

THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM IN RUSSIA **
AS A BACKGROUND FOR THE REVOLUTION

by

Marie Katherine Kask

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

HISTORY

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.

The Agrarian Problem In Russia.

The Peasantry and the Geography of Russia.

In Russia is to be found as satisfactory a proof as anywhere in the world of the theory that geography tends to exert a lasting influence upon the character and history of a people. The physical features and the climate of the country assume the greatest importance when considered in connection with the land problem which is and has been for generations the most overwhelming question in Russian affairs.

The most striking feature of the country is its immense size. The fact that it is a single unit, and also that it has never been fully developed, and has consequently been of little importance in European affairs obscures the fact that European Russia by itself is almost exactly two-thirds of the total area of ^{Europe} Russia. Taking into consideration that Siberia is also a part of the same unit Russia covers about a sixth of the World's surface or about 8,250,000 square miles of territory. Its importance in world affairs has never been in proportion to its size. The reason for this can be traced clearly to the backwardness of her people and her government in the past, which in turn can be traced partly, at least, to the geographical character of the country.

The actual extent of Russian territory has always been somewhat indefinite because there are few natural boundaries. To-day the political boundaries to the west are marked by no geographical divisions. The great central plain of which Russia consists continues into Poland, Austria and the Baltic States. The Ural mountains mark the division line between European Russia and that in Asia in the East, but these mountains are in fact no barrier at all, and the European plain rolls into the Asiatic plain, even as far

as the Pacific. In the South, the Black Sea and the Caucasus Mountains break off the Russian territory, but between Persia in the West, and China in the East, again there is no marked boundary. In the past this lack of natural barriers has somewhat influenced the the roving character of the people, and has made for the policy of expansion by land. The fact that it is easy to advance unobstructed has been made use of by Russia's enemies in the course of history; but the immense size of the country has counteracted all the benefits which might have resulted from the lack of barriers, ~~th~~ that in spite of all Russia has been a very difficult country to conquer.

The fact that Russia is one solid mass of land has made the difficulty of conquest and of penetration by other outside influences more difficult. Its coastline is one of the ~~shortest~~ shortest for its size..about one mile of coastline to ~~forty-one~~ square miles of area in Europe and about the same in Asia. Their large rivers, of the greatest importance internally as will be noted later, have their outlets in comparatively unimportant waters, so that the importance of penetration into the interior from the outside has been reduced geographically almost to nothing.

Because of the extent of territory Russia's problems of overpopulation have not so far been real. During recent years the population has increased very greatly, causing congestion in certain localities, but with better methods of distribution there will be no serious danger from land shortage for many generations to come. The fact that the point of saturation is and has been so far away has allowed the population of the country to drift from one locality to another with the result that in the past only parts of the country have become actually settled. Therefore when dealing with the agrarian problem in Russia it is necessary to limit ones' self to certain areas where the problem has actually arisen. Histori-

cally the land question has hardly developed in the outlying parts of Siberia which quite possibly will some day be important agriculturally, and the Russian problem is not found in all its phases in the border provinces, which have been or are under Russian control. Each of these has a problem of its own, sometimes closely connected with that of Russia proper, but characteristic of local conditions.

Russia consists practically of one continuous plain from the Scandinavian mountains in the north to the Carpathians in the South on to the Urals in the East. Only to the South does the land rise to mountainous heights. The surface of this plain is not entirely level but is marked by clefts and chasms which give the appearance of elevations and depressions, but since the greatest height to which the land rises is nowhere more than eleven hundred feet, these variations are negligible and change little the general uniformity.

The soil varies greatly in the various regions of the rolling plain and has been a factor in deciding the density of population in different areas. From barren clayey and sandy soil there is a gradual change to the richest possible black humus which in turn becomes thinner and thinner until the soil becomes mere arid sand in the South. The regions can be roughly represented by parallel division lines running East and West. The extreme Northern tundra area is of little importance until it advances south and becomes the pine area where large marshes, frozen a great part of the year, are numerous. The soil is not fertile and consists largely of glacial deposits. Agriculture is practically impossible, and because life is very hard the region is sparsely settled.

The land immediately South of this is the great forest region... about five hundred thousand square miles of timberland. Beginning with

4.

evergreens of the fir and pine families with aspen and birch scattered among them, advancing south the trees become hardwoods of the oak and maple variety. The forests have not been well kept. Fires and reckless clearing have destroyed much, but not so destructively as has been the case in North America. The soil of this region is quite suited for agriculture, but the clearings so far are small, and because of the abundance of land generally the soil has been exploited, and the old clearing is often left when it ceases to be productive. The soil is not of the best, and the climate is harsh. Forestry will, no doubt, be the industry of this region when modern methods of work and power have been adopted. The chief agricultural products of this part are rye and oats, with barley and wheat next in importance. Flax has been introduced of late years, and in the Baltic Provinces the potato was the important product. North of the sixtieth parallel there is little agriculture.

The great forest plain merges into what is known as the Black Soil region, the northern boundary of which can be roughly traced by a line drawn from Zhitomin, through K₁iev, Tula, Kazan to Ufa. The soil is very fertile known as Chernozium..and is a heavy black humus which is peculiar to this region and seems to be the result of ages of decay of organic matter. This area consists of grasslands with islands of woods scattered throughout, and is in reality the saving grace of the expanse of Russian territory. The western part including the Ukraine is the most fertile part of Russia. Wheat is the important crop, but the sugar beet and fruit are also grown in abundance. West of the Dneiper the vine is also developed. It is also the most useful for livestock. Toward the Northeast the region is less favored by nature. There are occasional droughts and the fertility of the soil is practically exhausted, because it has been in use for gene-

rations, with no scientific methods of recuperation.

Directly South of this region of fertility the soil becomes thinner until in parts of the country it becomes arid desert. In the west however there are fertile areas. In Bessarabia maize and hardy fruits are grown, and large quantities of wine are manufactured. To the East the land becomes drier, but in spots wheat, watermelons, sunflowers and flax are grown in abundance. Toward the Black Sea the country becomes mountainous and much of it is devoted to the breeding of horses and sheep. The fertility of the whole region is quickly disappearing because nothing is given back to the land. There is a continual possibility of droughts and although during the short period of rainfall vegetation grows luxuriously it matures very quickly and is then burned brown by the hot dry summer sun. The desolation of this burnt countryside gives way to the monotony of snow during the winter. Toward the East these dry steppes become a barren desert, which is the home of nomadic peoples. The district of the Don is the home of the Cossacks who lead a type of pastoral life. The shores of the Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula have been developed of late years. Immigration has given the country an energetic population, but climatic conditions are so uncertain that progress is very slow.

Russia is a network of rivers. The uniformity of the surface of the land gives them their character. The four large river systems — the Volga, Dwina, Dniéper and the Don arise in the elevation known as the Valdai Hills which ends in the basin of the Don. They empty respectively into the Caspian, the Baltic, the Black and Azov Seas...none of which waters are useful outlets to the rest of the world: The Caspian is most unhappily situated for this; the Baltic is frozen a great part of the year; and, the Black Sea and the Azov forming outlets only through foreign territory.

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But as internal waterways the rivers are of the utmost importance. Because of the lack of variation in the surface of the country, they are long and serpentine, and reach a great deal of territory. Moreover the streams are quite sluggish, and the lack of swift currents and rapids makes them navigable. Until the present, they have formed the important trade and transportation routes of Russia, since railways are still not highly developed. River traffic with human strength used for power has served Russia for a very long time, and has made itself known to us through such songs as "The Volga Boatman", which is one of many, because Russians always sing when working together. Not only during times of peace have the rivers served an important purpose: They have been the chief means of getting from place to place, for friend and for foe throughout history.

Because of the heavy snowfall during the winter and the sudden melting in the spring, the rivers tend to overflow their banks, and cause great floods. These are not unexpected in Russia and in a way they are beneficial forming alluvial plains the fertility of which ^{is} ~~are~~ renewed from year to year. On the other hand they are dangerous and cause a great deal of suffering in a country where few public precautions have been taken to counteract the destructive character of the floods. The fact that nearly every part of Russia is in danger of these is another instance of the general uniformity of the physical features.

The climate above all, continental and extreme ~~conforms~~ ^{conforms} to the same uniformity. The moderating influences are few. There are naturally, differences in temperature varying with the different latitudes but everywhere the winter is a long hard one and the summer ^{AND} short ~~hot~~. The large bodies of water exert little influence. The coast regions benefit somewhat by the seas, but the moderating influence does not penetrate far inland. Added

to the monotony of the landscape^{7/} is the snow of the winter which stays in most parts of the country for many months.

The above emphasized uniformity which is so striking throughout the the huge expanse of territory has been an important factor in retaining the political solidarity, in spite of internal divisions and feuds, and attempted conquests from the outside. The early Slavs found themselves obliged to adapt their daily life to conditions they found around them and although tribal relationships were important at first a complete rupture of these followed, which was replaced by geographic unions. The lack of barriers for division lines soon made all one. The transference of ideas and customs which so easily seize upon the uncultured mind crept over the whole land; ~~and~~ it is surprising, comparing with other parts of the world how uniform is the folk lore and folk music over the great expanse of territory. Religion also, introduced from the outside, has developed certain Russian peculiarities which show the same uniformity. For while on the one hand the sameness of geographical features foster likenesses, the extent of territory on the other, reduces the possibility of ever suppressing an idea or custom. For instance, when Eastern Catholicism was introduced, every effort was made to suppress the ancient folk music because of its pagan influences but quite without success; and , the early superstitions and customs of pagan Russia became a partx of the Orthodox belief, ~~of the belief~~ and has remained so ever since.

The likeness of traditions has helped greatly in the formation of a uniform language. When living condition in one part of the country become unbearable whole villages of peasants have been known to pick up their few belongings and migrate to new parts. This went on for generations and no power or law was able to stop the practice. The direct result of this

was an intermingling of dialects which might have tended to grow up in particular localities. (Here again one must take the precaution to remember in forming a general impression that since Russia includes numerous races and nationalities so there are numerous languages. But reference is made here as before to European Russia itself in which, comparing the size of Russia with England for example, the number of and difference of dialects is negligible.)

The monotony of the long cold winter and the influence of the sameness of the landscape along with the difficulty of agricultural labor and the poverty and lack of any physical comfort or intellectual stimulus have tended to produce a certain brooding melancholy, almost cruel, strain in the character of the people. To them the sameness of the wintry world would suggest that all would always be as it has been, and to live in the future is to exist merely as in the past, through countless ages to come. The result is that a slow sleepy, stoical hopelessness has become characteristic. But this dullness seems only a sleep from which the masses can be awakened. Possibly it is carrying the extent of the geographical influence too far to suggest that the extreme change and quick beauty of the short summer transform the minds of the peasantry, and rekindle hope. This contrast is expressed in Russian folk-lore over and over again; and the proportion of the melancholy strain to that essential gayety in the Russian character corresponds to the length and dreariness of the winter compared with the summer. This proportion is again borne out in the folk music. The bulk of it consists of the heart-rending minor melodies which have become familiar during recent years in this country, but this is interspersed with utter contrasts in the light and happy ditties.

The Russian peasants being still a primitive people show the in-

fluence of their surroundings much more than do more highly civilized societies. As culture and knowledge advance the modifying influences of geographical features upon history and character tend to decrease, but it is well to bear in mind that the influence of such an expanse of country as is found in Russia will always tend to modify the trend of events in one way or another as it has done in the past.

Chapter II.

The Russian People.

Any attempt to sum up the abstract characteristics of a people is bound to be contradictory, because human nature itself is not consistent.

The problem is doubly difficult for a nation such as the Russian because the country contains numerous nationalities with various languages and regional customs. But as emphasized in the previous chapter the wide geographical uniformity makes for certain outstanding traits in character which make one recognize a unity. These traits often give a clue to the interpretation of historical events, while at other times they mould the course of history. Like other developments they are made and influenced by history and in turn make and influence it. For instance, the combination of the slow, non-complaining melancholy with quick-witted understanding; the retention of pagan superstitions with a great capacity for religious feeling; the fatalistic acceptance of hardships; the great powers of sacrifice; and the latent fire and energy, have helped shape the course of events even while working as unseen forces. The historical setting and the lack of organizing power have in turn left their mark, if not altogether shaped the character of the people.

Broadly speaking there are four divisions among the Russians proper: The great Russian characterized by his sociable open-heartedness, brisk in mind and speech, and quick to love and forget; the Ukrainian, or little Russian, dreamy and reserved; the Siberian, practical, very versatile, and independent since he has never been a slave; and, the White Russian who has been continually suppressed under one yoke or another and is consequently timid and unobtrusive. Then surrounding these are the border peoples,

(1) Stepniak- Russian Peasantry...Pg. 12 ffg.

Poles, Baltic peoples, Georgians, Armenians, Jews and Tartars, whose problems are their own although they have at times influenced and modified the problems and policies of Russia proper..Different groups have played different roles but the @great Russian has played the important part politically and socially and has influenced the rest considerably, while the Little Russian has had artistic influence.

The effect of geography upon the character has been discussed above. "It is a land of vast lonely spaces of hopelessness only fit to brood in" (1) and the monotony of its long cold white winters produces a melancholy in any mind. The homesteaders of early Western Canada were subjected to conditions not unlike those found in the greater part of Russia, and the effect in many cases was similar. Theirs, however being accentuated by excessive loneliness often caused insanity. The Russian peasants living in villages for the most part escape the burden of loneliness but the monotony remains. Add to this the dire poverty brought on by backward methods of agriculture, lack of political and economic organization and the continual dread of the natural enemies - drought, floods, cold and insect pests and there seems little left to develop a cheerful sunny disposition in a people. They have been ["]between the lethargy of despair and the enthusiasm of the seer" (2) for so long that out of the former has developed a brutal cruelty which comes to the surface occasionally, as it does in the wild animal continually at bay. Hard tense struggle with privations at all times has given rise to a cruel cynical egotism in the

(1) - Lancelot Lawton - The Russian Revolution - Pg. 6.

(2) - Ibid. - pg. 9.

in the peasant which shows itself in his daily life, and is even more evident because of its contrast with the unexcitable calm which characterizes him as a rule.

It might be well to note at this point that although it is to the peasantry that national traits hold most strongly the Russian landowner and nobleman in the past shows his share of them. There were other influences to modify his mode of life and outlook, but essentially he remained the same. Outside of the superior station that he held as a landowner and civil or military servant to the state, he had received some education, and after the reign of Peter the Great had come in contact with European ways. But he was and is a Russian as is the peasant and the national characteristics apply to both.

The fact that the nobility of the country are of the same stock - race and color - as the peasants, is probably the cause of a certain independence in the nature of the people. The Russian peasant was not subservient to his master and possesses little of that slave instinct which knows no self control. This fact was well shown at the time of the emancipation and again during the various revolutionary outbreaks, which have been marked by a decided lack of violence on a large scale. He takes off his hat to a gentleman, but he retains his self respect. There is less of the grovelling slave about the Russian peasant than one finds for instance, among the people of the Baltic States where landlords have been foreigners either German or Russian, and where the native language and customs have been hounded and mutilated if not altogether eradicated during years of oppression. This does not imply that there is a conscious feeling of nationalism or of Russianism among the peasants. Little has been done to encourage it in the past. Even among the higher classes was patriotism in the western sense deficient, as emphasized in Tolstoy's "War and Peace". The only unity has

been a a loose religious unity --¹³ Orthodoxy, with the Tzar at its head. It is doubtful if the Slav idea has ever consciously meant much to the peasant. It is not that which conquers servility in the people. It is something more deeply -rooted than such consciousness and is as yet a negative characteristic; but it can one day become a very positive force, and can then be used as a basis for greater unity.

Along with this independence is a contradictory submissiveness born of long ~~xxx~~ oppression, a fatalistic "Neechevo" (Never mind or it does not matter) attitude. The worst is quite likely to happen and it is best to let things take their course. This can again be traced, in part at least, to geographic and climatic conditions over which the people have no control. Storms, floods, droughts and ravaging grasshoppers may come at any time. Nothing has ever been done to alleviate the misery which these bring. Why try to take any action against them. The evils are so overwhelming that no effort is great enough to check their progress. The peasant adopts the same attitude toward other matters. What is the use of striving and learning? "The less you know the less you are asked," is a favorite Russian saying.

But it would be a mistake to gather from this that the Russian is a sophisticated cynic who has exhausted the possibilities of life and lets matters slide. He rather resembles a simple -minded child who chooses the course of least resistance, and who has not yet developed that restless driving force which will not allow him to rest. It almost seems that he is a semi-barbarous being with all the active forces latent within him. Long suppression has served to increase his energy which will manifest great power when the time comes. There is "that philosophic imperturbable indifference to passing changes which never quite conceals 'a true Prometheus fire' burning within."⁽¹⁾ The conviction that there are exceptional latent powers

1) L. Rawlin - Op. cit. Pg. 13.

within the masses which have not yet been in any way ~~been~~ reached or used, is possibly the most interesting and important thing about the Russian people.

Along with the lethargic attitude towards matters concerned with the state and their own condition, practically every traveller in Russia remarks upon the surprising intelligence and quick wit of the peasantry. Even the oldest and dullest are ready to listen with interest to someone from the outside world. They are very fond of questioning the ~~fo~~foreigner and are ready to discuss any subject. They know nothing of science but they show an interest in scientific explanations of natural phenomena. In fact they show signs of having considerable powers of theorizing.(1). They reveal surprising knowledge and great facility of expression (2). Both foreigners and Russian critics remark upon it. It is upon this characteristic that Tolstoy partly built up his great faith in the peasants of the dark villages.

On the other hand the average Russian has not shown great promise so far of powers of application of his theories to daily life. "Russians are only thorough in theoretical matters; in the practical they are by far the most careless nation in Europe," says Stephen Graham after living among them for some time. ~~But~~ ^Acertain inefficiency seems to be characteristic of the people as a whole and is a basis for possible explanation of the long-continued oppression of the people. There is always time enough for everything according to the Russian ~~people~~. All work is carried on

(1) Stephen Graham - Changing Russia...pg. 33/

(2) Henry W. Nevins - The Dawn in Russia - pg. 62 - 63. At the time of the 1905 revolution "the people were drunken with ideas. After these centuries of suppression all Russia was revelling in a spiritual debauch of words.....Without practice or tradition in public speaking Russia was found to be a race of orators."

(3) Stephen Graham - ob.cit. pg. 37.

at a slow rate and no power has yet⁽¹⁵⁾ been found to hurry it up. Practically all work is accompanied by song, which no doubt reduces the monotony of the long hours of labor, but which does not fit into the American scheme of efficiency. This attitude does not exist among the peasantry only. Turgenev, after living most of his life abroad notices this characteristic inefficiency among all classes. He shows in "Smoke" the young, educated broad-minded landowner - always going to do great things but never accomplishing anything...all his efforts passing off in smoke. An intelligent peasant criticizes the land owning class thus:

" They have studied all the sciences, they speak so fluently that your heart is melted, but they do not understand the actual business in hand. They don't even perceive what is their own interest." (1)

It may be that all that is needed is some impetus strong enough to put the potential energy into motion and some power wise enough to give it direction. The group of statesmen in the Soviet Union who carried through the revolution seem to contradict everything that has been said about Russian inefficiency. They may be a first example of the new energy let loose.

The religion of the Russians is a subject to which a great deal of attention has been given in the past by critics and travellers. It should be noted that when speaking of the religious attitude, the social aims and the popular morals the upper and lower classes form two separate groups, each having its own ideas. No doubt in the final analysis the capacity for feeling and action in these matters is the same, but external environment has had such a decided effect upon each class that they appear

(1) Turgenev - Sportman's Sketches - I - The Peasant Proprietor Ovsyanikov.

absolutely different entities. The attitude of the peasant is native, while that of the higher classes is a foreign growth.

There is among the Russians a great capacity for religious feeling which expresses itself in Orthodoxy and in superstitions. In fact this is so much so that their patriotism and their moral life is one with it. When speaking of capacity for religious feeling it is not meant that the people as a whole are religious in the western sense. The majority accept Orthodoxy of course, or some other form of belief. This has consciously been encouraged for political purposes. The Bolsheviki say that religion is the opium of the people, and it seems that the Russians of the old régime well recognized this, considering the way in which they used it ~~taxx~~ along with intoxicating drink to keep the people subdued and contented under extremely adverse conditions.

Religions usually develop where a need is felt for them. All people seem to find it necessary to have someone or something to cling to for hope in time of hardship and misery - and for this purpose unconsciously create for themselves gods. It is easier for the ignorant masses to find solace in this way than for the more enlightened, and the Russian people have shown themselves extremely capable of leaning toward and having faith in the supreme being who can correct all ills. An interesting development of this tendency is showing itself at the present time when Lenin is being deified by the masses. There is a tendency to consider him akin to a god to whose wisdom in the past they can appeal and upon whom they can lavish their spiritual emotions. There is a transference of belief and allegiance from the older gods which had proved themselves out-worn. The change is not conscious: The older people confuse the old and the new, while the younger people think they are casting away religion altogether, and do not realize that there is a new force taking the place of the old.

Many writers upon the subject of religion contradict the statement that the peasantry is intensely religious on the grounds that theirs is a mixture of heathen customs with orthodox beliefs. But this does not seem to lessen the religious capacity of the believer. To the western European and ~~the~~ his American descendant there is a decided taste of sacrilege about the religion of the peasant. It is a strange mixture of pagan superstitions and Christianity. The doctrine of the Orthodox church and the popular religion vary greatly. Their attitude is far more objective than that accepted by the western mind. So many spirits of the early paganism remain to support or annoy the new God who came with Christianity, and no amount of suppression could oust them from the minds of the people. The clergy assume a peculiar position because of this. The "pop" or priest of the Russian is not a "holy man". He is a necessary factor in the ritualism which is half pagan. He is very important in the daily life of the people because every activity is carried on by the aid of God, but he is made use of rather than revered highly, and often forms the butt of the jokes among the people.

In 1659 there was a schism known as the Rascol in the State Church over controversial points of ritual which caused intense agitation and feeling on both sides. It divided the people into the "Old Believers" group and the state group. This division has exerted considerable influence upon the history of the country ever since. The Old Believers became the persecuted party, and under this added suppression have given rise to some interesting developments. Many new sects have been formed which have had some influence but the differences between these and the State church are minor differences of ritual only.

Much of the religion of the Russians seems to be mere formalism

of the kind which would enchain the minds of primitive people, but with it is found a great emotional power which expresses itself in real religious exaltation as well as in art. It is said that Russia contains the greatest wealth in folk songs and folk music of any country in the world. The people are steeped in music and give expression to it upon every occasion. In the early days of Christianity an attempt was made to suppress the singing and composing of folk songs because they supported the ancient pagan outlook and hindered the advance of orthodoxy. But the folk songs have persisted in all of their force, and they form a most vital part of the life of the people. It is only recently that the rest of the world has come to hear them and their pathos and poignancy leave no one untouched.

In other branches of art too the peasants show great originality. Folk dancing and story telling are a necessity to the Russian heart. Arts and crafts, represented by carved wooden utensils, jewelry, and the use of ornament in needlework, and also the famous ancient ikons show some Byzantine influence. But most of it has native originality. Under the heavy brooding melancholy there seems to be a strain of emotional colorfulness which expresses itself in art. It seems that only recently intelligent interest has been given to the wealth of these treasures of art, and it seems likely that much is still unrevealed.

Russia is also rich in superstitions, and these play a very important part in the lives of the people. They have been retained with exceptional force. The whole mass of superstitions is so closely connected with the religion that it is difficult very often to distinguish where the one ends and the other begins. Harvest festivals are held, even to-day, with the Holy Ikons and the spraying of holy water. The peasant crosses

himself in the Orthodox manner before a meal and sets out food at the same time for the "domovoi" or house spirit. He places his lighted candle before the image of his favorite saint, and at the same time repeats an incantation to save a sick animal. It is hard to say whether it is superstition verging on religion, or religion very near to paganism. And with these there is the ever-present belief in a Fate or Predestination which causes him to adopt the fatalistic, lethargic attitude toward life.

It is interesting to note that the greater number of superstitions and pagan and Christian practices are connected in one way or another with the question of food, and specially bread. The reason for this can be found in the fact that always a very high percentage of the people, even now about eighty percent, live on the land and make their living from it. Moreover the Russian loves the life and work of the farm and feels that it gives him a certain status in the sight of God and man. He makes an effort to come back to it if he is forced to leave it.(1). Since he puts his steadiest efforts into the acquisition of bread, and even with the continuous work of his whole family it is not plentiful it assumes a sacredness for him that is not known in countries of greater plenty. When crops fail starvation is near at hand. The natural enemies which threaten the crops are many, and with them the very life of the peasants is threatened. Prayers, songs, omens and proverbs have to do with the harvest (2). The importance of agriculture is not only felt by the peasants, but forms the subject of national interest throughout the extent of the country.

Something has already been said about the backwardness of the

(1) Stepniak - op.cit. - pg. 38.

(2) A.R.Williams - op.cit. Chapter "Comrade Harvest".

Russian peasants. They are conservative like all other uneducated, superstitious people. At the present time they are ignorant, unsanitary and hard to teach. Drinking "vodka" (raw spirits of alcohol diluted with water) has been the chief pastime. Life to them has been one round of work, religion, and drinking. They themselves say that where God builds his temple there Satan also places his public house. This can be accounted for largely when it is remembered that keeping the peasant ignorant has been the conscious policy of the State for centuries. The conservatism of the Russian is more apparent than real. He has no great awe for institutions or beliefs. He is quite willing to doubt and question. With a little encouragement there is reason to believe that he would be quite capable of doing his own thinking, and he could be brought to question even the Fate which he has so far taken as a matter of course. Nor has he any great respect for his superiors. The Tzar when he was at the head of the state was too distant to be considered a reality. Evidences of his work were scarce. The village elder was one of themselves. The priest was the only greater personage in their daily life, with the exception of the tchinovnik (the government official). But as shown above the priest has been the butt of Russian jokes for generations and the tchinovnik was considered a necessary evil. The Soviet authorities, so far are receiving the same treatment. Even when they show decided signs of working for the people they are regarded with distrust.

The Russian masses form an unwieldy weight to move, but with a little encouragement and enlightenment they would be easier to influence than, let us say, the British who are absolutely convinced that the old is the best, and reforms are only good when they are based upon solid tradition and precedent which are dear to the British heart. In England

these have been fostered, to make the people united and conscious of their own greatness. In Russia they have been suppressed and down-trodden. The traditions in the form of folk legend and song have even been suppressed at times. They have not disappeared, but they have failed to produce that national patriotism of the Western European countries. "No consciousness of national solidarity has been created by the rulers.... The government was not a delegation of power to be exercised for the common good by responsible trustees, but a vested interest to be jealously safeguarded and administered for the aggrandisement of a favored minority." (1).

Because of this the rulers and the ruled have never been one, and a national patriotism along political lines has not developed. The Tzar was "the Little Father" to the Russian people, but he was connected in their minds in some unknown way with the Orthodox Church rather than with the government. The nationality that the Russian knew was Orthodoxy... "the Provoslavny" for which there is no exact equivalent in Western Europe. The strength of the Tzar tradition was not a very strong one in Russia. He was a distant cold individual who did not enter into their lives of the people with heart and soul. Proof of this weakness is found in the fact that now after ten years of absence from their lives the Tzar is a forgotten figure. In fact not an arm among the masses was raised to save him from his tragic downfall.

Because of the consciousness of the dual interests of the rulers and the ruled, a feeling grew up among the peasants that they had something quite apart from the state to fight for when the time should come. An intense spirit of sacrifice has developed among them which in times of stress produces even great efficiency, which characteristic it has been

(1) - Atlantic Monthly - Feb. 1928 - Fall of the Russian Empire.

shown is not habitual to the Russian mind. Possibly it is this which has produced the remarkable statesmen who carried through the revolution. They were men who had suffered throughout their lives for a cause. The critics and writers of the past have recognized this characteristic of sacrifice. Dostoevsky says in analysing the secret of Slavic character:

" The Slavic idea, conceived in its largest terms is sacrifice. It feels the need of offering itself up in behalf of its brothers. The strongest sentiment of the Slavic people is their desire to fight for the weakest of their fellow men, to gain equality through liberty and and political independence and thus to establish the great Slavic union on the basis of God's own truth - in other words to assist in the profit, service and love of all humanity, and defend the weak and oppressed." (1)

Considering the peasant as he is at home this seems extravagant description. Among the masses the spirit is still latent, but among the intelligentsia there have been numerous examples of an almost blind sacrifice. Andreyev in one of his novels represents a young man of the middle class - (the intelligentsia is almost the only middle class that Russia has had so far) - of the 1905 period sacrificing his home, friends and life for - not Russia, or the peasantry, he hardly knows what for...for humanity. He serves by helping to burn landlord property and kill innocent people - a futile sacrifice, but intensely earnest. Russian history is full of such incidents.

Among the peasants there are no remarkable signs of unselfishness, but there is a recognition of natural justice. Law and authority in the Western sense are foreign to the Russian mind, as is the western idea of patriotism. But there is also a lack of lawlessness which is born of law. This brings us to a discussion of the mir with its litigation and governing powers which will be traced in the next chapter. The paternal government

(1) Dostoevsky - "Dissertation on Pushkin"

of the village elder has been well recognized by the peasant, and the tchin-ovnik ^{is} a personage quite apart from the ~~states~~ the mir government.

Every peasant feels a kind of patriotism toward the village community where he resides. It is toward the institution generally that he feels the love and respect, just as it is no one piece of land that he loves, but the soil in a general sense. The reasons for this are found in the frequent re-divisions of the land in the latter case, and in the roving character of the Russians in the other. A man possibly lives under the authority of several mirs in his life time. This was even more so before the laws which ~~restricted~~ restricted his movements. As shown above the geographical nature of the ~~the~~ country encouraged movement, and since the life of the peasant at all times left considerably to be desired, he was quite likely to leave old homes for new. This habit has in one sense broadened their outlook, and has prevented a certain narrow localism from growing up, such as has been the case in other European countries. Generally speaking the Russian is not rooted to one spot as is the German peasant to his paternal home. Extreme poverty and great ignorance have restricted the progress which might have resulted from this search for something better. But the Russian has developed a certain ease toward strangers which comes only from outside contacts, and is considered one of the most hospitable people in the world.

These are the characteristic traits in Russian nature. Very much in the character of any people defies analysis; but, it is well to correct the erroneous idea that the uneducated, ignorant, superstitious and dirty Russian masses are a degraded and brutalized part of humanity. They are ~~all~~ ignorant and superstitious, but under these external characteristics are latent powers of a very high order which break through the surface of lethargy, and give great promise of future developement when some advantageous

political and economic order has been established, and when science has improved their methods of work, and has modified and alleviated the influence of geographic and climatic conditions. They seem the most interesting people in Europe at the present time, perhaps because the least is yet known of them, and their achievement is in the future. In any case of all the vast sources of raw material that Russia has to work with the masses are the most important.

25.
Chapter III.

A Brief Sketch Of The Peasant Problem To Emancipation.

The Slavic people are not indigenous to any part of the great plain which forms the stage of their developement. They penetrated into the interior much as did the early pioneers into Canada, and trade was also their first object - trade in furs, honey, wax and slaves. Agriculture in early times was secondary. It came with colonization when firm settlements were already established.

The migrations were from the south east, and when the early hordes were already well settled, new hordes of these same Slavs came from the same parts and attacked the established settlements. It seems that then the Scandinavians known as the Variagi, penetrating from the North West were hired as mercenaries to drive out the intruding Slavs. As in other countries at other times where the Northmen were invited to drive out the foe, after successfully defeating the advancing enemy, they usurped the power and became the rulers. In Kiev, Askold, Novgorod and Ladoga brilliant military and commercial states were set up under Rurik and his kinsmen. In the process of forming these states the upper classes of the former people were absorbed by the conquerors, and the lower classes, some of whom were slaves became menials who paid tribute to the rulers. But there does not seem to have been any great antagonism between the social classes.(1). Eventually the upper class came to be known by the name of "Russ"(2) from which developed the name later applied to all classes.

(1) James Mavor - Economic History of Russia Vol.I - pg. 18.

(2) "The word 'Rus' in former times wrongly connected with the tribal name 'Rhoxolani' is more probably derived from 'Ruotsi' a Finnish name for the Swedes which seems to be a corruption of the Swedish 'rothsmenn' rowers or seafarers.... Encyc. Britannica.

Later contacts with the outside world were not with the west but with the east, possibly because of greater trade possibilities. From the east before the beginning of the eleventh century, Greek Orthodoxy was introduced which was to exert such wide influence later upon the historical development of the country. (1).

In these early states the system of land holding developed out of the custom and necessity of rewarding the fighting leaders or boyars by granting them large tracts of land over which they had extensive powers. By the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth this system of land holding was firmly established, and a class of 'cheladi' or slaves had grown up, who cultivated the land, and who came to be known as 'kholopi' or cultivators. They were thus very closely connected with the ownership of the land, and within the minds of the tillers of the soil there was a firm conviction that the land belonged to those who tilled it. They recognized that they, as serfs, belonged to the landowner. They said "We are yours, but the land is ours". This has remained the firm belief of the peasants throughout history.

Some agricultural labor at this time seems to have been done by free workers, but the greater part of the land was cultivated by the serfs who became heritable with the estate or 'votchina'. Extremes of great wealth and dire poverty grew out of the established system, and the states became a prey for the Tartars who had conquered them ~~at~~ by the middle of the twelfth century. (2)

The people predominantly Slav~~ic~~ were scattered without organization over the country. Great numbers fled to the Upper Volga regions

(1) Alexander Kornilov - Modern Russian History - Vol. I pg. 22.

(2) E.A. Walsh - The Fall of the Russian Empire - pg. ~~33~~ 19.

where they turned to agriculture , as all other activities which had predominated in the earlier organization were stopped by the presence of the conquerors in the south. The land was divided into estates called appanages or udeli, each under the rulership of some prince who received his authority from ancestry rather than from service to some greater ruler. The service to this prince in turn was voluntary and could be changed. The land within the appanage was divided among lesser princes, who in turn along with the appanage prince rented it to free peasants though oftener it was tilled by the earlier kholopi. Over the lesser princes the appanage prince retained some authority but the holders were not vassals(1), and service was changed from one prince to another without forfeiting the use of the land. Because free peasant labor was hired on many estates, that part of the population tended to become migratory, rather than stationary as under feudalism.

As time went on this system of appanages showed its weaknesses. Division among the members of the families of ruling princes, and consequent quarrels weakened the power of the appanages taken singly. Consequently the way was paved for the rise of one strong prince who would unite all of them by force into a larger unit. This power was found in the line of Moscow princes who forced the submission of the neighboring appanaged. Free towns such as Novgorod and Pskov which had grown up under the appanage system, and which had exerted a considerable influence upon the life of the times, also finally submitted to the rising power. Landholding became dependent upon the rendering of military service, and ceased with that service, which itself became hereditary. Allegiance became fixed. Independent de-

(1) - Ibid. pg. 25.

velopment along industrial and commercial lines was interrupted, and Russia became rural.(1). But no conscious effort was made on the part of the ruling power to give direction to the development of peasant and agricultural affairs. These were left to fit into the system of conquest and consolidation as best they could. The aggressiveness of the Moscow princes which had by the middle of the fifteenth century united the separate appanages into a Tzardom had little time to give to external development.(2)

But the pressure of the military campaigns fell upon the peasants nevertheless. Up until this time the peasant or cultivator had had a certain freedom of migration. He either rented land from the owner or worked as a laborer for him. The result of this was that the peasants sought regions where living conditions were easiest and tended to migrate to the borders of the state where population was scarce and owners conceded better conditions ~~to~~ to cultivators because the supply of labor was limited. This meant that in the central regions peasant households were depleted and taxes and rents were hard to collect. To counteract these hindrances to state development, the Moscow government imposed checks upon migrations - a first step toward bondage, even if in theory it was not considered so.

Further burdens in the form of debts fell upon the peasants as a class. In the southern outlying Black Soil regions the land was rented to the peasant. But before he could make a start the owner had to lend him capital. A beginning was not easy to make, and the result was that the ~~pea~~ peasant could not pay his debts, and thus fell into debt servitude to the landowner. But while the peasant did not own the land there was still the understanding that while he cultivated it, he could not be driven from it.

(1) - James Mavor - op.cit. Vol.I pg. 43.

(2) - A. Kornilov - op. cit. Vol. I pg. 47.

The peasant became the cause for a struggle between the landowner and the state. In theory he was a free citizen and as such he paid taxes directly to the state. Communities rather than individuals were taxed, and to insure⁽¹⁾ the receipt of taxes, ~~mirs~~ or organized village communes were formed. This secured for the state a mutual guarantee. While it was a beginning of local organization among the peasants, it was in reality a step toward bondage. But a real~~x~~ bondage developed out of the indebtedness to the landowner. The latter took over the debts of the peasants¹ ~~and~~ and with that the services of the individuals. To have them formally bonded would have insured these services for all time, but this could not be done in the interests of the State, because only from theoretically free citizens could taxes be collected.

During the early part of the Seventeenth century when the Romanovs came to power (2) a new era of external expansion began, requiring more money for wars which meant greater burdens for the people. Greater pressure was brought to bear upon the ~~peasants~~ peasantry. Class separations became more distinct. By the restriction of the right of migration of the peasant class, bondage became easier to enforce. By 1628 when a peasant was brought back from flight he had to promise to live with the master "till the end of his life"⁽³⁾. and in 1649 laws about desertion were made much stricter and the acquired bondage through debt of father was inherited by the son. In many parts of the country the landlord now paid the taxes for the peasant which meant~~x~~ total bondage, although theoretically he was still a free man. But since the landowner possessed judicial powers upon his estate the freedom of the peasant was in every way a contradiction, and he and the earlier

(1) The Russian institution the Mir has given material for a great deal of discussion among Russian patriots. The Slavophiles based their hopes for self-development of the Russian peasant upon this institution. Without doubt the attitude towards, and the attachment to the mir gave rise to

kholop became one in custom.

National life was seriously affected by the fact that the cultivator was bound to the soil. Earlier the 'Sobori' or the councils of Boyars had served a considerable purpose because they were of a representative character, since they stood for the attitude of the countryside. Now they appeared merely as individuals representing their own interests only, since the majority of the people were in their power. The councils tended to deteriorate and finally were discontinued altogether. The Tzar and the Patriarch (1) , the representative and head of the Orthodox Church) took over all the authority. Though at no time had Russia possessed a government of a representative nature, now it became a decided autocracy. When Peter the Great came to the throne in 1686, the way was paved for his activities.

Peter the Great, with his desire to simplify society in order to facilitate the achievement of his policy of "Westernization, Centralization, and Subordination," did away with the established classes of peasants and classified all as kholopi, who were servants to their masters, and all of whom were to be taxed. But payment of taxes was no longer a sign of personal freedom, because bondage was forced upon all.

This uniformity introduced by Peter did not necessarily intensify the pressure of bondage upon the people but it altered its character. In fact in one way it clarified matters , because henceforth the status of the peasant to himself was that of a bonded man, awaiting freedom; and to the landowner he was an economic unit only. For later reformers this was a clear basis upon which to work. The likeness of the interests of

(continued from page 29)

a warm patriarchal spirit - one of the finest things in the life of the peasant, contrasted with his attitude toward the State. (Discussed by Mayor - op.cit. Vol.I Chap.X.)

(2) ~~1613~~ 1613 - Michael Romanov^v was elected Tzar.

(1) Later Peter the Great replaced the Patriarch by the Synod.

of the Tzar and the Pomyetschek or landowner became apparent at once, and this left the peasant no one to whom he could appeal for redress when wronged. The fiscal burdens were increased almost fourfold⁽¹⁾ and Peter changed the tax from one on the peasant household to one on each individual, which meant that there was no escape from burdens no matter how well the peasant organized his household, to produce a surplus. Toward the close of the century Peter transferred the collection of taxes from the hands of military officials to those of local elected bodies² from among the commercial and manufacturing classes.⁽²⁾ And to secure laborers for his industries founded on the Western plan, he removed peasants from the land, forcibly when necessary, and sent them to work in factories. They by no means lost their serf status in this way, and came to be known as possessional peasants.

During the rule of Peter the Great the peasants almost reached the limit of what they could endure, but with the coming of the weaker rulers after his death, his system was to bring even greater burdens upon the peasantry, because the restrictions laid upon them by Peter were used unwisely to take more out of the lower classes. Uprisings occurred everywhere and flights by thousands became common. As a result of these, among other things, there began to grow among the higher classes the realization that the peasant was the real backbone of the nation, and by 1730 the evils of bondage right were discussed.⁽³⁾ But for more than a century yet the evils were to continue growing even more intense, as the position and power of the nobles increased in the country.

(1) Makeef and O'Hara - Russia - pg. 34.

(2) J. Mavor - ob. cit. pg. 142 - Vol. I.

(3) Ibid. - pg. 174. The problem was written of by Maslov and others.

Katherine II , the enlightened despot, after securing ~~great~~ increase of rich territory in the Black Soil regions, turned her attention to internal developement, but she saw with the eyes of the nobles, and she placed the working of changes in their hands which augered little good for the peasants. The nobles were pleased to escape from the burdens placed upon them as on all classes by ~~the~~ Peter the Great, but under no condition would they lighten the lot of the people and ^{lose} ~~gain~~ thereby. The fact that tradition had been swept aside , and attention was turned to internal developement, a new way was opened for change even in the lowest strata of society, and widely if not generally the institution of bondage came to be regarded as abnormal. But ~~on~~ the other hand, with the increase in the power of the nobles, the hardships of bondage life reached their culmination. During Peter's time already recruits had been taken from among the people, since wars with the west were modernized and were no longer games for gentlemen only. This military duty to peasant households was an added burden. On the other hand it was a step to freedom because the peasants who became soldiers saw something of the outside world, and came back to the villages with a wider outlook upon life. Again with the increase in the importance of the state a great number of the landed proprietors became public servants which took them away from their estates. These were left under the supervision of bailiffs, often foreigners who had neither the interests of the peasants, nor those of the nobles at heart. Not only did the grinding down of the peasant increase with this, but ultimately the danger of economic ruin for the state was increased. In fact as greater demands for the support of the country were placed upon the nobles, orders were sent home to take more and more out of the peasants. The distance between the sovereign and the people became greater and greater, as laws

were passed , increasing the powers of the nobles over them, while unsanctioned practices , causing even greater suffering were overlooked(1).

The change in the nature of the problem, as well ~~xxx~~ as the limits of endurance are seen in the number of petitions sent to Katherine by the peasants. These actually resulted in nothing. Finally the pent up feelings of the people showed themselves in the support given to Pugachev in his uprising against the government. This one led by the Cossack leader was the most important one of its kind (2) which were by no means uncommon. The movement finally crushed did not in any way further the cause of the peasants, but rather put a stop to all further discussions upon the subject.

Under subsequent rulers unrest as well as suppression increased. The serfs under the burden of suffering tended to become unsubmitive and expressed their ill-felicit by further complaints to the central government upon whom they based their last hopes. Uprisings, assassinations and flights became more common when other methods failed, but these were sporadic in nature. United action, which the upper classes could not have withstood was unknown. But signs of awakening were numerous, and the peasants began to expect freedom. At the accession of nearly every monarch stories of liberation were circulated, which when they came to nothing gave rise to intensified discontent.

Under Paul(1796 - 1800) an ukase was actually given out which seemed like a step toward emancipation. Peasants were not to be sold without land, and the bartschina (the required labor on the estate of the landowner) was fixed at three days a week. The results were negligible

(1).Mavor 1/2 ob.cit. Vol.I * pg. 181.

(2) Pugachev, leader of a peasants and Cossacks rebellion in the reign of Katherine II proclaimed that he was Tzar Peter III who had escaped after the palace revolution of 1762. This rising conspicuous for the atrocities committed on both sides lasted for nearly two years.(1773 - 1775) Finally Pugachev was betrayed by his followers and executed in Moscow.

for whereas in some places this was a decrease in others it was actually an increase in the number of days. Very little investigation had as yet taken place, and the ukase was a half hearted effort to show some activity for the deplorable conditions under the incompetent Paul caused even yet an increase in discontent.(1)

By the end of the eighteenth century the Pugachev risings and other disturbances of like nature show that ideas of social and political consciousness were growing up among the people(2), and with the course of events in higher circles far above their heads the hopes and fears of the peasants rose and fell. When Alexander I succeeded to the throne he had a reputation of being liberal-minded, and his early reforms although vague, seemed to point to change. Discussion of internal reform, specially in a committee appointed for that purpose went so far as to advance the suggestion of a charter for the people giving them the right to own real estate.(3) Alexander was not ready to go so far and little came of the discussions while they did pave the way for later reform. By the ukase of 1803, serf owners were allowed to liberate bondsmen individually or by whole communities with land, provided the consent of the Emperor was obtained. The result of this was not far-reaching(4) because the landowners ~~were~~ were the chief opponents of reform; but the very fact that such a reform was passed points toward ~~reform~~ emancipation. In the Baltic Provinces by the request of the landowners, peasants were given rights in 1804 and 1805 and again in 1816, the peasants were liberated without land and became economic slaves to the nobles.

- (1) In the four years of his reign Paul gave away as gifts to his favorites 530,000 peasants.
 ((2) Makeef and O'Hara - ob.cit. pg. 40.
 (3) A.Kornilov - op.cit. Vol.I pg. 88. Vorontzov, etc.
 (4) In this reign 160 agreements were reached, and the total number of liberated peasants amounted to 47,153 male souls. Kornilov op.cit. 102.

Developements and events in upper circles drove the problem of emancipation into the background again for about thirty years. After 1820 Alexander showed decided reaction; in 1825 at the time of the accession of Nicholas I, the palace revolt of the Decembrists made for further caution; and the expulsion of Charles X of France, and the Polish uprising fixed the policy of suppression.

But within the system of bondage itself was found the germ of destruction, as has been the case with every social system, which has fallen, and because of this no outside force could have saved it. It had already outlasted its necessity as most organizations in history tend to do. Conditions in the world generally had changed and no one country under the influence of economic internationalism could have retained outgrown institutions like bondage. Its fall could not have been prevented by the autocracy, nor the unlimited power of the nobles; nor could it have been brought about by the work of the revolutionary parties and the general attitude of the new intelligentsia, the growth of which had been marked since the influences of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Nevertheless the attitude rather than the work of these new forces in connection with the peasant problem had its effect, for all activity was driven underground by the policy of Nicholas I.

The real causes for the fall of bondage right are found within the institution. The very severity of the conditions of the life of the peasants had reached the breaking point, and as Russia attempted to vie with other European countries in world affairs, with Western methods added burdens were laid upon the masses. The unlimited power of the landowners ignorant of economic trends aggravated these burdens. The problem had reached the point where diplomacy in dealings was becoming necessary, but

the estates in many cases impoverished before, were left in the hands of bailiffs, who ground the peasants down without reason. The wars with France specially had undermined the system, because of the untold expense involved, so that by 1843 more than fifty four percent of the estates were mortgaged to credit institutions, and the peasants to the average of sixty nine dollars per bonded serf. the value being taken as one hundred dollars.(1). Besides this landowners had private debts to pay and the new tastes and habits acquired by foreign contact further impoverished them.(2) The burdens of all these debts fell upon the peasant class, and ill-feeling resulted to the extent that during the reign of Nicholas there were as many as five hundred fifty six peasant disturbances, in many cases whole villages revolting so that armed force was necessary to quell them. In ~~many~~ provinces the idea became popular that liquidation of serfdom with the retention of the land by the gentry would be profitable. Laws for the protection of the peasants were included in Nicholas' new code, but European disturbances of 1830 and 1848 tended to keep down discussions.

But the most important force of all was the fact that new economic factors were making serf labor unprofitable, and liberation became an economic necessity, much as liberation of slave labor in the United States preceding the Civil War. Specially was this so in the districts and provinces where the peasants held their land by the *bartschina* system, whereby they worked an allotted number of days for the landowner. There was often a surplus of labor power with very little increase in productivity, and the surplus grew because during the early part of the nineteenth century there was a great increase in the population(3). This aggravated the con-

(1) A. Kornilov - op. cit. Vol. I - 259.

(2) The Rostovs in Tolstoy's "War and Peace" is a good example of a family impoverished by mismanagement, etc.

dition of the already impoverished gentry.^{u)} An attempt was made to put the surplus into house labor, and into state factories, which Peter the Great had founded; but the methods and output from these could not vie with true industrialization and the competition of merchant factories worked by free labor. The latter were able to secure better means of production and more willing workmanship. Forced labor came to be considered unprofitable.

Considering these factors one might be led to believe that an agreement might easily have been reached by which the institution of serfdom would have come to an end; but the very immensity of the reform kept it back until 1861, even after the necessity for it was felt. Not only the fact that a solution by which the peasants were to benefit and by which the landowners were not to be deprived of their property and rights, was almost impossible to arrive at; but also the fact that a tremendous reform which would so radically change the relationship of the lowest class to the aristocracy might in turn be but a beginning for other reforms which would endanger the very being of the aristocracy. There was sufficient cause for fear, taking into consideration the troubled times in western Europe, with the many revolutions, and the fear and reaction evinced by the very mention of reform, among the monarchs of the century. But if serfdom had not been abolished when it was, it would have fallen of its own accord with greater disturbances to the state. The disastrous course and results of the Crimean War which benefitted Russia internally more than victory would have done, revealed to the thinking mind of Alexander II, that serfdom had to go. He was by no means a liberal by nature, and was both militant and conservative by education and training⁽¹⁾, but he was a man of reason to the extent that he realized the inevitability, and so consented to this greatest reform of the century.

(1) In 1816 the number of serfs was 9,787,000 as compared with 10,892,000 in 1835, even after 413,000 had been liberated in the Baltic Provinces.

Chapter IV.

The Emancipation Movement.

Discussion concerning reform in the institution of bondage began , as we have seen, before the middle of the eighteenth century, and the inevitability of change was apparent to all thinking minds. Among the aristocratic and political revolutionists of 1825 (Dekabristi) there were those who advocated complete abolition of serfdom (1). In the higher government spheres the next thirty five years were to see an attempt at doing away with the evil of serfdom without asking any sacrifice on the part of the land owners, and without bettering the actual living conditions of the peasants - in fact, without looking the problem squarely in the face.(2).

In 1826 a committee was appointed which worked on the question for four years. Another committee in 1835, and still another secret committee (1839 - 42) considered the problem from its various angles(3). But these committees, and the same is true of later ones did not or would not see, that what was necessary was a complete change in the methods of the government. And even at the time of the emancipation this fact was not fully recognized. Nevertheless the discussions led to the signing of an ukase by the Tzar in 1842 which was "a developement of the existing law of 1803" (4) and emphasized once more that landowners could liberate peasants if they chose, and for this purpose methods were suggested. It was advertised as a first step toward emancipation, but having the interest of the landowners only at heart it was bound to be ineffectual. The peasant was still

(1) Mavor - op.cit. Vol.I pg. 331.

(2) Ibid - Speransky suggested liberating the peasants without land but giving them equality in civil rights. He suggested an Imperial Duma. Pages 338 etc. Paulucci and Kisilev also had reform programs.

(3) Ibid. - I - 341.

(4) Ibid. - I - 348.

expected to pay the whole cost of his greater personal freedom. However limitation in serfdom was brought about at this time by minor measures.

In 1827, the purchase of peasants without sufficient land to support them was forbidden, and in 1833 the separation of families by sale was disallowed.(1)

Another committee which worked from 1840 to 1844 on the problem of the dvorovie lyudi (the serfs who were not on the land but were domestic servants in town and country houses, tradesmen, clerks managers and foundry and factory workers) gave a report which resulted in two ukases by which proprietors were given freedom to emancipate serfs upon mutual agreement.(2) But as the serf was in no case in a position to bargain agreements necessarily meant the acceptance of landowners' terms.

So little had so far become of the investigation and reform, that the Tzar becoming impatient tried to carry out an experiment in one large section of the country. He set committees to obtain inventories from the landowners in some of the western guberni(3). stating the obligations due to the landowners by the peasants. Where the information was unobtainable relations between owners and serfs were to be fixed. Bibikov who as the Minister of the Interior was at the head of this work pointed out the great variety of conditions and obligations, and the impossibility of making general regulations to govern them. Certain rules were made however with the hope that they be an aid to the final solution. The peasants of the clergy (higher and later the lower) were transferred to the state(4), and nearly all state peasants in western Russia were transferred from bartschina to obrok(by which the serf paid in money rather than in days of work)

(1) G. Vernadsky - A History of Russia - pg. 144.

(2) J. Mavor - op.cit. -Vol.I pg.351.

(3) Vilenskaya, Godinskaya, Minskaya, Korskaya, and others.

(4) J. Mavor - op.cit. pg.368...weldomed by the peasants.

Tzar Nicholas the First, autocrat that he was, was convinced that a limitation of serfdom was necessary, and his ministers conservative at heart worked upon the problem because this was expected of them.(1). Between 1844 and 1857 many reports were brought before the Tzar. Perovsky (1845)(2) advised that the peasant could not be liberated without land, and he suggested that before anything could be done it was necessary to re-organize the local administration. In 1847 a further ukase outlined more methods by which peasants could be liberated.(3)

1848, the Year of Revolutions in Western Europe stopped all talk of reform in Russia but serfdom was too real a menace to national life and development to be neglected long. The Crimean War with its dire results was to prove a blessing to Russia as other wars have proved since. She eventually benefitted more by defeat than she would have by victory(4). The danger of general national collapse brought the evils of bondage to the front with new vigour. Nicholas the First died realizing that his system had not brought success, and leaving a number of unsolved problems for his son.

Alexander II came to the throne in 1855. He had not been brought up to be a reformer(5), but the great task of effecting the change in bondage fell to him. And because he was far-seeing enough to realize that it was high time action was taken he probably averted a revolution in his country which might have been even more terrible than those which Russia has seen. (6)

(1) Ibid. pg. 369.

(2) Ibid. pg. 370 Perovsky's analysis shows that the attitude of many land-owners was that serf labor was uneconomical.

(3) Ibid. pg. 374.

(4) E.A. Walsh - The Fall of the Russian Empire - Pg. 30. He states that although the Crimean War was a national humiliation it was regarded by patriotic Russians as a blessing in disguise as it revealed the internal weakness.

(5) A.Kornilov Modern Russian History - Vol.II pg.5.

Alexander stated in a speech in 1856 to the marshalls of nobility in Moscow that though he did not wish 'to annihilate serfage' the existing manner of possessing serfs could not remain unchanged. "It is better", he said to abolish serfage from above than to await the time when it will begin to abolish itself from below." But it took about six more years before the reform was effected. So strong was the opposition of the economic interests of the landowners.

Alexander placed liberal-minded men in executive positions. Lanskoy was made minister of the Interior, and throughout the period of discussion men like Levshin, Unkovsky, Obolensky, Cherkassky and G. Samarin, Melyuten, and Rostovtzev held leading positions, and worked with true patriotism for the welfare of the country.

Investigations soon showed that the general attitude among the landowners was as follows:

(1) In the Black-Soil region - because population had increased and bad harvests had made foodstuffs higher in price the landowners found it to their disadvantage to feed serfs in the bad years; and, in many cases because of this they had been liberated without land. Some were even in favor of giving very small allotments to keep the labor power near at hand because they were to be hired back when necessary. Land without peasants sold for more than land without peasants. The Black-Soil proprietors therefore favored liberation without land.

(2) In the non-black soil areas the land itself was not valuable, and in many cases the landowners did not even own agricultural implements, but they derived huge profits from the work of the serfs in factories, and those engaged in home industries. Therefore the peasants rather than the

(continued from page 40)

(6) "Alexander II had in fact the same ideals of enlightened absolutism as Nicholas I but Alexander was a much gentler and tolerant disposition than Nicholas." G. Vernadsky - op.cit. pg. 151/

land were valuable, and the landowners would lose profits by emancipation. They therefore wanted redemption in case of liberation for which they were willing to give land.

(3). On the prairies of Great Russia, and in the Little Russian guberni where the population was scanty help was hard to get. The landowners in this area wanted some settlement by which the peasants could be made to stay upon the allotments given them whether free or not, to insure labor for the estates..

(4) In the South-West, and many parts of Little Russia the cultivation of sugar beets had become a profitable industry to the proprietor, and here too landless emancipation was favored.(1)

The basic cause for the difference of the opinions of the landowners was found in the differing economic conditions of their districts and it was quite evident that whatever the settlement might be , a uniform method of dealing with the problem was not practical.

Alexander had hoped that the nobles would of their own accord come forward to discuss the matter, and at the time of his coronation when they were all assembled they were sounded by Lanskoj, but only the Lithuanian nobles who were interested in the earlier inventories , and whose xx problem was somewhat different to the usual problem remained to discuss the matter. Only in rare cases did any of the more liberal-minded landowners show any interest.(2)

In the Main Committee appointed by Alexander , which consisted of about twenty leading men discussions came to nothing. The nobles of three guberni had decided to liberate the peasants without land but it was easily seen that this would merely create a large landless proletariat, if

(1) J. Mavor op. cit. pg. 377 ffg.

(2) Ibid. 381..A request for liberation of peasants on her estate came from Alexander's aunt, Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna - noted for her liberal interests .

applied to the whole land. And so the discussions continued until , Alexander losing patience ordered Lanskoj to formulate in three days ~~as~~ a rescript of a project offered by the latter himself to the Lithuanians. It provided for the following:

(1) The landowners to retain the right to the property but the peasants to keep their allotments for which they would pay in installments. For the use of the land for subsistence they were to pay in money or in work, on the landowner's property.

(2)

Peasants to be divided into village communities and landowners to be responsible for police functions and the organization of future relations and security of payment of taxes to the government.

(3) The reform to be effected gradually but the plan to be ready in six months.(1).

This was the first active step to emancipation and when rumors of it spread there was rejoicing in many parts of the country. The revolutionaries praised Alexander and there were hopes of great things to come. But from the conservative element there was criticism, while the idea of gradual reform did not satisfy the more liberal-minded Tver nobility who had always been noted for their progress.

The rescript was sent to the different guberni and Alexander waited for favorable replies. The Moscow nobility haughtily turned it down...revealing the lack of support and co-operation under which the work had to be done.(2) In many cases it seems that the local committees appointed to deal with the matter would have quite ignored it, but for the fear of the displeasure of the Tzar. There was also the fear that now since the rumor of great things about to come had reached the peasants, they would rise if

(1) J. Mavor - Op.cit. - 386.

(2) Ibid. - 387.

The local committees required a more detailed programme, and that of Pozen was accepted, which cunningly provided for a transition period of twelve years, after which the peasants were to go landless. To many this was quite satisfactory, but it met with violent opposition on the part of the Tver nobles once more, and again had to be changed.

The Tver nobility favored emancipation with land, and redemption by government credit. More and more support was found for this view among the influential leaders.(1), because they were beginning to realize that to liberate the peasants without land would be to incite them to revolution. Rostovtzev became the leader of the movement from 1858 on, and he upheld that the sale of landowners' rights should be obligatory on the demand of the peasants (purchase being optional), and that the necessary sums should be advanced by the government, in spite of the wretched state of public finances. To this the peasants were to add six percent yearly.(2).

Now the local committees recognized that a betterment in the living conditions of the peasants could no longer be evaded; but to give them more land with fewer obligations was considered absolutely impossible. They held that the estates would be ruined. During the transition period the landowners wished to preserve for themselves the greatest possible powers, and at the end of that time they still wished to reap the greatest possible benefits.

They had nothing definite

- (1) Rostovtzev wrote four famous letters to the Tzar in which he condemned landless liberation. These had considerable influence.
- (2) Mavor - op.cit. - pg. 398.

They had nothing definite to offer in the way of village government(1) but they were in favor of enforcing the new obligations upon the community or mir so that this system of mutual guarantee could hold the individual responsible while the landowner would still have power over the community.

Since not only rights but property also was at stake the interest taken in this matter of reform was very real. The adherents of reaction feared the radicalism of the reformers, while the latter worked with real patriotism to do away with this evil of long standing.

Under the presidency of Rostovtzev The Editing Commissions were formed by the Tzar. They were made up of the officers of the various departments connected with peasant affairs, and they included a number of experienced landowners. Lanskoj was replaced by the more active Melyuten as minister of the Interior.

The main points according to Rostovtzev were outlined thus:

(1) Peasants to be liberated with land. (2) Compensation to be paid by peasants for allotments (3) Process of compensation to be facilitated by government guarantee (4) Temporary period of obligatory relations to be avoided if possible, or to be made as short as possible (5) There should be a transition from bartschina to obrok in three years except where peasants did not want it. (6) Villages were to be endowed with autonomy. (2)

The Editing Commissions in four sections - the judicial, administrative, economical, and financial - discussed the problem in parts; and, altogether its thirty five reports, rediscussed and amended became eventually parts of the Emancipation Act of February 19, 1861.

The work of the Editing Commissions was to draw up the material and in revising the projects prepare it for the act. It was vested with

(1) Ibid. pg. 394.

(2) Ibid. pg. 399.

considerable power,,and the local committees came to look upon the members as a bureaucratic body, and no longer considered them as representing themselves.(1) in any way. The delegates from the local committees were asked to meet the commission. They were to come in two groups - the first to discuss and study projects, and the second for the period of constructive legislation. When decisions had been reached in these groups the projects were to be sent to the main committee, where the final revision was to be made.(2)

Every point and phase of the problem met with heated controversy. In most cases the Editing Commission was decidedly more liberal than the representatives from the country. In the problem of the size of the allotments specially did this difference become apparent. The economic committee of the Editing Commission suggested that the peasants should at least have as much land as they had cultivated for themselves formerly, and that if the landowner were left with one third of the estate the division would be fair. As a result of considerable discussion, certain maximum and minimum allotments were fixed for the Black-Soil and Non-black-soil regions. These were as follows: In the different guberni, and sometimes in the same one, in the Black-soil section, the maximum lots were to be...taking five localities $3\frac{1}{4}$, $3\frac{1}{2}$, 4, $4\frac{1}{2}$ dessiatines per soul respectively. In the non-black soil region maximum lots were in different localities $3\frac{1}{4}$, $3\frac{1}{2}$, 4, $4\frac{1}{2}$, 5, 6 and 8 dessiatines respectively. The minima were to be two fifths of the maxima (later changed to one third). In the steppe regions there were to be four localities - the allotments being $6\frac{1}{2}$, $8\frac{1}{2}$, $10\frac{1}{2}$, and 12 dessiatines respectively (with no minima). Special arrangements were made for the Little Russian guberni, and those on the western frontier where the holding of land

(1) Ibid. pg. 400.

(2) Ibid. pg. 401.

had been somewhat different.

The above was the settlement on this point during the first part of the work of the Editing Commission. In the matter of the obligations to be rendered by the peasants the decision was as follows: The Great Russian, the White Russian and New Russian guberni were divided into four regions, namely, the non-black soil obrok region, non-black soil bartschina region, black soil region and the steppe region. In the first of these the obrok was set at nine rubles per soul, except in certain localities where a gradation system was to be used...the first dessiatine requiring three and a half to four rubles, the second at a lower sum and so on. Where bartschina obligations were to be rendered, forty days for men, and thirty days for women were fixed.

These sums and days were of exceptional importance because upon these was to be based the future redemption price of the land which the peasants were to pay. Before he had paid obrok or rendered bartschina for the right to till the bit of soil allotted to him, as well as a necessary duty required of him because he was a bonded slave. Since now the redemption price required the same value to be rendered by the peasant, it stands to reason that he was not paying only the same value for the land (which we shall see was much less in extent in many cases than the land he had tilled before) but also for his greater personal freedom. Economically this meant that the peasant had from the first a very heavy burden to carry.

Another project which gave rise to a great deal of discussion was that of the structure and organization of the village community and administration. At first it was suggested that village communities for police purposes, and agrarian communities should exist side by side. This plan was met with criticism on the score that the administrative commune would na-

turally tend toward bureaucracy, which would be undesirable. Then the idea of re-instating the volost (district) of earlier times was considered, and the agrarian community, the mir, was to be a subdivision of the former. The volost however was not to have its former autonomous powers. The chief of the volost was to be responsible to the chief of the mir and the local police, and the village head and the other village officials were in turn to be under the authority of the volost head.(1) This meant that the administrative and agrarian bodies were hampered by each other and both of them were subservient to the police.

This settlement met with a great deal of criticism on the part of the liberal heads in the emancipation movement. The landowners also objected. One of the grounds of criticism was that if police power were to be uppermost, corruption would result and that while governmental power would be centralized, local freedom would be hampered.(2) The landowners argued quite logically, that while by this arrangement, the central government would gain an easy method of control, and the landowners would lose the authority of former times the peasant would gain nothing and his interests would be altogether neglected.(3)

Meanwhile there was much dissatisfaction among the landowners when they saw that their representatives in the local committees and their suggestions were being over-ruled. They objected to the intrigues of the bureaucracy and when they were permitted to make their criticisms in full they offered them in three thick volumes.(4).

Then Rostovtzev died in 1860, and this open-minded friend of emancipation was replaced by Count Panin who was noted for his conservatism. Besides being an uncongenial personality(5) he was an aristocrat, himself

(1) Ibid. 404. (2) ^{U.F.Samarin's objection.} Ibid. 406.
 (3) A.D. Jultukin - Ibid. 406. (4) Ibid. 407, after Kornilov.
 (5) A. Kornilov op.cit. Vol. II pg. 38.

an owner of twenty one thousand serfs, and an outspoken opponent of the work which had so far been done in the Editing Commission. His appointment was a decided blow to the supporters of the movement, but actually the work had advanced so far that no power on earth could stop it or hold it back. It seems too that the Tzar considered Panin a good tool for his wishes. This is the reason he gave for his appointment.⁽¹⁾ Alexander's instructions to Panin were that the work should continue along the lines followed up to this point.

The representatives in the local committees who came for the second period, as noted above, were a much more conservative lot than the first. But their influence was not much greater, in spite of Panin's sympathy. The Editing Commission started on its work of codifying its conclusions. Some minor concessions were made to the conservatives; The extent of the allotments in some districts were diminished, and certain changes in the terminology used in the case of future land holding were made. (By Panin's demand the term "use in perpetuity" was changed to "continual use" - the sense remaining the same.

After the work of codification was completed, the task of emancipation passed into the hands of the Main Committee. After twenty months of continual labor the Editing Commission was dissolved (October 1860). It had accomplished an enormous task: It had drafted sixteen sections of the future Emancipation Act, in eighteen large volumes with six volumes of statistics.

In the course of the discussions in the Main Committee the landowners' representatives tried hard to make further changes. They succeeded in having the allotments still further reduced in certain districts; and, they succeeded in passing an amendment to the effect, that in the higher steppe localities, the landowners were to be permitted to give gratuitously to the peasants one fourth of the allotment to which peasants were entitled

(1) Kornilov - Vol.II - pg. 39.

after which all obligations on both sides were to be cancelled. These allotments came to be known as the "beggarly allotments" and were to give considerable trouble afterwards.

On February 19th, 1861, the Act was signed.(1)

This ~~monstrous~~ ^{momentous} work was no doubt a first step to freedom, but the general feeling is that it should have done more than it did. The Agrarian Problem in Russia was by no means solved as remains to be shown. The very method of solution predicted this. It was carried out by the bureaucratic element interested in the State; by the landowners, led by their own immediate economic interests; and, by royal will, because it had become an unavoidable necessity. The peasants who were most concerned were not represented. If they had been their one desire for sufficient land would have been over-ruled by the interests of the other representatives. If the bulk of the land had been given to the peasants at the time many subsequent troubles might have been avoided.

Numerous new problems were raised by the passing of this great reform. The fact that one great change had been carried out raised a desire for others. Henceforth the desire among the nobles as well as all other educated classes, for political power began to grow. They felt that by emancipation they had relinquished juridicial and economic power(2), and they felt that this had to be made up in other ways. The agrarian reform had to be followed by numerous other reforms. Although the autocracy continued in power, its way was not to be a happy one, since the problems raised were many and difficult.

(1) A closer analysis of the terms of the act and the results of these will be dealt with in a later chapter.

(2) G.Vernadsky - op.cit. pg. 136.

Chapter V.
The Condition of the Peasants to Emancipation.

During the century and half before Emancipation there was a tremendous increase in population. This was partly the case because by conquest numerous new lands were annexed, and partly because of a natural increase. The majority of the peasants remained agrarian, although from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth there was an increase in the urban population from three percent of the total to eight percent (1).

With ups and downs due to wars the population of European Russia had remained fairly constant, about fifteen million, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the death of Peter the Great in 1725 - the number had decreased to thirteen million largely because of reasons already noted (2) By the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a population of forty million, and by the middle of that century the number had increased to seventy million. (3)

While the population had increased enormously the number of serfs had actually decreased considerably. The growth in urban population, and the freeing of serfs, by the releases of the years preceding emancipation, as noted above, accounts for this.

- (1). G. Vernadsky. A History of Russia. P. 106.
- (2) Supra. Chap. III.
- (3) G. Vernadsky. Op. cit. Pg. 106.

The following figures illustrate this fact:

| | No. of Landowners Peasants | No. of State Peasants | Total Population |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1st Census - 1722 | 3,200,000 | 2,200,000 | 14 million |
| 5th Census - 1796 | 9,789,680 | 7,276,170 | 36 " |
| 6th Census - 1812 | 10,416,813 | 7,550,814 | 41 " |
| 8th Census - 1835 | 10,872,229 | 10,550,000 | 60 " |
| 9th Census - 1851 | 10,708,856 | 12,000,000 | 69 " |
| 10th Census - 1859 | 10,696,136 | 12,800,000 | 74 " |

(1)

This will show that in the last twenty four years there was an actual increase in the landowners peasants, and a slight increase in State peasants, not at all proportional to the increase in population. In fact, while in 1835 44.93 per cent of the population were serfs by 1859 the percentage had decreased to 34.39 percent.

A change had been taking place, too, in the methods of meeting the obligations to the landowners. Generally it was a change from bartsching to obrok. As a rule the latter was preferred by the peasants as it left them with a little more independence, but in payment in money there were disadvantages as well, for money payments could amount up from year to year, while days of work could not. On the other hand it left them free to work upon their own land during the busy season which usually resulted in better crops to the extent that they could pay. In a few localities it was found that a combination of the two systems worked so well (2) that a surplus of grain resulted in the districts. This led to the formation of markets. But the

(1) J. Mavor. Econ. Hist. of Russia. Vol. I. 418.

(2) Mavor. op. cit. II. 422.

merchants benefited at the expense of the landowners who were unused to business. And this left still less for the peasants who were given correspondingly less by the proprietors. The system of economy was such that the community reaped none of the profits. Then, too, much of the surplus grain, in a country which had for so long grown for local consumption, would never reach the markets as the transportation system was quite inadequate. In 1838 there were only twenty seven miles of railway in Russia, and in 1858 the total had only reached one thousand and ninety two miles (1) which was of course quite inadequate for a country of the size of Russia. (Only after emancipation did the nation enter on a large scale railway building system). Beside this, the means for storing grain from year to year were exceedingly poor, and this and poor transportation means were the cause of the numerous famines in the unhappy country.

Price fluctuations were violent. As always, bad harvests meant high prices, and good harvests brought low prices, but beside this, other fluctuations were caused by existing conditions. Economists of the time tried to trace this instability to the bondage of peasants. For example, in 1804 - the very high price of grain was traced to the demand of the growing city population. But by 1826 the conditions were reversed. City populations were no longer increasing but even decreasing because it was impossible to carry out anything of a commercial nature, and all

(1) Makoff & O'Hara - Russia. Page 50

attempts in this respect were discouraged because the serfs could never become a dependable buying public (1). It appears that grain growing as an industry could never be economically profitable under these conditions, and a realization of this was becoming fairly general.

At the time of Emancipation the classes of peasants stood much as they had been during the previous century and a half. The numbers in the different groups varied from period to period, but the classification was as follows:

(1). Landowners' peasants, were the majority, owned privately by the nobles, but not exclusively by this class: Many merchants possessed large estates and there were cases where rich peasants owned land and serfs. This class of peasants, as all other classes, were divided into obrok paying and bartschina laboring groups, as has been noted above. Then there was the huge class of *dvorovie lyude* (2) - who served in the houses of the owners - and performed all tasks from ordinary domestic service to the entertainment in acting and music of the master class.

(2) The Church peasants - were in the middle of the eighteenth century, numerically the second most important group. They were owned by monasteries, the Holy Synod, the bishops and other churchmen, as well as by cathedrals and other churches. The complaints about their treatment and mismanagement of the estates, however, brought about finally, after

(1) Mavor^{of cit}-I. 424.

(2) The system of *dvorovie lyude* was in force only in Russia. Mavor I 200.

many former attempts of the same kind, the secularization of the clergy lands in 1764. About a million church peasants passed into the hands of the State, and were henceforth known as the Economical Peasants (1). The conditions of their life were greatly improved as bartschina was altogether abolished. But for lack of adequate management abuses developed again, and the results of the ukase were not followed out thoroughly. But on the whole they fared much better than before, and better too than the landowners' peasants.

(3) The court peasants and the peasants of the Tzar formed a large group. They served the varied needs of the court and the Tzar. The numbers in this group also varied from period to period, since grants from the court lands were given from time to time to private persons who had served the crown. The peasants were taxed as the others, and were divided into obrok and bartschina groups. Abuses in administration occurred here as well as elsewhere. In 1797 - the administration of the Crown lands as well as the lands of the Imperial family passed into the hands of the Department of the Udelny. Before this there had been frequent changes and fluctuations of policy. The local control of the Court lands was in the hands of managers, and the mir organization was responsible for the taxes (3); the fixation of obligations and the administration of interior affairs.

(1) They were placed under the administration of the Economical Collegians. Mavor I. 233.

(2) Mavor I. 255.

(3) Ibid. I. 254.

Strictly speaking, the Tzar's peasants formed a group differing from the Court peasants. The Tzar, and the members of his family personally often supervised these individually owned estates, and because of this, the peasants on these estates were even more at the mercy of the individual than were those of the landowners, considering that the members of the Royal family were so much more powerful and influential.

Besides these groups there were the Stable Peasants and the Falconers, who as the names imply, served certain needs of the Court. Large studs of horses were maintained, not only for the use of the court, but for reinforcing the cavalry studs by the introduction of good stock.(1). Falconry, again, was a favourite sport of the Tzars, and a group of peasants (2) was maintained to procure and keep these birds. Peasants were intructed to provide for the needs of the hunters. In 1827 the falconers were classified with the State peasants.

(4) The State Peasants, who at the time of Emancipation formed the largest group of serfs, had come to include nearly all of those not owned by landowners and the Court. Outside of the peasants of the clergy, the state peasants were generally classified as follows:

(a) The Possessional peasants, who worked in the various industrial enterprises since the time of Peter the Great.

(1) Mavor ^{op.cit} I. 263.

(2) In 1742 it was stated that there were 868 falconers.

They have little to do with the agricultural development of the country and therefore belong outside of this discussion.

(b). The Black Ploughing Peasants - or those who worked on the land. In many ways of course, they were subject to the same rules as those of the landowners, but they were not actually under such close supervision of a selfish head and their protests in time of trouble were more effective because they reached the authorities more easily. Because of these things they were, on the whole, somewhat better off than the landowners' serfs.

They seemed to have a little more room for development, and we find in this class more inequality in the scale of living. Here there were wealthy peasants and merchants who themselves owned land and peasants. Those who lived on the land had come in many cases to mortgage it, and even to sell at times. By tradition of course the peasants had rights to the land, but legally no right to sell existed. The selling of land resulted in poverty for some, and the state brought in programmes of repartition, which do not seem to have been general (especially in the northern guberni) from early times. Requests for repartition came often from the poorer peasants and the state tended to ignore agreements of sale and prohibited further sales, which, as above stated, had no legal grounds (1). In this way, the wealthier individuals of the community suffered. The central government

(1) ^{op.cit.} Mav or I. Pg. 278.

attempted by repartition to equalize the living conditions among the poorer peasants, the wealthier kulaks *(first)* and the peasant and village owners, who had come in from the outside with purchasing power.

From early times one solution for dealing with land poverty in the populated sections of State owned land was emigration to Siberia. The peasants who went were expected to supply the civil and military forces with supplies, and since land was unlimited there, they received large tracts for their own use during the early years. A little more room seemed to have been left to individual initiative here and this led in time to the formation of the rich and poor classes. Here, to solve problems of inequality, the solution of repartitioning was also adopted. (1).

(c). Another group of state peasants were the Polovneke or Metayer tenants, who cultivated land and shared the produce with the owner. They were supposed to pay one half of the crop to the landowner after the seed for the next year was deducted and were obliged to perform numerous other duties as well. Many of the state peasants who had sold their land or were landless through other causes drifted into this class. They worked on the estates of pomyetschiki, monasteries and also on those of merchants, officials and even peasants (2). But they had their obligations to the State like any of the other serfs - such as rendering recruits, for instance.

- (1). ^{оп.дт.} Mavor¹ I - 284.
 (2) " I - 285.

(d). The freeholders or Adnedvoitsi were a class descended from the serving people who had settled along the south and east frontiers of Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to resist the attacks of the Tartars (1). They had been given land for individual service, and therefore did not hold it in common (2). Many of this class were wealthy and had peasants of their own. But, here, as among other state peasants, the selling of land had developed, and the fact that in many cases, landowners had come in and had bought the rights, caused the odnodvoitsi to become impoverished. The state advised common ownership as a solution, and by 1851 - of the 1,190,285 odnodvoitsi souls, about half had accepted the common ownership of land.

These classes practically constituted the peasantry of Russia at the time of the emancipation. A word should be said about the Cossacks and the Military Settlements of Alexander the First. The Cossacks were peasants who in the early times had come to an agreement with the Tzar and were to furnish military service voluntarily in return for certain privileges, and free land tenure in their own district. They provided their own horses and equipment and were always ready at the call of the Tzar. In fact, they were mercenary troops, and had organizations of their own for governing purposes, and they elected their leaders (atamans). They

(1) Supra op. cit. Chap. III

(2) The old Service Serving people - also classed with Odnodvoitsi, possessed more common property
Mavor I - 300

enjoyed considerable independence and because of this often clashed with the central power. The great leaders of Peasant revolts came from among the Cossacks - namely Stenka Razin (1670) and Pugachev (1773). The Cossacks have formed a picturesque group in Russian history and have had a considerable place in her development, but because of the roving nature of the population and its military character, its' importance in agrarian development is not very extensive.

In an effort to free the state from the nobles, Alexander I founded Military Settlements. Under supervision and discipline whole peasant villages were to be militarized, and by the end of his reign about 200,000 men had been transferred to these colonies (1). These people were to have special privileges in land tenure, but actually nothing important to the State resulted from these colonies, but as a class for future reference they should be noted.

In the foregoing the classes of peasants in Russia have been analysed. It remains to discuss the relation of the individual to the powers above him. The chief contact which gave rise to the greatest discontent, was the relationship to the landowner. In the early days of Russian history the pomyetschek had been a military chief, but with the growth of the State he became the economic and financial representative of the government (2). From among his peasants he supplied recruits to the army, and it was to

(1). G. Vernadsky - A History of Russia. Pg. 111.
 (2). G. Vernadsky - " " " " Pg. 110.

the interest of the State to encourage his power over the peasants. Until 1731, the state taxes had been collected by State Commissars accompanied by Military forces, but after that date the Commissars were withdrawn, and the power of collection was placed in the hands of the landowners (1).

Thus the subordination of peasants to the landowners progressed, and since it was to the interest of the state, inhuman and unfair treatment was overlooked. James Mavor says:-

"Russia has never been fastidious about the sacrifice of individual freedom or comfort, or even about the sacrifice of lives when large aims seem to demand such sacrifices" (2)

Abuses of authority increased in spite of laws against cruel treatment, for peasants' complaints were forbidden. (3) Corporal punishment was common, and peasants were sold and bartered like ordinary goods and chattels with no regard for family ties (4). For any crime they were in danger of penal servitude and exile to Siberia. The following was common - taken from the Moscow Gazette in 1801 (5).

"For Sale - three coachmen, well trained and handsome and two girls, one eighteen and the other fifteen years of age, both of them good-looking and well acquainted with various kinds of handiwork. In the same house are for sale, two hairdressers, the one twenty one years of age, can read, write, play on a musical instrument and act as huntsman; the other can dress

- (1) Makoff & O'Hara - Russia, P 34. (2) Mavor I - Pg.
 (3) Mavor I - Pg. 204. (4) Makoff & O'Hara - Russia, p 34.
 (5) Quoted by E. A. Walsh "The Fall of the Russian Empire" p 34.

ladies' and gentlemens' hair; in the same house are sold pianos and organs".

In many places penal codes were drawn up with the bodily punishments inflicted for small crimes as well as great. Torturing of serfs was quite common. The cruelty of the landowner was reflected in the attitude of peasant to peasant. An example of this horror is seen in the treatment of horse-thieves (1) (which, however, was not confined to Russia) (2). And, when the pomyetschek fell prey to the anger of the serfs, his own methods of punishment were inflicted upon him (3).

We have seen that in the demands which the landowner could make upon his serfs there was no limit. The juridical relations of ownership and possession of land, for instance were extremely confused. Actually the peasant had certain traditional heritable rights, as had the pomyetschek, but his rights were not defined and were based upon changing custom. The peasants' conception of his rights was traditional while the landowners' conception was based upon expedience.

The law did not fix a maximum obrok, nor a settled bartschina requirement. In the majority of cases the landowner was left to take what he wished, and the peasant naturally tottered on the verge of ruin.

But the limitation of the personal freedom in

- (1) A. Kup^uon "The Horse Thieves".
- (2) G. B. Shaw. "The Devil's Disciple".
- (3) Mavor¹/1. 211.

matters of ordinary life among the villagers was nothing compared with that among the *dvorovie lyude*. Their suffering in many cases was much more subtle. Sometimes they were themselves educated and taught the children of the proprietor. Many were sent abroad to study music and acting, only to return to arbitrary treatment by the master, whose every whim was law. Marriage among all peasants was subject to the supervision of the landowner.

On the other hand, it was both to the interest of the state and to that of the landowner that the communal system of land-holding was perfected by the peasants themselves. The responsibility of the *mir* in the collection of taxes was a decided aid to the *pomyetschek*, and the other responsibilities which fell upon this organization further simplified this work. As has been pointed out before, in some parts of Russia from the earliest times, and in most parts during the years preceding emancipation, redistribution of land had taken place periodically. This was done by the peasants themselves and it has been shown that it was extra-ordinarily well done. The division was always even and fair in extent and value of the land, in spite of the fact that no scientific instruments were used. (1). In the different districts the length of time between repartitions was different. They varied from one to ten years (2). These redistributions had the effect of equalizing peasant progress; under the existing conditions it

(1). Mayor I. 211.

(2). " I 211.

resulted in common want.

The fact that peasant population increased from year to year caused a decrease in the size of the allotments. Since the same amount of land at the end of the next period had to be divided among the greater number of people, made for greater and greater land hunger, which resulted in further want and misery. It is true that the area of cultivated land increased considerably during the century and a half before emancipation but it in no way kept pace with the increase in population (1). The growth of factories and the consequent concentration of people in the cities, and migrations to Siberia meant some decrease of population on the land, but nothing was done on a sufficiently wide or organized scale to result in alleviation. The state did not seem altogether to recognize the immensity of the problem; it was not to the immediate interests of the landowner to work in the direction of depopulating any area of land (2), as a man's wealth was reckoned by the number of souls he owned (2); and it was quite out of the scope of power of the peasant in the mir to do anything about the condition.

The mir organization, however, attempted to solve the individual difficulties. Besides this common ownership and redistribution of land, they performed many of the local duties of government. They were responsible for the poor and helpless in the village, as well as the orphans

(1) G. Vernadsky - A Hist. of Russia Pg. 107.

(2) E. A. Walsh. The Fall of the Russ. Emp. Pg. 32.

and outcasts. And the treatment of these was humane and reasonable. Each peasant living in the village felt a personal responsibility for the unfortunate; and it is said that no matter how little he had, he gave some to those in want.

Taxes, as stated previously, were paid to the landowner and the state by the community and not by the individual, and the collection of taxes, the policy and method, were decided upon by the mir. The taxpaying unit was known as the tyaglo, and it usually (1) consisted of one man and one woman. It was left to the landowner to decide when a man or woman was old enough to begin paying taxes. The land given to a household did not depend necessarily upon the number paying taxes, but rather upon the number of souls in the family and their means of life - a personal touch due to local control. Among State peasants however, division of souls was more common (i.e. male souls at a census).

Sometimes the mir as a unit would rent land from private proprietors and cases were known where the community would buy collectively such things as salt, or would rent mills (2). To the Russian peasant it was a beginning of local organization ~~among them~~. They elected their own officials and held their meetings - according to locality - more or less often. (Fortnightly meetings were common). In all matters not having any relation to the state or the landowner, the village enjoyed autonomy. The burmister or alderman conducted

- (1) Tverskaya guberni tyaglo consisted of two or three men and the same number of women. Mavor^{or} I. 209.
 (2) Mavor I - 213.
 162.

all busniess with the state, through the village priest very often because he could read and write. But the meetings, themselves, at which all were allowed to be present, (though the tyaglo men had the decisive vote) were left to the villagers, and the fact that they so early learned to run public meetings must necessarily have something to do with their activity in the recent Soviets.

Common ownership of land no doubt gave the village a feeling of unity, and it kept individuals from becoming disproportionately rich or poor, but it at the same time discouraged individual effort to improve, since at the next redistribution the results of such effort might benefit the lazy and efficient neighbour. This must necessarily have made for inefficiency on the part of the community, and may be regarded as one of the causes underlying the retardation of progress in Russia during the centuries.

The Rise of Discontent after Emancipation.

The great reform of 1861 may be briefly analysed as follows: First came the general act, which dealt with the legal position of the peasants and the administrative organization, which two points were to be applied alike everywhere. The general methods and conditions of redemption, and the local institutions for peasant affairs were discussed here. It provided for officials called Peace Mediators, with their district conferences and provincial boards, to put the reform into practice; and, it also included provision for the liberation of all house-serfs without property two years after the publication of the act (1).

Next came a group of economic local acts, each of which was to meet special geographic and economic conditions. These dealt with the problems of Great Russia, White Russia and New Russia where the communal system was in existence; in Little Russia - with the provinces of Poltava, Chernigor and part of Kharkov; there was a separate act for the south western provinces and one for Lithuania.

Then there were special acts dealing with special problems. There was one which provided for the sale of the estate by small serf-owners to the government, if the emancipation as drawn up was to prove disadvantageous to them. Another provided for peasants performing obligatory work in landowners factories, and still others for peasants in the

(1). The domestic serfs who formed 6.79 per cent of all of the serfs became landless peasants. -

Mountains and the salt works; those in the region of the Danube army; those in the one province in the Caucasus where liberation took place; again, for those in Bessarabia where liberation had taken place before annexation; and lastly for those in West Siberia where alone in Siberia bondage right had been in force.

These different acts, seventeen in all, contained over a hundred articles each, and thus attempted to meet every problem which might arise, though the reform as a whole did not meet the issue fully.

The legal side of the Emancipation Act was possibly the most gigantic in undertaking. Suddenly over forty seven million (1) people were given legal status. But the material difference that this was to make in practice proved to be disappointing, although there is no doubt that the moral effect was far-reaching. The fact was that the civil rights given to the peasants were not on equal terms with those of the landlord. They did not become full citizens but were transferred to the "So-called tributary orders" (2). They were still taxed by the government per capita and not by income. They were still tied to the villages by the persistence of the mutual guarantee system, and were further restricted by an involved passport system. This meant that there was no freedom of movement or of profession. The act emphasized that

- (1) Knight, Barnes, Flügel / Econ. History of Europe
in Modern Times - P. 750.
- (2) Kornilov - Modern Russ. History Page 46, Vol. II.

during a period of nine years the obligatory peasants could not refuse to accept their allotments and to perform obligations for them (1), and even when this period was passed, the peasant could not sell or mortgage his so-called property, technically, any more than he had been able to before 1861. This meant that actually the only thing which the peasant now had was a share in the village, and it was to the interests of the community, to distribute the land so that it would be tilled, in order that collectively the taxes could be paid (2). The peasant had now become a serf to the soil.

The administrative organization provided for by the act was briefly as follows: The peasants were to continue living in villages which were the smallest autonomous social units. The villages were to be economically independent and within themselves were to determine the taxes, which were usually according to the size of the allotments. Above the village in authority was the volost, but this power was in police matters, since the district or volost police became the representatives of the central government along with the government tax collector. During the time of change the Peace Mediators were to have very considerable powers and it was because of the conscientious work of this group of public spirited men, that the inexperienced peasants received any of the rights granted to them by the Act. Actually, no self

- (1) Kornilov - Modern Russ. History Page 47. Vol. II
- (2) Knight, Barnes, Flugol - Page 751.

government, on the basis of responsibility to electors was granted at all.

The economic basis of the Act has been discussed in earlier chapters. Briefly it was to be as follows: The peasants were to retain approximately those allotments which they had been using in their bondage state. However maximal norms were set in three different regions. (1) In the non-black-soil - there were to be seven grades ranging from three and a half to eight dessiatins (1). (2) In the black soil area - five grades - from three to four and a half dessiatins and (3) in the Steppe regions - four grades from six and a half to twelve dessiatins. The minimal norms were to be not less than one third of the maximal (2). These, small as they were, were increases upon what the provincial committees had recommended. But the important thing to note, which was to be the basis of future trouble, is the fact that even in the best cases, the peasants received only half of the land which they were able to cultivate, since their allotments meant only three days' work a week to them, because for the other three days they had worked on the landowners' land. Then the land was not in one block but the portion received by each would be divided into as many as ten strips, representing land of every fertility - scattered over the countryside, and furthermore was subject to redistribution every ten or twelve years. The land was given to the village and the mir

(1) Dessiatin - $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres (about).

(2) Kornilov - Modern R. History - Vol. II. P. 50.

did the apportioning - the allotments being based upon personal needs in many cases. Of course it stands to reason, that the landowners made no effort to give up the best of their land, nor any more than was absolutely necessary. In many cases too, fraud was practised - In one case we are told that a noble retained 100,000 acres for himself, and sacrificed 6,500 acres for his serfs, but was paid at the usual rate of four fifths of the value of the estate by the government.(1).

The obligations were made as heavy as possible by the landowners. The *Editing* Commission had divided the country into four regions for the sake of settling the obrok to be paid. This division was as follows: In the industrial non-black soil region it was to be nine rubles per soul and ten in districts near the capitals where advantages could be derived by the peasants from the proximity of the city. In the Agricultural non-black soil region it was to be eight rubles. In the black soil belt it was at first fixed at eight but was later raised to nine rubles, and in the Steppe regions it was eight rubles throughout. When the peasant held less than the maximal allotment, the obrok was lessened but not proportionately. There was a special gradation system for this purpose, always to the advantage of the landowner (2).

The result of this settlement was that the standard of living of the peasant could not rise and that land shortage

- (1) Case cited by E. A. Walsh "The Fall of the Russ. Emp. P.40
- (2) Kornilov, Vol II. P. 51.

was felt at once. The peasant had to rent land at once from the noble, or seek work elsewhere. As the population increased, the allotments upon redivision became even smaller, and because of the increased land shortage rents rose, and people became poorer. As before, in the most fertile parts of Russia, these conditions were felt most strongly.

As we have seen, the land became the possession of the peasant community, and the individual held it only in "perpetual (permanent) utilization". By mutual agreement between the landowner and peasant, the obligations, not the land, could be redeemed (1).

The redemption was not compulsory, but while in the non-black soil regions the landowners wished it, in the black soil fertile belt, the nobles were driven to it. Since the peasants were no longer under the direct control of the landowner, the estates deteriorated with losses to the owners, and their only escape lay in redemption, and for this reason the process was carried out fairly quickly. The bulk of the land they kept, of course, and because of the density of the population, labor could be easily hired. In the northern nonblack soil regions only few landowners remained on the land. They sold their estates and went into industry.

The immediate effect of the reform upon the peasantry was as follows: For four years before it was finally published and circulated, the Russian masses had

(1) Kornilov Vol. II. 52.

been conscious of great things about to take place and with their characteristic calm they waited. Not that there was no discussion in the villages. The matter was characteristically viewed and theorized upon from every angle. The peasants expected full freedom, with all the land which they had been tilling. They expected the Tzar to recompense the landowners (1). It is true that they received over 350,000,000 acres, or one-half of the arable land of the Empire (2), but they had expected all of it. It is then no wonder that the subsequent cry among the peasants in all the revolutionary outbreaks in Russia, was to be the cry for more land, and the recognition of this want in practice if not in theory, gave the Bolsheviks that support of the peasants which the other parties had not had.

The peasants were to see, on the other hand, that the proprietors were very well paid. The money was advanced by the State and in forty nine yearly payments the peasants were to repay the government. Economically, emancipation was of the greatest advantage to the landowner, although legally he lost a very great deal of authority, and it was this phase which caused conservative opposition. As has been shown in an earlier chapter, as business concerns, the estates were already before emancipation in many cases on the verge of bankruptcy.

(1) Kornilov - Vol. II. 65.

(2) Knight, Barnes, Flugel - P. 750.

The peasants were left cold and unmoved by the abstract conception of civic rights and legalistic assurances of independence when they desired tangible facts (1). When the terms of the act were made known to them the majority understood little of the importance and immensity of the reform(2). All they knew was that conditions were not to be very different after all, and in many places they refused to believe that this was the real emancipation, and disturbances took place. The conservative element had been predicting violence since the beginning of the discussion and now the government sent out governor-generals with special powers, to the different provinces!. And where neither the generals nor the peasants were reasonable, bloodshed resulted (3), and repression on the part of the government was severe.

But, generally speaking, the attitude of the countryside was much as it had been during the ages. Discontent remained and the cry for land also remained the chief one in the hearts of the masses. Grumbling continued, but it was Fate which directed matters, and direct resistance on a larger scale was impossible because of lack of organization. The peasants repeated their proverbs once again: "It is high up to God, and far to the Tzar". "We cannot reach to Heaven with our mind, nor to the Tzar with our head".

- (1) E. A. Walsh "The Fall of the Russ. Emp." P.38
- (2) Kornilov Vol II. 65. Only enlightened governors took care to help the peasants to realize the meaning of the reform.
- (3) Kornilov Vol. II. 66. In the Province of Penza, the people resisted, and troops were called who *fed*

Once the act was passed, the progress of carrying out the reform did not look very encouraging. The liberal Minister of the Interior, Lanskoj was replaced by Valus~~ev~~^{ev} - a man who had shown himself to be a determined enemy of reform. throughout the course of the discussion of emancipation. He was appointed to conciliate the nobles who had opposed emancipation, and he meant to work into the hands of the landowners (1).

Now during Lanskoj's term of office, by means of the help of the governors, many of whom were liberal-minded men, the Peace Mediators mentioned before had been appointed. Since the friends of the reform realized that this executive work of bringing the reform to the people was possibly its most important phase, men known for their sense of justice and friendliness to the peasants had been selected (2). As they, with their district conferences and provincial boards were not under the authority of the provincial or central authorities they had great power, which they exercised in the cause of the peasants. Naturally, they clashed with Valus~~ev~~^{ev}. On the pretext of economy he tried to reduce their numbers, but the mediators stayed on, on only a half or a third of the salary

(contd.) upon them. The students at Kazan University had a requiem served for the dead. The monks who officiated were exiled to Solovki and the leader of the students brought to St. Petersburg.

- (1) Kornilov Vol. II. P. 67.
 (2) " " II. P. 68.

in order to accomplish the work assigned to them in the two years set down. It was because of their sincere efforts that even more was not taken from the peasants.

The peasants, on the whole, were left disillusioned by the great act. Its effect upon the country generally was further reaching. Alexander II introduced and allowed freedom of discussion and finally passed the peasant reform in order to save the State structure. It was to be a social revolution, the necessity of which was felt, and could no longer be ignored. Political reform was quite foreign to his mind. The State as it existed was sacred: The power of the Emperor was absolute.

But the very fact that a matter of such fundamental nature as emancipation should become the topic of discussion of Russia's millions, would mean that in the future other matters, political, economic or social, would also be discussed and reform would be expected. Public backing and support of opinions and theories of the Intelligentsia became known almost for the first time. As the new generation grew up, its demands and strivings for which it asked the support of public opinion were much more revolutionary. The younger people had lost the feeling of the permanence of the absolute bureaucracy, and thus with the impetus given ^{by} the peasant reform, were to come ~~the~~ later much more widely-spread demands for political, economic and social reform. Literature was the only means of expression, and political and economic

theories were the material for thought. Many sects grew up (1), which, however, for various reasons gained little support except among the Intelligentsia itself. But the government became alarmed, and all further reform would have been curtailed, if the very nature of the Emancipation Act had not made it absolutely necessary.

Therefore, even during the decided period of reaction, after the attempted assassination of Alexander II in April 1866, the passing of great and important reforms continued. The rising in Poland in 1863, and consequent repression, also, and little effect upon the changes in the fields of finance, education, local self-government, law courts, press, and the army, which followed in quick succession after 1861.

The Crimean War had revealed the crushing weight of bureaucracy upon the financial system. Now the Minister of Finance was freed of certain complications with the jurisdiction of other ministries, and was placed directly under the Inspector of the State Comptroller or Auditor. Public budgets were to be presented annually and the State Bank was erected to centralize credit and finance (2).

In June 1863 - a reform in the University Administration placed the power of government in the hands of councils elected from the various faculties but student organisations

- (1) For example - Pisarev and the Nihilists - who believed in the negation of all authority. ~~Purginev's~~ *Lurgenov's* "Fathers and Sons" presents the Nihilists theories.
- (2) β . Pares - A Hist. of Russia - Page 360.

were still illegal. This reform and one of the press in 1865 were to have little real effect. However, the removal of censorship in advance, on newspapers and serious publications might have been effective if the punitive censorship had been given to the law courts instead of being retained by the administrative authorities.

These reforms, along with others concerning town councils(1) and re-organization in the army (1) had their indirect effects upon the peasantry. The establishing of the elected councils of Zemstvos, for purposes of self government were to have a more direct effect upon the country. The Zemstvos were a necessity because some local administration had to take the place of the control which had been held by the landowners before emancipation. The members of these bodies were to be elected in the country districts and provinces from among the gentry primarily, but including a minority of peasant representatives as well. The district Zemstvo elected a permanent governing board, and from among its own members sent representatives to the provincial Zemstvo, which in turn elected its own governing board. (3). The powers of the Zemstvos included the supervision on roads, hospitals, food distribution, and later also education, medical and veterinary service, and public welfare in general. If we analyse this control, it is at once apparent that no

- (1) Pares. Pgs. 364-65. Town Councils (1870) established in all the larger towns - giving marked predominance in representation to the wealthy.
Army Reform - Conscription on Western basis, with exemptions and shorter terms.
- (2) Cf. The Soviet method and system of representation.

political power was given these representative bodies. The central government retained all police and military authority, and, as we shall see, it was to be clearly understood that the formation of these bodies did not mean any deviation from the ideas of absolute control.

With the passing of the power of the landowner the local legal administration had also to be replaced. The lower law courts were established with Justices of the Peace elected by the Zemstvos. Reform in the higher courts was also essential. In theory, at least, the courts were freed from class distinction and were to be independent of the administrative officials. Furthermore, judges were to be paid, and could not be removed as before on the slightest pretext; trials were made public and the jury system, most important of all, was introduced. In theory the reforms were much more far reaching than they could possibly be in practice, considering the retention of absolute autocratic control, and the general reactionary attitude of mind of the age.

So much for the various reforms which followed in the wake of the Emancipation Act: Now ^{to} let us turn to further reform and application in the peasantry problem itself.

In 1866 the principles of Emancipation were spread to include the numerous groups of state peasants, and in 1883, the serfs belonging to the Imperial Family were finally liberated. The latter were to retain the portions of land upon which they were living (in all cases larger than

those of the landowner's peasants) and their obrok payments were counted as redemption payments to be completed in forty nine years. This class included about 850,000 peasants of the male sex (1).

The matter of applying the principle to the State peasants was a more intricate problem. When the Ministry of State Domains was formed in the reign of Nicholas I the land possession of the State peasants was reorganized. The allotments were equalized and where there was not enough land to go around in one district the peasants were removed to other free state lands (2). A special commission (Cadastral) which worked upon this problem actually provided the State peasants with much more land than the landowners' peasants had received, and the obroks also were smaller. Not that attempts had not been made before to increase the burden of the State peasants, so that the expectations of the others should not be raised (3). But in spite of this, the allotments were larger and the possibilities of a somewhat higher standard of living within easier reach among the State peasants, by the final settlement, than they were among the landowners' peasants (4).

(1) Kornilov II - 117.

(2) " II - 117.

(3) " II - 119 - 21. Muraviov, as minister of State Domains, a very reactionary serf owner himself, tried to curtail the land allowance etc. of the State peasants.

(4) Kornilov II - 119 - 21. According to the analysis of Prof. L. O. Khodsky, quoted by Kornilov - 50% of the State peasants received "generous" norms, 35% sufficient allotments and 15% were given "insufficient". While he stated that only 13% of the landowners' peasants were provided for generously, 43% sufficiently, and 42% insufficiently. The use of the terms was of course conditional.

We have seen that immediately after emancipation neither great improvements nor ^{improvements} ~~happenings~~ could have been expected. The landowners were not worse off than before, although in the black soil regions they could not at once adjust themselves to new conditions. They were forced to rent their land to the peasants because they had neither the capital to hire labor nor to buy implements and cattle for cultivating, since in bondage times the peasants had used their own. In the non-black soil ^{regions}, the landowners sold their estates in many cases - not to the peasants, but to middlemen - either merchants or individual rich peasants who bought them for the forests, etc., and only after exploiting the land did they sell them to the peasants when the latter had money to buy. (1).

We have seen that in the black-soil regions, after the peasants realized that the power of the landowner over the person of ^{the} peasant was gone, the work upon the nobles' estate decreased in efficiency so that the owner was driven to redemption. But redemption was to be by mutual agreement and in many sections the peasants' realized that the old state with the decreased legal power of the landowner was preferable to be thrown on their own. Therefore in 1863 the government passed a law by which the gentry could receive redemption for the peasant holdings at once if they were willing to accept from eighty to seventy-five per cent of the compensation sum.

(1) Kornilov II - 124 ff.

This was welcomed by the landowners, but peasants in the south and south east specially, fled from this kind of emancipation because it meant that they would be left to their own small allotments with no means of making the side-earnings necessary to existence. Then also they would be at the mercy of the landowner who could charge what rent he pleased for extra land. It is true their obrok was to be reduced a fourth or fifth according to the lesser compensation price, but even this they despaired of being able to pay (1). Therefore the only alternative in many cases (specially in the South Eastern and Eastern provinces (2)) was for the peasants to accept the free "beggarly" or "quarterly" allotments (3). They were free from further redemption fees, but their poverty was established for all time.

Because of the reduced compensation price the landowners were specially careful to give the peasants as little as possible, and where no special provision to the contrary was stated they would cut off land which was of the utmost importance to the peasant community - such as pasture land for instance. It was absolutely necessary then for the peasants to rent back such land at the landowners' price of course. This laid the basis for a new bondage - economic in nature, which was to become more binding as the years went by, since the peasantry had no capital to start with, and had

(1) Kornilov II - 197.

(2) Ufa, Soronesh, Tambor, Samara, part of Sarator.

(3) Consisted of from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ dessiatins (Farbman - Bolshevism in Retreat - Page 5).

absolutely no means of accumulating any. Thus they could not improve their methods of cultivation and the problem became a vicious circle. They were still dependent upon the landlord.

The conditions in the villages, too, helped to keep back progress. The community system of land holding had its disadvantages. Individual initiative had little place. The allotments small enough in the first place, were subject to periodic redistribution, and with the increase of population ~~(1)~~ which was intensified after 1861, the allotments became smaller and smaller. Thus, in 1861 - the average peasant holding was 4.8 dessiatins, in 1886 it went down to 3.5 dessiatins and by 1900 to 2.6 dessiatins.(2) This meant that the supply of labor upon which the landowner could draw became greater and greater, which meant that the price of labor decreased and since the demand for land became greater the rents went up.

Since the Mir was responsible for the payment of taxes it was to the community interest that the best men should have the community land to till in order that the returns would be the greatest possible. Naturally, some were not able to compete, and since they could not sell their allotments they had to relinquish their rights for a period of time. In this way a class of landless peasants developed, while, no doubt, the thriftier grew richer. (3).

(1) ~~Population increase:~~

(2) Farbman - Bolsh. in Retreat - Page 12.

(3) Knight, Barnes, Flugel - Page 752.

The fact that grain growing was profitable during the years after Emancipation was reason enough for the landowners of the south to retain their control of the land. The world grain market was growing and there was a demand for Russian grain. The landowners where at all possible hired the peasants to work for them, but because of lack of capital (1) they found it almost impossible to open up new land. But the cultivated area increased greatly (2), especially in the south, and this was largely because of peasant population increase. The richer peasants, not the communities, rented or bought land, while the masses became steadily poorer. (3) The population increase was so great that the surplus could not easily be accomodated. From year to year great numbers of peasants went to the towns to work, but they still belonged to the villages. There were also periodic migrations to Siberia which were at first restricted (4).

The weight of taxation was a burden which was bound to stop all progress; and the peasants carried the bulk of it. From figures (4) collected during the years after emancipation we see that in 1872, of the sum of all direct taxes and payments which was placed upon the rural population, namely - two hundred and eight million rubles, only thirteen million rubles were paid by private landowners.

- (1) Kornilov II. 200. The landowners were heavily in debt to the State. Even after the retention of compensation money by the state in 1861. By 1870 the new debt was 230 million rubles, by 1880 - 400 millions, by 1890 600 million.

The taxes were of several kinds - the Imperial Tax - paid to the central government, including the hated poll tax of Peter the Great, which was not abolished until 1883-4; Local Zemstvo taxes; Communal taxes, paid to the Mir for communal administration purposes; and the redemption dues - which were heaviest of all. Then besides these in some places there were the obrok payments which were continued on top of all the other burdens. The landowner peasants bore the heaviest burden of the taxation. (5).

The central government took little heed of the growing discontent of the peasants. In spite of the growing deficit in the Treasury, they waged imperialistic wars which produced greater burdens, which were to increase the discontent. We are told that "much of the terrorism

(Contd.)

- (2) Kornilov II - 199. In the '60's 88,800,00 dessiatins under cultivation. . Early '80's, 160,800,000; by 1887 - 170,000,000 dessiatins.
- (3) Beazley, Forbes, Birkett - Russia from the Vangarians to the Bolsheviks - P. 45.
- (4) Kornilov II - 202.
- (5) " II - 203 - landowners' peasants paid 54 million rubles for their 33½ million dessiatins, while the state peasants paid 37 million rubles for their 75 million dessiatins.
- (6) Knight, Barnes & Flugol, op. cit. Page 757.

and peasant revolutionary sentiment of the thirty years following emancipation must be attributed to the crushing burden of an Imperialism for which the villages generally had not the slightest enthusiasm " (1). We are further told that in the War with Turkey (1877 - 78) the Russian officers deplored the fact that those they came to liberate were better off than the liberators.

The imperialistic policy was only an indication of the general policy of reaction which was constant in Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In a country where autocracy was glorified to the exclusion of all else, while the economic conditions were leading to collapse, it was no wonder that terrorism developed on both sides. This produced sterner reaction, considering which the course and non-solution of the peasant problem became inevitable. But so unbearable did conditions become in the thirty years following emancipation that some action by the government was necessary at different points.

It has been shown how the land poverty created by Emancipation led to a new economic bondage which carried with it even greater dangers of insecurity than that of earlier times: Also, how the community control of the individual, while on one hand it provided the only world he knew to the peasant, on the other restricted progress in methods of

(1) Knight, Barnes & Flugel *op. cit.* Page 753.

agriculture; how the method of redistribution and the decreased allotments still further lowered the standard of living; and finally how the unreasonable burden of taxation led the people to desperation.

Now let us analyse the situation at the end of the first thirty years of emancipation.

By 1887, the arable land had increased twenty five per cent over the area of 1861. In the Black soil regions this increase was much greater than in any other part, and in the Non-Black soil regions there was even a decrease.(1) The land held by the peasants yielded about 68.1 percent of the total yield. But this was not because the peasant lands yielded greater crops. On the contrary the yield of landowners' land was always greater than that of the peasants (2). The fact was that there was an increase in the amount of arable land held by the peasants. The fertility of the landowners' land was conserved by the fact that they could afford to leave it fallow, whereas peasants exploited theirs until the fertility decreased - by unscientific methods of cultivation.

Rye was the chief crop, occupying as many dessiatins as all other crops together. Wheat came next, after which came oats and barley. The sugar beet was

(1) Mavor - op. cit. II - 283.
 (2) " " " II 283.

an important crop also, especially in the west. Because of lack of agricultural capital and because of the ignorance and conservatism of the masses the introduction of scientific methods of agriculture, and the use of implements of a modern character was exceedingly slow. Nevertheless the use of artificial fertilizers and machinery was known, and specially after 1890. A considerable amount of research was done in Russia in agriculture methods. But up to 1890 and afterwards the fertility of the land tended to decrease because of the lack of restorative methods, and with that the decline in the well-being of the peasant became more marked.

This decline is even better illustrated by the lesser number of cattle owned by the peasants. From 1870 to 1900 there is a decline of thirty percent (1). According to the census of 1899-1901 in the number of working horses there was a decline of over thirty percent - so that about thirty percent of the peasants were without horses, about thirty two with one horse, about twenty one percent with two horses, and about eighteen percent with three or more horses. The foregoing is true of European Russia (2). In Siberia, on the other hand even by 1900, there was an increase in cattle.

The impossibility of retaining any civilized

(1) Mavor Ob. cit. II 285.

(2) Mavor Ob. cit. II 289 - Kornilov states that according to data collected at the beginning of the nineties, in some villages about 50% of the peasants had no horses, about 45% owned one and only 5 or 6% possessed two or more horses (Kornilov op. cit. II. 205)

standard of living, much less improving that standard is illustrated by the necessary practice among the peasants of selling grain in the autumn, even if the total yield grown essentially for their own consumption was deficient. The central government did not discourage this because it served two of its purposes, regardless of the fact that the peasants had, because of it, not only to live on the verge of starvation, but in many cases actually died of the results. With the sale of grain in the autumn the peasants raised the money for the payment of taxes. Therefore they were encouraged to do so, with the result that often there was a shortage of seed (1). Again, the grain export trade was lucrative for the state, and with no regard for possible famines at home the exports in grain increased.

But not all the grain sold was exported. A good deal of it was bought up by the middleman in the fall when prices were low and sold in the Spring (sometimes before) to the very same peasants who had sold it. It was very poor business for the peasant to sell at a low price and buy at a much higher price later on, but it was an absolute necessity. To buy later in most cases he had to borrow the money, and since he had no hope of ever paying it back, he had to promise his services to the landowner, the same type of debt servitude as had existed before emancipation. Mavor quotes the jests of the peasants themselves upon this matter of poor economics:

(1) Knight, Barnes, Elugol - op cit. page 735.

"Don't thou be sorry, Mother Rye!" says the peasant to the grain, "that thy path is citywards. In spring I will overpay; but I will take thee back". "Don't be sorry, Oats! that I brought you into Moscow. Afterwards I will pay three times over; but I will take you home again". (1).

The above conditions were true in the best agricultural districts of the northern regions, imports of grain had to take place.

These conditions were brought to the notice of the Central Government, and to the country at large, by the numerous crop failures which occurred during the years after the emancipation. In 1867 - in Smolensk, people died of starvation. Valuikev, the Minister of the Interior, denied the existence of the famine, saying that the reserves should satisfy the peasants needs, but investigation showed that this was not the case. In 1870, in the south eastern provinces, noted for their grain, there were poor harvests. In Samara it lasted for three years. The government recognized the necessity of action, but, as always, was slow to move.

The actual economic pressure rather than any desire to better the conditions of the people finally did bring about certain changes in the laws governing the peasants. No attempt was made to better their living conditions - physical, mental

(1) Mavor, *Op. cit.* II - 289.

or moral. Not that the peasants were not on the verge of utter degradation. Their life was one of utter misery, and it can be said for the Russian people that it was their power of half-humorous acceptance of Fate that during the years of utter hardships, they retained their whimsical philosophy of life. Many writers and so-called reformers among the higher classes (2) denounced policies of cultural advancement among the peasants on the grounds that they spent what little they had for their "vodka". Drinking among the Russian people was the usual means for relaxation. Their holidaying was always of a violent nature - but if men live under great pressure from day to day, the tendency is that in times of relaxation their reactions will also be under pressure. The life of the Russian peasant was a continual war against the powers of nature, poverty and starvation. The remarkable thing is that he did not become utterly brutalized, and that he was able to retain through hardships that utter tenderness toward the small and the weak which is so characteristic of the Russian peasant(1).

- (1) Nicholas Nekrassov's "Who can be happy and free in Russia" illustrates throughout its course this contrast between the violence and brutality of the peasant on one hand, and the tenderness, kindness and loveliness on the other.
- (2) Klimov - Governor of Zamara 1873 - Quoted by Kornilov Modern Russ. II. Page 2.4.

Whether the excess drinking in Russia was a deliberate government policy of course, remains a matter for argument. It is true that the State had a monopoly on the sale of vodka and it brought in an enormous income. It is also true that the State deliberately attempted to curb education among the peasants (1) to keep them in the "Power of Darkness" (1a) in order that from that source there should be no opposition to autocracy. The peasants themselves had a proverb which said that "Where God builds his church there the Devil erects his tavern" ^(quoted before) - for it was true that the two were always in close proximity, and after the Sunday church service the rest of the day was spent at the tavern.

The sordid conditions of their life are realized when we consider that their stoves had no chimneys in order to save fuel, in many cases they had no windows in order to conserve heat, and often were uncovered because the straw of the roof had been fed to the cattle (2). The writers of the time noted the economic insecurity of the peasant; his poor nourishment, bad physical and moral condition of living, the great amount of sickness and the high death rate (3) and the causes given were poor soil, insufficient ^{land} ~~and~~ and

- (1). E. A. Walsh, *op. cit.* 53 - 1887 a circular - that children of coachmen, servants, etc., were not to be encouraged to rise above the station in which they were born.
- (2a) Tolstoy's play is on this subject.
- (2) Karnilov II - 203.
- (3) Geoffrey Drage - "Russian Affairs" P. 81. In rural districts of Russia the death rate for the years 1890 to 1894 reached 33 per thousand. There was actual decrease in population in certain districts. Infant mortality was from 40% to 50%.
- (a) Karnilov II - 203.

heavy taxation. Writers such as Vassilchikov in 1880 (~~2~~) pointed out the likeness of the oppression of the Russian peasants to that of the French peasants before 1789 and predicted violence. (1)

The Intelligentsia recognized quite generally the defects of the system, and the criticism of the economic order was common among them. They felt their duty toward the masses: They considered that they owed the people for the culture they enjoyed. From these idealistic pricks of conscience developed the movement which had for its slogan "To the People", and other revolutionary movements which grew out of it. But the idealism of the intelligentsia hardly grasped the immensity of the economic situation, and while they wished to give the people knowledge and culture, they failed to realise that what they really wanted was land. This is the reason of the ineffectiveness of the revolutionary ardor of the early parties.

The central government was slow to bring about reform as has been pointed out before, but certain changes were made under the pressure of circumstances.

In 1880, Louis Melikov, as Minister of the Interior, permitted the discussion of a taxation policy and the reorganization of the legal and administrative status of the of the peasants, in the provincial and district Zemstvo

assemblies. This was welcomed with great rejoicing. He wished further to invite representatives from among Zemstvo workers, professors, etc., to a conference to discuss matters of further reform. But all discussion of change came to an end with the assassination of Alexander II on March 1, 1881.

But this was to be only for the time being, because the peasant question had again become so urgent that early in the reign of Alexander III, that most reactionary of Emperors, promises to aid the peasants were made. In June 1881, the first meeting of the so-called "informed men" took place to discuss lowering of redemption payments, the regulation of ^{the} present migration and other problems.

The matter of redemption had not been settled even yet throughout the country. There were still peasants paying obrok as before 1861 (1), Since no voluntary agreement had been reached. Now redemption was made obligatory, although this raised considerable opposition on the part of the nobles on the grounds that this was an "infringement of sacred rights of property".

Next a reduction in redemption payments was made - namely a rouble on an allotment, totalling twelve million roubles in all. And a sum of five million roubles was set aside for relief in specially burdened districts.

(1) Kornilov II - 253 - About 1/7 of the estates were still receiving obrok.

The most important change of 1881 (not completed until 1886) was the abolition of the poll tax of Peter the Great. It meant a loss of some forty million roubles, which had to be made up in other ways by the State (1). This reform was to have far reaching results, for it had been the chief reason for the "mutual guarantee" system in the villages, and which had so retarded the growth of professions outside the villages, for no matter where a man lived, he was responsible to the village for the head tax.

A further reform in the method of tax collection was carried out by Bunge, the Minister of Finance. The police, who had worked in crude and cruel ways, were replaced by tax-inspectors, who were also to get information about the peasants' ability to pay.

The fact that land scarcity was at the root of many troubles was recognized and three methods ^{were outlined} to overcome this shortcoming. A Peasant Bank was to be established, the renting of state lands was to be made easier, and a system of migration was to be formulated.

The Peasant Bank was to receive five million roubles a year from the State, in order to give credit to peasants wishing to buy land. At first it seemed that this might help to solve the situation, but soon it deteriorated into a bank for the well-to-do only, who often bought the

(1) Kornilov II - 254. A new liquor tax was established. Also the better situated peasants were taxed more heavily, and the taxes of the State peasants were increased 45%.

land from their poorer brothers. Its lack of efficiency is shown by the fact that in ten years' time it had only ~~affected~~ the increase of peasant landownership by one and one-half percent (1).

No State control of rent throughout the country was effected but on state lands regulation of rents took place. Furthermore, these lands were to be rented primarily to peasants in the districts.

Migrations, in spite of laws to the contrary by 1880 - had reached the huge number of forty thousand per year. In 1881 a special rule to restrict this was passed but it was never put into practice. In 1889 - after long discussions a law was passed by which migrations were to be made easier.

These reforms, as those before 1861, merely indicated the serious nature of the peasant problem. Little alleviation was felt because of them, but even such as ~~this was~~ to come to an end, for under the influence of Count Tolstoy (2) and Pobiedonostzev, Alexander III showed what was

(1) Kornilov LL - 256.

(2) Count Dmitry Tolstoy - served in the Ministry of Public Instruction and was Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod (1866 - 80) His reactionary tendencies in his dealings with the Universities and schools is specially noteworthy.

Pobiedonostzev - " He was a man of fine intellect and a first class jurist; he won the confidence of three Emperors. He had conviction and he was plain-spoken. A thorough despiser of human nature he turned reaction into a system of philosophy. He was Procurator of the Holy Synod until 1905."

(Bernard Pares - Cambridge Modern History pages - 298 and 313.)

his real attitude toward reform. Even the foregoing he considered in the light of weak concessions to public opinion. After 1882, real reaction was to be enforced.

The acts which followed were to prove this. In 1884 the Universities lost the semblance of freedom which they had had and the discussion of Zemstvo administration reform and the peasant question were no longer tolerated. (1). In order to strengthen the autocratic control, Alexander III and his successor tried to win the goodwill of the nobility once more by granting them special privileges. The class differences were to be accentuated consciously again. This move has been called an act of political madness (2).

In 1889, the first of the two laws was passed, which were to place all local power on the hands of the nobles. "Zemsky Chiefs" were appointed, from among the nobles, and they were to have almost supreme power over the self-governing institutions of the peasants (3). This was a decided step backward to the period before emancipation. These land captains had certain police powers, and became judges in lesser court cases, and in 1893 they were further given power to control the periodical redivision of communal land (4).

By an act of 1890 - the electoral system for the

- (1) Kornilov II - 262.
- (2) Vernadsky - Op. cit. Pg. 170.
- (3) Kornilov II - 263.
- (4) Beazley, Forbes, Birkett, Op. cit. 475.

Zemstvos was revised, giving the nobles a complete pre-dominance. The peasant delegates were reduced, and the few thus left, were to be appointed by the governor from a list submitted to him by the commune. In practice the Zemstvos became merely assemblies of nobles, supporting the Central Government.

These reactionary steps were carried out blindly and without reason, and were to court disaster, as we shall see.

Chapter VII
The 1905th Revolution.

The reactionary policy of the last years of the rule of Alexander III was continued under the strong influence of Pobiedonostzev, after Nicholas II, the last of the Tzars, came to the throne. The policy of suppression of anything savoring of reform was a natural corollary to the narrowness of the bureaucracy, the inefficiency of the absolute monarch, and the fear of the seething powers below the supposedly placid surface of daily occurrences. All the talk of political change, although that was foremost in the minds of the Intelligentsia, was driven underground, and the only legally accepted leaders of the countryside, namely the zemstvo workers, were driven to do economic and social work only. This work will be discussed in a later chapter. Already their organization efforts have been noted during the famine of 1891 and 1892.

The years before 1905 were to see the crystallization of all the revolutionary parties in Russia which were to play such an important part in the history of the country during the revolutions following, but none of them ever came very close to the peasantry. The Zemstvo leaders with their liberal tendencies were to become the leaders of the Constitutional-Democratic Party (Cadets) and their economic and social work in local administration remained their greatest contribution to the peasant problem. The Socialist parties approached the peasants in different ways. The Social Democrats (who split in 1903 into the Bolshevik and

Menshevik sections) tended to ignore the peasant question, because their theories of future organization were based altogether upon industrialization and the city proletariat. The party which took most interest in the peasants as a class was the Socialist-Revolutionary party which combined certain ideas of Western Socialism with the Russian communism of the Mir. With idealistic energy, they gave themselves to the cause of revolution and as a part of their programme carried out a system of terror which found expression in the numerous assassinations in high political circles. But their influence upon the peasants among whom they worked was practically negligible. The class differences between the Intelligentsia and the peasantry ~~was~~ too great. The highly theoretical social systems and reforms formulated and discussed by the revolutionary parties meant little to the peasants. Their problem did not seem to need these discussions. It was very simple. They still adhered to their age-long desire for the land. "The land is ours - give it to us and let us cultivate it" (1). There is no doubt that the influence of the villagers who spent a good part of their time working in the cities brought back a number of new ideas. While away from home they were fed upon Western Marxism, and the contact with the outside world naturally opened their eyes to many of the evils of the life in the villages but the peasants needed no outside teaching to make them radical in their demands. Their desire for the land, and their intent (1). Jas. Mavor. - An Econ. History of Russia. Vol.II P.300

to get it were more radical tendencies than those of any of the other theoretical or practical groups.

The reason for a certain show of prosperity in Russia during the years before the outbreak of 1905, can be found in the steady growth of capitalism, which was encouraged by the protectionist policy carried on by Witte and his predecessors. As nearly always is the case, this industrial development was altogether at the expense of the agricultural classes. The peasants paid heavy duties upon all the manufactured things which they had to buy, and, not only that, but also upon the necessities such as cotton and sugar. The result of this continued policy of protection was that the peasants sunk into greater misery. Specially was this true in the Central provinces. Not so much as a means of reform, but rather to counteract the influence of ~~Ph~~^{the} in government circles, Witte, in 1902, set up a commission "for the investigation of the causes of exhaustion of the central provinces." (1). He was aided in this work of investigation by the Zemstvos. The total result of this was that the work was even more decidedly restricted and Witte lost his office. So jealous was the bureaucracy of its power, the evils of which were in danger of being revealed, and so little interest did they actually take in the conditions of the people of the country!

(1) Kornilov - Modern Russian History. Vol.II. P.282

The government was weak, floundering and stupid, and its utter inefficiency was seen in its policy in making war upon Japan. It was possibly a stroke of policy to counteract the growing dissatisfaction in the country. It was hoped that a foreign war would appeal to the patriotism of the masses, but this proved an utter fiasco (1). It added another 2,442,000,000 rubles to the State debt; it shamed Russia before the world and was an indictment of the whole government system; and it brought to the foreground for the first time so generally, the discontent latent in the different classes of society.

It is significant to note how little the disturbances in the country and those in the city had to do with each other. Unions of trades and professions were formed for democratic demands among the city and town dwellers, and how they carried through their revolution is not for discussion here. But in discussing the revolution in connection with the agrarian problem, it is most important to note that a special peasant movement had been growing up before 1905, and that an impetus for organization was found in the fact that the reactionary government had tried to secure from the peasants' assemblies formal approval of the Russo-Japanese War; and also of its projects of agrarian legislation, including the principle of unlimited supremacy of the

(1). Knight, Barnes & Flugol - P. 754.

landowners and authorities over the Russian peasantry" (1). The opposition was general and out of it developed numerous peasants' unions - forming finally the "All-Russian Peasants' Union" which met in Moscow on July 31st, 1905. It had the support of the Intelligentsia - in the form of the Agronomists' and Statisticians Unions. The discussions and resolutions had to do first of all with the question of land, as was to be expected, and certain interesting resolutions were agreed upon. All private, fiscal udelnya, monastery and church lands were to be transferred to the disposal of all the people. "The use of the land is to be enjoyed only by those who, by their families or by partnership but without hired labor, cultivate the land, and to the extent only of such powers of cultivation" (2). At this time there was still considerable talk of redemption, and here disagreements developed. Nevertheless a resolution to the following effect was passed:

"That the land must be considered the common property of all the people, that private property must be abolished, that the monastery, church, udelnya, cabinet and Tzars' lands must be taken without compensation, and that the lands of private owners must be taken partly with and partly without compensation; that the detailed conditions of the mobilization of private lands must be defined by the coming Constitutional Convention or Constituent Assembly" (3)

(1). Quoted by Mavor - ob. cit. P. 297.

(2) Mavor II. P. 298.

(3) Quoted by Mavor II. P. 299.

This shows the radical trend of thought in the economic field. At this congress, complaints were made about the work of the land captains who were thoroughly hated. The village priests came in for their share of criticism, and the landowners methods of fining for trespasses which could not be avoided, were made matters for complaint (1). The political problem was not discussed openly. The blame for existing conditions was still placed upon the landowners and the land captains. However, the attitude of the peasants at this time toward the autocracy is apparent from the words of a peasant at this congress. He is quoted as saying: "The Tzar ought not to be touched. He is still breathing as something great to the peasants. This in turn will be over." (2)

At this first conference in July twenty-two provinces were represented, but at the second one, in November of the same year, practically all the parts of European Russia sent delegates. A difference in tone was also noticeable. The Peasants' Union decided to act with the other revolutionary unions of the proletariat, and they also planned a general strike, by refusing to make any land contracts with the landowners until their wishes were complied with. The peasants were quite sure that the peasant question would be the first for settlement in the new State Duma, and that their demands would be taken as the basis for the solution! So little did they understand the workings of the bureaucracy!

(1) Quoted by Mavor II. P. 300.

(2) Ibid. 301.

However, they recognized that there was a possibility that the government would prosecute the Peasants' Union, and as a safeguard they drew up resolutions, concerning their line of action in that case. They would refuse to pay taxes, they decided. Also, they would refuse to supply recruits and reservists for the army; they would demand the payment of all deposits from the Savings' Banks, and they would destroy all the liquor shops (to stop that source of government revenue). These were most revolutionary ideas! The peasants were beginning to realize their own power.

The other revolutionary parties tried to make the peasants put forward the general political demands which interested them above all else but the peasants interests were not political. (1). But when the Socialist-Revolutionaries circulated the motto: "All land for those that labor" their influence was at once felt in the villages because it fitted with their desires, and they adopted this programme wholesale. (2).

While their representatives were meeting to discuss the land problem the peasants in the villages were taking things into their own hands. Disorders began already in February of 1905 in the impoverished provinces of Orel and Kursk, and as they spread they became more organized. The peasant commune, which had been so carefully preserved by the

- (1) Beazley, Forbes & Birkett - Russia from the Varangians to the Bolsheviks. P 529.
- (2) Bernard Pares - Article in Cambridge Modern History, Vol. 12. P 355.

autocracy for purposes of its own, as has been shown above, now showed that it could in a time of excitement be turned into a weapon of resistance. Communities acted as one man and took what they wanted (1). Petitions from peasants demanded among other things that seven acres of land should be allowed per head; that there should be relief from the excessive taxation, remission of the remaining redemption dues, freedom to rent land and leave the commune, grants of state lands to those who tilled them, partial expropriation of landowners' land with compensation by the state, a legal limit to the extent of estates, freedom from special class laws, freedom of instruction and specially the abolition of the hated land captains. (2).

In the different sections of the country the resistance took different forms, but throughout, the use of force and violence to persons was very exceptional. (3). From reports (4) concerning the resistance in different districts in the different provinces it is possible to summarize the expression of discontent as follows:

In the northern provinces of European Russia the resistance to authority often took the form of cutting timber on the lands of private owners and upon those of the State. This illegal cutting was quite open and participated in by

(1) Bernard Pares - Article in Cambridge Modern History
Vol. 12. P. 353.

(2) Ibid. 354.

(3) Ibid. 353.

(4) Quoted by Mavor Vol. II. Pg. 302 ffg.

whole villages. The peasants were resolute in showing that they had grievances against the owners. Often new houses were built (1). They refrained from touching the estates of such nobles or landowners whom they knew to be poor, but they attacked the property of the rich owners, and often those not so rich. Taxes also were left unpaid, but it seems that this was because of the poor harvests, although an effort to embarrass the government was suspected. The authorities found it difficult to deal with these outbreaks. Proclamations were at first sent to the villages making extensive promises, but the peasants characteristically suspected these papers (2). In cases of arson, which occurred often and also in cases of the arbitrary expropriation of hay and grain troops were called in to check the activities.

In the Central districts resistance took the form of arbitrary pasturing of cattle on landowners land; the pillage of estates owned by landowners and merchants, cattle being driven away and houses and hay being set on fire; timber cutting also was carried on here; and, demands for new wage scales were set up by the peasants themselves - including length of working hours, working conditions, and even a demand for civility to be shown, was made (3). The landowner, the priest, sometimes the shopkeeper, and the land

(1) Out of this, and the same practice during the more recent revolution grew the saying: "The peasants have new houses, but do not ask where the logs were obtained".

(2) Mavor - Vol.II. P. 305.

(3) Ibid. 321.

(4) Ibid. 336.

(5)

captain came in for criticism. In one case the fees paid to the priest for the performance of the ceremonies of marriages, funerals and baptisings were reduced (1).

The same influences seem to have been at work here as in the northern provinces. It has been said (2) that the drastic demands made by the peasants were a means for driving the landowners from the land, because the peasants believed that it was against the law to leave ground uncultivated. It has also been said that another matter which influenced the peasants to attack the nobles was the fact that the returned soldiers told of Cossack raids upon Jews being left unpunished, and that now the peasants tried the same thing.

Whether this was the case or not, the efforts of the peasants did not go unpunished. Cossacks and dragoons were sent to beat the people, and martial law, always on the side of the landlords, was put into force. With these suppressions and the disagreements among the peasants themselves nothing much of a lasting nature was accomplished. The one thing which left a lasting result was the reaction to the brutality of the Cossacks. They used no judgment and the "nagai~~k~~a" or long whip made use of by them became a symbol of hatred not only of the soldiers but of the whole system.

In the southern black-soil districts a general

(1) Mavor - Vol. II P. 326.

(2) Ibid. 327.

revolutionary wave passed over the country after the Manifesto of October 17, 1905. Property was pillaged and burned, and illegal pasturings and ploughings were organized. Insufficiency of land and the poverty of the people were the causes. A peculiar feature of the problem of this section of the country was the fact that the rich and poor peasants were divided against each other, and often the farms of the "kulaks" were pillaged.

The above sketch shows that the resistance to authority was quite general. It grew out of age-old causes. It seems that the patience of the peasants was reaching a breaking point. It was a spontaneous movement guided by the common feeling upon the subject of land. But even though the standard of living of the Russian peasant was extremely low, Mavor points out (1) that the peasants had awakened largely because just before 1905 the conditions had improved. The "kulaks" had become a real force in village life, and even the village proletariat were making better wages (2). "People who are in the depths of despair through sheer want may be very discontented, but they rarely revolt".

The peasants showed action during the revolutionary year, but outside of the fact that it indicated awakening, nothing was really accomplished. The Revolution of 1905 can generally be called a failure, even though the Duma developed

(1) Mavor II. ob. cit. page 356.

(2) This can be compared to the French peasant at the time of the French Revolution.

out of it. There was no real union between the great working class groups of the country - namely the proletariat and the peasantry, and the organization was weak. Beside this, the effect of the agrarian disturbances upon the liberal reformers was to make them turn to the right. The Zemstvo workers henceforth were willing to work with the government, hoping of course to counteract the force of the bureaucracy through the Duma. The peasants had attacked the interests of the landowners, since the Zemstvo leaders belonged to this class, they naturally sided with the central government against the peasants. Then also, when the energy of the revolution had spent itself, many of the peasants themselves turned informers or provocators - largely out of fear and a desire to better their own condition. All the liberal-minded intelligentsia who held positions, teachers and so on, were now dismissed or replaced by Seminary graduates of the Holy Synod. But in the hearts of the peasants the feeling of revolt was not killed. In fact there was a change there. Whereas before the chief opposition had been toward the landowner, now it was turned upon the government.

The peasant disturbances should most certainly have pointed out to the central governing authorities the danger to be expected from this backbone group of the State, once it was aroused; and reforms were passed (1), but not so much to help the peasants as to save the autocracy. The

- (1) Lenin turned his attention to the Agrarian programme of Social Democracy at this time "Historically, the peasantry had been the real revolutionary class in Russia for centuries" - Knight, Barnes, Flugel - P 775.

real feeling of the government is revealed by the repressive measures it adopted, and its sympathy with the landed gentry. It assigned 8,000,000 rubles to those who had suffered from the agrarian disorders; whereas the penalties for agricultural strikes were made extremely heavy. (1)

In November of 1905 Witte had tried to relieve the situation by passing a law, by which the redemption fees for 1906 were to be reduced by one-half, and after that were to be done away with altogether. (2). But peasant riots had continued.

We have seen that the peasants placed great hopes in the reforms which the first Duma was to pass for their benefit. Now the government intended that this same first representative body should be one which would do exactly the opposite - i.e. work into the hands of the bureaucracy. The government felt that a peasant majority was the surest way to obtain the conservative body which it desired, and for this purpose Witte had actually passed the redemption reduction law - in order to gain the favor of the peasants. Witte also based his belief in the conservatism of the peasants in the fact that the traditional love of the peasantry for their "Little Father Tzar" was very great (3). By trickery (4) there was to be a peasant majority. Actually the government was doomed to disappointment, because among the first things

- (1) Beazley, Forbes, Birkett - ob. cit. 537.
- (2) Bernard Pares - Cambridge Modern History Vol.12 - 361.
- (3) Kornilov ob. cit. Vol. II. 317.
- (4) Mavor - ob. cit. II. 34.

asked for by the Duma was the expropriation of state and private lands for the peasants. A haughty answer was returned by the government, and although 15,000,000 rubles were voted for relief of starving peasants, the agrarian question became the final point of collision between the Duma and the Bureaucracy. The Duma was dissolved and by the reactionary cabinet under Stolypin's direction, as Minister of the Interior, the Agrarian reform of Nov. 9, 1906 was passed.

The great thing that this law was to bring to the country was to change land-ownership in the villages from collectivist to individual. Throughout Russian history we have seen the importance of the commune in peasant affairs, and in previous chapters the merits and faults of such economic organization have been noted. It was part and parcel of Russian rural life. Individual ownership was known but rarely (1). The Emancipation Act had provided for purchase of land by private owners from the commune, but cases of such ownership were not numerous.

Now every householder was allowed the right to separate from the community and make the portion of land which belonged to his family at the last distribution his own, with no further compensation to the community. He could sell this or divide it, but to prevent large tracts of land being owned by a few no one was allowed to purchase more than 25 dessiatines from any individual seller.

(1) Mavor - op. cit. II. 341.

By this act the land became the property of the head of the family, and the effect of this was bound to be far reaching. It meant that he had much more power than formerly, and the children had no more actual share in the family land.

Stolypin saw the necessity of change and for this reason he had this law passed. But he was not a reformer. It was not to improve the living conditions of the peasants, but to save the autocracy that he brought in his measures. He was counting on the political effects of individual freehold knowing from lessons of history that the latter invariably proves to be one of the most conservative forces in politics (1). The reactionary cabinet also recognized that the community system of the villages had been a very real force in revolution. This was another reason for trying to do away with the ancient mir.

Stolypin's reform was received in different ways. The peasants realized that it was merely a political measure, and the total innovation in system was naturally distasteful. Then instead of leaving the act to work itself out, which would of course have been slow, Stolypin tried to coerce it and lost the support of the Intelligentsia (2). The reform was bound to produce a large proletarian class, since the members of the family who would not inherit any part of the land would have to

(1) S. A. Korpff. - Autocracy and Revolution in Russia P. 37

(2) Ibid. P. 37.

seek something new sooner or later. Because of this possible tendency the Social Democrats at first received the law favorably - seeing in it a means of "proletariatizing" the peasantry(1)

The introduction of the reform was bound to be confusing. It did not solve the question of land scarcity, nor any of the other evils under which the peasants had struggled. The strip-system of fields which had always been a handicap in the commune was even more aggravated, although later other acts tried to remedy this. The strips, often miles apart, were fixed for good, and continual selling and exchange was to bring about greater confusion (2).

The State introduced other reforms to speed up this main one. It tried to make the purchase by the peasant of state land as well as that owned privately a little easier, and for this purpose tried to utilize the Peasant Bank. An attempt was made to smooth away grievances over petty fines and other frictions between landowners and peasants, and measures were discussed for the transference of peasants from congested districts to less populated areas. In May of 1906 - local land Reform Committees were decided upon to assist in the work of land distribution by the methods of the other reforms (3).

But as might be expected these committees, chosen against the background of reaction, sided with the interests

- (1) Makuf & O'Hara - Russia - 106.
- (2) Makuf & O'Hara - Russia - 107.
- (3) Mavor II - 346.

of the landowners and the bureaucracy. The representation of these interests was so much greater than that of the peasants, since the committees consisted of the inspector of taxes, the district member of the local government court, the land captains, district marshal of nobility, the Zemstvo representative and only ~~three~~ peasant representatives. Their duty was to fix land prices, so that the peasants could buy but since they themselves were landowners, their interests would demand that they should not reduce prices. They bought up land for the Peasant Bank, and much of this was quite undesirable bought at high prices to benefit the landowners who had it to sell, and where land was sold again, too often this was done in small strips, which intensified the existing evils. Under the existing conditions, these committees could hardly be expected to work wisely. The government reforms, having political control of the bureaucracy always at heart, were neither extensive nor sincere enough to alleviate the existing conditions. The fact that land was thrown open for sale raised the hopes of the peasants that now the age-old question of land hunger was to be settled, but the very nature of the sale was bound to intensify troubles. Only those who had money could buy land, and the life of this class was not unbearable. The tendency now was to strengthen this wealthier class, and to bring even greater poverty to those already poor. Often the land offered for sale was not in the districts where the need for it was the greatest and the government was not in a position financially

nor disinterestedly to adopt organized colonization schemes. The reforms, then, were not adequate to solve the problems of long standing. Whether the effects of these would have been different if historically there had been a longer time in which they could have been worked out, we shall never know. Possibly they arrived too late. (1).

- (1) "The experiment was much too short-lived to allow one to reach a definite conclusion as to its ultimate effects. It has been maintained, however, by economists and agricultural experts, both Russian and foreign, that it was an immense and unqualified success". A. Florinsky "The End of the Russian Empire". Page 16.

Chapter VIII.
Russian Agriculture and the War.

In the last Chapter it has been shown that Stolypin in 1906 made an attempt to solve the Agrarian problem in Russia and the laws passed at that time were ratified by the Land Settlement Act of 1911. As discussed above the reform was one which might have had very far reaching results, in spite of the fact that it was not an effort to improve the economic condition of the peasants - but a move to augment the power of the autocracy. The opinions of economists and historians vary very greatly (1) upon the importance of the Agrarian legislation of 1906 to 1911, but any movement which history checks in working itself out to its ultimate conclusion is bound to become the subject of endless surmise. On the one hand knowing the corruption of the administrative side of the bureaucracy and the bewildered and demoralized state of the country during Stolypin's régime,⁽²⁾ it seems that the agrarian

- (1) Antiserov, etc.- "Russian Agriculture during the War" (Carnegie Endow.) page 344. Speaking of the period after 1906.- "It seems as if the country was conscious of the great trials awaiting her, so intense were the efforts devoted to reorganization and renovation including the thorough reconstruction of the agrarian system by land settlement reform on an unprecedented scale".
Makoff & O'Hara "Russia" 108 ffg. Speaking of Stolypin's land law says "... the reform instead of bettering the lot of the peasant in reality was responsible for widespread impoverishment. Small farmers, suddenly uprooted from their old collectivism under the communal system, now found their holdings economically unworkable ... The Stolypin reform and the measures that followed up, instead of resolving the fundamental problem of Russian national economy, complicated it".
- (2) Kornilov - Modern Russia History, Vol.II, P.332. Between 1905-1909 there were in Russia more than 45,000 suicides - the natural consequence of the general despair and disparagement, the profanation of ideals and the general hopelessness gave rise to excessive neurasthenia and perverse practices among the intellectuals. All of this shows the necessity for fundamental change.

problem could never have solved itself, no matter what reforms were passed in theory; and, because, weighed down by the load of its own evils, the autocracy collapsed, the agrarian problem with all other problems was left at the mercy of revolutions, and is in the process of being solved along totally different lines.

On the other hand, judging by the fact that private property in land has been ^{the} ~~and~~ incentive to progress throughout history, the reforms might possibly have become the foundation for all other changes. They attracted a great deal of attention among the economists in Europe generally (1) and analysing the conditions of agriculture and the peasantry just before the war, it is evident that a real change was taking place.

The problems of over-population and land hunger have been discussed before. The population since emancipation had more than doubled (2). Naturally in a country the size of Russia with better organization that would have meant no overcrowding. The huge expanses of Siberia (3) were suitable for colonization. But density of population in particular localities had been brought about by the fact that the central government had, until 1906 restricted rather than encouraged emigration (4). For example, the passport

- (1). Antsiferov, etc., op. cit. Pg. 345 ffg. German and French views.
- (2) Ibid. 290 - 1858 - 75 millions in Russian Empire. 1914 - 182 millions.
- (3) Ibid 43. In Eastern Siberia and the Far East - in 1914 9 out of 103,451,200 dessiatins of land suitable for cultivation only 629,100 dessiatins were cultivated.
- (4) Ibid. 14.

system was most cumbersome. The written consent of two ministers was necessary in order to obtain permission to emigrate (1). The frequent redistributions of land among the peasantry had reduced the size of the allotments very considerably, which meant that upon the same area of ^{land} ~~area~~ there were now many more families. But even before the war there was a movement afoot for the formation of new peasant homesteads (2), but all of this was quite insufficient to meet the demands. The only organization which could have done anything on a general scale was the Peasant Bank, but it neither had sufficient funds, nor sufficient power. The measures taken by the government were half-hearted and inadequate and lacking in foresight and vision.

Added to these factors, the primitive methods of cultivation (3) and the fact that from year to year so much of the little land held by the peasants lay fallow (4) increased the misery and want of the peasants.

(1) Makov - Ob. cit. 81.

(2) Antsyferov - Ob. cit. 1861 - 8,450,782 peasant homesteads in Europ. Russia. 1905 - 12,298,000. But this involved a certain decrease in average size of holdings (page 23) which was not less than 10%.

(3) Barnes, Flugel, Knight - Econ. Hist. of Europe - P.763. 1907 - 13 Russian crop on average 10 bu. per acre - which was one half of that of France, and of that of Canada. In Canada the per capita yield was nearly seven times as great.

(4) Ibid. Page 16. 30% of the arable land was lying fallow.

In 1905, the land in European Russia was owned

as follows:

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------------|---|
| By State & Public Institutions | 154.7 | million dessiatins | |
| Peasant Allotments | 133.8 | " | " |
| By Private Persons: | | | |
| Gentry | 58.2 | " | " |
| Peasants (richer) | 24.7 | " | " |
| Other Social groups | 23.8 | " | " |

The land held by peasants had increased somewhat since 1878 . Specially was this true of land privately owned, which is significant because it shows that there was a trend toward individual ownership even before Stolypin's reforms. After the Agrarian disturbances of 1905 and the Law of 1906, there was even a greater move in that direction. Specially in the Black Soil regions was over-population general, and here after the precarious times of the 1905 revolution the gentry were most anxious to sell their private property. Consequently very much of it was transferred to the peasants by means of the intermediary Peasant Bank. By January 1st, 1917 the land holding in European Russia was as follows: The peasants possessed 185 million dessiatins or 46.8%. State and public institutions had 147.2 million dessiatins, and private owners 63 million dessiatins (2). By 1917, too, there were 7.7 million peasant farms, i.e. one half of the peasant households in European Russia had freed themselves from the communal forms of land tenure.

- (1). Ibid. Page 18. Allotment land increase from 30.9% to 33.9%. Land privately owned 1.3% to 6.2%. But Page 29 - the peasants formed in 1892 - 98.1% of all owners, so the amount of arable land held by a peasant household remained very small.
- (2). Ibid. Page 22 - 23.

More modern methods of agriculture were also being introduced, and a class of prosperous peasants was growing up which either bought more and more land through the Peasant Bank or leased it from the state or from private persons (1). This naturally was to make for a new problem in the villages - the exploitation of the weaker elements of a community by the stronger. It was to the poorer peasants in the villages the large majority of course that the revolutionary parties finally made their appeal.(2). These poorer peasants (3) supplied a good deal of the agricultural labor on privately owned farms, but themselves remained attached to the land. In this way a professional agricultural proletariat did not ever develop in Russia.

Of the crops grown before the war, as afterwards cereals formed 90 percent - (1913 - wheat 31.2%, rye 28.7%, oats 18.4% and barley 12.7%). Potatoes, flax and hemp formed about 9.8% and the other 2.2% was made up of sugar beet which was becoming an important crop; cotton, sunflowers, tobacco, rice, tea and grapes, most of the latter grown only in very restricted localities. The peasants sowed chiefly rye, buckwheat and flax - largely for home consumption since

- (1) These leases tended to decrease the fertility of the soil because usually they were short term leases, and no fertilizers were used. The land was exploited while in use. Ibid. 36.
- (2) The Bolsheviks - Nov. 1917.
- (3) Many of these were practically landless peasants or those who had received the beggarly allotment - supra P.

rye bread has formed the chief food of the peasants for generations. Other owners produced wheat, grass and sugar beet - largely for sale.

During the first years of the twentieth century the need for arable land was so great that the meadows were ploughed up causing a decided decrease in the live stock. Just before the war this deficiency was recognized but the war broke down any attempt to meet it (1).

On the whole during the years preceding the war agriculture in Russia showed some signs of progress: the yield of the land was improving, though not very generally; potatoes and other roots were being introduced; rotation of crops was beginning to take the place of fallow; more land was being manured and artificial fertilizers were slowly introduced (2) and grass crops like clover and alfalfa were being sown in the meadows where before only natural grass had been grown; and, the use of better implements and agricultural machinery became known - though not generally (3).

This progress, slight as it was, can be attributed to many things. The Department of Agriculture carried

- (1) In Asiatic Russia the reverse was the case. (85).
- (2) In 1907 - the use was still very limited - 13 million puds to 100 million dessiatins while in Germany 167 million puds were used to 15 million dessiatins. Antiferor - 61.
- (3) Knight, Barnes, Flugol - "Econ. Hist. of Europe" p.761. In 1912 - only 50¢ per peasant was spent for agricultural machinery.

on some useful work along technical lines. To some extent private landowners encouraged progress. But the bulk of the work done can be attributed to the Zemstvos and the co-operative and agricultural societies. They, sometimes, with the financial help of the government founded agricultural schools and model farms (1).

From 1895 to 1904 the Zemstvos increased the expenditure in improving agriculture from one to four million roubles (2). They arranged for courses in dairying and lectures at country fairs. They founded experimental stations and agricultural museums. They employed agronomists or agricultural experts from whom peasants could get advice, and encouraged the founding of agricultural associations, of which in 1914 there were 4,685 as compared with 175 in 1896 (3). Although the central government did not regard these attempts with favor, the department of agriculture helped the work along many lines. By 1912 - with the aid of the Zemstvos there were 212 model farms operated.

The work of agricultural co-operatives and artels was also important. They were formed to obtain mutual loans,

- (1) Agricultural science in Russia occupied a high level. In soil science, agricultural chemistry and physics, plant and animal physiology, genetics and plant breeding, the Soviet Union has continued this work. - Prof. N. J. Vavilov - Science and Technique under Conditions of a Socialist Reconstruction of Agriculture (Pub. Lenin, Academy of Agric. Sciences.)
- (2) James Mavor - Econ. History of Russia - Page 287, Vol II.
- (3) Antsiferov - ob. cit. page 76.

the production of dairy products, maintenance of a common store, and so on, and in numbers they increased very quickly. In 1905 there were 4,479 of these co-operatives while in 1916 there were already 37,000. (1).

These points noted are indications of a change, which shows that a certain new consciousness seemed to be awakened in the lives of the people. But by the time of the outbreak of the war very little had as yet been accomplished, and just to what extent any real progress would have been possible will remain a question for ever.

The very fact that the peasants seemed to be on an up-grade in progress made it more inevitable that in time of upheaval in the state itself they would make revolutionary demands. Politically and economically the revolution was felt to be inevitable sooner or later, during the summer of 1914. (2). But when war was declared the nation responded with great fervor (3). The peasants as well as the city population seemed to show considerable patriotism in time of crisis, but the masses knew very little about the real issues. In August of 1916 - Maurice Paléologue wrote:

"Among the rural masses the dream of Constantinople, which has never taken definite shape is becoming increasingly vague, remote and unreal. From time to time a priest reminds them that the Russian people is (sic) under a sacred duty, a holy obligation to wrest Tsarigrad from the

(1) Kornilov - Modern Russian History II, 335.

(2) " ob. cit. II. 337.

(3) Ibid. 341.

infidel and raise the orthodox cross on the dome of Santa Sophia. His audience listens to him with a composed and dutiful attention but without attaching more practical significance to his words than if he were speaking of the Last Judgment and the torments of Hell. It should also be noted that the moujik who is eminently peace-loving and tender-hearted and always ready to fraternize with his enemy is revealing an increasing loathing for the horrors of war" (1).

The peasants still had dreams of obtaining the land, and although the stress of war altered circumstances in the villages as elsewhere for a time, the age-long problem was still uppermost in the minds of the masses (2), as was seen when the revolution broke out, and every year strengthened the conviction that the state was a tyranny which had outlived any useful purpose.

The blunder of entering the war at all, and the subsequent mismanagement were to prove the truth of this conviction very soon. Foreign trade which had given the country a kind of financial prosperity fell at once, and her exports

- (1) Maurice Paléologue - "An Ambassador's Memoirs" Vol II P 316.
- (2) Makoff & O'Hara - 119.

two and a half years after the outbreak fell to one ninth of the pre-war level (1). This in itself was a huge loss to the country. State revenues decreased in other ways. The prohibition of spirits, wine and alcoholic liquors meant a yearly loss to the Treasury of £750,000,000. The fact that it was quite impossible for the government to meet expenses pointed early to ruin.

In agriculture the results of the war were not felt immediately. The fact that huge numbers of men were called to serve in the army made little difference at first since the settled areas had been overpopulated anyway. Again, the fact that the demand of grain for the army was great raised prices paid to peasants, and since little could be exported to foreign countries, more was left for home consumption. This tended to raise the level of living in the villages for a while. The prohibition of alcohol also certainly made a difference in the every day life of the people as well as their agricultural productivity. Money was less rare among the masses, and this meant that they could buy more than ever before.

But all of this was true only of the first year of the war. Eventually the 10,960,000 peasants (2) taken away from the countryside were to leave a deficiency in the

(1) "From the start the peasants were but little acquainted with the causes, aims and general circumstances of the War. Their isolation had been a calculated policy of successive governments" Makaf - 153.

(2) Antiferov, etc. ob. cit. - 117.

labor force, specially since these were the able-bodied men of the villages. Also, 2,600,000 horses (1) were taken from agricultural work. This amounted to about 16.2% of the whole number. The requisitioning of cattle, too, reduced agricultural output. Soon the peasants realized that although they were receiving money, they could buy very little, since the war demanded most manufactured articles for the soldiers; and, a little later it became evident that the paper money they were receiving was really worth nothing even if there had been things to buy. At once the peasants ceased to supply as much as they had done before, and already in 1916 - the sowing area was distinctly diminished (2).

There was further deterioration in the agricultural industry because practically no agricultural machinery was imported after the outbreak of the war, and very little was produced at home, because men from factories were sent to the army or transferred to munition factories; or the plants themselves were changed into munition factories. Thus hardly any new machines came into use and old ones fell into disrepair (3).

The importation of fertilizers also fell to a minimum. A considerable amount was being used before the war - but now even this was stopped.

- (1) Ibid. - 117.
- (2) Mak~~uf~~ - Russia - 123.
- (3) Ant~~sa~~iferov - ob. cit. 129.

Because of these causes of deterioration and the other reasons noted above, the grain placed on the market by the peasants tended to decrease as the war continued. The villages were becoming poorer. Specially in the northern and central provinces where part of the annual income had before come from other industries, which were now broken down, there was real need. The fact that more prosperous districts would not sell, and also because the transportation system was so poorly arranged led to food crisis in these districts as well as in the towns (1).

During the first years of the war the grain obtained for the army was much in excess of the demand, but already in 1915 - 16 the supply fell short by about four million puds (2) and in 1916 - 17 there was a decided shortage specially because civilian populations had to be provided for as well (3). Out of the 1,106 million puds necessary only 48.2 per cent was obtainable. This was a serious situation and the government had to resort to other measures to obtain grain. From the first there had been confusion as to the ultimate authority in the matter of providing provisions for the country. Finally in August of 1915 a Special Council was appointed, presided over by the minister of Agriculture. This body was to have full authority, and any disobedience was to be severely punished. The special council had local

(1) Makuf - Ob. cit. - 124.

(2) Pud - 40 pounds

(3) Antisiferor - Ob cit. 190.

committees all over the country through which it worked.

The policy of this council was to buy grain direct from the Zemstvos and agricultural associations in order to avoid middlemen, but because the government had no facilities for storing the grain before shipping, it had to resort to the use of middlemen after all, who possessed storehouses and elevators. But all of these measures proved to be inadequate.

In the autumn of 1915 already the government found it necessary to fix the prices of grain. But this first effort was only partial and proved of little use. New price fixing took place which was to apply to government purchases and private buying and this was announced to the public in September of 1916. (1). But it was too late for that year. The trade in grain was in full swing, and the fixed prices were so much below the market prices that the owners held back their grain (2), hoping that the prices would be raised. The prices were raised at the end of November, but it made little difference then. Upon this the Government considered it necessary to introduce compulsory levies (3) of grain and fodder - A certain quantity of grain was to be purchased in every province, to be determined by the

(1) Antsiferov - Ob. cit. 197.

(2) Ibid. - 197.

(3) It is important to note that the Tzarist regime first introduced compulsory levies of grain, much before the same attempt was made by the Bolsheviks.

chairman of the special committee; while provincial Zemstvo boards were to help decide how much should be taken from each district; and village meetings were to settle the amounts to be levied upon the different villages and industrial peasants. The grain was to be bought at a fixed price, and in case of refusal to sell on the part of the owner, it was to be requisitioned at a price fifteen percent lower than the fixed price. The whole plan met with little success, and this was one of the problems left to the new provisional government.

The revolution when it came seemed on the surface an upheaval in the cities, and specially of the proletariat. But it stands to reason that in a country so predominantly agricultural as Russia, the efforts for change would have been necessarily futile if the great masses of people had not had reasons for being discontented. It has been shown before that political and economic parties and their programmes played practically no part in the attitude of the peasants toward reform. Their one aim was to secure the land - a very real and concrete aim, and a stronger force than all other theoretical strivings for democracy. And because of this while on the surface the urban proletariat was performing spectacular acts (which were to have a lasting effect, no doubt) the peasants were carrying out a revolution of their own in the country which was to make it impossible to bring back former times ever again. At first this movement was marked by the same aloofness which had characterized the revolutionary relations of the peasantry before, and during the early part of the

struggle, in the absence of the strong arm of law and authority, the country was quiet and peaceful. "The seizure of land-owners' estates and the pillage of valuable property by the peasant was of comparatively rare occurrence. The village was content to watch patiently, while it organized slowly but surely." (1). The peasants were the real power behind the revolution. In spite of all party strife in the Cities "in an inconspicuous manner they hammered out as equitable a distribution of property as they could among themselves" (2).

Most authorities upon the subject of the Russian Revolution occupy themselves almost exclusively with the upheaval in the cities and therefore emphasize the undoubted horrors which accompany any violent outbreak. Because of this, not too much can be said about the comparative peacefulness in the country. "Many reliable witnesses for whom the Russian Revolution was an unspeakable disaster from many points of view, testify to the unexceptionally calm and peaceful nature of its course on the countryside. It is by no means necessary to be an idealist and a lover of the people" writes a landlord referring to the earlier stages of the Revolution, "to affirm that no social revolution was ever carried out so peacefully and bloodlessly as the Russian one where property was the sole issue, not the person". The brutal treatment and murder of landed proprietors were quite exceptional occurrences" (3). This speaks a great deal for

(1) Makoff & O'Hara - op. cit. page 152.
 (2) J. Bartlett Brebner "The Country of Dobsoi Ivan" Canadian Forum, Feb. 1928.
 (3) Makoff & O'Hara - Ob. cit. 202.

the fundamental worth of Russian character, and gives material for hope for great things to come when the Russian masses have evolved politically to the point where they will do things themselves (1).

One of the chief causes of the failure of the Revolution of March 1917, and the impossibility of the Provisional Government to retain power lay in the fact, as we shall see later, that there was hesitation in the settling of the land problem; and the secret of the success of the Bolsheviki in Nov. 1917, is found in the fact that they compromised their own policy, and surrendered to the peasants in the matter of land settlement. They said "The land is handed over for the use of the toiling population" which fitted their own theories, and did not clash with the desire of the peasants. "Let the peasants themselves solve all the problems; let them, themselves arrange their life" said Lenin. (2).

(1) There are other opinions of the course of the Revolution in the country. Cf. for example - Antsiferov, etc. ob. cit., Page 373. "Large and small estates were robbed of everything, buildings were destroyed or burnt down, etc... In short, it was a huge Jacquerie, or to refer to a Russian precedent, a new Pugachyev rebellion ... Wherever it was not checked by outside intervention, the bulk of landowners' estates had passed, de facto, into the hands of the peasants even before the Bolsheviki, on their advent to power legally abolished private landownership". But much of the argument used grows out of the prejudice toward all revolutionary parties upon whom he blames all excesses.

(2) Michael S. Farbman - "Bolshevism in Retreat" Page 203.

The success of the revolution~~s~~ in the Cities also lay indirectly in the desire of the peasants for the land. The tens of thousands of soldiers without whose backing nothing could have been done were almost exclusively peasants. Their incentive to oppose the government was that they wanted the land, and when the revolution broke out great numbers deserted in order to get back to the villages in time to receive their share (1). Their patriotism became a thin unreality when compared with this one real desire in their lives. The war was merely "a war of masters and tzars" to the peasants in the trenches; and, at home the truth of this feeling was expressed in a resentment against the unreasonable requisitions of houses and cattle for the war (2). The peasants throughout the country were weary of war, and a revolution to them meant the realization of their age-long desire for land. When we consider that the provisional government alleviated neither the war-weariness nor land hunger, the failure of its land policy becomes easily understandable.

The Socialist Revolutionary parties had opposed the Land Reforms of Stolypin from the first. The Social Democrats considered them as a purely bourgeois move; and the Social Revolutionaries who idealized the Mir as the basis for future social organization, considered the destruction of it in the light of utter sacrilege. The Constitutional Democrats of the left, also criticized the government policy (3). When the

(1) Antsiferov etc. Ob. cit. page 372.
 (2) Makoff - Ob cit. page 153.
 (3) Antsiferov etc. Ob. cit. page 369.

Provisional Government was formed (the personnel of which consisted of representatives of many parties who were always changing) the first thing that they did was to abolish the land settlement committees of the old government. They had no direct policy of their own to put in its place but left the final decisions to the Constituent Assembly. But fearing that the landowners would make an attempt to sell their property (fearing worse times with confiscation) they forbade all sales (1). Their whole plan of action was indefinite and indecisive. A central land committee and local land committees in the country were formed. The purpose of these was investigation of conditions - as if the suffering masses had not been exposed to investigation in the land problem since before Emancipation! The Imperial Appange Department was reorganized as the Special Central Department, and all the lands belonging to His Majesty's Cabinet were transferred to the State and placed under the Department of Agriculture! But it is easy to see of what little practical importance these acts were. The Tzar's lands had already during the old regime been in the hands and at the disposal of the Department of Agriculture!

No definite reform took place concerning the large private estates. The method of confiscations which were to take place was to be left to the Constituent Assembly, and thus for the time being all reform was brought to a close. Naturally the peasants became impatient. The (1) Antsiferov, etc. Ob. cit. 371.

land committees were of little use since they had no guiding policy to help them in their work (1). The central committee was an unwieldy bureaucratic organization of more than two hundred members, which could only collect information with which nothing could be done. Within this body itself, many parties were represented: Bolshevism was developing quickly, and many members of the organization carried a violent propaganda among the peasants (2). There is little doubt that they influenced somewhat the steady progress of quiet confiscation in the country. The fear of grain shortage which was quite general in the late spring of 1917 was blamed upon the demoralization of the peasants by agitators who, it was said, were becoming lawless and encouraged dissent; and they were threatened with punishment (3). But the real trouble lay in the indecision of the government itself and its lack of cohesion. There was decided dissention among the government officials themselves - Chufnov, who was of the left, was Minister of Agriculture. His policies were directly opposed to those of Professor Posnikov, the Chairman of the Central Land Committee, and he worked also against the leader of the Government - Prince Lvov, who found it necessary to resign.

When Kerensky was put at the head of affairs, further promises were made to solve the land problem by

"giving the land to the workers" (4). The danger in the

(1) Ibid - 262.

(2) Ibid. 267.

(3) Antsiferov - Ob. cit. 269.

(4) Ibid. 271.

country by this time was very real. The weight of the war, and the disorganization because of revolution were throwing the land into greater chaos from day to day. Specially great was the food problem, and although the Provisional Government tried to introduce system and efficiency in its method of dealing with it, (1) a well-organized administration was lacking to cope with the immensity of feeding the millions of men in the army as well as providing necessities for the people in the country. It is hard to say if any power could have dealt with the war and the problems arising out of the Revolution at the same time. There were so many contradictory interests. While Chekhov, as the Minister of Agriculture was trying to solve the land problem by encouraging appropriation of land, the Minister of Food supply was giving orders which were directly opposite, in the hopes of solving the army food question (2). And similar contradictory commands existed in almost every department of the government. And not only that but the work of the extreme parties, and factional interests did everything to complicate matters, as seen in the July rising of the Bolsheviks, and the Kornilov rising in the army. Everything pointed to the necessity of some radical ^{change} in the near future.

Meanwhile, in the country, a certain amount of gradual confiscation was going on. But generally speaking everything was peaceful. Even the decrease in the cultivated area of land was considerably small during the first

(1) Makuf - ob. cit. 178.

(2) Antisiferov ob. cit. 272.

year of the revolution - namely from 50,081,000 to 48,433,000 acres or about 3.3%. The drastic consequences of decreased cultivation were not felt until 1918.(1). It was natural that as a result of the general atmosphere of uncertainty about the future people were anxious to sow only so much grain as was needed for their own consumption (2). There is no doubt that the propaganda of the Bolsheviks and others had its influence upon the peasants where they were reached, as it had upon the soldiers in the cities, but taking it all in all, the effect was comparatively small. On the land the revolution was a very simple thing - the settlement of the age-long question of land, and the peasants were solving it from below. All they wanted was legal sanction for their deeds. Since the Provisional Government hesitated about this, they were ready to back any other power that would. Thus when, because of numerous other circumstances as well, the Bolsheviks were driven to power in November, their land policy gained the support of the peasants throughout the country. The facts that they borrowed the land policy from the Social Revolutionaries; that they consented in practice if not in theory to private ownership; and, that they compromised out of question as far as their own theories were concerned, are not within the scope of this work. With one stroke on Nov. 8th by the Decree of the Socialization of Land

(1) Savel Zimand - State Capitalism in Russia 1917-1926.
(Foreign Pol. Assoc.).

Statistics for decrease in Cultivation

1916 - 236,000,000 acres.

1921 - 132,300,000 acres.

Anstiferov ob cit. Livestock decrease for 1917-1919

Livestock 20%, Sheep - 24%, Pigs 42%.

(2) Antsiferov Ob. Cit. 283.

given below they did what the Provisional Government had hesitated in doing. They stated that:

- (1) All private ownership of land is abolished immediately without compensation.
- (2) All landowners' estates, and all lands belonging to the Crown, to monasteries, church lands with all their live stock and inventoried property, buildings and all appurtenances are transferred to the disposition of the township Land Committees and the district Soviets of Peasants' Deputies until the Constituent Assembly meets.
- (3) Any damage whatever done to the confiscated property which from now on belongs to the whole people is regarded as a serious crime punishable by the revolutionary tribunals. The district Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures for the observance of the strictest order during the taking over of the landowners' estates, for the determination of the dimensions of the plots of land, and which of them are subject to confiscation, for the drawing up of an inventory of the entire property, and for the strictest revolutionary protection of all the farming property on the land, with all buildings, implements, cattle, supplies of products, etc., passing into the hands of the people.
- (4) For guidance during the realization of the great land reforms until their final resolution by the Constituent Assembly, shall serve the following peasant nakaz (instructions) drawn up on the basis of 242 local peasant nakazi by the editorial-board of the "Isviestia of the All-Russian Soviet

of Peasants' Deputies", and published in No. 88 of said "Izviestia" (Petrograd, No. 88) (August 19th, 1917.)

The lands of peasants and of Cossacks serving in the army shall not be confiscated. (1).

There was one thing about this declaration which made it different to other revolutionary declarations: It was definite. The Bolsheviks were quite aware that this was not likely to be a solution of the agrarian problem. But they won the peasant support for the time being. The land programme adopted at the time was, in fact, in direct contradiction to Marxian doctrines. It was passed as a first step to gain time. One thing which it does show is that the Russian Peasant, for the first time, was recognized as a real and conscious force, whose wishes were not to be ignored.

A study of subsequent developments shows that the early policies of the Soviet government by no means solved the Agrarian Problem in Russia. But it can be said that since the Revolution a sincere effort has been made to meet it.

(1). Scott & Baltzly "Readings in European History Since 1814" Page 581. from M. H. Graham's New Gov'ts. of Eastern Europe. P. 592.

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