 32.

[3]Ibid., p. 27. [4]Ibid., pp. 28-30. [5]Ibid., p. 41.

Like virtually all Russian liberals, Korolenko was anti-bureaucracy, particularly the Russian bureaucracy which he considered reactionary. This led him to oppose central government control of famine relief.[1] In particular, he was disturbed by bureaucratic interference in the development and operation of private charity, even after the central government and provincial administration had officially sanctioned it. In his book on the famine, Korolenko discussed at some length the unwarranted interference on the part of district bureaucrats in the conduct of private philanthropy.[2] Apparently there was considerable bureaucratic jealousy over jurisdiction vis-a-vis famine relief between the district officials and provincial officials, which on occasion had dire effects on the people. He blamed the reduction of the dole in a particular district by district officials on this conflict of interest, in which he felt the district acted out of spite.[3]

Sergeevskii's pamphlet, written in Russia but read and published abroad by Lavrov, reflected an enmity toward the system which was more in the vein of Stepniak and Plekhanov than Korolenko. From Sergeevskii's point of view, the entire economic foundation of the country was crumbling and it was extremely easy for anyone to comprehend the scandalous picture of horrendous leadership which the government had displayed in coping with the famine. He stated that initially, when rumors of a famine first were heard, the government did not know anything and subsequently did not want to know anything. When, according to Sergeevskii,

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[1]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 372.

[2]Ibid., pp. 125-27. [3]Ibid., pp. 215, 217.

the government finally mounted an assault, it was not against the famine, but against the peasant who was in need of aid, against the press who dared to discuss the famine and against private charity.[1] It should be noted that hostility toward the system, stated above, existed prior to the famine, the famine acting only to confirm that hostility.[2]

A number of sources could be cited to demonstrate the level of hostility felt within the liberal camp toward the tsarist regime. For example, G. A. Fal'bork, in a report before the Imperial Free Economic Society in 1892, attacked the state for permitting grain to be used in the making of "spirits," which he argued degrades the people. He stated that "the process continues now, in spite of the fact that near the public houses and distilleries the people swell and die from hunger."[3] In general Fal'brok felt that the government was more interested in keeping society under its control than it was in securing food for the people.[4] Basically, the same view was expressed in a leaflet of the People's Will Party entitled "First Letter to the Starving Peasants." From the perspective of this document, the government was castigated for doing virtually nothing to help the starving peasants.[5]

Victor Chernov, a man with impeccable revolutionary credentials, became hostile to the system in his student years because the government adopted the capitalist system which was responsible for bringing many

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[1]Sergeevskii, p. 26; see also pp. 27-30 for more examples of antagonism toward the Tsarist system.

[2]Ibid., pp. 44-45. [3]Fal'bork, pp. 241, 249.

[4]Ibid., pp. 245-46; see also pp. 241-57.

[5]Shapkarina, p. 155.

many social and political crises to Russia, in this case the famine.[1] Although not a revolutionary per se, Anton Chekhov was another keen observer of the domestic scene who provides evidence than an underlying antagonism towards the system existed in Russia. In particular, he noted the reluctance that people felt in aiding the starving ones because they did not trust the Russian government to properly dispense such aid.[2]

Similarly, there existed a great deal of enmity toward the local government and officials as well as the central government. Plekhanov, again, was the leader of the assault on what he considered a deplorable effort made by local government to cope with famine relief. He blatantly stated that zemstvo officials were comparable to a zemstvo "Oblomovshchina." He was critical of the fact that zemstvo officials did not bolster their courage and demand serious help from the government. On the contrary, what the zemstvo did was to reduce estimates vis-a-vis the number of peasants who needed help.[3] Plekhanov noted at some length examples of how the zemstvos went about determining who would get food loans and supplies, especially in Perm Province where the poorest peasants were apparently excluded form obtaining loans. "There was no justice in this, but obviously, what the Shadrinsky zemstvo did, similar to many other zemstvos, was to follow this well-known principle, in the case of the peasantry: if you had a great deal then they gave to

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[1]Chernov, Krasnyi Arkhiv, I (1922), 284. Years after the famine, another revolutionary expressed deep hostility toward the government at the time of another crop-failure. See Shishko, p. 11.

[2]Chekhov, p. 285.

[3]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 75.

you, if you had little than you received little."[1] Plekhanov cited another instance of injustice to the peasants which took place in Saratov Province. In this instance, he claimed that the officials did not distribute all the seed grain to be used for sowing the fields of the peasantry. Without this seed, the peasants were forced to lease their land to the kulaks.[2]

Possibly Plekhanov's most damming criticism of the local government had to do with the purchase of grain for famine relief. He was especially chagrined by the fact that certain zemstvos allegedly purchased grain from kulaks for a higher price than it could be obtained in other places. According to Plekhanov, the zemstvo of Samara had a very difficult time solving its food shortage problem. It seems that a certain Dementeev was sent to Odessa to purchase grain for the province and was gone two months. The grain purchased by Dementeev was of extremely poor quality, with sand, pebbles, and other foreign particles mixed in the grain. This, Plekhanov stated, was the kind of grain which was sent across Russia to feed the starving people of Russia. Therefore, he felt that the zemstvo people were not really concerned with the welfare of the people.[3]

While the zemstvo officials were not troubled about the needs of the people, he sarcastically accused them of being very troubled about themselves and special allotments of money for the purchase of fur coats and carriages for their departure on famine business.[4] In sum, Plekhanov considered the conduct of the zemstvo officials to be a mockery of the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 75-76. [2]Ibid., p. 78. [3]Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[4]Ibid., p. 79.

suffering peasantry. He stated:

> In such mockery are guilty very many zemstvos. The loans, which are cut back to a few zolotniks per head; the "proletariats," who are deprived of help; the fields which are not sown, . . . the meal unfit for food; being thirty percent filth, which is transported at zemstvo expense from one end of Russia to another; the furcoats, . . . the rewards, pensions, and loans, which are given out by zemstvos to each other,--all this is very callous, very shameless mockery of starving ones united in a most unambiguous rapaciousness. It is not enough to eliminate such people from the management of society's business, it would be necessary, in the mode of Peter the Great, to deprive them of life.[1]

This problem of incompetent and corrupt officialdom, was compounded by the fact that there was no real alternative to the zemstvo officials, because government bureaucrats were worse in Plekhanov's opinion.[2] In his opinion, the reason that conditions were so deplorable within the zemstvo officialdom was because the government had systematically eliminated from public activities all honest men and encouraged only "birds of prey and swindlers" to serve the state.[3]

Antagonism towards the system was also expressed in the leading periodicals in Russia. The enmity is not, however, as nasty as that expressed in emigre publications, but these periodicals accomplish their task nonetheless. In 1892, the Russkoe Bogatstvo essentially agreed with Plekhanov, when it argued that the famine relief activities of certain zemstvos "was bad and was notable for extreme negligence of the people."[4] This article was concerned with the fact that officials of the government lacked self-respect, character and steadfastness. Its negative attitude toward zemstvo officials is seen in the fact that the writer asked the rhetorical question, where are the good people who

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[1]Ibid., p. 80. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 81.

[4]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 100,103, 110.

should be the bureaucrats within the zemstvo?[1]

Korolenko's critical observations of local government was based on his experience in Nizhni-Novgorod and particularly in Lukoyanovsky district. He believed that district officialdom was permeated with "peasant-haters," who arbitrarily reduced the size of loan requests and in other ways refused aid to the peasants. The famous author stated that "the glances of every peasant-hater in all Russia are turned with hope to the far off district, where a small group of zemsky nachalniks with the leader of the district bravely struggle for the prevention of aid for the suffering people."[2] As noted above Korolenko was particularly disturbed by the power struggle between the district and the provincial zemstvos for control of famine relief, and was critical of the district for reducing the size of the dole which he believed was done out of spite.[3]

The district, according to Korolenko, placed the local village in a very bad position, because they had to implement district directives which constantly cut down the amount of famine relief. In one case in which the tally sheets stated that the people should be getting twenty pounds of grain, they were receiving only five to seven pounds, on the order of the land captain.[4] Within the left circles the land captain took a great deal of criticism and was considered a hindrance and a detriment to famine relief.[5]

The clash of bureaucrats and interested groups was an important

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[1]Ibid., pp. 96-97. [2]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 17.

[3]Ibid., p. 217. [4]Ibid., pp. 230-35.

[5]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 4.

area of criticism of the famine relief effort. The Russkoe Bogatstvo, like Korolenko, also noted the uncoordinated efforts of the zemstvo in trying to cope with famine relief. In part the responsibility for this was placed on the lack of centralized control over zemstvo activities. The handling of famine relief was characterized by considerable overlapping of responsibilities which compounded the difficulty of supplying food to the people.[1] The Vestnik Evropy would essentially agree when it criticized the system for operating too slowly. The government's regulations were excessive, cumbersome, and inflexible, which seriously hampered the distribution of aid.[2] It would seem that the only well-organized famine relief programs were to be found in districts exclusively in private hands.[3]

Within the context of general hostility, antagonism, and enmity toward the Tsarist system--both on the central and local level--there were a number of specific conditions which reenforced and possibly inspired this alienation from the government. The circumstances surrounding the food-supply loans stiumlated considerable discussion. One of the issues involved in food-supply loans was whether it would demoralize the peasants. Some elements within the liberal community were disturbed by the fact that although the peasant had a right to this aid,

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 100,103, 110.

[2]"Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 393. See also "Vnutrennei Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 374; "Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1891), 420; Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 353.

[3]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1892), 421.

he was humiliated by the conditions under which he obtained food-supply loans from the state. The peasant, as stated in the Russkoe Bogatstvo, was not accorded his full rights, but was treated as a beggar who plans to resort to extortion whenever possible.[1]

In another article, the Russkoe Bogatstvo attacked the entire structure of food-supply loans, because this type of credit undermined the economic well-being of the peasant. In essence, it was against the repayment of these loans, because the payments to the state would reduce the standard of living of the peasant. Credit can be beneficial, but this type of credit was disastrous.[2]

A number of acticles in the Vestnik Evropy were sharply critical of the whole organization of food-supply as part of famine relief. Initially this periodical was critical of the fact that the government had not foreseen such a tragedy and properly prepared the means to overcome such disasters.[3] One article argued that it was ridiculous to expect the peasant to be able to pay back food-supply loans. But more importantly, it states that the entire system of guaranteeing the national food-supply existed more on paper than in fact, as circumstances in 1891 demonstrated. There was not then sufficient grain in reserve to feed the population when called upon to do so.[4] The Russkoe Bogatstvo was

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 108. There also existed a large number of regulations governing the distribution of loans which Fal'bork found deplorable, pp. 258-60.

[2]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 7-10.

[3]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, IV (August, 1891), 866.

[4]"Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 391-93.

also very critical of the lack of preparedness on the part of the local government in the event of a tragedy. It was very upset over the lack of monetary reserves with which to buy grain to sustain the people through the famine.[1]

The attempt by the government to help its suffering people through the creation of public works drew special attention from the groups hostile to the government.[2] Plekhanov acknowledged that the government attempted to provide public works for the unemployed peasants, but he sarcastically asks what good does it do to provide work for 1,000's when millions are in need. In his opinion, such governmental projects were a mere drop in the sea. In addition, he pointed out that the worker was forced to perform extremely arduous labor, while the contractor swindled him out of some of his earnings, which were not, from Plekhanov's view, excessive to begin with. Finally, he criticized the contractors because they tended to hire peasants who were not of the famine district.[3] In conclusion, it would seem that Plekhanov was not imbued with the public works program of the Tsarist government during the famine.

Criticism of the public works program can also be found in the Russkoe Bogatstvo. It noted that the creation of jobs was belated and therefore many peasants could not take advantage of this opportunity because of the spring plowing. Secondly, the sum allotted for public works was inadequate in comparison with the number of people who needed

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[1]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 6-7.

[2]"Po Povodu Goloda," Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 390-91; Fal'bork, pp. 263-67.

[3]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 86-87.

work. Again only thousands of men could be employed, when millions were seeking aid. Thirdly, the extensive cutting of forests might undermine the existing forest industry, which would damage the well-being of other peasants.[1] In addition, this periodical was extremely critical of government efforts to force peasants to work on public projects. A case in point is the governor of Kursk who ordered peasants to be arrested who walked off public work jobs and also denied food-supply loans to those peasants who refused to work on such jobs. From a liberal and quite legal perspective, the periodical logically refuted the government's right to abuse peasants in this manner.[2]

Antagonism, hostility, or enmity are very closely related to bias or prejudice, in this case bias against the Tsarist system, and can be a cause or an effect of that bias. Without question much of the articulate "left" of Russia was biased in its view of Russia in the last years of the nineteenth century.[3] For the historian, the level of prejudice within a historical source is of considerable importance in making a determination concerning the verity of that source, when trying to recreate the past. Once it becomes clear that a source is badly biased in its view on a given subject, it naturally raises questions concerning the perspicaciousness of the entire testimony from the source. Did, in

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 177-179.

[2]Ibid., pp. 182-83.

[3]Indeed, the line between being antagonistic and biased is rather blurred, and much of the above discussion could be considered as examples of bias as well as hostility toward the system.

fact, the prejudice of the observer from the left destroy or at least seriously warp their view of reality of the contemporary world?

As noted above in the discussion of the Populists's economic world view, it was pointed out that the Populists tended to separate the ideal from the real--intellectual history from economic history. The personal bias of these men toward the Tsarist system and capitalism had seriously warped their ability to deal fairly with the factual evidence. Their conclusions were "intimately associated with an emotional hostility towards capitalism."[1] Essentially, this same trait was pointed out in an article in the Vestnik Evropy, in May, 1892. The article was very critical of the fact that this happened to be a basic characteristic within Russia's intelligentsia. "Nowhere in the world is there, it seems, such a constant and systematic discord between theory and practice, between ideas and facts, between goals and results,--as there is with us."[2] The article goes on to state that "the urgent needs of the people are investigated and illuminated from various sides, as if only in the interest of abstract knowledge, and the abundant materials which are gathered are fruitlessly lost in archives and libraries, without any practical application to life. . . . On the one hand, the mass of factual information, assiduously gathered and worked through, is ignored in practice and remains some kind of Terra Incognito, and on the other--there are bold executors, who act at random, without knowledge, under the guidance of chance personal impressions and preconceived routine

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[1] Mendel, p. 75.

[2] Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (1892), 345.

views."[1] This, it would seem, is an apt description of the function of the mind of the left at the turn of the century. In effect, their very strong biases prevented the populists, Marxists and their philosophical adherents from perceiving reality. World view tends to be more important than evidence or logic.

The problem of bias, which is particularly significant in the study of Russian history at the end of the previous century, was also pointed out by Leo Tolstoi. Tolstoi says that one of the interesting issues permeating famine relief was whether there was work available but no workers, or no work and plenty of workers. Russians took sides in this debate, offering evidence in support of their position. Tolstoi solved the problem eclectically by arguing that both positions are equally valid. He said there were jobs for which there were not sufficient workers. What one must understand, according to Tolstoi, is that for bad workers there is no work, but for good workers there is always work available. "Indeed, he says, that in the present year there is less work than usual, and therefore more bad workers remain without work, all the same, whether there is or is not work for a man, depends not on one of the external causes, but on the energy of the worker,--whether he seeks work well, takes care of the work, and works well."[4]

Tolstoi's answer to the problem of whether there is work and enough workers, emphasizes the fact that one's position on this debate must have reflected biases rather than evidence, since as Tolstoi points

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Cited by "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1892), 184.

out there was evidence to support both sides. As shown above, the left tended to view anything the government did in a bad light.

Prejudice toward the Tsarist system is readily apparent in the most cursory examination of available material. Among certain groups of left students the famine itself was blamed upon the Tsar and his government, their slogan being "a crop-failure comes from God, but a famine comes from the Tsar."[1] That the government was guilty of causing the famine was considered self-evident.[2] What could be more biased than for a noted observer such as Korolenko, to state that he went to the famine district seeking tearful scenes and the terrible effects of the famine? His bias is reflected in his book, in that he provides many examples of what he sought to find, and more specifically in the following quote. "For a man with a soul, for a society not forever sunk into a stupor it is enough that 100's of children cry, are sick, and die, even if not directly from famine cramps, that thousands of men become pale, grow thin, lose strength, and finally are ruined by famine. . . . I am not able to pass over in silence this sombre picture, which this miserable Kamchatka [a village] presented, under the iron pressure of a heartless system."[3]

Propensity toward exaggeration also reflects overriding bias. A. A. Kaufman, a liberal scholar, stated that "often so great was the poverty in the village that even the presence of cockroaches and bedbugs

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[1]Obolensky, p. 198.

[2]Ibid., p. 199. The self-evident type argument was also used by Vorontsov, see above p. 182 which points out the impossibility of capitalism for Russia.

[3]Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 220.

was considered a sign of relative prosperity: they were not to be found in the poorest households since there was nothing to feed on."[1] This kind of statement was used as evidence by Lazar Volin to demonstrate the level of poverty in the countryside. The absurdity of the statement--at least as far as bedbugs are concerned, since if the poorest huts have people living in them they do have a host--should be clear for anyone with a little common sense.

The same kind of misuse or misreading of evidence can be found in Russia and Its Crisis by Paul Miliukov. Every student of Russian knows that Miliukov was hostile to the Tsarist system, but he was more than hostile, he was biased. As Kaufman, he is vitally concerned with the agrarian crisis and attempting to demonstrate that it existed. He makes such statements as, on the average, the peasant's yearly consumption of food "is still below the necessary minimum."[2] By definition, how can anything be below the necessary minimum? In another instance, Miliukov asserts that a peasant needed twenty poods of grain per year to sustain life.[3] A majority of experts assert that 13-14 poods was the necessary minimum.[4]

Miliukov goes himself one better in his discussion of land renting practices in the rural district. He states:

> Necessity has been so great, and opportunities for renting land have been so comparatively few, that rent has risen enormously.

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[1]Lazar Volin, A Century of Russian Agriculture: From Alexander II to Khrushchev (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 59.

[2]Miliukov, p. 322. [3]Ibid., pp. 328-29.

[4]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. II; Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104; Fal'bork, p. 238.

> Contrary to the laws of classical economy, the rent has not only reached the amount of the "unearned increment," but has far exceeded it, swallowing up the profits and, very often, the very wages of the tenants. Instances are numerous where tenants pay as rent one, three, or even five dollars more per dessyatin than the land yields as net profit, if tilled by hired labor. . . . of course, no profits are looked for from such renting, the only aim of the peasants--and the only economic explanation of the possibility of such rent--being to apply their own and their horses gratuitous labor to produce some more grain for their subsistence.[1]

Since Miliukov does not qualify or explain the above passage, one can only judge it as it stands. As it stands, it reflects a deep bias on the part of Miliukov--i.e., an attempt to substantiate the agricultural crisis which was a result of the policies of the Tsarist government. His bias is such that he overlooks one extremely important premise in modern economics. That premise is the inherent rationality of the human being to maximalize his economic opportunities. To suggest that the peasant would rent land, because of his desperate struggle for survival, at a net loss is essentially ridiculous. That demonstrates peasant stupidity rather than poverty. The evidence presented by Miliukov must be incorrect or misinterpreted. The peasant did rent land but he did this because it was advantageous, and because he made some kind of profit from his investment.

The Populist writer, Karyshev, greatly exaggerated the significance of the famine and thus displayed his own bias, at least in terms of his economic world view. Writing in the Russkoe Bogatstvo in 1893, he stated, "enough of these horrible facts. Obviously, the famine brings to agricultural industry a great shock, from which it will be

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[1]Miliukov, p. 330.

able to recover only in the course of many years."[1] The famine, as viewed by Karyshev, not only halts agricultural progress but causes it to retrogress. Consumption was therby diminished. In a country which was becoming poorer and poorer the reduction of consumption was disastrous.[2] Karyshev's basic prejudice in interpreting the evidence at hand becomes rather clear when it is realized that there were no long term economic effects from the famine and that in the same year as his article was published, Russia had one of her richest harvests in the nineteenth century.

Prejudice against the system did not abate, however, with the advent of good harvests. In 1898, at the time of another famine, Tolstoi's bias is clearly apparent. He says that the Russian peasant and thus Russian agriculture will prosper only when the officials and bureaucrats of the government are removed from the peasant's back. He was anti-bureaucracy and argued that the peasant is much better informed concerning his needs than the official. Tolstoi states, "that the experience of life constantly . . . shows, that the more the peasant is subjected to the influence of officials, as it is in the central areas, the more he becomes poor, and, on the contrary, the farther the peasant lives from officials, as for example in Siberia, Samara, Orenburg, Viatka, Vologodsky, Olonetz provinces, the more they prosper."[3] It

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[1]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 3.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Tolstoi, Golod ili ne Golod?, p. 17.

should be pointed out that the above assertion was untrue as far as Samara is concerned, and Orenburg and Viatka were fringe areas of the famine district. The inclusion of Samara, one of the hardest hit districts in the famine and a chronic poverty region belies Tolstoi's interpretation.

Shifting from passive antagonism of the system to a more virulent kind, one can see the bias and the level of intense hostility in the opening paragraph of a leaflet entitled "First Letter to the Starving Peasants" distributed by the Narodnaya Volya Party.

> Heavy misfortune has fallen now on Russia; in twenty provinces the people starve, cattle and horses are slaughtered or perish because of insufficient food, many fields are not sown, because the owners do not have seed; the peasant with chains is indebted and enslaved for two-three years to the lord, merchant, kulak, and bloodsucker; little children die, like flies; in some families everyone gathers in one hut for warmth and storehouses and sheds are pulled down for firewood. The entire peasant economy has been destroyed, and there remains nothing for the peasant to do but become a laborer for the landlords or merchant. This is what is taking place now in the most fertile fields of Russia.[1]

One can clearly see the level of exaggeration and bias, for example in the number of provinces stricken, the allusions to the propertied classes, the claim that "children die like flies," and that the peasant economy has been destroyed.

Similarly, Plekhanov's essays were so replete with bias as to impair seriously his ability to make a fair judgment of the real conditions in Russia. In his first letter to the comrades he says that "you know that almost half of European Russia and part of Asiatic Russia is stricken with a horrible tragedy, such a tragedy can not be found in the history of Western Europe. Only in the barbarous despotism of a barbar-

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[1]Shapkarina, p. 154.

ous Asia is it possible for this tragedy to happen, which occur quite frequently in our fatherland."[1]

Plekhanov's discussion of governmental efforts to cope with the famine reflect his deep bias towards the system, which should force the student of the period to examine his entire interpretation with considerable caution. Plekhanov, in his essay O Zadachakh Sotsialistov v Bor'ba s Golodom v Rossii, asks the rhetorical question what can the Tsarist government do in the struggle with famine. He says that everybody knows that the government has distributed foodstuffs and organized public works for relief of the stricken people. However, Plekhanov states that everyone also knows how little the scale of government aid was in proportion to the mountain of need. He goes on to argue that even if the government had furnished sufficient aid, the quality of the aid, he suggests, was quite inferior.[2] Thus Plekhanov has cast aspersions on both the quantity and quality of government aid, and not one word of praise or credit is given the government for its efforts to alleviate the suffering. Yet, Plekhanov states quite bluntly that his investigations into conditions within Russia are in accordance with "proper scientific research" and "objectivity."[3]

Another prominent radical living in exile took a similar sarcastic view of the Tsarist government's efforts to help the suffering ones. As early as September, 1891, which is an indication of the basic prejudice

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[1]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh. . ., p. 1.

[2]Ibid., p. 22.

[3]Ibid., p. 35. For additional examples of Plekhanov's biases and the degree to which he is alienated from reality see pp. 193-95, above.

of this observer, Stepniak was critical of the fact that as of that date the only thing the government had done was promulgate a number of ukazes. He says that the Ukaz "is a convenient commodity, which is manufactured with no expenses and little trouble, and which makes people believe that something is being done for them in high quarters."[1]

His bias is more subtle in the discussion concerning the one ukaz which he felt was beneficial for the suffering peasant; that was the ukaz which prohibited the exportation of rye. The benefit of that ukaz, while being the only important step taken by the government, he argues was purely negative. It would prevent grain from leaving Russia, but it would not feed the starving peasants. "To buy bread one must have money, and as they [the starving peasants] have nothing, the corn will be as inaccessible to them when stored up somewhere in Russia as it would be at the antipodes."[2] In addition, Stepniak was critical of the implementation of the ukaz. "It was intended to prevent or retard the rising of the price of this staple food . . . and to put it within the reach of relief committees. In reality it has done the reverse of what has been expected. The prohibition had to come into force only on the 27th of August. This gave ample time, not only to export the corn in which money had already been invested, but to buy new stocks both at the corn market of the Empire and in the interior provinces. Rye simply became an object of speculation, and thus the intended effect of the measure was completely destroyed. Instead of falling, the price of rye has risen with feverish rapidity."[3] Rather than give credit where

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[1] Free Russia, II (September, 1891), 6.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 7.

credit is due, Stepniak preferred to belittle and sarcastically criticize whatever the government attempted to do. For example, he makes the following criticism of an article by the Ambassador of the United States, Charles E. Smith, which was favorable to the Russian government: "his opinions do not demand serious discussion. While for example, Mr. Smith credits the Russian government with immense exertions to relieve the prevailing distress, he absolves it altogether by his silence on this subject from any part in precipitating the famine."[1]

The hatred of this member of the articulate left for the Tsarist system is also seen in what is almost "wishful thinking" concerning the effects of the famine. It is as if Stepniak subconsciously desired the worst possible results in order to substantiate his basic prejudice against Tsarism. In April, 1892, he predicted greater suffering in the next three months than had been experienced to date.[2] This, of course, was not the case. He also predicted that the loss of livestock has been so great in Russia, that there would be only enough animals left to farm 37 1/2% of the remaining arable land.[3] In June of the same year, he predicted that peasant agriculture could not recover or be restored from the calamitous blows of the famine.[4] Again his biases clouded his judgment and it will be demonstrated below that this too is a bad prediction.

The same month, Stepniak printed in his paper a proclamation from the revolutionaries within Russia, which indicates both his own prejudice in choosing to print it, and the bias of the so-called secret press. It is a biting attack on the government, and grossly exaggerates the

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[1]Ibid., II (May, 1892), 14. [2]Ibid., II (April, 1892), 4.

[3]Ibid., p. 5. [4]Ibid., II (June, 1892), 5.

consequences of the famine. The following exerpts are illustrative.

> Yet, while letting tens of millions of peasants die from starvation, the government has managed to use the national calamity for the purpose of spoils for landlords, speculators, and officers of the state.
>
> Exactly at the time when the zemstvos were actively engaged in purchasing rye, the grain market was converted into a bourse by the prohibition of the exporting of grain. Thus the government compelled all Russia to pay exorbitant prices for her bread.
>
> Under the pretext of combating the famine, the government has created a network of committees, which have become centers of organized plunder of funds assigned for the support and employment of the starving population.
>
> The government seems to say through its acts "Let the nation die out, provided we be enriched thereby."[1]

Possibly the best example of the bias of Stepniak was an editorial written by him in July, 1892. It is a summary of the events surrounding the famine, and he feels that "the effect of the famine of 1891-92 will be felt for many years to come."[2] He acknowledged, however, that conditions were not as bad as originally thought, but he did not give credit to the government for the prevention of starvation in Russia. He was simply too biased to be at all objective in his conslusions.

> But, casting a retrospective glance upon the recent past, we may fairly say that the immediate effect of the calamity proved much smaller than could be anticipated. In July last there were about 34 million peasants absolutely ruined by the bad harvest; in fact, having but little chance of getting another harvest at all. Yet now the calamitous year is over we have not heard of anything like the wholesale starvation which the early communications foreshadowed. The area of land under cultivation has diminished, but not at such a frightful proportion as was anticipated. Russia has passed well through the terrible ordeal, and this is done <u>above all to the indomitable energy of the peasants themselves</u>. In the best cases they had barely enough to keep body and soul together. Yet the peasants stood the utmost privations in order to save the seed-corn. . . .

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[1]Ibid., p. 6. [2]Ibid., II (July, 1892), 3.

> Now we ask, is not this fact a most emphatic refutation of the charges of improvidence, laziness, and reckless drunkeness, brought against the peasants by the partisans of serfdom, such as Prince Meshchersky, and so often repeated in the European press. Will foreigners become better advised now?
>
> But the position of the peasants during last winter was so desperate that millions of them would not have seen the spring, and would not have had any more opportunity of showing either energy or sluggishness, but for immediate relief. From all sides this relief came. . . . From England and America over one million rubles was received in money and corn. This means over one hundred thousand lives saved. The American corn, which was of excellent quality, was used chiefly for seed in the famine-stricken provinces of the middle-Volga, and has given exceptionally good returns, such as the exhausted and weakened native seed never gives. . . .
>
> The great lesson which this calamitous year teaches us is "that the universal brotherhood of man is no longer an abstract idea but an accomplished fact," . . .
>
> As to Russia, there the outbreak of the famine was like a trumpet call, which aroused all that has life and breath to come forward and help the people. From the capitals and all the big towns thousands of men and women belonging to the upper classes rushed to the villages to put at the service of the suffering people their means and their devoted work. It was that enthusiastic legion that bore the brunt of the battle, and succeeded in subjugating the monster of Famine. As an important testimony to the zeal and energy of these true friends of the people, we publish in another part of our issue the account of an impartial eye-witness, . . .
>
> At the same time, several of the special agents of the official relief committee (that of the Tsarevich) who were sent to all the famine-stricken provinces, have published reports upon their respective provinces. The story they tell is almost invariable the same: frightful misery until some private individual or society came to the place, wrote to the papers, got subscriptions and helpers, and organized the work of relief on a sound basis.[1]

The depth of his prejudice is clearly evident when he excludes the government from playing the major role in famine relief as was demonstrated above in Chapter I. His view toward the government has already been indicated, but the subsequent quote further substantiates this view: "But, on the whole, bureaucracy has not proved, and indeed

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[1]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

could not prove equal to the task [of famine relief] imposed upon it. Bureaucracy is a sort of machine, and nobody has as yet suggested treating wounds by machinery. The work of relief . . . could be done only by volunteers. It was done by volunteers so far as it was done at all . . . ."[1] "Actually the reason hunger did not sweep away millions of Russian people was because of the charity of the starving peasants themselves--those who received 1 and one third lbs. of bread a day did not consume it all but shared it with their brother."[2]

Without question, the unwillingness of Stepniak to concede the proper role of the Tsarist government and system in the alleviation of suffering is a blatant example of the kind of prejudice which permeated much of the articulate left. Obviously such biases warp one's view of reality, and does in fact suggest why there existed this separation between the "ideal and the real" within the Russian opposition groups. Such a world view, based on a deep bias, seems to have permeated the Russian intelligentsia, and while the evidence is not overwhelming, it is certainly more than suggestive.[3] The significance of this bias for subsequent Russian history is obvious; the bias was also important for the subsequent historiography of the period.

Modern historical knowledge about the famine to date is very poor, and what does exist is prejudiced. Indeed, a perusal of modern scholarship dealing with the famine of 1891-92 reveals a bias, or more properly, an interpretation similar to that expressed by the "articulate

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[1]Ibid., p. 4. [2]Ibid., III (November, 1892), 7.

[3]For additional examples of obvious prejudice, see Fal'bork, pp. 241-67.

left," that the famine is a significant turning point in Russia's social-political-economic history.[1] Since there was no modern study of the famine, its causes and effects upon which the modern student based his conclusions, it would seem that the current view of the famine and the significance of the famine is derived from an acceptance of the contemporary view. Simply stated, historical knowledge of the famine is poor and seemingly biased.

Since many statements concerning the famine are not footnoted it is difficult to prove the validity of the above assertion directly. However, since the "articulate Left" made frequent reference to the famine unto itself and vis-a-vis the agricultural crisis of the late nineteenth century,[2] and since western scholars base much of their research upon the writings of the liberals, Populists, and Marxists, it is not far-fetched to assume that the contemporary judgments--prejudices --concerning the famine have become modern prejudices. The modern scholar also seems to have inherited the antagonistic view of the contemporary toward the Tsarist government.

The modern scholar presents an image of the famine as if there is only one interpretation as to is causes, the extent of the famine, and performance of the government in coping with the famine; as if in fact there was no "debate," no controversy surrounding the famine. This, of course, has been proved incorrect, in that the causes, etc., were pass-

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[1]One naturally ponders why there has been very little formal study done on the famine of 1891-92, in view of the significance the historians consider it to have.

[2]My own research substantiates this statement. See also Mendel, p. 49, who states that the famine of 1891-92 was "the most frequently mentioned date in Legal Populist literature."

ionatedly debated issues. Any indication of this debate is simply not revealed in the pages of modern scholarly literature. It suggests that the scholar has approached the study of Russian history--at least as far as the famine is concerned--with preconceived notions. The following discussion will be illustrative.

Avrahm Yarmolinsky mentions both the famine and the severe cholera epidemic that ensued in his book Road to Revolution. He reveals a bias towards the government, when he states that "the measures taken by the authorities and private organizations were pitifully inadequate."[1] While he does not cite a specific source for this assertion, he is aware of some of the radical literature dealing with the famine.[2] Haimson's view of the government is quite similar to Yarmolinsky's. He states that "the famine exposed the bankruptcy of the imposing state ediface. The floundering Tsarist bureaucracy . . . now proved itself incapable of transporting available supplies to the stricken regions."[3] The historical inaccuracy of this statement is obvious.

Sidney Harcave, also presents a distorted picture of the famine of 1891. He says that a drought in Russia and the ensuing cholera epidemic were having their normal disastrous effect because the peasant lived so close to the margin of existence. "Peasants were dying by the thousands, starved or overcome by cholera, and neither Russian efforts nor those of foreign sympathizers, who sent ton after ton of provisions, could do much to stay the ravages. By the next planting time, there would be an

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[1]Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Road to Revolution (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1959), p. 338.

[2]Ibid., p. 339. [3]Haimson, p. 49.

an appalling lack of able farm workers, animals, and seed; for the effects of famine always carried over into the second season."[1] This too is a biased and inaccurate statement, in that we have already seen that public and private philanthropy did successfully stem the horrors of starvation. His bias towards the government is reflected in the following statement, which deprecates government relief efforts and exalts private aid, which played a minor role in the overall famine relief program. He states, "of necessity, emergency relief in this instance became for the most part a privately sponsored undertaking."[2]

Similarly, Samuel Baron, in his biography of Plekhanov, seems to have accepted the biased assessment of the left vis-a-vis the Tsarist government without raising any questions whatsoever. He argues that the famine awakened the intelligentsia to social activism after the quiet years of the 1880's.

> The impetus for this reversal came in the first instance from the shocking revelations brought to light during the great famine of 1891-92. . . . The intelligentsia were profoundly disturbed not so much by the natural disasters as by the barbarous reaction to them in a Russia they took to be a modern, civilized country. Millions of people were threatened with starvation, and yet the government made no move to curtail grain exports. Reserves sufficient to tide over the needy were available, but the government proved too indifferent or too inept, or both, to carry out an adequate distribution. Even its efforts to conceal the scale of the disaster from the public failed, and the horrfying spectacle of the government's ineffectuality and callousness in the face of the disaster shocked the intelligentsia into a new sense of social responsibility.[3]

Other scholars were not as overtly biased concerning the famine, but they did view the famine as a great disaster, implying more human

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[1]Sidney Harcave, Years of the Golden Cockerel (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1968), p. 275.

[2]Ibid., p. 276. [3]Baron, p. 140.

and considerably more economic suffering than was actually the case. Bertram D. Wolfe's statement on the famine suggests a touch of the intelligentsia's propensity to exaggerate the extent of the famine and clearly indicates that the famine was a great tragedy for Russia. He states:

> In 1891, as so many times before, famine swept over Russia. The black earth fields turned gray, they cracked, they became dust; . . . hunger took possession of Europe's granary. Whole villages took to the roads in quest of food or employment. Or gathering their rags about them, died quietly in dark corners, as animals die. Cholera, typhus, typhoid followed in the tracks that hunger had smoothed.[1]

Similarly, a number of other prominent scholars see the famine as a great tragedy: Wayne S. Vucinich says the 1890's began with the disastrous famine, and Lazar Volin uses the word catastrophic, both men implying a magnitude of tragedy greater than has been suggested in Chapter I and Chapter II.[2]

Scholars of Russian economic history consider the famine to be very significant in its economic impact on the peasant and the state. Alexander Gerschenkron argues that even though there was a brief reversal in the overall decline in grain prices, the famine was still ruinous to the peasantry, and was in general a disaster for Russia.[3] Theodore

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[1]Bertram D. Wolfe, Three Who Made a Revolution (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 89.

[2]Wayne S. Vucinich (ed.), The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. XVI; Lazar Volin, "The Russian Peasant: From Emancipation to Kolkhoz," The Transformation of Russian Society, ed. Cyril Black (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 298.

[3]Alexander Gerschenkron, "Agrarian Policies and Industrialization: Russia 1861-1917," Cambridge Economic History of Europe VI, Part II, ed. H. J. Habakkuk and N. Postan (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1965), pp. 776, 778.

Von Laue considers the famine to be a decisive turning point in modern Tsarist economic history in that it precipitated the advent of Witte's industrialization program. While this is considered a historical "truth," Von Laue also states that the Russian economy virtually went to pieces in the famine.[1] The great Russian historian, Sergei Platonov, stated that the famine brought to light the fact that the prosperity of the nation had declined and the misery of the people continued after it ended.[2] Kindersley argues that the famine revealed the poverty and vulnerability of agriculture.[3] Finally, although the great Russian agrarian scholar, G. T. Robinson essentially ignores the famine, he does consider it to be primae facie evidence of the general decline in Russian agriculture and proof of the existence of the agrarian crisis.[4]

One can draw some very interesting conclusions concerning the view of the famine found within modern scholarship. First, almost all western scholars conceive of the famine as a very significant event in Tsarist Russian history, a view it would seem based largely on the biased testimony of the articulate left. As such a number of these scholars are as biased as some of the contemporary observers, especially as regards the role of the government in alleviating the suffering. Other modern scholars consider the famine to be a significant turning point in

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[1]Theodore H. Von Laue, "The State and the Economy," The Transformation of Russian Society, ed. Cyril Black (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 214-15.

[2]S. F. Platonov, History of Russia, trans. Emanuel Aronsberg (Bloomington, Indiana: University Prints and Reprints, 1964), p 402.

[3]Kindersley, p. 176.

[4]Geroid T. Robinson, Rural Russia under the Old Regime (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1967), p. 116.

Russia's economic life. In every case referred to above, these very important judgments are predicated upon publications of the left or are simply assertions with no real evidence cited to substantiate their conclusions. It would seem that since the famine is considered such an important event, the scholar would have used more care in forming his judgments on the famine. On the contrary, Western scholars have tended to accept the liberal view of the famine without question, totally unaware, it seems, that the famine itself and its effects were debatable issues. This hypothesis leads to another significant insight into Western scholarship on Tsarist Russia in the 1890's--in particular its view of the agricultural crisis.

The willingness to accept the famine as a great disaster, which underscores the inefficiency and culpability of the Tsarist government, is intimately related to the generally accepted theory of the "agricultural crisis." Up to the present time, the famine constitutes valuable evidence for the existence of the agrarian crisis in the late nineteenth century. Modern scholars see the famine as both a "cause and an effect" of the crisis, in the same way that the articulate left viewed the famine's relationship to that crisis. Thus it would appear that a re-evaluation of the significance of the famine has very intriguing possibilities for a re-evaluation of the "agrarian crisis" in Russia in the 1890's.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPACT OF THE FAMINE ON THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF RUSSIA

"Russia's best Minister of Finance is the harvest."[1]
The Economist

"But on the whole, as in so many other cases, if we rely entirely on the testimony of the most articulate classes in the population, we run the risk of being seriously deceived."[2] M. P. Gilmore

The famine of 1891-92 had a great impact on the economic history of Russia because it brought about the removal of Ivan Vyshnegradsky and the appointment of Sergei Witte as Minister of Finance in September, 1892.[3] As is generally known, this great statesman set Russia on the path of rapid industrialization.[4] The awareness of the necessity to industrialize, however, had existed in Russia prior to the advent of Witte. A former Minister of Finance, Michael Reitern, 1862-1878, told Alexander II that "without railways and mechanical industries Russia cannot be considered secure in her boundaries. Her influence in Europe

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[1]"The Projected New Russian Loan," The Economist, L (October 15, 1892), 1296.

[2]Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1952), pp. 62-63.

[3]Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 48.

[4]Kochan, p. 10 ff.; Theodore H. Von Laue, Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 5-35.

will fall to a level inconsistent with her international power and her historic significance."[1] However, what distinguishes Witte from his predecessors in the Ministry of Finance was the fact that he was the first statesman in history to give industrialization-modernization priority over all other sectors of the economy.[2]

Witte's industrialization program was the first modern experiment in attempting to create an industrial power out of a backward nation.[3] It was an experiment in state capitalism which relied heavily on the technique of deficit financing.[4] Briefly, Witte hoped to develop the natural resources of Russia, by concentrating on the expansion of the railroads and heavy industry, and, in addition, he also sought to stimulate private initiative. As a result of this, he hoped that Russians would be richer and, indirectly, the state treasury would be richer.[5]

It is generally agreed that his policies were successful, and the results were astounding. In the period 1892-1901, the average annual percentage of industrial growth was 8.03%, an extraordinary figure for the day. Overall, from 1870-1900, Russian manufacturing grew at a faster rate than any advance nation in the world, due largely to the great spurt in the 1890's.[6] The real issue for this paper is not that Witte embarked on an industrialization program, but how it was possible for any statesman to thrust upon Russia the strains of heavy industrialization at the very time when the famine had apparently demonstrated that Russia was economically exhausted.

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[1]Cited by Von Laue, Sergei Witte, p. 9.

[2]Ibid., p. 5. [3]Ibid., p. 119. [4]Ibid., p. 76.

[5]Ibid., p. 35. [6]Kochan, p. 16.

There seem to be two main considerations in the formulation of Witte's policy. First, for Witte, industrialization was simply a necessity.[1] He viewed the famine and Russian backwardness in general as pointing out the necessity for rapid industrialization; the only way that Russia could survive was through the modernization of her economy.[2] The Minister of Finance knew, however, that the weight of modernization must fall upon the backs of the Russian peasant. In a public address in March, 1899, Witte acknowledged that there was no greater problem to be solved than the improvement of Russian agriculture. Nevertheless, this problem, he believed, could only be solved through the continued development of industry and the protectionist system, which would make the Russian economy self-sufficient.[3] This brings us to the second consideration. It is possible that in contrast to the vast majority of observers, the Minister of Finance did not consider the Russian agricultural sector unable to bear the strain of modernization. Why?

Part of the answer to this question lies in the official view of the cause of the crop-failure in general, and the famine in particular. Witte and the Ministry of Finance had a very simple view pertaining to the causes of the famine. The famine of 1891-92 and other famines were caused by adverse weather conditions, and not by underlying factors such

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[1]Von Laue, Transformation of Russian Society, p. 215.

[2]This answer to Russia's dilemma was not unique to Witte. See Struve, The Slavic and East European Review, XII (April, 1934), 586, who acknowledged he had outlined programs very similar to the Witte program.

[3]Theodore H. Von Laue, "A Secret Memorandum of Sergei Witte on the Industrialization of Imperial Russia," The Journal of Modern History, XXVI, No. 1 (March, 1954), 63.

as the exhaustion of once fertile farm land.[1] In his memoirs Witte states, "that Russia is essentially an agricultural country. The year's crops, its chief wealth, depend on the capricious elements and are an uncertain factor. This again necessitates the keeping of a reserve fund in anticipation of the lean years."[2] In 1893, only two years after the famine the government argued that even given the natural fertility of the soil and the somewhat limited use of manure, the success of the harvest in the black earth regions is predicated on climatic conditions.[3]

At the turn of the century, two official publications of the Ministry of Finance expressed essentially the same view. For example, the official publication on agriculture for the Paris Exposition held in 1900 states that the annual harvest in Russia was characterized by "enormous variability of yields from one year to the next," caused by the special climatic conditions of Russia.[4] This same publication goes on to say that in the black earth zone the harvest depends on the amount of and the promptness of the rain. If the rain was sufficient, the harvest would be rich and abundant, notwithstanding the mediocre farming techniques and lack of fertilization. If the summer is dry there would be dearth.[5] Similarly, in 1901, for the Glascow International Exhibition

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[1]Drage, p. 140; Bruggen, p. 171.

[2]Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 78. The famine simply did not make a great impression on Witte. This is suggested by the fact that he virtually ignores the famine in his memoirs.

[3]Ministerstva Finansov, The Industries of Russia, III (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Finansov, 1893), p. 100. Cited hereafter as the Industries of Russia.

[4]M. W. Kovalevsky, La Russie a la Fin du 19e Siecle (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1900), p. 167.

[5]Ibid., p. 168.

the publication of the Ministry of Finance stated, concerning the harvest of cereals, that: "The climatic conditions are on the whole rather unfavorable to farming, and are accountable for the deep variation in the agricultural estimates, which we have noted before. The seeds . . . suffer most from droughts, which are the cause of countless calamities."[1]

The skeptic might argue that the above statements vis-a-vis the causes of crop-failures in Russia were political expedients, in that it diverted attention from the real causes of Russia's agricultural crises--backwardness and soil exhaustion. Whether Witte and the Ministry of Finance really believed the official "line" cannot be ascertained. We will probably never know whether he was simply gambling that the agricultural sector would be able to support his programs, or whether he was acting upon real convictions, that famines were not a result of soil exhaustion and backward techniques. Whatever the case, one must admit that for the first five or six years Witte and his program were extremely successful, largely because he was blessed with good harvests from 1893-1896.[2] Indeed, there was at this point in time an aphorism in Russia which said that Russia's best "Minister of Finance" was a good harvest.[3]

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[1]Ministerstva Finansov, Russia, Its Industries and Trade (Glascow: Hay Nisbet and Co., Limited, 1901), pp. 161-62. Cited hereafter as Russia, Its Industries and Trade.

[2]See the data in Kovalevsky, p. 167, and Raymond W. Goldsmith, "The Economic Growth of Tsarist Russia 1860-1913," Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX (April, 1961), 448.

[3]"The Projected New Russian Loan," The Economist (London) L (October 15, 1892), 1296.

If Witte did believe in the vicissitudes of the weather as the determining factor in the harvest, one can thus more easily understand why Witte, in the very teeth of the famine, promptly intensified the policies of the preceding Minister of Finance, which many argued had turned a crop-failure into a drought. If this interpretation was true, that chance determined the harvest, there was very little that the Minister of Finance or anyone could do in the short-run to alter the nature of things. He therefore opted for a strong industrial society as a solution for all of Russia's problems, agricultural as well as industrial. Witte himself understood that there was a risk involved and that another crop-failure might ruin his program. There were, however, two conditions which he felt would alleviate any crop-failure if it did come. On the one hand he believed that Russia was such a large country that a poor harvest in one region would be more than offset by an abundant yield in another--as had been the case even in 1891.[1] On the other, he deliberately kept an unusually large reserve fund in the treasury on the chance a very poor harvest might occur.[2] Thus, Witte's embarkation on a policy of rapid industrialization, largely paid for by the agricultural sector, does not appear to be a blatant disregard of the famine of 1891-92 and the agricultural crisis.

From the evidence examined, it would seem that the interpretation of the causes of the famine of 1891-92 and crop-failures in general, suggested by Witte and the Ministry of Finance, was correct. The crop-failure of 1891 was caused by drought and was not a result of soil

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[1]Kovalevsky, p. 167.

[2]Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 78.

exhaustion and the backward techniques of the Russian peasant. The Imperial Free Economic Society debate on the causes of the famine, discussed above, reveals that on many estates practicing the most modern techniques, the drought brought the destruction of the crops. The drought was simply so severe that so-called "improved methods" of farming made no difference.[1]

The only possible alternative to the meteorological explanation, as the one real cause of crop-failure, is soil exhaustion. Even a superficial examination of this argument reveals the inherent weaknesses contained therein. If the soil of the black earth district was exhausted, as has been so frequently alleged, then how does one explain the bumper crops of 1893-96.[2] How can one have the largest yields in this four year period in the last half of the nineteenth century, if the soil is exhausted.[3] In addition, scholars have established that production per dessiatin had increased in the latter years of the nineteenth century.[4] These conditions hardly substantiate the argument that the soil of the black earth district was exhausted, and that this caused the crop-failures that plagued Tsarist Russia at the turn of the century.

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[1]See above, Chapter II, pp. 116 ff. See also Solov'ev Vestnik Evropy, II (November, 1892), 356, 357, 360, who was placing more emphasis on drought as the key factor in bringing about the agricultural crisis.

[2]See the harvest data in Kovalevsky, p. 167; Goldsmith, Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX (April, 1961), 448. Statistical data in Chuprov and Posnikov, and Khromov leads to the same conclusion.

[3]See Goldsmith, p. 446.

[4]Robinson, p. 98; Michael T. Florinsky, The End of the Russian Empire (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 181.

The famine of 1891-92 should not be viewed as a unique phenomenon, but viewed as a part of a constantly recurring phenomena that is visited upon Russia, and is largely caused by drought. One study made by a Western scholar concluded that between the years 1885-1954, there occurred droughts in the central black earth regions roughly every five to ten years.[1] It is interesting to note that bad harvests occurred in 1884, 1891-92, 1897-98, 1906, 1911, and 1920-21, roughly every five to ten years.[2] Drought caused famine in 1873-74, 1891-92, 1906 and 1920.[3] Even within the era of the modern Soviet state, drought has played a decisive role in agriculture. For example, the virgin land campaign of Nikita Khrushchev was destroyed by meteorological factors, in particular the drought of 1963.[4] In addition, in the spring of 1972, the Soviets experienced a horrendous crop-failure, which brought about the well-known "wheat deal" with the United States in 1973. The Soviets obviously have the technical ability requisite for modern agriculture, yet drought has recently emerged supreme over all factors, as it did in 1891. Indeed, one might argue that this is a simplistic interpretation of the vicissitudes of Russian agriculture, but it is, nevertheless, the most valid approach to an understanding of what was actually taking place within the rural sector of the Russian economy.

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[1]R. E. H. Meller, Geography of the U. S. S. R. (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1965), pp. 193-4.

[2]Fisher, p. 475; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 211.

[3]See Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity, pp. 18,21; Volin, A Century . . .,p. 172; Mordovtsev, Otechestvennyia Zapiski, No. 4 (April, 1874), 385; Korsakov, p. 24.

[4]Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 485-87.

The proponents of the soil-exhaustion-backwardness theory, as the primary cause of the famine of 1891-92, might point to the ever increasing frequency of crop-failure and/or famine as proof of the deterioration of the Russian farmland. Indeed, it was demonstrated in Chapter I that Russia has experienced numerous crop-failures throughout her history. The oldest known date of a famine in Russian history is 1024, and it is estimated that from 1024 to 1892 there were 143 famines.[1] From the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries there were about eight major crop-failures per century, the causes of which were primarily climatic.[2] As one comes closer to the modern day, the number of famines and crop-failures per century begins to increase, i.e., in the seventeenth century--fifteen major crop-failures, in the eighteenth century--thirty-five, and in the nineteenth century--forty-eight.[3]

Closer analysis of the frequency of famine theory tends to subvert rather than substantiate soil-exhaustion as a causative factor in the famine of 1891. For example, in the nineteenth century thirty-five crop-failures occurred prior to 1854 and only thirteen subsequently, which tends to refute the above argument, in that crop-failures were taking place less frequently as the century wore on.[4] In addition, the increase in the number of crop-failures was due in part to the growth in the size

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[1]Ibid., p. 103; Stefanovich, p. 64.

[2]Ibid., p. 103; Fisher, p. 425 says seven crop-failures per century. See also Plekhanov, O Zadachakh, p. 20.

[3]Ibid., p. 103; Stefanovich, p. 64 cites the figure 47 crop-failures as of 1892. I include the crop-failure of 1897-98 which makes it 48.

[4]Ibid., p. 103.

of the Empire, and possibly in part to more advanced or efficient methods of recording and observing crop-failures. Very likely many crop-failures went unnoticed in the earlier centuries and only true famines were recorded historically.

In addition, the famines, or more appropriately the crop-failures of the nineteenth century, were not of the magnitude of the tragedy that took place during the reign of Boris Godunov. As one student of the famine wrote in 1892, "fortunately, the famines of the present century are not always of the same intensity, as occurred in the 'olden' times and never reached their level." [1] Major crop-failures occurred in 1820-21, 1827, 1833 and 1834,[2] 1839-41, 1843-45, 1848, 1850, 1853, 1863, 1873-74, 1880, 1883, 1884, 1891-92, and 1897.[3]

This impressive list of major crop-failures in the nineteenth century becomes intelligible only if viewed as a result of meteorological conditions. Each of these crop-failures occurred in given districts, not throughout the entire empire. Yet techniques of agriculture were relatively universal among the peasants. Thus if the soil was exhausted through exploitative and backward techniques then essentially all of Russia should experience crop-failure at the same time. On the contrary, provinces bordering one another would have completely opposite harvest

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[1] Stefanovich, p. 59.

[2] Levasseur, in his report to the National Society of Agriculture in France, states that the crop-failure of 1833-34 was the only crop-failure of the 19th century on a par with 1891-92. He says that it also was caused by drought, p. 52.

[3] The list was comprised from: Stefanovich, pp. 58-60; Levasseur, pp. 51-52; Shishko, p. 8; Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 91; Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 426.

results. Under such circumstances, the vicissitudes of the weather constitutes a better explanation of the differences in harvest yield than does soil exhaustion.

The crop-failure of 1873-74 in the central black earth region is an excellent example of the above situation. The left bank of the Volga experienced a terrible crop-failure which centered in the province of Samara. The right bank of the Volga had an abundant harvest--in particular the province of Saratov.[1] A drought accompanied the crop-failure in Samara.[2] Nevertheless, some observers argued that the crop-failure was a result of complex economic causes, or to be more specific, excessive taxation and rent rapaciousness which in general caused the exhaustion of the soil.[3] If this is correct, then why did Saratov have a good harvest in that year? Surely it was not because the complex economic conditions were vastly different in Saratov than in Samara. On the contrary, it would seem that the unpredictability of the weather is the real culprit. One area received rain in sufficient quantities and had an excellent harvest, while the other did not. In addition, if the lands of Samara were truly exhausted as was claimed, no one would have even bothered to plant a crop in 1891 which might fail. As Plekhanov pointed out Russia would have been similar to the exhausted lands of Virginia which had become unusable for tobacco.[4] This, however, was not

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[1]Stefanovich, p. 60; Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar, p. 104; Mordovtsev, Otechestvennyia Zapiski, No. 4 (April, 1874), 365.

[2]Mordovtsev, Otechestvennyia Zapiski, No. 4 (April, 1874), 385.

[3]Ibid., pp. 367-69; Sergeevski, p. 36; Stefanovich, p. 62.

[4]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh, p. 17.

the case in Russia.

The Russian famine of 1891-92, it would seem, was caused by unfavorable climatic conditions. What distinguished this famine, at least in the mind of the editor of the Vestnik Evropy--M. Stasulevich--from previous and subsequent crop-failures was the vast area of the disaster. In 1867, 1874, and 1880 the intensiveness of damage was just as great as it was in 1891-92.[1] The only real difference being the extensiveness of the latter and that is why it was remembered by contemporaries and by modern scholars.

To a certain extent this thesis is guilty of the crime Plekhanov accused many of his contemporaries of committing. Plekhanov criticized those people in Russia who were comparing the famine of 1891-92 to the past famines of Russian history. In his opinion they were attempting to ameliorate the excitement over the famine, and undermine its uniqueness by arguing that they were a customary phenomena in Russia.[2] Plekhanov, on the other hand, argued that the famine was unique. He would have us believe that the famine of 1891-92 was unique because it was brought about by the transition from a natural to a money economy, in which speculators and peasants ravaged the land in order to sell for the market. All the grain was exported and none remained in case of an emergency.[3] Thus, when the drought came it quickly brought famine. This argument is extremely weak in that it fails to explain why the severe famine in 1833 or all those that happened prior to the nineteenth cen-

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[1]Stasulevich, Vestnik Evropy, V (September, 1891), 426.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh, p. 20.

[3]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

tury, i.e., before Russia made the transition to a "money" economy, occurred. Again, natural disaster makes a better argument.

The crux of the matter is that those who attempted to play down the uniqueness of 1891-92 were on more rational ground, than those who saw it as a tragedy of major proportions. The latter viewpoint was particularly characteristic of the liberal elements. Placing the famine in some sort of historical perspective, however, does tend to reduce its significance in one's mind. A few comments made about three other crop-failures will illuminate this point. Perhaps the growth of the news media in the nineteenth century had something to do with making crop-failures more significant than they really were.

In a very lengthy article in the Otechestvennyia Zapiski dealing with the causes of the famine of 1874 on the left bank of the Volga, there are a number of parallels to the famine of 1891. The Russian people at the first news of the famine hastened from all sides to offer help. However, just as in 1891, the donations totaled only 1,000's of rubles while certain elements claimed that millions of rubles were needed. There is also the normal discussion of the guilt of society, of the poverty of the peasant, and of the backwardness of agriculture as critical factors in the famine.[1]

A more emotional approach was taken in another article pertaining to the same famine. The article hurls bitter accusations at the system in the same manner that many of the articulate left did in 1891-92. For example it states:

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[1]See Mordovtsev, Otechestvennyia Zapiski, No. 4 (April, 1874), 365-90.

> The vampire who dooms the Russian people to inevitable ruin, to inevitable starvation, to inevitable epidemics, to a terrible and slow death, is the state regime of the Russian Empire, which inevitably put all its weight on the suffering people, inevitably demands from the people everything . . . that they are able to produce. The Russian state system everywhere sucks out all of the strength of the Russian people and fatally leads it to degeneration, to extinction. If this order is maintained just a little longer, then it inevitably exhausts all of Russia, all the Russian people.[1]

The last example stemming from the Samara famine of 1874 comes from a contemporary brochure. It states that "from the Caucausus to the White Sea, from the Amur to the Vistula everywhere it is the same, everywhere there is famine, in a few localities it is a severe attack, in others--it is in the form of chronic starvation. . . . Everywhere there is ruin."[2]

Turning to the crop-failure of 1898 one discovers another poor harvest in the Samara area. Peasants petitioned Tolstoi for help claiming that "we find ourselves in far greater straits than we were in 1891 and 1892."[3] From Kazan it was also reported that "the present famine is more terrible than that of 1891."[4] The editor of the newspaper Free Russia, F. Volkhovsky, made the standard complaints that the government denied that a famine existed, and was hindering private charity.[5]

Tolstoi makes similar complaints about the government during the crop-failure in 1897, in that the government opposed and hindered private charity in a number of provinces.[6] According to this great humanitarian, in some areas the peasants were so poor that they did not even

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[1]Cited by Sergeevskii, p. 37. [2]Sergeevskii, p. 35.

[3]Free Russia, X (February, 1899), 12. [4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid. [6]Tolstoi, Golod . . ., pp. 8, 19.

have "lebeda" to eat.[1] It would indeed seem a miracle that the peasantry survived these great "tragedies" of the nineteenth century in order to experience a true famine in 1921.

In 1921, Soviet Russia experienced a true famine rather than the discomfort of a serious crop-failure. The crop-failure was precipitated by drought in both 1920 and 1921.[2] The primary area of the famine of 1921 included the Volga district and thus such provinces as Samara, Simbirsk, Saratov, and about half of Penza, Kazan, Ufa, and Viatka provinces. There was also famine in other districts which made the area of this famine larger than that of 1891.[3]

It was the famine of 1921 that helped Vladimir Obolensky to recall the famine of 1891. He states:

> And now, [1921] when having put aside the newspaper, in which one reads about thousands of exhausted, starving people, . . . about armed squads of red soldiers sent out of Moscow against oncoming crowds, one begins through association to recall a famine, with which one participated in the struggle against, the "unprecedented" famine of 1891. . . . Everything that then alarmed, captivated, made one indignant, now seems rather quiet, small scale and kindly.
>
> A kind Russian public, a good Russian government, a good famine, . . . and above all a good self, . . . full of very elevated intentions and dedicated nature of a young repentent nobleman.
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> Disasters were then on a different scale, and we were more impressionable and sympathetic.[4]

Writing in 1927 about the famine of 1921, Frank A. Golder described

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[1]Ibid., p. 18.

[2]Korsakov, pp. 24, 29; Frank A. Golder and Lincoln Hutchinson, On the Trail of the Russian Famine (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1927), p. 13; Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity, p. 3; Volin, Century . . ., pp. 172-73; see also H. H. Fisher's book, The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919-1923.

[3]Korsakov, pp. 33, 41.

[4]Obolensky, pp. 195-96.

agricultural conditions in virtually identical terms which were used so extensively by both contemporaries and modern scholars in describing the agrarian crisis at the turn of the century. He argues that in addition to a capricious climate, which was characterized by periodic drought, the agricultural methods of Russia were backward, the three field system was still in vogue, and the use of fertilizer was sparse.[1]

The famine itself he blames on political and economic factors rather than the drought. The causes were threefold. First, the disruption brought about by the War and the Civil War in the period 1914-1920. Secondly, the disruption of economic life and thus the lack of incentive for the peasant to raise surpluses for the market. Finally, he includes the drought, "which, however, would have been of minor consequence if the other causes had been absent."[2] Again there is a desire to seek deeper causes than the more simple solution.

William Barnes Steveni was also very much interested in the famine of 1921, as he had been in 1891. His publication of 1922 in support of the suffering peasants is replete with the same rhetoric that typified much of the literature concerning the famine of 1891. For example:

> The object of this pamphlet is to support the appeal . . . on behalf of 30 million peasants, who are now face to face with death, and who will perish, not in thousands, but in millions--unless the people of England, America, France and other countries hasten to the aid of these starving and inarticulate millions.[3]

or:

> In the winter of 1891-92, when I cooperated with Count Tolstoi and Count Bobrinsky, in saving the starving, I travelled 1,500 miles through Toula, Ryazan, Penza, Samara and other governments. <u>There</u>

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[1]Golder, p. 1. [2]Ibid., p. 14.

[3]Steveni, <u>Europe's Great Calamity</u>, p. 1.

> were then fourteen million people starving and forty millions affected by the failure of the crops.[1] But the present famine is far more intense and terrible. . . .

Steveni, in 1921, places considerable emphasis on the drought as the essential cause of the famine. However, he still cannot refrain from bringing in that old cliche about "exhaustion of the soil" as a factor in causing the famine. He lists approximately ten causes of famine in Russia, all except drought, referring to political or economic factors.[2] He also notes, however, that rainfall in 1921 was at one of the lowest levels ever recorded.[3] Yet the simple answer is simply too obvious to be considered valid.

Steveni considered the two famines of 1891 and 1921 to be such close parallels of one another that he quotes his book of 1891 extensively in order to give the reader of 1921 an insight into conditions of present day Russia.[4] But after each paragraph describing conditions in 1891, he states that the situation in 1921, was far more terrible. There was less bread, more heat, a worse drought, and more deaths due to hunger typhus.[5]

This very brief examination of the famines of 1873-74, 1897-98, and 1921-22 was designed to put the famine of 1891-92 in better historical perspective. One observes an obvious progression from one crop-failure to the next. In each case, the present famine was more severe-intense-destructive than its predecessor. Quite possibly, with the exception of 1921, there was considerable over-reaction to the dramatic impact of drought. And in each case, we have seen a deliberate effort

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[1]Ibid., p. 2. [2]Ibid., pp. 7, 8. [3]Ibid., p. 17.

[4]Ibid., p. 15. [5]Ibid., pp. 16-21.

to view the causes of the famines as far more complex than they really were.

Steveni, being a very knowledgable man concerning Russia, refused to accept drought as the cause of Russia's famines even though his own arguments supported this interpretation. He says:

> It is remarkable fact that the famine is most severe in those governments where the soil is richest; viz, in Samara, Saratoff, and in Little Russia. Probably this land is the most fertile in Europe. It consists for the most part of black virgin soil, over a yard in depth, and is generally of so rich a character that it requires no manuring. . . .
>
> But the greatest drawback to agriculture in Eastern and Southern Russia is the want of water.[1]

After saying this, in the very next paragraph he states that "the closer I become acquainted with the conditions affecting Russian agriculture, the more I became convinced that it is not so much the character of the soil or climate which are the main factors for these chronic famines, but the ignorance and poverty of the peasantry, for which they are not responsible!"[2] The above argument obviously falls within the realm of hypothesis. One can, however, move into the realm of fact when examining the economic impact of the famine upon Russia.

Whether Witte was more perceptive in his views on what caused the famine of 1891-92 than most of his contemporaries will probably remain a moot point. We do know that the weather was favorable and that the agricultural sector successfully bore the strain of rapid industrialization for nearly a decade. Another reason that Witte possibly considered the agricultural sector more viable than practically everyone else is

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[1]Ibid., p. 19. [2]Ibid.

the fact that the long and short term economic impact of the famine of 1891-92 was negligible.

At first glance the famine of 1891-92 appeared to have great economic consequences for Russia. Some of the contemporaries, especially the members of the articulate left, argued that the economic impact of the famine would result in the virtual ruin of Russia. One article in the Russkoe Bogatstvo of November, 1891, stated that famine of 1891 did not just effect the starving ones. On the contrary, "it is a tragedy for the entire state and all of the people, with consequences to future generations."[1] The idea was apparently quite common, that it would take years to recover from the losses incurred during the famine.[2] Stepniak also agreed that the effects of the famine would be felt for many years in the future.[3]

Other members of the left essentially agreed with Stepniak for Nikolai-on, in his book, Ocherki Nashego Poreformennago Khoziaistva, states that the famine cost the country a great deal in money, ruined thousands of peasants and in general lowered the viability of the population.[4] Three years after the famine, in 1895, Nikolai-on still held to this opinion. He felt that "the famine [of 1891] stretched to extreme tension all of our economic connections and relationships. The entire country in economic terms was rendered to a significant degree

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[1]"Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891), 226.

[2]"Iz Obshchestvennoi Khroniki," Vestnik Evropy, VI (November, 1892), 418.

[3]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 3; Ibid., III (November, 1892), 7.

[4]Nikolai-on, Ocherki . . ., p. XV.

isolated. In many cases the economic connections were broken, and the whole of our economic ediface was shaken to its very foundation."[1]

Another Populist N. A. Karyshev agreed with Nikolai-on that the tragedy of 1891 would have an impact on the economic relations of Russia for many years. For example, the birthrate dropped and the deathrate increased, causing a decline in the population. The state budget along with manufacturing and trade were totally disrupted. As a result there was unemployment, bankruptcy, a fall in the rate of exchange and a trade crisis. Finally, the famine had a very detrimental effect on agriculture, in particular causing the peasant to become heavily indebted.[2] Modern scholars have also asserted this theme, that the famine of 1891 rent the very fabric of the tsarist economy to pieces.[3]

Concerning the effects of the famine, Plekhanov stated that "the present famine, once and for all ruined the peasant masses, terribly reducing the productivity of Russian agriculture."[4] As a result, the people had become so poor, that the government could no longer rob them, but was going to have to rob the bourgeoisie.[5] Plekhanov also believed that the famine would hasten the break-up of the rural economy and the acquisition of the land by the bourgeoisie.[6] In effect, he was saying that the famine would create a rural proletariat. This idea found favor

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[1]Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895), 155.

[2]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 1-3, 11; Theodore Dan expressed a similar view, p. 195.

[3]Von Laue, Transformation of Russian Society, p. 214.

[4]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh, p. 28.

[5]Ibid., pp. 29, 33. [6]Ibid., p. 35.

among other "astute" observers of the famine of 1891-92.[1]

It would thus seem that there was virtually a unanimous opinion, both contemporary and modern, that the famine of 1891-92 had and would continue to have a dire economic impact on the Tsarist system. Indeed, such a conclusion makes considerable sense. Obviously a crop-failure that could lead to famine would have some impact on the economy, especially in terms of the harvest, exports, balance of trade and the Imperial budget. The subsequent discussion will show the actual impact of the famine, and it must be admitted that at first glance it would appear to substantiate the generally held hypothesis.

The most obvious result of a crop-failure is its effect on the harvest, in this case the grain harvest. Tables 3 and 4 show: (1) the crop deficiency of 1891 as compared with the average annual crop for the five year period 1883-1887, and (2) the crop-yield as compared with the previous eleven years.[2] The harvest of cereals in 1891 was well below the average of all harvests from 1884 to 1894 in the following proportions: rye--70.4%, wheat--67.1%, oats--75.3%, and all other cereals--73.6%.[3]

With a decline in the size of the harvest and as a result of exigencies within Russia, the famine caused a sharp drop in the export of cereals from Russia. It should be noted that the sharp drop in exports did not take place in 1891, but in 1892. This is explained by the fact

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[1]For example, Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, p. 71; Pipes, Struve, p. 88.

[2]Documents of the House of Representatives, "Russian Farm Products in 1891," XXXVIII, 322-23.

[3]Kovalevsky, p. 167.

TABLE 3

Crop Deficiency of 1891

Cereals	Average for five year period 1883-1887	1891	Increase or Decrease
	Bushels	Bushels	Bushels
Winter Wheat	72,702,000	60,585,000	-12,117,000
Spring Wheat	170,215,000	116,554,000	-53,661,000
Rye	684,899,000	519,877,000	-165,022,000
Barley	151,174,000	134,441,000	-16,733,000
Buckwheat	60,585,000	35,774,000	-24,811,000
Millet	49,910,500	36,351,000	-13,559,500
Peas	13,848,000	11,540,000	-2,308,000
Maize	22,503,000	27,696,000	-5,193,000
Oats	549,881,000	422,941,000	-126,940,000

TABLE 4

Crop Yield of 1880-1891

Year	Rye Bushels	Wheat Bushels	Oats Bushels
1880	504,656,000	158,946,000	490,652,000
1881	611,176,000	256,852,000	588,430,000
1882	606,772,000	232,341,000	540,147,000
1883	518,994,000	212,128,000	540,003,000
1884	664,958,000	258,650,000	485,355,000
1885	679,809,000	172,378,000	376,486,000
1886	639,743,000	157,700,000	551,500,000
1887	721,250,000	274,912,000	596,535,000
1888	734,995,000	304,018,000	544,487,000
1889	547,254,000	197,257,000	502,775,000
1890	652,390,000	206,330,000	523,997,000
1891	519,877,000	177,139,000	422,941,000

that exports of any given year--basically exported in the first six months of a year--are largely drawn from the harvests of the preceding

year.[1] Thus, the exportation of cereals for 1891 were almost as great as those of the previous year. Table 5 shows the exportation of cereals from Russia in the period 1890-1894, and points out the sharp drop in exports in 1892 and not in 1891.[2]

Table 5

Exportation of All Cereals 1890-1894

Year	Exports (Poods)
1890	418,503,000
1891	391,411,000
1892	196,422,000
1893	404,039,000
1894	639,511,000

Since cereals comprised the largest single item of Russian exports, a sharp drop in the export of cereals would have a drastic impact on the economy because it would disrupt Russia's balance of trade. From 1886-1890, cereals constituted 51.2 percent of the total value of exports from Russia. In 1892, cereals comprised 34.5 percent, a definite drop but still quite large in view of the events of the preceding year.[3] This reduction in cereal exports brought about the lowest surplus in the balance of trade--76,036,000 r.--since 1886, and a drop

[1] The Industries of Russia, 1893, III, 103-104.

[2] Great Britain, Board of Trade, Statistical Abstract for the Principal and Other Foreign Countries, Vol. 22 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884-1894), pp. 74-75.

[3] P. A. Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe Razvitie Rossii v XIX-XX Vekakh (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stva Politicheskoi Literatury, 1950), p. 474.

of 259,000,000 r. from the previous year. The balance of trade figures for the decade of the 1890's are as follows: 1890--+285,590,000; 1891--+335,804,000; 1892--+76,036,000; 1893--+149,601,000; 1894--+115,109,000; 1895--+162,935,000; 1896--+103,045,000; 1897--+169,710,000; 1898--+115,213,000; 1899---23,503,000; 1900--+89,842,000.[1] These figures make it clear that Russia's favorable balance of trade was adversely affected by the famine.

Similarly the precipitous crop-failure of 1891 had a detrimental financial impact on the Tsarist budget because it reduced the state's income in sundry ways, i.e., in terms of (1) tax receipts for the stricken areas, (2) redemption payments, and (3) lower receipts derived from excise taxes and duties placed on exports, imports and the domestic trade, all of which were somewhat curtailed.[2] A much greater disruption of the budget stemmed from the huge sums expended in famine relief. Table 6 reveals the drastic difference in the budget of 1891 as opposed to that of 1890 and 1892.[3]

The expenditure upon famine relief basically accounts for the differences in the Imperial budgets as shown above. The Tsarist government expended approximately 196,000,000 r. in 1891 and 1892 in alleviating

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[1]Ibid., pp. 468-69. See also U. S., Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Foreign Countries Parts I-III, Statistics of Foreign Commerce, 1909, p. 32. Cited hereafter as Statistical Abstract of Foreign Countries, Parts I-III.

[2]See the tables representing ordinary budget receipts of the Tsarist government in The Russian Journal of Financial Statistics (St. Petersburg: W. Kirshbaum, 1899), pp. 220-223; Khromov, Ekonimicheskoe . . ., pp. 498-99; Kovalevsky, p. 779.

[3]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 498-503 and 518-21. See also Kovalevsky, pp. 779 and 785 which substantially agrees with Khromov.

TABLE 6

Imperial Budgets for 1890, 1891, and 1892
(Rubles)

	1890	1891	1892
Revenue			
Ordinary	943,686,000	891,594,000	970,165,000
Extraordinary	103,687,000	37,201,000	198,679,000
Total	1,047,373,000	928,795,000	1,168,679,000
Expenditure			
Ordinary	877,780,000	875,349,000	910,684,000
Extraordinary	178,732,000	240,298,000	214,772,000
Total	1,056,512,000	1,115,647,000	1,125,356,000
Balance	-9,139,000	-186,852,000	+43,488,000

the famine-stricken districts, the vast majority of which was spent in 1891.[1] This is an impressive sum when one realizes that it constitutes approximately 20% of the entire budgetary expenditure of 1891 and 10% of the total extraordinary expenditure from 1889-1898.[2] Thus there is little doubt that the famine of 1891-92 had a significant impact on the budget of the Tsarist government.

The most serious effect of the famine, which gives particular credence to the interpretation that the famine would have a long term impact, was the widespread destruction of livestock within the famine

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[1]Kovalevsky, p. 786. See also Statesman's Yearbook, ed. J. Scott Keltie, 1894, p. 873, which states that the Tsarist government spent 162,000,000 r. for famine relief in 1891 and 87,474,219 r. in 1892.

[2]The total extraordinary expenses from 1889-1898 were 1,930,152,000 r.; see Kovalevsky, p. 786.

district. For example, as of April, 1892, it was reported that in Saratov only one-third of the horses remained alive and one-eighth of the cattle; in Voronezh, 100,000 out of 400,000 horses perished by January, 1892; in Samara, 800,000 horses and cattle out of 1,600,000 were killed or starved to death, and only a few of the 2,250,000 sheep remained alive; Tambov lost over half of its livestock.[1] By mid-winter horses and cattle within the famine district were selling for very low prices, i.e., 3-4 rubles for a horse which would have sold for seven to eight times more in normal times.[2] The obvious reason for this drop in the price of livestock is that there was no food for the animals, and they either starved or were slaughtered for food. The price of hay had risen from a normal price of 4-5 rubles per ton to over 12 rubles, in the less stricken areas, and up to 30 rubles per ton in the more remote localities.[3]

The magnitude of this loss in livestock can be seen from the following data, showing the difference in the number of livestock in the fifty European provinces in 1890 and in 1892: (1) 3,100,000 fewer horses, (2) 1,600,000 fewer cattle, (3) 6,000,000 fewer sheep, and (4) 700,000 fewer pigs. This is approximately a 10% reduction in each of the above

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[1]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV, 547; See also Korf, p. 114; Kornilov, pp. 74-83; Free Russia, III (November, 1892), 7.

[2]Kornilov, p. 9; Edgar, The Russian Famine, p. 48; Stadling, The Century Magazine, XLVI (August, 1893), 652; Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1893), 2.

[3]Blankenburg, p. 25.

categories and a drop of 15% in the number of horses.[1] The significance of the loss of livestock--especially horses--can scarcely be overemphasized in an agricultural economy where livestock provided power, food, and fertilizer. In this one area, the famine of 1891-92 was truly a significant event.

Up to this point it would appear that the famine of 1891-92 was indeed one of the most significant events in Russian history in the last half of the nineteenth century. As shown previously, approximately 13,000,000 peasants--over 10% of the population of the Russian Empire--were receiving some type of governmental aid. Russian livestock declined literally by the millions. In addition, the effects of the famine on the harvest, exports, and the budget were considerable, and ultimately led to the dismissal of Vyshnegradsky and the appointment of Witte. The above constitute the obvious examples of the economic impact of the famine. More penetrating analysis of the economic impact will show, however, that the Tsarist state was more viable than many have supposed, and that the system emerged from the famine relatively unscathed economically.[2]

It was pointed out above that the famine had a detrimental effect on exportation of cereals and thus the overall balance of trade. But it should also be pointed out that Russia still had a favorable balance of trade for 1892 and thus the crop-failure really did not disrupt the basic

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[1]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 466-67. One should note that this decline in the total number of livestock in 1891-92 stands in sharp contrast to the gradual yearly increase which is observerable throughout this period.

[2]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 3. Even Stepniak was forced to acknowledge this fact in terms of the immediate impact.

flow of gold into Russia. As a matter of fact, 1892 marked the third highest amount of gold and silver imports in the period 1887-1900, approximately 160,000,000 r.[1] As a matter of fact, with the exception of grain exports, there was very little difference in the value of exports and imports for Russia in 1891-92. The failure of the harvest had virtually no impact on other categories of trade, expecially the consumer goods trade.[2]

The reason that the famine did not have an extensive impact on the trade of Russia was because the Russian economy in the early 1890's was still very backward and non-integrated, or if one prefers, non-monetized.[3] It was not a highly specialized and differentiated economy, as existed in the capitalistic west, and abundance in one region or sector was perfectly consistent with the existence of dearth elsewhere. It is this basic nonintegrated nature of the Russian economy which must be borne in mind in attempting to determine the true economic impact of the famine. This does not mean to purport that capitalism was not developing in Russia, that economic phenomena such as specialization in produc-

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[1] Statistical Abstract for Foreign Countries, Parts I-III, 1909, p. 32; see also "The Economic Condition of Russia," The Board of Trade Journal, XII (January-June, 1892), 12-13. Gold deposits in the State Bank of St. Petersburg on December 16, 1891 were 404,700,000 r. On December 16, 1892, gold deposits were 528,000,000 r. See A. I. Stein, "Review of Foreign Trade," The Industries of Russia, Vol. II (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Finansov, 1893), 467.

[2] Issac A. Hourwich, "Russia in the International Market," Journal of Political Economy, II (December, 1893-September, 1894), 289.

[3] Many Populists failed to understand that capitalism had really not yet come to Russia. For example, Nikolai-on recognized that the capitalist system is very complex and integrated. He misread, however, the impact of the famine and argued that the capitalist system was already upon Russia, when in fact closer study shows that Russia had much further to go. See Ocherki . . ., p. XII.

tion and market awareness were unknown. It was, after all, that symbol of the modern capitalist society--the railroad--that made it possible to bring enough food to the famine district to prevent total disaster.

Another example of the relatively backward--non-integrated--aspect of the Russian economy is found in the impact of the high price of rye, the staple food of Russia, in 1891-92. The famine district was the main producer of rye and sold approximately 50% of its total harvest on the domestic market.[1] The price of rye in 1892 reached 150 kopecks per pood or three times the price in 1890.[2] Due to the inelasticity of demand for a subsistence item, such a rise in the price of rye might have had serious ramifications upon the demand for goods in other sectors of the economy. In 1891-92, in Tsarist Russia, this was not the case. For example, the products of heavy industry were not affected by changes in popular consumption, but were largely predicated on state consumption, which as we know, increased rather than declined. But even in the consumer goods industries, the purchase of items such as sugar, kerosene, matches, tobacco, etc., only slightly declined in 1891 and even rose in 1892.[3] The only major popular item to show a distinct drop in consumption was drinking alcohol, but this might have been caused by the shortage of grain for making "spirits," and also by the sharp increase in the

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[1]Ministerstva Finansov, Russia: Its Industries and Trade, 1901, p. 171; Lyashchenko, pp. 517-18; Kovalevsky, p. 727.

[2]Ministerstva Finansov, The Industries of Russia, 1893, III, 125.

[3]This assumption is based upon an examination of indirect tax receipts derived from the purchase of consumption goods, Khromov, p. 498. See also Hourwich, Journal of Political Economy, II (December, 1893-September, 1894), 289-90, which shows that the imports of these items generally increased in 1892 over 1891.

excise tax placed on alcohol in 1892.[1]

The aphorism "one man's meat is another man's poison" also helps explain why the famine did not entirely disrupt the national economy.[2] Those areas that had good harvests in 1891 and 1892 prospered by the misfortune of the eastern black earth and Volga agricultural districts, in particular the rye producing provinces around Moscow, and the provinces to the west and north of Moscow. The average and above average harvests within these areas coupled with the high price of cereals certainly boosted the incomes of some of the farmers outside of the famine district.[3] Thus while a dearth in a large and important region and subsequent increase in the price of a staple good would lower consumer demands for other goods, the profits from higher grain prices in other areas certainly increased consumer demands, and thereby maintained some sort of constancy within consumer demands for 1891 and 1892. It also helps to explain why receipts from taxes on consumer goods did not appreciably decline in 1891 and even rose in 1892. Thus one may conclude that in terms of consumption of goods, the famine of 1891-92 had very little short term effect.

Possibly a more important index of measuring the economic significance of the famine, especially from a governmental policy-making point of view, would be a determination of its effect upon the financial structure. For example, the famine apparently influenced the fluctua-

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[1]Ministerstva Finansov, Russia: Its Industries and Trade, 1901, pp. 207, 212; The Russian Journal of Financial Statistics, pp. 30-31 and 62-63.

[2]The Economist (London), L (October 15, 1892), 1,296.

[3]Kovalevsky, pp. 730-31.

tions of the discount rate of the state bank. As a matter of fact, there seems to exist a direct relationship between the famine, the grain trade, and changes in the discount rate. As of February 11, 1891, the discount rate stood at 4 1/2%. On 8 October, after the first Ukaz appeared restricting exports of rye, it rose to 5%. On the 19th of October, three days after the appearance of the second decree restricting food exports, the discount had risen to 6%. By January, 1892, the discount rate dropped slightly to 5 1/2%. In the late spring of 1892, when the restrictions on the exportation of cereals were about to be lifted, the rate fell to 4 1/2%.[1]

The rise in the discount rate of the state bank by 1 1/2% indicates that the famine did affect the financial system of the state. In fact, the discount rate did not rise above 6% until the financial crisis in 1899, when for twenty days it stood at 7%.[2] It is important to note, that although the discount rate had been raised during the winter of 1891-92, with the advent of spring and a new harvest the rate was down to what it had been before the crop-failure of the previous spring. The rise in the discount rate was designed to add stability to the financial structure, and in particular, to uphold the exchange rate of the ruble which had fallen by 20% during one year of dearth.[3] One might infer that these conservative measures on the part of the government were not only a reaction to the consequences of the famine, but also a reaction to the international image of Russian finance. The Ministry of Finance was greatly concerned about this image and made numerous statements to

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[1]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., p. 543. [2]Ibid.

[3]The Economist (London), L (October 15, 1892), 1,296.

maintain a favorable impression of Russian finance abroad.[1]

Another index of the financial impact of the famine is the volume of savings in the savings banks throughout Russia. From 1870, the number of savings bank depositors and the size of the savings deposits steadily rose. The years 1891 and 1892 constitute no exception as the following figures show: in 1890--the number of savings accounts stood at 798,000 and deposits at 139,000,000 r.; in 1891--the number of accounts was 999,000 and deposits totaled 191,000,000 r.; and in 1892--the number of accounts reached 1, 194,000 and deposits increased to 239,000,000 r.[2] Thus it would seem that the famine had little or no effect on the flow of savings into banks, and was therefore not totally disruptive even in 1891-92. When one considers that possibly a large percentage of the total depositors were made up of rural elements, it raises doubts concerning the general impact of the famine. As of 1913, over 30% of the depositors belonged to the rural sector, and it is more than likely that this sector constituted a fairly large percentage in 1891-92 also.[3]

A change in the death rate is another index of the economic impact of the famine. The impression given by some observers is that there was

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[1]For example, see a number of articles in The Economist (London), 1891 and 1892, which reflect the Russian government's concern for its financial image abroad.

[2]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., p. 540. Over a broad range of years there is no real deviation from the statistical trend caused by the famine.

[3]Lyashchenko, p. 699. See also Olga Crisp, "Russian Financial Policy and the Gold Standard at the End of the Nineteenth Century," Economic History Review, VI No. 2 (December, 1953), 165; and Donald M. Wallace, Russia (New York: Cassell, 1912), p. 539, who view the increase in small savings accounts as an indication that conditions within the rural sector were not as bad as often alleged.

a marked rise in the percentage of dead per living inhabitant in 1891 and 1892. Steveni states that there was a 1% increase in the death rate in the famine district because of famine and hunger typhus alone.[1] However, after the hysteria over the tragic effects of the famine had subsided, it became apparent that not many people died as a direct result of the famine and the hunger typhus.[2] Hunger typhus was very contagious and did afflict many people within the famine district, but the mortality rate was relatively small.[3] Indeed a study done in 1896 proved that the increase in the death rate had increased in 1891-92 approximately .35 of 1% over the average death rate for the period 1884-1890.[4] Thus it would seem that again there was no appreciable impact on the Russian society because of the famine, especially when one considers that Russia was stricken with a cholera epidemic in 1892 which would accoumt for part of the increased death rate.

From the evidence presented above, it is possible to formulate a number of conclusions. On the one hand, the famine of 1891-92 was one of the most dramatic domestic events to befall Russia in the last half of the nineteenth century. The total area strickened by crop-failure, the great number of people that received aid, the number who did die and the thousands stricken with hunger typhus, and the destruction of livestock, all indicate that the famine was a tragic incident. Nevertheless it would seem that the overall economic consequences were slight in

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[1]Steveni, Europe's Great Calamity, pp. 6, 22; see also Stadling, The Century Magazine, XLVI (August, 1893), 570.

[2]Free Russia, II (March, 1892), 8; Ibid., III, (November, 1892), 6.

[3]Novikov, p. 129. [4]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. LIV.

terms of the entire nation and essentially of short duration.

The evidence shows that export trade, outside of the grain trade, was not disrupted, and that consumer demand remained good and thus domestic trade was not seriously damaged. In addition, the financial structure vis-a-vis the discount rate and savings deposits were not seriously affected. Finally, it has been shown that Russia still had a favorable balance of trade for 1891 and 1892, and that gold was still flowing into the country. Thus the famine did not have any serious short-term economic consequences which would essentially hinder the implementation of the Witte program.

Had the crop-failure and subsequent dearth taken place within the primarily wheat and barley growing areas--wheat being the real export crop--rather than the rye growing districts, the economic results might have been more significant.[1] As it was, the government and a portion of the peasantry of the famine district absorbed the losses resulting from the crop-failure. The government itself was able to counter the shock of the famine by floating loans abroad--supported by the rise in the home discount rate--and in turn provided a bare subsistence of food and even loans to the peasantry stricken by famine.

In addition to the non-integrated aspect of the country, the economic status of the majority of the peasants who suffered through the crop-failure, also helps explain the minimal effect of the famine on

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[1]Wheat and barley were the chief export cereals from Russia. In the 1890's Russia exported 2 to 5 times as much wheat as rye. See: Ministerstva Finansov, Russia: Its Industries and Trade, 1901, p. 171; Ministerstva Finansov, The Industries of Russia, 1893, III, 103-105; Kovalevsky, pp. 727, 743; Lyashchenko, pp. 519-20; and George Pavlovsky, Agricultural Russia on the Eve of the Revolution (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1930), p. 253.

such things as overall consumption and the volume of savings. Since the famine district comprised the most destitute agricultural elements after the Emancipation of the serfs, it would hardly seem feasible that such a marginal economic segment would have a real effect on consumption one way or another. Similarly, they would not be likely to possess substantial savings accounts. Thus the average peasant within the famine district was not a significant member of the domestic economic order, although he did play an important role for the government in terms of its policy concerning grain exports. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that rye exports were far less valuable than wheat exports.

As long as there remained enough food within Russia to feed the people, and more importantly as long as the government could effectively financially absorb the losses from a crop-failure through its own monetary reserves, a famine such as that of 1891-92 would not have an appreciable economic effect on Russian society. On the contrary, the fact that the famine was relatively economically inconsequential and that the government so ably handled such a monumental task of feeding thousands of people possibly renewed the government's faith in the economic stability of Russia, and its ability to cope with any future misfortune. It was in this milieu, in the aftermath of the great crop-failure of 1891, that Sergei Witte became Minister of Finance.

One of the obvious impressions that emerges from an in depth study of the famine of 1891-92, is the fact that the government did a creditable job in ameliorating the effects of the crop-failure. Whatever one's bias toward the government of the Tsar, it did ultimately organize a famine relief effort on a massive scale which suffessfully prevented extreme discomforture from becoming a pervasive tragedy. There was con-

temporary evidence which supports this interpretation, even though at times this was not the intention of the witness.

For all the veracity of such accusations as corrupt and incompetent, which have become generally accepted as accurate descriptions of the Tsarist system and government, the government did care. The government cared not only about helping the people--which is proved by the famine relief program--but also about the corruption and incompetence which existed within the governmental structure. For example, the government was very interested in instituting the best procedures to ensure the organization of food supply in the event of future famines.[1] The government sent special officials to the famine district to expedite famine relief and to supercede "incompetent" members of the bureaucracy.[2] In fact, at least one governor was discharged by the central government.[3] In addition, there were instances in which the government took official action to punish corruption and malfeasance in office.[4] These examples of corruption and incompetence were used by some contemporaries to show the ineptness of the Tsarist state, whereas viewed in a different light they at least suggest sincerity of purpose on the part

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[1]"Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 104.

[2]Vlasov, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 4 (1913), 131. The entire article is about the incompetency of the Governor of Tobolsk and the intercession of the special emissary of the government, Prince Golitsyn. Troinitsky says that Prince Golitsyn came to the famine district to check on conditions in three provinces. See Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), pp. 542,544.

[3]Troinitsky, Istoricheskii Vestnik, No. 8 (1913), 551.

[4]Sergeevskii, p. 26; see also Korolenko, V Golodnyi God, pp. 104-105, 215-218.

of the government.

A number of observers paid compliments to the government for its handling of famine relief. Leon Dru, a French observer noted in his report to the National Agriculture Society of France, that the Tsarist government had displayed the greatest concern in attempting to acquire the necessary goods to sustain the famine-stricken people.[1] In his report to the Imperial Free Economic Society, Baron Korf gave credit to the government for coping with the collossal food-supply problem which was undertaken over and above the normal work load of operating the government. He was particularly pleased by the efforts of the state railroads to get supplies to the famine district.[2] A contemporary Western observer was favorably impressed with governmental efforts to sustain the people and stated that the honesty of the Tsar's officials in dealing with the relief funds was unquestionable.[3]

Even one of the chief protagonists of the Tsarist system, Stepniak, found a few favorable words to say about the Tsar. Alexander, it was reported, had given half of his income for famine relief--5,000,000 r. Stepniak's newspaper, Free Russia "offers him its congratulations, and hopes that his contribution to the famine fund is the beginning, for him and Russia of better things."[4]

One of the more interesting examples of positive response to the Tsarist government had to do with its actions vis-a-vis the laws restricting the exportation of grain--in this case the support was for

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[1]Dru, p. 5. [2]Korf, p. 112.

[3]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 6-7.

[4]Ibid., III (August, 1892), 2.

the reluctance of the government to act rather than for the implementation of such laws. In August, 1891, when pressure was building for the restriction of the exportation of cereals, a number of periodicals of liberal orientation such as Russkaya Mysl' supported the government's lack of action on the prohibition of exports. The editors of the periodical attempted to exert a dampening effect on those elements that were beginning to "fume and fuss" over the crop-failure, and pointed out the sincerity of the government. The liberal newspaper Russkiya Vedomosti also was against the prohibition of grain, and thereby stood behind the inactivity of the government.[1]

However, the government was eventually forced to prohibit the export of grain, and this too found favor with the liberal press. The Russkiya Vedomosti in late August, 1891, justified the government's conduct to its readers.[2] In November, 1891, the Russkoe Bogatstvo published a small article which was very complimentary towards the government as regards the prohibition of grain.[3] In addition, at least some of the people who were helped by the state in the handling of famine relief also expressed their thanks to the "Autocrat."[4]

There were even favorable comments made concerning the conduct of the state's officials who implemented the program of famine relief--especially for that most maligned of all officials, the land captain.

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[1]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 70-71.

[2]Ibid., p. 71. Needless to say the conservative press essentially stood behind the government; see Plekhanov, O Zadachakh, p. 27.

[3]"Bor'ba s Golodom," Russkoe Bogatstvo, XI (November, 1891) 223-24.

[4]Obolensky, p. 228.

The land captain was described in the Vestnik Evropy as personifying within themselves "reasonable and energetic authority."[1] Korf also was very impressed by the work of this relatively new official in the governmental bureaucracy.[2] The work of Alexander Novikov, a land captain in Tambov, was called splendid even in the pages of Free Russia.[3]

The zemstvo also came under praise from the left segment of society. Sergeevskii, a cohort of Paul Lavrov, argued that the zemstvos played a very important role in famine relief. However, he gives the district zemstvos more credit for iniative in seeking money for the relief effort than he gives to the provincial zemstvos.[4]

Possibly the best and most honest observations pertaining to the relief efforts were made by American observers who had fewer biases concerning the Tsarist system than did the Russians. Ambassador Smith was one of those who was favorably disposed to the Tsarist government and its ability to deal with the immediate consequences of the famine. He stated that the Tsarist government had sought to alleviate the disaster in a "liberal fashion."[5] Similarly, all of the American commissioners who brought grain to Russia, were very positive in their praise of the government's reception and distribution of American grain. Upon arrival in Russia the commissioners were satisfied with the plans made by Ambassador Smith to distribute the grain brought by the American "Famine

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[1]Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 363.

[2]Korf, p. 120. [3]Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 6.

[4]Sergeevskii, p. 22.

[5]Smith, The North American Review, CLIV (May, 1892), 549.

Fleet."[1] W. C. Edgar paid a compliment to Russian officialdom when he said that every pound of flour was conscientiously and judiciously delivered--that the flour from America "went to the exact spot which they intended that it should--to the stomachs of the hungry people."[2] In an article concerning the famine, Edgar was also complimentary of the Tsar's vigorous actions to deal with the famine.[3]

The commissioners from Philadelphia were also quite pleased with the efficiency with which their gift was handled. Mr. Reeves noted that the American cargo was given priority over other goods shipped within Russia, and was not hindered in its distribution.[4] Rudolph Blankenburg was pleased by the urgency with which his cargo was handled. It was placed on a train labeled "Committee of the Imperial Crown Prince. Special Train. Give right of way!"[5]

The commissioner from the Christian Herald, Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage, was particularly impressed by the conduct and concern of the government. He observed that there "was sincere sympathy and compassion for their compatriots in the imperial circles of Russia."[6] In November, 1892, Talmage preached a sermon in which he was very pro-Tsar as a result of his visit to Russia. This sermon received some publicity and as a result led to a strong counter-attack by Stepniak in an article entitled

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[1]Edgar, p. 24; Reeves, p. 12. [2]Ibid., p. 32.

[3]Edgar, Review of Reviews, V (July, 1892), 693, 695.

[4]Reeves, p. 13. [5]Blankenburg, p. 17.

[6]T. DeWitt Talmage, T. DeWitt Talmage: As I Knew Him (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1912), p. 264.

"Dr. Talmage Preaching the Gospel of the Tsar."[1] Earlier, in August, 1892, Stepniak had criticized Talmage for being naive and misinformed in his attempt to correct the false image held by the world against the Tsar and his government.[2]

It is important to recognize that the Tsar and his government did do a good job in the organization of famine relief, which helped thousands of people through a difficult time. The American testimony to this effect should be given greater credence than the very biased views presented by the articulate left. It has been shown in Chapter III, that the left was overtly biased in its view and was really incapable of ever approaching objectivity as regards the Tsarist system. The problem is that the image of a reactionary, unsympathetic, and incompetent government propagated by the contemporary, has been perpetuated within the modern view. Certainly the reign of Alexander III and his "reactionary" reforms, such as the implementation of the land captain, is considered one of the worst reigns of all the Tsars in the nineteenth century. The following quotation, taken from a speech by Representative Pendleton concerning American aid to Russia, captures the essence of this generally accepted image:

> Someone said that we should aid Russia because of an age old friendship. Can we have friendship between Tyranny and liberty; between Asiatic despotism and modern civilization; between the inertia of barbarism and the spirit of progress? There is no friendship and there can be no friendship between such opposing forces. I hope the hour will come when we can clasp the Russian hand in honest and cordial friendship, but that day should not come until the Tartar

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[1] Free Russia, III (January, 1893), 4,5.

[2] Ibid., III (August, 1892), 3.

> has mended his ways; until Poland is free; until persecution for opinions and religion's sake shall have ceased, and until constitutional government shall prevail from the Baltic to the Bering Sea.[1]

It would seem that the critics of the Tsarist government and system expected it to be more than it was, and to do more than was reasonable. Considering the magnitude of the country, the ignorance and backwardness of the people, the low level of technology, the Tsarist government was doing far more than a creditable job in the 1890's. This is particularly true concerning the famine relief program and the Witte industrial revolution. Above all the Tsar's government was becoming more effective in coping with the needs of the Russian people, a very significant criteria when evaluating the efficacy of a given system.

The critics of the system called for all sorts of reform--from the implementation of the socialist state to the complete destruction of the state. But it seems that they were asking far more than was possible. The critics looked to the parliamentary governments of the West--especially the United States--as the epitome of good government. But this judgment poses a very interesting question; would the United States' government, which indeed provided greater freedoms for its people, have done as well in coping with such a tragedy as the famine as the Tsarist government did?

In the debate that ensued in the House of Representatives over Senate Resolution 21 to help finance American aid for Russia, it is apparent that our legalistic democracy would not have intervened on the behalf of its people, as the corrupt, and autocratic government

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[1]U. S. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Session, 1892, Vol. XXIII, 164.

of the Tsar had done. Among the arguments used to defeat the resolution to help the Russians, was the following argument of Rep. Kilgore of Texas, which is quoted at length:

> But just a word or two as to the merits of this question. In Texas some years ago we had a famine which covered thirty counties of that great state and included thousands of people. It was drought-stricken country; fearfully stricken, too, it was. People were compelled to surrender their homes and the accumulation of years of toil and privation on the frontier, and to move back to the settlements to save themselves and their families from starvation. Texas came before Congress with a proposition to extend them relief--charity if you please--in the nature of an appropriation of $10,000 to buy seed for the distribution among these people, and the Texas people were met with the objection that the government had no authority to expend money for such a purpose.[1]

Representative William J. Bryan also argued against the resolution, making essentially the same point as Mr. Kilgore. He stated that in the summer of 1890, the state of Nebraska suffered a terrible drought and crop-failure--something that is not supposed to happen in the technologically rich American farm belt. State and private aid was exhausted and the state finally turned to the Federal government for help. The United States government denied aid to its people on the grounds that the government had no authority to appropriate money raised by taxation to care for its citizens temporarily in need. Precedents were then cited by Congress, and Bryan agreed with the Congressional decision.[2]

Bryan argued that sending aid to Russia would set a precedent and commit the government to help everyone who might be afflicted by famine. "If it is our duty to aid those in other lands whom God in His wisdom has permitted to suffer, how much more imperative the duty to relieve those whom an American Congress in its folly has caused to suffer."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 160. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

One can cite other examples from modern American history, which show the very legal approach of the West as opposed to the more humane attitude of the Tsar. In 1893, President Grover Cleveland would not authorize direct aid to the American people to help alleviate the effects of that great depression. In like manner Herbert Hoover refused to distribute direct aid to the people for the first three years of his administration during the great depression of the thirties.

From this perspective, the Tsar's government was not only more humane, but even forty years ahead of the "great American experiment." In this perspective, the criticism made by contemporaries concerning the government's reluctance to admit the existence of the famine, its tendency to render smaller appropriations than requested by the zemstvos, and restriction of press coverage seem rather petty. There definitely were positive attributes to the Tsarist government, and it behooves the student of Russian history to bring them out in the name of fair play and justice. The historian must remember that in making a judgment one must, in part at least, render that judgment according to contemporary values and conditions. Thus judging the Tsarist government by the standards of its day, one must concede that it compares favorably--in meeting the crises of its people--with that paragon of government, the government of the United States.

CHAPTER V

THE CRISIS IN RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE?

Qu il n'y a rien, le roi perd ses droits.[1]

In the preceding chapter, I have shown that the immediate economic consequences of the famine of 1891-92 were relatively minor, and that the famine constituted no obstacle to the Witte program of industrialization. However, the question remains, what was the long range economic impact of the famine, especially in terms of the crisis in Russian agriculture. As shown above, contemporaries and even modern scholars argue that the effects of the famine would be felt for years to come.[2] As such, the famine of 1891-92 comprised an integral component of the so-called crisis that had befallen agriculture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and especially after the famine of 1891-92. The famine was not only a cause of the crisis, but was also an effect of said crisis.[3] It will be demonstrated below, however, that the notion of a crisis in Russian agriculture at the turn of the nineteenth century was unfounded.

The overriding theme in economic studies of Russia at the turn of

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[1]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 20.

[2]See above, pp. 242-44.

[3]Yuzhakov, Russkoe Bogatstvo, XII (December, 1893), 204.

the century, is the existence of a crisis in Russian agriculture; that is, the ever growing deterioration of the agricultural sector, especially peasant husbandry. A discussion of this crisis or agrarian problem is found in the contemporary, in the Soviet, and in Western scholarly works.[1] Such statements as "the economic condition of the peasantry kept deteriorating,"[2] or "famine conditions, epidemics increased mortality, decrease in the number of livestock, . . . this is the spectacle of the growing destitution of a famine-stricken Russian village,"[3] are indeed commonplace.

Paul Miliukov, in his work Russia and Its Crisis, probably indicates as well as anyone the broad acceptance of the existence of the crisis. He says:

> What is the Russian crisis? And what is the Russian social unrest? . . . The crisis is now being chirped about even by the sparrows on the roofs, and is being studied by government committees and discussed in hundreds of publications. . . .
>
> We begin then, with the agrarian crisis, which lies at the bottom of

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[1]I could cite numerous sources--up to twenty-five--to prove the point. See, for example: Contemporary: Yuzhakov, Russkoe Bogatstvo, XII (December, 1893), 203-204; Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 53; "Sel'sko Khoziaistvennyi Krizis i Prodovolstvennaya Nuzhda v Pskovskoi Gubernii," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1896), 188-89; Chuprov and Posnikov, p. XLI.

Soviet: Khromov, Ekonomika . . ., pp. 206, 207, 210; N. A. Yegiazarova, Agrarnyi Krizis Kontsa XIX Veka v Rossii (Moscow: Akademii Nauk, 1959), pp. 3-10, 83-84, 138-52; Lyashchenko, p. 439 ff.

Western: Vucinich, p. XVI; Francis M. Watters, "The Peasant and the Village Commune," The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 133, 152; Von Laue, The Transformation of Russian Society, pp. 298, 301; Seton-Watson, pp. 514-17; Sidney Harcave, The Russian Revolution of 1905 (London: Collier Books, 1970), pp. 19, 20.

[2]Gerschenkron, Cambridge Economic History of Europe, p. 776.

[3]Volin, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 298.

all other crises in a country such as Russia.[1]

The hypothesis that the Russian agricultural crisis of the late nineteenth century is fallacious was initially suggested by the minimal economic effects of the famine. In particular, the relatively mild effects of the famine together with the great economic "take off" from 1893-98 are inconsistent with the idea of an agricultural crisis and the supposedly catastrophic famine. Most scholars have been content to accept the co-existence of a disastrous crisis in agriculture and the great industrial advance of the 1890's. This inconsistency and the acceptance of the inconsistency is reflected in the following statements of Theodore Von Laue. On the one hand he states that "since emancipation the economic condition of the Russian government and Russian society had not improved and even declined."[2] On the other hand he states: "industrialization, it stands to reason, had only come gradually to its commanding position as the clue to modernization and power. Witte was the first Russian Minister of Finance to give it priority. But he benefitted from a long period of preparation."[3] There must have been a period of growth and relative prosperity in the economy at large, since one can hardly imagine that Witte benefitted from a long period of decline. Von Laue seemingly contradicts himself.

There is a paradox here; either one or the other of the assertions must be wrong. I will argue that the standard interpretation of agricultural crisis is incorrect. On the contrary, conditions were very

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[1]Miliukov, p. 316.

[2]Von Laue, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 215.

[3]Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 5.

likely improving in the rural sector, which paralleled the rapid growth in the industrial sector. This interpretation of Russian agricultural development coincides much better with the economic outburst in the 1890's than does the crisis approach.

When scholars and intellectuals speak of a crisis, what do they mean, and who was suffering from the crisis? In general they mean that the rural economy and the overwhelming majority of the rural population had declined economically to a point verging upon destitution.[1] There is a virtual torrent of material which discusses the impoverishment of the peasantry and his village. "To numerous observers of Russian rural conditions, the growing destitution of the village seemed so evident that it required no special demonstration."[2]

The very gloomy view of the Russian rural scene became an extremely popular stereotype in the 1890's largely as a result of the famine of 1891-92.[3] A perusal of contemporary literature would find it replete with references to the impoverished countryside, the impoverished masses or the ruined people.[4] A number of zemstvo publications which investigated the causes of the crop-failure of 1891, took special note of the

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[1]For example, see Volin, A Century . . ., p. 59; Watters, The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, pp. 152, 157; Harcave, 1905, pp. 19,20. I could cite over thirty sources which make reference to the impoverishment of the peasantry.

[2]Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 57-58. [3]Ibid., p. 57.

[4]This subject was quite popular. For example, see Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 90-95, who provides a survey of some of this literature on the ruined peasant. See also "Vnutrennei Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 372-394. Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 43-71, for a discussion of the general causes of the impoverishment of the peasant. See also the debates of the Imperial Free Economic Society of 1892 which centered on the problem of the ravaged peasant.

"gradual impoverishment of the people." Virtually anyone who was anyone talked at one time or another of the general deterioration of the Russian peasant; for example, Lenin, Struve, Chernov, Tolstoi, Yuzhakov, Shisko, Nikolai-on, Plekhanov, and Stepniak all mention the impoverishment of the Russian masses.[1]

The concept of the exhaustion of the peasant or the impoverishment of the people is also very common in modern scholarly literature, being the basic component of the "crisis" thesis. The following quotations are typical of this interpretation:

> In the last resort it was the peasantry who had to pay far beyond their resources, for the development of industry. This was a sequel to the government's fiscal policy of indirect taxation and also the the high prices of imported goods following the imposition of the protective tariff. Industry, therefore, far from bringing benefit to the mass of Russians, actively contributed to their impoverishment.[2]

> The chief sufferer from this neglect was, of course, the peasant: the landlords, with their superior education and financial resources, either did not need outside assistance or could more easily obtain and pay for it than the poverty-stricken peasants.[3]

Along with the essentially overwhelming and universal belief in the agricultural crisis and the economic bankruptcy of the rural masses, is the generalization that the crisis alludes to the peasants or peasan-

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[1]Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question," p. 79. Struve, Kriticheskii . . ., pp. 238-45. Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 11. Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 84, 90 ff. Chernov, Krasnyi Arkhiv, I (1922), 283-84; Shisko, p. 8. Tolstoi, Golod ili ne Golod? pp. 9-12. Yuzhakov, Russkoe Bogatstvo, XII (December, 1893), 204. Nikolai-on, Ocherki, pp. 129-31. Free Russia, II (July, 1892), 5. See also Mendel's discussion of Legal Populist literature on the subject, pp. 40-50.

[2]Kochan, pp. 3-4.

[3]Volin, A Century . . ., p. 67. See Haimson, pp. 49-50; Treadgold, p. 12; Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 43; Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 72.

try, and not to just some of the peasants. This is an extremely important consideration in that scholars and contemporaries tended to discuss the Russian peasant collectively and their conclusions referred to the peasants, and not just to a segment of the peasantry.[1] The crisis always encompasses the exhaustion of the paying powers of the population, or the universal poverty among the peasantry.[2] The implication is clear that it is the mass of the population, or the vast majority of the peasants who had become impoverished and destitute by the turn of the century. This is a primary component in the crisis hypothesis.

Some scholars tend to qualify somewhat their references to peasant destitution. Von Laue, makes special allusion to the poverty within the central black earth provinces, but acknowledges that a crisis exists in "villages throughout Russia."[3] Liashchenko and Pavlovsky also discussed the general agrarian crisis with special emphasis on the central black earth regions as being particularly destitute.[4]

Modern scholars and contemporaries were quite aware of the fact that some peasants--at least the kulaks--were prospering at the turn of the century.[5] In particular, the Marxists within the Russian intelli-

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[1]The above quotations are indicative of my viewpoint. Examination of the literature dealing with the period gives the impression that the author is talking about the peasant in general. See, for example, Pavlovsky, pp. 27, 84, 251; Robinson, pp. 94, 97, 99, 103, 110-111.

[2]See Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 72; Mendel, p. 48.

[3]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 73.

[4]Lyashchenko, pp. 440, 444, 447; Pavlovsky, pp. 72-83.

[5]See Lyashchenko, pp. 457-59 which show that the majority of Russian peasants--over 60%--comprised the middle and upper elements of the Russian peasantry.

gentsia argued that the development of capitalism stimulated the differentiation of rural society, e.g., it created the wealthy bourgeoisie and a rural proletariat. Lenin, in his scholarly work, The Development of Capitalism, was most associated with this idea.[1]

In his study, Lenin concluded that a wealthy proprietary class is emerging at one end of the rural spectrum and at the other end one finds the general mass of the peasants becoming proletarians.[2] He stated that "the existence of these two polarizing trends among our petty producers clearly shows that capitalism and mass impoverishment, far from precluding, actually condition each other, and irrefutably prove that capitalism is already the main background of the economic life of Russia."[3] The implication of his study is in substantial agreement with the general thesis that the majority of the peasants were becoming destitute.

By definition the "crisis" equates to the impoverishment of the vast majority of the Russian peasantry. The question is, however, were the majority, not just some, of the peasants becoming impoverished? The important consideration here is not whether there were poor peasants, but whether they constituted a majority of the peasantry, and thereby substantiate the view that Russian agriculture was in a state of crisis. Lenin's studies pertaining to the growth of markets--On the So-Called

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[1]V. I. Lenin, The Development of Capitalism in Russia: Collected Works, Vol. III, 4th Edition (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960), pp. 170-87. Struve, Kriticheskii . . ., pp. 287-88, 238-39. Peter Struve, "Past and Present of Russian Economics," Russian Realities and Problems ed. James D. Duff (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1917), pp. 59-60.

[2]Lenin, Development of Capitalism, pp. 150-56; and "On the So-Called Market Question," pp. 109, 111, 117.

[3]Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question," p. 109. Italics mine. For a modern discussion of Lenin's thesis, see Yegiazarova, pp. 11-13.

Market Question, and The Development of Capitalism, clearly show that the majority of the peasants were not considered within the poor category.[1]

In his first work on the subject, On the So-Called Market Question, published in 1893, Lenin attempted to show the differentiation of the peasants in three districts, one each from the provinces of Taurida, Samara, and Saratov. He based his study on zemstvo statistics. While his figures do show differentiation, they also show that a majority of peasants were prospering rather than declining. In Dneiper district, Taurida, 60% of the peasants were categorized within the middle and prosperous groups, only 40% in the poor. In Novouzemsk district, Samara, 63% of the peasants are found in the well-to-do categories. Finally, in Kamyshin district, Saratov, 46% of the peasants were included in the middle and prosperous peasants. One must also bear in mind, that Lenin admits that he excluded a large number of prosperous households in Novouzemsk district, which would have made the majority percentage even greater. Adding the number of households in all three districts together, the middle and prosperous peasants comprise 59% of the total.[2]

Without question, simply by using data Lenin used, and not even redefining it, it is evident that the majority of peasants were not destitute, but in fact were in relatively sound economic condition. Lenin,

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[1] I am using Lenin's definitions of what is a poor--middle or prosperous peasant. His interpretation is distorted because the poor category includes peasants who had an income well above subsistence level, and can hardly be viewed as destitute. One should also be aware that Lenin's studies are based on a very limited number of peasant households. See "On the So-Called Market Question," pp. 111-113, and The Development of Capitalism, pp. 150-57.

[2] Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question," pp. 111-113.

himself, states: "From these data it is quite evident that the process going on among our agricultural and community peasants is not one of impoverishment and ruin in general, but a process of splitting into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat. A vast mass of peasants (the poor group) --about a half on the average--are losing economic independence."[1]

Within a few years Lenin enlarged upon this work with the publication of The Development of Capitalism, his most scholarly work. In this work he also used data taken from zemstvo statistics, in particular peasant budgets from Voronezh province. Within four districts of Voronezh only 18.18% did not have any draft animals to till the soil, and thereby would be considered in a very poor economic situation. Approximately 54% of peasant households had two or more draft animals. Within forty-nine provinces of European Russia, 27% of peasant households had no draft animals, 29% had one draft animal, and 44% had two or more.[2] It is evident that Lenin's study indicates a growing differentiation among the peasantry, but this material also strongly suggests that the broadly accepted interpretation, that the vast majority of the peasantry were becoming destitute, is very dubious.

The above material has demonstrated that based on Lenin's definition of poor, middle and wealthy peasants--a definition which tends to exaggerate the number of poor--the majority of Russian peasants were not economically destitute. Lenin's evidence does not stand alone, however. There is other material--based upon the amount of land held by each fam-

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[1]Ibid., p. 112. Italics mine.

[2]Lenin, Development of Capitalism, pp. 148-50. See also Lyashchenko, pp. 457-59 who accepted Lenin's study as being basically sound.

ily--which supports the conclusions drawn from Lenin's work.

Land-hunger, not enough land to support the peasantry, is considered one of the basic components of the crisis theory and thus the deterioration of the peasantry. In particular, shortage of land among the peasants was one of the most important criticisms of the Emancipation of the serf in 1861. Yet data presented by a noted scholar of Russian agriculture shows that after 1861, 70% of the peasantry had sufficient land to maintain at least a subsistence standard of life, without supplementing his income.[1] Since many peasants had additional income via handicrafts or other occupations, it again appears that a majority of the peasants were not in a state of abject destitution.

To this point, it has been suggested that the majority of Russian peasants were not enduring an economic deterioration in their standard of living, but on the contrary, were sustaining themselves reasonably well. However, this assertion does not remove the possibility that the peasantry as a whole was materially declining absolutely, even though a majority of peasants were still economically viable. In other words, it could be that the majority of peasants of 1900, although maintaining themselves well above the subsistence level, had declined economically relative to their status in 1870. In order to refute this possibility, one must examine in detail the most important indices of peasant well-being--(1) tax receipts and (2) the overall standard of living of the peasant.

Intellectuals and scholars from the 1870's to the present have stressed the role of taxation as a critical factor in the development of

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[1]Pavlovsky, p. 81.

the Russian agricultural crisis. The theory begins with an attack on the emancipation of the serf, which critics claimed did not provide the peasant with sufficient land, placed an exaggerated redemption payment on this land in excess of the value of the land, and retained the mir and the age old practice of joint responsibility for taxes. In addition to burdensome redemption payments, the peasants were also faced with zemstvo, village, and indirect taxes.[1]

In the early 1870's, the Valuyev Commission supposedly confirmed the fact that peasant taxation, in which redemption taxes predominated, was indeed very oppressive. The redemption payments were considered unfair and even burdensome largely because the redemption value of the allotment exceeded the fairmarket value of allotted land by 90% in the years 1863-72. Even at this juncture the tax arrears began to accumulate, which underscores the heavy fiscal burden placed upon the peasantry. This was the case despite the joint responsibility of the entire commune for the payment of redemption fees.[2]

The government was cognizant of the distress within the rural sector, and did provide tax relief by reducing redemption payments in 1883 and abolishing the poll tax in 1887.[3] But the government, it is argued, intensified the problem when Ivan Vyshnegradsky was appointed Minister of Finance (1887-1892).

In general, Vyshnegradsky's program was aimed at stabilizing the

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[1]For example, see Robinson, pp. 94-117; Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 57-77; Florinsky, p. 176; Lyashchenko, pp. 439-475. For a contemporary view see Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 345-64; Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 43-71.

[2]Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 50-52. [3]Ibid., p. 53.

Russian economy and lowering the debt by establishing a favorable balance of trade. He attempted to attain these goals through the use of higher taxes, a high tariff, and the regulation of the domestic railroad rates. His measures were designed to force the sale of agricultural products, in particular cereals, which were exported in such great quantities that Russia had a favorable balance of trade, thus increasing her gold reserves. They were apparently effective, for it is estimated that Russia exported 15% of her harvest in the period 1882-86, and this increased to 22% from 1887-91.[1] In addition, cereals comprised an ever increasing share in the exportation of goods from Russia. In the period 1861-65, cereals comprised 31% of all exports from Russia. From 1891-95, in the period of Vyshnegradsky's successor, agricultural products constituted 75-80% of all her exports, with cereals averaging between 40-50% of the total.[2]

Witte followed Vyshnegradsky as Minister of Finance (1892-1903) and despite the warnings of his predecessor as to the exhaustion of the tax paying powers of the peasant, intensified Vyshnegradsky's program of forced exportation of agricultural products. For example, in the fall of 1892, Witte proposed an 11 1/2% increase in indirect taxes, and thereafter he raised them almost every year.[3] The indirect taxes became, from the 1880's, far more important as a source of tax revenue than direct taxes--over 80% of tax revenues came from indirect taxes by

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[1]Bruggen, pp. 30-34. Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., pp. 23-33. Seton-Watson, p. 518.

[2]Lyashchenko, p. 519.

[3]Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., pp. 101, 280.

1900.[1]

The theory of the agricultural crisis argues that the fiscal policies of the state, especially of Vyshnegradsky and Witte brought about the economic ruin of the peasantry. There seems to be universal agreement that the fiscal component of the theory of the Russian agrarian crisis cannot be exaggerated, in that high taxation definitely depressed the income and standard of living of the peasant.[2] Some scholars go so far as to state that the Tsarist government "extorted" money from the population in the collection of taxes.[3] The theory clearly holds that it was the peasant sector, rather than any other sector of the economy that was forced to pay the cost of the government's programs. Thus, the redemption payments, in conjunction with high taxes, created a burden that was a basic cause of the declining rural economy.[4] Witte had supposedly taxed the peasant to exhaustion.[5] The peasant class was reduced to abject misery.[6]

The proponents of the crisis theory argue that the fiscal policy of state was the critical factor in the economic decline of the peasant for a number of reasons. First, taxes consumed a large share of his income, contributing nothing in exchange.[7] In addition, they forced the peasant to sell all of his produce consistent with survival, and put

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[1]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 70.

[2]Volin, A Century . . ., p. 54; Seton-Watson, p. 510.

[3]Lyashchenko, p. 534.

[4]Vucinich, pp. XVI, XVII.

[5]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 75; Kochan, p. 16.

[6]Watters, The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, p. 155.

[7]Volin, A Century . . ., p. 62.

pressure on him to extend the total area of farmland. As a result, rents went up, due to increased competition for land, prices fell because of the flooded market, and, through his backward agricultural techniques, the peasant exhausted the soil--all this attempting to meet the state's and his own fiscal needs.[1]

Most of the contemporaries held an identical view with that expressed by modern scholars. In a long book review article by L. Slonimsky, published in Vestnik Evropy, the agricultural problem is discussed at length. The root of the problem is to be found in the oppressive and ruinous tax system, which is particularly oppressive within the famine district. The high taxes force the peasant to sell more grain which causes the price to fall. In addition, through the excessive recovery of taxes the paying strength of the population was becoming exhausted. Tax pressure also forces the peasant to pawn his last horse, or cow, in order to get enough money to pay his tax obligations.[2]

N. A. Karyshev also found the tax paying ability of the peasant strained to the maximum. In his view, the crisis, as it existed in the 1890's, had deep causes and even deeper antecedents. Being a populist, he was acutely aware of the monetization of the peasant's natural economy--a process caused by the need for money to pay taxes, for the renting of land, and the purchase of household goods. This pursuit for a larger quantity of money was the basic cause underlying the tremendous expansion of the area under tillage, which due to the backward agricul-

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[1]This basic interpretation can be found in virtually every survey text of Russian history or monograph concerning agriculture--i.e., Florinsky, Robinson, Lyashchenko, and Volin.

[2]"Vnutrennee Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 354-59.

tural techniques resulted in the exhaustion of the soil and the deterioration of agriculture in general.[1]

The ruinous tax obligations were singled out as a critical factor in the agricultural crisis by many other contemporaries too. Plekhanov argues that from emancipation the condition of the peasantry has deteriorated, and that the tax burden hung very heavy on the peasant.[2] In his view, "the peasant groaned loudly under the weight of the tax burden . . . ."[3] Plekhanov believed the burden of taxes to be so disproportionate, that if the same proportionate tax levy was placed on land controlled by the bourgeoisie, "he at once would be made a desperate revolutionary."[4]

Nikolai-on had a somewhat different perspective vis-a-vis the tax system, than most of his colleagues. He did not feel that taxes were oppressive enough in themselves to explain the declining state of Russian agriculture.[5] It was the destructive aspects of the capitalist system, which seriously aggravated the tax burden, that largely explained the "crisis." Thus, the national well-being could not be raised solely by the improvement in the tax system. Nikolai-on states that changes must take place in the form of production--alter the trend toward capitalism--before the well-being of the people is enhanced, and

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[1]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 52-54. See also "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, II (February, 1892), 113-14; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 112; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (March, 1892), 308, which point out the burden of taxes on the peasant.

[2]Plekhanov, O Zadachakh . . ., p. 10. [3]Ibid., p. 36.

[4]Ibid., p. 37. [5]Mendel, p. 57.

their tax paying capability improved.[1]

Skvortsov noted in his famous study on the national economy that there existed a general consensus about the overwhelming weight of tax payments.[2] This well-known economist discussed at length the book written by Kavelin, dealing with the Peasant Question. Kavelin blamed the low level of productivity and the backwardness of peasant agriculture upon the weight of the tax burden and the government's fiscal policy. The peasant was forced to sell not only his product, but even the necessary instruments for production--his cattle and horses.[3] The agricultural crisis and the fiscal burdens upon the peasant were so pervasive in the 1890's that even contemporary American observers, such as George Kennan, embroiled themselves in the "tax" question.[4]

The studies that exist showing that the peasant's tax paying capabilities were exhausted are numerous, emphasizing mainly the arrears in the redemption payments as proof of the inability of the peasant to meet his obligations. In the twenty year period 1861-1881, redemption arrears had gradually increased, but in the period 1881-1901, they rose rapidly.[5] In 1880, peasant arrears in redemption payments amounted to 27% of the annual assessment. By 1896-1900, redemption arrears amounted to 119% of the annual assessment; this despite the reduction, deferment

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[1]Nikolai-on, Ocherki, pp. 258-63. [2]Skvortsov, p. 4.

[3]Ibid., pp. 70-71. A similar view was expressed in 1892 by Sergeevskii, p. 33, and in 1902 by Shishko, p. 7.

[4]Free Russia, II (February, 1892), 7.

[5]Wallace, pp. 535-36.

and cancellation of the debt that occurred in 1881, 1884, 1896 and 1899.[1]

The increase in these redemption arrears took place mainly in fertile provinces, which according to the crisis theory, is of great import. In 1890, out of the 52 million ruble redemption debt, approximately 41 million or 78% belonged to the black earth provinces.[2] Table 7 demonstrates the growth in arrears, in general, as well as the growth of tax arrears in six of the provinces of the famine district.[3]

TABLE 7

Percentage of Arrears to the Annual Tax Assessment

Provinces	1871-1875	1876-1880	1881-1885	1886-1890	1891-1895	1896	1898
Simbirsk	5%	6%	34%	42%	204%	223%	277%
Tula	3	5	16	35	134	151	244
Kazan	4	31	101	170	370	334	418
Orenburg	43	54	46	135	448	334	277
Samara	48	59	152	210	433	315	363
Ufa	25	40	77	208	336	360	397

As noted above, the growth in the arrears in the redemption payments is considered by students of the agricultural crisis--both modern and contemporary--as primae facie evidence of the existence of the dis-

[1]Robinson, pp. 95-96.

[2]Wallace, pp. 535-36; Slonimsky, Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (May, 1892), 354.

[3]Lyashchenko, p. 447; see also Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), 90-92; Fal'bork, p. 251.

tress within the Russian countryside.[1] Scholars attach such importance to the growth of arrears, as evidence of this distress, because it is one of the few indices that exist for demonstrating that there was an agricultural crisis. Concerning this problem of proving the existence of a crisis rather than simply asserting it, one famous scholar has stated:

> 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 select certain measurable factors, which appear to focus and reflect the general condition.[2]

As the best index for substantiating the famine crisis, it is an extremely important element in the argument of those who uphold such a thesis. Apparently, the proponents of the "crisis" theory feel that arrears are such an index, because the redemption arrears demonstrate an inability on the part of the peasant to pay his taxes.[3] They argue that if the peasant had had the money, he would have paid his taxes. The question is why?

Geroid T. Robinson, still considered to be an outstanding authority on Tsarist agriculture in this period, offers a hypothesis as to why the arrears in the redemption payment demonstrates an inability to pay. Because this is a critical issue in both the standard theories concern-

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[1]"Vnutrennee Obozrenie," Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 372-73; Fal'bork, p. 253; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 170; Wallace, p. 535; Robinson, pp. 110-111; Volin, p. 51; and Miliukov, p. 373.

[2]Robinson, p. 110. This statement makes clear the difficulty that is involved in coping with the agricultural problem in Tsarist Russia.

[3]Ibid., p. 110; see also Miliukov, p. 325.

cerning the crisis and the revisionist interpretation presented here, Robinson will be quoted at length.

> 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, even against an entire village, as an attempt to "beat out" the tax. An army of collectors heaved and strained at the task, . . . and the methods of collection being what they were, non-payment may be considered as usually indicative of a sheer inability to pay. The arrears therefore present perhaps the best of all indices of the peasants' economic situation, and their considerable total, their wide territorial distribution, and the fact of their continual accumulation would seem to indicate a widespread and increasing distress in the village.[1]

The above statement makes perfectly clear the importance of tax arrears to the picture of rural distress that has existed in Russian agricultural historiography since the Valuyev Commission of the 1870's. The most important substantiation of the existence of the agricultural crisis rests on the assumption that out of fear of the tax collector, if the Russian peasant had anything at all, he would have paid his tax obligations. If he faced floggings, being exiled and the sale of his property, it was because he was already destitute.[2] This is the hypothesis

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[1]Ibid., pp. 110-111. Italics mine.

[2]The image of such harsh methods of tax collection is quite common within the literature on the subject. The following is a brief sample: Lyashchenko, p. 513; Volin, A Century . . ., p. 52; New York Times, July 13, 1891, p. 6; Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), pp. 85, 93; Free Russia, II (October, 1891), 6; Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892)

offered, as the basic proof of the picture of rural distress in Russia at the turn of the century, by possibly the most respected scholar on Russian agriculture in the western world. It will be shown, however, that this proof of peasant distress is indeed very weak. An examination of available evidence indicates that the "army of tax collectors" might not have had such a great effect on peasant well-being as believed, which makes possible a reinterpretation of the significance of the increasing tax arrears.

With the advent of Vyshnegradsky as Minister of Finance and the increased emphasis on tax collection, the growth in tax receipts was notable. For example, there was a marked increase in the redemption payments in 1887, the first full year of Vyshnegradsky's tenure, as opposed to 1886. There was a similar major increase in the receipts derived from indirect taxes.[1] It is assumed that the increase in receipts and the promptness of payment were a result of the ruthless and more efficient methods of tax collection. It would seem, however, that the occurrence of excellent harvests in these years and the obvious relationship between good harvests and capacity to pay, renders the above assumption somewhat spurious. Furthermore, the ability of the peasants to pay taxes, especially indirect taxes might possibly indicate economic well-being rather than drastic economic decline.[2]

354-55, 59; Fal'bork, p. 251; Tolstoi, Golod ili ne Golod?, p. 15; Nikolai-on, Ocherki, p. 257.

[1]See Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 498-99, which shows an increase of 40,000,000 r. in redemption payments and 12,000,000 r. in indirect taxes on consumer goods--tobacco, etc.

[2]Crisp, Economic History Review, VI No. 2, 165.

Tax arrears, i.e., the ever increasing peasant debt, does not by itself indicate gradual economic decline, as Robinson acknowledged. In the short run, a mounting debt does not demonstrate a lower standard of living, and in the long run, was not a great factor because the government eventually cancelled all redemption payments. In one sense, the real loser through the ever growing tax arrears was not the peasant but the state. However, the government was probably better off financially than at any time in the nineteenth century. It is well-known that the government "extorted" sufficient funds from the countryside through indirect taxes to meet its fiscal requirements. In addition, the fiscal policy of the Minister of Finance helped to monetize the rural sector--the charge made by the Populists--and thereby forced the peasant to expand the cereal growing area, increasing production and exports, which gave Russia a favorable balance of trade.

An examination of the tax receipts, see Table 8, sheds considerable light on the question of the economic welfare of the peasant. From 1887 to 1899, the redemption receipts remain relatively stable, with the obvious exception of 1891 and 1892, and correspond rather closely to the harvest of the respective year. Excluding 1891-92, the average collection of redemption dues was approximately 93,000,000 r.; using that figure as a basis for comparison, one can observe a relatively minimal fluctuation from year to year. Or if one averages the redemption payment for the period 1887-1890, the average yearly collection is approximately 90,000,000 r., whereas the average annual collection for 1896-1899 is approximately 91,000,000 r., which further underscores the relative stability of the collection of redemption dues. It is very interesting to note that by subdividing the redemption payment according

to social status of the payee, one finds that the real fluctuation in payments occurred within the payments of the former state peasants, the more prosperous element among the peasants. Receipts from indirect taxes, however, steadily increased--almost tripled, while liquor revenue increased approximately 16%.

TABLE 8[1]

Imperial Receipts from 1886-1889
(Thousands of Rubles)

Year	Liquor Receipts	Indirect Taxes	Redemption Receipts
1886	236,977	35,262	48,788
1887	257,624	47,255	88,958
1888	265,125	54,520	92,270
1889	274,920	59,913	91,747
1890	268,381	64,685	88,232
1891	247,442	64,290	69,049
1892	269,046	75,274	77,088
1893	260,834	85,104	98,994
1894	297,386	100,248	92,819
1895	298,215	109,519	101,297
1896	294,299	105,988	96,946
1897	280,129	120,664	88,519
1898	289,573	126,398	86,152
1899	310,297	139,424	95,496

If Robinson's hypothesis is correct, that the peasant was under tremendous and ruthless tax pressure from the Ministry of Finance via the tax collector, and since there obviously was money in the countryside which resulted in an absolute increase in tax revenue for the state, should not receipts from redemption payments--the fixed taxes "forcibly" collected--show a marked increase in tax revenue than indi-

[1]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 498-99, 502-03.

TABLE 9[1]

Payments in Redemption of Land
(Thousands of Rubles)

Year	From Former Serfs of Private Owners	From Former Peasants of the State
1887	43,285	45,672
1888	43,052	49,217
1889	42,414	49,332
1890	40,967	47,265
1891	34,850	34,197
1892	35,763	39,223
1893	42,802	53,128
1894	40,100	49,642
1895	42,123	55,845
1896	40,625	53,096
1897	37,543	47,952
1898	38,018	46,303

rect tax receipts. Taxes were collected in the fall after the harvest,[2] and any money extant in the village, according to Robinson's theory, should have been divulged for the payment of the arrears in direct taxes. On the contrary, money was retained in the village--held back from the tax collector--for the purchase of consumer goods which produced the marked increase in indirect tax receipts.

A proponent of the crisis theory might counter at this point and say that this critique of the arrears hypothesis ignores the problem of income distribution. It could well be that the wealthy peasants were paying their redemption debt and had money left over to contribute to the rise in indirect tax income. The poverty-stricken peasants, on the other hand, had neither money for redemption payments nor did they con-

[1] The Russian Journal of Financial Statistics, pp. 222-23.

[2] Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 52-53; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., pp. 26-27; Chuprov and Posnikov, pp. XVIII-XIX.

tribute to indirect taxes by purchasing consumer items. This reply, however, overlooks the joint responsibility of the commune--village--for the redemption payments and under this law, the wealthier peasants would have had to make up the deficit payments of the poorer peasants thereby, theoretically leaving no money in the village to be absorbed in indirect taxes.[1] It also overlooks the evidence provided by Lenin which shows that even the poorest category of the peasantry was spending a considerable amount of his income on the purchase of personal items.[2]

The refutation of the crisis theory, which is predicated on tax data, rests upon a simple reinterpretation of the existing argument. The basic premise within the existing hypothesis of agricultural decline is that the "peasantry" bore the brunt of the tax burden. This is probably the most universally held interpretation in Tsarist Russian historiography, i.e., the decline of the Russian peasantry occurred because of the fiscal policies of the state, especially under Vyshnegradsky and Witte. The following excerpts prove the point.

Von Laue: And while Witte continued to argue that they [indirect taxes] were paid only by those who could afford them, his critics showed convincingly that many items constituted part of the peasants' household economy, such as tea, vodka, matches, and kerosene.

> For the consumer the result was a slight rise in the price of vodka, which fell as another burden especially upon the peasants who would not dispense with liquor.[3]

> And, in order to support his pet industries, Witte taxed the population to exhaustion, ... He thus sapped the initiative of the Russian peasants, kept them in their primitive

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[1]See Volin, A Century . . ., p. 52 for a discussion of the joint responsibility for taxes.

[2]Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, pp. 164-165.

[3]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 70.

condition, ruined their health, denuded their forests . . . . Such a system could only end in the utter ruin of Russia.[1]

Kochan: In the last resort it was the peasantry who had to pay, far beyond their resources, for the development of industry. This was the sequel to the government's fiscal policy of indirect taxation and also to the high prices of imported goods following the imposition of the protectionist tariff. Industry, therefore, far from bringing benefit to the mass of Russians, actively contributed to their impoverishment.[2]

But during this transition period, he [Witte] had to acknowledge that taxes and import duties reduced a standard of living that was already at a bare subsistence level, that taxes were paid not out of excess but out of current needs. . . . The Witte system was tantamount to squeezing the peasantry tighter and tighter for sake of a problematic future benefit.[3]

Robinson: 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.[4]

Vucinich: Another shortcoming was the heavy redemption price the peasant was forced to pay for his land. This coupled with high taxes, created a fiscal burden that was a prime cause of increasing rural poverty.

The peasant sector, forced to pay most of the cost of his program was ignored.[5]

Volin: If any further evidence is needed of the heavy fiscal burden imposed on the Russian peasantry by redemption payments and taxes. . . .

Since excise taxes, in order to produce revenue, must be imposed on articles of mass consumption, the peasant population naturally was bound to bear the brunt of indirect taxation.[6]

The contemporary also argued that the peasantry sustained the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 75-76. [2]Kochan, pp. 3-4. [3]Ibid., p. 16.

[4]Robinson, p. 96. [5]Vucinich, p. XVIII.

[6]Volin, A Century . . ., pp. 52-53. See also George F. Kennan, "A Theory of Circumstantial Causation," The Russian Revolution, ed. Virgil D. Medlin (Hinsdale, Ill.: The Dryden Press, 1974), p. 30.

oppressive tax policies of the state. Miliukov states that "to meet the deficit in the budget, large increase in indirect taxation was resorted to, which took back from the peasantry more than had just been granted them."[1] Or, State Comptroller Lobko, an avowed critic of Witte's program stated: "The chief burden of that system lies undoubtedly upon the agricultural mass, seriously impairing its purchasing power. It has to bear almost the entire burden of direct and indirect taxes."[2]

Does it not follow that if the peasantry paid the taxes, especially indirect taxes, then they must be the sector of the economy purchasing consumer goods? If the peasant was purchasing consumer goods, then the peasants' economic well-being may not have been in a state of decline. If his well-being was not declining, then there could not have been a general, gradual, and deepening agricultural crisis in Russia in the 1890's. These conclusions are simply the logical implications of the assumption--which has been shown to be universally accepted--that the peasantry, the mass of the people, sustained the tax burden, both direct and indirect.

It cannot be argued that the burden of taxation--reflected in the arrears--was borne by the mass of the peasantry and brought ruin to Russian agriculture without coping with one very awkward fact. If the

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[1]Miliukov, p. 325.

[2]Cited by Mendel, p. 55 and Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 75. See also Sergeevskii, p. 32; Nikolai-on, Ocherki, pp. 258-59; Shapkarina, p. 155; Slonimskii, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 355; F. A. Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev i Khlebnykh Tsen na Nekotoryia Storony Russkago Narodnago Khoziaistva, ed. A. I. Chuprov and A. S. Posnikov (St. Petersburg: V. Kirshbaum, 1897), p. 78.

peasants were the primary source of indirect tax income, then they must have been the major consumer of the goods taxed, i.e., sugar, matches, etc. Therefore, if they could purchase non-essential goods one can hardly depict the rural sector as being ravaged by the ruthless tax system

The "crisis" theory cannot avoid this dilemma by asserting that the peasant did not pay the indirect taxes, for in that case, much of the argument for the existence of the Russian agricultural crisis is dissipated. One can no longer argue that monetary demands forced the peasant to exhaust his soil, rent land, and flood the market with grain for export, in order to pay his taxes. Either the peasantry paid the taxes and thus obviously was a consumer of non-essential goods, or he did not pay the taxes--the indirect tax receipts being derived from urban centers and wealthy peasants--and therefore the mass of the peasantry was not ruthlessly exploited by the state. It will be demonstrated below that in fact the former option is the more likely.

The peasant arrears grew not because of an inability to pay, but because of an unwillingness to pay the redemption payments. It seems that the peasantry was acknowledging the presence of the tax collector up to a point, and beyond that point would pay no more redemption taxes. It violates one's common sense literally to believe that the tsarist officials flogged, and extorted tax payments from great numbers of peasants. Without question, such things did take place, but hardly against approximately 100,000,000 people. One should note that the threat of extortion and high taxation did not bring the peasants into line in the era of "War Communism" in 1918-1920. Lenin was forced to make concessions because peasants were not bringing their grain to the cities to

sell, hence the NEP. Had whipping been enough, Stalin might not have had to wage war on the peasantry in the period 1929-34 to subordinate the mass of the peasantry to the state.

There is evidence that suggests that the peasantry would have revolted if pushed too far in the 1890's, as they did in 1920 and in the early 30's. In November, 1891, peasants of two volosts of Totemsky district, Vologdosky Province, refused to pay the tax arrears of the previous years. The land captain asked for police assistance to collect the taxes and the arrears, and over ten police and district officials were dispatched to the troubled areas. The peasants, however, still refused to pay the arrears, and openly resisted the police.[1]

The investigation conducted by the government reported that in one volost the peasants threatened the police with bodily injury, and in fact did beat up one of the policemen. In the other volost, a crowd of over 700 men gathered to thwart the tax collection, uttered abuses and hurled various objects, including horse manure, and ultimately physically abused the police chief.[2] While the taxes were ultimately collected in these volosts and some of the offenders punished,[3] this incident demonstrates that the peasantry was not simply a passive force that was broken and could be manipulated at will. One should also note that the state attempted, at least on one occasion to punish those officials who were overzealous in their work, and thus extortion was not an officially approved policy.[4]

The government fiscal program had as its goal the industrializa-

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[1]Shapkarina, p. 114. [2]Ibid., p. 115. [3]Ibid., pp. 117-121.

[4]Plekhanov, Sotsial Demokrat, IV (1892), p. 85.

tion and modernization of Russia. To accomplish this task the state needed money--derived either from direct taxes or indirect taxes. The growth in the importance of indirect taxes as the main source of tax revenue was probably predicated on the fact that they were easier to collect. Since the government obtained the requisite funds without a great deal of commotion, one cannot really visualize the Minister of Finance, vis-a-vis the tax collector, being as stringent in the collection of taxes as is often alleged.

This discussion has attempted to demonstrate that the existence of tax arrears per se is not a barometer of the peasants' inability to pay his taxes, and proof of his economic distress. On the contrary, the peasant had money as demonstrated through increased tax revenues, and he made a tremendous contribution to the budget of the state through indirect taxes. As was pointed out in 1896, the relative well-being of the Russian state was predicated on the relative well-being of the consumption of society--i.e., the peasant--who paid the indirect taxes. The "growth of national consumption is the growth of the state."[1] The Tsarist industrial and fiscal status was better in the 1890's that at any time in the nineteenth century. In addition, the rate of growth of the industrial sector was more rapid than the rate of growth in any country up to that time. The growth of national consumption was indeed the growth of the state.

Proponents of the "crisis" theory have either ignored or overlooked evidence which suggests that the tax burden was not overly oppressive.

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[1]Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., pp. 76-79.

George Pavlovsky, author of Agricultural Russia on the Eve of the Revolution, states quite emphatically that the redemption payments were not a heavy burden on the peasant after the reduction made in the size of those payments in 1881.[1] A very scholarly observer of the agricultural problem, Skvortsov, stated that the burden of taxes varied considerably from peasant to peasant, even among former landlord serfs. In addition, the huge number of former state peasants were not at all burdened with taxes. It was also the non-black earth districts which were most heavily taxed and yet seemed more prosperous.[2] Even the arch advocate of the ruination of the rural sector, Nikolai-on, acknowledged that taxes were not high enough to explain the deplorable state of the peasants' life.[3]

It is the contention of this dissertation that the peasant deliberately avoided paying his direct taxes,[4] despite the alleged consequences, and quite possibly concealed the true state of his economic status from the authorities. Money existed in the village, but it was hidden away and "only rarely kept in bank accounts--money hidden because of the fear of mutual guarantee."[5]

There seems to be a close parallel between the interpretation of Russian agriculture with its high taxation and deterioration of peasant welfare of the nineteenth century and that of French agriculture in the

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[1]Pavolvsky, p. 78. [2]Skvortsov, pp. 71-72.

[3]Nikolai-on, Ocherki, p. 257; Mendel, p. 57.

[4]Slonimsky, Vestnik Evropy, III (May, 1892), 357.

[5]Trudy: IVEO, "Veseda V," I, 1892, 365-66; "Khronika Vnutrennei Zhizni," Russkoe Bogatstvo, IV-V (April-May, 1892), 109.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which led to the great revolution of 1789. It is a comparison that Sergeevskii noted at the time of the famine in 1891. Sergeevskii, for example, states that the main source of peasant poverty in mid-eighteenth century France was taxes.[1] However, this also might not have been an accurate image, for one of the most famous characteristics of the Frenchman, then and now, is his unwillingness to pay direct taxes to the state. The following quotations, although apropos to late seventeenth century France, are exemplary of the above point.

> The evil inflicted on the country by this absurd tax [taille] had ramifications which even its inventors can hardly have foreseen. Firstly, it meant the destruction of much good feeling over the countryside, by making every man a spy on his neighbor, the smallest sign of increasing prosperity was jealously watched for, and the man who was rash enough to let it be seen that he was rising above the subsistence level would certainly find his taille doubled at the next assessment. . . . Families who could have bought good clothes went in rags.[2]

> On Sundays and Fete days every public house is full of drinking peasants. The facade of poverty raised by the peasantry as a protection against augmented taxation often concealed a degree of secret comfort which was unsuspected, even by the neighbors.[3]

> Taxes might be impending and debts unpaid, but he [the peasant] is still to be found dancing with violins and hautboys in public places of a Sunday.[4]

Another example, this time from eighteenth century France, also reveals how peasants hid the level of their prosperity.

> The peasants sometimes permitted their lands and houses to appear dilapidated and impoverished in order to reduce the assessment.

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[1] Sergeevskii, pp. 10, 15.

[2] W. H. Lewis, The Splendid Century (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1947), pp. 66-67.

[3] Ibid., p. 78. [4] Ibid., p. 79.

> Rousseau, forced one day to request food at a peasant's hut, was given only dry bread and skimmed milk, until his host, assured that he was not a tax spy, produced eggs, ham, and wine.[1]

The use of tax data and redemption arrears as evidence to prove the existence of the Russian agricultural crisis at the turn of the nineteenth century, has been found wanting. There remains the task of ascertaining the general standard of living of the Russian peasant to determine whether in fact the status of the peasant was deteriorating. Ironically, the overall increase in indirect tax receipts will serve as an index of growing prosperity rather than poverty.

As indicated above, indirect tax receipts were derived from the people at large; the peasant constituted the mass consumer in Russia. As such the influx of tax receipts, placed on items of general and daily consumption like alcohol, kerosene, tobacco, cotton, and sugar, "may serve as an adequately accurate index of fluctuations in the comfort and well being of the people."[2] It has been shown in Table 8 that the size of the indirect tax receipts grew tremendously. However, it can be argued that the increase in tax receipts only reflects a proportionate increase in the rate of taxation. The rate of indirect taxes was raised considerably by the Minister of Finance in the last two decades of the nineteenth century; in fact, the indirect tax rate more than doubled--went up 108%--between 1881-1901.[3] However, receipts from indirect taxes, excluding alcohol receipts, rose by 850% from 1881-1899, which clearly

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[1]Louis R. Gottschalk, The Era of the French Revolution (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), p. 24.

[2]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. LII.

[3]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 70; Volin, A Century . . ., p. 53.

means that total consumption was growing at a faster pace than the increase in the tax rate.[1] Similarly, Miliukov states that from 1893 to 1902 the tax burden had risen 49%,[2] but Table 8 shows that by 1899, indirect tax receipts were already up approximately 64%.

The general rise in consumption--real income--throughout Russia, a question of serious academic debate since the 1890's, is important to the issue of a "crisis" in Russia. If real income and consumption were rising, then a crisis predicated on the exhaustion of the Russian masses must be wrong.

The contemporaries, especially the critics of Witte's industrialization program were almost eager in their desire to show that there was no noticeable improvement in real income--popular consumption--even during the great spurt of industrialization of the 90's.[3] The advocates of declining real income include possibly the most knowledgeable economic historian of this period, Alexander Gerschenkron. Gerschenkron argues that consumption levels within Russia dropped in the last decades of the century, through the implementation of forced savings (inflation) and taxation. In his opinion, the Russian populace was called upon to make sacrifices during the transitional stage to an advanced industrial society.[4]

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[1]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 498-99, 502-502.

[2]Miliukov, p. 322.

[3]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 211. See also Mendel, pp. 45, 48. The context in which the argument was presented suggests that both these scholars accepted the contemporary view.

[4]Gerschenkron, Continuity and Change, pp. 14, 15, 37.

Paradoxically as it may seem, Lenin offers an opinion which would place him among the few who say that the standard of living of the peasant was improving. He states that:

> The peasants have begun to live a "cleaner" life (as regards clothing, housing, and so forth). That this undoubtedly progressive phenomenon must be placed to the credit of Russian capitalism and of nothing else is proved by the generally known fact . . . that peasants of the industrial localities live a far "cleaner" life than the peasants engaged exclusively in agriculture and hardly touched by capitalism. Of course, that phenomenon is manifested primarily and most readily in the adoption of the purely outward, ostentatious aspect of "civilization," but only arrant reactionaires like Mr. V. V. are capable of bewailing it and seeing nothing in it but decline.[1]

A Statistical study made by Raymond Goldsmith, "The Economic Growth of Tsarist Russia 1860-1913," challenges the basic interpretation of the "crisis." His very scholarly essay concludes that the average annual rate of growth of both the gross national product and gross national income increased absolutely from 1860 to 1913, and especially in the years 1885 to 1913.[2]

Despite efforts to indicate the contrary, the evidence clearly shows that in general consumption per capita did increase in the last decade of the nineteenth century. For example, the cotton industry of Russia rested on a mass domestic market and the consumption, and production of cotton made rapid absolute gains in the period 1880-1900, and especially in the 90's. In that decade, per capita consumption rose by 56.5%, and total consumption by 75%. Cotton production itself rose by

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[1]Lenin, "On the So-Called Market Question." p. 107.

[2]Goldsmith, Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX (April, 1961), 412-13. See also Crisp, Economic History Review, VI (December, 1953), 165, who feels that conditions might have been improving rather than declining within the agricultural sector.

approximately 100%.[1]

Witte himself claimed an increase of the consumption of cotton goods of 25% per capita in the period 1892-1900. However, critics of his statistics went to considerable lengths to refute them. They argued that this was only a slight increase, and that it reflected simply a change from homespun goods to the purchase of manufactured goods, which represented no real improvement. One critic, Butmi, found that the actual consumption of raw cotton was down, and that if there was an increase in the consumption of cotton goods it denoted a decline in quality.[2]

It would seem that the critics of Witte were determined to refute the evidence whatever its validity. For example, a 25% increase in cotton consumption can hardly be considered slight. In addition, assuming that the peasant was an economically rational being, the preference of purchasing a shirt rather than making it oneself, represents an alternative which is probably advantageous to him or he would not do it. The last point concerning the decline in quality, still does not refute the government's contention that consumption of cotton goods was up.

The government claimed that per capita sugar consumption had increased by 2.92 pounds during the decade of the nineties.[3] The critics also found fault with this data. Von Laue argues that Butmi's findings

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[1]Lyashchenko, p. 509; and especially Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 452-53, 460-61; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 268.

[2]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69. See also, George V. Butmi, Itogi Finansovago Khoziaistva s 1892 po 1903 (St. Petersburg: Ministerstva Putei Soobshcheniia, 1904), pp. 48-50.

[3]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 274.

showed only a .9 of a pound increase in per capita consumption of sugar.[1] In this regard, an examination of Butmi's figures show a .9 of a pound increase from 1894 and not from 1892; 1894—9.7 lbs. of sugar per capita, 1900--10.6, thus a .9 of a pound increase.[2] However, if one uses the 1892 figure, as N. O. Osipov does in his article "Concerning the Relationship between the Price of Grain and the Tax Receipts for the Past Ten Years," in Chuprov's book, Vliianie Urozhaev i Khlebnykh Tsen, we have the following results: 1892--8.3 pounds of sugar consumed per capita,[3] and in 1900--10.6, which reveals an increase of 2.3 pounds per capita. In either case, consumption of sugar per person in Russia was definitely increasing in the critical decade of the agricultural crisis. One might also conclude that there was virtually a deliberate effort to pick data that would present a warped view in order to support one's interpretation.

The consumption of tea increased on such a scale that there was no challenge of the data presented by the government.[4] Per capita consumption of tea increased approximately 30% in the decade 1890 to 1900.[5] The consumption of matches also increased, at least from 1888 to 1894, by approximately 10%.[6]

Finally, the state claimed an increase in the consumption of

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[1]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69.

[2]Butmi, pp. 50-51.

[3]Osipov, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., p. 377.

[4]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69.

[5]Butmi, pp. 52-53; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 274.

[6]Osipov, Vliianie Urozhaev, p. 380.

illuminating oils (kerosene) of approximately 28% from 1892-1900.[1] Butmi, however, using 1893 and 1899 as his measuring points found a 4.9% per capita decline in consumption of kerosene.[2] In addition to the problem of which set of dates is more accurate, Butmi also used a per capita consumption figure for 1893 of 12.3 pounds which was considerably higher than the 10.5 figure for 1892 and the 10.8 figure cited for 1893 by Osipov.[3] Butmi states that the source for his figures, the official collector of indirect taxes, did not have the data for 1900, therefore he used 11.7 figure of 1899. One wonders, however, why he did not use the figures for 1892 instead of 1893; he had them for other consumer items. Nevertheless, the preponderance of evidence suggests that per capita consumption of kerosene did increase as reported by the state.[4]

One of the most easily verified indices of growing prosperity was the increase in the number and amount of small savings accounts in Russian banks.[5] In 1886, the number of savings accounts stood at 306,000, and grew steadily to 3,551,000 by 1900. Deposits rose from 42,000,000 rubles to 662,000,000 rubles.[6] The magnitude of these figures suggests that something was "right" in the Russian economy for someone.

This data leads to the conclusion that in terms of the domestic

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[1]Butmi, p. 52; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 274.

[2]Butmi, p. 52.

[3]See Osipov, Vliianie Urozhaev, p. 379; Butmi, p. 52.

[4]See Osipov, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., p. 379, which shows a slow but gradual increase in consumption of kerosene for 1888-1894.

[5]Crisp, Economic History Review, VI (December, 1953), 165.

[6]Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., p. 540.

mass consumption market of cotton goods, sugar, tea, kerosene, and matches, not only tax receipts but consumption per capita was increasing in the last decade of the century.

There was, however, one major consumer item which did show a decline in per capita consumption in the period 1886-1900. The consumption of alcohol did drop slightly, but this could be the result of numerous factors, particularly governmental interference, rather than simply the declining economic condition of the peasantry.[1] It is, however, interesting to note that tax receipts from alcohol continued to increase throughout the period, and that governmental revenue per capita from the sale of alcohol was virtually the same in 1897 as it was in 1867.[2]

Witte's opponents and modern scholars apparently refused to accept the implications of the evidence presented above. For example, Von Laue, Lyaschenko, and Khromov might state that consumption levels were improving but they would not and have not seen this as invalidating the crisis hypothesis.[3] In part the contemporaries such as Nikolai-on and modern scholars have tended to ignore the evidence by stating that is explained by increased consumption by the urban sector and the wealthy peasantry.[4]

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[1]Ministerstva Finansov, Russia, Its Industries and Trade, p. 212. The Russian Journal of Financial Statistics, pp. 30-31, 62-63.

[2]The Russian Journal of Financial Statistics, p. 31; Khromov, Ekonomicheskoe . . ., pp. 498, 502.

[3]Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., p. 170; Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 73; Khromov, Ekonomika . . ., p. 207. Lyashchenko, p. 447.

[4]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 69; Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, pp. 166-67.

The bias of the scholars on this period is examplified by the passages written by Theodore Von Laue in his article "The High Cost and Gamble of the System: A Chapter in the Industrialization of Russia." In response to Witte's claim that increased tax revenue was predicated on higher consumption levels, Von Laue states: "While Witte continued to argue that they [indirect taxes] were paid only by those who could afford them, his critics showed convincingly that many taxed items constituted part of the peasants' household economy, such as tea, vodka, matches, and kerosene."[1] This statement says that peasants purchased the items from which were derived indirect tax receipts, and, as such, the increase yield of tax receipts and the increase in consumption clearly means that the Russian peasantry was enjoying an improved standard of living, rather suffering a gradual but definite economic decline.

There are other aspects of the peasant standard of living or real income index which are presented to support the contention that a crisis was taking place in Russian agriculture. The question of the amount of food available for per capita consumption is one example. Was there more grain per capita in Russia by 1900 than there was in 1860? This is a controversial issue among scholars of Russia's economic history in the last half of the nineteenth century. Such noted authorities as Peter Lyaschenko and Alexander Gerschenkron hold opposing viewpoints. Lyashchenko is quite positive in his answer, arguing that for the country as a whole there was more grain per person in 1900 than in 1861 because agricultural production increased more rapidly than population.[2]

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[1]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 70. Italics mine.

[2]Lyashchenko, pp. 453, 514.

Gerschenkron, however, states just as positively that there was less grain per capita in Russia by 1900, because output had declined since 1870.[1] In one of his latest publications, he indicates at length that the per capita output of wheat and rye available for domestic consumption had declined from 1870-74 to 1896-1900. He states that in a determination of the amount of grain per capita, "it is . . . important to take account of the fact that along with an increase in exports there was also a considerable increase in marketings of product to the cities whose population was rapidly growing and whose bread consumption was considerably above that of the peasantry. It is then difficult to escape the conclusion that the bread consumption of the rural population in the 1890's reached a very low point even if one abstracts from the disaster [sic] of the great famine of 1891/92."[2]

Gerschenkron's argument, however, does not present as favorable a picture as actually existed. For example, his study of output per capita of grain refers only to wheat and rye, and does not take into consideration barley, oats, and corn, which played an increasingly more important role in the production of cereals in Russia. Secondly, while his index for per capita output of wheat and rye was lower in 1896-1900 than in 1870-74, it showed a definite rise over the period 1886-1890. One might conclude from his own evidence the rural sector was experiencing a recovery rather than a deepening crisis.

In his article, Goldsmith states that the volume of total agricul-

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[1]Gerschenkron, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 48; Gerschenkron, Cambridge Economic History of Europe, p. 777.

[2]Gerschenkron, Cambridge Economic History of Europe, p. 778.

tural output increased at a rate slightly more than the population, which seemingly refutes the picture drawn by Gerschenkron. In addition, the increase was most rapid in cereal production, and the overall agricultural "rate of growth accelerated considerably beginning with the mid-1880's after remaining low in the first two decades following the agricultural reform."[1] Nevertheless, Goldsmith concludes his study of Russia's economic growth doubting whether--in view of increased exports and industrial consumption--per capita consumption of agricultural products increased throughout the country. In fact, he feels that it might even have declined, and thus in general would tend to agree with Gerschenkron.[2]

Table 10 dealing with per capita output of cereal demonstrates that the amount of grain available for individual consumption was improving, even after one abstracts the ever growing exports.[3]

In the late nineteenth century the international grain market was in a general state of depression, as grain prices declined sharply. The drop in prices on the international market, as well as the intense competition with American farmers, was reflected on the grain market within Russia. The decline in the price of grain and its impact on peasantry

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[1]Goldsmith, Economic Development and Cultural Change, IX (April, 1961), 442.

[2]Ibid., p. 454.

[3]This table does not attempt to pinpoint precisely what per capita consumption of cereal was from 1886-1900. It deals with general developments. The table itself is a conglomeration of various sources, especially the harvest figures which were computed by applying Goldsmith's index to the harvest of cereals found in Khromov. Since I use population and export figures for the entire empire, and harvest figures based on European Russia, the per capita consumption estimate is underestimated rather than overstated.

TABLE 10

Amount of Cereal Available for Per Capita Consumption from 1886-1900

Year	Population (millions)	Cereal Harvest (50 Provinces) Millions of Poods	All Cereals Exports (Millions) of Poods	Grain Per Capita Harvest Minus Exports (Poods)
1886	110.9	2,135	279	16.74
1887	113.1	2,525	393	18.85
1888	115.3	2,454	548	16.53
1889	116.6	1,838	467	11.76
1890	117.8	2,212	419	15.22
1891	119.0	1,732	391	11.26
1892	120.2	2,083	196	15.70
1893	121.5	2,934	404	20.82
1894	122.7	2,989	640	19.14
1895	123.9	2,686	575	17.03
1896	125.1	2,730	507	17.77
1897	126.4	2,261	489	14.02
1898	128.4	2,672	459	17.23
1899	130.3	3,016	346	20.49
1900	131.7	2,953	420	19.23
		Five Year Averages		
1886-1890	114.7	2,233	421	15.79
1891-1895	121.4	2,485	441	16.83
1896-1900	128.4	2,726	444	17.77

is considered another index of the agricultural crisis.

Contemporary literature is replete with discussions and evidence purporting to show that low prices and their concomitant high harvests constituted a virtual disaster for the peasantry of Russia.[1] Yuzhakov

[1]"Obezpechenie Narodnago Prodovol'stviya v Svyazi s Khlebnoi Promyshlennosti," Russkoe Bogatstvo, III (March, 1892), 131. See also Mendel, p. 47 who outlines the legal populist view concerning low prices and the "fear" of a good harvest.

and Nikolai-on argue at some length about the detrimental impact of the more productive American farmer and the resulting decline in price upon Russian agriculture.[1] Another Populist, Karyshev, devoted an entire article to the problem of the fall of prices. He argued that the peasant had greater and greater need for money, because of state pressure, which forced him to sell more and more of his product, to his own detriment. The huge mass of grain thrown upon the market brings down the price of grain. In view of the extrenal pressure for lower prices and the internal factors bringing about lower prices, the people were on the verge of bankruptcy.[2] Karyshev also makes the point, that more and more the peasants fear a good harvest because of the implication of excess grain upon the low level of prices.[3]

Modern scholars have picked up the contemporary sensitivity to the declining grain prices and their relationship to Russian agriculture. The double pressure of heavy redemption payments, in conjunction with falling prices "constituted the economic basis of the agrarian crisis, resulting in accumulating arrears in taxes and redemption payments, and reducing the peasant class to abject misery."[4] Khromov also sees the decline in grain prices on both the international and domestic market as leading toward the growth of arrears and the general ruin of peasant

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[1]Nikolai-on, Russkoe Bogatstvo, I (January, 1895), 178.

[2]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), pp. 61-68.

[3]Ibid., p. 52.

[4]Watters, The Peasant in Nineteenth Century, pp. 154-55; see also Volin, A Century . . ., p. 60.

husbandry.[1]

What seems to be the major exception to the standard interpretation of the impact of low grain prices upon the Russian economy is a two volume study, published in 1897 under the editorship of A. Chuprov and A. Posnikov entitled Vliianie Urozhaev i Khlebnykh Tsen. The study was commissioned by Witte to gather information to support his arguments concerning the improvement in the general well-being of the country.[2] The entire two volumes centers around the theme that low prices were good, the very opposite of the accepted viewpoint, and were indeed beneficial to the Russian peasant. Although virtually everyone ridiculed its findings, the conclusions of the study mesh very well with the evidence that there was no economic crisis.[3]

The editors begin with a statement acknowledging the rather paradoxical implications of the study. They state:

> the considerable drop in the prices for grain products, beginning with 1893 and particularly 1894, should have, at least at first glance, caused real damage to the interests of the people's economy of a country which retains a predominantly agricultural character. Such a supposition shared by many, and often expressed, is based on the opinion that either all or a considerable share of the agricultural products goes through the market and that the agricultural income of the land is composed by multiplying two magnitudes--the crop and the prices, which is the reason why the level for the price of grain bears no less a significance than the size of the crop, for

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[1]Khromov, Ekonomika . . ., pp. 206-207.

[2]Theodore Von Laue, "The High Cost and Gamble of the Witte System: A Chapter in the Industrialization of Russia," The Journal of Economic History, XIII (1953), 431.

[3]This work was apparently overlooked by G. T. Robinson because it is not to be found in the bibliography of his famous study of Russian agriculture.

the general well-being of the population.[1]

In order to understand the real significance of the harvest and the price of grain one must first have a basic and correct understanding of the nature of the grain market and other components within the national economy. The first major consideration to bear in mind is the fact that not all the provinces of European Russia had surplus or even sufficient grain. Even in the very good crop year of 1895, roughly forty percent of all the provinces had shortages of grain--eighteen governments out of fifty, or 22 out of 46, depending upon the source.[2]

The national economy of Russia consisted of disparate components in which the level of the price and the size of the harvest had inverse effect on those regions which had surplus grain and those that experienced deficits. The one region had a product to sell and the other wanted to purchase that product. High prices brought great benefits to the areas of exports, to the detriment of the areas of import. The occurrence of low prices brought the reverse phenomenon.[3] Low prices were therefore definitely an advantage for some people.

Another factor to be cognizant of in the determination of the influence of prices and harvests upon the economic well-being of Russia, is that the largest part of the harvest does not enter the market. Statistical data as of 1895 shows that only 25 to 33% of the total harvest became part of either the export or domestic trade. This being true, the range of price fluctuations do not affect the major portion of

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[1]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. I.

[2]Ibid., pp. II-III. [3]Ibid., pp. III-IV.

the harvest in Russia.[1] A final premise to this discussion is the fact that wheat was the primary money crop--84% of the harvest of wheat being put on the market in 1888-1890, whereas only 20% of the rye crop became part of the trade market. It is then the cultivators of wheat who are most concerned with price levels, rather than the producers of rye.[2]

The peasant, constituting over 80% of the population, is the largest consumer of the harvest, and is thus vitally concerned with the size and the price of the harvest. Chuprov indicates that in only six of the fifty provinces of Russia did the peasants have real surpluses for marketing. This calculation is based on peasant needs for himself and his livestock. The statistical evidence suggests that in the overwhelming majority of cases the tillage of the peasant did not provide adequate grain for peasant needs. "Only one small group is isolated from the total mass of peasants who are growing grain for sale: in the greater number of cases, the peasant economy is purely a natural economy, pursuing the aims of direct consumption."[3]

Given the following premises, (1) that internal grain market is made up of dissimilar components, (2) that as a result a large percentage of Russian provinces are purchasers of grain, (3) that a large part of the grain harvest is totally unaffected by the price because it is consumed directly, and (4) that the vast majority of Russia's peasants--which means essentially the majority of the Russian people--are purchasers of grain, then it follows that large harvests and low prices

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[1]Ibid., pp. IV-V. [2]Ibid., p. VI. [3]Ibid., p. VIII.

constitute a boon rather than a tragedy to most Russians.[1]

Chuprov and Posnikov contend that large harvests and low prices have benefits beyond the simple purchase of a cheap commodity for the rural sector. The urban population naturally thrives upon an abundant harvest with favorable prices. In addition, there seems to be a direct connection between high yields and low prices in lowering the death rate and increasing the number of marriages. Per day labor rates improved in good crop years. Perhaps the most important evidence that good crops and low prices are a benefit to Russia, is the fact that villagers do not strive so diligently for supplemental work in the cities as during poor harvests.[2]

The following quotation, taken from the report of the Minister of Finance on the state budget of incomes and expenses for the year 1895, summarizes very well the contention that good crops and low prices are a benefit to Russia.

> The drop in prices for the products of the land, represents an outstanding feature of the economic history of cultural states for the past quarter century . . ..[3]
>
> The distinguishing characteristics of our national economy and daily life as compared with the Western European countries, is incidentally involved in the supremacy of our system of natural economy both in the predominance of numbers, as well as in the total area of land owned by that same peasant population which cannot alienate the grain they produce for the market, but are themselves its consumers. That amount of agricultural products which enters into international trade and into the internal market constitutes a comparatively small part of the total agricultural income of the country. The majority of the peasant farms obtain their monetary means not as much by the sale of grain, as by

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[1]See Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., pp. 54-79.

[2]Chuprov and Posnikov, pp. XLVIII-LII, LIV.

[3]Ibid., p. LVI.

> various forms of handicraft occupations, side earnings, sale of other farm products, etc.--and the numbers of peasant farms buying grain, exceeds in the average years the numbers who sell it. A high crop increases the natural stores in the country which serve as the source of both personal consumption as well as for the support and improvement of agricultural production itself, provides one part of the population a greater amount of products for sale, and for the other--lightens the burden of expense on the purchase of bread. In the years of good crops the peasant economy accumulates forces, increases consumption and, incidentally, improves its farming and domestic circumstances, thanks to increasing earnings from private landowners. In the years of abundant crops, the factory-plant products designed for bread consumption of their products, as well as the handicraft enterprises, widen the trade turnover, increase the profits of the transport enterprises, raise the state incomes. For Russia, in the whole aggregate of her village interests, and the interests of the whole national economy a high crop is a blessing, even if it is accompanied by some drop in the prices of grain. . . .[1]

The argument and evidence presented by Chuprov et. al. is creditable because it makes good common sense. And in the view of the Soviet scholar S. A. Pervushkin, it apparently makes very good theoretical sense. He argues that in periods of prosperity prices of agricultural products decline relative to industrial products, which in view of the declining grain prices of the 1880's and 1890's, implies that the decade of the 1890's would have been a period of relative prosperity.[2]

Although the Chuprov findings seem to be a reasonable deduction from the evidence presented therein, the study provoked a storm of protest. As Von Laue states, "practically all economists ridiculed its conclusions."[3] This, of course, is excluding the thirteen economists who published articles in the work. Lenin was among those who attacked

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[1]Ibid., pp. LVII, LVIII.

[2]S. A. Pervushkin, "Cyclical Fluctuations in Agriculture and Industry in Russia," Quarterly Journal of Economics, XLII (August, 1928), 566.

[3]Von Laue, The Journal of Economic History, XIII (1953), 431.

the Chuprov study, and this will be described at greater length below. In general, it would seem that modern scholars have simply ignored the work. Lazar Volin, however, briefly duscusses the findings of Chuprov's study in his latest book on Russian agriculture.

Volin notes that Chuprov's work evoked considerable study which disagreed with the findings, which Volin himself feels are too extreme. He states that "a special study of 82 peasant households in the province of Kazan, brought out that for 11 peasant households, or 13 percent of the total number, low prices were advantageous; for 55 households, or 67 percent, high prices were profitable; and for the remaining 16 households, or 20 percent, the question of price was immaterial."[1] Volin feels that such data throws serious doubt upon the conclusions of Chuprov and Posnikov. However, he does acknowledge that large crops were an unmitigated boon to the rural sector of Russia.

Volin has chosen to accept the evidence presented by one study based on 82 peasant households. Given the fact that such a small sampling could be--and probably is--very untypical, and in view of the fact that Chuprov's findings are a result of a number of studies based on the governments's data of millions of households across Russia and substantiated by samplings of Zemstvo statistical material from 13 provinces, it would seem that the weight of believability must lie with Chuprov.[2]

The discussion of the general influence of the price of grain and the yield of the harvest leads quite naturally to a specific examination of the structure of the peasant budget. The following discussion is

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[1]Volin, A Century . . ., p. 61.

[2]Chuprov and Posnikov, pp. XI-XIII.

predicated upon Chuprov and Posnikov's study, which includes a very lengthy chapter dealing with peasant budgets. The conclusions in this study are based largely upon the budgets of 230 typical farms and the money balance of 232,373 farms.[1] This material is considerably more extensive than that used by Lenin in his famous work, The Development of Capitalism, which is based essentially on 66 budgets.[2]

As noted above, Lenin was critical of the findings in Chuprov's study because they were premised on an average budget for all peasants rather than dividing peasants according to various well-defined categories such as size of land allotment or the number of draft animals, as he did. Lenin argues that average budget figures always picture the peasant farm in better condition than it really was.[3]

Nevertheless, it is the opinion herein that general averages, while not completely accurate, make the material much more intelligible for drawing conclusions. In particular, in the Russian situation averages are more valid than Lenin assumed. If one uses 66 households for a measure, as Lenin did, then the average budget might be considerably out of perspective. But by using a broader basis for use as evidence--over 200,000 households--which quite possibly more nearly reflects the composition of society, then the use of the "average" is more relevant. The following quotation from Robinson states the proposition very well.

> 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 procreating by statistical method an "average peasant,"

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[1] Ibid., pp. X-XIII.

[2] Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, pp. 148 ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 149.

and writing for him a statistical biography. . . .

> 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 sizeable 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 as great, the "average" might perhaps have 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.[1]

Professor F. A. Shcherbina wrote the lengthy chapter on the influence of prices and crops upon peasant budgets in the Chuprov study. She establishes the premise that it is grain farming that is the fundamental component of peasant agriculture and his economy in every region of Russia. All other aspects of agriculture, such as truck gardening and bee keeping, are essentially supplemental.[2] This is the reason that the fluctuations in grain yields and prices is so important to the peasant.

Shcherbina's study showed that for the average peasant, high prices and low harvests bring a deficit to the family budget. On the other hand, low prices and abundant harvest means a surplus in the budget. A surplus in the budget only happens when there is an increase in the harvest. After demonstrating that her model was sound theoretically, she then programmed the harvest and prices of 1891 into her model and

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[1]Robinson, p. 111. See also Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., pp. 9-10, who says essentially the same thing.

[2]Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., pp. 54-55.

showed that her theory stands the test of reality.[1] The reason the large harvest-low prices benefits the average budget is because the peasant, after taking care of his food needs in terms of grain, has more money to spend on other things.[2]

The low prices and large harvests had a very favorable impact on peasants who supplemented their income outside of grain husbandry. The money income came principally not from the sale of grain but from the "craft" earnings. The craft earnings were used primarily to defray state, and zemstvo taxes, rents, and the purchase of grain to supplement shortages. These outside earnings were very important because if they decrease, the peasant is forced to sell more of his farm products which would have been used to fulfill his own needs. The craft earnings, which are usually drawn from (1) local agricultural earnings, (2) local handicraft industries, and (3) from seasonal work, are dependent on the fluctuations of crops and prices.[3]

The data shows that good crops and low grain prices result in high wages at harvest time in the chernozem region. This increase in pay was 18% throughout the entire black earth zone, when crops were better than average.[4]

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[1]Ibid., pp. 54-79. Shcherbina acknowledges that he is holding all other variables constant, p. 75.

[2]Ibid., pp. 60, 74, 76. See also Osipov, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., p. 372. The budgets were based on average expenditures and incomes of budgets throughout Russia for the period 1883-1887.

[3]Chuprov and Posnikov, p. XIV. The findings given below are based on labor wages earned by the peasantry in the period 1882-1892 and also from data for 1892-94.

[4]Ibid., pp. XV-XVI.

Grain prices and the harvest have an impact on the Russian handicraft industry in two ways: by determining how much the farmer-craftsman will have to spend on the purchase of food, and regulating the demand for his products. Again research shows that good crops bring a rise in the handicraft industry and low crops bring a reduction. For example, the handicraft industry was depressed by the crop-failure of 1891, but recovered nicely in the boom harvest years of 1893, 1894.[1]

Seasonal labor from the rural sector is also affected by the harvest and price of grain in that the exodus from the village to urban centers is much less when the harvest is large and the prices low.[2]

Thus in terms of the peasant economy and the peasant budget, the following conclusion may be drawn: that "for the majority of the peasant economies, high crops bring well being, even when they are accompanied by low grain prices."[3] This conclusion obviously stands in complete contradiction to those who argue that low prices were a factor in the ruination of the Russian rural sector. This conclusion was based on evidence taken largely from the 1880's. However, Chuprov offers evidence based upon the good harvests for 1893-94 to back up the conclusion made above. Chuprov and Posnikov state:

> According to the comments of many correspondents of the Ministry of Agriculture in the annual review of 1894, . . . the peasants in this year have "spruced up," "have stocked up provisions and feed; many will have stores to last them two, three years; obligations are being discharged, and taxes are paid regularly; the dead stock is being filled in; [substantiated by Goldsmith's work] the cattle are in good condition; there is a noticeable improvement in food and dress; the earnings have increased due to more intense work in harvesting and transporting of the crop on the landlord's estates." .

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[1]Ibid., pp. XVI-XVII. [2]Ibid., pp. XVII-XVIII.

[3]Ibid., p. XX.

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> "The bread the peasants eat is pure and in abundance" conveyed a correspondent of the Korochansk District; "former black, decaying roofs are being replaced with new ones; the backyards fallen into disrepair, are being renovated. . . . the people have cheered up, the peasant food is considerably better; meat began to appear oftener." . . . "the peasants from the Kazan province have poured their grain into the communal stores; many thousands of families have spruced up and caught their breath; part of the indebtedness has been paid, etc." Similar information was conveyed in 1894 from Olonetz, Viatka, Perm, Kaluga, and from the northwestern regions.[1]

Zemstvo publications for 1894 and 1895 show a similar improvement in the rural sector. In Orlov Province, the number of new peasant huts had increased and the peasants had added to the number of their cattle. The number of livestock was increasing in Voronezh also. In Poltava, conditions were better than they had been in years because of low grain prices and high wages for labor. As a result, very few workers had left seeking employment elsewhere.[2]

The picture presented here clearly is not one of mass poverty and decline, but rather one of improvement. There is, however, additional evidence to indicate that the crisis hypothesis must be rejected.

Shcherbina, in the discussion of peasant budgets, worked from a basis of an average peasant household, which is considered to be six people, with an income per soul of 55 r. 54 k., for a total average income of 333 r. 24 k. per soul.[3] An examination of Lenin's material on peasant budgets reveals that possibly 75% of the peasants would have

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[1]Ibid., p. XXI. This material is quoted at length because it stands in stark contrast to the usual picture concerning Russian rural life.

[2]Ibid., p. XXII.

[3]Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., pp. 54-55, 78.

approximately 50 r. income per soul or higher. His average figure per farm was 491 r., which is considerably higher than the figure used by Shcherbina.[1] In one of his articles on the economic conditions within Russia, Karyshev cites an earlier study done by Shcherbina and apparently accepted the figure of approximately 50 r. per soul per family, and he reached an average income per family of over 400 r.[2]

With that in mind, an examination of the percentage of the peasant's budget that was expended in tax payments does not seem overly burdensome. Using Lenin's figures, it appears that the average peasant would only pay about 7% of his total income in tax payments. Even the poorest category of peasant paid only approximately 13% of his total income to the state.[3] While this is a considerable portion of the peasant's income, it does not appear to be a great burden upon the backs of the people. It is a far-cry from the 45% figure of the total income consumed in taxes presented by some commentators.[4]

Another salient point in support of the proposition that there was no agrarian crisis for the majority of peasants is the fact that real income, in terms of wages, began to increase in the late nineteenth century. Robinson argues that millions of peasants were either engaged in the handicraft industry and agricultural or industrial wage labor. Wage

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[1]Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, pp. 150-51.

[2]Karyshev, Russkoe Bogatstvo, VIII (August, 1894), 60.

[3]Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, pp. 150-51.

[4]Free Russia, II (August, 1891), 3. See also Nikolai-on, Ocherki, p. 258, who would have us believe that over 4/5's of the total income from grain was consumed by direct and indirect taxes in the 1880's. This seems rather excessive in view of the general arguments presented above.

labor, which is the main concern here, was an important source of income for huge numbers of peasants. While Robinson emphasizes the low level of these wages, he points out that beginning in the early nineties the payments for wage labor began to rise. In fact, from 1895 into the twentieth century there was an increase in the amount of wages paid throughout all of European Russia. In addition, wages increased faster than expenses in ten of the thirteen regions of Russia.[1] This is additional evidence--though it was not Robinson's intention--to suggest improvement rather than deterioration in agricultural conditions.

The conclusion is obvious. Russia did not experience an economic downturn in agriculture in the last years of the nineteenth century--especially after the famine of 1891-92. The vast majority of the people, the peasantry at large, were not enduring an unending spiral of decline to ruin and destitution. Virtually every index for measuring the existence of the crisis--(1) tax arrears, considered by Robinson the best index of the crisis, (2) the so-called burden of indirect taxation, (3) declining output of cereal per capita, and (4) the impact of low grain prices, which was supposedly a major component of rural depression in the 1890's, has been shown invalid. The indices of an agrarian crisis have not only been shown to be invalid, but have even helped establish the proposition that conditions within Russia were on the upswing.

This interpretation does not preclude the existence of destitution and poverty within the agrarian sector of Russia. There was ample evidence--undernourished people, bad housing, serious crop-failures,

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[1]Robinson, pp. 105-106.

disease, and poverty--to demonstrate that a crisis might exist. It does, however, shift the emphasis from a vast majority to a minority of the peasantry who were experiencing economic deterioration, in particular peasants within the central black earth provinces.[1] The perspective is not of Russian agriculture in a state of stagnation or decay. This difference in perspective is obviously of tremendous importance. While any generalization about the Russian peasantry is rather tenuous, it does appear that the burden of proof now rests with the advocates of the agrarian crisis.

Despite the weight of the evidence presented above, in one sense the crisis hypothesis may have some validity. It may have been possible for the Russian agricultural sector to become monetized, and the peasant spend more money, while the total income level of the peasant fell relative to previous years. Two processes might have been going on simultaneously: a shift from "natural" to money economy and a decline in real income. The Russian peasant had two basic elements in the composition of his total income--natural income, consumption of his own production, and monetary income. Thus, while his monetary income could be rising and the peasant is spending more money, his natural income could be declining more rapidly. Therefore, total real income of the peasant would be falling. This possibility was the basic point made by Lenin in The Development of Capitalism. According to Lenin, capitalism was developing in Russia, the market was being created through the monetization of the peasantry, and at the same time a poverty-stricken rural proletariat was emerging. He states: "they [the rural proletariat]

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[1]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 73.

became poorer, but at the same time receive and spend more money,--and both these sides of the process are necessary for capitalism."[1]

The data necessary for resolving the problem posed by Lenin does not exist. Again, one must cite G. T. Robinson, who states that income distribution lata for the Russian peasantry over time is not available. If the data which would demonstrate changes in real income does exist, it has not been uncovered to date.[2] Even Lenin could only postulate hypotheses concerning the economic well-being of the Russian peasantry during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Something might be learned, however, from data concerning wages paid to those peasants who supplemented their income by seeking employment outside their allotment. Robinson provides evidence which shows that the daily wage-rate paid to the peasant worker rose faster than the price of his principal food--rye--in the 1890's, and thus constituted an increase in real income. This is a very important measure of peasant well-being in the 1890's because "wage work in agriculture and other rural non-industrial occupations was . . . an important source of peasant income."[3] In Lenin's study of peasant budgets, 30 of the 66 budgets examined added to income by farm and day laboring.[4] Chuprov's study also agrees that a large proportion of the peasantry supplemented

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[1]Lenin, Development of Capitalism, p. 167.

[2]See above, p. 284. Robinson, p. 110. In addition, one must bear in mind that noted scholars such as Goldsmith, Volin, Gerschenkron, and Vucinich have apparently not uncovered this data.

[3]Robinson, p. 105.

[4]Lenin, Development of Capitalism, p. 154. In 1893, he argued that the majority of the peasants met their total needs by selling their labor.

its income via the sale of labor. Fully 30% of the total income of the peasant household was obtained outside agriculture per se.[1] We can be fairly certain that in an important component of the peasant's total budget, his real income was rising rather than falling. If that were generally the case, it would seem that monetizing the peasant economy would raise rather than lower living standards.

It seems very likely that conditions were improving in the last years of the nineteenth century for a majority of the Russian peasants. Given the fact that consumption of cotton, tea, sugar, matches, kerosene, tobacco, etc. was growing absolutely, it is hardly likely that the overall standard of living of the peasant was dropping. Would there be a decline in the consumption of food, especially with food prices falling relative to other commodities, while there was a rise in the use of tea or kerosene? Assuming that the peasant acts rationally in making his economic decisions, would the peasant reduce his consumption of an essential necessity--food--relative to consumption of sugar or tea? If, therefore, the peasant's total income--monetary and natural--was lower in the 1890's relative to the 1880's, then one must accept the proposition that the peasant was willing to maintain not only current levels but increase levels of consumption in items such as tea and sugar at the expense of his expenditure on food, his home, his land, and his livestock. If his total income was reduced, would he not cut back on the use of sugar rather than enlarge his consumption of such goods?

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[1]Chuprov and Posnikov, pp. XII, XIV. See also Shcherbina, Vliianie Urozhaev . . ., p. 55.

If indeed there was no deepening agrarian crisis within Tsarist Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, why was there so much literature on the subject? One answer to this question is that the famine of 1891-92 focused attention on the agricultural sector of the Russian economy more than any incident since the Emancipation of the serf. As such it acted to confirm biases that already existed toward the system, and to convince others of the existence of a crisis within the economy. It generated a popular humanitarian movement which drew Russian university students and upper class elements of sundry types, as well as numerous foreign observers to the famine district. The impressions formed by these observers about Russian agriculture must have had great influence and very likely prejudiced any further attitudes toward Russian husbandry. Even in its best days, the rural economy was hardly on a level with its West European counterpart. Thus to men--both Russian and foreign--aware of agricultural developments in the West, it would seem that Russian agriculture was in a state of decline. They did have access to statistics on the tax arrears, which were and are still believed to be the barometer of the economic situation of the peasant. In addition, many of the men, such as Paul Miliukov, Konstantin Golovin, P. K. Shvanebakh, Sergei Sharapov, and General Lobko who attacked Witte's program and pointed to the agrarian distress, had for various reasons a real political "axe" to grind.[1] It should also be remembered that the Zemstvo statistics so often cited by the liberals to show the

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[1]See Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., pp. 276-82; Miliukov, pp. 134-37.

rural distress, were compiled from an essentially populist viewpoint.[1] Thus there was formed a body of opinion and statistics so great as to prejudice subsequent study of the subject.

Study of Russian agriculture in this period can lead to a new interpretation of the causes of the Revolution of 1905. The generally accepted view as to the causes of the 1905 Revolution is that the ever declining condition of the rural sector reached a point at which the peasants finally began to revolt in 1902, and ultimately led to the general conflagration of 1905.[2]

It would seem that a critical factor in the downfall of Witte in 1903 and the Revolution of 1905 was the world and Russian depression of 1899. From 1893 to 1899, Russia was experiencing a tremendous boom--expansion in agriculture, industry and trade. However, this period of prosperity came to an end in 1900, at the same time that the international economic scene suffered a setback in the depression of 1899-1900.[3] A few historians see the Russian depression that began at the turn of the century, as a direct result of Witte's program. Gerschenkron, for example, sees the underlying cause of this economic reverse as

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[1]Schwarz, Continuity and Change, p. 54; Yegiazarova, p. 9.

[2]Robinson, pp. 116, 138-39; Gerschenkron, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 53; Von Laue, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 218; Kochan, p. 17; Harcave, The Russian Revolution, p. 20.

[3]Pervushkin, Quarterly Journal of Economics, XLII (August, 1928), 579. Von Laue, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 218.

"the exhaustion of the tax-paying powers of the rural population."[1] This interpretation of course is quite consistent with the traditional agrarian crisis theory.

The Russian depression of 1900 was related directly to the world-wide financial crisis of 1899-1900. Witte's entire industrialization program was dependent upon the influx of foreign capital,[2] and when these loans floated abroad ceased to flow into Russia, through no fault of the government, the Witte bubble burst.[3] The international crisis itself was the result of a number of factors--the Fashoda incident, the Spanish-American War, the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion, all of which greatly curtailed the international money market.[4]

The riots and disturbances that took place in Russia were rooted in frustrated expectations. In line with the well-known aphorism that the poverty-stricken do not rebel, the peasant revolts of 1902, 1903, and 1904 should not be interpreted as a result of sheer poverty.[5] Extreme suffering tends to produce apathy, concentration on survival, and not violence.[6] Bertram D. Wolfe states about the famine of 1891,

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[1]Gerschenkron, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 53; see also Miliukov, p. 337; Kennan, The Russian Revolution, p. 31.

[2]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 74.

[3]Von Laue, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 218.

[4]Von Laue, Readings in Russian History, p. 74; Kochan, p. 17.

[5]A number of scholars feel that these riots were a product of the agricultural crisis. Robinson, p. 116. See also Gerschenkron, The Transformation of Russian Society, p. 53; Harcave, The Russian Revolution, p. 20; Kennan, The Russian Revolution, p. 31.

[6]Carl G. Gustafson, A Preface to History (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 100.

that they are wrong who believe that the starving revolt.[1] Similarly, Eric Hoffer has stated: "Where people toil from sunrise to sunset for a bare living, they nurse no grievances and dream no dreams. One of the reasons for the unrebelliousness of the masses in China is the inordinate effort required there to scrape together the means of the scantiest subsistence. The intensified struggle for existence 'is a static rather than a dynamic influence.'"[2]

Study of the French Revolution, which has parallels with the Russian situation, reveals that the outbreak of revolution took place in the period of a depression following a period of expansion. Economic misery--destitution--did not provoke the revolution.[3] France in the eighteenth century, like Russia in the 1890's, sustained a period of growth and increasing prosperity.[4] However, in 1788-89, France was a stricken with a series of economic setbacks which played a considerable role in stimulating the revolts in mid 1789. Thus the French Revolution "was born not out of misery, but out of strength and hope."[5]

Given the revisionist interpretation of the agrarian crisis of the 1890's, the model of the French Revolution is very apropos to the Russian scene on the eve of the revolt of 1905. The peasant revolts of 1902, in Poltava and Kharkov, are more easily comprehended as a result

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[1]Wolfe, p. 89. See also Arthur P. Mendel, "The Question Remains Open," in The Russian Revolution, ed. Virgil D. Medlin (Hinsdale, Ill.: The Dryden Press, 1974), p. 91.

[2]Richmond Times Dispatch, August 9, 1970, p.

[3]Edward M. Burns, Western Civilization (7th edition, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1968), p. 612.

[4]Brinton, p. 30. [5]Gustafson, p. 101.

of frustrated expectations than as a result of deepening poverty. The districts of Poltava and Kharkov were not even part of the central black earth zone, but the wheat exporting areas and would be particularly affected by international monetary fluctuations. Robinson notes that agricultural wage real income fell beginning in 1901, and by 1904, was lower in almost all of Russia than it had been in 1895.[1]

Thus the period 1902-1905, which erupts in the Revolution of 1905, becomes more intelligible. The peasant and worker were angry and frustrated because of the sudden curtailment of their improved standard of living. This interpretation as regards the cause of the Revolution of 1905, fits the traditional model of revolution much better than the interpretation of dire poverty. As such, the revisionist interpretation of the economic consequences of the famine, the myth of the agrarian crisis, and the economic reasons for the revolts prior to the Revolution of 1905, make a consistent pattern--each new interpretation naturally leading to the other.

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[1]Robinson, p. 106.

CHAPTER VI

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONCLUSION

> "For our purpose, the main thing to learn is not the art of accumulating material, but the sublimer art of investigating it, of discerning truth from falsehood and certainty from doubt. It is by solidity of criticism more than by the plentitude of erudition that the study of history strengthens, and straightens, and extends the mind."[1] Lord Acton

The Russian Famine of 1891-92 was one of the most important events in the last half of the nineteenth century in the economic, social and international life of Tsarist Russia. Economically, the famine was significant not because it had a long lasting impact on the Russian economy in contrast to the opinions of many contemporaries and modern scholars. As it has been demonstrated, the economic consequences were slight and only of short duration. Nevertheless, the famine was important in an economic sense because it acted as a catalyst for rapid industrialization, and instead of hindering the modernization of Russia, helped bring it about.

The famine was very significant in terms of the international grain trade, and especially vis-a-vis the grain trade of the United States. A study of the world grain trade shows that in the ten years, 1881-1890, prior to the famine, Russia and the United States were the largest competitors for this trade. The following figures provide a

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[1]J. E. E. Acton, "The Historian as Judge," What is History--Fact or Fancy? ed. Brian Tierney, Donald Kagan, and L. Pearce Williams (New York: Random House, Inc.), p. 13.

picture of the average annual export of various cereals, from Russia and the United states for the above period.[1]

TABLE 11

AVERAGE ANNUAL EXPORT OF CEREALS, 1881-1890,

FOR RUSSIA AND THE UNITED STATES

Wheat in Bushels	
Russia: 83,170,011 Second Largest Exporter	United States: 83,343,864 World's Largest Exporter
Corn in Bushels	
The United States provided 57,000,000 bushels of the 64,000,000 bushels imported by Europe, which was only 4% of America's harvest.	
Rye in Bushels	
Russia: 46,000,000 of rye grain, not counting rye flour. World's largest exporter.	United States: 2,000,000
Barley in Bushels	
Russia: 32,123,179 World's Largest Exporter	United States: Met Own Needs
Oats in Bushels	
Russia: 58,022,565 World's Largest Exporter	United States: 2,828,387 Third Largest Exporter

The harvest of the winter crops in Europe in 1891, disrupted the normal international grain market. Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary were suffering from a shortage of rye, and eventually all cereals, for

[1]"Production and Distribution of the Principal Agricultural Products of the World." Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Statistics, No. 5 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), pp. 13-22. Cited hereafter as "Production and Distribution of the Principal Agricultural Products of the World."

almost a year. An international grain commission calculated the harvest of wheat and rye in Europe at--wheat 82.5% and rye 72.1% of the harvest of 1890, or 80.2% for wheat and 75% for rye of the harvest of 1889.[1] The wheat crop in the United States was unusally large, with a total increase of 211,000,000 bushels or 50% over the crop of 1890. Since the famine eliminated Russia as a competitor in the grain market, it was only natural that the grain of the West would replace the grain of the East in the European market.[2]

The increase in agricultural exports from the United States in the fiscal year 1891-92 was enormous. This fiscal year corresponded almost exactly to the time of the embargo on exportation of grain from Russia. All agricultural exports from America comprised, on the average, about 73% of the total domestic exportation of the United States. In 1892, agricultural products made up 78.1% or $793,717,676 of the total export, which was more than the total foreign trade--exports and imports--of the United States in any year prior to 1870.[3]

The effects of the increased exportations in monetary value upon cereals and breadstuffs is significant. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1891, the value of cereal exports was $128,121,656.[4] However,

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[1] Documents of the House of Representatives, "Grain Crops of the World, 1891," XXXVII, 162-64.

[2] Ibid., pp. 161-63.

[3] "Production and Distribution of the Principal Agricultural Products of the World," p. 151. Another source gives an even higher figure--79%. See Exports of Farm Products from the United States 1851-1908, p. 9.

[4] Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the Corporation of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York for the Year 1891-92 (New York: Press of the Chamber of Commerce, 1892), p. XXV.

for June 30, 1892, the value of these exports reached $299,363,117.[1] The examination of the exportation of a single crop, corn, reveals a significant increase over those of the previous fiscal year--1891. In that year the United States exported 30,768,213 bushels of corn valued at $17,652,687, compared with 73,768,672 bushels valued at $40,623,517 for the fiscal year 1892.[2] It was believed that this increase, in the exportation of corn, was a result of the efforts of Col. Murphy, who was sent to Europe in 1891 to push the use of corn as a food. The heavy exports of corn, however, were probably a result of the demand for grain in Europe to replace the vacuum created by the embargo of Russian cereals, rather than a result of Murphy's efforts. The total value of breadstuffs exported in 1892 was larger than that of any other single item exported up to that time.[3]

An article, published by the Department of Agriculture in 1894 entitled "Recent Features of Our Foreign Trade," analyzed the trade of the United States for the fiscal years 1891, 1892, and 1893. The impetus for this study was the marked decline in exports in 1893 and the increase in the exportation of gold and the decrease in the gold importation as opposed to 1892. The article noted that since America's exports consisted largely of agricultural products, those circumstances

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[1]Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Corporation of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York for the Year 1892-93 (New York: Press of the Chamber of Commerce, 1893), p. XXII.

[2]U. S. Department of Agriculture Reports, Reports of the Statistician, No. 97 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), p. 283.

[3]Edward T. Peters, "Recent Features of Our Foreign Trade," Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Statistics, No. 8 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p. 12.

which affected the international grain market would affect the volume of exports and thus the entire foreign trade of the United States.[1] It then compared the poor harvest in Europe, and especially in Russia, with the abundant American crops of 1891. After comparing the value of exports of 1892 to 1891 and 1893 to 1892, the article concludes that "the great increase in our exports of domestic merchandise during the fiscal year 1891-92, as compared with the fiscal year preceding, is explained by the fact that a very large crop of the principal cereals in this country in 1891, following the small crop of 1890, coincided with the short crops in Europe and consequently with an active foreign demand for our surplus breadstuffs."[2] Conversely, with the recovery of Russia and Europe and a better harvest in 1892-93, the American exportation of cereals declined appreciably.[3] Thus it is apparent that the famine in Russia had a marked influence upon the foreign trade of the United States, and what was a year of misfortune in Russia proved to be one of good fortune for the United States and the American farmer.

The famine in Russia and American aid to Russia briefly rekindled the excellent relations between these countries that had existed during the Civil War. The trend in the relations of the two countries had been spiraling downward toward the end of the century.[4] America's dislike for autocracy, her reaction to George Kennan's book, Siberia and the Exile System, and the persecution of the Jews had a great deal to do

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[1]Ibid., p. 5. [2]Ibid., p. 13. [3]Ibid.

[4]Thomas A. Bailey, America Faces Russia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 150.

with her growing antagonism toward Russia after the Civil War. Nevertheless, the needs of the starving peasants offset these obstacles, and the Americans, with a crusading fervor, came to the peasant's aid. The Minister of Foreign Affairs considered American aid a counterpart to the visit of the Russian fleet during the Civil War. A Foreign Office dispatch of January 29, 1898, to the Russian Ambassador to America, Count A. P. Cassini, briefly reviewed the excellent diplomatic relations of the two countries during the Civil War and the famine, as a prelude to instructions that he should energetically resist the growth of American guidance in the trade and commerce of China.[1]

The response of America to the suffering within Russia favorably impressed the Russians--noblemen and peasant alike. In a letter to Rudolph Blankenburg, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov wrote:

> It is with great pleasure that I accept the photographs of the departure of your steamer Indiana from Philadelphia, and I thank you most heartily for them and your letter, in which you tell me of the kind interest you are all taking in us. The friendly feelings of sympathy America shows us now, when so many of our people are in want, can never be forgotten by me or my countrymen, and that you will believe this is the sincere wish of, dear sir,
>
> Yours faithfully
> Ct. Vorontsov-Dashkov[2]

A village elder told Blankenburg that "all we can say is, God bless you and those who sent you."[3]

Upon the arrival of the Indiana at Libau, Philadelphians read in the North American of March 21, 1892:

The following dispatch has been sent to the Mayor of Philadelphia by

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[1]"Severo-Amerikanskie Soedinennye Shtaty i Tsarskaya Rossiya v 90 X gg XIX v." Krasnyi Arkhiv, LII (1932), 133-34.

[2]Cited by Blankenburg, p. 2. [3]Ibid.

> the Russian Relief Society: "The Russian Relief Society warmly welcome the dear American Brethren who arrived in the Indiana, and prays you to transmit to the inhabitants of Philadelphia an expression of the Society's lasting gratitude. God save America." The dispatch is signed by the leaders of the Russian Relief Society.[1]

The enthusiastic response of the people in Libau, Riga, and St. Petersburg provides a further indication of the Russian attitude toward America's aid. Before any aid had reached Russia, Ambassador Smith stated in a dispatch of January 11, 1892, that the movements within America to procure and send aid to Russia made an excellent impression in St. Petersburg.[2]

Dispatches from the Ambassador contain three more statements of favorable Russian reaction to American efforts. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicholas De Giers, told Smith that the Russian government was quite aware of the generous gifts donated by the American people.[3] He noted that the Tsarevich concurred with everyone else when he said "'We are all deeply touched by the ship-loads of food which are coming to us from America.'"[4] On March 31, Smith had an audience with the Tsar who felt that the aid coming from America was extremely generous. He asked Smith to convey the following message to the President upon his return to the United States:

> I am very much touched by the interest and kindness which the people of the United States are showing in sending ships of flour to my suffering people; these offerings are great and generous; they indicate a sympathy and friendship for which we are deeply grate-

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[1]The North American (Philadelphia), March 21, 1892, p. 1.

[2]Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith, Vol. 42, A Letter from Charles E. Smith to James G. Blaine (January 11, 1892).

[3]Ibid., No. 156 (March 2, 1892).

[4]Ibid., No. 161 (March 24, 1892).

> ful; and I desire that you will convey to the American people my sincere thanks for this manifestation of their friendly and human sentiments.[1]

In addition to the gifts presented to the Captains of the ships that brought the grain to Russia, the Tsar sent presents to the American commissioners who supervised the delivery of the cargoes of grain. On May 27, 1893, the tenth anniversary of the coronation of Alexander III, the warship Rynda anchored in the Delaware River upon which the various commissioners were received.[2] Each commissioner received a letter of thanks and a gift from the Tsar.[3] The Russian Ambassador, Prince Cantacuzen, presented the gifts to W. C. Edgar, R. S. Phelps, Rev. Dr. T. Dewitt Talmage, R. B. Reeves, Rudolph Blankenburg, Col. A. V. Drexel, Jr., Dr. Biddle, C. McReeve, S. Klopsch, and Dr. Hubbel. Each present was an elaborate piece of Russian handicraft. For example, R. B. Reeves received a beautiful gold plated punch set.[4] Another Russian act of gratitude for American aid was active participation and interest in the Russian exhibit at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.[5]

The closing incident to the Russian Famine of 1891-92 and the American involvement, is rather ironical in view of the present world situation. On November 7, 1893, the Marshal of Nobility of St. Peters-

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[1] Dispatches of Charles Emory Smith and Andrew White, Vol. 43, No. 164 (April 1, 1892).

[2] Reeves, p. 105.

[3] B. F. Tillinghast, "A Far-Reaching Charity II," The Midland Monthly, I (May, 1894), 426.

[4] Reeves, pp. 105-108.

[5] Tillinghast, The Midland Monthly, I (May, 1894), 425.

burg, Count Alexis Bobrinsky, representing the nobility of St. Petersburg, presented to our Ambassador an address to the people of America.[1] The address was mounted in a leather case which folded in half, with the script appearing on the inside facings. It reads:

> In the annals of Russia for 1892, painful though the memory be, history will point out many a bright and joyful page scattered throughout the Empire, on which will be written in letters of gold the beautiful story of the brotherly love as exemplified by the good people of the United States of America.
>
> Hardly had human voices been heard calling for bread in certain governments of Russia, that had suffered from drought, hail, and untimely frost, be that friendly people across the Atlantic moved by an earnest desire to help the afflicted and to feed the hungry, collected from every state in the Union as if by one accord, shipload after shipload of corn and dispatched them, one after the other, on their errand of mercy and relief.
>
> Deeply grateful for such evident signs of evangelical feeling and interest, the Assembly of Nobles of the government of St. Petersburg, as representatives of the intellectual class in Russia, has resolved to express their warm and heartfelt gratitude to those friendly people who form the great Nation of the United States of America.
>
> May the Lord bless and keep all those kind-hearted Americans, men women, and children, who took part in that great and good work of charity, and may the Hand that giveth unto us all, reward them bountifully, and ever keep them from a like misfortune.
>
> The Marshal of the Nobility of St. Petersburg
>
> Count Alexis Bobrinsky.

This address was placed on display in the lobby of the State Department in Washington, D. C., and at the present time it is located in the Archives of the United States.

The famine had a very interesting impact and significance vis-a-

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[1]U. S., Department of State, Russia, Diplomatic Dispatches of Andrew D. White, Vol. 45, No. 153, (November 7, 1893).

vis the contemporary perception of the famine, its causes and results. It is clear that many members of the intelligentsia incorrectly perceived what was happening about them. As argued in Chapters III and IV, there indeed was a discrepancy between the real and the ideal, between what was and what they wanted to believe. As such, among the articulate left, the famine was largely used to confirm biases already in existence, biases against the Tsar and the Tsarist system, biases which, as has been shown, seriously clouded their perspective, biases which the modern scholar has simply adopted without a thorough investigation of the situation.

The famine of 1891-92 became all things to all men. Witte responded to the famine by sounding a call for the rapid industrialization of Russia. The famine had the same effect upon the thinking of Struve, who saw the salvation of Russia only in rapid industrialization and the concomitant development of capitalism. Another Marxist. Lenin, viewed the famine as absolute proof that capitalism was already developing in Russia. In this respect, Lenin was following the thinking of Friedrich Engels who "writing on the famine of 1891, said that it signified the creation of a home market for capitalism."[1] The populists, i.e., Vorontsov and Nikolai-on, on the other hand, drew a totally different conclusion from this event, namely that capitalism cannot come to Russia because of the poverty of the Russian people. Not to be outdone, the political radical Stepniak argued that the famine demonstrated the corruption of the Russian government.

Underlying all che above hypotheses was the premise—which virtu-

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[1]Lenin, The Development of Capitalism, p. 166.

ally everyone agreed upon--that the famine was primae facie evidence of the existence of a crisis in Russian agriculture. Inability to perceive the causes of the famine, made it extremely difficult for the contemporary to objectively view the Russian agriculture crisis of the late nineteenth century. Superficially, the famine was both cause and effect of the agrarian crisis. Again, as in the case of the famine, the modern scholar has adopted the view of the contemporary, basing his judgment largely on the works of the articulate left and therein warping the history of Russia in the 1890's.

Before turning to the conclusions, per se, a few comments are in order as regards the strength of the hypothesis of the agrarian crisis. A number of the historians who uphold the theory of an "agrarian crisis" did so despite evidence, which they presented that tends to suggest a contrary interpretation. For example, Lyashchenko and Von Laue speak of the rise in consumption of various consumer goods, yet still argue in support of a "crisis."[1] Geroid T. Robinson would acknowledge that agricultural output was up and that real wages were up, but he also continued to espouse the crisis hypothesis.[2] One of the best examples of a noted authority who overlooked the existence of positive evidence and was an advocate of the agrarian crisis was George Pavlovsky. His own evidence demonstrated that former state peasants had more than enough land for subsistence, that 70% of all peasants had enough land and that the redemption payment was not a heavy burden.[3]

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[1]Lyashchenko, pp. 509-10; Von Laue, Sergei Witte . . ., pp. 171, 268, 271, 273-74.

[2]Robinson, pp. 98, 108. [3]Pavlovsky, pp. 75, 79, 102.

Even the most recent scholarship on the subject of rural conditions in Russia in the late nineteenth century, continues to uphold the crisis theory. In one chapter of a general study edited by Vucinich on the peasant in the nineteenth century, Francis Watters argues at great length, that the economic well-being of the peasant was declining. The index used to support this view was the growing weight of redemption payments relative to land and grain prices upon the former serfs, and thus his obvious decline. Watters does admit, however, that his findings do not include the former state peasants "whose circumstances were considerably better, with respect to both size of his land allotment and his redemption payments."[1] The point is that one cannot speak about the general deterioration of rural life in Russia when approximately one-half of that life has been excluded.

The Russian famine of 1891-92 has been incorrectly interpreted by the contemporary and by the modern scholar as well. It was misinterpreted vis-a-vis its causes, its impact, and in its relationship to Russian agricultural history in general. The famine was essentially irrelevant to the evolution of the economic life of Russia. Like an eclipse, it was an exciting and momentous incident, but when it is over life goes on as before.

The following quotation from John Stuart Mill's Principles of Political Economy illustrates the point that disasters such as the crop-failure of 1891 do not necessarily have a long-term impact.

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[1]Watters, The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, p. 154.

> This perpetual consumption and reproduction of capital affords the explanation of what has so often excited wonder, the great rapidity with which countries recover from a state of devastation; the disappearance, in a short time, of all traces of the mischiefs done by earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and the ravages of war. An enemy lays waste a country by fire and sword, and destroys or carries away nearly all the moveable wealth existing in it: all the inhabitants are ruined, and yet, in a few years after, everything is much as it was before. . . . There is nothing at all wonderful in the matter. What the enemy have destroyed, would have been destroyed in a little time by the inhabitants themselves: . . . The possibility of a rapid repair of their disasters mainly depends on whether the country has been depopulated. If its effective population have not been extirpated at the time, and are not starved afterwards; then, with the same skill and knowledge which they had before, with their land and its permanent improvements undestroyed, and the more durable buildings probably unimpaired, or only partially injured, they have nearly all the requisites for their former amount of production. If there is as much of food left to them, or of valuables to buy food, as enables them by any amount of privation to remain alive and in working condition, they will in a short time have raised as great a produce, and acquired collectively as great wealth and as great a capital, as before; by the mere continuance of that ordinary amount of exertion which they are accustomed to employ in their occupations.[1]

The famine itself was caused by climatic factors--in particular a drought--and not by the exhaustion of the soil, which in turn was brought about by backward agricultural techniques. As in 1921-22, if there had been no drought, the Russian people would have had sufficient food to sustain themselves. One must bear in mind that agricultural production per dessiatin of land was increasing despite the relatively backward techniques. Thus, the famine was a climatic phenomenon and not an integral part of a deep-seated agricultural crisis.

Caused by a happenstance of nature, the famine cannot be used to support the hypothesis of an agrarian crisis. As shown in Chapter V, such a crisis probably did not exist; consumption per capita of basic

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[1]John S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), pp. 74-75.

consumer goods was on the rise and agricultural productivity was growing faster than population. As a result, rather than the deterioration of the Russian rural sector, it would seem that the life style of a majority of the Russian peasantry was improving rather than deteriorating. Having made that judgment, it follows that the outburst of peasant disorders prior to the Revolution of 1905 was probably a result more of "frustrated expectations" than an ever growing deterioration of the peasantry. Poverty-stricken people are not prone to revolution; they are much more concerned with simple survival.

Finally, this study has revealed that the members of the articulate left did not have a very sound grasp of the world in which they lived. Their biases were so entrenched that they were incapable of viewing the famine and the agricultural crisis in an objective manner. The contemporaries, depending upon the preconceived viewpoint, differed greatly as regards the implications of the famine. But the necessary premise for their biases was the belief that the famine reflected the deep-seated deterioration of the rural sector of the economy.

Modern scholars have regrettably based their view of the famine and, subsequently, the agricultural crisis, on that propagated by the more vocal elements of the contemporary Russian. Thus they espouse the standard arguments concerning the causes of the famine and "tremendous" effects it had on the economy and the agricultural crisis. What has never gotten into the historical literature was the fact that there existed a great debate within Russia. The contemporaries debated not only the causes of the famine, but whether a famine even existed. This debate has remained submerged until resurrected in this work. The viewpoint held by modern scholarship is thus largely inaccurate. It is also

to be regretted that modern scholars have retained the contemporary bias in evaluating the Tsarist system at large.

This dissertation has attempted to study the impact of the Russian famine of 1891-92 in its broadest sense. Simply stated, the true impact of the famine is to be found in the minds of the observer. It is not the physical impact, that is the numbers of starving or the disruption of the economy, that makes the famine important. It is the psychological impact, what men believed to be the truth, that made the famine important. The famine demonstrates that what people believe to be true can be far more important than what is actually the truth. But for the historian to understand himself and the world in which he lives, it is important to separate historical fact from historical fiction, to know what actually happened as well as what a contemporary believed to have occurred. The removal of the veil of belief that surrounded the famine and its impact is one step forward in the constant search for the historical past, and thereby more accurate insights into the future.

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