REVOLUTIONIZATION OF RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE

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REVOLUTIONIZATION OF RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE

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PREFACE

Today practically everyone wants to know more about the Soviet Union. The purpose of this study is to examine one specific phase of Soviet life—the agricultural system. Whether the Russian peasants are better off under the Communists than they were under the Czar is a question of most importance and interest. Before drawing a comparable conclusion to this question, it was necessary to make an extensive study of rural life under the Czars and under the present day Soviet Government. The writer has attempted to approach the study without bias or prejudice. The material assembled for this study has often been of a conflicting nature, which has made it difficult to reach definite conclusions. However, both sides of the issue have been presented, and the reader, after carefully weighing the facts on each side, can form his own opinion.
CHAPTER I

THE EXPERIMENT OF SERFDOM

Russia has of old been known as an exclusively agricultural country. In earlier stages of her development, 700-1200, trade was the chief occupation, but as the princes and boyars—followers of the princes who received grants of land for their service to the state—came to be deprived of the wealth derived from commerce and trade dues, they devoted themselves more and more to agriculture. From the beginning of the thirteenth century to the launching of the first five Year Plan in 1928, the masses of Russia have looked to the soil for their subsistence.

Early trends toward changing the Russian Empire into an agricultural country began in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries around the city of Kiev. In the northern part of the country the land was too swampy and too wooded to support much farming and seldom could a patch of ground large enough to support a tiny hamlet or two or three homesteads or even a single homestead be found. Part of the southern region was too dry for farming and in some cases even for pastoral
life. Due to wars and other uncertainties around Kiev, however, the peasants began to leave in search of new and safer lands. They moved northward before the advancing nomadic hordes and into the Moscow area, settling along the river both for fishing and for transport. The task of preparing the soil for cultivation was hard and tedious and was achieved only after spending much time burning down trees and digging out the stumps which, naturally, was a prerequisite to farming in such a wooded area. Thus it was in an unpropitious forest area and on the poor clay soil of central and northern Russia that the first important efforts were made to establish homes and till the soil.

The early agriculturists usually grouped themselves together in tribes and wandered about the country, not dwelling in permanent villages nor making permanent farms. They usually cultivated a particular plot of land for three or four years and then moved on. Private and permanent ownership of land did not take root, and all land was open to settlement. Though theoretically the land belonged to anyone who desired to settle it, the early Princes, who were in reality little more than local chieftains and possessed approximately the same powers and privileges as did the Indian chiefs in the Colonial Americas, soon established "de jure"

ownership over all territory that they overran and captured, and the native peasants came under their jurisdiction. These Princes would give their most trusted followers estates and peasants and in return these followers, commonly called boyars, agreed to furnish their respective Prince with a certain number of men to be used in time of war. Thus were formed very large establishments with thousands of slaves and thousands of cattle and horses. Heavy taxes, usually collected in the form of food and supplies, were forced upon the peasants annually and divided among the boyars and the Princes. Such were the first steps toward setting up a landed aristocracy and enslaving the peasant farmer. This system, unsatisfactory and inadequate throughout, was to remain dominant during the next five centuries and resulted in the curtailment of practically every advancement in the agricultural field.

The boyars were really "military servicement", and claimed the peasants were working indirectly for the State through them. Many of the peasants had been left homeless following the Tartar invasions of 1237 and 1239 and had no alternative other than to come under the subjugation of the landowners. The landowners furnished them stock and farm implements, and the peasant was obligated to build a house and farm buildings, drain marshy land, and turn a certain portion of his crop

2Leonard E. Hubbard, The Economics of Soviet Agriculture, p. 11.
over to the owner. He received loans and other assistance from the landlord, and bound himself not to go away without payment. The ordinary peasant, if he had discharged all obligations, could leave his plot of ground in the week preceding and the week following St. George's Day, November 26. During the winter months he could work elsewhere and give a certain portion of his wages to his respective landlord.3

The peasant farmers, though made landless during the servile wars and period of Princes and boyars, were not yet serfs; servdom did not appear until towards the sixteenth century. Their loss of land and the concentration of landed property in the hands of the spiritual and temporal aristocracy resulted in their economic dependence on the latter, but they retained their personal freedom. However it must be admitted that their condition facilitated the destruction of their personal liberty by their landlords. The period of "free cultivators" was rapidly drawing to an end.

There were two systems established under which the peasant farmer could render service to his landlord. Under one he did obligatory labor for the lord, usually three days in the week. The three day period was often violated and the peasant was forced to work as high as five days each week for his lord. Besides the field work he had to perform various

winter services, and paid dues in the form of fowls, sheep, pigs, mushrooms, while the women had to bring a certain amount of flax, hemp, and yarn. The number of days the peasants had left could be spent on his own plot of ground which was usually not over three acres. Those who lived under this system were called barshchina-peasants.4

The second was known as the obrok-system. Under it the entire plough-land, and at times the forest, was given to the peasant community which was obligated to pay a certain amount of money each year to the owner. People who worked under this system often migrated to an industrial center after the gathering of the harvest. They worked both as an agriculturists and as an industrialists, and were inefficient in both. The obrok-peasants were better off than their barshchina-brothers, for, although they might have to pay exorbitant tribute, they enjoyed a certain degree of freedom and self-government.5

The farm implements used by both the barshchina and obrok-peasants were very primitive and inadequate. A family usually considered itself lucky to possess a horse, and only on rare occasions were they fortunate enough to possess both a horse and a cow. Their low, thatched-roofed log huts usually consisted of one to three small rooms, and the furnishings of

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4 Alexander Kornilov, Modern Russian History, p. 27.

5 Ibid., p. 27.
the household were meager. They cooked their food in large brick stoves or ovens which at the same time gave them warmth, and which later served as beds after the fire died. Any additional beds were merely crude wooden platforms, provided with straw mattresses, but seldom were there any bedsprings. A few backless benches and chairs and possible a cabinet to hold the dishes and cooking utensils constituted the remainder of the essentials. A few of the more fortunate peasants had rough plank floors in their huts, but the majority had to be content with dirt floors that were covered partially with straw.\(^6\) The principle and general food was farinaceous, and huge amounts of it was consumed. The chief crops grown were rye and oats, as both were suitable to the soil and climate, but wheat and barley were added to the list later. A few potatoes were grown for local consumption.\(^7\) These tillers of the soil were usually jolly despite their unpleasant surroundings, and it was not uncommon for whole villages to stay up late at night singing and dancing. The characteristics of such an ignorant, simple race of people, has to be admired.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Russia relied on her princes to fight off foreign invaders, and the boyars were given more land and more peasants each year. By

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\(^7\)Count A. De Curowski, *Russia As It Is*, pp. 189-190.
the beginning of the sixteenth century service to the state had become a hereditary obligation from which no member of the noblesse was exempt. The land given to the boyars, however, was usually granted only for life in recognition of their services. Under such a system technical agricultural improvement was almost impossible, for the peasant farmer had little to gain by building up the soil and the landowner had little incentive and less time to take active part in developing his estate. There was always the possibility that the State might expropriate the land, and he cared little to improve it and then run the risk of this happening. The landowner also had little time to spend in the fields with his peasants, for he was usually away on business at the provincial center or state capital. If he did develop his estate, it could not after his death be passed on to his family, since it was only a grant for his life. Besides all this the lack of a market for agricultural produce further destroyed incentive for any increase in agricultural production.8

Until the time of Peter the Great, the landowners were continually agitating for more power to control their workers. The peasant until this time was forced to work under certain conditions for the landowner but still retained his personal freedom and could leave at the end of the harvest provided

8 Hubbard, op. cit., p. 28.
he had no debts. However this freedom was being gradually withdrawn, and he came more and more under the complete authority of his landlord. The government facilitated serfdom, as they deemed it necessary in order to receive the greatest service from their landowners. Then a severe depression in the sixteenth century ruined masses of peasants, and they had to choose serfdom rather than death by starvation. Pressed by material needs the peasants began to flock to the landed proprietors by the thousands to be transformed from free men into serfs.9

The peasants were given land and material assistance in exchange for the bartchina. They did not willingly place themselves in economic and juridical dependence on the noble, and energetically defended their "right of disavowal". The landlords therefore began to appeal to the government for the suppression, by legislation, of the right of disavowal, and for the institution of serfdom.

The government replied to the landowner's pleas by enacting a number of laws that served to bind the peasant more firmly to the soil. In 1607 a law was passed which gave landowners fifteen years to recover runaway peasants, and fined any person ten roubles who concealed or sheltered them.10 In 1649, after numerous protests from the gentry, the time

9 Gregor Alexinsky, Modern Russia, pp. 61-62.
10 Fareš, op. cit., pp. 149-152.
limit was abolished and the last hope of the peasant for obtaining his freedom was destroyed. Where previously the individual peasant had legally been bound to his individual landlord during the latter's life, now he and his descendants were bound to the landlord and his heirs indefinitely. The law of 1849 did more to convert the peasants to serfs than anything else.\(^{11}\)

The legal steps taken by the Government to promote serfdom proved disastrous in many cases. As many peasants had no legal means of escape from ruin, enormous numbers had course to flight. Some left their farms and joined robber bands, others hid in the woods, and still others joined the Cossacks. Numerous laws were passed to prevent such flights, and the State police was even allowed to hunt these fugitives. If any landowner was found hiding a runaway peasant, he had to give four just as good in his place.\(^{12}\) From the middle of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth, the atrocities committed against the peasant farmer reached their apex.

During the reign of Peter the Great, 1682-1725, serfdom was intensified. Peter demanded increased service from all classes of his subjects, and forced most of the existing free labour among the peasants into serfdom in order that it

\(^{11}\) Hubbard, op. cit., p. 13.

would be better organized. In order to make Russia more efficient in her fight against foreign invaders, he turned over serfs to landowners not as personal possessions for their own purposes, but as a trust from the State to enable them to fulfill the demands of the State. He cared nothing for class rights and privileges, but let nothing stand in the way that would hinder him in making Russia a great power.

Most burdensome of all the new measures introduced by Peter was the poll tax. So far, taxation had been assessed by land, originally by acres and later by farm buildings. This at least took account of riches and poverty; for land that went out of cultivation, the peasant would not be required to pay. This tax was often evaded, for a number of households would surround themselves with a single fence in order to count as one. Peter shifted the tax on to the person; his poll tax was a levy on each individual head. The tax had at least one good effect. Now, the peasants worked all the surplus land that had heretofore been out of cultivation, for the land itself was no longer taxed. As a result the area under cultivation was very considerably extended in the succeeding years.\(^{13}\)

The poll tax had a drastic effect on the agricultural class years after the death of Peter. The task of collection

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 232-233.}\)
was difficult and several methods were introduced to expedite matters. Taxes were first collected by the army and then by the squires, but both methods proved ineffective. The power of the squires over the agricultural class had been extended in order to try to collect the taxes and pour more money into the State treasury, for, after all, this was the purpose of the tax. Many of the squires took advantage of this newly granted power and sold peasants away from their families in order to put them on another estate where they might possibly meet such payments. So bitter were the peasants toward this action that at the accession of Catherine II about two hundred thousand were in rebellion. They were often reduced to submission by armed force, and in some cases by use of artillery.\textsuperscript{14} It is easy to understand the peasant's action under such unpleasant working conditions. They had no incentive to work, as forced labor has always proven to be poor and very ineffective. Being forced to give up most of their earnings to the State in the form of taxes, the farmers reacted by growing as small a crop as they thought they could get by with, making no efforts to care for the soil by crop rotation and other scientific methods, and taking advantage of every situation to express their dislike of the whole situation.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 233.
Though Peter left the country deep in debt and practically turned the peasants into slaves, he is credited with doing several things to encourage agriculture. He acquired enormous amounts of new territory, including the Ukraine which later became the "Granary of the Empire", and encouraged the landlords to create large estates there. It was in this new area and under the careful guidance of Peter that cattle breeding was concentrated and became prosperous. This so-called black region also produced oats, rye and wheat.\textsuperscript{15} It was not Peter's idea at all to retard agriculture, for he understood perfectly that a well-developed agricultural system was essential to the growth and expansion of any country. But by intensifying serfdom, Peter unconsciously, did very much to keep Russian agriculture primitive.

From the middle of the fifteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, serfdom grew by leaps and bounds. Throughout this entire period the government encouraged and even passed laws to facilitate it. The reasons given were considered good and the Tsar believed such a policy to be perfectly justified. The landowners, serving as intermediaries between the central power and the rural population, organized the economic activity and rural life of their peasants with a view to their own material interests and the financial and military requirements

\textsuperscript{15} Witt Rowden, Micheal Karpovich, and Abbott Payson Usher, \textit{An Economic History of Europe Since 1750}, p. 230.
of the State. They had to see that the peasants performed military service and other duties to the State in addition to collecting taxes that went into the State treasury. They also acted as the peasant's judge, settling all disputes and quarrels among them. Thus the problem of administering so populous a country was simplified and the expenses of the States was diminished.\(^\text{1}\) The Tsar exercised absolute power over the nobility who acted as the civil and military administrators, thereby relieving the State of such responsibilities. (Nicholas I summed the situation up by saying that "absolutism has 150,000 unpaid prefects of police".\(^\text{1}\)) This system, so the Tsar claimed, cut down the expenses of running the government and, as a result, lowered the peasant's taxes.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth, the agricultural class was divided into two distinct groups: peasants belonging to the crown—State peasants—and peasants who were the personal property of the large landowners. The latter group—serfs in reality—had fewer privileges and did not prosper near so well as did the crown peasants. The landowner's serfs had to pay the expenses of the administration in each county; they had to resist any attack made on the property of the master, as well as the honor of his wife and daughter; they could not make complaints against their master nor change masters, leave him,

\(^{1}\text{Alexinsky, op. cit., pp. 63-64.}\)
or join a corporation; and, worst of all, if a serf should inherit any property it must be sold and the money given to the master. The landowner, in return, was the supreme judge in all civil contests among his serfs; he had the power to exile any "unruly" serf to Siberia or to any other penitentiary establishment; he could arrange his estate anyway he saw fit and make any serf do any kind of work; he could allow serfs to buy their freedom, but seldom did this happen; and the landowner controlled the private life of his serfs, for he could designate who each should marry. This latter power was usually exercised at the close of the harvest each year. The landlord would gather all his workers together and pick each male serf a wife at random and force them into matrimony. On a few estates the landowners allowed serfs a greater amount of freedom, but this was the exception, not the rule.17

The State peasants were more fortunate, as they had less taxes to pay and enjoyed more personal freedom. The land they cultivated belonged to the State and they were usually given larger portions than were the serfs. Their personal freedom was not jeopardized as long as the required amount of taxes was paid and no conspiracy against the State was uncovered. They also had another advantage as barshchina had been supplanted by obrok, the payments being quite moderate, and they could not be sold without their soil.

17 Gurowski, op. cit., pp. 204-213.
One thing held in common by the State peasants and the serfs was the village commune. The workers lived in little village communities, known as mirs, and each village regulated the cultivation of the land assigned to its inhabitants, paying the propietor every year a stipulated sum as a collective obligation of the village group. This was particularly true of the State peasants, for the obrok system was predominant among them. The same situation held true in regards to the serfs, although the biggest share of the land controlled by their local commune was cultivated for the landlord who received everything it produced. The serfs were allowed a certain portion of land to farm for their personal benefit, and this was held in common by all members of the commune.18 Both the serf and the peasant considered his house and household effects, as well as his horses and cows, to be his personal property and although legally the landlord or the State could deprive him of such property, cases of seizures were extremely rare. Both groups were allowed to cut fuel from the woods, to pasture stock in the pastures owned by the lord or the State, and were to be protected from external aggression.19

The members of each commune elected its own officers to carry on local affairs; everything concerning the internal

administration and working of it was done by the members. They maintained the highways and roads on its own territory, relieving the State of such an obligation. All farm implements, seed and work animals were pooled and used by the village as a whole. By doing this the highest peak of production was attained from such crude and primitive methods of farming. Each had a common storehouse and in such houses after each harvest a certain quantity of grain was deposited by each husbandman to form a reserve for times of scarcity. The local government which always had at least one representative in each village often introduced new administrative and agricultural reforms. The introduction of agricultural schools, and rural banks, acquainted the people with the results of advancement. Though this government action often proved beneficial, the workers detested any government control, for it destroyed personal incentive and turned them into mere machines.

There were very few peasants who did not belong to the commune, but there was a small group of farmers, who owned small plots of ground and lived scattered in single habitations throughout the land. They were called "freeholders" and occasionally a few could be found that possessed bonded serfs. By the close of the eighteenth century there was close to 773,656 males belonging to this group.20

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20 Kornilov, op. cit., p. 29.
Until the close of the eighteenth century the monasteries played a rather important role in the control and advancement of agriculture. Oftentimes they owned whole villages of peasants and thousands of acres of farm land. Landowners would pledge land to the church for mention in its prayers, and there came to be a precise tariff for all the various forms of mention, descending in dignity from mention at the alter to mention at the church wall. A monk demanded ten roubles of a peasant for mentioning him, and usually complained that this was too small an amount. Many peasants and landlords gave land to the church to obtain the right of joining the community in old age, and quite frequently a landlord would give two or three peasants to a church official in exchange for a prayer. All these bargains were described as "settling one's soul."\(^{21}\) However, the church's relationship with agriculture was broken off in 1764 when all its land was taken over by the crown.

As a result of the various laws issued by the Tsar to promote serfdom, the masses of agriculturists became discontent and harder and harder to coerce. Not having any legal means by which they could voice their protests, they relied upon the only practice they knew—uprising. From the death of Peter the Great in 1725 to the Emancipation Act

\(^{21}\) Fares, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
of 1861, the entire rural area of Russia was affected by a
series of peasant uprisings and flights. Professor
Kluchevsky says that:

It was not only that peasants absconded by house-
holds. They absconded by whole villages. Any day an
estate might find its every "krestianin"—another name
for the peasant—gone, and not a trace of the runaway
left. In fact, merely during the period 1719-1727 the
estimated number of such absconders came near to reach-
ing 200,000, and everywhere the areas subject to epide-
mics of peasant "flights" increased, and whereas, in
former times, serfs had usually removed themselves from
one estate to another, they now drifted as far as the
Don country, Urals, Siberian towns, the Bashkir country. 22

To make an acute situation even worse, a ukase was
issued in February of 1762 that released the nobility from
any further service to the State, but the condition of the
serf was not even mentioned. In fact, this law was another
blow to the farmer as it left the door wide open for his
exploitation, for, by not mentioning his name, it was gen-
erally understood that he was to remain the personal pro-
erty of the nobility. The landowners quickly took advan-
tage of this situation to gain back all the power over their
serfs that had been lost during the reign of Peter the
Great. The release of the nobility from obligatory service
to the State tended to aggravate the serf rather than
alleviate him.

During the thirty-four years of Catherine II's reign,

1762-1769, some 800,000 free peasants were reduced to serfdom and in five years, 1788-1801, her son Paul handed over an additional population 530,000 to private persons along with large portions of state land. Agriculture became more and more retarded instead of advancing as it was in other European countries. Serfdom reached its peak during this period, as legally the serfs had no rights whatsoever. All the laws enacted against them were still in effect, and the prosperity of a landowner was not judged by the number of acres of land he owned but by the number of serfs he possessed. In 1783 the total male population of Russia, not counting that of the conquered provinces, was 18,030,529. Of this number 8,375,538 belonged to private landowners; 5,440,259 were state peasants and "freeholders"; 292,743 wereburghers; 107,400 were merchants; and 310,000 were nobles, clergy and state officials. These figures show that 54.5 per cent of the population lived in the rural areas and of this number 46.0 per cent were state peasants and "freeholders," and 38.0 per cent were landowner's bonded peasants. These figures also show that the urban population constituted 3.1 per cent of the total number, and the privileged class constituted 2.4 per cent. This percentage gradually began to change after the close of the eighteenth

23 Melvin K. Knight, Economic History of Europe, p. 192.
century partially due to the rise of industry and partially
due to the fact that serfdom was proving unprofitable.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century many condi-
tions encouraged and favored the advancement of agriculture
in Russia. The large amounts of new territory obtained dur-
ing the reign of Catherine II made it possible for every
person to have a large portion to cultivate provided the
government would see that an equitable distribution was made.
In 1800 Russia counted 51.2 men per square mile, while in
France the proportion was 184, in Germany 263, in Ireland
337, and in Belgium 512.25 So few people and so much land
was conducive to good agriculture; at least a factor in its
favor. Also other nations were begging for more grain, and,
consequently, the value of Russia grain exports began to
rise steadily. In 1758 grain was exported to the value of
$48,000; in 1778 such exports were valued at $425,000; and
in 1802 they were valued at $3,480,000.26 In spite of this
production, prices remained practically the same, and the
further growth of agriculture in the south was encouraged
simultaneously with its increasing colonization.

Agriculture was further encouraged during the first
years of the nineteenth century by the enactment of a number
of laws and the creation of various committees by Alexander I


26 Ibid., p. 62.
to help the peasant farmer. During the first year of his reign, he issued a ukase that allowed "free peasants" to purchase land. Though many peasants prior to this time had purchased land, they could not do so legally as the privilege was restricted to the nobility. This law merely made legal the practices that had been going on for some time. Then, in 1803, a second ukase was issued that legalized contracts of freedom voluntarily entered into between owners and their slaves. Peasants could be liberated individually or by whole villages. The purpose of this edict was to encourage the formation of a new class, a rural third estate, who would work diligently to achieve greater goals in agricultural. 27 The Tsar also devoted one million roubles a year to the acquisition of land with serfs for the Crown. At the close of Alexander's reign, some 47,152 males had been liberated and became "free cultivators." 28

Alexander's perseverance in agrarian reforms was brought to an abrupt halt in 1812 by Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Agriculture sustained a serious blow, for the farmers were forced to burn their crops, barns, and villages in face of the advancing French armies. All horses, cattle, and poultry that could not be evacuated had to be destroyed. This "scorched earth" policy was particularly disastrous to farmers

27 Alfred Rambaud, Russia, p. 211.
28 Kornilov, op. cit., p. 102.
in the black-soil area, through which the Grand Army passed on its way to Moscow.

At the close of the Napoleonic wars, Russia found her agricultural system in deplorable condition. Landowners and peasants had contributed hundreds of millions of roubles to the cause, and the entire income of the estates did not exceed one hundred million roubles a year. It is easy to see the enormous indebtedness of the landowners. In 1843 more than fifty-four per cent of the estates were mortgaged to credit institutions. The average indebtedness of the landowner was sixty-nine roubles per bonded-peasant, while the average value of a peasant did not exceed one hundred roubles. Lack of capital prevented the landowners from buying the necessary farm implements, seeds, and fertilizers to develop their respective estates. The cities began to revive at the beginning of the twenties, but the landowner's estates could not recuperate so soon from their ruination, and their indebtedness had assumed enormous dimensions and continued growing to the very time of the abolition of serfdom.

During the reign of Nicholas I, 1825-1855, there was a steady decline of progressive ideas. Nicholas contented himself with approval of the great nobles who set their serfs free, but he also assured the nobility that they did not have to free any of their serfs unless they so desired. In

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29 Ibid., pp. 256-257.
fact, he persistently used the police and army to put down any uprisings should they become serious. Official records vividly portray the inhumane treatment that the serf was subjected to during this period. The landowners realized the possibilities of selling their products for money in the open market, and thus of augmenting their revenues, in order to achieve this end they by no means sought to improve the technique of production, but mercilessly forced their serfs to labour, employing the same methods as slave owners might employ toward negroes.

In 1852 an inquiry was held in respect of a landowner of Kherson, K—, who had driven a young man to suicide. The inquiry elicited the fact that K— very often had the peasants put in chains, and so chained drove them like cattle to work. One peasant—woman fled. She was caught after an attempt at suicide. She was chained to a post in the kitchen and kept there for five years, being liberated only when her services were required. Another peasant was chained by the neck for four years. He died thus chained.

The serfs were schockingly fed. This was the diet on the estate of Mme 3— of the province of Kharkov. In the first place, food was cooked only once a week. First meal, borsch (the national soup of Little Russia), but without salt. Second meal, rotten pumpkin or elderberries. For the whole day, a scrap of bread. On Sunday, meat full of maggots.

In 1857 the Russian Senate dealt with the affair of the landed proprietor Stratshinsky. The latter was accused of abducting the wives of his peasants and of the violation of numerous young girls, often children of thirteen or fourteen years of age, followed by death. The inquiry confirmed these facts. Nevertheless, the Senate did not find Stratshinsky guilty, but merely left him "under suspicion."

As a result of such atrocities some 556 different uprisings occurred during the twenty-nine years of Nicholas's reign, or an average of nineteen annually. Their number, increasing year by year, ran as follows:

Between 1826 and 1829 there were 41 peasants' risings
" 1830 " 1834 " 46 "
" 1835 " 1839 " 59 "
" 1840 " 1844 " 101 "
" 1845 " 1849 " 172 "
" 1850 " 1854 " 137 " #31

These uprisings included every kind of a plot from arson to murder. Military detachments were used to suppress the serfs on 228 different occasions. In 1836 and 1839 insurrections took place in the county of Saratoff, and the half-crazy peasants burned the manor-house, and sought revenge on the nobility and civil officers by throwing them into the conflagration.32 The situation was so tense and acute that the slightest rumor or even a casual remark could easily lead to a rebellion.

Alexinsky says that:

In the present condition of the serfs the speech of a drunken deserter from the army, an imperfectly comprehended order, the appearance of an unusual malady, or the visit of the Tsar to Moscow, in short, any event that evokes the general attention, may produce excitement and arouse the thought, always present, of liberty. Then this excitement may turn to a riot, and the riot to a general insurrection. All this is possible at any moment, and a conscientious police force could guarantee a single day of tranquillity.33

31 Ibid., p. 87.  
32 Kornilov, op. cit., pp. 256-257.  
33 Alexinsky, op. cit., p. 88.
The government, in collaboration with the landowners, had enacted several laws that they hoped would pacify the peasants and prevent a nation-wide revolution. By the edicts of 1816, 1817, and 1818, Alexander I had abolished serfdom in the provinces of Estland, Durland and Lifland. The peasants in these provinces became personally free, but were forced to become the economic slaves of their landowners. In 1827 Nicholas I issued a ukase prohibiting landowners from depriving their peasants of soil by selling out lands without serfs, and he also required the estates to possess four and one-half desiatins—a desiatin is about 2.7 acres—per soul. In 1847 another ukase permitted the peasants to buy themselves land by whole villages in cases where landowners' estates were sold by auction for debts.34 All these laws, evaded in different ways by the landowners, were negligible, but they prepared the way for the Emancipation Act of 1861.

The early agricultural system of Russia had many deficiencies. It had continued to remain in the primitive stages, while agricultural advancements in other countries were recognized and facilitated. Probably the greatest reason for such backwardness can be on the system itself which was based mainly on forced labor. The peasants were forced

34 Tornilov, op. cit., pp. 259-265.
for centuries to work under a system from whose planning and directing they were omitted. Neither the landowners nor the government had ever seriously attempted to change from the status quo.
CHAPTER II

THE DECLINE OF THE NOBILITY AND THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALISM

The Crimean War—1854-1856—against Turkey, England, France, and Sardina crystallized a growing conviction in the minds of the Russian nobility that either military or economic competition with industrialized Western Europe promised disaster, and that the old order must go. The medieval institutions of Russia could not cope with modern ones. The war was, however, rather the occasion than the real cause of the emancipation, the economic weakness of the old order having been recognized for many years.\textsuperscript{1} Economic conditions in Russia made serfdom no longer profitable to the nation or to the individuals. The increase in population, which resulted in the scarcity of arable land, coupled with the gradual rise of industrialism, worked changes in the situation under which serfdom was not satisfactory. When every farm had been an isolated and a self-sufficient unit, the inhabitants had subsisted entirely on the products of their labor, but the spread of the Industrial

\textsuperscript{1}Melvin M. Knight, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Felix Flugel, \textit{Economic History of Europe in Modern Times}, p. 749.
Revolution worked such changes in Russian life until the bondage system was no longer adequate to provide for the new needs of a new life.

Professor Jones lists four major causes for the emancipation of the serfs. They are: the masters felt the necessity of settling the question of human bondage once and for all in order to put an end to the everrecurring disturbances; the liberal ideas at work centered on the equality of all individuals; the thinkers and leaders realized that forced labor was less productive than voluntary labor; and serfdom encouraged illegitimacy, since female serfs often became the mothers of children whose fathers were lords.2

Using these stated reasons as a basis the new Tsar, Alexander II, who had ascended to the throne in 1855, began preparing an edict that would give every soul in Russia personal freedom. The Tsar could not be regarded as a liberal, for he justified his views by saying that "it would be better to abolish serfdom from above than wait till it will begin to liberate itself from below."3

There were many questions to be answered before any type of emancipation act could be issued. What would become of the serf after emancipation? What would become of

2Jones, op. cit., p. 92.
of land? Liberty without land would be disastrous for the serf, as he would be forced to leave the only home he had ever known. He could not be expected to rent land and establish himself without sufficient capital, and, on the other hand, to give the land to him would deprive the landowners, the governing class, and the crown of their property without compensation. The serfs had no money with which to purchase the land and to allow them to buy it on long term credits, attempting to meet such payments out of their meager income, practically meant confiscation of the land. It would be impossible to confer any substantial benefit on the serfs without doing a proportionate injury to the landlords.

There were only three feasible methods by which the serfs could be liberated. First, he could be freed without receiving any land; secondly, he could be given personal freedom and obtain occupation of the land, redeeming it by receiving financial assistance from the government; and, thirdly, he could be converted into Obligatory Peasants for an indefinite period. The Ministry favored the latter method, as it led to the liquidation of serfdom without any expenditures on the part of the government, which at that time was financially weak due to the cost of the Crimean War. However, the Tsar disagreed with the Ministry's choice.

4Ibid., p. 12.
as he believed the government would be forced to lend a helping hand to the serfs before any noted progress could be achieved; therefore, he favored the second plan.

Selling his idea to the landowners was the biggest hurdle Alexander had to clear before serfdom could be completely abolished. The landowners realized that reform of the system must come eventually, but could not agree among themselves as to how it should be carried out. Those in the Northern provinces, living mostly off cherek paid by the peasants as the land was very poor, favored quick and complete liquidation of serfdom with land, but on the basis of high compensation for their estimated losses. On the other hand, the landowners in the black-soil of the Southern provinces—where the land was very fine for farming and the population was strictly agricultural—favored liberation of the peasants as free souls but without any land. Each group was interested in a plan that would secure for them the greatest possible economic advantages, not considering what effect such a plan would have on the serfs involved.

In 1859 the Tsar appointed an Edicting Committee to draw up a plan of liberation that would work throughout the empire. The committee worked on various proposals for two years and finally drew up one which they considered would be acceptable to both parties. This was submitted to Alexander and on February 19, 1861, he issued the famous Emancipation Act, which, according to figures released by
the Ministry of Interior, freed 22,558,748 serfs. The total population was given as 60,143,478; the proportion of serfs to free men being 37.51 per cent. Most authors consider this figure a conservative estimate and place the actual number closer to thirty million.

The most important phase of the Emancipation Act was the first article which stated that "the right of bondage over the peasants settled upon the landlord's estates is forever abolished." The freed serfs were to retain for their own use the land already occupied and farmed by and for themselves. However, the actual amount allotted to them was some 15.0 per cent less than the area they had cultivated for their own needs before the emancipation; the actual amount varying with soil, climate and density of population. The average for the empire as a whole was 22.5 acres, but in the fertile, more thickly settled south it was 5.5 acres. In no case was the property bestowed gratis. For everything of which he was deprived the landowner received compensation. Since the peasant had no money to pay for his allotments, the requisite funds were to be advanced by the government and the loan, bearing six per cent interest, was to be repaid by the peasants in installments termed "redemption annuities" covering a period of forty-nine years.

\[^{6}\text{Jones, op. cit., p. 94.}\]

\[^{7}\text{Ogg, op. cit., p. 323.}\]
The liberated serfs were settled in villages called mirs, which were to be autonomous and to have the police functions formerly performed by the landlords. No family received outright the title to any land except to a homestead, since the title to the remainder was vested in the village communities, which in turn apportioned to the individual family the land it worked. Each family was held responsible for redemption of their homestead, but the arable land was redeemable by the peasant commune in agreement with the landlord. All members of the commune were jointly responsible for the payment of annuities and the fields belonged to the community as a whole and not to the individual peasant households.

Each commune elected a leader or starosta who became the representative of the government in his district. Only peasants had any right to vote in the local elections and no person not of the peasant class could ever acquire an interest in the communal land. Most questions, such as public hygiene and education, as well as the agricultural policy of the commune, were determined by illiterate members of the commune without any outside aid; consequently, the habits and outlooks of the peasants remained primitive and their standards of living and economic progress did not improve. The commune had to pay a certain amount of taxes to the government annually; the amount each household had to
pay being determined by the size of its allotments. The local government of each commune could also receive dues from its members for various spiritual, mental, or moral needs, and for social exigencies.\textsuperscript{8} Sergei Witte, Minister of Finance from 1892 to 1903, gives the following description of the work carried on by the communes:

In artels or co-operative groups, the peasants plow the land, and sow, harvest and thresh the grain; mow hay, cut down forests and brushwood; cut reeds, rent land...construct enclosures, common threshing floors, grain-kilns, grist-mills, drying-rooms, baths, barns, pasture-fences, bridges, dams, roads, ponds, and ditches. In artels they buy horses and machines, hire blacksmiths, and so forth. Finally, the commune works as a collective group in supplementary non-agricultural enterprises: in hunting, salt-distilling, stone-breaking, lime-extracting, fishing, and so on; and in communes and artels the peasants build breweries, break stone, construct barriers along the rivers, and set up shelters for use when they are hunting and fishing.\textsuperscript{9}

There were many disadvantages to the communal system. For instance, most of the land allotted to a household was distributed in strips and quite often a family had as many as one hundred strips, each only two or three feet wide and perhaps in different fields several miles apart. The system of land tenure involved a great deal of communal control of the community's farming activities, so that not only were the times of sowing and harvesting, haymaking and the like very dependent on the decision of the commune

\textsuperscript{8}Hubbard, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 37-39.

\textsuperscript{9}Gerard Tanquary Robinson, \textit{Rural Russia Under the Old Regime}, p. 125.
as a whole, but the crops to be sown, what land to be left fallow, were similarly dictated. The lack of capital in each commune also presented a great obstacle to improved methods of farming and to the extension of arable land. The communal system was very prodigal of labor and rendered the use of any but the simplest farm implements impracticable. Also, most of the communes required that all land held collectively must be redistributed every twelve years. Such redistributions were sometimes based on the number of workers in a household, sometimes on the number of mouths. Some families had insufficient equipment to cultivate their land; others had too much. The farmer took all out of the soil and put nothing back.\textsuperscript{10}

The average peasant was disappointed with the Great Reform, for he was led to believe “full freedom” would be obtained. He now found himself compelled to pay for land that he had always considered to be his by prescriptive right. He could no longer freely use the meadow land to pasture his stock nor cut wood from the forest. He didn’t even know what procedure to go through to secure the right to use those lands. Very few landowners obligated themselves to explain the full content of the act to their former serfs, and, even if they did, most of the serfs were too ignorant to understand its provisions. Some were led to believe that there was going to be a second reform.

\textsuperscript{10} Hubbard, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 33-40.
and each peasant would receive a free quota of land. When this rumor failed to materialize, riots broke out all over the country. There were some 647 instances of peasant riots within the first four months after the emancipation.\textsuperscript{11}

The economic condition of the peasant was worse after than before emancipation. He received only allotments of land that had been in his possession before the emancipation, and those allotments had never required over one-half his labor, for heretofore he had been forced to work at least three days each week for his master. He could now do no more than eke out a subsistence from the limited amount of land he possessed, let alone pay his annual "redemption annuities" and local and state taxes. In order to meet his obligations, the peasant had to either rent land from the landowners, or seek part-time employment elsewhere.

The dearth of arable land and work horses was another symptom of the peasant's economic weakness. With the growing density of the population the dearth of land was felt more and more, rent rose higher and higher, and the peasants became poorer and poorer. The number of work horses diminished until by the end of the century, there was approximately one of these work-animals for each household. If some household had two horses, there was somewhere another household that had none.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11}Jones, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{12}Robinson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 103.
furnished free anymore; everything had to be bought and paid for.

The landowners were effected in various ways by the emancipation; some profited, others did not. In the black-soil provinces the landowners retained most of their land and were able to get cheap labor in view of the dense population and absence of non-agricultural occupation. Some peasants, even after the emancipation, worked for daily wages and the landowners in this area could hire a laborer for an entire year for sixty-one and one-half roubles, or approximately 331.67. The worker was provided room and board. During the harvest season a laborer was paid $ .35 per day or $ .29 per day and subsistence. The compensation the landowner received from the peasants could either be used to improve his estate or extinguish his debts. If a landowner did not wish to manage his estate, he could always rent it out for a nice sum, since the rentals were very high due to the insufficient allotments of the peasants. He could also force the peasants to pay an exorbitant sum for rental of pasture lands.

In the non-black-soil region of northern Russia, the situation was quite different. Landowners here, after receiving their compensation, usually severed all connections with their former possessions; only a few remained on their estates and endeavoured to continue agricultural

\[13\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 105.}\]
pursuits. It was difficult to obtain labor in this area, for most of the peasants entered industrial occupations. The landowners found it more profitable to sell their land and employ their capital for industrial purposes. Thus the emancipation act caused many peasants to discontinue their agricultural pursuits.

In 1866, the peasant-reform was completed by spreading the fundamental principles of the Act of February 19th, to the numerous categories of State peasants. These people, prior to the reform, were in possession of much larger portions of land than were the landowner's peasants, and if the act was applied to them it would hurt more than it would help. But instead of cutting their allotments down to the size of the other peasants, a ukase was issued in 1863 which permitted them to keep their present allotments and if any peasant in this group had less land than the maximum amount issued to a landowner's peasant, he received additional land. Thus the maximal norms of allotments of the landowner's peasants were taken as minimal norms for those of the state peasants.

In 1878, a study and comparison was made of the condition of the state and landowner's peasants. The allotment of land was broken into three different groups; "generous", "sufficient", and "insufficient". A peasant having in his possession all the land he could cultivate was regarded as having a "generous" allotment. Some
5,400,000 or fifty per cent of the state peasants fell in this category, in contrast with 1,370,000 or thirteen per cent of the landowner's peasants. A farmer awarded "Sufficiently" received allotments that were classed between maximal norms of the landowner's allotments and the average norm of the state's allotment. Some 3,600,000 or thirty-five per cent of the state peasants fell in this category as compared to 4,800,000 or 43.5 per cent of the landowner's peasants. They had approximately three-fourths the amount of land that they were capable of cultivating. Finally, some 1,455,000 or thirteen per cent of the state peasants and 4,460,000 or forty-two per cent of the landowner's peasants were "insufficiently" allotted. Those in the latter group absolutely did not have enough land from which they could obtain a satisfactory living, let alone pay any type of taxes. 14

From 1861 to the close of the nineteenth century there was a constant increase in the amount of acreage brought under cultivation. Rising from eighty-eight million eight-hundred thousand desiatins in European Russia in 1860, to one hundred and six million, eight-hundred thousand desiatins twenty years later, and to one hundred and seventeen million desiatins in 1887. 15 These increases were in the black soil region, since most of the estates

14 Kornilov, op. cit., Part II, pp. 120-121.
15 Ibid., pp. 195-199.
elsewhere had been abandoned and agriculture replaced by industry.

There were two major reasons for such an increase in acreage: the rise in the price of grain and the building of the railroad. In the late forties the Corn Laws of England were abolished and a new market for Russian grain was opened. Also, the increased number of workers in the factories at home demanded more food. From 1800 to 1845 less than thirty million puds—a pud is a measure of weight which is about 36.11 pounds—of grain was exported from Russia, but between 1846-1850 exports rose to fifty-one million puds. During the next five years, 1850-1855, it fell to forty-five million, as the Crimean War increased the demand for food at home. Between 1856-1860 the figures rose to sixty-nine million, to seventy-six million between 1861-1865, and between 1876-1880, to two hundred and fifty-seven million puds per year. By 1875 there was thirteen thousand miles of railroad in Russia which facilitated the exportation of grain and other agricultural products.

Despite the increase in acreage, exportation of grain, and miles of railroad, the peasant continued to struggle along, barely eking out a mere existence. Though the price and demand for grain reached an all time peak, the peasant

15 Ibid., p. 109.
had to pay the landlord three or four times as much for the land he rented. He did not and could not understand how to make this land produce effectively. In comparison to other European countries, Russian agriculture was still in the primitive stages. In European Russia in 1877 the average allotment of a peasant household was 35.5 acres; while in Poltava, where allotments were the smallest, each household had about 16.5 acres. The average holdings in France was about nine acres to each household. The land in Russia was just as good as that in France, but it produced not one-half as much per acre. Thorough fertilization, deep plowing, a complex diversification and rotation of his crops, were for the most part beyond the peasant's power—even beyond his knowledge and desire. His individual activities and movements were to a considerable extent controlled by his commune, with a uniform crop-rotation usually necessitated by the intermixture of his strips of land with those of his neighbors. Then during the repartitional period there was always the possibility that any strips of land which he fertilized and improved would later be assigned to someone else. And besides all this he was often too poor to pay for new equipment, or to risk of trying new methods and new crops. As a result the peasant continued the primitive routine of cropping the land year after year to the point of exhaustion and then leaving it unseeded for ten or more years. Instead
of applying new methods to old fields, he usually applied old methods to new fields.

There are many other reasons for peasant disasters besides his lack of scientific agriculture and the dictatorial powers of the commune. One of the major problems was the increase in the rural population. From 1860 to 1900 the population of Russia increased from 74,000,000 to 133,000,000 which necessitated the feeding of millions of new mouths from the already meager allotments of land. Periodical redistributions of land every twelve years caused each person's share to become smaller and smaller. Also, taxes placed on the peasants were almost unbearable. In 1872 direct taxes amounted to two hundred and eight million roubles, while only eighteen million roubles fell on private landowners. In addition to this the rural inhabitants had to pay a yearly per capita tax of forty-two million roubles. The redemption payments were not included in either of these two taxes. The peasants found it impossible to meet their obligations in full and by the close of 1875 the arrears to the state equalled 22.0 per cent of the average yearly assessments. By 1880 the deficit and increased to 27.0 per cent and by the close of the century to 244 per cent in some provinces.

17 Herbert Meaton, Economic History of Europe, p. 485.
18 Paras, op. cit., p. 370. 19 Jones, op. cit., p. 95.
To make matters even worse there were numerous government restrictions and regulations that prevented the peasant from migrating from the crowded area in the black-soil region to sparsely populated Siberia. In June of 1881 special rules required the peasant to get permission of the Minister of the Interior and of State domains if he wished to leave his allotment. Not until 1889 were such rules revoked and a law passed by which migration was aided by the government.

Under such conditions crop failures were frequent and often resulted in severe famines which caused the death of thousands of peasants and brought untold hardships upon others. In 1892-1893 Kornilov personally visited several districts of Russia. He says:

I personally saw a large number of impoverished villages in the central black-soil provinces; for instance in the province of Tula seventy-five per cent of the peasant’s houses had their stove built without chimneys, for the sake of economy in fuel which consisted of wood or straw; the ceilings in these houses were absolutely black with soot, and in damp weather they dripped black mud. A large number of houses in such villages were uncovered; only one rafter remained on the roof, since the straw was removed and given to the cattle. According to the data I collected it appeared that by the beginning of the Nineties in some villages about fifty per cent of the peasants had no horses, while of the remaining fifty per cent about forty-five per cent owned one horse, and only five to six per cent possessed two or more horses.20

20 Kornilov, op. cit., Part II, pp. 204-203.
The government took some steps to assist the struggling peasant, the most important being the creation in 1862 of the Peasant Bank, to encourage the average farmer to purchase land and originally advanced him from 75 to 80 per cent of the purchase money on transactions at 8 1/2 per cent interest for twenty-four and one-half years, or at 7 1/2 per cent interest for thirty-two and one-half years. Such credits were made available to whole communities, partnerships, or to individual peasants. The interest rate was gradually lowered, and the bank eventually allowed loans on mortgages not acquired through its services.\textsuperscript{21}

This helped slightly the rural element but later the government became alarmed at the number of delinquent redemption payments and began to sell lands of the peasants who were in arrears; as a result the activity of the bank was soon reduced to dealing with only the wealthier agriculturists. During its first ten years of operation, it helped increase peasant landownership only .12 per cent a year.\textsuperscript{22} The greatest achievement of the bank was that it fostered the rise of a rich class of farmers on a capitalistic economy. This had never happened before in Russia.

The increase in the price of rural land was another problem that was partially solved by the government. The

\textsuperscript{21} Hubbard, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 51-53.

\textsuperscript{22} Kornilov, \textit{op. cit.}, Part II, p. 256.
peasants had long desired governmental control over rentals, the authorities had hesitated for fear of creating false hope and exercised regulation only on fiscal domains. In 1881 a law was passed allowing more of the fiscal land to be rented to the farmers and the amount of such land rented by peasants jumped from 23 per cent to 66 per cent. This brought about a decrease in the demand for more land and eased the problem of overpopulation.

At the close of the nineteenth century the peasant population as a whole were divided into rich, middle, and poor. The rich peasant hired labor in addition to his own family; the middle peasant worked his own land which supported him sufficiently; the poor peasant hired to other landowners in order to exist. The latter group were in much worse condition than before the emancipation, while his more intelligent and thrifty neighbor managed to produce a saleable surplus and lived comfortably.

From 1861 to 1905 there was a steady decline in landowner's estates and a gradual rise of a new agricultural class. The nobility was in debt at the close of the Crimean War and over half their redemption payments had to be used to pay off such debts. Many landlords squandered the remainder. Some found it hard to get away from the old system of serfdom and adjust themselves to the new capitalism. The lack of capital made it difficult to purchase new and modern agricultural equipment which was necessary under such a
system. One bad harvest might cause many landowners to lose their entire estates.

Insufficient capital and lack of interest in the new system caused many landowners to rent annually their entire estate to the peasants for a certain sum of money. Others allowed the peasants to work the estate and divide the crop equally at the end of the harvest. Another system, the one most reminiscent of the days of serfdom, was the renting of a part of the estate to the neighboring peasants who agreed to cultivate another part with their own horses and farm implements for the benefit of the landlord. This proved very inefficient, as most of the peasants could not buy additional horses or iron plows. They knew practically nothing of scientific agriculture, and there were very few agricultural schools to acquaint them with any new methods. As compared to their West-European competitors, the Russian landlords lagged far behind in agricultural production.

From 1899-1903 the average annual yield of Spring wheat in Russia was 8.9 bushels per acre, and of Winter wheat fifteen bushels per acre, while in 1898-1902 the general average yield of land of all categories in Germany was 27.5 bushels and in the United Kingdom 35.4 bushels.23 In spite of the Emancipation Act further agrarian reforms were still needed.

23 Robinson, op. cit., p. 130.
Due to the conditions described above, the outright sale of land by the nobility increased greatly from 1861 to 1905. Statistics show that in 1877 the nobles possessed some 73,077,000 desiatins of land, while in 1905 their holdings also diminished from 535,2 desiatins in 1877 to 488 desiatins in 1905; and their total possession of work-horses from 546,000 in 1888-1891, to 499,000 in 1904-1906, that is, 8.5 per cent. 24

The land sold by the nobility went to various people. By 1905 some 16,241,000 desiatins was owned by merchants, and peasant non-allotment-land increased to 23,542,000. Most of the merchants bought this land to speculate with, although a few attempted large-scale capitalistic methods of production but made little headway. By the close of the nineteenth century a wholesale liquidation of landowners estates increased peasant ownership of land, it must be remembered that most of the land purchased by the peasant belonged to the commune, not to the individual.

Despite the transfer of land from the nobility to the peasants, at the close of the nineteenth century the latter were in a worse economic conditions than they were in 1861. The average size of the farm and of the number of horses both declined. Meanwhile the population increased. 35,000, 000 from 1860 to 1897. The average peasant family in 1905

24 Ibid., p. 313.
possessed approximately thirty acres of land, either bought and rented land, which must support not less than five persons. The Russian peasant paid, as compared with the German, two and one-half times as much for cotton and sugar, four and one-half times as much for iron, and six times as much for coal.\textsuperscript{25} Such exorbitant prices for imported products lowered the peasant's living standard by forcing him to spend practically all his earnings on absolute necessities and the amount available for the purchase of modern agricultural and improving his estate was far below the amount needed.

As early as the Eighties and Nineties the emancipated peasants found it impossible to subsist and pay their taxes from the miniature allotments granted them were forced to seek other earnings. Many went to the city for temporary work, gravitating back to the soil, and returning to their village as soon as they were in a position to maintain their land. By 1905 their number increased greatly, and, working hand in hand with the proletariat, began clamoring for agrarian reforms.

The farmers and the proletariat were supported by a new political party, the Socialists-Revolutionists, which sprang up in 1900. This new party advocated socialisation of the land and its distribution among those who actually tilled it.

\textsuperscript{25}Kornilov, op. cit., Part II, pp. 305-311.
Encouraged by its program, the peasants began demanding that
the old communal system of land tenure be abolished in favor
of the individual who owned and developed his land. He also
protested against the unequal distribution of state and local
taxes and requested that the redemption payments be reduced.
By a manifesto of November 16, 1905, it was laid down that
after January 1, 1907, there should be no further collections
from the mirs of dues on account of the loans made at the
time of the emancipation. The state cancelled completely
communal obligations and provided that after the date men-
tioned the villages should become full owners of their land,
with no further liability to the state except ordinary land
taxes.\textsuperscript{23}

The most important milestone in Russian agrarian his-
tory after the emancipation in 1861 was the land reforms of
1906. These are commonly attributed to Peter Stolypin who
was appointed Minister of Interior in April of 1906 and
held that position until 1911. During the revolutionary
years, 1905 and 1906, cries for agrarian reforms grew louder
and louder and the rural population demanded the liquidation
of the communes and that part of the land belonging to the
state, the Imperial Family, the church, and private landowners
be turned over to them. Stolypin endeavoured to appease the
peasants by various concessions; many class restrictions
were abolished, state and communal land was offered for sale,
and freedom to leave the community was granted. Then in November of 1906 two edicts were passed converting collectively-owned land into individual proprietorships. The mir was deprived of its authority over the peasants and the latter were given the right to separate from the commune. According to the provisions of these edicts the head of every peasant family, holding a portion of land by right of communal tenure, could claim the transfer to him as private property of his due share of the communal land. In Communes where redistribution had occurred within the past twenty-four years, the peasant was allowed to claim all the land in his effectual occupation at the time he applied for private ownership. He could also claim his appropriate share of the communal land in accordance with the size of his household. This meant that he might be entitled to more or less land than he actually occupied. Communal land was sold to all the peasants at a moderate price, and any commune could convert its lands to private ownership by a two-thirds vote.27

The principle objects of these reforms were the development of small proprietorships and the extension to landowners of the fullest freedom to cultivate their holdings as they desired and to dispose of them without restraint. Stolypin intended to create a contingent of small landholders on whose loyalty the government might depend, for the experience

27 Hubbard, op. cit., p. 48.
of the revolutionary years had shown the communal system was responsible for the fact that whole villages acted as one man in agrarian disturbances. The edicts of 1906 introduced and encouraged the private ownership of land.

It was not until 1910 and 1911 that the results of the agrarian reforms began to appear. The primary purpose of the reforms had been to encourage the rise of a class of prosperous peasant farmers with sufficient land to adopt up-to-date farming methods and compete with the countries of Western Europe. In order to make this possible it was essential for the peasants, as soon as they had the necessary capital, to be given the opportunity and means of acquiring additional land. To facilitate such transactions the government allowed farmer to buy land belonging to private or public owners or to the commune. Peasants were also allowed to sell their land to neighboring farmers and to migrate freely.

By 1913 and 1914 the agricultural situation in Russia had undergone numerous changes, and more agrarian legislation of the kind outlined by the late Stolypin was passed. The liquidation of the communes had progressed rapidly, as most of the peasants were eager to become private landowners, no matter how small a portion they might possess. Improved methods of cultivation were introduced, and agriculture showed astonishing signs of progress. Many new crops were being grown. In the south, rye, oats, barley, wheat,
flax, and potatoes showed increased acreage, especially in western Kiev, Podolia, Poltova, and Kharkov. In the east agriculture never proved successful on account of its severe winters and frequent droughts. Taking the Empire as a whole, rye was the chief grain grown as it formed the staple of the peasant's food, but wheat was the principle commodity produced for exportation.28

The methods of cultivation had improved greatly by 1914, but remained primitive as compared to those of other countries. The majority of the peasants still lacked the necessary capital to buy labor-saving machinery, improved seeds, and necessary fertilizers. Most of the peasants continued to use the wooden plow drawn by a single ox or horse, but the number of such plows and work-animals increased. The grain was sowed by hand, grass and grain cut with a scythe, and threshed by hand labor or by treading. Some of the well-to-do landowners had modern equipment, and a few were acquainted with scientific methods of farming. The use of fertilizers increased by 400 per cent from 1908 to 1913, and the output of agricultural machinery increased seven or eight times. Russia was beginning to manufacture iron plows, drills, self-binding machines, and threshing machines. This type of farm equipment was imported from abroad.

An interesting feature in the social life of the masses

28GEE, op. cit., p. 328.
was the growth of co-operative societies. From 4,400.79 in 1905, the number increased to 19,200.53 in 1911, to nearly thirty thousand in 1913, and to 37,000 in 1917.29

The co-operatives were formed in villages and towns, for mutual loans, for joint acquisition of agricultural implements, cattle, for production of oil, of dairy products, for the maintenance of a common store selling to members all necessities at cost price. Every co-operative became the center of local life and at the annual meetings the peasants gathered to exchange information and ideas.

At the close of 1916 there were 1.6 million independent farms, covering forty million acres. The average size of a farm was about twenty-five acres. The number of freehold farms was 10.7 per cent of all peasant holdings, the total number of which was about 11.5 million.30 The dreams of individual ownership of land that each peasant had cherished for centuries were beginning to gradually materialize.


30Hubbard, op. cit., p. 53.
CHAPTER III

THE COMMUNIST EXPERIMENT AND THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

When war broke out in 1914 the great mass of peasants were still far from contented with their economic situation. The few years that had elapsed since the land reforms of 1906 had not given them time to become economically independent from the large landowners nor from the government. Russia was still almost wholly a country of small farms whose operators still believed largely in home production for home consumption, and every small farm grew a variety of crops. Though the practice of introducing modern machinery, new agricultural techniques and of trying to grow grain crops for export had taken roots in a few sections of the country, the vast majority of the Russian farmers continued to stick to the primitive methods of production, hoping that the time would eventually come when they would be allowed to seize the riches of their well-to-do neighbors. Professor Jones describes the peasant of pre-revolutionary days as:

"Pocking aimlessly at the land with tools, using methods so primitive as to maintain them near the edge of starvation unless seasonal conditions were unusually..."
favorable; condemned by ignorance, poverty, and the apathy their existence engendered to a lifelong servitude. With few exceptions they were slaves with all the faults of a servile mentality; trucking humility and bestial cruelty, treachery and avarice hypocrisy, cowardice, and superstition.¹

On the eve of the Great War some two hundred thousand landlords owned over a quarter of the arable land in European Russia. They were the object of sullen envy and hatred by each of the sixteen million peasant households, as each peasant blamed the landlord for all his troubles and could not seem to grasp the fact that the absence of crop diversification, insufficient numbers and poor quality of livestock, had a direct bearing on his dire poverty. Instead of attempting to improve his position, the peasant continued to see the landlord as the one cause for all his troubles. It was to the hated landlord that he was obliged to pay rent, seek permission to use the pastureland, and the large fertile estates of the landlords formed a vivid contrast to the little strips of peasant land around the village. Deep in the hearts of many peasants was the conviction that they had been cheated at the time of emancipation; that when they were released from bondage they should have been given, if not all their former masters' land, at least a much larger share than they actually received.

The outbreak of the war temporarily solved some of the

¹Jones, op. cit., p. 182.
peasants' problems. The induction of millions of young farmers into the army left more land for each person to work, and there was an increased demand for food throughout the country. This new demand for additional food was followed by a rise in the price of all agricultural products, which served momentarily as an incentive for increased production. The needs of a gigantic army and of the swollen cities continued to grow and the government began to carry out a larger share of the grain purchases. The demands placed upon the rural element seemed unending.

This temporary period of agricultural prosperity was shortlived. The increase in prices resulted in a depreciation of the value of the ruble, which was being turned off the printing press in growing quantities. The peasant found much needed manufactured goods growing scarcer and scarcer and their price becoming higher. The farmer found it unprofitable to trade valuable food for worthless rubles, therefore he began to consume more of his produce and sell less. The percentage of all kinds of grain and fodder crops marketed fell from 12.4 per cent in 1909-1913 to 7.4 per cent in 1915. The acreage under cultivation decreased from 101.7 million dessiatinas in 1914 to 90.3 million dessiatinas in 1916. This decrease was brought about because a large part of Russia was in the war zone and much

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2 Hubbard, op. cit., p. 65.

3 Ibid., p. 66.
of the land still owned by the nobility had to go uncultivated due to the shortage of labor. The problem of obtaining farm machinery and a sufficient amount of seed were other factors that served to retard agriculture throughout the war years, and, in addition to these difficulties, there were no foreign markets for Russian produce. Everything the farmer raised was consumed by the army and the factory workers, and the prices they paid were not at all satisfactory.

In order to assure sufficient supplies for the urban population and the troops at the front, the government decided to fix the prices of grain. All it needed could be bought under compulsion and if supplies were withheld, they could be requisitioned at fifteen per cent below the fixed price. Many of the peasants believed the amount fixed by the government to be too low and were reluctant to sell. As a result the government in November of 1916 stated that a certain amount of grain must be produced each year for the army. Premiums were to be awarded to all growers delivering their quotes by a certain specified date, but in spite of this, only twenty three million puds out of the expected 515 millions had been procured by that date. Thus, even before the revolution the peasants showed a distaste for compulsory deliveries of produce.

The war, though it brought about a general letdown in agricultural production, also had a certain effect on the nature of crops grown. In former days the peasant grew
crops almost entirely for his own use, such as grain, potatoes, vegetables and fodder crops. In course of time Russian agriculture became increasingly based on a market economy and the proportion of land under grain declined in relation to land planted with sugar beet, flax and other so-called industrial crops with a relatively high market value. Rye, the chief crop before the war, gave way to wheat. This period of raising produce for the market instead of for home consumption soon declined, however, as the farmers found the government and private buyers unable to pay them a sufficient price.

The war inflicted a number of blows, direct and indirect, on Russian agriculture. It took out of the villages approximately twelve million able-bodied peasants and over two million horses. By 1918 that plant acreage had declined 8.4 per cent in European Russia, and in the fertile Caucasus, which was especially hard hit by the loss of manpower and by the closing of the export market, the decline amounted to 23.8 per cent.4 The war caused tremendous food shortages and large numbers of workers fled from the cities to the country. The declining productivity of agriculture, coupled with the collapse of the transportation system under the strain of military requirements, left the entire empire in

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a state of chaos. In many provinces peasants were in armed revolt against the requisitions, which still did not yield enough to feed the hungry cities.

As a result of the food shortage, the members of the armed forces and the proletariat voiced loud protests, which soon gave way to open riots and on March 12, an unplanned and unorganized popular tumult took place in the streets of Petrograd which was all that was necessary to bring down the rotting structure of the monarchy. A few regiments of disciplined soldiers could have dispersed the rioters, as they lacked both arms and organized leadership, but the troops used to stop the mob refused to fire on their fellow citizens and went over to the insurgents. From that time on the cause of the monarchy was lost.

The agrarian revolution was slower getting under way than the mutiny of the soldiers and the revolt of the proletariat. The peasants acted cautiously until they could see whether the revolutionists were going to win. As soon as they sensed the helplessness of the monarch and the disorganized condition of the new government, they began to enroach on the landed estates in various ways. Cattle were pastured on the estate meadows; wood was cut without permission in the landlord's forest; rent for leased land was left unpaid or was fixed at a nominal sum; thefts, large and small, from the landlord's stables and granaries were committed. One of the favorite practices of the peasants was
to prevent prisoners or other laborers from working the land of the nobility by threats of violence, and then take the land over themselves on the ground that it was not being cultivated.

During the early part of the revolution, murdering of the country gentry and the destroying of their homes was common. The revenge seeking peasants showed very little mercy toward the hated landlords. Each felt himself perfectly justified in seizing all the land he possible could, regardless of the methods be might be forced to use in obtaining it. There are numerous cases that reveal the barbaric and destructive action of the farmer who, due to his lack of education, often destroyed valuable farm machinery and work animals. When the provisional government finally realized that the entire countryside was in a turmoil and threatened seriously to reduce spring crop sowings for the coming harvest, it was too late to take any effective action.

The Provisional Government believed in communal land tenure and the expropriation of large estates but they shirked the responsibility of positive measures to put their policy into action, and were content with establishing a land committee in each village to handle agrarian matters. These committees were to make a thorough study of the situations in their respective localities and make suggestions for agrarian reforms to the Constituent Assembly. A prescribed method of appointing members to this committee or
what definite duties they were obligated to perform was never defined; consequently each committee did almost as it liked. There was no uniform procedure, therefore it was almost impossible for the committees to decide what type of farm legislation would be suitable to the peasants.

The latter had their own ideas in regards to what type of land policy should be adopted. They were convinced that all land owned by the state, by landlords, by churches and monasteries and by city dwellers, along with all livestock and machinery belonging to landlords, should be transferred to the possession of the township committees. Division of land was frowned upon as this would prejudice the rights of the soldiers at the front.

The peasants made some two hundred and forty-two resolutions at various meetings during the administration of the Provisional Government. The central objective of these resolutions stated that:

The right of private property in land is abolished forever; land can be neither sold or bought nor leased nor pledged nor alienated in any way. All land . . . is taken over without compensation as the property of the whole people and passes over to the use of those who work on it. . . . The right of using the land is enjoyed by all citizens (without distinction of sex) of the Russian state who desire to cultivate their own labor, with the help of their family, or in a cooperative group, and only as so long as they are able to cultivate it. Hired labor is not permitted.5

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The Provisional Government listened to the peasant's ideas, but no effective action was taken to satisfy their desires. Instead of putting forth an acceptable program, it continued the Czarist policy of forced requisitions of grain. Such action served to turn the rural element more against the authorities in power, and bolstered the strength of the Bolsheviks.

During the Fall 1917 the peasants became very impatient with the slowness of the government to take the land away from the landlords and developed a process of harassing the nobility continuously. Threats were made against managers of the estates, hay was forcibly requisitioned at a low price and often times horses and other livestock was seized. The government made feeble attempts to stop these disorders by use of troops, but such measures were of no avail in checking the roaring conflagration which was spreading in the villages and which was destroying forever old land deeds, the old civilization based on the rule of the country gentry, and the entire agrarian system.

On September 21 Kerensky, head of the Provisional Government, made one final attempt to suppress the agrarian riots and rebellion by issuing a military order forbidding peasants to take other people's land, cattle and machinery, to cut wood which did not belong to them, or interfere with the hiring of agricultural labours under fear of various
legal penalties. The government attempted to arrest the leaders of the villages who were the most zealous in carrying out the demands of the peasants which clashed very definitely with the property rights of the landlords. This strategy often backfired, as the troops sent to arrest the violators usually joined them and condoned their practices of land-seizure. Kerensky's final strategy failed, and the peasants began flocking to the Bolshevik camps in order to support a movement to crush the Provisional Government.

The Bolsheviks played a major part in instigating the overthrow of the autocracy in March, but held only fourteen legislative positions out of some five hundred created by the Provisional Government. Lenin first stated his agrarian policy to the Duma shortly after the Revolution and urged the peasants to take over landlord's estates without any compensation and to make an end of private property in land. He received unanimous support from the rural element on this issue, but the peasants failed to agree with his policy of giving all power to the soviets and of turning every estate into a socialized farm. The farmers certainly wanted to divide the landowner's property, but did not want the government to step into their shoes.

Lenin knew that only by favoring the redistribution of land could he hope to secure a passive ally in the peasantry,

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who made up eighty per cent of the population. Existing conditions favored the Bolshevik cause, as Russian tillers of the soil were hungry for land. Realizing that by appealing to the peasant's emotions he could easily work them into a fury against the existing regime, Lenin began making ardent speeches all over the country. He proposed an immediate division of land among the toiling masses. The land must go to the tiller of the soil, regardless of objections from the bourgeoisie.7

The Bolshevik's appeals brought about the desired results, and on November 7 the Kerensky Government was overthrown. The new party immediately issued a decree declaring landlord property in land abolished forever and claiming that land belonged to the state, to be used by the peasants on a basis of personal labor. Lenin hoped to create a large socialized farm out of each estate whereby a number of families would live together and work the land collectively. It would not belong to individuals but would remain the property of the government, which in turn would supervise the distribution of produce after each harvest.

The peasants were sorely disappointed with the new agrarian policy and expressed their objections by refusing to adhere to governmental policies. They continued to seize

7Walter Russell Betsell, Soviet Rule in Russia, pp. 28-30.
and divide the greater part of the big estates, and in a few weeks ninety-seven per cent of the entire land under cultivation passed into their hands.\(^8\) Seizure was not organized and varied greatly from one part of the country to another. Peasant holdings were increased by 20 per cent as an average, but in some places holdings were increased 65 per cent.\(^9\) Many of the farmers received more land than they could possibly work for years to come. Most of the remaining landlords were either run out of the country or murdered, but a few who had been generous to the peasants in the old days were allowed to keep a small portion and invited to join the co-operatives.

The Bolsheviks soon realized that their agrarian ideas were not acceptable to the great masses of farmers. As Marxists they looked upon agriculture as an integral part of the national economy which must be socialized and large-scale methods of production introduced. The peasants did not understand Marxism and refused to give up individual forms of farming and to relinquish the right of disposing of their products as they saw fit. Therefore it became necessary for the Bolsheviks to compromise with their Marxist doctrines and put the idea of collective farming

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aside temporarily. In February of 1918, Lenin issued a decree under which the peasants were granted the use of all lands formerly belonging to the landowners, the Crown, the State, and the Church. The land could not be sold nor used for speculation, and the idea of equality of distribution was officially upheld. The only land not turned over to the peasants was that occupied by State farms which made up about three per cent of the total area under cultivation. Temporary appeasement of the rural element was necessary in order to receive their support of the new regime, but the idea of government control of agriculture was continuously encouraged.

In May of 1918 the Bolsheviks issued another decree which required the peasants to surrender all food surpluses to the government for distribution among the factory workers, who in turn would furnish the peasants with needed manufactured goods. Rural opposition to this policy led to open conflict between the government and the farmers. When peasants refused to give up their grain, detachments of city workers were sent to the country by the authorities with orders to take the grain by force. Also, special committees of poor peasants were organized to redistribute the land, requisition horses, and help city workers to extract grain forcibly from well-to-do peasants. The Communist ideas of a "classless society" and "brotherly love"
were confusing terms to the average farmer who recognized individualism as the only feasible method of success.

In September of 1918, Lenin issued a new land law which vividly portrayed just what his party was trying to do. Fundamental aspects of the law stated that: (1) all property rights in the land, treasures of the earth, waters, forests, and fundamental natural resources within the Russian Federated Soviet Republic abolished; (2) the land passes over to the use of the entire laboring population without any compensation, open or secret, to the former owners; (3) the right to use the land belongs to those who till it by their own labor, with the exception of special classes covered by this decree; (4) the right to use the land cannot be limited by sex, religion, nationality, or foreign citizenship. The decree further stated that a person not physically or mentally able to work and whose land was nationalized could receive a federal pension for the rest of his natural life. Land was given only to those who worked it for the benefit of the community and not for personal advantages. No person was to be allowed more than he could cultivate, and the amount given was to be determined by its fertility, climatic conditions, and so forth. No child under twelve years of age was to be classified as a workman, nor any woman over fifty nor any man over sixty. Land formerly belonging to landowners, the state, private banks, or monasteries that had never
been in cultivation was to constitute a surplus to supply the landless peasants and those who possessed less than the peasant's production and consumption standards called for. 10

The contents of the Bolshevik land law had a deep emotional appeal to the peasantry. They backed Lenin almost unanimously in his fight against the White Russians who were led by Czarist sympathizers. The Communist declared that the civil war was a struggle of the hungry against the fed, the rural population against the bourgeoisie. The anti-Soviet movements, despite aid from foreign countries and tremendous propaganda campaigns, never enjoyed popular support from the masses, but really crumbled away under the pressure of numerous peasant uprisings. The Bolsheviks credit their success largely to the loyal support of the agricultural element.

In the early days of the new Communist order, Lenin was honored and worshiped by the laborers. The mere mention of his name among a group brought shouts of praise and admiration. He was considered a friend of the masses, a crusader for the poor. William C. Bullitt, American diplomat sent to Russia in 1919, reported:

When I called on Lenin at the Kremlin I had to wait a few minutes until a delegation of peasants left his room. They had heard in the village that

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Comrade Lenin was hungry. And they had come hundreds of miles carrying 500 puds of bread as the gift of the village to Lenin. Just before them was another delegation of peasants to whom the report had come that Comrade Lenin was working in an unheated room. They came bearing a stove and enough firewood to heat it for three months. Lenin is the only leader who receives such gifts. And he turns them into the common fund.  

Despite their admiration for the Bolshevik leader, the farmers could not understand and refused to accept his agrarian policies. Lenin had abolished all private property and private trading was replaced by the voluntary exchange of manufactured goods from the town for goods from the country. Each was to supply the other's needs. This, in Lenin's opinion, was true Communism. But the peasant failed to cooperate. He felt that his hard work would be of no benefit to himself, as his surplus products would be seized by the States. To counteract the coercive power of the government, the peasant cut down the size of his farm and began producing only enough for his own use. The area of land under cultivation was only one-half in 1921 what it was before the war. The number of horses declined from 35,000,000 to 10,000,000; there was only one-half the quantity of horned cattle, forty per cent of pigs and thirty per cent of sheep. Only about one-half the agricultural implements were left; less than one-eighth of the old.

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11 The Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, p. 94.
cotton land was now under cultivation; the flax crop was one-ninth and the wool crop one-tenth of pre-war days.\textsuperscript{12} This resulted in a tremendous shortage of food in the cities. The government was forced to take all that was available from the farmers and even then the townspeople in the most prosperous areas existed on a semi-starvation diet. The peasants who had rejoiced when the Communist gave them land began to grumble, and their grumbling became loud and deep. Peasant uprisings began to occur all over the country.

Throughout the entire period of the Communist experiment, 1918-1921, the farmers were forced to do many things through government officials, which they had formerly done for themselves. Officials rationed seed corn, fertilizers, farm implements, and other agricultural necessities. Many of the government appointees were incapable of filling a key position, and, as a result, heated disputes often arose between the farmers and their immediate superiors. For instance, in one village not far from the city of Samara, the local administrator refused to issue seed corn to the farmers. An abundance of corn was available, but the administrator claimed that the peasants had horded grain that could be used for seed. The farmers, knowing that the time for sowing crops was rapidly passing,

\textsuperscript{12}MacKenzie, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 86.
protested in vain. Then they resolved to defy the administrator and march on the local storehouse. This plan was carried out and the grain was divided in a systematic manner, a full list being made of the amount issued and then sent to the higher authorities. The government, instead of condoning the action taken by the farmers, chose to regard the incident as an act of disloyalty and lawlessness and sent troops to the scene with orders to stamp out such action. Many of the farmers were arrested and sent to prison; others were fined severely.\textsuperscript{13}

The bungling and mistakes perpetrated by the government led to a steady decrease in the production of food. In order to partially meet the demands of the factory workers, Lenin was forced to assign a certain portion of arable land to each factory, allowing the workers to cultivate it for their own needs. The factory supervisors designated each Saturday to be used for cultivating the acreage assigned by the government. The food was harvested in the autumn and stored, being gradually distributed during the winter. This process temporarily eased the food situation in certain parts of the country, but overall it remained acute.

By 1921 Lenin called a halt in his Communist policy.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 155-156.
He realized that he could not go on. According to official figures the reduction of acreage under cultivation between 1913 and 1921 was 25 per cent for all Russia. Pre-war Russia had exported as much as $240,000,000 worth of grain each year, and now she was unable to grow enough for her own people. Lenin didn't want to forget or abolish completely state control, but he had to restore private trade and cooperate with foreign capitalism in order to live. At the time, however, he would endeavour to secure the gradual triumph of State management and State control throughout the Russian Republic, and instead of doing everything in one sweep, he would attain his ends step by step. The people would be educated to the point where they could produce for themselves better than under the direction and control of moneyed interests. But until they reached that point, private financiers would be allowed to play their part again.

The emergency programme formulated by Lenin acquired the name of the New Economic Policy, more commonly called the Nep. Its basic feature was the substitution of taxation for the former system of requisitioning all the peasant's surplus grain. Permission to sell his surplus in the market revived the farmer's interest in sowing and harvesting larger crops; and the rise of agriculture in turn constituted the necessary prerequisite for the revival of the cities and of industry. The New Economic Policy was in reality an unofficial truce between the Marxian Government and the
individualist peasants with certain elements of capitalism revived.

One of the major reasons for Lenin launching the Nep was a severe drought in 1920 that resulted in a terrible famine which lasted through 1923 and is regarded as the worst in Russian history. Millions of people died. The famine was perpetrated by seven years of war which wrought ruin and devastation throughout the country. Also, Allied navies blockaded all Russian ports from 1918 until 1920, preventing needed food, agricultural implements and medicine from reaching the Soviet Union. American and British newspaper reporters told almost unbelievable stories of the suffering and death that occurred along the Volga and in southern Ukrainina and the Crimea. It was said that the rations of some families consisted of oak leaves, dung and straw which was baked over an open fire. Most of the work horses were eaten by the starving peasants or died from lack of fodder. There was neither seed nor animals with which to cultivate a crop. The famine had probably as much to do with bringing about the economic changes as did the failure of the Communist experiment.

The effect of the Nep on agriculture was immediate. Food began to flow freely into the towns. In 1922 only 156 million acres were planted, nearly 100 million less than in 1913; in 1923 the area increased 203 million acres, in
1924 to 217 millions and by 1927 it reached 236 million.\textsuperscript{14} Even with this increase, however, production was still far too low. Though the New Economic Policy had partially returned to the capitalistic system that existed in 1913, the State still took active steps to discourage any attempts at accumulation of sizeable portions of land.

The Bolshevik policy, even under the new system, had as its primary purpose the destruction of the large estate. The well-to-do peasants who sprang up as a result of the Stolypin land acts were also the target of Bolshevism. Few families were issued over ten, fifteen or twenty acres of land. Such small holdings could not possible produce the grain that the larger, richer and better managed estates had. The Soviet Land Laws, which governed agrarian relations until it was largely rendered obsolete by collectivization, reverted agriculture to practically the same position it held during the late nineteenth century. Land was declared national property and could not be bought or sold. Each family usually received its share according to the size of the family, which proved to be a poor and inefficient method of distribution. If, for instance, one dessiatina of land was allotted each soul a family of seven, consisting of a father, mother, four children and a grandmother, would receive seven dessiatinas, while a newly married couple

\textsuperscript{14}Hubbard, op. cit., pp. 82-83.
received only two. Under such a system some families received more land than they could work, while others did not receive enough.

This corresponded with a primitive instinct for equality, but did not make for higher agricultural productivity, especially in view of the fact that the village land was liable to redistribution, which robbed the peasant of the normal incentive to expend labor and money improving his holding. The sweeping away of the large estates and the creation of some twenty-six million small holdings easily explains the decline in Russia's supply of marketable grain. The Soviet agrarian system, as it existed up until the time of large-scale collectivization, kept the land in the hands of the poor and unproductive farmers. Lenin by trying to give every soul an equal amount of land introduced a theory that had never been practiced in any country before. It failed largely because of the lack of individual capital, insufficient work animals and machinery, and most of all the lack of education and understanding of the masses.

One major change brought about by the NEP was the increased transfer of wealth from the city to the country that had already been proceeding illicitly. The people in the cities wanted above all else food and would give whatever they had for more to eat. When they had no money, the peasants would accept furniture, clothes, musical instruments or anything of value. Many farm houses had to be
rebuilt to hold the new treasures. Peasants crammed their strong-boxes with fine garments, and it was not uncommon to see numerous farm houses filled with carpets and curtains, pianos and organs, and handsome furniture galore. It is said that some of the peasant's wives refused to wear any garment except silk. The communist theory of "brotherly love" was the least of the farmer's worries.

The initial period of the New brought quick recuperation from the worst effects of the famine and civil war, but from 1923-1926 Russian agriculture again showed signs of becoming stagnant. By 1928 only 90 per cent of the pre-war acreage under grain crops had been restored and it was estimated that the yield per acre of some had declined in the following substantial proportions: cotton, 25 per cent; flax, 32 per cent; hemp, 15 per cent; sugar beets, 10 per cent.15 The government blamed this retardation of agriculture on the partial revision of capitalism, and claimed that it could only be solved through all out socialization.

From the very beginning of their regime the Bolsheviks had favor and encouraged collectivization. They had continuously sought to show the peasant the advantages of socialist big farming methods, holding out to them all manner of privileges. The farmers were urged to turn each estate

15Chamberlin, Soviet Russia, p. 190.
into a model experimental farm, as the set-up of each favored such a move. Government loans were made to encourage collectivization, and some communes were even made tax free.

As early as 1918 the first collective farms or kolkhozes appeared with various degrees of pooling of property, implements, and labor. These early kolkhozes usually took the form of simple cooperation for the joint acquisition and use of complex machinery. Such a society was called a toz. Land remained the property of the individual owners, who received the output from their particular plot of ground. Livestock and the smaller farm implements also remained outside co-operative ownership, but the pastures were often used in common.

Another method of collective farming was the agricultural "artel". Under this type of organization the land, heavy tools and machines, farm buildings, and work animals were held in common. Individual land holdings were lumped together and worked collectively. The total output was divided among the members according to either labor, or shares, or the number of workers, or the number of consumers.

A third type of collective farming was the agricultural "commune". All implements, machines, livestock, and buildings were owned by the commune, while the members lived in communal homes, with kitchens and nurseries.

According to official figures these early collective farms were occupied mainly by the poorer rural element. This
was particularly true of the commune. The great majority of the peasants refused to join either of the three collective organizations, and until February of 1919 only thirty-five State-farms of any type had been created. At the end of 1920, however, about 4,400 State-farms with an average area of 1,150 acres, and three per cent of the peasant's land was being jointly cultivated by collective labor. Of this three per cent 48.1 per cent belonged to the toz, 42.9 per cent to the arteil, and nine per cent to the communes. 16

In 1921 Lenin was forced to introduce his New Economic Policy, but by 1925 the Communists again began considering federal land legislation. The party asked officials of the Communist University at Moscow to examine the question and draw up a feasible program of legislation. The university officials decided that neither the soviet land law nor the agrarian laws of the autonomous republics forming the Union should contain anything directly or indirectly contrary to the nationalization of land. It was decided that the USSR had the right (1) to dispose of all land necessary to the institution or enterprise of general importance; (2) to make transfers to the soviet colonization fund or to the concession funds; (3) to control the acts of the autonomous

16 Gregor Bienstock, Solomon K. Schwarz, and Aaron Yugow, Management in Russian Industry and Agriculture, p. 130.
republics which have these transfers in view.\textsuperscript{17} Thus after functioning four years under a part capitalist and a part socialist economic system, the government began making plans to revert again to its communistic ideas.

The new governmental policy was not put into effect immediately. Both Trotsky and Stalin were struggling for leadership of the party and neither wanted to make a wrong political or economic move. But in 1927 the party came face to face with a general emergency and some decision had to be made. Statements by high Soviet leaders about an alleged imminent "war menace"--Great Britain had broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union--filtered down to the villages, and to the peasant, whose memory of the World War and the civil war was still vivid. War meant scarcity, perhaps famine. The end of war was not a suitable time to exchange edible grain for worthless rubles.

The result was that when the state and cooperative grain buying organizations entered the field in the autumn of 1927 they encountered the stubborn resistance of the peasant holders of grain. There was the danger of a bread shortage in towns, and extraordinary measures had to be adopted to meet the emergency. Local authorities were directed to use compulsion, which had been discarded since the days of military communism. Persons accused of speculation were arrested and punished, and in many villages soviet

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Batsell, op. cit., p. 713.}
officials carried out what amounted to the requisitioning of the peasant's surplus grain at a fixed price.

The crisis of the grain supply in the winter of 1927 and 1928 presented a much more complex problem than the mere meeting of a temporary emergency. It raised the question of how agriculture was to develop in the future. A return to requisitioning without a decisive change in the system of land holding and farming would simply bring the country back to the difficulties of military communism. This was almost sure to result in a descending curve of peasant production and a shortage of supply.

There were only two feasible ways of emerging from the crisis of low productivity with which Russian agriculture was faced. A restoration, in one form or another, of private property in land, and a relaxation of the political and economic pressure against the kulaks would mean a step toward complete capitalism. Land would drift into the hands of a few, instead of having twenty-six million small farms. This policy, however, would clearly be alien to Communist economic principles, and, if adopted, communism in Russia would be defeated.

The other possible plan was collectivization of all the small farms. Stalin, now leader of the Communist Party, favored the latter and in November of 1928 made the following statement to the Party Central Committee:

We must not for too long a period of time base the Soviet power and the socialist structure on two different
foundations, on the largest and most unified socialist industry and on the most divided and backward small peasant farming. It is necessary gradually, but systematically and stubbornly, to remake agriculture on a new technical basis, on the basis of big production, pulling it up to socialist industry. Either we solve this problem, and then final victory is guaranteed, or we retreat from it without solving it; and then the return to capitalism may become and unavoidable development.18

Thus the leader of the Communist Party gave the signal for an all out plan of socialization, and collective farming on a big-scale was just around the corner.

18 Chamberlin, Soviet Russia, p. 162.
CHAPTER IV

THE NEW SYSTEM—COLLECTIVE FARMS

The year 1927 found the Bolsheviks with their backs to the wall. They must either go all out for capitalism, which to them was the same as czarism, and refute the work of Marx and Lenin, or they could adopt extreme socialism, putting the theories of Marx and Lenin into practice whenever possible and practicable. Through the influence of Stalin the party decided to follow the latter course, and in 1928 the first Five Year Plan was outlined.

The Soviet authorities hoped that by 1930 some fifteen per cent of the peasant farms would be collectivized. Stalin believed this would be accepted by the majority of the rural element, as it would be similar to the old days when everyone belonged to communes. The government wanted the peasants to see the advantages of collectivization and voluntarily combine to form such associations. To assist them in coming to this decision certain measures were taken to render individual farming unattractive. Those who had become well-to-do during the N.E.P. were branded as kulaks, and the poorer peasants were encouraged to take their land, farm buildings and agricultural implements. Anyone owing twenty-five acres
of land or more fell into the kulak category and was subjected to continual harassing and might have his property confiscated at any time. It was very advantageous to the Bolsheviks for the poverty-stricken peasants to take over the property of the so-called kulaks, for a kolkhoz—Russian name for a collective farm—could be formed without too much government support and without any additional members.

Besides encouraging seizure of farm property, the government used other methods to encourage the agriculturists to join collectives. Farmers were compelled to sell all their surplus grain in order to pay their taxes and were latterly compelled to sell to the state at its own price, because transport facilities were refused private consignments. Only those peasants living close to a large city could sell grain or flour on the town market. The State had its own flour mills and other industrial facilities and would sell its produce so cheaply that private concerns had little chance of surviving. The peasant, having practically no other market for his grain than the government, reduced production crops and procured money to pay taxes by growing other products. In 1928 six and a quarter million less acres were sown to grain than in 1927, while the production of cotton, flax, tobacco and sugar beets was increased by three and one-half million tons and the area under vegetables by 200,000 acres.¹

¹Hubbard, op. cit., p. 105.
The State could not successfully buy and sell these perishable products, so every peasant was forced to sell his surplus produce to the government at a fixed price, and the poor farmers were given full authority to force their richer neighbors to pay off. The government further crippled individualism by selling farm machinery only to those persons who belonged to a collective.

Stalin based his system of state taxation on the individual wealth of each peasant. The rich class, or kulaks, had to pay all their profits to the State in form of taxes and if this was done successfully, then additional taxes were added each year forcing them to sell their property in order to pay. The result was rising debts, whereupon the property would be seized and handed over to the nearest kolkhoz. The middle class of farmers were not taxed too severely, but were forced to realize that individual farming could no longer continue. The poorer peasants, who were anxious to join collectives, were taxed very lightly or not at all and were the chief weapon used by the Soviets in encouraging the rise of the collective system.

From 1927-1929, the peasants were not driven into the kolkhozes by actual force, but everything was done to encourage them to make this move. In spite of all the privileges offered a farmer if he joined the new organization, the percentage of peasant homesteads collectivized from 1927 to the spring of 1929 rose from 0.3 per cent to 3.9 per cent
only. However, as the government continued to use its economic weapons more and more and the growth of collectives became inevitable. By March of 1930 sixty per cent of all peasant homesteads were brought under the new system.

Most of the peasants failed to voluntarily join the kolkhozes as much of their individual freedom would be taken away. This one thing obliged the Bolsheviks to rely on coercion to see their wishes fulfilled.

Upon entering a collective, the member turns over to it all major farm buildings (except dwelling houses), all draft animals, all but a designated amount of livestock, all equipment except small tools, and all fodder and seed. These are henceforth the property of the collective, and the individual member may not thereafter acquire property of this description. On the other hand, the individual member may own privately a dwelling house (though not the land upon which it is built); such minor buildings as are needed in connection with his allotted plot of land; a limited amount of livestock; and small tools. In general, the individual is permitted to own such farm property as is required in tilling the land allotted him.2

All the land belongs to the State, but is attached to the kolkhoz for permanent joint cultivation. The small plot granted each member for a homestead ranges from three-fourths to one and one-half acres in size and is used for private gardening, small-animal and poultry breeding, bee-keeping and dairying. Each household can usually own one cow, one or two calves, several pigs, up to ten sheep and goats, twenty hives,

2 U. S. Congress, Communist in Action, p. 143.
and an unlimited number of poultry and rabbits. In some regions variations are permitted in the size of the homesteads (up to approximately 2.5 acres) and in the number of privately owned livestock.  

The kolkhoz consists of peasants of both sexes, over sixteen years of age, who personally participate in its work. If a member has sold his horses during a period of two years prior to joining, and possesses no seed he must pledge himself to pay in installments, out of the future income, the value of a horse and the required seed. This provision prevents a farmer from selling his horses and seed just prior to joining a kolkhoz, and being admitted with nothing. However the size of the admission share does not affect the member's income.

Collectivization got under way on a rather large scale by 1929. This first year of the agricultural experiment, however, proved a failure. The harvest was bad and the officials appointed to supervise the kolkhozes were inexperienced and incapable. Thousands of work animals, cows and pigs were allowed to die due to the lack of food and proper management. The peasant resented the practice of having to work for the State, as they thought the Revolution had been fought to insure their right to do as they wished. They did not understand how the new system worked and were

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3Bienstock, Schwarz, and Yugow, op. cit., p. 143.
hesitant to learn. They automatically disliked any plan that had to rely on coercion, even though it may be for the public's benefit.

The kolkhozes require every able-bodied member to do any work for which he is detailed during specified hours. In return he receives rations, and, perhaps, a small sum of money, but does not have a voice in the disposal of the farm's produce, all of which, surplus to the consumption needs of the farm, is handled by the State at a fixed price. The Bolsheviks forced the farmer to do things when they should have been led. Stalin recognized this mistake and in March of 1930 stated that all peasants could withdraw from the collectives if they wished. In two months collectivization in the Soviet Union fell from 60 to 23.4 percent. Peasants leaving the kolkhozy, however, did not recover their former holdings, but had to take whatever vacant and therefore usually inferior land was available; neither did they get back all their animals and stock. Usually they were given a sum of money in compensation, which being calculated at the Government's arbitrarily fixed purchasing price was hopelessly insufficient to recoup their losses. Most of those who left the kolkhozy in the spring of 1930 were only too glad to be readmitted before the end of the year.

Fortunately for Russia 1930 was an excellent harvest year, and the food situation remained satisfactory in spite
of the disorganization of agriculture. More grain was exported during the twelve months beginning with the 1930 harvest than in any other year since 1915. The in 1931 341 million acres were sowed, compared to 318 million in 1930. The 1931 harvest was a partial failure, however, as the year was abnormally dry. The 1931-1932 harvests were also poor as the spring and autumn sowings were carelessly carried out by collectivized peasants who had lost all interest in their work. The kolkhoz presidents proved to be unfamiliar with agricultural problems and, the majority refused to take advice concerning such matters from experienced peasants.

The harvest of 1932 was also far below the average. Unwise legislation was responsible for this marked decline. Sherwood Eddy said that:

> If men steal from the commune harvest of the collective or State farm, by the law of August 7, 1932 they may be shot or imprisoned. The theft of bourgeois property is a light offense, and the murder of an individual, unless it is a political crime, receives a maximum penalty of 8 to 10 years in prison. But poaching upon the preserve of a collective, or stealing of a dollar’s worth of grain, if it is socialized property, may merit the death penalty. As capitalist property was once considered more sacred than the human life of the poor, so now public property becomes more sacred than personality in Soviet Russia.4

Despite the crop failures, the government continued to extract the same amount of grain from the peasants, which

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resulted in famine in some parts of the country. This was
done to show the peasants that if they didn't work, then
they would be the ones to starve. This bit of philosophy
worked well, for after 1932 opposition to collective farm-
ing ceased.

When the government decided to industrialize the nation
and adopted the first Five Year Plan in 1929, they realized
that such a program demanded tremendous investments of capital,
which, under Russian conditions, could be obtained only from
the villages and only on condition of their rapid economic
progress. Private capital would take too long to start,
as only a few farmers could purchase a tractor, if they were
available, let alone establish factories. Stalin knew that
the collectives were going to have to produce more grain, to
provide food for the increased urban population and for ex-
portation and before they could possibly meet these new de-
mands, tractors and other modern agricultural equipment
would have to be made available to each collective. In 1927
there were only 24,500 tractors throughout the Soviet Union,
which, of course, was a very insufficient number. Under
the new program, Stalin hoped to furnish the collective with
all the farm machinery they needed within fifteen to twenty
years. He hoped to accomplish in this short time what other
nations had worked for over a century to achieve.

In September of 1933 the Council of People's Commissars
organized Machine Tractor Stations—commonly referred to as
M.T.S.--For the purpose of supplying each kolkhoz with adequate tractors, combines, and other heavy equipment. These state agencies were not a part of the kolkhoz, but furnished and serviced farm machinery for them. The latter supplied the operators, and the scale of payment for the use of the tractors was fixed by mutual agreement between the members of each cooperative. Two drivers, furnished by the kolkhoz, are assigned each tractor and worked in shifts. The type of M.T.S., depending on the nature of the principal crop (grain, cotton, and sugar beets), grown in the district, was decided by the Provincial or Republican Government, but the appointment of the director, senior agricultural expert, senior mechanic, and chief book-keeper was retained in the hands of the Union Commissariat of Agriculture. Then, in 1934, the Bolsheviks stated that the M.T.S. should advise the collective on technical questions, such as rotation of crops and financial plans, and give instructions to its members in the use and care of machinery. The kolkhoz was required to provide all the necessary field labor and put into effect the instructions issued by the higher authorities.

The government placed the M.T.S. and rayso—district agriculture department—in very advantageous positions by allowing them to dictate all major operations of the collective. The former had the kolkhoz at its mercy, for it controlled all the heavy equipment that was so necessary to
the expected production. The reasons for concentrating this power machinery were the more economical use and better care possible when all the tractors and combines in the district were at the disposal of a single authority, possessing also a more or less well-equipped repair depot. Another possible motive was the strangle-hold it afforded the government over the kolkhoz. The big disadvantage to this system was that if a K.T.S. was badly managed, its machinery in bad order and inefficiently organized, the whole district would suffer. This happened quite frequently, especially in the early experimental days of the collectives.

In the early years of the collectives the tractor-drivers were often underpaid and discriminated against. These drivers, furnished by the kolkhoz, were trained at the K.T.S. and were supposed to work only for the collective from which they came, but during the busy season drivers were forced to go from one collective to another. They were supposed to be paid by the kolkhoz on whose land they were working in money and kind, but the money and kind was really collected by the K.T.S. and redistributed among the drivers. This system had many defects as it was recorded that many drivers failed to receive the full amount due them. This mistake was corrected in 1930, however, when the government issued an order under which all tractor-drivers were to be paid in cash out of State funds a guaranteed minimum of two and one-half rubles per day, the difference, if any,
between this and the money-value of their labor-day being paid by the kolkhoz concerned.

In 1939 the government also issued a new contract to be followed by the two cooperatives. It differed from its predecessor in laying down more rigid rules and forcing a greater degree of responsibility on both parties concerned. The M.T.S. was obliged to keep a table showing the precise area of land to be ploughed, cultivated, the depth of furrows, the date when each class of work must be completed; while on its part the kolkhoz must provide a specified number of field hands for various tasks, have its own machinery and implements in good repair when required, provide the desired amount of good seed where and when wanted, and so on.

A new way of financing the M.T.S. was also introduced in 1939. State Banks had formally furnished all finances, and each M.T.S. could often show good profits by being economical on oil and gas, or by plowing the land shallow or waiting until just before crop time to plow the land. Under the new plan extra fuel is furnished and higher wages are paid during busy seasons which gets the tractors to the fields early. At the end of the year the manager and members may receive bonuses ranging from one to three months pay if they have satisfactory fulfilled their plan.

The government has found out in recent years that they could get more out of their workers on the M.T.S. by rewarding them in recognition of doing a good job. This has proved
much more satisfactory than using coercion as the method of obtaining a higher productivity. Today there is little if any actual sabotage, as mere ignorance and stupidity is more the cause of failures than anything else. Every worker now understands and cooperates in developing a better farm program. M.T.S. has increased from 153 in 1930 to 3,980 in 1940 and now service 94.5 per cent of all kolkhozes.5

The administrative set-up of the kolkhoz, which is commendable in many ways, is as follows:
The People's Commissariat of Agriculture, which is comparable to the Secretary of Agriculture in the United States, is responsible for carrying out the Soviet Government's agricultural policy in the technical sense. The Commissariat draws up both the Five Year Plans and the single year plans, which include questions concerning the areas to be planted in different crops and stock-breeding.

The Commissariat Agriculture and usually the president of the kolkhoz belong to the Communist party. The secretary of the party cell is a political official whose main function is to see that the Party's instructions are properly carried out and to guard against any subversive ideas that might originate in the collective. The general assembly of members has the right to decide certain matters of domestic policy coming within its competence, such as decisions regarding the distribution of the farm's surplus produce and money revenue among the members. It elects the president of the collective. However, he is usually not a farmer nor is he from the rural area. In 1930 some 25,000 industrial workers were sent to the country to become the first kolkhoz presidents. Today there are over 240,000 in Russia and most of them come from the professional class. Their duties are more or less to handle the business transactions of the collective and they do not have much to say about the actual farming procedure. Their functions are similar to the duties of a college or university president in the
United States. The vice-president is the best informed man regarding agricultural matters for he is selected from the peasant class and supervises all economic activities. Success or failure of a harvest is largely his responsibility.

The duties of the other members of the administration are almost self-explanatory. The accountant is in charge of the office and clerical work, which besides keeping accounts both of the farm's money and material resources, has the task of booking up each member's labor-days and recording the normal tasks which constitute a labor-day. The field supervisor is responsible for general work on the farm and the labor supervisor is responsible for the proper distribution of the farm's labor resources among the various activities. The seed experts and stock experts are responsible for choosing the best seed for planting and for supervising stock breeding on the collective. The brigadiers and leaders of different groups are comparable to labor foreman in the United States, while the brigades are comparable to our labor-gangs.

Not all members of the administration are actual members of the kolkhoz. The agronom is a general farming expert who advises the administration but works directly for the government. The veterinary surgeon and mechanics are a part of the kolkhoz but possess the power to act without consent of the administration. For example, mechanics can order tractors to the K.T.S. for repairs even though the
president or vice-president may protest. These experts have more freedom than anyone else on the collective.

The president of the collective has a very precarious position as he is responsible both to government organs and members of the collective. His primary duty is to organize smooth and successful functioning. He must fulfill all government demands with respect to the compulsory delivery of goods and labor duties and is the first to bear the brunt of dissatisfaction of the mass of peasant members. He is held responsible for grievances and unsatisfactory results and if he yields to the pressure of the peasants among whom he must live and work the government may send him elsewhere. Then on the other hand, if he unquestionably fulfills all the demands of the Commissariat of Agriculture, regardless of the mood of the peasants, he provokes sharp resentment among the members and often finds himself in a situation in which productive work is utterly impossible.

A successful president must maneuver between the demands of the government and the demands of the peasants, indicating to each side their weaknesses. The duties of the president, however, have become considerably easier in recent years and now resemble the usual ones of a manager of an economic enterprise.

Not all kolkhozes have the entire administrative employees that the large ones do. Sometimes two or three small collectives unite and use one agronom, and seed expert.
Some collectives that carry on such enterprises as wine making, tanning and brick-making possess experts to supervise these branches. Each kolkhoz employs a certain number of watchmen to guard the ripening grain, the storehouses, and other duties of like nature. Each collective also employs a certain number of nurses and children's governesses who take charge of the babies and young children when the mother is at work.

It is surprising the number of female workers on the farms. The industrialization program sent many young men away to technical schools or to the cities to work in industry, leaving the women at home to do the farm work.

Hindus says that:

Women are among the best tractor operators in the country and are also the best managers of collective farms. Tens of thousands of them have been and are being trained not only in the use of machinery but in every phase of agriculture. Any national plan of tillage, which in time of war is even more indispensable than in the time of peace, can be successfully carried out.6

The women of Russia work as hard as any of the men, and the success of the Five-Year Plans can to a large degree be attributed to their energetic efforts. The Soviet women of Russia are very similar to the pioneer women of America during the eighteenth century.

On each kolkhoz the workers are divided into brigades

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with a brigadier at the head of each. In the early days of collectivization these brigades consisted of around one hundred persons and each one had a certain specified job to do. For example, one brigade would be given all the farm implements and was held responsible for the plowing, while another brigade did all the hoeing. This proved unsatisfactory, for members were shifted about and their positions were not permanent. In 1932 the government issued a new law which put laborers in permanent brigades. Each brigade was further subdivided into a number of detachments and each detachment usually consisted of relations or members of families living in close proximity or connected in some way. The important fact about this change was that each brigade was attached to a particular part of the farm for a whole rotation of crops (three years or more) and had allotted to it a definite and fixed inventory of work animals and farm machinery. This made it possible to fix responsibilities, and the results of each brigade's efforts were clearly visible. Brigades who took deep interest in their work and made good crops received bonuses in addition to their regular salary for "workdays" completed, while brigades which showed lack of interest and farmed badly might have deductions made from their regular salary.

Today a farmer in Russia is paid by the amount and type of work he does, not a set salary. It was discovered that if a set salary was given each worker, some would do as
little as possible and shirk important work. Everyone is paid according to the number of "workdays" performed. A workday is measured, not in terms of time, but in terms of the type of work performed and the quality of the performance. Production quotas are established for various kinds of work, and the number of workdays credited for one actual day's work may vary from one-half to two, depending on the type of work and performance in relation to quota. The president of the kolkhoz, the nurses, kindergarten attendants, watchmen, and the like are credited with workdays for every day they are on duty, but ploughmen and reapers are credited according to the measured results of their work. It is possible for skilled laborers, such as tractor-drivers, to earn more than their normal number of workdays by performing more than their standard day's task. During the busy season a tractor-driver or a combine-harvester who avoids stoppages and works overtime can earn an astonishing number of workdays in twenty-four hours and receive possibly a couple of thousand rules as the result of a few weeks intensive effort. The lower-paid groups, such as watchmen, milkmaids, and shepherds, though they receive less pay, have steady employment whereas a field hand may not work more than 180 days each year on the kolkhoz land.

The office employees and various other experts who are not members of the kolkhoz are usually paid in money which can be used to purchase food from the collective at considerably
less than market price. These employees, however, are sometimes paid in rations. Most villages contain a consumer's co-operative shop selling a wide range of prepared goods that can be purchased at a small profit for the grower.

A member of the collective, after he fulfills his duties, is largely free to spend the remainder of his time as he chooses. He may earn extra credits, cultivate his individual plot, or engage in other work. The average worker spent about fifty per cent of his time on the collective before the war and a like amount of time was spent doing anything else he wished.

There are several ways in which the collective markets its produce. There are no "middlemen" in Russia as in the United States, and goods must pass directly from the producer to the customer. A stated amount of the produce raised must be sold to the State at a fixed price of approximately forty per cent. In reality this is a sort of tax; the price fixed being rather low. Another large proportion goes to the N.T.S. as compensation for services. Then the collectives make contracts with state industrial enterprises and co-operatives to take a certain portion of their produce at a reasonable price. If there is any produce not disposed of in the above mentioned ways, the collective may sell it on the free town market. A considerably higher price is received for those goods sold on the town market than those sold to the state or to
co-operatives. Then at the end of the year the total net profit of the collective is figured, and each member receives his share according to the number of workdays he has to his credit. The peasant is paid partly in produce and partly in cash.

The peasant receives a large portion of his income from produce raised on his individual plot of land. On this plot, consisting of three-fourths to two acres, the farmer raises all types of perishable products that he sells at the town markets. Each farmer must sell his own goods to prevent speculation. The State, however, can step in and compete with individuals any time the market price is too high. The town markets represent an unusual degree of free enterprise in the Soviet Union, and they have done much to increase the income of the collectives and their members.

In recent years Premier Stalin has frequently spoken of the necessity of letting the members of the kolkhoz make most of their own decisions. This, as Stalin knew, was impossible during the early years of collectivization due to the dire need of food in the cities. The extreme necessity for a greater amount of food partially justifies the coercive methods the Bolsheviks had to rely upon in earlier years. The peasants gradually accepted the new system and now self-government is being realized in practice.

During the first years of compulsory collectivization, kolkhozes varied greatly in size. The majority consisted
of five or six families who worked forty to sixty acres of land, but there were also giant kolkhozes consisting of thousands of families and from 7,000 to 8,000 acres of land. The size was usually determined by the speed with which the members had formed their respective collective.

It soon became clear to the Soviet officials that small kolkhozes were unprofitable and the giant kolkhozes did not lend themselves to efficient management. By 1938, the average kolkhoz compromised seventy-eight households and approximately 1,800 acres of land. Size varies with the region, depending on crops and specialization. Ukrainian kolkhozes, producing mainly grain and cattle, are the largest. In 1932, 65.2 per cent of all Ukrainian kolkhozes covered more than 1,250 acres; and 1.1 per cent less than two hundred fifty acres. The smallest kolkhozes are found in Georgia (grapes, medicinal herbs, tea), where 65.3 per cent of all kolkhozes covered less than two hundred fifty acres and 1.8 per cent less than 1,250 acres.\footnote{Dienstock, Schwarz, and Yucow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 137.}

Collectivization progressed very rapidly in Russia shortly after the launching of the first Five-Year Plan. Statistics show that in 1929, 3.9 per cent of all peasant farms and 4.9 per cent of cultivated land area was collectivized. By 1931, 52.7 per cent of peasant farms and 67.8 per
cent cultivated area were collectivized. By 1935, the kolkhozes embraced 83.2 per cent of all cultivated land. In 1940, they embraced 96.9 per cent of all farms and 99.9 per cent of all cultivated land.\(^9\) By the outbreak of the Russo-German war in 1941, collectivization of agriculture had been completed.

The area under cultivation increased very rapidly and the production of grain throughout the empire increased on a similar scale. The average annual grain crops in millions of tons were 67.6 in 1910-1914; 73.6 in 1926-1932; 94.5 in 1933-1937; 95.0 in 1938; 110.3 in 1939 and 119 in 1940.\(^10\) Cash incomes in collective farms increased in rubles from 5,332,000,000 in 1933, to 14,180,000,000 in 1937, to 18,300,000,000 in 1939.\(^11\) By 1942, the communist hoped to have 350,000 combines; enough to harvest eighty-five per cent of the crops, and 500,000 automobiles, chiefly trucks. Unfortunately, the war produced almost a complete halt in the manufacture of farm implements.

The Sovkhoz, or State-farms, that were begun back in 1919, advanced along with the collectives. They were never meant, however, to be operated on as large a scale as the kolkhoz. The sovkhoz is a large agricultural enterprise worked by hired labor, and owned, financed, organized and

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 154.  
\(^10\)Ibid., p. 158.  
managed by the government. State-farms are divided into several kinds, such as grain, livestock, cotton, and a number of other types of lesser importance. In 1931, the State-farms increased their acreage under cultivation from 2,931,000 acres to 10,753,000 acres of which seventy-two per cent was planted in wheat. Today all State-farms are under the direct supervision of the Commissariat of Agriculture. They are comparable to our A. and B. Colleges, for they are the experimental stations that furnish valuable scientific information to the collectives.\(^\text{12}\)

From 1928, until war broke out in 1941, Russia grew a variety of crops. Grain, cotton, sugar-beets, flax, and sunflowers were the most important, but grapes, corn, potatoes, rice, tobacco, and various other crops were also grown. Grain is grown throughout Russia except in the northern portion, but the Ukrainia is the chief grain belt. Cotton is grown chiefly in the south, around Tashkent, Armenia and Georgia. Sugar-beets are produced at Valadistok, around Stalinsk, Tashkent, and in the Ukrainia. Flax is raised chiefly in the Moscow area, however, all of southern Russia produces some. Grapes are found in Georgia, while potatoes are produced around Kiev and Kharkov. Sunflowers are grown extensively from Kiev to Stalinsk, and rice in the south around Tashkent. Cattle and pigs are raised

around Moscow, Kharkov, and Sverdlovsk, while horses are raised around Lake Baikal and along the Don River.

Russian agriculture has not reached the point to where only certain crops are grown in certain areas. It is true that she is working toward this goal, but practically every collective tries to grow a little of everything. It is interesting to note that the grain center of Russia, the Ukraine, is also the hog raising center, and compares to our middlewest, which would include such states as Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri.

What collectivization has done for Russia is the question in everyone's mind.' Maurice Hindus, who was in the Soviet Union in 1933, says that:

At the time of this writing it looks as though only a miracle can save Russia from a war, and if it were not for collectivization of the land not even a miracle could save her from disaster if she had to fight a long war. Without collectivization she would have been a divided, underfed, disorganized nation, and no propaganda in the world could have held her together. The peasant would have raised only as much food as he could have sold advantageously, that is, as much as he would have been paid for in manufactured goods. Any surplus he might have had he would have hidden as he did in the days of military Communism and even more markedly in the years preceding the first Five-Year Plan. Had efforts been made to collect from him forcibly, he would have screamed with protest and would have sabotaged production precisely as he did on previous occasions. Let it be remembered that it was the lack of food which sent the czarist throne tumbling to destruction...

15 Maurice Hindus, "The Strongest Soviet Weapon", Asia, XXXVIII (January-December, 1933), p. 188.
Collective farming (up until the war) made tremendous changes in the peasant's life. In Czarist Russia about sixteen per cent of the peasant farmers were well-to-do according to local standards, while twelve per cent were landless and earned their living as agricultural or industrial unskilled laborers. The standard of living of these landless peasants was incredibly low. A peasant who did not own at least twelve acres of land could not possible support his family without some other source of income. In 1917 nearly seventy per cent of the peasant households had less than ten acres of land, 28.9 per cent possessed no horse and 47.6 per cent only one horse, and the total head of cattle came to forty-four to every hundred of rural population. Many households had no livestock at all except poultry, as they were too poor to feed themselves, let alone animals. In 1910 almost half the peasants used ancient plows with wooden frames and iron or steel points, which turned up only a thin furrow. The acute shortage of horses also prevented any effective type of deep plowing or harrowing.

Since the move toward collectivization in 1928 the price of food has declined annually, allowing everyone a greater amount of the necessities of life. Through scientific farming, better transportation facilities, the peasant's

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14 Hubbard, op. cit., p. 233.
greatest enemy, famine, has been eliminated. Before the second World War Russia boasted of being free of depression and famine permanently.

The old conflicts over land, over pasture and water rights for livestock, which caused periodic uprisings all over the country and brutal destruction of property and life, have been abolished by collectivism. Peasants are now able to sell their produce on town markets and enjoy such luxuries as sugar, factory-made shirts, ties, bicycles, and radios.15

In 1937 about three-fourths of all the land in collectives was plowed by tractors which meant that deep plowing and proper harrowing was carried out. Land that was left fallow in the old days was disked and harrowed over and over again to prevent the growth of weeds. All land was plowed in the fall before being planted in the spring, thus returning its moisture and was the best weapon against drought.

In the old days few peasants bothered about the selection of seed, which resulted in an inferior crop and inferior grain. The Communists placed emphasis on the selection of a variety of good seed. Russian scientists have worked continually on developing seeds that are suitable to climatic conditions, and before the war Russia had almost her entire acreage showed with select seed.

Rotation of crops has been one of the most valuable moves of the Soviets. No matter how rich a land is, it can be impoverished by constant cultivation. United States agricultural experts have found this to be very true in recent years. Rotation of crops with due attention to the seeding of grasses can protect land from dust storms and from being gullied to destruction. In 1933 the Commissariat of Agriculture and other high officials planned to protect the land by keeping the fields in cultivation for five or six years and then seed them in grass—clover, timothy, alfalfa, and other kinds, depending on climate and soil. This program was to take in all kinds of crops, as the Soviets were determined not to allow any lands to reach a state of decomposition or pulverization. This type of conservation was unknown to the peasant of Czarist Russia.

The Russian plan of conservation was very much like the one introduced in the United States by the New Dealers in 1933. Our Soil Conservation Act and AAA differed little from the Russian plan. Both have been highly successful, but probably more so in Russia as the farmers were forced to preserve their soil, while in the United States they were asked to do so. There is no doubt that collective farming is the most successful way of preventing parasitic methods of cultivation.

According to figures released by the Commissariat of Agriculture, Russia by 1942 was to have 81,755,000 acres
of land seeded in fine grass. New lands were to be brought under the plow to make up for this encroachment. The plan also called for the forestation of almost 2,500,000 acres in the steppe country, which was frequently subjected to hot winds.

The social condition of the peasant has improved greatly under the new system. Today on the collective farms nearly one hundred per cent of the people are literate, and the health service has increased immensely. At the close of 1937, every collective had at least a four-year school which were, in the near future, to be replaced by seven and eight-year schools. By 1937, the collectives built 5,000 new clubhouses, and converted thousands of former homes or barns of priests and landlords into clubhouses. In 1937, they had established 40,000 libraries and 50,000 reading and recreation rooms and 5,000,000 children had accommodation in nurseries and playgrounds.15 Every collective also had a school for adults in the winter months, for Soviet officials felt it necessary to educate the old as well as the young. Instead of a few nobles, the church and the Imperial family owning most of the land, it is now used for the benefit of everyone. There can be no denying that the new agricultural system had done wonders for both the peasants and the nation.

15Ibid., p. 188.
Despite this advance, farming in the Soviet Union is still behind that of the United States. In 1940, Russia had 2.8 acres of land per person compared to 2.8 per cent in the United States. The rural population in the Soviet Union in 1940, amounted to 114,577,278, or 57.2 per cent of the total, while the rural population in the United States was only 57,245,573, or 43.5 per cent. In 1940, the United States had over 6,000,000 farms averaging 174 acres in size, while in the Soviet Union 245,000 collective farms existed, with an average sown area of 1,198 acres, and 3,961 State-farms with an average sown area of 5,351 acres. Though there are far less farmers in the United States than in Russia, we still produce more food. This can be attributed to our high degree of mechanization, which so far the Russians have not reached. However, it must be realized that Russia's industrial program in 1940 had been in operation only twelve years, whereas in the United States such a program had been started much earlier.

Soviet agriculture was severely injured during the war. It is not known just how much destruction was perpetrated by the Nazis, although some figures were released toward the close of the War. It has been estimated that in the Moscow province alone the Germans pillaged 2,286 villages of which 640 were completely demolished. Some 47,246 collective farmer's homes were ruined and eighteen per cent

17U. S. Congress, Communism In Action, p. 73.
of the people were left homeless. In the Smolensk province 220,000 houses of collective farmers, or about one-half, and 28,500 collective farm buildings were destroyed.\textsuperscript{18} Similar examples have been reported from other districts that were occupied by the Nazis. Not only dwellings, but all kinds of farm buildings such as barns, grainaries, machine-tractor-stations, flour mills, village clubs, and experiment stations, all suffered a similar fate. The Germans followed the scorched earth policy, leaving behind them incredible waste. One German soldier, who was a member of the "torch-bearers detachment", wrote in his diary that:

Yesterday in the village of Konsky Brod, we burned grain. Grain is tremendously difficult to burn. The grain does not want to burn—it acts as if it were resisting destruction. Gustav Elinger twice poured gasoline over it. Honestly, tanks burn easier than grain. But we won a victory over the stubborn grain in spite of the bellowing of a whole bunch of Russian idiots who were watching our work.\textsuperscript{19}

It is known that the Russians followed a "scorched earth" policy of their own. In order to prevent the Germans from exploiting the agricultural resources of invaded regions, they burned crops, machine-tractor-stations, and even blew up tractors and combines. It is not known how much heavy farm equipment was destroyed during the

\textsuperscript{18}Lazar Valin and Sylvia Goodstein, The U.S.S.R. in Reconstruction, pp. 99-100.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 101.
war, but authorities do say that there is an acute shortage in Russia today. It is also known that hundreds of thousands of horses, cows, pigs, goats and sheep were seized by the Germans or killed in the combat area.

Newspaper correspondents, diplomats, and other persons who have visited the devastated countries of Europe almost unanimously agree that Russia suffered more than any other nation. One of the latest and most authentic reports on present agricultural conditions in Russia has been made by John Strohm, an agricultural expert from the United States who visited Russia in 1946-1947. He stated that eighty per cent of the work on the collectives was done by women, although high Soviet officials reported that within twenty years women would be doing only fifty per cent of the work. Strohm discovered that during the war the loss of farm machinery was terrific, and that now two-thirds of the grain is being cut by hand. However, according to the fourth Five-Year Plan the Soviets hope by 1950 to have fifty-five per cent of the grain cut by combines.

Today, more than ever before, the members of the collective receive a large share of their revenue from produce grown on their one or two acre plots of land. The family needs are obtained from this plot, besides a surplus to sell on the free markets. The women walk fifteen to twenty miles to the nearest market, carrying their produce on their back. Before the war each collective had at least
one truck for this purpose, but they had to be given to the army in 1941.

The women receive very high prices in the cities for their goods. Eggs sell for twenty-five cents each; milk at eighty cents a liter; tomatoes for $1.35 per pound. However, the average price that the farmers must pay for a pair of shoes is $135.00, therefore, the exorbitant prices they receive for their produce does not purchase very much.

Strohm reports that the war brought undescrivable suffering and destruction to the Russian farmers. Slit trenches, shell holes, and burned out tanks are on every collective. Sawmills, horses, machine-tractor-stations were destroyed by the Germans and today much of the farming is carried on with spades and other primitive tools. A few cattle have been brought to Russia from Germany, but they do not even compare to the number that the Russian farmers lost during the war. Today the members of every collective in the Soviet Union are working hard to restore their economy to its peacetime level.20

It must be admitted that the collective farms of Russia have so far been highly successful. In a decade and a half Russian agriculture has thrown off its medieval cloak and has become highly mechanized. Today the Soviet Union is in the middle of her fourth Five-Year Plan, and what changes it will make in agriculture only time will tell.

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