

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE
PEASANT

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The relations of groups of men to plots of land, of organized communities to units of territory, form the basic content of political history; social stratifications and convulsions, primarily arising from the relationship of men to land, make the greater, not always fully conscious, part of the domestic history of nations.

THUS wrote Namier in the introductory chapter to *England in the Age of the American Revolution*. It was one of the insights which he brought to English history from his profound knowledge of eastern Europe. For, if this dictum was valid for eighteenth-century England, it is still more conspicuously true of modern Russia, where even in 1914, by which time industrialization had begun to make its mark, well over 80 per cent. of the population lived on the land and by the land. This 80 per cent. was not, of course, an undifferentiated mass. Every extreme of geographical configuration, of soil fertility, and of climate could be found in the ample expanse of the Russian Empire. It comprised a primitive hunting economy in the north; a nomadic cattle-raising economy in the steppes of Asia; specialized dairy-farming in parts of Siberia; cotton-growing on irrigated land in Turkestan; cultivation of fruit, vine, and tobacco in the Caucasus and the Crimea; sugar-beet in the Ukraine; and large-scale grain-growing with the beginnings of mechanization in the southern European steppe. But all these occupations had a local and limited character. By far the largest part of the population was engaged in near-subsistence farming, producing food crops primarily for its own consumption and for the satisfaction of its immediate obligations to some superior authority. This is the Russian peasant who, throughout the ages, has been the focal point in Russian society and Russian history, and presents the crucial problem of the Russian revolution. The Russian revolution in relation to the peasant began with 'emancipation'

under Alexander II in 1861, and was completed seventy years later with 'collectivization' under Stalin (both the conventional words deserve the qualification of inverted commas). It is this process which I wish to trace here in its broadest outlines.

The first point to note is that the unit with which we are dealing throughout this revolutionary process is not the individual peasant, but the peasant household or *dvor*. The *dvor* of modern times is an attenuated survival of the kinship group, the enlarged family, which was familiar in feudal Europe, and survives today in the Balkan *zadruga*, in the Chinese *chia*, and in many other parts of the world. With a natural non-monetary economy and an illiterate population, where custom ruled, and where there were few written laws and fewer written contracts, the individual was too unstable and precarious a unit to serve as the formal basis of the social and economic order. The kinship group, the household, the *dvor*, provided the necessary element of durability and continuity. Whatever happened to the individual, the *dvor* went on. On it rested responsibility for the cultivation of its holding of land. By it the necessarily unproductive members of the community, the young children and the aged, were cared for. Through it the necessary adjustments were made between land and changing population. If the members of the *dvor*—the 'eaters' in the graphic Russian phrase—become too numerous, then some of them must be hived off, temporarily or permanently, to find employment elsewhere. Conversely, if the number of workers in the *dvor* was insufficient to meet its needs, fresh hands could be recruited by marriage, real or sometimes fictitious, or by adoption. Similar processes in medieval Europe are attested by terms such as *adfratatio* and *Blutbrüderschaft*—measures by which you adopted fictitious brothers into the kinship unit. But this necessary flexibility made impossible any strict definition of the scope or extent of the *dvor*. Custom regulated the form of self-government of the *dvor*. The senior member, the natural head of the household, was commonly recognized as the head of the *dvor*; but the nature and extent of his authority was nowhere defined. The traditional picture of the patriarchal family, in which the father rules over the sons, and the mother over the daughters-in-law, with a rod of iron—or perhaps with a cudgel—is probably not far from the truth.

A more puzzling and more complex institution was the *mir* or *obshchina*, the so-called 'peasant commune'. The translation 'commune' is traditional, though it would have been less

misleading to reserve the word 'commune' for the Russian *kom-muna*, a group engaged in tilling the soil in common and sharing the produce. The *mir* was an institution for collective tenure of the land, but not for collective cultivation. The work was done, and the produce reaped, by the *dvors*. The function of the *mir* was to redistribute the land between the *dvors* at regular intervals—every three or six years, or sometimes every year—to take account of the changing membership, in terms both of workers and of 'eaters', of each *dvor*; the strip system, however wasteful and inconvenient, was necessary to ensure an equitable distribution. The *mir* also determined the uniform rotation of crops, and regulated conditions of access to the common pasture. Its origins are obscure and controversial. Some such institution can be traced far back into Russian history; and it had the character, which it never entirely lost, of a genuine and spontaneous peasant community. But the form in which it dominated the Russian rural scene in the nineteenth century was clearly influenced by the rise of serfdom, the purpose of which was to bind the peasant to the land, to regulate his labour and production, and to create the framework of a settled rural society. The relation of the *mir* to the *dvor* also becomes clear. The *dvor* was too small and weak an organ to undertake this process of regulation. 'The tie of kinship', writes Marc Bloch in his work on *Feudal Society*, 'was one of the essential elements of feudal society; its weakness explains why there was feudalism at all. . . . Feudal ties were developed when those of kinship proved inadequate.'¹ The weakness of the *dvor* explains why the *mir* was necessary.

The character of the eighteenth and nineteenth century *mir* was feudal. It was part of a hierarchical order of society, and was concerned with obligations due to a higher authority. The hierarchy of Tsar, landowner, serf corresponded to the medieval pattern of sovereign, vassal, and villein. As in feudal Europe, the estate was divided into two parts, the lord's demesne and the peasant holdings grouped round it; and the peasant tilled the land of the lord. Some analogies between the *mir* and the medieval manor are fairly close. 'The manor', writes another recent historian, 'was the fundamental economic unit of mediaeval civilization. . . . But no one is quite sure how a manor should be

¹ M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (Engl. transl. 1961), pp. 142, 443. There is some evidence that the size of the old family unit decreased with the introduction of more settled agriculture in the 15th and 16th centuries (see J. Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia* (1961), p. 26); if this is correct, it would have enhanced the importance of the *mir*.

defined.¹ The legal status of the *mir* cannot be defined in modern terms: to ask whether it was a voluntary association of individuals or an administrative organ would be meaningless. The *mir* was the instrument through which the landlord exacted from the peasants the discharge of the obligations due to him and to his superiors. It was also, in a sense, the representative organ of the peasants face to face with the landlord. It owed to this dual role its tenacity of life and its high prestige. In the nineteenth century it excited the sentimental admiration of the pedantic Prussian traveller, Haxthausen, of two whole generations of Russian Slavophiles and *narodniks*, and of the liberal-minded British journalist Mackenzie Wallace, who described it as 'a living institution, whose spontaneous vitality enables it to dispense with the assistance and guidance of the written law'.² This last observation was correct. The custom of the *mir*, like 'the custom of the manor', was more important than any written enactment.

This sentimental view, however, masked a great many ugly facts. The society which embarked on the first agrarian revolution—the emancipation of the serfs—was in no sense a stable society. It was a society which, through centuries of experiment, had failed to create a rural economy adequate to its needs, and was marked by constant peasant risings on a major or minor scale. The inefficiency of serfdom was now a commonplace everywhere in Europe. For nearly 100 years before 1861 Russian politicians and Russian men of letters had been preoccupied by the material backwardness of their country in face of western Europe; and serfdom, more than any other single institution, appeared as the hard core of Russian backwardness. The liberation of the landowners by Catherine the Great from their feudal obligations was widely felt to undermine the moral foundations on which serfdom rested. The urge for reform was stimulated by the Napoleonic wars, which promoted contacts of all kinds with the west and were followed by the emancipation of the serfs in the Baltic provinces. It came finally to a head with the Crimean War, which demonstrated without possibility of contradiction the inadequacy and insufficiency of the existing social, political, and economic order. The emancipation of the serfs, proclaimed on 19 February (o.s.) 1861, was the first of

¹ M. W. Labarge, *Simon de Montfort* (1962), p. 87.

² D. Mackenzie Wallace, *Russia* (1877), p. 127; a more realistic account was given by another British visitor of the period, W. H. Dixon, in *Free Russia* (1870), ii. 32–62.

a series of measures undertaken for the conscious purpose of renovating Russian society and bringing it up to date.

It proved, however, to be the beginning, not the completion, of a revolution. Serfdom was the corner-stone of a still largely 'natural' non-monetary economy and of a social structure which remained essentially feudal. If the corner-stone were removed, the structure would collapse unless other steps were taken to shore it up. The dilemma was expressed in the question whether the peasants were to be emancipated with or without land—or with how much land. To emancipate them without land—as had been done forty years earlier in the Baltic provinces—meant to create a large class of landless peasants and to advance at a single step into a predominantly capitalist economy. Such a change would presuppose a class of landowners with sufficient capital to organize the cultivation of their lands by hired labour, or of peasants with sufficient capital to rent or purchase land for their own needs; it presupposed also a degree of industrial and commercial development sufficient to sustain the new type of economy. Few people in Russia believed it possible to embark on such a course without disaster. On the other hand, to emancipate the peasants with sufficient land to supply their own needs would mean ruin for the landowners, and deprive them of the necessary source of labour to till their lands. The issue from the dilemma was a compromise which proved detrimental to all but the most efficient landlords and, at the same time, left a vast majority of peasants with the sense of having been tricked and cheated.

The statute of emancipation and the supplementary enactments which followed it were infinitely complicated. The detailed regulations varied from province to province and between one class of peasant and another. But, broadly speaking, the peasants acquired their legal freedom together with the right in perpetuity to their existing allotments of land in return for annual redemption payments to be spread over a period of forty-nine years. Since the annual payments everywhere exceeded the rental value of the land it was commonly said that the peasant was being compelled to pay for his own liberty as well as for his land: the purpose was clearly to fix the payments high enough to compel the peasant, in order to discharge his obligations, to render to the landowner services as great as those rendered by him before the emancipation.

To set the achievements of the emancipation in the broader perspective of the revolution is a difficult task. It did not, in any

absolute sense, emancipate the peasant. In the Ukraine and throughout southern Russia—the great grain-producing regions—the peasant continued to discharge his obligations by tilling the landlord's demesne. In the less fertile northern regions his obligations were, as a rule, commuted for payment in kind or in money. But this made no essential difference; the state peasants had always discharged their obligations to the state in this way, and were no less tied to the soil than their fellows. Where no alternative employment and no avenue of escape was available, the emancipation could not materially raise the level of the peasantry as a whole. It did, however, by removing the equality of servile status, set in motion a process which came to be known as 'differentiation' among the peasants. The strong and enterprising could hope to rise; the weak and inefficient, deprived of the protection which serfdom offered, could tighten their belts still further. But this development of what might at first sight be called normal capitalist competition took place within the ancient framework of the *mir* and of the *dvor*. The emancipation statutes recognized land-holding in two forms—by communes (*obshchinnoe vladenie*) or by *dvors* (*podvornoe vladenie*). It knew nothing of individual peasant holdings. Even the house-and-garden plot (*usad'ba*) was held not by the individual peasant, but by the *dvor*. In a sense, the *dvor* and the *mir* were both strengthened by the emancipation, which gave them a formal legal status. The obligations imposed on the peasant, and the rights enjoyed by him, remained the collective rights and obligations of the *dvor*. The emancipation statute recognized the *mir*, under the name of the village community (*sel'skoe obshchestvo*), and laid down that this community should be composed of 'peasants settled on the land of a single landlord'—thus perpetuating the role of the *mir* as the buffer and intermediary between landlord and peasant. The statute also recognized the customary powers of the *skhod*—the assembly of householders constituting the *mir*. In practice the *mir* remained the medium through which the state and the landlord found it convenient to deal with the peasant household. At the same time the *mir* acquired certain functions of control over the peasant formerly exercised by the landlord, including the right to restrict his movements and to impose forced labour on defaulters. The *mir* was what it had always been, except that the landlord had less effective control over it and the well-to-do and successful peasant more. This was serfdom tempered by elements of the survival of the fittest drawn from the armoury of capitalism.

If, however, the weight of evidence points to a deterioration of the situation of the peasant in the forty years after the emancipation, part of this decline must apparently be attributed to a steep increase of peasant population in this period, the causes of which have still not been adequately studied. The census of 1897 recorded a total of 79 million peasants in European Russia against an estimate of 50 million in 1860. The 1897 total included 5 million peasants resident in the cities; the figure may in other respects not have been strictly comparable, and the 1860 figure may have been substantially under-estimated.¹ But, whatever its precise dimensions, the fact of the increase is beyond dispute. It found expression in an intense land-hunger and in the purchase by peasants of non-allotment land with the help of advances from the Peasant Land Bank established in 1882: this was also an index of the declining prosperity of the weaker land-owners, now eager to part with estates which they could no longer cultivate economically. It was a period of chronic hunger in the Russian countryside, culminating in the catastrophic famine of 1891. A major symptom of the crisis was the mass emigration from European Russia to Siberia, beginning in the 1880's and 1890's, and then, after the turn of the century, to the American continent. In Russia the progress of industrialization was too slow and on too small a scale to absorb any substantial proportion of the surplus. However unprogressive and uneconomic the institution of serfdom had been, the emancipation totally failed to cope with the problems of an expanding peasant population.

The year 1902 saw serious peasant risings in several provinces. The revolution of 1905 was the first occasion on which a peasant revolt was partnered by strikes and disorders among urban workers, though the two movements were not co-ordinated or synchronized. The frightened government, by a decree of 3 November 1905, cancelled all redemption payments due from the peasants after the following year. But this was not enough. It was time for a fresh attempt to tackle the basic problem of the relation of land to peasant from a somewhat different angle. The Stolypin reform, embodied in the decree of 9 November 1906, was the main landmark in Russian agrarian history between the emancipation and the revolution of 1917. The starting-point of the reform was an open recognition of the obsolescence of the *mir*, which not only belonged, scarcely less

¹ For possible shortcomings in the comparison see G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Régime* (1932), pp. 288-9.

than serfdom itself, to the pattern of a pre-capitalist economy and feudal society, but was in many ways a practical handicap to sound agriculture. Where the land was subject to constant partition and re-allocation, the cultivator had no impulse to spare or improve his holding with a provident eye to future use; he did not look beyond this year's crop. Even where repartition no longer occurred, it left behind it a legacy of strip cultivation, where the land of the cultivator was divided into strips separated from one another by the strips of his neighbours. The *mir*, even when it no longer re-allocated the land, was responsible for enforcing the necessary rules of uniform cultivation: this militated against any departure from the current three-field rotation, which had long been abandoned in more advanced countries. If, it was now argued, the *mir* could be broken up and the initiative left to the individual peasant, or at any rate to the individual *dvor*, the way would be open to a progressive Russian agriculture. The idea was not altogether new. Since the emancipation enterprising peasants had from time to time succeeded in consolidating their holdings and dissociating themselves from the control of the *mir*. As was natural, this had occurred most frequently in the black-earth region, where repartition by the *mir* was least common, and the opportunities open to the enterprising peasant were greatest. The Stolypin reform, named after the Prime Minister who introduced it, aimed at encouraging and standardizing this practice.

The essence of the reform was to accord to the peasant *dvor* the right to claim direct ownership of the land allocated to it under the *mir* and to sever itself altogether from the communal authority. Where the peasant consolidated his holding and built a new homestead on it, the holding was called a *khutor*; where, having consolidated his holding, he none the less continued to live with his neighbours in the village, it was called an *otrub*. The principle of the collective responsibility of the *mir* for tax payments had already been abandoned. The general exercise of the new right would cause no direct inconvenience to the Government, and was clearly intended as a prelude to the disappearance of the *mir*. Since the *mir* was still the form of organization of at least three-quarters of the peasantry, this was a bold and far-reaching plan. In the ten years from 1907 to 1917 something like 10 per cent. of all peasant holdings were taken out of the *mir* and reconstituted as independent *dvors*, though the incidence of the change differed in different regions, being greatest in the north and north-west and in the steppe

regions of the south and south-east.¹ Moreover the *dvor* itself was no longer the closely knit family of the pre-emancipation period. The intrusion into the countryside of a monetary economy and of market relations had imperceptibly altered its character. Individual members of the *dvor* could sell their labour outside the *dvor*. Clothing and articles of daily use, formerly produced within the *dvor*, were now purchased outside and became the property of individuals, not the common property of the *dvor*. Inequalities, rivalries, and grievances between members of the *dvor* sapped its unity. The Stolypin reform maintained the collective responsibility of the *dvor* for payment of taxes, but accorded to members of the *dvor* the right to leave it without the consent of the head of the *dvor*, which had hitherto been necessary and could be enforced by the refusal of passports to would-be runaways. The effect of the reform was to destroy the collective character of the *dvor* by vesting the holding, including the house-and-garden plot, in the individual head of the *dvor*, and offering to other members the right to secede. No statistics appear to exist to show any effect which the reform may have had on the solidarity of the *dvor*.

The Stolypin reform was the logical sequel of the emancipation, and was designed to complete the transition begun fifty years earlier from a feudal to a capitalist economy in the Russian countryside. Individual ownership and individual enterprise would be the motive forces: competition between peasants would reward the efficient, and drive the inefficient from the land or reduce them to the status of landless labourers. This process would create a prosperous class of peasant proprietors, who would bring efficiency to Russian agriculture and have a vested interest in the maintenance of the existing order. It was noted that, in the peasant disturbances of 1905, the poorer had sometimes turned against the richer peasants, and the well-to-do peasants had found themselves on the side of the landlords and the Government.² This result of the process of 'differentiation'—which Marxists hailed as a beginning of the class struggle in the countryside—was clearly to be encouraged. In a famous speech to the Third Duma in 1908, Stolypin expressed himself on this point with epigrammatic clarity:

The government has placed its wager, not on the indigent and drunken, but on the vigorous and strong—on the vigorous individual

¹ *O Zemle*, i (Narkomzem, 1921), pp. 60–61; for further statistics see G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Régime* (1932), p. 225.

² For sources see *ibid.*, p. 307, n. 89.

proprietor who has to play a part in rebuilding our imperial régime on strong monarchical foundations.

Stolypin showed some interest in the organization of migration to Siberia, but was not otherwise much preoccupied with what would happen to the 'indigent and drunken' peasants who would pay the price of the prosperity of the 'vigorous and strong'. He held the firm Victorian belief that poverty, inefficiency, and vice went together, and merited reprobation rather than indulgence.

What would have happened if this idyllic picture had not been rudely disturbed by the impact of war and revolution? This is one of the popular might-have-beens of recent history. Writers who apply Western criteria to Russian conditions are inclined to assume that, given two or three decades of peace, a class of Russian peasant proprietors would have developed the tradition of efficient conservatism commonly attributed to the peasant proprietor of western Europe. Writers more familiar with Russian history tend to argue that, in default of an industrial expansion infinitely more rapid and more far-reaching than would have been either practicable or tolerable, the pressure from the mass of peasants threatened with hunger, servitude, or expulsion by the advance of Stolypin's vigorous and prosperous small proprietors would quickly have produced an explosion as brutal and as anarchic as anything that occurred in the revolution of 1917. Faced with these speculations the prudent historian will confine himself to the analysis of what did in fact happen. Nor shall I attempt to draw up any balance-sheet of the state of the peasantry on the eve of the revolution. The general picture was one of a still primitive agriculture; the wooden plough—still the only implement of cultivation possessed by about half the peasant households—was often cited as the symbol of the backwardness of the Russian countryside. The outstanding redemption payments had been cancelled in the revolution of 1905; but direct taxation on the peasant was reinforced by high indirect taxes on his few items of consumption. Near-starvation and acute land-hunger were the lot of the Russian peasant. The trend towards individual enterprise instituted or encouraged by Stolypin had as yet made no serious impact. The decade after 1906 was relatively free from agrarian disturbances. But when the February revolution of 1917 loosened the bonds of authority and reopened every contentious issue, the trouble boiled up anew, and sackings and seizures of landowners' estates by peasants became an everyday occurrence. A process of what

one writer called 'agrarian local "self-determination"'¹ had set in.

Since we have now reached the October revolution of 1917, it is necessary to inquire what those primarily responsible for making it had thought and said about the peasantry. Here we meet the problem of the ownership of land—an alien and relatively modern innovation in Russian social and legal thinking. Under the traditional conception the monarch was lord of the lands over which he ruled, and the peasant enjoyed a right of use over the land which he tilled with his own labour and that of his family. These rights were fundamental; all other rights in land derived from these. When the Tsar donated land to his faithful retainers, the substance of the donation was not so much the land as the peasants who worked it. Labour, not land, was the scarce factor; the land without the peasants would have been an empty gift. Occasional sales of land occur at an early period. But it was not till the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the advent of capitalism, that land became a commodity which could be bought and sold without regard for those who worked on it—a development consecrated and fostered by the emancipation and still more by the Stolypin reform. Time-honoured attitudes and prejudices, however, lingered on. The first organized Russian revolutionaries of the 1860's and 1870's, the *narodniks*, preached a peasant socialism, which looked forward to an equal distribution of the land among a mass of small cultivators: this was to be achieved by direct revolutionary action, and would enable Russia to avoid the stage of capitalism through which western Europe was passing. In by-passing capitalism the *narodniks* also by-passed the conception of property in land; what would be equally shared by all was not ownership of land, but the right to use the land which one tilled with one's own labour. Nor would the right of use be vested in the individual peasant; it was a right of the *dvor*, which was in turn subject to the over-riding authority of the *mir*. The Marxists posited two distinct revolutions. The bourgeois revolution would expropriate the landowners, and would bring capitalism to Russian agriculture in the form of peasant ownership of the land and freedom to buy and sell, or to rent and hire; but this would be a régime not of equality, but of competition and exploitation. The ensuing socialist revolution would alone bring equality to the countryside in the form of collective ownership and cultivation. So long as the issue remained theoretical, the

¹ S. N. Prokopovich, *The Economic Condition of Soviet Russia* (1924), p. 68.

controversy raged unchecked. But when, in the early 1900's, the situation once more became revolutionary, and the Social-Revolutionaries—the heirs of the *narodniks*—appealed to the peasants on a programme of the confiscation and equal distribution of the land, the Bolsheviks for their part found it necessary to offer to the peasants something more immediately attractive than the prospect of eventual collectivization; and at the Stockholm party congress in April 1906, at which Mensheviks were in a majority, Lenin and his supporters came out openly for the confiscation of all non-peasant land, and its transfer to local peasant committees. This was equated, in Bolshevik thought, with the first or bourgeois stage of the revolution; the second, socialist or collective, stage could wait for the present.

A peculiar place in this controversy was occupied by the question of the *mir*. Its merits were consistently sung by the revolutionary *narodniks* and Social-Revolutionaries, who saw in it a foretaste of the future socialist and egalitarian economic order. Karl Marx himself cautiously admitted to a correspondent that, in favourable circumstances, the *mir* might serve as 'a point of support for the socialist regeneration of Russia'; and in the last year of Marx's life he and Engels included a similar comment in the joint preface of a new edition of the *Communist Manifesto*:

If the Russian revolution serves as a signal for a workers' revolution in the west, so that the two complement each other, then contemporary Russian land tenure may be a starting-point for communist development.

These guarded utterances did not commit Marxists very far. Lenin denounced the Stolypin reform as 'this encouragement of robbery of the communes by the *kulaks*' and as a policy of 'the forced smashing of the *mir* in order to clear the way for capitalism in agriculture at any cost'.¹ Lenin had no belief in the *mir*. But he was prepared to avail himself of any prejudice which might be excited by Stolypin's attack on it and by the introduction of naked capitalism into Russian agriculture. The two revolutions—the bourgeois revolution which would install peasant ownership in the Russian countryside, and the socialist revolution which could be realized only through some form of collectivization, were inextricably intertwined in the agrarian programme of the Bolsheviks.

¹ Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3rd ed.), xi. 378; xii. 123.

The 'April theses' which Lenin submitted to the party on his return to Petrograd early in April 1917 provided the clue to his thinking at this time. The confiscation of all landlords' estates, and the placing of the land at the disposal of Poor Peasant and Peasant Soviets, were the main points of his agrarian programme. But 'the centre of gravity' was to be transferred to the poor peasants, evidently thought of as a separate group; and large estates were to be transformed into model farms working 'under the control of the poor peasants and for public account'. Thus, while the main emphasis rested on the expropriation of the feudal landlords, which had a general appeal for all the peasants and fell within the framework of the bourgeois capitalist revolution, a hint was dropped of the subsequent stage at which a wedge would be driven between the poor and well-to-do peasants, and an advance made to the eventual goal of collectivization. When the Bolsheviki seized power six months later, they were conscious of needing the support of as many of the peasants as possible; in concrete terms, they needed an alliance with some at any rate of the Social-Revolutionaries, who, as the elections to the Constituent Assembly revealed, commanded the allegiance of a large majority of the peasants. The decree on land, issued by the Bolsheviki on the day after the revolution, was taken word for word from the Social-Revolutionary programme, and was confined to the confiscation of the landlords' estates and their distribution to the peasants on the basis of equality. The peasants required little prompting from Petrograd. All over Russia, in a more or less orderly or disorderly way, they appropriated the land for their own use. Nor were the appropriations confined to landowners' land. Large peasant holdings, created under the Stolypin reform or earlier, were also broken up and distributed—a process afterwards referred to as 'a dekulakization of *kulaks*'.¹ The revolution, by encouraging wholesale repartition of the land on a basis of equality, created a nation of peasant small-holders.

It is easy to blame the Bolsheviki for not having been willing

¹ *XV Konferentsiya Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii(B)*, p. 133. Much detailed information about what happened to the Stolypin holdings is collected in a symposium published by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture in 1921 (*O Zemle*, i. 69-78); another contributor summed up the process: 'The idea of a general equalization of land holdings completely carried away the peasant masses. . . . A considerable part of the newly formed *khutors* and *otrubs* fell a victim to this idea' (*ibid.*, i. 83). Statistics of the break-up of *khutors* and *otrubs* from contemporary publications and unpublished archives are given for several provinces in *Istoriya SSSR*, no. 3, 1958, p. 100, note 49.

to halt at this point. But what drove them on was something more solid than a dogmatic desire to hasten the transition from the bourgeois to the socialist revolution. Ever since the emancipation voices had been raised from time to time in protest against what was called 'fragmentation'—the division of the land into ever smaller and smaller units.¹ The aim of the Stolypin reform was to prevent further fragmentation by allowing the successful peasant to aggrandize himself at the expense of the less efficient and drive the latter from the land. The revolution, in halting or reversing this process, had done nothing to solve the problem. 'Farming on separate plots,' Lenin told the peasant congress in May 1917, 'though it be "free labour on free land", is not the way out from the fearful crisis, from the universal destruction: this is not salvation.'² A year later the accuracy of this forecast was confirmed. By the spring of 1918 the large cities faced starvation. The peasant had no inclination to deliver grain to those who, in the turmoil of revolution, had nothing to offer in return. Even if the cities had had more to offer, the peasant might well have made it a first priority to fill the bellies of himself and his family. The great landowner had willingly let his peasants go hungry in order to bring his grain to the market; the small peasant proprietor was unlikely to take the same view. Armed detachments sent from the cities into the rural areas to collect grain were a desperate expedient. The only hope was to build up a body of support among the peasants. Stolypin had thought to bolster the Tsarist régime on the support of well-to-do peasants; Lenin would turn to the poor peasants. He couched his policy as usual in Marxist terms. At his speech to the party congress in March 1918 he spoke of 'the first stages of a movement of small peasants who want . . . to undertake, in spite of all their prejudices, in spite of all their old beliefs, the transition to socialism'. A decree of May 1918 appealed to 'all workers and landless peasants' for an 'unsparing struggle' against *kulaks* and those who hoarded grain; and a month later came the creation of 'committees of poor peasants' in the villages with unlimited powers to extract grain surpluses from 'the kulaks

¹ On the eve of the emancipation, Kiselev, the Minister for Agriculture, described fragmentation as 'harmful to any basic improvements in agriculture', but as the only way to avoid the formation of a rural proletariat, and concluded that this was 'a problem whose solution lies beyond purely economic considerations' (J. Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia* (1961), p. 514).

² Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3rd ed.), xx. 417: equalization of holdings was, in Lenin's words, merely 'the idealization of capitalism from the point of view of the small producer'.

and the rich' and to hand them over to the State. Lenin described this measure as the 'turning-point' at which 'we passed the boundary which separates the bourgeois from the socialist revolution'.¹ This was the period which came to be known as 'War Communism'. Never before had so direct an attempt been made—though in a crude way and with the crudest of weapons—to apply the communist principle 'from each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs'. But need, not dogma, was the driving force behind the move.

In the winter of 1918–19 civil war, combined with class war in the countryside in the form of 'the battle of the grain', reduced the country to conditions bordering on anarchy. Even if these measures proved successful in collecting such grain surpluses as existed, they would not ensure adequate cultivation and sowing for the next harvest. In December 1918 the committees of poor peasants were disbanded; and throughout 1919 the Bolsheviks staked their hopes no longer on the poor peasant, but on the so-called 'middle' peasant—the peasant who had enough land to cultivate with his own hands and those of his family, but was not rich enough to be an exploiter like the *kulak*. On the other hand, experiments in collective cultivation met with little success. Lenin's famous pronouncement on the subject belongs to the year 1919:

If we could tomorrow provide 100,000 first-class tractors, supply them with petrol and supply them with mechanics . . . , the middle peasant would say: 'I am for the commune, i.e. for communism.' But in order to do this it is first necessary to conquer the international bourgeoisie, to compel it to give us these tractors.²

No socialism without a socialized agriculture; no socialized agriculture without tractors; no tractors without an international revolution. The vicious circle could not be broken. This was the long-term problem. How could peasant Russia industrialize herself without capital from abroad? The immediate problem was the increasing tension between country and town, especially now that the single common purpose—to prevent the return of the landowners—had been achieved. Peasant disturbances flared up again in the winter of 1920–1, and the towns were on the verge of starvation. The dramatic mutiny of the Kronstadt sailors was a by-product of the general discontent. It was the

¹ The references to the relevant decrees and to Lenin's pronouncements will be found in E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917–1923*, ii. 50–55.

² Lenin, *Sochineniya*, xxiv. 170.

refusal of the peasants to feed the towns on the existing terms which forced the introduction of the New Economic Policy, NEP, in March 1921.

The essence of NEP, which was freely described by Lenin and the other party leaders as a 'retreat', was a return to capitalist practices in the countryside on the basis of peasant ownership. The obligations of the peasant to the State were discharged in the form of a tax in kind, calculated as a percentage of crops harvested: he was free to sell the rest of his produce on a free market. This picture of a free economy was, of course, subject to important reservations. Attempts were made, without much success, to popularize Soviet farms, collective farms, and agricultural communes; agricultural co-operatives for joint marketing made more progress. After the 'scissors' crisis of 1923, with the catastrophic fall in the ratio of agricultural prices to industrial prices, the principle of price control was accepted—ostensibly to protect the peasant; and from 1924 onwards state purchasing organizations were engaged in buying grain after the harvest at fixed prices and gradually superseding the free market. But the character of NEP as the foundation of Soviet policy for the peasant remained intact throughout the 1920's; and this raises the three vital questions of the relation of the peasant to the land, and of the revolution to the peasant. How far, and why, did this policy succeed? How far, and why, did it fail? Why did the Soviet Government finally abandon it for the heroic experiment of collectivization?

The revolution had profoundly affected the peasant in two ways. In the first place it removed the great landowner, destroyed the last remnants of serfdom, and handed over the Russian countryside to a peasant community—this was the bourgeois aspect of the revolution; secondly, it placed in power a régime whose dynamic force centred not on agriculture, but on industry—this heralded the coming of the socialist revolution. It has been argued that the industrialization of Russia had begun twenty years before the revolution, and that what happened afterwards was a continuation of this process. This argument contains a small kernel of truth. Industrialization was a world-wide process springing from advances in science and technology, and Russia could not remain wholly isolated from it. But the form which industrialization took in the Soviet period was dictated by the revolutionary character and ideology of the régime, as well as by the connected fact that it was undertaken independently and without support from foreign capital. It was this

last point which determined the severity of its impact on the peasant. In 1924 the economist Preobrazhensky read a paper at the Communist Academy called 'The Fundamental Law of Socialist Accumulation', in which he argued that the accumulation of capital necessary to set industrialization in motion could come about, in Soviet conditions, only through the expropriation of the surplus product of agriculture and rural industries; in other words, that the peasant must be compelled to supply what he produced to the towns without receiving a full 'equivalent exchange' in industrial goods. The brutal frankness of the analysis gave offence. But its cogency could not be seriously contested. Its economic and political implications lay at the back of every important issue in Soviet affairs for the next five years. Nor would it be possible—for two different but equally cogent reasons—to extract the necessary surpluses from an agriculture carried on by an infinite number of small peasant households. In the first place such agriculture was incorrigibly inefficient and backward; secondly, the small peasant with his family lived at subsistence level, and grew for himself and not for the market. Marketable surpluses on the scale required would be produced only by an agriculture organized in large-scale units and with modern technical resources. Two alternative roads led to this goal. The first was that pursued by Stolypin—to encourage the growth of large efficient individual farms, which would grow and sell grain at a profit: this was the capitalist road. The second was to create large-scale collective farms working to a programme laid down by a central authority and delivering grain at planned prices: this was the socialist road. In the controversies of the later 1920's these two alternatives were constantly presented in different guises reflecting the inclinations of those who propounded them.

In 1925 everything appeared to favour the former solution. Early in that year the word went out to moderate the campaign against the *kulak*; not every well-to-do peasant was to be treated as a *kulak* or as an enemy of the régime. In a speech of April 1925 Bukharin addressed to the peasants the same injunction which Guizot had addressed to the rising French bourgeoisie of the 1830's: 'Enrich yourselves.' A party conference in the same month gave its blessing to the practices of renting land and hiring labour, which were the instruments and symbols of 'differentiation' among the peasants. It was a repetition of Stolypin's 'wager on the strong'. Opposition to this policy in the party was never entirely silenced. At first such opposition

was denounced as Trotskyism. Then, when Zinoviev and Kamenev broke with Stalin in 1925, they took up the campaign against the appeasement of the *kulak*; this left Bukharin as the main defender of the wager on the well-to-do peasant, with Stalin cautiously taking up a middle position. Finally, after the total defeat of the Trotsky-Zinoviev-Kamenev opposition in 1927, Stalin broke with Bukharin and plunged into large-scale collectivization—an onslaught on the *kulak* and the well-to-do peasant far more drastic than anything dreamt of by the old opposition.

It would be a mistake to pay too much attention to the struggle for power between the leaders: this was subsidiary to the real issue, and to some extent independent of it. Of contending leaders, Stalin could least of all be accused of clinging to a consistent policy; and Stalin won because he was a far astuter politician and abler organizer than his rivals, not because his policies differed from theirs. But it would also be wrong to attribute what happened to any dogmatic adherence to Marxist theory. Everything turned on the one practical issue—how to squeeze out of the surplus of agricultural production the capital required for a policy of intensive industrialization.

The policies of NEP, logically culminating in Bukharin's revival of the Stolypin wager on the 'strong' peasant, broke down because—among other reasons—they failed to provide an organizing principle for a rural economy and a rural society that were already in decay. The clash between the demand for the equal division of the land and the demand for large-scale units of production as the necessary condition of increased efficiency and productivity in agriculture had been recognized from the moment of the revolution. The revolutionary demand for equalization had priority; as Lenin put it at the second congress of Comintern in 1920, 'for the sake of the success of the revolution, the proletariat has not the right to shrink even from a temporary lowering of production'.¹ But it was not doubted that, once the victory of the revolution was secure, the reorganization of agriculture on a broader basis than that of the small peasant holding was an imperative necessity. This task the methods of NEP proved unable to fulfil. The primitive and traditional foundations of the patriarchal *dvor* could not withstand the twin demands of economic competition and political equality: it began to dissolve from within. It was torn asunder by complaints of 'inequality in the enjoyment of revenues' and

¹ Lenin, *Sochineniya*, xxv. 274-5.

'inequality in the labour load of individual members'.¹ When a group of peasants, in response to an official inquiry, attempted to give reasons for the decay of the *dvor*, 18 spoke of the interference of individual members of the *dvor* in its affairs (5 mentioning in particular the interference of women), 5 of the breakdown of discipline (1 specifying the decline in corporal punishments), and 4 'the independence of children in matters of marriage, culture and education, and religion'.² Discussions in the press constantly cited 'quarrels among women' and 'the demands of the younger members of the *dvor*' as motives for its dissolution. The growth of literacy, the doctrine of the equality of the sexes, and the new opportunities for individual enterprise were sapping the foundations of the old order. A picture from the province of Pskov in the middle 1920's, said to apply to half the peasant population of the province, described the relation between members of the *dvor* as one of 'embittered mutual strife, frequently ending in the beating up, or even torturing, of the weaker by the stronger': the result was, sooner or later, the breaking up of the already poor and inadequate holding into tiny fragments.³ The number of *dvors* rose sharply from 16 million in 1917 to 24 million in 1924—a reversion to the evil of 'fragmentation' which Stolypin had set out to overcome.

The *mir*, though subject to the same processes of decay as the *dvor*, was a more complex and more artificial institution. In the middle nineteen-twenties, it was under attack primarily from 'Rightists', both inside and outside the party, who wished to stake the future of Soviet agriculture on the strong, enterprising individual peasant; and its defenders at this time could uphold it as the bulwark of the collective and co-operative principle in agriculture. But it was also denounced by consistent Leftists in the party as a relic of the period of serfdom, a symbol of the backwardness of strip cultivation and the old three-field rotation, and a barrier to the true solution of collective cultivation of the land; and these attacks grew stronger with the more radical turn in agrarian policy after 1927. Nevertheless, throughout this period the *mir* remained immensely strong. Once the peasants, in the aftermath of the revolution, had broken up the Stolypin holdings and flocked back into the *mir*, an overwhelming proportion of agricultural land in the RSFSR⁴—as much as 98 per

¹ *Na Agrarnom Fronte*, no. 3, 1929, p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, no. 8, 1928, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 11, 1928, p. 18.

⁴ In the Belorussian SSR, for historical reasons, the *mir* was virtually non-existent, and in the Ukraine west of the Dnieper it was weak. Conditions in

cent. in some provinces—was held in this form of tenure, and subject to periodical redistribution. Moreover, as in the days of the Tsars, the *mir* was the organ through which the Government dealt with the peasants. Abolish the *mir*, said a spokesman of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, and nothing would be left of the principle of nationalization.¹ The *mir* already had political affiliations: the *skhod*, which was the assembly of the *mir*, was also the village meeting which elected delegates to the village Soviet, and was often a more effective body than the village Soviet itself. By the later nineteen-twenties the *mir* was well on the way to becoming an indispensable subsidiary organ of local government. But, as a viable economic institution charged with the organization of agricultural production, it was as obsolete as the *dvor*. The question was what was to replace it.

The crisis matured very slowly. Already after the harvest of 1924 we hear complaints of extensive speculation in grain: *kulaks*, instead of selling grain after the harvest, bought grain in the autumn on the calculation, which proved correct, that prices would soar in the spring. But for nearly three years the issue did not come to a head. The crisis in the battle of the grain which decided the future shape of Soviet agriculture occurred over the 'grain collections' following the harvest of 1927. The collections, which at this time were still voluntary, consisted of the delivery of grain at fixed prices to state and co-operative organs; and on the success of the collections depended the feeding of the cities, the factories, and the Red Army. The State held no grain reserves and lived from harvest to harvest. In October 1927, when the collections should have been at their peak, the deliveries fell away to two-thirds of those of the previous year, in November and December to less than a half. In December 1927 the fifteenth party congress marked the expulsion from the party of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and the other opposition leaders; Trotsky was banished to Alma-Ata in January 1928. The congress passed resolutions in favour of the intensification of industrial development and of the collective principle in agriculture. It spoke of the need for 'an offensive against the *kulak*'. But it played down the crisis of the grain collections: this failure of official policy could not be admitted in face of the opposition.

When the congress was over, the leaders were seized with the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics were also different; but here grain cultivation was unimportant.

¹ *Na Agrarnom Fronte*, no. 9, 1926, pp. 87-88.

something like panic, inspired by elementary fear that they would be unable to maintain basic food supplies to the urban population. In January 1928 the word went out to bring in the grain by any means, even by the use of what were called 'extraordinary measures'. Stalin made his one recorded official trip to Siberia, where large stocks of grain were believed to exist, and spoke at various centres in support of the campaign.

The 'extraordinary measures' varied from place to place with the amount of resistance encountered. They included forced placings of a peasant loan, prosecutions under a clause recently added to the criminal code to deal with hoarders of grain, confiscation of concealed stocks, and even direct requisitions by armed detachments. Some of these proceedings were afterwards denounced as abuses. Thanks to the 'extraordinary measures', grain was collected in the first months of 1928 in sufficient abundance to make up for the deficiencies of the previous autumn. But this harsh, if necessary, policy produced the natural reaction. The area under wheat and rye, the principal grain crops, fell in 1928 by more than 10 per cent.¹ The peasant was still master of the situation. If he was not free to dispose profitably of his surpluses, he could retaliate by cutting down his sowings.

In spite of these warning signs the advance towards the final climax seemed, down to the very end, halting and reluctant. Collectivization as such was not a sudden reversal of policy; it was a decision which had been slowly built up over the years. But, before the end of 1929, collectivization had always been thought of by the Bolsheviks as a gradual, piecemeal, and mainly voluntary process. No doubt, all acts of government contain elements of compulsion as well as of persuasion; but mass collectivization of the peasantry by violence had never entered into party calculations. Stalin, at the fourteenth party congress in 1925, dismissed enthusiasts who wanted to 'beat' and 'strip' the *kulaks* as people who had lost their wits.² Two years later, at the fifteenth party congress, which first used the formula of 'an offensive against the *kulak*', Molotov made an unequivocal pronouncement of party policy:

Persuasion, plus encouragement by the proletarian state of the elements of a developing large-scale socialized peasant economy—that is our method of collectivizing the countryside.³

¹ See the table in *XVI Konferentsiya Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii(B)* (1929), p. 10.

² Stalin, *Sochineniya*, vii. 335-7.

³ *XV S"ezd Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii(B)*, p. 1080.

In July 1928, when 'extraordinary measures' had already been used to enforce grain deliveries, a resolution of the party central committee recorded the view that 'individual small and middle peasant households' would 'remain for a considerable time the basis of grain production';¹ and, as late as April 1929, when Stalin had broken with Bukharin on the issue of reprisals against the *kulak*, he declared that individual peasant holdings would 'continue to play a predominant part in supplying the country with food and raw materials'. It was in the same speech that Stalin made the calculation that 500 million puds of grain a year must be procured from the peasant to feed the towns and factories and the Red Army; that, judging by the experience of the last two harvests, not more than 350 million would be acquired through voluntary deliveries; and that to obtain the balance 'organized pressure on the *kulaks*' would be necessary.² But this meant only a reversion to the 'extraordinary measures' of 1928, and was far from a plan for the total liquidation of the *kulak*. Nor was mass collectivization seriously contemplated at this time. The first five-year plan proposed the collectivization of only 20 per cent. of peasant holdings by 1933.

It is still not clear by what precise steps Stalin reached the revolutionary decision, announced in December 1929, to carry out 'the liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class' and the mass collectivization of the peasantry. The decision bears all the marks not of a premeditated stroke of policy, but of an adventure inspired by panic, a desperate throw when every alternative seemed to have failed, a resort to shock tactics to win an essential objective which had resisted every other type of assault. But two major miscalculations were involved in the decision; and these turned what was planned as a police operation into a civil war of the Government against a large sector of the peasantry. In the first place, the strength of *kulak* resistance was underestimated. 'Extraordinary measures' and 'organized pressure' had sufficed, though with increasing difficulty, to extract the grain surpluses. But now the *kulaks* were fighting for their life. They resisted almost to a man, and were shot down or haled off into exile. Secondly, it had been assumed that the *kulaks* would prove a small and isolated minority, hated by the mass of peasants who would come out on the side of the Government. This assumption proved illusory. The *kulak* still retained his hold over the peasantry at large; and neither the middle nor even

¹ *VKP(B) v Rezolyutsiyakh* (1941), ii. 278.

² Stalin, *Sochineniya*, xii. 59, 87.

the poor peasant generally wanted collectivization. Many—perhaps most—of the peasants, far from rallying to the Government side, supported the resistance of the *kulaks*; and the savage reprisals meted out to the *kulaks* fell in a lesser degree on them. In three months the brutal and bloody task was accomplished. In March 1930 Stalin called a truce in his famous 'Dizzy through Success' proclamation. By this time, one-half of all peasant holdings had been collectivized. A partial and temporary halt was called in the process; and thereafter the collectivization of the rest proceeded more slowly. But the back of the resistance had been broken. Seventy years earlier, the emancipation had torn down the framework of serfdom and exposed the peasant to the hazards of a precarious rural economy and a decaying rural society. Serfdom was bankrupt, and Stolypinism had failed. Collectivization was designed as a new framework suited to the needs of the new social and economic order.

The historian may be reluctant to pass judgement on this story; but he must, explicitly or implicitly, draw some conclusions from it. The question is often asked whether collectivization was really necessary. This is, for the historian, a meaningless question not susceptible of a precise answer. His task is to try to explain what happened, not to speculate what might have happened if conditions and antecedents had been other than they were. But the question, though incorrectly put, conceals several questions which it is right and proper to ask.

The first of these questions is why the Soviet leaders decided to industrialize, and to industrialize at the breakneck speed which imposed this harsh pressure on the peasant. The pressure to industrialize was strong among orthodox party members steeped in the theory of industrialization as the key to progress and among the new industrial managers whose influence was increasing in the party. Industrialization was the answer to the insistent and apparently insoluble problem of unemployment. Above all, industrialization was urgently called for by the dangers of the international situation. The year 1925, when industrialization was first put on the map at the fourteenth party congress—the year of Gosplan's first 'control figures'—was also the year of Locarno, which was acutely feared in Moscow as an attempt to woo Germany away from her eastern orientation and set up a solid western bloc against the Soviet Union. The year 1927, when the fifteenth party congress announced the first five-year plan and inaugurated the offensive against the *kulaks*, was a year of international disaster for the Soviet Union,

witnessing the breaking off of relations with Great Britain and France and the fiasco of Soviet policy in China. The need to industrialize as a defence against the menace of international capitalism, as a means to 'catch up with, and overtake', the capitalist countries, was constantly stressed during these years, though never so eloquently as by Stalin in a famous speech of February 1931, ten years and four months before Hitler's invasion:

No, comrades . . . the pace must not be slackened. . . . To slacken the pace would be to lag behind; and those who lag behind are beaten. We do not want to be beaten. . . . We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or they crush us.¹

Those who wished to slow down the pace of industrialization were an unpopular minority open to the charge of pessimism or lack of patriotism. In answer to our first question, I think we must accept rapid industrialization as a postulate of Soviet policy. Neither in the climate of the period, nor retrospectively, did any alternative policy seem plausible.

The second question is why, in the pursuit of rapid industrialization, the Soviet leaders thought it necessary to resort to the mass collectivization of agriculture. This is the fundamental question round which much of the present lecture has revolved. It must, I think, be taken for granted that the fragmentation of peasant holdings which had begun with the emancipation, and was resumed at an enhanced pace after 1917, was incompatible both with agricultural efficiency and with industrialization; 25 million independent peasant households were an insuperable obstacle to technical progress. Ever since Lenin in 1919 had declared that 100,000 tractors would convert the peasant to communism, industrialization and collectivization had marched side by side in Bolshevik thought. The Stolypin attempt to build an efficient agriculture on the basis of prosperous individual peasant holdings was based on the spoken or unspoken assumption that foreign capital would be available in sufficient abundance to finance alternative sources of employment, or emigration, for displaced peasant labour. The half-hearted Soviet attempt in the middle nineteen-twenties to revive this policy of reliance on the individual peasant holding, undertaken in the absence either of native or of foreign capital, could not succeed; for it provided no inducement for the prosperous individual peasant to produce for the market the low-price

¹ Stalin, *Sochineniya*, xiii. 38-39.

grain supplies which were a *sine qua non* of industrialization. The clash of interests, the political rift, between a Government in a hurry to industrialize and the successful peasant, bent on building up his own prosperity and on ruling the roost in the countryside, was total and absolute. The leaders moved, haltingly but in the end conclusively, into the policy of mass collectivization, because they could find no other road to rapid industrialization which was compatible with the survival of the régime.

The third question is why the policy of rapid industrialization through collectivization, once adopted, brought with it the awful cruelties and brutalities which attended its execution. It is not enough to attribute what happened to 'excesses' and 'abuses' committed by individuals; on the other hand, it is dangerously inadequate to think of it in terms of Russian economic or political backwardness or of the absence of a liberal tradition. It should be remembered that only two other large countries have industrialized on their own resources without the substantial aid of foreign capital—Great Britain and Japan; and both these industrial revolutions involved particularly harsh and callous treatment of the peasant and his family. The Marxist picture of modern capitalism brought into the world dripping with blood and sweat cannot be dismissed as mere propaganda. What was unique in the Russian experience was that intensive industrialization was taken in hand within a decade of a savage interlude of international war, political revolution, and civil war, which ravaged the country from end to end, and whose physical and moral consequences were still everywhere apparent. This, perhaps, more than any other single factor, explains the extreme harshness of the Soviet industrial revolution in its impact on the peasant.

The final question concerns the place of collectivization in the story of the Russian peasantry. Clearly it is the most important landmark in that story since the emancipation. Clearly also it is not the end of the story. Change and experimentation in agrarian policy are still the order of the day; and we have not yet seen in the Soviet Union—and still less elsewhere—the final solution of the problem how to integrate the peasant into a modern industrial civilization. But this argument would lead me beyond my present theme. The purpose of this lecture has been to map the chequered destiny of the Russian peasant from the moment of emancipation to the moment of collectivization. What happened after collectivization must await another lecture—and another historian.