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The social dynamics of the Great Russian village, 1861–1889: Unity or disunity, love or hate?

Perez, Margaret Curran, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1992

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THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE GREAT RUSSIAN VILLAGE
1861-1889
UNITY OR DISUNITY, LOVE OR HATE?

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Margaret Curran Perez, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1992

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INTRODUCTION

That class of people identified as "peasant" can be found in most societies throughout history. As a group they can be defined as agriculturalists, bound to the land either through indenture or through tradition, using labor intensive means to provide sustenance for themselves and their families. But a simple definition does not do justice to the millions of people who have historically and culturally been placed in this category. It has been argued that there is a universal persona ascribable to all peasants regardless of geographical location, ethnic culture or place in history and on a broad spectrum this may be true. However, while it can be said that there are certain traits justifiably identified as "peasant" --attachment to the land, communal sharing, reverence for tradition, allegiance to family, poverty, widespread illiteracy and a sense of separation from the ruling classes, there are also differentiations among the various national groups which have been influenced by geographical location, ethnicity, distinctive traditions, religion and the specific way of life led by the various societies. So that while there
are certain similarities there are also important distinctions and these factors make the study of peasants in general terms a difficult task. Peasants can be enigmatic, that is to say, puzzling and inexplicable to members of other social classes. The great numbers of rural folk who have throughout history populated vast areas of the world were for the most part illiterate and superstitious, forced to concern themselves only with their daily lives and sustenance. Normally, they did not write their memoirs, institute laws, captain armies or become kings or Tsars. As part of the "little tradition" in apposition to the elite power structure, peasants had little voice in either the affairs of their particular country or in the formation of the laws that were imposed upon them.

To the people toiling in the fields on a daily basis in order to support themselves, there was a wide chasm separating them from what could be termed cultured or civilized society. However, the peasants saw themselves differently than most outsiders viewed them. Designated a societal "class" by the hierarchy, the peasants saw themselves less as a class than as a "condition" one in which old-fashioned traditions were upheld. They did not view themselves as a lower class of citizens, rather they saw themselves as participants in a different way of life from the other groups in society. Clearly, they viewed
outsiders to the village or non-peasants with suspicion, a view that was often reciprocated by those who considered themselves intellectually and or economically superior. And the differences between peasants and non-peasants were not just in reciprocal attitudes but they were clearly visible to the eye. As Teodore Shanin argues in Russia as a Developing Society, the distinctions were not only economic, cultural and legal but also visual and linguistic. Peasants recognized other peasants at a glance and adjusted their behavior to one of their own accordingly. Economically, they were at the lowest end of the spectrum; legally, they had few rights and were at the mercy of their superiors; culturally, visually and linguistically, the contrasts were such that as in Russia, the peasants could have represented an entirely different civilization.

In late 19th century Russia, 80% of the population was of the peasant estate (soslovie) but the greatest amount of historical research on this period has been given directed toward the other 20% who either ruled the country or contributed to its intellectual life. Thus the study of peasants became the realm of ethnographers and dilettantes rather than of the historians who were more concerned with world events, their causes and effects. Little interest was generated for the peasants until, as their fortunes lagged, they rebelled against
the outside authority in an attempt to effect changes in
the status quo. These rebellions or revolts that
occurred from time to time have received much attention
and have been used as a source of insight into the
thought processes of the peasants.\textsuperscript{5} Under the stresses
of rebellion, the peasant was presented as lacking
cognition, believing nothing but rumor and acting on his
basest instincts. But these extreme circumstances which
demonstrated group reactions to perceived inequities did
not depict peasantries in any depth. Beyond the occa­sional rebellion lay a peasantry with solid traditions,
institutions and values. The fact that they were at the
bottom of the social pyramid in no way detracted from
their innate sense of worth. Only recently, large
numbers of scholars have begun to investigate the
peasantry to learn about their daily lives, family
relationships, the composition of their villages and
village institutions in order to shed some light on
peasants as individuals rather than as faceless numbers
and to evaluate their place in history.

Early contributions to peasant studies carried out
by anthropologists were concerned with societies which
differed from the accepted norms of Western Europe and
North America. Many of these studies focused on Latin
American, African, Asian and Caribbean peasantries which
were accessible and therefore could still be documented
in the 20th century. By this late date most of the peasants in Europe had been converted to farmers and the necessary records of their lives were no longer applicable. In the case of the Russian peasant, the ethnographers of the late 19th century explored life in the villages through the use of informants who reported mainly anecdotal accounts which stressed the quaintness of the peasants. Historians who began to investigate the Russian peasants in the 19th century took the same approach and made use of the biases of the day usually basing their conclusions on an approach that depicted the peasants as happy and childlike in their acceptance of life, eager to please those in authority and content only to farm their small plots using time honored methods of farming. They were represented as God fearing, conservative in their thinking and highly moral in their views of life.

Indeed, the peasant liked to view himself in the same way in relation to those outside of the village gates. He believed that he was more God-fearing, more conservative and definitely more moral than his superiors and, in his own way, he looked down upon those who patronized him. History had taught him through the years of serfdom that from an objective viewpoint he was considered to be the lowest member of Russian society and therefore could be treated accordingly by those above
him. He could be whipped for legal infractions, alcoholism or simply trying to obtain what he felt was rightfully his. This kind of justice, reserved only for members of the peasant class, was a clear indication to the peasant of his status in the scheme of Russian law. But was the Russian peasant happy and childlike? No. He may have, on the surface, allowed this myth to be fostered by others outside of the village but in actuality he was tough and mature about his way of life. And he had his own methods for dealing with the inequities of his life. Believing as he did that he was not only more moral but smarter than those above him, he practiced a certain degree of shrewdness when dealing with outsiders. While in their presence he showed himself to be submissive, acquiescent to their wishes and even stupid. He doffed his hat, shuffled his feet and took on the mien of a sycophant. In reality, this demeanor was a prudent use of evasiveness which served not only as a protection from punishment as in the Russian case but a clever method of dealing with people and ways that the peasant basically did not understand nor appreciate. The peasant was not stupid, only unlettered and untrained in many of the the ways of the outside world, afraid that he would be used or cheated, he covered himself with a sly veneer. The fact that the village was not a totally closed society meant that he had to deal, to some extent, with those
beyond the village gate. This was simply seen as a
necessity of life that he could control through the use of pretense. But, he knew all that he had to know to survive in the village and among his own peers and in this milieu the facade disappeared.

The studies of peasants to date have been largely concerned with the economic environment in the countryside. Indeed the peasant family is treated not so much in a human sense as in relation to its economic enterprises. As Teodore Shanin states: "A peasant household is characterized by the extent of integration of the peasant family's life with its farming enterprise."7 But Shanin, as a sociologist, also recognizes that there are social concerns to be discussed. He admits to stratification in the villages as well as factionalism and concludes that: "the rural community must be treated in its historical and societal setting."8 So that while the importance of economics cannot be negated or even lessened there is another side to the peasant that has to be considered. It is the social or human aspect of the peasantry that is of concern in this dissertation. This paper is an attempt to look at that aspect and to investigate the social dynamics of the villages and the peasant families of 19th century Russia.

Historically, the period of time from the issuance of the Emancipation edict in 1861 until the late 1880's
when the *zemskii nachalniki* (land captains) were imposed on the peasantry was a time of increasing freedom for the villagers. Peasant courts (*volosti*) were established to deal with individual and village problems, villagers were given the opportunity to work for themselves rather than for the landlord and the rural people, despite the fact that the Emancipation edict did not grant land and total freedom, apparently began to view themselves as a vital parts of society. But this period of relative freedom was not to last. By the end of the century government restrictions were again placed on the peasantry and on peasant institutions in the form of the land captains who were, in effect, caretakers of the peasants. This short period of freedom, however, is the main focus of this dissertation.

This approach to peasant life, however, is not taken from the elitist viewpoint of the government or the intelligentsia who initiated reforms and attempted to control the peasantry according to their own agenda, but from the perspective of the peasants. How did the peasants relate to each other in the village? How did they relate to their kinsmen both in extended families and in nuclear families? What were their strengths and weaknesses? What were the mechanisms of change in the countryside and what aspects of peasant life remained the same? The approach taken is in some ways an attempt at
a micro study of peasant life in a cross-section of uezdy in Tambov, Vladimir and Moscow provinces. These provinces were chosen based first on availability of data and secondly on a comparison of that information which could demonstrate the similarities and differences among the villages. Generalizations cannot always be made about the Russian countryside since there were a number of factors which determined the complexion of a village; whether the peasants were former state peasants, private peasants or temporarily obligated; the size of the village and accessibility of land; the necessity and availability of outside work; the literacy level of the local elders and the attitude of the villagers toward childhood education as determined by the number of schools and the number of children enrolled in them, the type of agriculture that was carried on and the proximity of the village to a large urban center or to markets. For example, in the rural atmosphere of Tambov, close family ties and adherence to the traditional patriarchal family appear to have remained intact. Since the mainstay of the economy was chiefly agriculture, the united family was of major importance. In the industrial villages of Vladimir the family and village ties were more relaxed since the availability of industry permitted and often demanded that the peasants do wage work outside of the village. Moscow presented a surprisingly mixed set of
circumstances in that about half of the villages were primarily agricultural as opposed to a combination or totally industrial based economy. But the close proximity to the city appears to have fostered a freer approach to family bonds even in agricultural areas. One method of demonstrating this is to look at and compare the numbers and types of family disagreements which surfaced in a study of the peasant or volost' courts of all three provinces. The records of these court cases have been used here as a barometer of social problems and indicate that at least in the more industrialized sectors, the number of complaints by parents against children, daughters-in-law against fathers-in-law and sons against both fathers and mothers were more numerous and often more vitriolic than those found in Tambov where a more traditional view of the family continued to be the norm.

All of the variables mentioned above are important to the study of the Russian village since they represent different types of villages where the residents had, at least on the surface, different life styles and different goals. However, despite these differences, there were a number of similar qualities which could be found to some degree in all of the Russian villages whether small or large, agricultural or industrial, populated by former private peasants or by former state peasants. In all
villages or communes there were primary peasant institutions which united the peasants such as the skhod and the volost' courts but there were also less concrete factors as in the shared attitudes, morals and ethics which dictated the way the peasants lived their lives. It was these less tangible characteristics that went beyond the physical differences of economics, education and kinship organization and united the vast number of peasants into a cohesive class. The village, to most peasants, represented a tie with the past, a center of life and a base of security that could not be found elsewhere. The family, of course, was the primary unit of society but the village, the next largest unit, was and has been the focus of peasant existence in all societies. Inside that village was a world designed for and maintained by the peasants in which cohesiveness was an essential ingredient. This was a communal society and it was imperative that the individual subjugate himself to the common will of the collective regardless of whether he worked in local agriculture or in a nearby industry. In the case of the Russian village immediately following the Emancipation, all public and many private aspects of life were governed by the norms and rules of the majority of communal members. Before 1861 peasant life had been dictated by the serf owner whose own interests took precedence in peasant matters. He regulated marriage and
family, economics, work and travel. But despite this, the peasants managed to maintain a cohesion among themselves through institutions and beliefs which served their own purposes outside of the immediate control of the landlord. When serfdom was finally abolished the villagers were able to pick up the threads of their existences and weave a vital, growth oriented society. Long standing traditions, religion and common necessity guided the actions of the villagers in their agricultural work and in the economic ventures which affected the entire village and they also dictated family matters such as marriage customs, treatment of relatives and neighbors and even overall moral character. To promote and preserve this collective approach, there had to be some guiding body to hear the opinions of the people, formulate village policy, direct the centralized planned so necessary to communal life and, in general, to preside over all aspects of rural life. And despite expectations in some quarters that the peasants could eventually be assimilated into the larger Russian society, the villagers were reluctant to give up what they considered to be their independence and the ability to govern themselves in village matters. They wanted a form of home rule. This desire for village autonomy at times conflicted with the demands of the larger state and the village administration was expected to fill another equally essential
role that of a buffer between the peasants and the state which imposed taxes and enacted laws relating to peasant matters. Local management then was critical not only to the peasant on the village level but also to the state which needed to deal with some representative bodies in the countryside. Generally all peasant societies have had a local representation in some form which acted in the same manner as in the Russian experience. So, this was not unusual nor was it peculiar to Russia. In the villages of Mexico and Latin America which were for centuries ruled by outsiders, the village administration was usually maintained by appointed representatives answerable to the ruling hierarchy who set standards, punished offenders and in general created a link between the village and the outside world. In these villages, however, the mayor or president and a council drawn from the local area was of vital importance because it could supervise village affairs from a position of knowledge and importance and therefore were respected at least grudgingly by the local inhabitants. Even though the local villagers disliked the idea of government interference in their affairs, the local administration was considered to be a unifying feature, a counterweight to state governments and usually held the loyalty of the populace. The same ideology held true for the Chinese peasants of Northern China where peasant farmers insti-
tuted local administrative councils to, as they claimed, "cope with the demands of the state." Even in the so-called primitive societies of the Ethiopian Qemants there existed a permanent council of elders who decided judicial matters and meted out punishments according to time-honored methods. These administrative councils or, in the case of the Russian peasantry, the skhod, were part of the glue that held the peasants together as a group but they also separated them from the rest of society. In the Russian experience the strength and power of the skhod may have delayed or retarded the assimilation of the peasants into the rest of Russian society.

In the Russian countryside, village or communal problems were dealt with by this council of elders. Members were elected to this body by the general consent of the males of the village with the position of starosta or chief among the elders usually falling to an older khozian or householder of some prominence in the village. This did not necessarily mean that the position was held only by a man of wealth, but usually by one who had demonstrated morally that he was worthy of the trust of his neighbors. Often the designated nominee would refuse to accept the position preferring instead to remain in the background of the political arena where he could either complain about or agree with decisions as he saw
The role of the skhod, however, was not limited to crimes or intervention into land divisions. The peasants, acting together in the skhod set the entire course of village life. Sowing, reaping, and haying times, which fields to be planted and which to be left fallow and what crops were to be sown were decided as was the redivision of allotment land. Employees of the village such as the cattle herder were chosen at the skhod and holiday festivities were planned and land was set aside for use as a cemetery. When disaster struck individual families as in the death of a family member, illness, or fire, the skhod was asked to call for, organize and pay for pomoc or village wide assistance in which anyone capable of helping the distressed family would contribute man hours of labor toward rebuilding, haying, reaping or whatever tasks the family could not cope with or complete. The skhod often contributed money along with this aid in order to supply building materials, food for the participants or necessary implements to restart the family enterprise. In other family matters the elders took control of the assets of children on the death of their parents, appointing a guardian and overseeing their education and often acted as supervisors in dysfunctional family situations. This body of elders also guided the moral and ethical underpinnings of the village. When a
peasant failed to meet the agreed upon standards of the village, his punishment came from the skhod. This is not to say that this body was always essentially moral and ethical but only that it was called upon to rule on the behavior of others in keeping with the general ethos of the village. It was, according to reports, not unusual for members of the skhod to base their decisions in a criminal case on the amount of vodka supplied to them either by the plaintiff or by the defendant and to continue to extort money for vodka even after the victim had spent all of his available rubles. In the case of one peasant, Mikhail Bukharin, a suspected thief who became the hapless scapegoat of a venal group of elders, that group refused a decision on his guilt or innocence until all of the available spirits had been consumed. They even went so far as to take the wheels off of his cart with an eye toward selling them for more vodka. Bukharin refused to be cowed by the elders and, unhappy with his unwillingness to admit to his alleged crime and his supposed inability to supply more vodka, the elders decreed that Mikhail was to be marched through the village in a display of charivari. Finally, their enthusiasm spent, they forced him to eat a lump of dirt which seemed to satisfy the men. It also proved the point that the peasants would not tolerate theft of any kind perpetrated against a member or members of the
village. But these complaints against elders and judges who presided over criminal and misdemeanor cases while under the influence of vodka usually crop up in any discussion of the skhod by outsiders. However, I saw very little clear cut evidence of that situation in most of the research. Unfortunately, the records of the skhod meetings are largely unavailable but the attitudes of the peasants through various comments, the references to the skhod in the volost' court proceedings and the works of ethnographers who specifically mention those cases in which the skhod and the elders engaged in corrupt practices indicates that while these conditions surely existed, they may not have been as universally typical as is often reported.

The most significant role for the starosta and the elders was the insurance of the economic viability of the mir. Taxes had to be paid to the state, the zemstvo, and the village so that services could be provided, roads could be built and schools supported. These imposts were a necessary element for any society but for the Russian peasant especially, they were an extra burden that often could not be met on a small income after taking into consideration his daily living expenditures—food for his family, replacement costs for seed, agricultural equipment, clothing and household goods and the few rubles that were set aside for holyday celebrations, weddings,
christenings and funerals. The skhod, however, maintained a tight control over the villagers to ensure that the moneys would be forthcoming. To this end, it also controlled the issuance of passports for those who wanted to leave the area for work either in the city or in other rural or industrial areas a distance from home. The passports ensured that if the otkhodnik (departing worker) did not return home when expected or did not send a substantial portion of his wages to his family in the village, he could be forcibly recalled by order of the skhod, thereby negating his passport and his freedom to work elsewhere. The passports then effectively controlled the movements of the villagers. Non-productive members of the village were brought before the skhod for punishment and, on occasion, if this action did not yield the desired results, they were taken en masse before the volost' or district court. Many of the volosti reported that non-payment of taxes and other fiscal responsibilities of the mir were not within their jurisdiction, but the records show that they did take on the prosecution of these cases when requested to do so by the starosta.

The volost' courts which were a higher authority for peasant justice were often called upon to mediate disputes that could not be equitably solved by the skhod. With the Emancipation Edict of 1861, these peasant courts
allowed the villagers to take their problems into the wider arena. If the skhod did not rule favorably on a particular complaint the peasant could go outside of his own village or mir and take his case to the volost' court which served a number of villages. These courts were still peasant oriented but they introduced a new factor into the solution of peasant problems, the laws of the state. Composed of elected peasant representatives chosen by skhod elections in all villages with a ratio of one man for every ten households, the courts were a bridge between rural law and custom in use in the villages and the written law which was the backbone of the state. Authorized to make some use of obychnoe pravo or customary law along with the written law the volost' courts began in the 1860's to adjudicate an increasing number of peasant complaints, not just those involving criminal conduct but also litigations involving land divisions, family matters and criticisms of the village starosty. The large number of the decisions of these courts was compiled by the Trudy Kommissii in 1872 and through these records we can piece together some of the problems that were found in the villages, how the peasants reacted, and the methods used to solve the problems. Given the peasant makeup of the volost' courts, the use of customary law, and the fact that the judges were elected by the village skhod, it may be
expected that these courts were simply a continuation of
the local elders courts and in some cases they were.
Often the judges were uneducated and illiterate, little
better than the peasants they served. Elected to the
position of starshina or elder of the volost' a capable
man was expected to serve for a specific period of time,
in most cases three years. It was not important that he
be literate since that was the responsibility of the
pisar' or scribe who kept track of opinions, decisions
and records of meetings. In court cases these records
were most important since any decision rendered by the
volost' in land divisions or criminal cases especially,
could be appealed to the justice of the peace for a
rehearing, in which case the starshina could be called
upon to justify his rulings according to the law. The
pisar', usually elected for a definite period of time
such as three years, received a salary of approximately
250 rubles per year depending on the wealth of the
volost', and an additional incentive of 1% of the volost'
cash which was taken in fines. In most volosti literacy
or some degree of knowledge of written laws was a
prerequisite for election. The responsibilities of the
pisar' and his assistants were to keep the records,
direct the elders to the proper written law, answer
questions and to generally manage the work of the courts.
Given the general illiteracy of the judges and the
alleged use of alcohol connected with the proceedings it is surprising that many of the decisions demonstrated a rational, and in some ways, progressive approach to the law and the settlement of problems.

In Chernianov, a volost of 4200 state peasants, the district court had a literate starshina and two of the eight judges had some degree of literacy since they were former church school teachers. In January, 1871 the court was faced with a complaint from a woman who related to the court that her husband abused her without reason. Witnesses testified that the husband was mentally unstable and often threatened to burn down his house. The volost court, in a decision that could only be termed progressive, ruled that the defendant's mental condition was to be evaluated by a doctor and that consequently he was to be placed under the supervision of the local starosta. In the interim, the wife would be protected and supported by the volost. This approach to a complex family problem appears to have been unusual for the peasant courts but it gives an indication of the authority of the judges and especially of the potential for dynamic, vital approaches to peasant problems. But, while this volost moved ahead, others with less literate judges retained the flavor of the local skhody on a district level favoring punishment by the birch rod for a majority of offenses. Although most of the volost
informants denied that this was an oft used method of problem solving, the records indicate that it was not all that uncommon. In cases of theft, for example, corporal punishment was the choice of most peasants and the judges. In Mokrinsk volost' the statement was made that the birch rod had not been used in two years. "We have not heard of the birch rod" the informant claimed. However, in the seven cases reported for 1870 and 1871, the birch rod was applied in three of them. All of the complaints were thefts either between family members or between neighbors. Obviously, the birch rod was used and used often especially in cases of theft but also in some instances of violence and almost always when the complaint involved disrespect or abuse of parents by their children.

There has been some disagreement among historians and students of the peasantry as to the efficacy of corporal punishment as opposed to imprisonment in cases where some discipline was required. Many are of the opinion that the birch rod was preferred by the peasants since it was quick and, though painful, it resolved the problem immediately without any question. If given the choice of the birch rod or imprisonment, the peasant would invariably choose corporal punishment over languishing in the volost' jail, where he was unable to work. Indeed, informants to the Trudy Komissii claimed
that at least the peasants feared the birch rod and that it had to be maintained as a deterrent. But while they may have feared the rod, it is believed that the inability to work and therefore to make money during incarceration was particularly difficult for the peasant. If he held a factory job, jail time may mean that he would lose his job which was his source of income for his family and for taxes. However, I submit that this was not always the case. A number of cases brought before the courts in Tambov, Moscow and Vladimir involved failure to pay taxes due to excessive alcoholism and laziness. Imprisonment for these defendants was not a hardship. The incarcerations rarely lasted more than seven days during which time the families of the prisoners were expected not only to visit but also to supply food. Obviously, one who was opposed to work would not mind a few days rest in the volost' jail. With this view in mind it cannot be said that all peasants preferred the birch rod or that all chose jail as payment for their crimes. It may have been an individual choice, dependent upon the crime and the individual and one that cannot be decided across the board. The other choice of the court judges was to levy a fine. If a peasant was wealthy this option posed no problem. However, the majority of the villagers were either at or close to the poverty line. Had the volost' court imposed a fine for a misdemeanor
crime the payment could have been an impossible burden on the peasant living close to the edge. Since income and outgo were, to some extent synchronized, an extra expenditure in the form of a fine could have been devastating and neither the skhod nor the volost' court wanted to destroy a potential taxpayer.

But despite the unifying features of the skhod and the volost' in village life, there were tensions and what could be termed a discordant side to the village. The life of a peasant was not an easy one nor was it as peaceful and serene as the 19th century writers liked to imagine. Life in the peasant villages was extremely difficult and while the rural people chose to conceal their true personae from the outside world, behind the facade the truth was somewhat different.

The life of hardship in the peasant milieu bred distrust, alcoholism, anger, violence, spite and jealousy. Despite the need for collective organizations in the villages and the unity of purpose, neighbors were not always friends nor were they always to be trusted. A united front may have been presented by the villagers to all outsiders but within the confines of the village numerous tensions existed. Fellow villagers were a source of jealousy and vengeance, families members were often antagonistic toward each other, thefts and violence or even simply accusations of thefts and violence were
common occurrences. In order to cope with these problems the **skhod**, was called upon to formally censure or punish the offending villager. However, if there was little hard evidence of an infraction and the **skhod** refused to act against the defendant, or if there was a belief that the **skhod** had been too easy on the culprit or as in one notable case, the guilty peasant refused to be cowed by the condemnation of the **skhod**, the villagers, convinced of the guilt would take matters into their own hands by instituting what can be termed informal social controls such as shunning, rumor mongering and slander to show their displeasure and to keep up the pressure against their neighbor. These tactics often caused the recalcitrant peasant or even the innocent one to mend his ways in order to make peace with his neighbors. In the countryside the good will of neighbors where everything must be shared was vitally important.

Theft, violence, alcoholism and slander were all part of village life. Although the main thrust of the villagers was economic cohesiveness these centrifugal forces were a part of life. Not everyone was honest, hardworking and God fearing nor was everyone in the village content with his life. Neighbors were jealous of neighbors, villagers lied about their co-villagers, parents abused their children, sons and daughters resented their parents, brothers fought over the distri-
bution of land and assets, husbands and wives were unfaithful, husbands refused to support their families and buried themselves in vodka and wives protested the treatment that they received from both their in-laws and their husbands. A listing of these problems found in the Russian villages demonstrate the human condition which can be found not only in peasant societies but in all societies. Heretofore, in an effort to show the cohesive elements in the village, the rituals which bound the peasants together and the traditions that had been in effect for generations, these tensions and problems went unrecognized and largely unreported. But to deny the existence of problems and to speak only of the good is counterproductive in peasant studies. The Russian peasants were, after all, only human.

Certain anthropologists see in peasant society what has been called the "Image of a Limited Good". This theory implies that the peasant perceives all of the good and valuable assets in life as existing in limited quantities. The term "good" can refer to anything from land to happiness to good luck. Since a larger cut of the pie would leave smaller pieces for everyone else it is believed that any individual or any family possessing more money, more land or, more good fortune than his neighbors has obviously obtained this wealth at the expense of his co-villagers. The corollary to this is
that the more fortunate villager must therefore be brought down a peg by those less successful than himself. No one can be allowed to get above his neighbors economically, socially or morally. To carry out this levelling, the peasant utilizes individual and family action in the form of quarrels, threats and violence between neighbors; informal, unorganized group action as in the practice of shunning or concerted slander against the offender or institutionalized action which, in the case of the Russian peasant involves the agreement of the skhod.21 George Foster's formulation of the "Image of Limited Good" had been widely accepted by anthropologists although many question various components of the theory such as whether, as Foster states, health can be included as an element of limited good. Others, like James Gregory, prefer a different approach to the problem and contend that peasants, while admitting to limitations in all good things of life, expect that those with greater wealth will share with the less fortunate.22 However, the theory could be useful in explaining some peasant actions. For example, it could be used as a justification for the failure to achieve economically and it could be seen as a basis for many of the animosities and tensions among villagers. Jealousy could be at the root of the arguments and violence between neighbors and against those who are economically better off. These
suppositions are difficult to prove within the framework of the available research but Foster's studies indicate that disputes over wealth, that is, any material asset, and land are common in all peasant societies.²³

The Russian village was not just a collection of childlike peasants in a bucolic setting. Nor was it simply a gathering of crude, witless people bent on preserving their agrarian life to the exclusion of progress. It is true that the peasantry disliked external authority and that they, to a certain extent, wanted to maintain tradition but the village was not a stagnant entity. The Russian village had a certain vitality and although it may have appeared that the peasants shunned progress in reality there was movement, albeit slow, towards enculturation. Within the villages there were both centrifugal and centripetal forces at work. The forces that united the peasantry and separated it from the rest of the country and those that were gradually sundering that traditional unity. This dissertation is an attempt to examine both aspects of village society and of the family itself and to see how these conflicting forces worked. From the viewpoint of the factors for unity, the legal institutions are important but the moral underpinnings of village life based on religion and tradition and a strong work ethic are closely woven into the fabric. On the other hand,
life in the village also represented poverty, illiteracy, competition for limited access to wealth and a lack of individuality. The same situation holds true for the smaller unit, the family. Both the patriarch and the baby were strong forces for family unity economically and socially. The family had to work together to insure its existence. But, again, poverty, competition and lack of individuality created tensions. The close living quarters, the lack of land and the subsequent opportunities for employment outside of the village were forces that were gradually sundering the family. The four chapters then are divided to show both the unifying and disunifying forces in peasant life. The first two chapters demonstrate the centripetal strengths of the family and conversely the tensions that abounded in the peasant izba. How did the family function as an economic unit? What strategies both economic and cultural were used to create a viable working family of producers? On the other hand, the family had very definite tensions which are dealt with in chapter two. What were these tensions? Why did they exist and how did the families deal with them? The following two chapters deal with the larger unit, the village, in the same manner. The institutions such as the skhod and the volost' courts were unifying elements in the countryside but they did not stand alone, they were based on traditional shared
values that brought the peasants together but there were problems and tensions present in the commune. In some cases the two sides, unity and disunity necessarily overlap since what can be termed a cohesive factor in a village or a family can also hold the seed for disruption. The two are often intertwined. For example, a discussion in chapter three on the family court as a unifying feature also illustrates that there were tensions, the potential for violence and therefore the need for some kind of arbitration. The courts which answered to these needs were necessary to village life. On the other hand the depiction of a large, prosperous family is presented as an asset to peasant life as long as it stayed united. In chapter one the benefits of that solidarity are discussed from an economic viewpoint. But when that family separated as a result of tensions within the household, the sources and the after effects of the problems are carried over into that chapter on dysfunctional families. It is impossible to relive the difficulties and interpersonal relationships encountered by these families and therefore the true causes and effects of dysfunctionalism in a family are difficult to assess. There are as many opinions as there are researchers on the topic. And, there are no simplistic answers to the questions since families and people in general do not always act according to certain prescribed stimuli nor do
they lead their lives in constant tension or in unvarying compatibility.

The main sources for this research were the records of the Trudy Komissii po preobrazovaniiu volostnykh sudov in eight volumes in which the proceedings of volost' courts in all of the European provinces were collected and catalogued. These accounts, published in 1873 are incomplete at best, but serve as one of the few large bodies of materials which afford insights into peasant complaints against their neighbors and their families and therefore into the pressures of village life from a peasant viewpoint. In some provinces, the commission delved into the reports from a number of uezdy and volosty while in others only a few are related. The acta do not list all of the cases brought before the courts but the sampling presumably is a fair indication of the types of complaints brought before the courts and the decisions rendered.

An invaluable additional primary resource has been a collection of materials from the Central State Archives for Moscow province (TsGIAM) which yielded information on separation and divorce petitions from Moscow province. This resource is extensive and is still largely untapped since the amount of information contained in the microfilms is too lengthy to allow proper inclusion in this dissertation. However, in the future the material from
this archive will prove invaluable in understanding not only the tensions between husbands and wives but the approaches taken by the couple, the families, the state and the church. Several of these cases have been presented in chapter two.

Ethnographic resources were utilized to further understanding of the peasant family and the village milieu and to provide an insight into the ordinary, everyday existence of the villagers. Often they provided an exceptional view of how the peasants felt about each other and about themselves. However, they tended to reveal the biases of the researchers and this factor had to be taken into consideration. Primary among them were the ethnographic works of V. V. Tenishev, especially Pravosudie v Russkom' krest'ianskom' byty, S. V. Pakhman's Obychnoe grazhdanskoi pravo and the narration of the travels through Smolensk of A. N. Engel'gardt in his work Pis'ma iz derevni. The latter proved to be an especially valuable tool even though the author naturally introduces his own cultural biases into his tales as in his claim that the daughters-in-law were ultimately responsible for family divisions. The stories of village life and the sketches of the families that he encountered and with whom he lived provided an insight that could not be found in the purely anecdotal records of other ethnographic works.
There are a number of secondary resources for Russian peasant studies that are of recent publication. Most notably among these is Traditsionnye normy povedeniya i formy obshcheniia russkikh krest'ian XIX v, a recent work by M. M. Gromyko a Moscow ethnographer. But contemporary works by American historians are also valuable not only because they are replete with new research on the topic but because they indicate an increasing interest in the study of peasants as important parts of society. Peasant Russia: Family and Community in the Post-Emancipation Period by Christine Worobec is a macro-study of peasant society in Russia and covers much of the same ground as this dissertation. Peasant Economy, Culture and Politics of European Russia 1800-1921 edited by Esther Kingston Mann and Timothy Mixter, is a compilation of research on peasants by contemporary historians. It has been used as validation for some of the opinions formed from the primary research. Two important sources for understanding the peasantry are, of course, the sociological works of Teodor Shanin, The Awkward Class and Russia as a Developing Society.

For general information on the peasantry as a universal social class and for the sake of comparison between the 19th century Russian peasants and those of other countries and time periods, a number of works by ethnographers were either consulted or used in the
preparation. Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlan-A Mexican Village* has been, for some years, an important source for peasant studies. However, his consensus model of the peasantry which depicts village life as filled with ritualism and tradition, stresses only the unity of the peasants and homogeneity. He admits to few disruptive influences or conflicts preferring instead to concentrate on agreement among villagers and the happier side of peasant life. Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlan Restudied*, on the other hand, revisited the scene of Redfield's original research and established that there was more coercion than consensus among the villagers. In effect, there were conflicts in the form of violence, theft, slander and jealousy in Tepoztlan. While both researchers are correct from the viewpoint of what they were studying, it is Lewis who paints a more accurate picture of the village; Pierre Goubert (*The French Peasantry in the Seventeenth Century*), is concerned mainly with a definitive look at peasant life and not with interpersonal relations as is Eugene Weber (*Peasants Into Frenchmen*), in his study of the 19th century French peasantry. Laurence Wylie in (*Village in the Vaucluse*), investigates the modern day French peasant and all economic and cultural aspects of his life; Joseph LoPreato, *Peasants No More: Social Class and Change in an Underdeveloped Society* and Carl Levin Christ
Stopped at Eboli describe life among the Italian peasants; John Messenger (Inis Beag) and Andrew Greeley (That Most Distressful Nation), the former an anthropological study, the latter a sociological one on the Irish peasants past and present and their attitudes and biases. Especially helpful were the works of Frederick C. Gamst, Peasants in Complex Society which provided an overall look at peasant society and of George Foster who formulated the theory of the "Image of Limited Good". There have been a number of other works that have been used in both the historical and anthropological fields but for purposes of brevity in this introduction, only two or three sources have been listed in each grouping of peasant studies. Although it is but a short list of references used in the preparation of this paper it gives a general idea of the scope of information available to peasant historians and anthropologists who wish to universalize peasant perspectives.

While this is primarily an historical study with set chronologic parameters, the anthropologic approach has been indispensable. This method of research is important in that it enables the historian to compare various peasantry for cross-cultural nuances and to make use of on-site observations of peasant traditions and attitudes. Peasant culture and traditions have been studied in microscopic form by anthropologists and these studies of
groups along with the history, geography, geopolitics, religion and economic conditions of the various areas must be taken into consideration for any definitive understanding of the peasantry. Based on this approach the conclusion can be drawn that peasantries are basically universal not in all aspects but at least in their view of life. Hence, the anthropologic approach to an historical problem is a necessity.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 40. Redfield uses the terms great tradition and little tradition to differentiate between what he calls the reflective few and and the largely unreflective many or the masses of people who have little voice in government, arts or culture. Other terms which denote the same concept are "hierarchic vs. lay culture," "high and low culture" and "folk and classic cultures.


7. Teodor Shanin, "A Peasant Household: Russia at the Turn of the Century," in *Peasants and Peasant Societies*, 2nd ed., ed. Teodor Shanin (Oxford: Basic Blackwell Ltd., 1989), p. 21. Shanin's approach to peasant studies is economic in that everything in peasant life is related to the family business and the need for subsistence. While there is interconnectedness which cannot be denied, there are also other facets to village life that need to be studied.

8. Shanin, p. 73.


12. V. V. Tenishev, *Pravosudie v Russkom' krest'ianskom' byty* (Briansk, 1907), p. 37. The term charivari is not a Russian term but is borrowed from the French. It was a practice used in earlier centuries in France in which criminals or suspected criminals were marched through the village streets to be ridiculed by their neighbors. Any kind of metal objects that could be hit or banged together to create a cacophony of sound were employed by the villagers to further humiliate the victim.


17. *Trudy Kommissii*, vol. 1. This was a common feeling among the peasants who supplied information to the *Trudy Kommissii* in all of the provinces.

18. Tenishev, p. 41.


22. See James Gregory "A Question of Reciprocity", *Current Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 1, (March, 1975), pp. 73-83. In this article Gregory puts forth an alternative to Foster's theory which he calls "the expectation of circumstantially balanced reciprocity" (ECBR). The
basic tenet is that peasants believe not that there is limited good but that those having more are expected to share with the less fortunate. Gregory does not attempt to disprove Foster's theory however, although other anthropologists do take various individual parts of the theory and dispute their validity. According to Gregory, the theory of limited good is widely accepted in anthropological studies and is especially noted in *Peasant Society: A Reader*, a much used study of peasant-ries by Jack Potter and May N. Diaz (Boston: 1967).

CHAPTER I

THE UNITY OF THE PEASANT FAMILY

In any study of peasant society, its social structure, domestic economic customs and rituals, the family must be seen as the first and most basic social unit. Originally families formed with their extended kinsmen into close knit groups or communities for economic and physical survival but gradually, the widening circle of close kin, distant relatives and newcomers took on the complexion of a village society in which certain rules and norms of behavior were necessary for the maintenance of order and the common good. Nevertheless, the lineal and collateral kinship ties of the family continued to be an important force in peasant society. To achieve success each individual household had to be united for its own economic self-interest at one level but at another had to balance its own self-interest against the greater needs of the community or village in order that the peasant way of life would be maintained. To achieve this stability the family had to work together to form a viable economic unit within itself but it also had to be a part of a support group which would give assistance
a part of a support group which would give assistance when needed. Usually this support group would be made up of members of the extended family: the birth families of both husband and wife, aunts, uncles and cousins. This not to deny the role of neighbors and friends in times of need, but the economic viability of a family often went hand in hand with its extended family relationships especially when that family was young. Once a nuclear family separated from the core family, its economic stability was basically determined by its own work. However, this is not to say that the nuclear family could not depend to some extent on the assistance of relatives in times of need. In order to survive in the village the peasant family then must employ a strategy for economic survival but also be cognizant of the need to maintain and strengthen the social and familial ties.

Peasants by most definitions were agricultural workers, attached both economically and, many feel, emotionally to the land. The hardscrabble existence in the countryside has been written about, researched and delineated by many historians and anthropologists from those who saw this as a splendid example of innocent devotion to the land to those who realized that the hardships of the life made it less than an ideal existence. To many peasants, if not all, the land offered security. It was his home and his life and therefore not
something to be abandoned at will. But his continued financial security was based on his ability to work the land and achieve some economic stability despite the vagaries of weather and the seasons. While the average peasant probably could not hope for huge economic returns, he could, with diligence and luck, earn enough to keep his family fed, clothed and sheltered. Thus, the first order of business for the peasant family was the creation of strategies for maintaining at least a subsistence level of agriculture. However, to sustain himself and his family he usually had to avail himself of other options for income outside of agriculture. Therefore, the definition of peasant as bound to agriculture was only partially true. He was also among other things a factory worker, a carter and a trader at times. In order though to pursue not only agriculture but these other options as well, he had to rely on his family.

The techniques for the fiscal success of a family consisted first in the generation of an economic field of activity in which the family could endure by balancing its producers and consumers to ensure at the very least a subsistence level, and optimally a comfortable existence. The ideal was achieved if the family could not only survive but was able to put aside some replacement capital for the next year's seed, cattle feed and farm implements and could provide some resources for ritual
requirements such as weddings, holiday celebrations, expenditures associated with childbirth festivities and other disbursements related to familial and societal expectations.

This description would imply that life and survival in peasant agricultural society was fairly uncomplicated and straightforward. And, indeed, if the plots had been adequate, the yearly crop yield sufficient to meet the goals of the family, the weather ideal and the tax burdens low, the individual family may have come close to prospering. However, the Emancipation Statute of 1861 which stipulated the allocation of a specific quantity of land to the peasants did not prevent the landlords from reserving the best plow lands, forests and meadows to themselves and consigning to the peasants plots of poor or unusable land on which crop yields were meager and redemptions payments significant. On top of this were the tax burdens for the village, the zemstvo, the guberniia and the state which were often excessively high. To further add to the peasant problems the unpredictable weather patterns that were the bane of all agriculturalists prevented the family from feeling confident that they could reap a harvest adequate to meet their monetary obligations and also provide for its own survival. "Getting ahead" economically was often an almost insurmountable task.\(^2\)
The family, and by this is meant the family living together in an individual household, had to depend first on itself and its own resources to subsist by whatever means necessary. Sometimes the choices made were detrimental to intra family relationships and its cohesion because they forced some members to leave the village for work in nearby cities and factories which left the others to perform the most menial tasks. Despite the fact that the mir attempted to maintain its control of these departing workers through the granting or revocation of passports, the growing number of workers could not help but cause a loosening of familial ties as many young people discovered the city and a certain degree of independence. Fortunately, the village was often able to meet the necessary means for survival in the form of local workshops and industries some of which afforded returning peasants the opportunity to put to use skills learned in the city. Carpentry, cobbling, parttime agricultural work, spinning and weaving were various methods of earning extra income for both men and women in the family and large villages often had the benefit of leather works or cotton mills. Rental land also had the potential for extra income if the lease payments did not greatly exceed the possible yield and if the renter had sufficient man power to work both his own fields and the rental property. If a family was fortu-
nate enough to own working cattle, the possibilities were broader. Draft animals could be used not only on one's own fields but could be rented out to the village as a whole or to other individuals less fortunate. The peasant family therefore made use of whatever options were available to it for economic subsistence. However, even with these alternatives the opportunity to rise above a mere level of subsistence was circumscribed by the number of producers as opposed to the number of consumers and the availability of resources.

The various mechanisms employed by peasant families were can be illustrated in the village of Spas'-Temnia, Moscow guberniia with the family of Ivan Alekseev Chuliu-kan'. Ivan, 32 and his wife Anna 31 are both described as strong, healthy peasants with four children; A 12 year old son who was already apprenticed, two other sons aged eight and six and a daughter of four. Their izba or hut was approximately ten arshins square, made of logs with a straw roof and was considered to be substantial for the family of six. The family owned a horse, cow, a calf and sheep and had been assigned a nadel for two souls, or approximately five desiatin (approximately 13.5 acres). The annual family income was derived from both agricultural production on their nadel and rental land and from side occupations (promysly). As can be seen from their sources of income below, their yield appeared to be
considerable for Moscow province. They also had a number of options open to them for earnings outside of agriculture.

### INCOME FROM AGRICULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yield</th>
<th>Annual Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 poods of hay, 10 k. @</td>
<td>6 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 measures of rye, 90 k. @</td>
<td>34 rubles, 20 k.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after discounting the cost of seed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 meas. of oats at 3 r @ chet</td>
<td>9 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 meas. of barley, 1 r @</td>
<td>6 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 meas. of potatoes, 15 k. @</td>
<td>9 rubles, 60 k.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 meas. of peas, 2 r @</td>
<td>8 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 meas. of flax seeds for the extraction of oil, 17 k. @</td>
<td>2 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 arshins of linen grown and woven by Anna at 10 k. @</td>
<td>8 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 funts of spun threat, 30 k. @</td>
<td>90 k.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the sale of a calf</td>
<td>3 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Income from nadel</td>
<td>86 rubles, 70 k.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CASH INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES

Ivan works periodically at the pin factory stretching wire 80 rubles

In the autumn months he frames windows and replaces glass at *pomeshchik* homes 25 rubles

Income from the work of oldest son apprenticed for 3 years at 70 rubles
For mowing at the local priests house 10 rubles
Total from other labors 138 rubles, 34k
Total income from all family production 224 rubles, 24k kopecks

CASH EXPENDITURES
The disbursements of the family can be broken down to food, clothing and shoes, expenditures necessary for the home and work, and taxes and obligations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>138 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>16 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>35 rubles, 52 k.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household and work necessities</td>
<td>17 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes and obligations for two souls</td>
<td>19 rubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>225 rubles, 52 k.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breaking down the various expenditures a picture can be drawn of a family that ate fairly well, although meat was a delicacy reserved usually for holidays as was vodka. The statistics do not indicate whether chickens were kept for family use. Although clothing was adequate, there was not much variation and often the calculation for different articles was made on a yearly basis although the coat or cap may have been in use for several years. For example, Ivan owned a poddyovka (a long tight-fitting coat) which was purchased for 12 rubles. However, it was expected to be of good use for 12 years, making the yearly cost one ruble. Anna's
canvas or linen jacket was worn for two years and a new one was determined on the basis of the cost of material over a two year period.

The expenses connected with the house and agricultural work varied from year to year. It is to be assumed that the outlay of one ruble per year for new dishes and tableware was not a constant, nor were the set expenses for the repair of miscellaneous items. In some years this cost would be much larger than others. However, one ruble per year was set aside for repairs. Some costs may have varied with supply and demand; thread, soap, lamp oil, tallow, heating fuel and their prices were variable. Other costs were fixed per year as the annual rent on the haying fields, the cost per family for the village herdsman, and the expenses involved with farm implements such as a sledge or cart with a life expectancy of 15 years. These items must be replaced and their cost per year was factored into the annual budget based on replacement costs. The family also was compelled to contribute to the support of the local clergy and to purchase candles for the church so that the priest would pray for the family and its success. This last item was of great importance and could not be ignored since it assured the family of God's continuing favor. If money was not available then it had to be taken from elsewhere in the budget, probably from the taxes and obligations
which most peasants attempted to meet but which very often received the lowest priority. Many families fell into arrears on their assessments to village, volost', zemstvo and state taxes and hoped that each year would bring a windfall that would help to alleviate the problem.\(^8\)

The Chuliukin family is, however, an example of a middle class peasant family in a village where there were other economic options available besides agriculture. The close proximity to a pin factory and to the city allowed Ivan to supplement his income. On the other hand, Anna spun, wove and made the family clothing while continuing the necessary work on the nadel. Their oldest son was already apprenticed for three years at the age of 12, with an annual income of 24 rubles.\(^9\) Looking at the sources of income required for the subsistence of the Chuliukin family it is easy to see that while Ivan and Anna appeared to have been willing to do whatever was necessary their options, which may have been considered broad in other areas of the country, were circumscribed in their village of Spas'-Temnia because there were other families attempting to make use of the same economic resources. Of the 15 families in the village, six had members engaged in itinerant glass-cutting and several others worked part time at the pin factory. The women, too, competed for spinning and weaving production in the
In most of the villages in the Moscow-Vladimir market nexus, there were alternate strategies for extra income. In the village of Semenduko, Il'insko volost', Iurievsko uezd, Vladimir, 34 (68%) of the families had some income other than agriculture. The principal source of income was weaving which was done by 20 families in workshops and another 12 families in their homes. For example, the family of Grigorii Ivanov' had eight members. Its economic strategies included the ownership of two horses, three cows and nine small animals. There were four soul allotments for the family and they also rented another desiatin of land at a cost of ten rubles per annum. Together with this some of the family members worked in a local workshop weaving cloth while at least one member left the village for outside work. The owners of the workshops were master craftsmen who also lived in the village and were neighbors. Evgraf' Kirillov' and Savelii Kirillov' both were masters in their workshops. Evgraf' had had his business for six years, Savelii, for two. Both employed a number of workers since both had small families living in their households. In the family of Evgraf' there were three members, in Savelii's there were only he and his wife. Both men had horses, cattle and small animals and both worked their own nadels (one and a half souls each) and each rented
two desiatin of land at the cost of 20 rubles per annum. On the other hand, there were those families, like that of Andrei Ivanov who earned their living only from agricultural pursuits. Andrei's family of eight had three nadeles and rented another desiatin of land for ten rubles a year. However, he too had horses (two), cows (two) and five small animals. On the surface he appears to have been less prosperous than his counterparts although he had six workers in his family, land and a number of animals but we have no information on his income nor his outlay in terms of food, equipment and clothing. He appears to be in a favorable position and able to maintain a certain equilibrium. Unfortunately, however, it is extremely difficult based on the available statistical data to describe accurately the well-being of these families in Vladimir because we do not have available all of the pertinent information. For example: The quality of land that was farmed and its yield per desiatin; the ages and physical status of the members of the family; annual costs for housing, food, shelter and taxes and the yearly income from all sources. All of these factors are important in an evaluation of a family and its way of life because they inevitably allow the researcher to breathe some life into the family and to ascertain whether a family that appeared to have been successful was in fact only marginal.
However, the economic success or wealth of a family appears to have been directly influenced by its unity. The families that were large and in a position to utilize all of their resources were the most successful while families that divided for whatever reason, often remained on the edge of poverty because their assets in terms of land and farm animals were reduced as was their manpower. It is, according to the available information, too soon to tell about the success or failure of the Chuliukin family since only one of the children is a producer. If this nuclear family continued to grow, eventually incorporating the adult children into the future extended family, it had the possibility of becoming a wealthy peasant family. This, of course, involves again taking into consideration certain variables which include unexpected illnesses, several contiguous poor growing seasons, loss of kustar (in home production of spinning and weaving for profit) for Anna through factory mechanization, or a variety of other unanticipated adversities that occurred in a family economy that was fragile at best.

That same possibility of an unstable future applied to the skotnik (cowherd) Piotr and his wife Khovra, a family encountered by A.N. Engel'gardt during his travels through the Russian villages in 1871. This family of nine members had little pleasure in life since Piotr was
the village herdsman. This position, was one of the lowest in the village hierarchy and the skotnik was hired by the skhod. And even though he was a member of the commune he did not receive any nadel since, as a full time employee of the mir he could not fulfill the responsibilities of both community herdsman and individual agriculturist. The position of herdsman was one of trust in the village and often was given to former house serfs or to strong decent men of little intelligence. In Piotr's case there is no indication in the literature that he lacked intelligence and he appears, from Engel'gardt's description to have been a good worker and a good family man. The family's existence was, of necessity, one of constant work for the maintenance of approximately 100 cows belonging to fellow villagers. There was an unvarying schedule of cattle feeding, milking, pasturing and watering throughout the year. In the summer months, Piotr and his two oldest sons, Varna, age 14 and Aksin, age eleven began at sun rise to pasture their charges. At 11:00 they brought the cattle back to the yard where they stayed until 3:00 in the afternoon when they were returned to the pasture until nightfall. In the winter the cattle had to be fed and watered in the sheds where his Khovra milked them. During the winter months, normally a down period, Piotr and his family got little rest since they had to be available at night to ensure
that the cows were safe against the severe winter. Since December, January and February were the primary calving months the skotnik was on call constantly to assist in the birthing and to bring the newborns into the warm izba where they were then taken care of by his wife. Wherever possible the younger boys also helped their father. Ten year old Andrei carried his father's gun to guard the cattle in the pasture although it was uncertain that he was strong enough to use it. His strength had never been tested though he often fantasized about his prowess. Young Prokhor, age eight did his own part for the economy. Since he was big and strong for his age he chopped firewood, usually enough for the daily cooking. Piotr's wife Khovra not only helped to tend the cattle but also carried on the duties prescribed for the wife and mother of a family sewing clothing, preparing food and tending to the younger children. In these activities she had the help of her eldest daughter Aksiota, 12 and even six year old Soloshka did her share by rocking the baby in the cradle. Only four year old Pavlik and the baby had no responsibilities. For all of this hard work, the family received 60 rubles per year, six bags and six measures of rye, two bags of oats and one half bags of barley. They also had a small kitchen garden and received a small share of land for a measure of flax and some potatoes. The village
also supplied Piotr and Khovra with two portions of vodka for use on Sundays and holidays, cottage cheese, skimmed milk and a variable amount of money to be given to charity, specifically the priest and the church. This small amount of compensation from the village meant that the family still had to purchase four bags and two measures of rye per year for a cost of 34 rubles. The remaining 26 rubles of his salary was spent for rent on his house (20 rubles) and for the purchase of salt, lenten oil and clothes. This family appears to be on the edge of poverty and although most members of the family worked hard their compensation was minimal and there was nothing left over for ritual observances, replacement of equipment or even extra clothing for the growing children. However, we cannot be sure of this since the only method of comparison is with the family in Moscow whose expenditures and incomes were much higher.

These two families both struggled to live at least at a subsistence level since there were only two adult workers in each family. Although they were large families, they were composed mainly of consumers too young still to assist as full economic partners in the family business. This was a limiting factor in the amount of outside employment the family could manage. The Chuliukins lived in Moscow gubernia where there were a number of economic options available to them. The
area, in the midst of a growing industrialized zone, afforded skilled workers of glass and wire an opportunity to ply their trades in a growing market environment. And while the family's principal occupation was farming the winter months provided ample opportunities for outside employment. On the other hand, the skotnik in Smolensk had limited outside resources and his base of income had to come from agriculture and its related industries. Had he and his wife chosen to abandon the position of herdsmen, their economic options would be severely restricted. The differences in areas were also pointed up in the costs of living and the necessities of life. The Moscow family budgeted a yearly sum of 138 rubles for food and 35 rubles for clothing while the Smolensk peasants could allow only an extra 34 rubles for food and less than six rubles per year for clothing a family of nine. But despite the economic environment, families that continued to work together had very good potential for a degree of wealth as it was measured against their fellow villagers. An excellent example of the economic progress to be made by a family that was united and hardworking is also to be found in Smolensk.

The family had eleven members; the elderly patriarch, the aging, weak mother and three sons who are described as "fine fellows" where work was concerned but otherwise they were neither clever nor smart and were
said to have been suffering from rickets. Their wives, hand-picked by the baba in her younger days were all healthy, strong, excellent at work and smart. One of the wives had no children, one only a daughter, while the third had children of both sexes. As long as this large three generational family stayed together they were able to amass a certain degree of wealth and were regarded as "rich" by their neighbors. There were no arrears, the family owned seven horses and eight cows and the members of the family were well dressed with new boots and warm clothing. Because the land was not separated, the fields were large and the family was able to rent more land, sell more food and eat chicken on a regular basis. However, there was little harmony in the family. The wives disliked the arrangement and would have preferred to live separately with their own husbands and children in the privacy of their own izbas. And once the elderly parents died, the individual small families were free to divide their property and form their own households. Without the benefit of numbers and strength, however, the once large prosperous household, Engel'gardt tells us, became three small, poor households struggling to maintain themselves in a hostile economic environment. Each family claimed its own nadels, rented its own haying fields, built its own barns and izbas and tended to its own small flock of animals which had been greatly reduced
in number. The wisdom of this separation was questionable in an economic environment that was unconducive to small families with small plots of land and few adult laborers.¹⁹

This large family in Smolensk could have continued to prosper had they been able to agree among themselves and had they maintained the system of hierarchy within the patriarchal household. The oldest son had been charged by his parents with control of the economic operations of the family and, as the new patriarch after the death of his parents, he was to head the family, keeping it together and overseeing its growth. But this was impossible given the differences among the brothers and their wives and their desire for economic and emotional freedom from each other. Economic survival depended on solidarity within the family, sufficient workers as balanced against consumers and enough working cattle for the land. With planning all of this in turn would allow for a decent return on investments such as rental land and farm equipment and would ensure future growth along with the ability to afford present necessities.

These three families cited above were all different in size, assets, type of work and potential for increased economic growth. Both the Chuliukins and Piotr the skotnik represented young families with the possibility
of a large number of producers. The Moscow family had already begun to ensure the training of their eldest son in a trade and given the variety of options available to them, they should have been able to continue their progress. The herdsman of Smolensk was in a different position. While he did do some farming, he did not have a nadel and since his economic life was bound to the cattle, a 24 hour a day responsibility, he had neither the time nor the opportunity to pursue other outside income producing skills. His sons, on the other hand were potential strong producers who would be entitled their own nadel in the future and may have formed the basis for a large, prosperous, agricultural family, that is another extended family. The large family of producers in Smolensk that chose to separate showed little potential for recovery. The brother with no children and the one with a daughter had little chance to recoup himself in the foreseeable future. At least 20 years would be needed to regain any kind of prosperity and only if there were no debilitating illnesses, natural disasters such as droughts or floods or catastrophic events such as fires. In the case of the brother with only a daughter, he could only hope that he and his wife were able work until the daughter married and arrangements could be made for the son-in-law to move into the izba with them thereby creating a new extended family. The
brother with no children had to look to change his situation. Since he had no heirs his options were to adopt an orphan or the son of a relative in order to pass on the assets of the family.\textsuperscript{20} This approach was not uncommon in 19th century Russia where children as potential workers were of vital importance. Godsons of deceased parents often filled this role which was mutually beneficial to both sides. Otherwise those families with only an aging husband and wife and unable to support themselves through their work could become a drain on the village tax structure.\textsuperscript{21}

Whatever its makeup and source of workers, the large three and four generational family still remained in many areas and appeared to have been successful. One such household in Moscow gubernia had 12 members: the khozian Feodor Maksimov 63, his brother Kiprian 62, both of their wives, Feodor's two sons and their wives, Egor Fedoro's son, Kiprian's daughter, her husband and daughter. The family's worth in immovable property was 373 rubles with two izbas, an ambar (shed) and outbuildings. Unfortunately the information available does not extend to the techniques employed by the family for maintenance but we can make the assumption that since their property value was much greater than the village average, that they were in a profitable mode at the time the statistics were computed.\textsuperscript{22}
Unity therefore was of vital importance to the economic viability of a family and in order to achieve this each individual member of that family was responsible for certain tasks which benefitted the family as a whole. While most of the focus in Russian family studies has been on the role of the patriarch in the family as head of the family and his unquestioned authority over the other members, his sons and especially the women, the position of the patriarch's wife has often been impugned or ignored. The patriarch was the legal head of the household and much of the literature on the subject of peasant family has revolved around the position of the khozian (family head). It was his role to supervise the economic strategies of the family and also to control and protect the other members, especially the women. However, the role of the baba in the family has often been overlooked. Yet, the family could not have survived without the help of the baba (old woman) who supervised the household, worked in the field when necessary and in general held the family together forging out her own role in the village. This is not to denigrate the functions of the patriarch but only to elucidate the positions of his wife in the scheme of peasant life. The wife in the household has been cast as a shrew, a mean spirited person who set out to make life miserable for everyone especially in the three generational family, her
daughters-in-law who were at her mercy, and this was often true. But, in her defense, she had to be tough minded, resilient and highly individualistic, protecting her turf in the male dominated atmosphere and assuring her hegemony among the women of the household.

The work of the baba was vitally important not only to the economy of the household but also to its daily well-being. In the winter she spun and wove cloth, making all of the clothing for herself, her husband and her children and often worked for outside agents of factories, spinning and weaving cloth as kustar in order to earn a small amount of money for the household and for her own use. In the summer, the baba worked alongside her husband in the fields where she received no personal financial benefits but labored as part of the family unit in its joint interest. However, she jealously guarded her ability to spend her winters working on her own, fully aware that while her husband was alive she was entitled to support from him and could, to some extent, pocket her own earnings. But, should her husband die she was entitled usually to only one-seventh of the property she had helped to acquire. Her resources, especially her dowry, and the money she earned through outside work, either kustar, selling eggs laid by her chickens, or the profits earned from gathering and selling mushrooms and berries belonged to her, either to
share with her family or to preserve for herself and eventually for her daughters. However, typically most of her earnings were spent on family necessities. Perhaps because of her concern for making money, the baba was often placed in charge of all of the family finances. And in most cases it would appear that she took this obligation very seriously. She was responsible for finding the money for taxes, family celebrations such as weddings, dowries for her daughters, and holiday expenditures. She was also concerned with saving enough money to provide for a coffin and a shroud when she and her husband died. Her importance to her husband both economically and domestically could be demonstrated by her response when she found, as was not uncommon, that her husband was unfaithful. She simply refused to dress him or to let him benefit from her work or money, a tactic that would quickly demonstrate her importance.  

Of course, this option was more often used among the older women who had already established their position in their husbands' lives and therefore held some leverage in family matters.

Despite the contention that the peasant wife was often the force behind family separations that ultimately resulted in poverty, the woman in the household was frequently the source of strength for her husband that was needed to rebuild and revitalize a family.
Semenov relates the story of one peasant, Ivan, whose father disowned him for constant drinking and for failing to do his fair share of work for the family. He was nicknamed Nuzhda for his complete lack of reliability. But, after his renunciation by the paternal family, his wife took over. She encouraged Ivan to borrow enough money from his brother-in-law to build an izba using trees hauled from the nearby forest. His wife then took in two foster children from the foundling home and gave them jobs. In the beginning the couple was able only to eke out an existence but with diligence and hard work they began to prosper. Ivan's wife refused to allow him to drink and under her watchful eye and management they cultivated a fair sized herd of cattle, reaped good returns on their rye and wheat yields and began to raise and sell cattle. The baba began a side business in mushrooms and became so adept that it was said that she found fungi in places neglected by others. For this work the family was able to add another 20-30 rubles a year. Over the years and through the work of the wife, the family turned itself around and became valued members of the village. 29

Despite the significance of a well managed household to the success of the family, the wife in the family had few personal possessions that she could call her own. Her main asset, her dowry, was inviolable and this
attitude was one that was rooted in customary law. Whatever the new bride brought to the marriage remained hers and hers alone until her death. Her few belongings were packed in a trunk to which she held the key, usually wearing it on her belt. Her husband may, on certain occasions, gain access to the trunk but the khozian, usually her father-in-law or brother-in-law, had absolutely no right to open the trunk without her consent, a permission she rarely gave. And, if he took it upon himself to break into the trunk he could be punished by the courts. Since the skhod was the nearest court, the complaint would be made first to the elders who would attempt to mediate the problem. However, if arbitration failed, it was dangerous for the skhod to rule against the woman. The trunk and all that it represented was of such importance to the women of the village that they could riot in order to jealously protect their rights. The volost' court records show several instances where women accused their husbands or other family members of violating their rights to their dowry and trunk. In Elatemski uezd, Tambov gubernia, for example, the peasant Mironova complained that her brother-in-law, Fedorov, broke into her trunk and took two rubles in order to get drunk. The court found Fedorov guilty of breaking the lock on the trunk and of the theft. He was required not only to pay back the two rubles but was also
sentenced to 20 lashes with the birch rod. In some instances there was no proof that a crime had been committed but, based on personal history, the accused was convicted. In Serpukhov uezd, a complaint was made that a peasant had broken into the trunk of his mother-in-law. The accused explained that he was innocent and a search of the trunk found that it held only an old mop and some trash. The starost could neither confirm nor deny that a theft had taken place. But, the volost' court ruled that the son-in-law was repeatedly in trouble and therefore he was arrested for three days. The trunk also became a source of contention on the death of a woman with both the husband and her birth family claiming her possessions. The decision of the court in these cases was most often based on the length of the marriage and the contents of the trunk. If the marriage had lasted ten or more years then the husband was usually entitled to his wife's belongings. If there were children, the daughters became the heirs and if the trunk contained clothing for the husband, he was then awarded those items.

The younger women in the family lacked the power of the baba although the dowries stored in their trunks were just as inviolable. However, they had neither the age nor experience to defy either their husbands or the khozian, usually their father-in-law. And their lives
were usually less than contented since they were often considered to be the lowest member of the family. In that position they were forced to take on the meanest tasks in the family and were often denied the right to sufficient food as the last member of the family at the table. Until they had children or a new daughter-in-law joined the family their only recourse if life became difficult was either to leave the marital family or to patiently await the death of their in-laws at which time their husbands might become the new khozian or they could separate and form their own household. This unpleasant outlook left few options for the young peasant wife. The choice of marriage or spinsterhood was not considered an option to the peasant girl. Society dictated that marriage was necessary and that obedience to a husband and a khozian was not to be questioned.

Undeniably marriage was considered primarily from an economic viewpoint. It was a transaction that involved an exchange of property from the parents of the bride to the potential groom and basically formed a contract between two families, one the supplier, one the purchaser with the match-maker acting as an agent for both. The entire process was set in motion when the young man reached the mature age of 18 and his family decided that it was time to bring another worker into the household. The search for a suitable bride was left in the hands of the svakha.
(matchmaker) charged with finding a girl of at least 16 years who was strong, a willing worker and one who had been properly groomed for marriage in that she had been trained in household chores by her mother. Beauty and intelligence were not considered important and in some cases were felt to be a detriment to the marriage since they were not economically useful and could be the source of discontent for the new bride and her family. However, the family of the bride was considered to be of some importance. Were they good Christians? Were they morally good? Did they have the reputation for good honest work or were they poor because of alcoholism and neglect of duty? Did the bride have family obligations that would attach to the groom and create a burden on his relative wealth? None of these problems were hidden from the groom and his family since everyone knew the economic and personal status of everyone else: the number of acres tilled, the source of a family's income and its misfortunes which could occur even in those families who exercised diligence and hard work. Illustrative of this would be a family who, although once fairly prosperous, fell upon hard times when the father became ill for a long period of time. The mother, with two small sons and a marriageable daughter, was unable to do the work required and the land was reclaimed by the mir to satisfy taxes. The daughter, in the meantime, had been sent to
the nearest town for work where she, untrained in most of
the necessary work skills, was fair game for what the
peasants believed to be the evils of the city. Even if
she remained honest, the stain of living in the city
would remain with her and her purity would always be
questioned. She not only had her own reputation to worry
about but she probably was entrusted with the care of her
two small brothers when, on the death of her father, her
mother was no longer able to raise them. Any chance for
a marriage to another peasant, even one to which she may
have been betrothed, no longer existed. No man was
willing to take on the task of raising the brothers of
his wife and supporting them until they became old enough
to work. Nor was he willing to be the butt of rumor and
innuendo concerning his wife although she, personally,
may have been above reproach in her actions. All of
these facts and questions were taken into consideration
before the prospective groom and his family sat down to
negotiate a marriage and to execute an agreement between
the two families.

Before the marriage could take place the bride-to-be
was expected to sign an agreement with her future husband
stating that she was in agreement with the arrangement.
One such agreement between the peasant girl Anna Kuleshe-
va of Birichevskaia volost', Archangel guberniia and her
intended husband Vasiliy Iakolev Filina of Ivanov
Chernishevst indicated that she acknowledged and accepted the agreement made between the families, immediately on the attainment of her majority. She also accepted 100 rubles offered by the groom's family as a token of good faith. This vklad or pre-marriage payment represented compensation to the family of the bride for her removal from their home and the loss of her services. It was considered a gift, not a reward, although it was sometimes referred to as naradja (reward). If the intended bride did not live with her parents, it was given to her brother, the oldest member of the family or to some outside person who was responsible for her. Only on rare occasions was it given to the bride, herself, for her own use. The groom also supplied a trousseau of sorts with shirts and other female attire. After the contract was agreed to and signed, usually over copious amounts of vodka, it held the force of law and any attempt to break the agreement by either side required recompense not only for the amount spent on the gifts, preparations and match-maker but also for loss of dignity and honor. Until all of this was accomplished the contract remained in force. On occasion the agreement was voided because the young people were unwilling to accept the choices made by their parents, an occurrence which left the families in the difficult position of having to reclaim their losses and honor. In one such case in Tambov, a
state peasant, Popov brought his case to the Piter volost court complaining that the peasant Riabikin had promised his daughter Tatiana in marriage to his brother. The agreement had been reached over what the plaintiff described as "hard drinking" and Popov had paid an more than twice the required number of silver rubles to close the deal. However Tatiana refused to take part in the agreement and went to live with her uncle. Popov asked the court to award to him the amount of money spent and also to consider a payment for his loss of honor. The two families could agree on nothing and the anger was such that any agreement was impossible. The court ruled in favor of the plaintiff for expenses incurred, delay of the marriage and loss of honor in the amount of 30 rubles. In a similar case in Moscow gubernia, the mother of the bride had already begun preparations for the wedding when the young groom decided that he did not want to get married. His family attempted to show that final agreements had not been made for the union and therefore they were not responsible for the cancellation. Again, the court tried conciliation but these attempts were unacceptable to either party. The widowed mother of the bride contended that she had spent 30 rubles on the wedding and the court agreed that she was entitled to be reimbursed. They also awarded her five rubles for the insult. However, she was required to return a shawl
given her by the family of the young man as a sign of good faith.\textsuperscript{35}

The new bride could be found locally or within a radius of several miles of the groom's home village. The local market town provided the hub for a circle of villages from which a mate could be chosen and it also provided an opportunity for both parents and young people to meet. It is then likely that the local peasants were at least somewhat familiar with many of the residents of their neighboring villages who visited the central market and may indeed have had relatives in the other villages. Through this network of villages the prospective groom and his family could consider their choices for a mate before openly proposing a union or even initiating a meeting. Marriage records for Volokolamsk \textit{uezd}, Byigorod \textit{volost'}, indicate that while some couples came from the same village mates were also chosen from a number of surrounding villages either in Volokolamsk \textit{uezd} or Klinsk \textit{uezd}. The villages of Ochishcheva, Efim'eva, Stromilovo bol'shoe, Stromilovo malo, Valuiki, Shishkina and Lystseva in Volokolamsk and Nikol'skaia, Kharlanikha, Slobodka and Novoe celo in Klinsk were the principal villages represented in the statistics but peasants from other smaller villages in the area were also mentioned. All of the villages were situated either on the Volokolamsk road, the Klinsk road or on country roads between
the two and lay approximately 100 to 120 versts from
Moscow. Teriaeva, Klinsk was a market town where an
annual fair was held on July 20. It lay 120 versts from
Moscow, and 42 versts from Klin on the Volokolamsk road
and was a rather large town with approximately 500
residents in 70 households. In Volokolamsk uezd the
largest town in the area was Ochishcheva with a popula-
tion of 380 in 48 households. It was found 117 versts
from Moscow and 16 from the city of Volokolamsk on the
Klinsk road. Another important town in Volokolamsk was
Efim'eva which housed 288 peasants in 27 households.
However, there were two calico factories in the village
which undoubtedly drew workers from neighboring villages
thereby encouraging interaction between families. The
plotting of this geographical information enables one to
gain some insight into the proximity of the villages
which fostered association between peasants of different
villages.37

The marriage between Ignatii Dmitriev of Efim'eva
and Marfa Stefanova a resident of Lystsova was a union
that not only typified the bonds created among the
peasants of neighboring villages within a certain
economic zone but also demonstrated the satisfaction of
economic needs for the families involved. The groom,
Ignatii Dmitriev was the nephew of Vasilii Ivanov with
whom he lived in the village of Efim'eva. This was his
second marriage at age 40 and he was responsible for two children from his previous marriage, 18 year old Efim and 14 year old Tat’iana. His uncle’s family already consisted of five children, at least four of whom still lived at home.\(^3^8\) This rather large family had a net worth in immovable property of 200 rubles including two bakeries.\(^3^9\) His new wife, Marfa was 27 years old indicating that either she was widowed at a young age or that she had never been married. It would be most likely that she had been a spinster since she had no children and was long past the age that was considered suitable for girls to marry. The bride had obviously been chosen for her ability to work and, if she had not been married before, the amount of money paid to her family was presumably small since at age 27 she had almost certainly been a liability, if not an embarrassment to her family. The witnesses or sponsors for both bride and groom came not only from Lystsova, the bride’s home but from Ochishcheva and also Chashcha. There is no information on the bride’s sponsors but Savva Nikitin, a friend or relative of the groom who came from Ochishcheva was relatively poor, living in a two generational family with his son Andrei and his wife.\(^4^0\)

In the village of Ochishcheva, the marriage between Filipp Timofeev, 24 and Stefanida Mikhailova, 21 united two families in the same village and also, it appears
from an economic standpoint, heightened the status of the bride's family. The groom, Filipp lived with his parents, but his brothers and uncle had a combined wealth of over 800 rubles in immovable property. The family, divided, was not essentially large by village standards but among the four families there were only five small children or consumers as opposed to eight producers. On the surface this appears to have been a prosperous extended family. The bride, on the other hand, was the oldest child in a relatively poor family with six children. Obviously, the family of the bride, therefore, was able to make a rather good match. As the oldest child, she was undoubtedly well trained in domestic work and would be an asset to her husband's family and the only daughter-in-law in the immediate household. The sponsors for the couple again came from other villages and there is no information on their economic status, only their ages and sizes of families so that it is difficult to pinpoint specifically why they were chosen for this role. But the choice of sponsors for any wedding was in many cases an important decision since it added a new aspect to family relations by introducing ritual or fictive kinship into the family.

Fictive kinship is described as a relationship between individuals or families who are not related by blood. It can be demonstrated by the bond that exist
between blood brothers, between wedding sponsors and the marrying couple or between godparents and their godchildren. Often the association will take on the same terminology as real kinship, that is, uncle, aunt, brother or cousin. In the case of wedding sponsors and godparents fictive kinship or ritual kinship unites not only the individuals but the entire families of those involved in the ritual. According to anthropologists May Diaz and Jack Potter this kinship arrangement is permanent in nature and involves certain rules of behavior. For example, the same incest taboo that exists between blood relatives is in force in fictive kinship. In spite of the closeness of this relationship, inheritance does not extend to this category of relatives.44 This new relationship, however, was not always solely on friendship. It was reciprocal in nature in that it established a mutually beneficial alliance. It was hoped that the marital sponsors or godparents would either serve to enhance the status of the new couple or be of some help to them both at the time of the wedding or christening and in the future. New kinship relationships were not always formed through the wedding or christening rituals. Sponsors were sometimes chosen based on an already established relationships as in the case of blood brothers or collateral family members. Unfortunately, in the cases shown here all of this data is not presented
but certain assumptions must be made based on studies of other peasant societies especially those of Latin American where the *compadrazgo* (loosely translated as father, godfather or friend) system is recognized. These ritual kinships, it is believed, were initiated by both the Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church in Europe and carried to America. Both of these sects placed enormous importance on the rituals of marriage and Baptism.  

The ceremony uniting a couple in marriage was, as in all societies, filled with ritualistic significance and protected by the full powers of the law and church. Once the marriage took place, not only the young couple but their families were united and any attempt by the parents of the bride to default on the original contract which granted their daughter to her new family became a matter of law and often had to be settled by the courts. No matter how difficult the daughter's life or how abusive the husband and his family her parents were not to intervene. It was not uncommon for girls to attempt to leave their new families and return to their birth homes. However, if the girl's father permitted this kind of behavior he was judged guilty of over indulgence and punished. Usually, the father and often the mother were jailed for interference in the family of their daughter and were prohibited from seeing their daughter in the
future without the permission of her husband. It was not atypical, however, for the girl or her family to claim that they were not fully aware of the full extent of the law which bound the couple together and therefore were not guilty of any crime. But, the village elders and ultimately the volost courts took a dim view of the defense that claimed ignorance since it was an especially popular one among the peasantry. However, it was in the best interest of the village in general and the families in particular if the couple was forced to iron out the difficulties and sometimes it was necessary for the elders to intervene to achieve harmony. In Bronnitskii uezd, moreover, a young peasant complained that his wife left him of her own free will to live with her parents. His demands for her return were ignored and he therefore asked the court to order his wife to return to the family home. His wife contended that she had left willingly because of her husband's cruel treatment of her. However, she was unable to supply witnesses to corroborate her testimony. The starost, however was aware of the treatment she had received at the hands of her husband and based on his assessment, the court ruled that although the wife had to return home, the couple would be under the supervision of the starost who would mediate their arguments and offer advice when necessary. If, however, the cruel treatment continued despite the
efforts of the starost, the wife could petition the court for a separation agreement.  

The marriage contract had the same intent as the sale of a horse. Once the settlement had been made, the girl belonged to her husband and his family and even though they mistreated her she was, in effect, their possession - one that had been chosen for strength, ability to work and to bear children. On the other hand, if severe and cruel treatment could be proven beyond doubt, the court could take the side of the wife and grant a separation agreement. This appears to have been an individual court choice since the ultimate aim of the court was to preserve the inviolability of the marriage contract. The reason for this stance was twofold: the Russian Orthodox church deplored divorce and forbade it under most circumstances and secondly, from the practical viewpoint of the volost and village elders, a separated woman especially one with children would place extra burdens on the community forcing it to help in her support. At any rate, claims of poor treatment were often not taken seriously since it was the duty of the husband to "educate" a wife who was considered either recalcitrant or unreliable. This is not to say that the husband had no obligations concerning the welfare of the wife. On the contrary, he was expected to support her and their children through his work and since the home
was considered to be a joint economic venture he was not allowed to alienate the property in any way without the consent of his wife. Should he refuse to provide for his wife and family then the wife could ask for a separation, taking any children of the marriage with her. It was also assumed that both the husband and the wife would be able to consummate the marriage. A disability which prevented this sexual act also negated the marriage contract.

While the marriage contract was of great importance from an economic standpoint it also was filled with ritualism. Certain actions were fundamental to the proper betrothal and marriage; the services of the matchmaker (svakha), the amount of the dowry, the negotiations between the families over vodka, the choice of witnesses or sponsors for the couple and the wedding itself. The birth of the newest member of the family, however, was only marginally an economic benefit although there was much symbolism and ritualism surrounding the birth. The child was usually born not in the izba but in either the bania or in the corner of a shed or other outbuilding which was considered a place of privacy for the new mother. This privacy also prevented anyone from looking on the child with an "evil eye" which would ensure that the child would not survive. To compound the distresses of the infant and mother the birth was usually attended
by a povitukhi (midwife) who was untrained and unskilled in difficult deliveries, her only qualifications being experience with a number of deliveries, including her own children. Immediately after birth the child was wrapped in his father's clothes and given a soska (pacifier), a rag wrapped around crumbled bread that the grandmother had chewed to soften. These actions were considered mechanisms of bonding between the newborn and the other family members which would be most important to him after his mother. However, the first moments of a baby's life were then filled with dirt and bacteria and could have been among the causes of early illness and death. The lack of sanitation at his birth, the soska from the mouth of a grandmother who often had gum disease and the use of the father's coarse and usually filthy clothing did little to ensure good health. The child who survived all of this and was unaffected by the often erratic feedings of mother's milk due to her work in the fields, was considered to be a strong, healthy infant that should survive the early years of his life and continue to thrive. The family could then look forward to another worker in approximately 12 years. A brief look at the practices that surrounded the birth of the baby is intended to provide an insight into the unity in the Russian family and also to the difficulties of producing and raising children until that time when they can become
productive.

If the child survived under the unhealthy conditions in the peasant izba, he became the center of the Baptismal ritual which was of vital importance to the family. It not only ensured the place of the child in the church but the Baptism also provided another opportunity for the strengthening of ritual kinships for the family. The godparents, especially the godfather were sometimes chosen from the family; a sister or brother of the parents, some close relative that would tend to the child if the parents should die or a close associate or blood brother who would be expected to look after the interests of the child. The best choice, however, was one in which the godparent could contribute some good to the family by way of his godchild. This establishment of a patronal relationship with a member of the community or nearby community could be of benefit if the family needed assistance of any kind from help in the fields, to monetary relief, to the hiring of the father in times of need. When the wealthy land owner needed to hire workers at threshing time, he looked first to his family and then to those with whom he had formed fictive kinships or patronal relationships. In this way the godfather and the parents of the child formed a dyadic contract one in which there was reciprocal assistance. The parents of the child may have had little to offer in the way of
material goods but they would receive consideration when work was available. On the other hand, the wealthier godfather increased his prestige and also augmented the pool of ready workers in his circle.

The Baptismal records of the church at Volokolamsk show that both of these approaches were common in the choice of godparents. Savva Nikitin, a 46 year old peasant of Ochishcheva brought the youngest of his four children, Domna, to be baptized in 1862. He lived with his second wife, his younger brother Nikolai and their families in a rather poor existence with a net worth in immovable property of 60 rubles. His eldest son Andrei, living separately was worth 108 rubles. But his choices for godparents were fellow villagers, Andrian Emel'ianov, worth 430 rubles and Anna Ivanova, the wife of Andrei Petrov whose two houses, ambar and several outside sheds were worth 340 rubles. In a village where the mean worth in immovable property was approximately 100 rubles, these were considered to be sizable holdings. A christening in Efim'eva united two prominent families which could have been mutually beneficial to both large families. Ivan Kondrat'ev and his wife Irina Semenova members of a three generational family with a worth of 620 rubles chose as godfather, the priest of the village of Spirova, Ioann Kolokolov and as godmother, Anis'ia Filippova, the widowed sister-in-law of the wealthiest
man in the village, Martyn Egorov. The khozian of this family appears to have been in an excellent position. He and his wife had five sons, four of whom were grown men and two were married and living in the four generational family with their wives and children. Anis'ia also lived in the household with her two children and Martyn's father Egor. The union of these two families in a ritual kinship could indeed be beneficial from the standpoint of economics since they appear to have been from the same economic stratum and could help each other.

The godparents were ritualistically important from the moment that the baby was born. On the day of the christening they arrived bringing symbolic offerings of bread to the new parents. They were handed the baby by the midwife who, even though some weeks had passed since the birth, was still a valued individual and merged with the godparents as guardians of the child. Her indispensability to the new mother was such that another type of fictive kinship was formed in the period immediately following the birth since, according to tradition, once a year the new mothers and the midwife celebrated the birth with a night of vodka. After the ceremony, the godparents were responsible for the entertainment and dinner of guests who had come to congratulate the parents and present the newborn and the midwife with copper coins for luck. The activities of the godparents both at
the ceremony and as the hosts of the ritual dinner were important because it further cemented the relationships between both families. From then on, the godparents were expected to treat the child as one of their own should the child be orphaned or other necessities arose, and to continue to do so until death. It was also expected that the association between the two families would be continued and strengthened over the years to include the aforementioned mutual assistance at any given time. To be chosen as a godparent was considered an honor and even though there were those who had a number of godchildren, it often served to elevate their status in the community since it was a recognition of their prestige among the other families. The wealthy especially would recognize the gains to be made by both families from this arrangement since it widened their network of subordinates.

The family that remained united and looked to enhance their status both economically and socially by increasing their numbers, forming valuable fictive kinships and making use of all adult members of the family as producers and all available strategies for monetary growth had every chance of success. However, when the family divided on the death of the parents or when razdel (separation) took place due to personal difficulties among the family members, the result was often disastrous. As we have seen with the large family
in Smolensk, it could reduce one prosperous family to two or three families of poor peasants. The intent, then of the family and of the commune was to keep the family together and when this was not possible, to guard the assets of the family. In the mind of the peasants, a home and land left in the hands of a woman was not a viable option. Even though the woman of the family may have been the strength behind the husband and though she may have been more capable than the nearest man, she was not considered by the men who ruled the village to be competent and it was simply not acceptable under customary law for her to take an equal place with the men as a household head in the commune. This did not hold true for all villages or communes but it was a basic tenet that the wife of the patriarch did not receive a full share in the family property. Customary law called for the division of the property equally between the brothers of the deceased patriarch and his sons. The ownership of the home was left to the brothers which did not pose too much of a hardship since most families divided after the death of the father and rarely remained in one izba. The remaining property of the father was then divided equally between the sons; daughters received no part in the estate and were placed in the care of their brothers who were expected to find suitable husbands for them and to provide them with a dowry when they married. However,
adopted sons shared in any inheritance according to the number of years they had spent in the home. Usually if it was more than 6 years, the adopted child shared equally as did the son-in-law if he lived with the family.\(^5\)\(^8\) This arrangement left the widow with very few material assets unless her children were young in which case she maintained the family home until either her children matured or she remarried. In some volosty she was left with nothing but her clothes and what remained of her dowry.\(^5\)\(^9\) When her children came of age, if she did not remain with them, the mir would move her to another small izba, or she could leave the village to live elsewhere, either with her birth family or with a grown child. Of course, the length of the marriage and the age of the woman was often taken into consideration. In Ot'iasovsk volost', Tambov gubernia, the courts allowed nothing for a young wife but up to one half the grain available for an older wife.\(^5\)\(^0\) This would see her through a difficult period until, perhaps, other arrangements could be made. Circumstances, however, often changed these rules and an individualistic approach was taken to the problem.

Widows with young children were often at the mercy of the brothers-in-law or fathers-in-laws who resented sharing their wealth and that of their families with the widow. The widows then could make use of the volost'
courts to remedy the situation. One case in point was the complaint of the widow Dobova who, on the death of her husband, asked the court to divide the family property equally among her two young children and herself. She did not ask for everything that she and her husband had worked for, only the heir's portion. The defendants, her father-in-law and brother-in-law opposed the division and refused to voluntarily separate. In this case, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, Dubova, and decided that the property had been acquired equally with the family of the deceased and therefore the heirs were to divide the assets equally. In Taradeevsk volost, a similar complaint was lodged by a young widow against her father-in-law whom she claimed had taken all of the money and assets of her deceased husband. The father-in-law admitted the claim and an agreement was reached to pay the widow half of what was owned by her husband, two rubles and four measures of rye. The complaints of the widows were not always so clear cut or simple. In Volokolamsk uezd, an 80 year old widow petitioned the court for a division of property after the death of her son with whom she had lived. She no longer cared to remain with her daughter-in-law and two children but wished to move in with her son-in-law. Her son's family had apparently been economically successful since the property in dispute consisted of:
A home with outbuildings, a barn, shed, horses, a bull, four sheep with lambs, spring grain, four chetverti or rye, oats, agricultural tools, and whatever remained after the payment on the sowing. With all of this she added a remembrance on her application that the "dead should rest in peace." From all of this wealth she had, to date, received only a cow and a chetvert of rye and oats. The court sympathized with her and ruled that she should receive in three parts, an outbuilding, sheep with two lambs, 20 puds of hay, 20 puds of spring straw, two chetverti of rye per field at harvest time, a measure of peas, a measure of hemp, one hen, two small tubs for tableware and a small cast iron pot. All of this was to be placed in the hands of the son-in-law who signed a paper agreeing to manage the widow, feed her and take care of her until her death. He would also pay for the land and make any other monetary payments required by the village. In the same volost', the opposite problem was brought before the court. A widow complained that after the death of her husband, her aged mother-in-law drove her from the home in which she had lived for 30 years and refused to give her any part of the property. Her claim was based on the confession of her husband to the village priest in which he had agreed to bequeath to his wife the money or wood for a new izba and two chetverti of rye for provisions. Her mother-in-law
claimed that the deceased had left a last will and testament which did not mention these bequests to the wife. However, she could present no witnesses and the court chose to accept the testimony of the village priest concerning the confession. The final ruling granted to the widow approximately 100 trees to build her izba at her mother-in-law's expense, and one chetvert, four measures of rye for food.64

These cases in the volost' court records make the point that customary law as expressed by the informants in the villages was not always applied across the board or on an equal basis to all plaintiffs. Subjectivity was always a factor. Normally, these divisions were left to the families and the elders and the courts did not enter into them. But, in the case of a dispute, the court seems to have ruled according to the wealth of the family, the ability of the newly widowed woman to be able to support herself in the village and of course, on the individual. It would be unrealistic to assume that a court that decided criminal cases on the basis of past performance and character would not do so in the case of family property.

The problem of the relative wealth or lack of wealth in a family is a difficult one. Most of the research available is geared toward statistical information which may or may not give a true picture of a family's economic
success. For example, it can be assumed that a large family with a number of producers, draft animals, rental land and outside sources of income would be fairly wealthy. However, unless we have a full accounting of the family members, their incomes and outlay it is almost impossible to put a human face on the statistics. A family may have several grown sons with no small children or elderly parents but this does not tell us the character and productivity of these sons. In the case of the large family of Smolensk, the once large family divided because although they were fairly prosperous, the sons, their wives and parents could not get along together and succeeded only in working for themselves. Engel'gardt tells us that each wife took care only of her own husband and children and refused to take part in the work of the family as a whole. We also are told that although the sons were big and strong they were also, in Engel'gardt's words "dimwitted" which indicates that they may have been unable to understand the economic or monetary aspects of the family business. 

The study of the relationships among Russian family members is arduous at best since most of the village registers record only first names and patronymics of the household head. A surname, if it has been adopted is usually not included. This makes the tracing of family histories and lineage difficult at best. A woman in the
family was usually not identified at all unless she was widow or soldatka and considered to be a household head. Any information on her birth family or birth village was omitted since it was believed that once a woman married and relocated to her husband's village, her own place of birth was no longer important. This information only resurfaced if and when she divorced her husband or when, upon his death she returned to her birth family. Given the dearth of information which would flesh out the details of the families presented here I must rely on reasonable assumptions to ascertain familial relations in a given village.

In the village of in Il'insk, Vladimir, a rather large village of 104 households there are clusters of families with similar names and patronymics. Since separated families tended to build homes in close proximity to other family members, sharing at least some implements of agriculture or continuing to work in the same businesses we can make the assumption that Ivan Vasil'ev and Iakov' Vasil'ev were brothers since they lived next door to each other. They may also have been related to neighbors Dmitri Vasil'ev and to Vasilii Vasil'ev. In the same area of households was one Vasilii Ivanov, possibly the father of all four men. The possibilities in a village are limitless and the path to verification is circuitous. But it is virtually impossi-
ble to document all of the family relationships in the village, without more pertinent facts. As shown above, marriages and baptisms united a number of families within one village. The interweaving of families made up of grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, adopted children, blood-brothers, collateral relatives and fictive kinships was almost indispensable in the countryside because it gave family members a base of support among people that could be trusted and could therefore act as a first line of defense against outsiders both in the village and beyond. In times of need, members of the extended family were called upon for assistance before neighbors since the familial relationship created, in most cases, a large group of fellow villagers who could be trusted. Allegiance was first to the family and then to outsiders.

The peasant family in Russia was more than just a business, it was a vital component of village society which alternately grew and declined both physically and economically through the generations. When peasant families separated, the large extended family was naturally contracted into several nuclear families which then were often reduced to poverty. But this idea of division tends to give a picture of small families, working totally alone and therefore unable to achieve any parity with larger families. Indeed, many times this was
the case. But, the small peasant family was not usually so isolated in its pursuits as it would seem. With its wide reaching network of kinsmen both through consanguinity and affinity, the Russian family could claim as we have seen, a large group of relatives both in its own village and in the surrounding countryside. Kinship relationships were invariably calculated along patrilineal and patrilocal lines. Therefore when a razdel took place and a young couple, for example, left the extended family we are shown only the effect on the patriarchal family of the husband and the struggle of the nuclear family to redefine itself outside of this parental family. This approach in most of the research neglects to mention the other family relationships were act as support groups; the family of a wife which already consisted of siblings, a patrilineal line of its own, collateral kinsmen and a web of fictive kinships developed through the years. Unfortunately, the Russian documents available on family studies do not tell us about the network of family relationships which undoubtedly existed. In other peasant societies, for example, those in Latin American, Asia and even in contemporary Europe, the extended family is considered to be a necessary adjunct to the nuclear family.

While it is true that in many cases peasants would move to a new village where they lacked any network of
kinsmen. Often villagers left their homes in favor of economic advancement such as work in the city where they would remain for many years often ignoring the efforts of the mir elders to force their return. But it would seem that the majority of the villagers lived their lives within the same circle of villages, enlarging the circle of kinship relationships with each new generation and making use of these relationships in a give and take exchange of mutual assistance which was necessary for economic and probably emotional survival.

Unity was essential to the economic survival of the Russian peasant family but often this solidarity extended only to the economic realities of life. Tensions abounded in the peasant izba and the members of the often large extended family were frequently at odds with each other. Individual personalities and problems inserted themselves into day to day living. And although unity of economic purpose was paramount, the various strategies chosen by peasant families to achieve economic fulfillment were not always successful nor was there always complete agreement among the family members especially when the basic decisions were left in the hands of the khozian. But the success or failure of the peasant agricultural endeavors was not just a question of work and strategy but in a large measure it rested in the hands of nature. The fact that a family business could
be wiped out because of drought in one year and heavy rains the next, heightened the tensions in the families by making future planning nearly impossible. In this atmosphere of not only poverty but uncertainty, human emotions were bound to surface and the resulting tensions could serious damage if not destroy the unity of the family.
ENDNOTES


2. The extent of the peasant's inability to get ahead can be seen from the zemstvo statistics for the various provinces. For example, Saratovskii sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii po Saratovskoi gubernii, vol. 2 and 3 (Saratov, 1884).

3. Krest'ianskoe khoziaistvo, vol. 1, Formy krest'ianskago zemlevladeniia v Moskovskom gubernii ed. V. Orlov (Moscow, 1879), Spass'Temnia, pp. 32-34.

4. The date given for income from nadel does not specify how much was in cash and how much in kind. According to Shanin, the peasant family consumed much of their agricultural harvest and sold what was not needed.

5. Spass'Temnia, pp. 34-37. The calculations presented in the original research show that the family has expenditures of 246 rubles @ against an income of 224 rubles per year. However, based on my calculations, the Chuliukin family comes out about even annually.

6. The expenditure of 138 rubles for food does not indicate what meats or foodstuffs were acquired since the family should have been adequately supplied with produce and had at least one cow that was able to calve.

7. The important cost of seed is not mentioned in the statistics.

8. While the village, volost and zemstvo taxes were a burden, the most feared tax was the state tax. If the peasant family was unable to pay the taxes, an item of value was taken. As Chekov notes in his story "Peasants" the samovar, which was important to a peasant family, was the last valuable asset taken in ransom for taxes.

10. Ibid.

11. Sel'skaia obshchina, kustarnye promysly i
zemledel'cheskoe
khoziaistvo, Iur'evsk uezda, Vladimir Gubernia, 1883,
pp.86-91.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. A.N. Engel'gardt, Pis'ma iz Derevni (Moscow,
1884), letter #1, pp. 9-10.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. Peasants did build, buy, sell and rent
their own houses or space in them sometimes for long
periods of time. This had to have the approval of the
communal elders. A complaint to the volost court in
Vladimir province showed that a house was considered
the property of the person who built or remodeled it.

18. Note the disparity between the 6 rubles which
could be used to clothe this family of 9 in Smolensk as
compared with the 138 rubles required for the Chuliukin
family of Spas'-Temnia. The difference is between the
cost of manufactured clothing against home made clothing.


20. M. M. Gromyko,"Sem'ia i obshchina v traditsion-
noi dukhovnoi kul'ture russkich krest'ian XVIII-XIX vv."
in Russkie: semeinyi i obshchestvennyi byt. (Moscow:

21. Orphaned children were also available and the
family would raise them in exchange for work.

22. Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii
arkhiv g. Moskve (Hereafter cited as TsgiaM), f. 184,
o.8, ed.xp.78.

23. See Rose Glickman, "Peasant Woman and their
Work," Russian Peasant Women, eds. Beatrice Farnsworth
and Lynne Viola (New York: Oxford University Press,
1992), pp. 54-72.
24. A.N. Engel'gardt blames most if not all razdeli on the women. See also the records of the Trudy Kommissii which on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict.


26. Trudy Kommissii, vol. 1, Tambovskaiia guberniia and vol.2, Moskovskaiia and Vladimiriskaiia gubernii. This information is supplied by informants from each volost in explanatory notes to the volost court records.

27. Engel'gardt, p. 169.

28. Ibid., p. 260.


34. Ibid., p. 60.

35. Trudy Kommissii, vol. 1, p. 88

36. Ibid., vol 2, p. 333.

37. TsGIA, f. 203, o. 747, ed.xp. 2110.

38. TsGIA, f. 203, o. 745.

39. Ibid., f. 184, o. 8.

40. Ibid., ed. xp. 1823, l. 1862.

41. TsGIA, f. 184, o. 8.

42. TsGIA, f. 203, o. 745.

43. Ibid.

44. For a discussion of fictive or ritual kinship see May N. Diaz and Jack M. Potter, "Introduction: The Social Life of Peasants" in Potter, Diaz and Foster,

45. See Diaz and Potter, p. 157.

46. Pakhman, p 88.

47. Ibid., p. 89.


49. Pakhman, p. 95.

50. Ibid., p. 85.

51. TsGiaM, f. 184, o. 8, ed.exp.78, l. 48ob.

52. Ibid. There were 55 households in Efim'eva ranging from Martyn Egorov whose worth was 1330 rubles to the widow Ul'iana Egorova with a property value of 15 rubles. Most were valued at 100 rubles or less.

53. TsGiaM., f. 184, o. 8.

54. TsGiaM., f. 203, o. 745.


56. Ibid.

57. Trudy Kommissii, vol. 1, Tambov gubernia.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., p. 77.

61. Ibid., p. 84.

62. Ibid., p. 166.


64. Ibid., p.335.

65. Engel'gardt, p. 259.
CHAPTER II

IS THE FAMILY ALWAYS HAPPY?

In his short story, "The Peasants", Anton Chekhov described the peasant family in graphic and unflattering way. The family in question, while living together, displayed very little emotional unity and in fact, very little love for each other. Life was a difficult struggle and one survived only through being tough. The parents were crude and querulous, threatening the other family members with violence while the daughters-in-law and sons showed only hatred for them and for their respective mates. There was little congeniality among the younger members of the family. They lived together simply because they had no choice either economically or emotionally. While Chekhov may have colored his portrait of this peasant family to make them appear worse than they actually were, he was not too far off the mark when he dealt with the quarrels and the general dysfunctional characteristics of many peasant families.1 However, an important bond of loyalty did exist among family members which ultimately superseded all other relationships. No matter how much one disliked his brother or brother-in-
depended on the ability of its members to work together. Neighbors were important when outside help was necessary as in case of fire or illness but fear, insecurity, and distrust motivated by self-interest prevented the average peasant from forming anything but a superficial relationship with his fellow villagers. There was of necessity some co-dependency on one's neighbors many of whom were lateral family members. But outside of the immediate family, everyone was basically regarded as a potential competitor for land, for outside earnings and for prestige within the village. And this attitude often extended to former members of the family who had separated into nuclear groups. Once a division of the dvor had taken place, the separator and the core family had no further economic claims on each other.

The peasant family guarded its secrets from all outsiders despite the fact that the village was fairly open and everyone knew his neighbor's business. But a facade had to be maintained. This attitude of economic secrecy is not uncommon among peasants and can be especially noted among the Mexican peasants of Oscar Lewis's Tepoztlan where villagers would go to great length to conceal their wealth behind closed doors and locked barns, downplaying ritual occasions when large outlays of money could be expected.²

While these pressures are obvious to anyone investi-
gating the peasantry there has been almost no research on the mechanisms used by peasants to ease their burdens or the troublesome aspects of dealing with large families in closely confined huts and in poverty. Only recently have scholars begun to examine the centrifugal forces at work in the Russian family, to isolate the tensions that existed and to analyze the methods used to ease the problems. 3

All aspects of life had to be geared toward the security and maintenance of the family in a hostile environment where personal disasters could occur at any time. Variables such as drought or floods, illness and the incapacitation of workers in the family were among the unforeseen emergencies that could destroy an entire planting season and force a family into indigence. Occurrences of this nature could be catastrophic for a family struggling on an annual basis to maintain itself. A lost year or even a season of crops could place the average or below average family in a situation of extreme poverty from which it was very difficult, and in some cases impossible, to recover. The constant stress of coping with these possibilities caused tensions which were manifested in violence or alcoholism. Contingency plans had to be formulated so that not only could the family live at a subsistence level for the following year but could put aside enough money for replacements of
tools and seed; cultural and ceremonial obligations had to be met; taxes paid and rental properties acquired to increase the amount of land farmed. The family itself had little control over many of its obligations and many were unanticipated. Therefore it was important that the family, through its workers, be able to maintain a certain equilibrium against any emergency or disaster.

In the family environment one method of dealing with the problem was to acquire more producers which would, in turn, make more economic options available. More workers meant the ability to rent more land, more opportunities for kustar as a side income and more potential for sending family members to work in the city or in surrounding agricultural areas.

Marriages were one method of increasing the number of workers and also of perpetuating the family. Primarily based on the productive needs of the family the girls chosen as brides had to be healthy, strong and willing to work under the supervision of their mothers-in-law and able to produce heirs for the family. Emotionalism and love, although desirable especially to the young couple, were not necessary to the fulfillment of the marriage contract and could be considered obstacles if the intended bride was not a good worker and of good moral character. Often the young people would state a preference for a mate and if the parents of the couple agreed
to their choices then all was well but the marriage was primarily arranged by the families of the young people with a view toward the exigencies of the families. In most cases the young bride was expected to move in with her husband and in-laws and to share the izba with what may have been a large three generational family composed of grandparents, parents, other sisters-in-law, cousins, aunts and uncles and perhaps an adopted son or blood brother. The range of peasant families, though, was great and the extended family could take on many variations. The diversity of one peasant family was described by August von Haxthausen in his trips through Iaroslavl guberniia in the 19th century. He recounts that the head of this family was an old man, a widower with no children. The oldest female member of the family was a widowed relative with a 14 year old daughter. The rest of the group was comprised of the former son-in-law of the old woman, a man who had remarried following the death of his wife and now lived in perfect harmony with his new wife and five children. Despite the lack of blood ties, the family members were very fond of each other and had, in effect, created their own family. According to Haxthausen, this was typical of the Russian view of family. If a blood family did not exist then a family of another nature was created and to the Russian peasant this meant any group of people who worked
together, ate together and pooled their resources. In effect, all of those who shared a "common pot" in both the work and the rewards of the household. If a son established his own household he was, while still a close blood relative, an outsider to the family. He and his family no longer shared the "common pot." In effect, in the view of the peasants the family as an economic unit was so important that they manufactured families to suit their needs even when no blood or kinship ties existed.

However, under whatever guise, this large family confined to close quarters, living on the edge of poverty and anxious about their subsistence became, necessarily a source of extreme tension. Alcoholism and violence as expressions of that tension were rife. But the range of family problems went beyond the short term drinking spree which led to a fight or loud argument. Family difficulties encompassed a wide variety of complaints with both short and long term implications. Inequitable family divisions between the large family and the incipient nuclear families, long-term bickering between in-laws living in the same household and disputes between husbands and wives which often led to violence especially against the wife. Fathers and fathers-in-laws were prominent figures in disagreements with sons over the authority of the patriarch; daughters-in-law were in frequent conflict with their fathers-in-law since they
were often considered to be economic and sexual chattels, and with mothers-in-law over their status in the household. In the realm of marital relations the most frequently heard complaints were those in which the wife charged her husband with violence, alcoholism, failure to support the family or adultery. This wide range of difficulties pointed up the various incendiary combinations that could exist in this large peasant household and frequently did exist.

Any of these problems if taken to the extreme could in the long run destroy the necessary productive balance of the family. And in the Russian village so dependent on unity these tensions frequently became not just family crises but ones that spilled over and affected the entire community. In the necessary resolution of these difficulties the first recourse was to the family itself if that family as a whole had sufficient strength and stability to cope with the problem. Often, however, the family could be manipulated by the patriarch or the babushka (old lady) in which case the results could be disastrous. Unfortunately, the proceedings of these family courts were not recorded and only the reports of ethnologists in the countryside are available to shed some light on them. One such incident, however, is said to have occurred in the village of Kniazev where a young daughter-in-law had a romantic liaison with her unmarried brother-in-law.
Her father-in-law relayed the information to his son who, though described as dull, beat his wife. To the mother of the young men, this, however, was a black mark against the reputation of the family and she called a family counsel or court to decide the fate of the daughter-in-law. The elders who consisted of the patriarch, the husband and another brother, then punished the "whore" by beating her continuously in turn. The informant states that the young woman lay more than a month in this state before she finally died. Her seducer remained unpunished. In this case impartiality did not exist in the family court because there was no one who was able to command the moral authority necessary to enforce a just decision, one in which the guilty parties would be punished equitably and humanely, and there is no mention of the authority of the patriarch in the case who appeared to have been under the control of his wife. A more positive and unbiased approach was to summon the skhod which, again, rarely recorded its actions. However, certain cases of family disputes have come to light through ethnographic reports.

In the village of Arkhangel' an old woman Zakharova came to hate the wife of her grandson. The situation became so untenable that the young wife wanted to leave the household. In desperation the grandson turned to the starosta who convened a skhod. When the old woman
appeared before the elders they scolded her and shamed her for her actions and demanded that she stop all of her scheming since the household belonged to her grandson. On the other hand, the young man was ordered to stop drinking and take control of his household. Finally, the elders decided that the young man had shirked his duties in that he had never stood up to his grandmother nor had he championed the cause of his wife and that this situation was likely to continue. They then ordered that the family separate and the young couple was forced to build another hut. This unique approach to a family problem went far beyond the written law and in carrying out these orders the skhod displayed powers that did not fall within their purview since they were not empowered to demand the separation of a family. The elders, therefore hoped that the crisis had been eased and that the complainants would not carry the case to the volost court which often overruled the skhod's decisions when they were paternalistic or violated the written law. Increasingly in the 1870's, however, the plaintiffs did appeal to the volost courts for a fair hearing on their problems.

The role of the skhod in the settlement of village problems was a difficult one in that it could not render strictly impartial judgements since the elders knew the families, their problems and needs, and the needs of the
community which had to be balanced against those of the individual. As a result, the judgements of the skhod in solving family questsins were often indicative of the status within the family of both the complainant and the defendant and the effect the judgement would have on the family and the village. If, for example, a son brought a questionable complaint against his father, the skhod would most often rule in favor of the patriarch according to customary law which attempted to preserve the hierarchical structure of the family and the authority of the khozian. But since these decisions of the skhod could often be perceived as biased in favor of tradition or slanted in favor of a particular family member, the complaining peasant anxious for a favorable solution found no redress of his grievances through the skhod and would look to the volost' courts where he hoped for a more neutral and ultimately a agreeable judgement.

The choice to file a complaint in the volost' court could not have been made lightly given the penchant of the peasants for solving all problems within the mir and outside of the jurisdiction of the state. However, the number of cases brought before the volost' courts in the years 1869-1872 indicate that this was an option that the peasants were beginning to take in larger numbers. There was a gradual rise in the total number of cases brought before the courts from their inception in 1862 until 1872
when the statistics were calculated. Initially, the peasants viewed the new courts as agents of the state and therefore were slow to accept them. But within a few years the realization that these were indeed peasant courts began to take hold. In Tambov 159 (22%) of the 675 cases heard by the volost' courts were family related. Of these litigations 99 or 14% dealt with monetary and economic concerns, either family divisions which had to be decided by the courts, failure of a son to support his parents, unpaid debts between brothers or theft. The remaining 60 (8%) were family arguments, marital separations, and fights, parents who complained of the disrespect of their sons, sons who resented the authority of their parents and sought to have their fathers declared incompetent, and brothers who used violence against brothers. The statistics for Moscow guberniia indicate a similar percentage of family arguments over finances (14%) but a rise in basic family arguments to 94 or 16% of the 595 cases presented. Vladimir's 114 (34%) of 325 cases exhibited a much larger number of financial complaints 68 or 20% with 46 or 14% of the claims brought against family members for arguments or fights.7

The volost' court dealt with family problems with a mixture of written and customary law (obychnoe pravo). The use of traditional law was invoked in some cases
since it was the accepted form of law in the countryside and was most often applied to problems over property divisions which were difficult to address using a written law designed for urban usage. Illiterate peasants rarely understood the written law and this use of customary law on occasion was predicated on the realization that sole use of written law would create legal chaos especially in these areas of land divisions which had always been treated traditionally. Peasants, accustomed to traditional methods of arbitration would undoubtedly refuse to accept the decision of the courts if only the unintelligible written law was applied. The courts, in all types of cases, often specified that their decisions had been rendered according to either written law or "conscience" which may be an indication of customary law. It was however, often in the best interest of the court to find an answer in written law which could be easily defended should the defendant decide to appeal the case. This approach was most often applied when the pisar was literate and had some familiarity with the legal code. On the other hand, the peasant petitioner would frequently state that he wished a settlement "according to the law" which brings up the question as to what law the peasant was invoking. Was it the one that he understood as in customary law, the written law of which he was usually only vaguely aware or
was it any combination of laws that would find his complaint valid and award the decision to him?

As stated above, customary law was most often invoked in cases involving property separations and divisions. In terms of family tensions this sphere of legal action could be highly volatile for families and in many instances it was both a cause and an effect of family pressures between fathers and sons, between brothers, or between daughters-in-law and agnate (related on the father's side) relatives. Even though certain guidelines were followed according to customary law which defined the rights and responsibilities of family members these traditional divisions were not always easily accepted. It was the indisputable goal of the skhod which decided divisions of property to maintain the economic viability of the family to the benefit of the mir and the family. But, these decisions, although based on tradition, were almost never clear cut. For example, on the death of the head of a family, property was divided according to the needs not only of the family but of the village and commune in general with an eye toward taxation and land allotment. But the disposition of these divisions varied from volost' to volost'. In most cases widows were allotted 1/7 of the movable property in an estate according to time honored traditions of necessity. However, the age of the woman, the presence
of young children and the amount of the estate were taken into consideration when the award was made. If the woman was young and could remarry or if she had no small children, she received only her clothes and dowry and was allowed or encouraged to return to her parents' home. However, if she was responsible for young children or there were no other male family members, the widow became the sole recipient of the property which she kept in trust for her sons until their maturity unless the court saw fit to name a guardian to ensure that the assets would not be lost. Older women were, in some volosty, given 1/2 of the grain collected by the family apparently to ensure at least one year's food or planting. Daughters retained only the property of their mothers and were assured that their brothers would take care of them and provide them with a dowry and a proper marriage. On the other hand, in some volosty, the widow received nothing and could stay in the home only if her children remained with her. If and when the children left the home, the mir moved the woman either to a smaller, widow's izba or placed her with another family who might make use of her services. These women then became the recipients of the charity of others and of the church. This attitude toward elderly widows has been accepted universally by peasantry even in Western Europe where they were considered marginal members of village society. Since,
on the death of their husbands, they were considered to be non-viable members of rural society, there was little reason to treat them as equals with tax paying neighbors. There were some options open to them, however. They could adopt a son or take in a tenant which, in effect, would create another family for her and provide a man to handle the agricultural work. Even though women were important members of the work force during their married life, the belief held that only a man could maintain and work the land, control the family and provide for the family's well being. And this concern with a male head reached not only to the birth sons of the deceased but also to adopted sons and sons-in-law living in the home if they had lived with the family a prescribed number of years (usually ten). This approach was meant to ensure that the family would not fall on the charity of the mir and would remain viable members of the village. Unfortunately the information on the volost approach to inheritance is given in broad terms and denotes general circumstances and does not include individual exceptions to the rules of which there were many. It can not be stressed too clearly that the hallmark of all laws not only customary law, was the inviolability of the family as an economic unit and in recognizing this vital point the courts were compelled to acknowledge not only the law but also local, peasant needs and perspectives. In the case
of the death of the patriarch, the needs of the family itself, the mir, the size and income of the family before the death and the potential ability of the family to support itself after his death, the role played by the widow, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and adopted children in the family were all taken into consideration. There was also the problem of property held in stewardship for the children of a deceased khozian. This property was for the use of their father's family until such a time as they could reclaim their portion. In Perkinsk volost', Tambov guberniia, a widow petitioned the court for the return of her children's property from their uncles who held it in trust. The young widow had remarried and claimed that she had received only half of the allotment promised her. Her former brother-in-law claimed that she owed a debt to the family and refused her requests until such a debt was discharged. She agreed to this and a peaceful solution was reached. In this case the mother of the children was free to pursue her case in the courts on behalf of her children but the sources state that the negotiations had taken place not between the widow and her former family but between her second husband and her brothers-in-law, an indication that the woman was not taken seriously by the men who would only deal with another man. The disposition of an estate after the death of the household head, however, was far more clear
cut than the other types of divisions which pitted brother against brother, father against son, mother against son and the often acrimonious separation of a nuclear family from the extended family. Often this latter form of separation took place simultaneously with the death of the patriarch in which case there was a total upheaval of the economic and family condition.\textsuperscript{14}

But, the position of the peasant body at large was clear: the household had to be maintained first for tax purposes and the larger the family the greater the security. If family tensions could be allayed in favor of unity then the courts would rule in this manner. This attitude was exemplified in a case brought before the courts in Kulevatov a rather large \textit{volost} with three \textit{obshchestva} serving 1260 private peasants in Tambov \textit{guberniia}. Two brothers, Ia. and V. Malakhov in the village of Kulevatov had separated without the authorization of the \textit{starosta}. As a result of the unpleasantness that accompanied the property division, the family was unable to pay the taxes for the first half of the year. The elder brother stated that he was unable to pay the taxes but that he did not want to separate from his brother nor leave his home. The younger brother complained that his brother spent all of the family money wastefully and because of this he no longer wanted to live with his brother. The court ruled in favor of
family unity in this case. The payment of taxes was a responsibility of the family and a necessity for the mir. In this case, neither brother could maintain a viable household alone. Therefore both brothers were given 20 lashes with the birch rod and were refused permission to separate.15

In another case where customary law was apparently applied, the peasant Gorev of Ot'iasov a small volost' of 680 temporarily obligated peasants in Tambov, complained that his son Eliseia had gone to work at the stone works. But after his indentured time had expired his son returned only to buy an izba in the village of Ot'iasassakh where he then remained with his wife and daughter. The money he had made at the stone works was not given to his father and he, as a result, built up arrears of 30 rubles. Gorev requested that his son be forced to return to his home, pay the arrears and also be punished for disrespect and disobedience. The court agreed with the complaint of the father that Eliseia had shown disrespect and had separated from his birth family without permission. Therefore the court ruled that the families were to be reunited. But, emphasizing the importance of the patriarchal family, the son was punished with 15 lashes of the birch rod.16 The basis for this punishment was the strong belief not only in the necessity of keeping the family together as one unit but to insure
that the elderly parents would not fall into abject poverty if another family member took on the burden of taxes. Without the son, the old man had fallen into arrears and there was little evidence that he would be able to redeem himself without help. The burden then for support of the elder family would have fallen on the commune. The decision rendered by the volost' court took into consideration customary law and the right of the patriarch of the family to demand not only monetary recompense from members of the family who went on otkhod or were indentured but also the right of the father to insist upon the respect of his children and all other family members. Without this respect and obedience the family could not survive as a cohesive unit. It is quite probable that had the son chosen to fight his father's complaint and appeal the decision to the justice of the peace, the physical punishment would have been condemned but it is doubtful that he would have been allowed to continue to live separately.  

When a separation took place, all possible assets were divided and some of these divisions were quite complex. A study of the volost' court records yields information on razdel which could not be decided at the family or mir level and gives an indication of the minute detail into which the peasants were willing to go to insure equitable distribution of property or to make
certain that their brothers or relatives did not receive more than what was perceived as a fair share. These complex divisions then involved the volost court recognized as a higher body with greater legal knowledge, able to separate the wheat from the chaff. In Gorel'ski volost, Tambov, two brothers, T. and Stepan Kozarin filed the complaint that a third brother Gavril had not properly divided the assets of the family into three equal parts. They claimed that Gavril Kozarin did not include a number of cows in the division. The defendant claimed that the cows belonged to his wife who had purchased them originally and who now laid claim to the heifers produced by them. In lieu of the cows, Gavril offered his brothers his sheepskin and homespun coat. Obviously no agreement was reached either within the family or by use of a court of arbitration and the matter was carried to the volost court. Their decision was that since the cows were considered as movable property they were part of the family assets despite the fact that they were purchased by the wife and therefore they were to be divided evenly "according to local law and the last revision." 18

One cause for volost court intervention in these types of cases was that separations were undertaken by families alone and without witnesses or approval. Divisions could become acrimonious and the courts had to
be brought in to solve the problems and implement the decisions. In many of the cases brought before the courts the divisions had been made at some previous time, neither witnessed nor recorded and one or another of the litigants had refused to live up to the verbal contract. Therefore the court was forced to hear the testimony of each participant and then to decide the legitimacy of the claims. In these instances, the court then divided the property as it saw fit according to law and custom and with an eye toward the potential viability of each participant. Final settlement normally involved small claims on the order of two chetverti of rye or a horse collar. It was not uncommon, however, for the litigants to attempt to drag the case out by ignoring the rulings of the court or claiming lack of understanding of the decision. In Volokolamsk uezd, Moscow guberniia, a peasant complained that his brother ignored the separation agreement forged by the volost' court and continued to claim the larger part of the rental land shared by the brothers, enjoying the fruits of his labor to the detriment of his brother. His claim was that he assumed the court decision affected only nadel land and not rental land. The court, however, reinforced its original decision and ruled that the brother must return the surplus harvest which totalled 189 sheaves of grain. If he was unable to return the grain then he was responsible
for a payment of eight silver rubles.\textsuperscript{15}

The disbursement of property, was one of the most notable causes of family friction. But this is not to say that all divisions were acrimonious. Many times and indeed most times, they were completed equitably and with no dissension or necessity for outside intervention. In the case of the formation of nuclear families family members frequently assisted the smaller family in the separation if it was in the best interest of both the extended and the nuclear families and the skhod usually agreed.

Although families often separated into smaller units on the death of the khozian, there were those who found it difficult to continue in the extended families and divided early because of continuing conflicts in the parental home. In most cases, the daughters-in-law who could not tolerate their in-laws were blamed for the decision to separate.\textsuperscript{20} The claim has been made that their ability to nag their husbands finally forced the decision. The family in Smolensk described by Engel'gardt and cited in another chapter was, according to the author, an example of control that women could have over their husbands. The hostility that the younger women felt for the extended family was evident in the way they regarded their own small families as individual, three families sharing one space rather than one large family
working together. After the separation the small families would need much luck and excellent management of assets to attain what the family had achieved before separation. Engelgardt, like most of his contemporaries, laid the blame for this on the nagging of the wives who refused to understand the necessity of the large family and who placed their own selfish desires ahead of the family good. While this may have been true in many cases in large numbers of families, it was not universally true.

A review of the volost court records show that family separations were not always the fault of the daughter-in-law even though the daughter-in-law was forced to suffer many indignities, held the lowest possible position in the household, was expected often to tend to the children of the other daughters-in-law and was the last to be allowed to eat at the table. The youngest daughter-in-law, in effect, became the scapegoat for the entire family. The source of her misery was not only her mother-in-law who often ruled the household with an iron hand but also her father-in-law. The extent of this problem was brought out by E. P. Busygin in his assertion that many daughters-in-law were pressured into suffering the unwanted sexual attentions of their fathers-in-law and that as a result their husbands were determined to remove their families from this volatile
situation. In Busygin's view this happened more frequently, especially to the soldatka, than was acknowledged at that time and that the older men often punished the young women for rejection of their advances. Busygin cites the practice of fathers-in-law confining the daughters-in-law to an outbuilding or cellar and refusing them food unless they complied with their impositions. But this type of complaint rarely, if ever, found its way into the records of either the skhod or the volost' courts since it was considered a grievous sin and not usually discussed. There are numerous references in the court records to young wives wishing to separate from their fathers-in-law and husbands but the stated reasons were usually mistreatment rather than specifically snokhozhistva.

Many times, the son simply could not get along with his parents or he was a younger son who had no prospect of becoming the khozian. Under these conditions, it was in his best interest and that of his young family to claim his share of the property and form a new entity. Again these separations, although understandable and numerous, were not always free of argument or strings attached. In Moscow guberniia, a peasant father went to the volost' court to complain that he and his son had separated amicably but that the young man had agreed to pay the family for the rye and flour they had given him.
Some time later he still had made no move toward satisfying the debt. The court decided to allow the son time to remedy the situation but since the original agreement had been accomplished without witnesses or notarization, the court was unable to make a definitive judgement based on the evidence. The members requested that the complaint be tabled for further consideration.

By far the greatest number of rancorous separations took place between brothers after the death of the khozian. Many times these separations involved an absentee brother in the army. Prior to the military laws of 1874, the soldier brother was not expected to take part in the family business and it was considered safe to cut him out of the inheritance even though he may have had a wife and children in the village who would be taken care of by the family but given no share in the property. In the event of the death of a soldier, the wife and children received continuing care from the family. In large families this was not always an easy task. In Moscow guberniia a soldatka filed a complaint that her brother-in-law refused to support her and her two children living with him after the death of her husband. The young unmarried defendant was the sole provider for the family which consisted of his mother, his sister-in-law and the children and himself. However, he was a 19 year old and was overwhelmed by the responsibilities
given to him. While he insisted that he had not failed in his duties to his family, he found it increasingly more difficult to maintain the level of work and production necessary for the sustenance of the family. In sympathy with him the court attempted to provide for the soldatka while easing his burdens and ruled that the family should separate with the widow receiving half of her husband's share of the family property and the money from his recruitment for the support of her children until they reached maturity. However, since her children would inherit part of the land, she was allowed to remain with her family on the land. Whether she maintained a separate hut or remained with her in-laws is not noted but, in effect, she was expected to pull her own weight in the family until such a time that her brother-in-law could create an economically viable business. While all of the background of this case is not known, there were undoubtedly other tensions extant in the family which, if known, would shed some light on whether the soldatka was insensitive to the family situation or whether her complaint was, in actuality, valid and she and her children were indeed neglected by the family. The court verdict however, did much to take the edge off of the economic conflict.

In Kulevatov volost, Tambov, the peasant soldier Sukhov complained that his brother had not turned over to
him the necessary plots from the property of his deceased parents. His older brother claimed that all the divisions had been made and that all the younger was owed was two chets of oats for which he had not asked. The court ordered a redivision because the original separation, a year earlier, had not taken place before witnesses. A Tambov peasant Neverov, wanted to separate from his brother with whom he could not get along. He calculated his share of half of the land taking into account the cost of one izba, a bathhouse, a shed, a threshing barn, an entrance building, two carts, two horses, ten sheep, two cows, two horse collars, two bridles, seven chetverts of rye, six chets of oats, money given to his brother for the purchase of horses, three rubles for his wedding, three rubles for wages paid, three rubles for the purchase of tires, six rubles for tax money and eleven rubles in advance money, one ruble for a horse and one ruble in land obligations, probably rental property. His birth brother and mother appeared before the court and expressed a desire to stay together claiming that the younger son had been lured away from his family by his father-in-law who would benefit from the division of the Neverov property. The court, however, ruled that the private had every right to separate and ordered that he receive one horse, a bathhouse, three sheep and a cart. The grain was to be divided into three parts with one
part going to the complainant. The decision was to be carried out in a month's time and was to be supervised by the starosta. In another case, a mother chose to leave her elder son to live with a younger son which necessitated the separation of the two brothers. The elder son was reluctant to divide the property but agreed to accede to her wishes. His only claim was that she had been gone from his home for three months and that he had been forced to pay for the feed for the horses that she claimed. The court allowed 18 rubles for feed which was then deducted from the mother's property.

The problems of family separation could be enormous. In reading the volost' court records it is easily seen that peasants, even close family members, rarely trusted each other totally. Despite ties of kinship there was always the question of one getting his fair share of that important commodity, property. This assessment can be supported by the number and variety of cases in the records in which one party accused his kinsmen of cheating and sought the help of the courts. For example, a peasant father complained that his son did not treat him fairly in the division of sheep after a separation; a soldier petitioned for half of an outbuilding; the soldier's widow, N. wanted the clothing of her husband which had been claimed by his family; the family of a deceased woman who listed the clothing that she kept in
her trunk and demanded that the husband return such items as a Chinese corset, an altered fur coat and three printed aprons. Much of this is understandable since anything that could be considered an asset was important. A horse collar took on great significance since the purchase of a new one could be prohibitive to a family just starting out on its own land. Barrels, peas and cart wheels were negotiated, argued about and divided among family members and each member who was able to attain something extra considered himself victorious since it meant that he did not have to purchase or grow these particular things. In the case of grains, the separator could stave off hunger or put off the purchase of seed for a period of time with the acquisition of the necessary foods from his family.

These tensions which often caused and also accompanied family separations could mean a catastrophe for both the parent family and the nuclear family. But, they appear to have been a normal part of life in the peasant villages. Separation, no matter how precarious produced a certain amount of vitality of growth in the countryside and after a time, probably eased the pressures on the families enabling them to keep the bonds that united them. On the other hand, frequent divisions within a village also placed limitations on the amount of land each family could possess which eventually made it much
harder for families to sustain themselves through agricultural work on their own plots and forced them to either rent land, or hire out their services to other families with sufficient land. Despite the number of families that separated,\textsuperscript{28} there were also many who were unable or unwilling to divide their property and in many of these households the tensions continued unabated. Economics, blood ties, marriage or just lack of land and other resources forced them to stay together and these pressures were manifested in fights, alcoholism and ultimately broken families. This is not to say that the divided or nuclear families were stress free in their interpersonal relations, only that the large, poor family confined to one dvor was subjected to a different and more complex pressures.

Alcoholism and the violence that often followed bouts of drinking were manifestations of those pressures. The volost' courts were frequently called upon to decide the punishment of those peasants who attacked their parents, in-laws, brothers and wives, not to mention, neighbors, while under the influence of vodka. Since alcohol in many families was an accepted form of recreation the potential for alcoholism was great. In numerous huts the peasants drank vodka to start the day and to finish it.\textsuperscript{29} And given the amount of hard work and the lack of recreational activities available in the
daily life of the average villager, this is not too difficult to understand. The vodka simply dulled the senses of the peasant and allowed him to better accept his hard lot in life. However, the use of vodka also brought out the hostilities that he felt for other family members and for neighbors and blunted the sense of morality that the peasant claimed was important to him. It was not uncommon for a peasant in a drunken state to invade the homes of his relatives and to show his bravado to his elders. In Volokolamsk uezd, a peasant complained that his son-in-law showed up at his home in a drunken state, swearing and acting scandalously. During his visit he grabbed his father-in-law by the beard and attempted to drag him out of the house. Although the younger man denied the charges, the court ruled his actions a violation of family peace and quiet due to drunkenness and he was given ten lashes. In Tambov, a couple complained that their son-in-law, Churbakov, who lived with them, drank frequently and was violent around the hut. Their decision was to separate him from the family. The guilty peasant was happy to separate and claimed half of the assets of the family. However, the court, while allowing the separation insisted that the young man's behavior was unacceptable. He showed disrespect for his elders and his chronic use of alcohol was disruptive to the family. He was fined five rubles, but
rather than accept this fine, Churbakov argued with the court in rough, impudent language and, as a result, he was placed under arrest for two days. But alcohol was not always essential to violence among family members. Cases brought before the courts indicated that beatings of close family members were fairly common and perhaps were a release of tensions. Anger was not dealt with in a constructive way in many cases and verbal disputes, for the most part, ended in physical abuse not only among the men but among the women as well. In Moscow, a brother beat his sister who then demanded 20 rubles for the insult; in Tambov, the peasant Zhdanov complained about the beating given him by his uncle in a dispute of cattle feed; a fight erupted between a peasant woman and her aunt when the older woman broke into the young woman's trunk and stole two rubles. The aunt, Timofeva was fined for her actions. In a fight that involved almost an entire family a peasant in Tambov protested to the courts that his brother and his nephew had attacked him after he had beaten his sister-in-law who had, in turn, fought with their mother. This free for all was disentangled in quick fashion by the elders of the court who heard the testimony of the mother as to the instigator of the fight. When attempts to reconcile the warring factions were fruitless, the court simply arrested the responsible son on the word of the mother who was a credible wit-
ness.32

One of the most frequent cases of physical violence heard by the courts was the abusive treatment of young wives by either their husbands or their husbands families. Young wives complained of being forced from their homes by their in-laws or husbands, accused of witchcraft and verbally persecute simply because of their position in the family. Beatings were not an unusual form of punishment for daughters-in-law who held very little status in the family. But while the peasant wife was considered to be the property of the husband and usually treated as such by the skhod, the volost' court took a dim view of spousal abuse since the wife was an integral part of the family unit and her inability to work endangered economic productivity. And the same held true for the treatment she received from her father or mother-in-law. Therefore, a woman could take her complaint to the volost' court and could expect, in many cases, some measure of satisfaction.

A case in point was the complaint of a state peasant woman who testified that her husband, Sergei Antonov, violently beat her, tore her shirt and skirt and pulled out much of her hair. Her father-in-law, brother-in-law and husband then tied her arms in sheepskin and led her through the village. When questioned the husband countered that he had asked his wife for dinner but that
she had refused and that after the meal he forced her to sit at the table whereupon she began to throw the plates destroying her shirt and skirt in the effort, then left to go to her mother refusing to comply when he asked for a shirt to wear, a responsibility of the wife. Both the father-in-law and the brother-in-law denied any involvement in the disciplining of the woman. Witnesses offered that they had not seen the original altercation but that they had seen the men dragging the woman through the street. They also testified that the family character of the husband was bad and that the husband himself was fighting all of the time. The court ruled in favor of the wife and the husband was sentenced to seven days arrest. His father was acquitted but his brother was sentenced to three days for taking part in the fight though he did not wound the petitioner in any way. While the wife may have been guilty of what could be called insubordination, the character of the husband and his family weighed heavily in the decision making process. An assessment of their productivity is not given but their reputation was such that the courts considered this to be an equally important factor.

Another daughter-in-law in Tambov filed a complaint that her mother-in-law, father-in-law and even her husband called her a sorceress, beat her and accused her of being depraved. She asked for a separation and
several witnesses supported her testifying as to the truthfulness of her statements. In this case the court ruled that the young wife was to stay with her husband, living like Christians in mutual love and that the parents should stay out of their lives. The husband it would appear was simply taking his cue from his parents in his treatment of his wife. This parental authority and control on the part of the husband's parents was often quite unacceptable to the daughter-in-law since it was usually harsh and was interposed between the husband and wife causing a rift between them. The husband was expected to choose his wife over his parents and while this may have been emotionally satisfying to the young couple, it could precipitate economic suicide.

Young women fed up with such interference and abuse frequently left their husbands' families and returned to the home of their parents. This, however, was not always the wisest choice since the marriage contract was held in high regard by not only the skhod but by the volost' courts. By accepting their daughter back into their home, the parents of the young woman risked censure and a possible fine or prison sentence. Circumstances, however, always played a part in the decisions of the courts and there were times in which the volost' court agreed with the actions of the daughter-in-law as in the case of Petra Kozima in Tambov who refused before the
court to live in the home of her father-in-law who, along with the other men of the family continually beat her. She announced to the court that not even the law could not force her to remain with him. The court accepted her account and sentenced the men of the family to seven days in jail. Petra was to return home with the agreement that if the problem was not solved in 30 days she was free to separate. But while witnesses attested to the truthfulness of Petra's account another peasant did not receive the same support when he complained that his wife, without his knowledge, had left him to return to her parents. His repeated requests for her return went unanswered and he asked the court to force her return. The wife also complained of her husband's cruel treatment but in this case no witnesses were available. The court ruled that the woman was to return to her husband and that the two would live together under the supervision of the local starosta. If any abnormally cruel treatment was observed then the woman could file her own complaint. The complaints of women who abandoned their husband's home because of the alleged cruelty of their fathers-in-law or husbands were numerous and seems to indicate a growing independence among the younger women and an attempt to fight back rather than to accept traditional treatment.

While beating a wife did not of itself constitute
grounds for separation, constant brutal abuse, alcoholism and failure to support the family were considered unacceptable and grounds for the issuance of a separate passport. Unfortunately, these were not unusual or rare complaints but commonplace. There were numerous complaints to the courts in which family tensions were related to alcoholism and lack of support. To illustrate a few: A husband refused to support his wife and children and put them out of their house; a peasant wife with her son left a husband who not only spent all of his money on drink but also all that the son had earned; a peasant in Kovrovsk uezd complained that her husband indulged in drinking, did not tend to his business and wasted money to the point of absolute poverty while giving his wife no sustenance. In the first two cases either the starosta or an outside guardian was appointed by the court to oversee the restructuring and maintenance of the family economy until it was once again on a productive footing. A separation, it was felt, was not in order since there were indications that the family could again be made productive. In the third case, however, the birch rod was applied to the recalcitrant husband as an incentive for a more productive life. But, if a wife complained that her husband was unable or unwilling to mend his ways and support his family due to his use of alcohol, a separation could be granted. The
seriousness of this approach can be laid to the fact that alcohol and idleness not only affected the family but had a negative effect on the rest of the village. A non-working husband was unable to pay his fair share of the taxes or to contribute to the community effort and there was the danger that his family would become the responsibility of the commune.

But separation or divorce was not an easy step to take. In order that the wife be granted her own passport to live where she chose, the husband had to consent. Without this agreement the wife had no choice but to institute formal proceedings which involved the filing of a request for separation with the Imperial Chancellery for Petitions. The first step in this procedure was an investigation by the uezd izpravnik into the reasons for the discord in the family. The family was thoroughly examined as to local residence, age, property positions, length of marriage, morals of the parties involved, the existence of a third party for either mate, the length of time in which problems had existed, root causes of the problems, and whether or not the couple was still living together. This inquiry was completed at the cost of 80 rubles to the party requesting the separation and contained the recommendation of the investigator as to whether the request was legitimate or whether the couple should be forced to stay in the marriage. The petition
was then forwarded to the guberniia governor for consideration and then to the chancellery since all separations had to be approved in the name of the Tsar. Permission to separate for one year was usually granted to be followed by resubmission of the petition if the marital problems showed no improvement in that time.

In the case of Irina Ivanova, a peasant of Klinsk uezd, Moscow guberniia, who filed a petition to separate from her husband Stepan, permission was granted quickly. Stepan had refused to honor his wife's request for separation and so the investigation was begun. The izpravnik confirmed that Irina had been truthful in her complaint that her husband was vicious and depraved and this was borne out by a decision of the volost' court where Stepan had been tried and found guilty of spousal abuse. In the view of the investigator then, the wife was entitled to a separate passport. Similarly, a separation was granted to Agapia Ivanova Rostunov whose husband, a soldier was imprisoned in a Moscow army jail for embezzling and for acting in what was described as a publicly inexcusable fashion. While he had been living the high life in Moscow, he neglected to support his family in Klin. Under the circumstances Rostunov did not refuse to comply with the request for a passport and a temporary separation was granted. A review was to be made in a year to ascertain whether the husband had been
reformed and whether the marriage could be maintained as a viable entity. It is obvious that these requests for separation were not treated lightly. The time and money involved in the procedure made it difficult at best and only those who felt that they had valid complaints and were living in an untenable relationship would make the effort. Divorce was the ultimate method of separation and could be accomplished through the church only under certain conditions. Adultery was the only accepted reason for divorce but exceptions were made for other causes, most notably, failure to consummate the marriage, marriages that had taken place at a younger age than approved by the church, lying about ones status before marriage and fourth marriages. Because of the church's ban on divorce but acceptance of life long separations, bigamy became a major problem in the countryside. A man or woman could take another spouse after a lengthy separation during which time their former mate had left the area. In the eyes of the church and the state this naturally constituted bigamy and nullified the second union immediately. But the disentanglement of a family was so complex that often the peasants would react to necessity on their own initiative. A man whose wife had separated from him needed a woman to oversee his house and possibly his children and so the church's ban on divorce was not always acceptable and ways could be
found, village priests could be found who would circum­vent the church's dicta. 39

On occasion, however, the volost' court would grant a separate passport to the wife if an abusive or adulter­eous situation existed. Although they had no jurisdiction over the granting of a divorce this allowed the spouses to be free of their families without the lengthy process of petitioning the Tsar. And while the option to request a legal separation from the higher courts was available it would appear that this was not the approach taken by most peasants especially those who lived a distance from Moscow. Most of the complaints were handled by the volost' courts locally and the preferred solution involved a settlement of differences on the spot rather than a long separation. A peasant wife in the most rural areas did not have the options for support that those in the city had. Therefore, she was constrained to either accept her situation, attempt to solve the problems or return with her children to her parents' home. The actions of the volost' court under these circumstances varied from place to place. In some areas, the judges refused to agree to separations while in others they took the complaints of the wife seriously and granted her request even without the permission of her husband. In cases where the husband had alienated the family property so that the wife had no means of support, a separation
was usually granted on the word of the starosta and
witnesses. But it cannot be said that all of these
complaints of young women had validity and that the women
were entirely innocent of any wrongdoing. It was not
always the husband who was guilty of alcoholism, violence
or failure to live up to marital responsibilities. While
the volost court may have attempted to preserve the
family economy by forcing the women to return home, there
were also those cases in which the complaints of the
women were spurious at best. In an interesting case, a
young woman asked for a separation from her husband and
in-laws because she claimed that while her husband was
away, her father-in-law had refused to support her, to
feed her and to supply her with a home. She had returned
to her parents but still asked for support. The lengthy
questioning by the judges elicited the facts that while
her in-laws wanted her to return to them, she was not
starving and she did have a home. She simply wanted
maintenance from both her birth family and her marital
family. 40

However, it must be noted that while the complaints of
wives against husbands were more numerous, the opposite
problem also existed. Young women, especially, left
their homes for a variety of reasons but there were also
complaints against "bad" wives. In shuisk uezd, a peasant
complained about the evilness and dissolute behavior of
his wife, and asked to separate from her. The court refused the separation request but placed her under arrest for three days on the charge of bad behavior. At the end of her sentence she was sent back to her husband to live peacefully and told to be more considerate of her husband and his family. In the same uezd, a peasant complained that his wife was spoiled and refused to live with him. The defendant explained that her husband had turned evil and that she could no longer live with him. The volost' court returned this case to the skhod for supervision. In an interesting finale to a case of adultery in Kovrovsk Uezd in 1867, a peasant complained that his wife had committed adultery with another local peasant. The man in question admitted his sin and the court ruled that both the wife and her lover were to be punished with 20 lashes of the birch rod. However, the court also ruled that the mother of the young man was also to be punished in the same manner because she had failed to raise him properly and to curb his vicious inclinations.

According to S. V. Pakhman in Obychnoe grazhdanskoi pravo, the voluntary absence of a wife from the home of her husband and his parents was a criminal offense and the court was bound to return her to her home and to be kept there under the jurisdiction of the starost. Many of the marital abandonments did not come before the
courts because, as peasants explained, they were unaware of the law that prevented them from leaving the home and the remaining spouse simply did not pursue the legal paths open to them. This may have been one source for the number of bigamous marriages of which the church complained. In a given situation a peasant may have been ignorant of his legal rights, allowed his wife to leave without question and merely taken another wife.

Although complaints of abuse and the requests for separation were among the most numerous of the charges brought before the courts, they were by no means the most damaging in terms of family harmony and continuity. There were frequent protests of abuse not only between husbands and wives but between parents and grown children. Often the older people had to rely on their sons to continue the family enterprise and when the relationship between parents and children broke down, the family unit was again seriously compromised as was the ability of the parents to support themselves. Complaints against sons who showed disrespect or failed to support elderly parents thereby making them the liability of the _mir_ was a common issue. So also were charges of abuse, both mental and physical, and disrespect and disobedience toward the elders.

In most cases the courts ruled in favor of the parents. For example, in Moscow, in 1871, a peasant
complained that his son did not give him respect and obedience and had beaten him. Although the son denied the charges, the court found his attitude to be menacing and after questioning witnesses decided that the son was guilty and promptly sentenced him to ten lashes with the birch rod to be followed with supervision by the local starosta until a change in attitude was observed. In another case, an elderly peasant went to live with his oldest son in joint residence. However, the wife of the son began to slander him, accusing the old man of adultery with her. The son, under these pretexts, banished him from the home. The court again ruled in favor of the father, punishing the son with 20 lashes for banishing his father and for permitting his wife to slander the old man. The same punishment applied to a Vladimir peasant accused of wasting his mother's property, i.e. her grain and using toward her insulting and foul words. He was sentenced to 15 lashes with the birch rod. Although it would appear that disrespect of sons and daughters against mothers was less frequent than against fathers, the problem did exist and was an indication of the friction present in the peasant household where a man and his family were so tightly bound to the previous generation. Subservience to parental authority was an accepted way of life among the peasantry and only the possibility of the gross misman-
agement of family assets due to alcoholism or other infirmities such as illness or age could alter that respect and obedience. The severity of the punishments were an indication of just how the peasant courts viewed the disrespect of one's parents and family unity. Normally, the birch rod was reserved for serious crimes against fellow villagers, such as theft and some of these volosti reported that it was not used at all except as a last resort. Fortunately, most of these problems could be allayed by the court system or by the local skhod. Few peasants with parental problems would choose to ignore the judgments of their elders in the mir or the decisions of the volost' court and although the problems may not have always been solved they did act as a restraint.

Violence among family members was not a rare phenomena in Russian peasant families, it was often accepted as normal and was a manifestation of the tensions endemic in many households. Peasant complaints to the volost' courts about familial violence were commonplace and it would seem that many of them could have been settled within the home. But perhaps the intervention of the court was necessary in situations where the violence was merely the culmination of long term feuds. In Tambov, the peasant Akim Blagov was brought before the court on the complaint of his older
brother who claimed that Akim had beaten him while drunk and did not even know that he had knocked him down. Akim confessed his actions and asked for his brothers forgiveness but the brother would have none of his apology and demanded that he be punished. He was lashed with the birch rod ten times. This seemingly simple problem was related to unintentional alcohol induced abuse and there was no assertion on the part of the plaintiff that the actions were planned in advance. However, the refusal of the elder brother to accept an apology indicated that other factors were involved. Perhaps this was a continuing problem that had been tackled before without good results or there may have been other factors which created a poor relationship between the brothers. These facts, unfortunately, are not given in the court records and we are only left to wonder about the intransigence of the injured brother.48

We can see from the numerous complaints that peasants families although for all intents and purposes bound inextricably together economically, did not always function as smooth units. The conditions in which they lived, which included not only close quarters but apprehension over economic viability, deprivation, illiteracy and the need for constant back breaking labor all combined to create a potentially explosive situation. The aged and authoritarian parent, the discontented son
who awaited the opportunity to become the patriarch, the young wife with no rights or her own who wanted to separate, the brother who had worked the land and did not want to share it with his family, and the family with an alcoholic and idle husband all were part of the village picture. Whether this was the norm or the exception cannot be decided based on the available information. However, enough cases can be illustrated through the volost' court records and through the efforts of 19th century ethnographers to show that even though the peasant was dependent on his family for sustenance and the economic viability of the family depended on cohesion and the efforts of all of its members, it was not always a smoothly working relationship. Each member of the family depended on the other and usually trusted very few members of the village outside of the immediate household but the interpersonal relations within that household could be extremely tense. This is not to imply that all peasant households were filled with tensions and that all parents, children, siblings and married couples fought with each other. Understandably there were many households in which the members maintained solid working relationships with only a modicum of overt conflict. However, the lives of large members of the peasantry were filled with so many pressures that the release of these tensions was both necessary and, in some cases, probably
desirable. Once the pressures had been eased there was little reason to continue violent or anti-social behavior.

2. Oscar Lewis, p. 7.


5. Tenishev, p. 63.

6. Ibid., p. 64.

7. These statistics are compiled from the court cases of the Trudy Kommissii.

8. The distribution of property after the death of a household head was a local problem and not all volosts maintained the same rules.


10. This was standard procedure according to the Trudy Kommissii.

11. Pierre Goubert, The French Peasantry in the 17th century, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 144. Goubert also notes that these women did whatever was necessary for survival: they pilfered, sold spells and teas which were meant to be either aphrodisiac or cleansing to the blood.

12. Worobec, p. 66.


17. Since the physical punishment was carried out immediately this would have been a moot point. However, the justices of the peace were not inclined to use the birch rod and condemned the practice after the fact.


20. Engel'gardt and most of his contemporaries accepted the theory that the daughter-in-law was responsible for family separations. This was a bias that was not unfamiliar in the 19th century.


28. See Frierson, p. 75.


35. Ibid., p. 31.
36. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 50.
37. TsGiaM, g. Moscow, f. 17, op.66.
38. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 35.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 68.
44. Pakhman, p. 88.
46. Ibid., p. 364.
47. Ibid., p. 80.
48. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 166.
The Emancipation Edict of 1861 introduced a number of traumatic changes into peasant life in the countryside, changes that the government hoped, would eventually transform former serfs and state peasants into free citizens capable of taking their place in Russian society along side the other classes. It was also hoped that the traditionalist and therefore politically conservative peasants would support the Tsar and his government once freedom had been granted. But to the peasants, the Emancipation edict did not go far enough fast enough. The new laws had an initial effect of creating widespread confusion which resulted in uncertainty as to the real import of the edict and ultimately, in many instances, to the refusal to accept the decree as it was written. The peasantry represented the largest single class of society in Russia but they were, for the most part inexperienced with the larger world, untrusting in their associations with government and the bureaucracy, and wary of accepting what they considered to be a bogus emancipation since it
what they considered to be a bogus emancipation since it clearly held them in servitude for another two years and forced them to pay for the land that they felt belonged to them. In effect, they saw little potential for immediate improvement in their lives and long term betterment of their position was a question. Indeed the peasantry was disillusioned with the scope of the Emancipation edict and waited patiently for what they felt would be the true words of the Tsar, who would comprehend the plight of the peasants, understand that his people were being cheated by the nobles, land owners and government officials and grant them not only freedom from serfdom but also cede to them the land that they had always claimed as a God-given right. They believed then that the true and lasting changes in their status would come not with what they considered to be a preliminary edict but with a new law which bore the signature of the Tsar and which would make the transformation in their lives instantaneous rather than gradual. In anticipation of this expected new edict the peasants refused to totally accept as truth the word of the local bureaucrats and members of the intelligentsia who explained the new laws as they were written. They preferred instead to adopt as fact the rumors and half truths that circulated through the countryside fueling their hopes for absolute freedom without restraint, without indebtedness for land
and without a waiting period.

But notwithstanding these aspirations of the peasants, the edict was crafted in such a way as to maintain stringent supervision over the peasants as a class. While granting freedom from serfdom the government was still unwilling to allow complete autonomy in the countryside nor was it willing to allow individual peasants to immediately and without experience take control of their own lives in so far as economic, legal and social considerations were concerned. It was prepared to make some concessions in terms of peasant traditions such as the limited use of customary law in peasant courts but it was not inclined to create an independent and therefore equal class of citizens in the countryside. To deal with these problems or potential problems, the administration turned to the commune (mir), an organ of limited self-government controlled by elected peasant elders which was already in place in the countryside. The commune was required to take responsibility not only for land distribution but also for the collection of taxes and other duties from peasant householders, and to monitor and control the movements of its members through the issuance or refusal of passports. The commune would then act as a liaison between the state and the peasant villages, gathering the peasants together under one umbrella while suppressing to some extent individual
initiative. Ultimately these control mechanisms had the
effect of intensifying village and communal unity to the
point of reinforcing rather than weakening the age old
separation between village and town, peasants and members
of the other classes. Out of necessity the newly freed
serfs initially responded to the emancipation by with­
drawing into themselves, focusing on their own circum­
stances. There was little interest or experience in
national problems nor was there an understanding of
nationalism or citizenship. Turning inward the peasants
looked to their own trusted and traditional institutions
and attitudes to help them adjust to the new conditions
the most important of which concerned their livelihood.
Most important among these institutions was the skhod,
the town administrative council composed of elected
officials or elders which, in concert with the heads of
village households, set the standards for sowing,
reaping, haying and other agricultural chores on communal
and nadel land, regulated the moral standards of the
community and passed judgement on those who failed to
meet those moral standards. The second major institution
was the volost' court system which had been initiated
with the Emancipation to hear and mediate peasant
complaints. These courts were primarily in peasant hands
and based all decisions on a combination of the written
Russian law and customary law (obychnoe pravo). These
two quasi-political institutions often worked together to solve village problems. However, there were other important entities operating within the mir that were less formal but served the same purpose of creating bonding mechanisms for the villagers. These were the peasants own approaches to communality and solidarity which did not always rely on legal institutions but which were created by a need for structure in interpersonal relationships and to guarantee mutual assistance with or without the skhod and the volost' courts.

Despite outward appearances, there was not total equality within the village but often fine lines of distinction among the villagers. There was a definite hierarchy of prestige and esteem within the village structure. Some villagers were respected and admired, others were barely tolerated. The basis for this respect could be wealth or it could be integrity or it could be the associations and experiences that individual peasants had had with the outside world.¹

Conversely, those who were barely tolerated were considered a burden to the village. Again wealth and integrity or the lack of it could be deciding factors. And the peasants dealt with these people through informal sanctions of their own, either through shunning, rumor or slander or through community self-justice (samosud) sanctioned by skhod. There were also bonds of kinship and
there were informal bonds established between neighbors. These attachments were important when mutual assistance was needed. *Pomoch* or help could be obtained through formal requests to the *skhod* or, if this was not forthcoming, it could be on a neighborhood or family level. Again on an informal level, courts of arbitration, family courts and neighborhood courts could be called upon to decide guilt or innocence and mete out punishment when necessary. If these avenues were unsatisfactory then the *skhod* or the *volost* court was brought into play. All of these mechanisms both formal and informal were part of the necessary village cohesive ness and while the *skhod* and the *volost* courts are the most prominent in historical research, the undercurrents in the village were equally important though far less obvious.

These cohesive elements both formal and informal were of major importance to the peasant following the emancipation when he was forced to accept responsibility for himself and to face new problems. The keystone of the emancipation was the new land laws which allowed the former serfs and state peasants to own and manage land. But this new freedom, such as it was, also brought new responsibilities and thus the opportunity of land ownership was filled with complications for the inexperienced *muzhik*. When the negotiations between the former land owners, peasants and peace mediators were completed
it was clear that the peasant would not receive the amount or quality of land he demanded, expected or needed. Much of the land offered to the former serfs was of poor quality and his rights to water, haying land and open fields were seriously reduced. The former landowners still held the upper hand in negotiations with the peasants and the communes and it was not unusual that the peace mediators, whose responsibility was to achieve a just settlement would be firmly under the control of their peers. With meager resources, then, an improvement in the base economic condition of the peasant was questionable at best. To further confound the newly freed peasant a new set of parameters was placed on peasant initiatives and a new series of expensive and unforeseen obstacles were now presented. Fixed amounts of available land were to be divided and redivided in what was to become a period of increased population. As the land was redivided to accomodate new communal members and the division of nuclear families, the yield in crops per plot was reduced. However, the peasant family still had to bear an exorbitant cost for its meager nadel in terms of 49 year redemption payments regardless of yield. This very brief overview of the land reforms accompanying emancipation is by no means an attempt to delineate all of the complications attendant upon the new land laws and it also must be noted that the land situation differed
from region to region dependent upon the type of land, the agreements between landowners and peasants and the economic needs primarily of the former landowners. This short background is simply an effort to provide a framework for a discussion of peasant responses to the upheaval and to clarify the resultant internal cohesiveness among the peasants.

Along with the issues of land usage, the former serfs were also faced with other economic changes. Where previously, the landowner or serf master had supplied the necessary tools, and other implements of farming they now had to be purchased either individually or collectively. In addition there was heavy taxation at the local, gubernia and national levels that had to be met. But first and foremost, was the necessity of maintaining at least a subsistence level of existence for the peasant family. If this could not be accomplished then all other agricultural activities and expenses were extraneous. Economically then, the emancipation placed the peasant in a tentative if not a precarious position. Under these circumstances the traditional peasant commune became even more of a focus of authority and community and especially comfort, relieving the peasant of the burden of dealing individually with the changes decreed by the government and ensuring that he was not left totally reliant on his own initiative but, as a member of the group could look
to a certain comradeship with his neighbors under the aegis of the mir. The land to be used by the peasant was distributed by the commune in accordance with the new laws but also in keeping with the traditional customary law which was familiar to the peasant. By using this method, the distribution would be fair. Taxes were assessed according to amount of land and the ability to pay. The sharing of burdens and assets and a total sense of solidarity were absolutely necessary both under the law and, in reality, for the survival of the agriculturists. The commune then presented itself as a unified, egalitarian society on which the muzhik depended, and which dictated his actions and provided security to enhance the common good. In effect it bound all villagers together in the pursuit of common goals.

All of the economic activity in the village was watched over by the commune which while providing some sense of security also monitored peasant actions to ensure compliance with the common needs, the most important of which was that the villager pay his required taxes and duties and meet his other communal obligations. The peasant commune charged with these responsibilities could consist of one village or of several usually dependent upon the size of the villages. In the case of the large village commune, the inhabitants were represented by a skhod of elders, headed by an elected
starosta. Where there were several smaller villages in an obshchina, each had its own skhod of elders to deal with local problems and were represented at the larger meeting. The largest skhod was at the volost' level and dealt with the problems of all of the communes and members in that volost'. Its membership was composed of the local starosty and elected members of the villages.

The elected and admitted leaders of the villages in the skhody met on the demand of capable individuals to deal with matters of fiscal necessity such as finding the money for certain ventures, redividing land to create a cemetery or to dig the village out of debt. Along with the allocation of taxes, and the distribution of land, the skhod also determined the times to begin work, apportionment of village responsibilities, the hiring of herdsmen or shepherds and the designation of guardians for orphaned children. All of these actions of the skhod were done with the participation of the household heads and, indeed, everyone tried to have a voice in the decisions. For example, in the village of Spas' Temnia, Moscow province, on one occasion the skhod met to discuss the issue of a pair of pants for the obligatory soldier of 75 kopecks. The original request had been for one ruble, 25 kopecks. "Plenty, Plenty" shouted a voice from the crowd. A member of the elders seated at a table objected that it was not enough. Another neighbor
interjected that 30 k. is sufficient for the pants and seven grivens for the shirt. "Cheap brother", states the teller at the table. The women in the crowd yell "On the contray by God. That amount should pay for both pants and shirts. The final decision on the price is 40 k. for the pants, 85 k. for the shirt and three rubles for vodka. But the argument is not over. The shouts continue with statements such as "It is enough for burial." In this case the matter was solved with some agreement but often no agreement could be reached especially in weighty matters and care had to be taken that the final decision would stand up if appealed to the volost' court. If there was prolonged discussion and argument the starosta or some other respected figure would try to force a decision often asking in disgust, "What are we children that we can't make a decision?" If there was still no decision then the majority prevailed as in the case of the soldier's pants, or a "No agreement" was entered and the matter was tabled for the future by the whole group. If there was unanimity then the skhod celebrated with vodka.4

This meeting of the skhod of Spas'Temnia gives a clear picture of how decisions were made at the village level. While it is almost certain that land redistribution and tax assessments were grounded on certain principles of equality this was not always the case in
the other functions of the mir. The capability, character and work ethic of individual members were taken into consideration when decisions were made. On the other hand, the ability of some members to shout louder than their contemporaries also assured an advantage in skhod decisions. In some instances the decisions of the skhod were based on the amount of vodka consumed and the ability of the mir or certain villagers to pay for that vodka. However, there were also villages where drinking at the expense of the mir was forbidden. In one such village described by S. T. Semenov, a clever starosta, Stepan Astaf'ev refused to spend money on vodka. Certain members of the village tried to change his mind but to no avail. Astaf'ev insisted that the mir money was to be used for taxes and to pay the arrears of those who spent their money on drink. Some villagers were most unhappy; Danilo the shoemaker, the stove maker Vasilii and his brother Sidov, and the Revtsovi brothers. According to Semenov, the majority of these profligates had families and the opportunity to drink at mir expense was not taken lightly. It was an unhappy village in some quarters but it was a village where business could be conducted with clear heads and the taxes were paid.

As in all semi-enclosed peasant societies, villages were in reality stratified societies based first on membership but then on the certain qualities necessary to
the maintainence of harmony. But the more subtle
stratifications were not always obvious to outsiders
since they were often founded on internal perceptions and
nuances which were not shared with outsiders familiar
with the more objective criteria of the great society;
education, money, family and associations. A prosper­
ous villager with a large family, working animals and a
large pool of land would naturally have more prestige
within the village community than a poor family with few
assets and he therefore could command a certain respect
at any given time. But this situation could have a
certain fluidity and death, disease or razdel could cause
the disintegration of a family and the loss of this
prosperity. Razdel or division of assets was quite
common after the emancipation and could mean that a large
seemingly wealthy family consisting of several grown sons
and their wives who shared draft animals, small animals
and land could impoverish themselves by dividing into
nuclear family units with small households, little land
and fewer if any work animals. Prosperity then could
be transitory and therefore not always a reliable
yardstick for prestige in the village but this is not to
say that a financially successful villager was not always
an example to his neighbors. However, many of those
considered to be of the upper stratum in the villages
were those who commanded respect because of some neces­
sary skill, personal accomplishment such as familiarity with the outside world, an acknowledged integrity or because of service to the community. There were other stratifications as well in the villages. Teachers who came from outside the village and meshchani (members of the petty bourgeoisie) were considered in a different category from the average villager although they may have been in the village for a long period of time and may have been, in fact, a member of the peasant class or, in the case of meshchani, married into a local family. These outsiders to the village, it was believed, did not share in the same common interests as the local peasants and therefore should not be allowed to take full part in community decisions. All other considerations aside, the primary element of acceptance was that those who shared in the burdens of the group and took on responsibilities were considered to be model peasants and entitled to be heard while those who willingly neglected their obligations and failed to contribute to the good of the community were pariahs and unworthy of equal treatment. It would seem that the majority of the villagers fell somewhere in the middle between models and derelicts, submitting to the will of the commune, paying whatever taxes they could afford but taking on only those extra responsibilities that could not be avoided.10

The commune existed for all and all were expected to
share in the labor and the duties but of necessity, the group only fully supported those who were able to carry their fair share of the communal responsibility. However, the individual peasant was still primarily on his own with his family to win or lose in his battle for subsistence and to compete with his neighbors for economic advancement. If a family experienced the death of the head of the household, its neighbors would help for a period of time. But, if a family remained a burden on the community for an extended period with little relief in sight, the commune would essentially abandon it, redividing its land and share of taxation. This is not to say that the villagers were unsympathetic towards their neighbors. If they refused to help another in time of need, the same would be visited on them.

Peasant attitudes toward fairness permeated much of their ethical code. There was little sympathy for the malingering villager who neglected his duties, drank to excess and caused his family to fall into utter and complete poverty. But at the same time that they drew the line at supporting those people who refused to help themselves they were more than happy to assist anyone who through family tragedy or just bad luck could not for a period of time help themselves, could not sow their nadel land, pay their taxes or feed their families. This traditional source of help, called pomoch' was as
structured and as institutionalized as the quasi-political entities of the village and the skhod. The common thread running through all forms of pomoc' was charity. It was never followed by immediate compensation. For example, if a family izba was destroyed by fire the neighbors responded without delay. At the time of the fire, everyone helped to remove the icons, tear the tightly packed straw roof apart, carry available water to prevent as much damage as possible and to care for the homeless family. Much of this was not only individual help for the family but also a response to the fear that the fire would spread, coming into contact with neighboring izbas. The peasants then could request immediate "obshchestvo pomoc'" for rebuilding and the mir in this case usually responded immediately with money, workers and materials often setting aside a strip of forest and cutting down the necessary logs. When the family could again stand on its feet economically, the money was repaid but the favor itself was returned in kind. Sometimes when money was not the object, the mir voted to use any available cash for the food and entertainment of the workers during the project.

Pomoc' was given at all times and without question to individual families in times of significant necessity such as deaths and marriages. Poor families
often did not have the wherewithall to pay the obligatory costs associated with proper burials, wedding costumes and ceremonials for the brides. Sometimes the wedding finery was made by neighbors or relatives as pomoch'. This concept of neighborly assistance was quite common in peasant societies. In China and other Asiatic groups of peasants, the burial and wedding associations were established arrangements, organized and staffed by individuals in the village with certain skills that could be applied at these times. While there is no evidence to suggest that the same sort of structured organizations existed in the Russian villages the basic idea remained the same.

However, pomoch' did not just refer to immediate responses to calamities or to assistance at family events. It was a highly structured system which also was applied to agricultural work in certain seasons of the year and could consist of plowing, preparation for planting of fallow land, kneading flax or any other work that required much time and many hands. If the household head needed extra help in sowing his fields, clearing stubble or reaping crops, he had only to call on the obshchina for collective support. The petition would be taken under consideration and a verdict rendered. If, however, time was short, the khozian would simply bypass the obshchina in favor of meeting with
the other heads of the village households to request the necessary help with the promise that entertainment and food will be provided during the course of the work. But, when no calamity or disaster occurred, the obshchina usually did not take an active part. No money was advanced and no workers were gathered and the task of assembling pomoch' fell solely on the khozian who had to rely on relatives and neighbors for help. If there was a large amount of work the khozian, or the men of his family, after exhausting the supply of available workers in their own villages, went to the next closest village and issued the invitation; "Please, have some bread, salt, wine and food. For guests there is enough: only give to charity, don't stay at our request; help us meet with other Orthodox Christians in our work." 14

The fact that a khozian had enough work to facilitate the hiring of a number of men indicates a degree of wealth and property. The hired men could not be expected to work for free but had to be entertained fed and treated well. Work usually began at 9 or 10:00 A.M. but a worker could start at 8:00 after eating breakfast prepared for him by the wife of the khozian. This early meal usually consisted of warm wheat bread, cucumbers, honey or syrup and often vodka. When labor began, the khozian had to treat the workers with re-
spect, neither forcing them to work nor showing them how the tasks should be accomplished. If the work was to last for several days, a midday dinner of pierogis, beef, fish, nuts, tea, and sweet meats was provided for up to 15 workers at intervals between shifts. In the evening after completion of the work, the khozian had to provide food and entertainment which often lasted into the night and involved much drinking and celebrating. Since the supply of vodka was expected to be unlimited, workers often brought their relatives to share in the largesse. The women came with husbands, brothers or other relatives and since they had not contributed to the pomoch', they were called zakhrebet-nika. Most of the women did not consume their share of the alcohol but would bring containers in which to carry home the leftovers. This would provide the workers and their families with a store in reserve for future family holidays or just for daily use. A khozian who did not provide the required food, drink and entertainment would find that the next time he needed help it would be unavailable.

The reserve of poor, landless laborers who were willing to participate in pomoch' was large. Relatives and neighbors had first call on their services but a number of "gad abouts" were available "na toloky" and were hired for specific tasks for either one day or
until the job was completed. In the southern gubernias the term pomoch' is applied to a one-time call for assistance but when the work involved was on going or the call was repeated in subsequent seasons, it was often termed "toloka" not just as a regional term but one that differentiates between help and seasonal assistance.\(^{17}\) Often laborers would roam the villages seeking out positions with households known to be in need of labor and able to pay and they would present themselves for work. The women of the household were usually distrustful of these men, but afraid to turn them away lest they seek revenge and after all, the work had to be done.\(^ {18}\) In families where there lived only a husband and wife with young children and therefore few workers, for example, there was little choice in hiring practices. The landless and poor were available and would work for fairly low wages, for a share of the crop or for bread. Considering the fragile economics of peasant life it was not inconceivable that the hiring family may, in the future, have need of the same kind of charity.

For those on toloka, however, the hiring practices were often not so cut and dried or ethical. It frequently happened that the khozian would hire workers on a yearly basis, establishing contracts for the following seasons in the winter when the poor had exhausted
their supply of bread and would be willing to agree to any wages in order to gain an advance. These agreements allowed the khozian to pay less money than if he hired the individual in the spring and summer when competition from other households and necessity would raise the wages. Assuming that the worker did not die or fall ill in the interim, he was expected to honor the contract forged when he was at his most vulnerable. The peasant laborer, however, was not without recourse in these situations. He was aware that the landowner could not recoup his losses if the peasant for some reason refused to work the following season. If there was a written contract, the volost' court could rule against the worker but could not force him to make good his debt. Most of the time the peasant didn't even bother to deny the legality of the contract but if he didn't have the money, there was no recourse. The courts could not sell his property since, if he was poor he was also probably in arrears and owed more in taxes than he did to the khozian. If he was not in arrears then his property could be sold to satisfy the debt but only with the permission of the starosta who fearing the economic destruction of the peasant and his family usually refused to contribute further to its devastation. If the khozian wanted to recover his losses it would have to be through threats and intimi-
The peasant rarely denied the debt and always offered to repay the money on the installment plan rather than by work but rarely could this be worked out to the mutual satisfaction of the khozian and the laborer. In the end the debt usually went uncollected and the peasant was free to form another alliance the following year. This type of attitude was not unusual and therefore although it was indeed frustrating for the khozian it was not unexpected. It was a matter of the khozian forcing an unfair agreement on the peasant and the peasant using highly adaptive methods to renige on the agreement.

Pomoch' served many purposes and the designation was used for many different types of village activities which could not have been accomplished without help. In essence pomoch' was just what the name implies, "help" in all forms for villagers in immediate need, members of extended families and those whose wealth and large amount of land required the assistance of workers during sowing and reaping seasons. It was a part of the internal cohesion necessary to village life. In Tambov gubernia, Kozlov Uezd in the 1870's records show that new houses were built with pomoch'. In Moscow during the same period the transportation of cuttings for a new izba, the transport of logs, haying, reaping, processing of linen and the transporting of manure in
the fields was carried out while Mozhaisk uezd reported crushing flax in villages and harvesting flax in the fields. Vladimir sources reported that reaping, building houses and plowing were common events.22

The basic institutions of solidarity, both formal and informal, in the Russian village are obvious but what is not so straightforward is how the peasants viewed themselves and the rest of society from the relative safety of the commune. What kind of lives did they lead? How did the rest of Russian society view them? In the 19th century writers like Turgenev saw the peasants as simple and stoic yet fatalistic in their view of life and death.23 While these intellectuals painted a picture of a difficult and uncertain existence, they also colored this with an exaggerated belief that the Russian peasant was hard-working, God fearing, serious, moral and shrewd, indeed a pillar of the empire. Indeed the peasant most often saw himself in the same light. But, while some of these perceptions were based in fact others were pure idealization.24 The muzhik worked hard in order to live, was terrified of a vengeful God and was indeed shrewd in his dealings with anyone he believed to be superior to him. He would often tug at his hat, shuffle his feet and affect an attitude of total obeisance when forced to deal with a perceived superior or member of the
elite. But his deference was born of necessity and the experiences of generations of serfdom. He could be highly adaptive in his behavior and often "played dumb" in face to face encounters with outsiders. As Maxim Gorky noted, the peasant was a "tough, cunning realist who, when it was favourable to him, knew quite well how to make himself out as a simpleton. By nature the peasant is not stupid and knows it well." This demeanor may have earned him a reputation for stupidity but it also protected him from punishment in potentially dangerous confrontations. Investigation shows however, that the peasant was not always so benign for at times he was also violent, drank copious amounts of vodka, and often cheated his fellow villagers and outsiders while professing his innocence, shrewdly. In fact, this view of peasants in general was put forth by writers of an earlier age as is seen in the statements of a nobleman of Languedoc, France in the 18th century who, confronting the peasant Jean-L'Ont-Pris stated: ...I am obliged to you for confirming many of the doubts I had about the character of peasants of your kind. Miserable wretches! Who would have said that beneath that innocent exterior, they hid the most perverse morals and the most invincible malice! But these conflicting views on the actions and attitudes of the peasants indicate a certain pragmatism and a method
of coping with a dreary existence that cannot be fully appreciated unless the daily life of the peasant is examined and the difficulties of village life understood. Looking at the everyday life of the average peasant it can be easily seen why it was necessary for the villagers to band together for the common good and why they were separate from the rest of Russian society.

For most villagers their existence was one of strenuous work, poverty, and intense internal competition for economic improvement surrounded by filth, hunger and in most cases unremitting drabness. The difficult working conditions and a poor and unvarying diet which consisted mainly of large amounts of potatoes, bread and other starches flavored with salt contributed to the wretchedness of peasant life. The daily life of a family began, especially in the winter, between four and six in the morning when the peasant wife stoked the fire, lit the stove and began her chores. A breakfast of potatoes, bread and salt was ready at 8:00 a.m after which everyone worked either in the local shops or on jobs related to the farm equipment such as repairs, or in the case of the women at spinning linen or other home crafts until noon. At approximately 12:00 a main meal of one, two or three dishes of soup with cold noodles, crumbled bread in
kvass, potatoes in kvass, radishes with kvass, cabbage with kvass or cucumbers with kvass with a second dish might be kasha.\textsuperscript{28} Meat was almost non-existent in the daily diet and crawfish which might be available from nearby rivers were considered to be inedible since they fed on carrion. As the year progressed there were fewer grains and vegetables and the daily fare was, of necessity, reduced to certain edible grasses which could be boiled with seasonings, mushrooms and kvass or cooked in linseed oil extracted from flax seeds. Fortunately, this down period also coincided with Lent which was a period of reduced intake. The diet varied very little except for holidays when resources were gathered to provided some type of feast which would include meat. While there is evidence of complex carbohydrates in this daily regimen, there is little indication of protein especially in the poorer families. Ethnographers cite some meat and cheeses in the diets but it is doubtful that in many of the poorer villages quail or other small game were on the average menu and cheese products assume the availability of cows, goats or the money to purchase cottage cheese or milk which can be converted to cheese.\textsuperscript{29} Simple carbohydrates or sugar is, of course, obtainable through vodka. According to sources in the villages, vodka was a mainstay, the importance of which grew with usage.
A.I. Engel'gardt cites an example in a village where, he contended that there was so much wealth that everyone had vodka in his home. The drinking custom began with vodka only for dinner. Then the peasants became accustomed to drinking for dinner and little by little began consuming more until they were taking a drink the morning after. Working men, he asserts never drank a glass of vodka before 5:00 a.m. but a glass of tea mixed with vodka was quite acceptable. In the spring, summer and autumn, the hours of work were longer and the labor more physically intensive but fresh vegetables, berries and cereal grasses were more attainable from gardens and forested areas even though rye for bread had to be purchased in many villages.

The daily working conditions and diet of the peasants are best illustrated by the life of the cattle herder Peter, described in chapter 1. The family worked from morning until evening to support themselves yet had very little to show for their labor. The amount of money paid by the village and the few perquisites such as grain did not really satisfy the needs of the family. But the members were not in a position to supplement their income to any great degree.

This combination of poverty, poor diet, vodka, hard work and allegiance to his village and way of life put the peasants into a different light where the rest of
society was concerned. Typically, the peasant was rejected by the other social classes as illiterate, crude and unworthy of consideration by the better educated and wealthier groups. The villagers were naturally aware of their low status vis a vis the other classes of society and despite their astute handling of outsiders, they almost certainly were infected with a degree of paranoia concerning their own worth in relation to these classes. The realization of this general attitude is demonstrated in a short description given by the peasant Michele on the status of peasants in Southern Italy.

God is at the head of everything.  
He commands in Heaven. Everybody knows that.  
Then comes prince Torlonia, ruler of the earth  
Then comes his guards.  
Then comes his guards' dogs.  
Then nothing.  
Then more nothing.  
Then still more nothing.  
Then come the peasants.  
That's all. 31

The attitude of these southern Italian peasants could also be applied to the Russians. Their undeniably low socio-economic status and the rejection of other classes created what some anthropologists have come to call a "culture of poverty" or "miseria" that was both social and psychological and permeated every aspect of peasant life. However this "culture of poverty" also served to create another bond among the villagers, an
"us against them" attitude which pervaded their existence and excluded most if not all outsiders. Thus the peasantry despite its dislike of its low social status responded by maintaining the very unifying characteristics and institutions which preserved that separatness in many aspects. It was, it would seem, a dichotomy. The villagers resented the attitudes of outsiders yet they perpetuated their distinctiveness.

Peasant institutions furthered that detachment; the village, the commune which organized peasant life, and the skhod could be seen as quasi-political institutions reserved to the peasantry. These organizations, along with the volost' courts which, although created by the government, were peasant courts dealing with peasant problems apart from those of other classes, united the peasantry but also divided it from the larger society whose own legal and economic institutions, despite attempts to the contrary, could not ultimately be ignored; taxes had to be paid, military service recognized and the Tsar's laws had to be obeyed. As in other peasant societies, the members also stood apart from the other classes culturally and linguistically, viewing themselves as keepers of the traditions of an old Russia resistant to change and modernization. The use of obychnoe pravo or customary law and samosud (self-justice), the former of which was
barely tolerated by the authorities, the latter, for­
bidden by those same authorities, reflected the atti­
tudes of the peasants in maintaining their traditional
practices despite governmental attempts to the con­
trary. But it was more than just these identifiable
features and institutions that divided the countryside
from the city and the peasant from the seasoned urban
worker. The "us vs them" perspective was a collective
mentalite' in a social structure that embodied certain
ethics, self-sufficiency and inherent xenophobia which
allowed these institutions to flourish, traditions to
be perpetuated and the separatness maintained. Howev­
er, despite the factors that united the peasantry
against the outside and that held the villages togeth­
er, there were innate elements that also pulled the
villages apart. Most of these elements were economic
such as competition for a restricted market, rivalries
among individuals for positions in the dwindling job
market and the departure of various family members for
work in the cities and factories. These factors con­
tributed to tensions, discontent and natural strains on
the communality in the countryside. While the village
and rural institutions then were essentially centrip­
etal forces in the countryside these economic and
personal tensions created centrifugal pressures which
undermined the facade of unity and eroded the idea of
egalitarianism in the villages.

In all societies whether peasant or urban, the family is the foremost unit both economically and socially. But the family cannot live independently of larger social systems and must broaden its scope to include other families who share the same basic principles and the same adversities. These families in the Russian countryside, grouped together in villages maintained a degree of vitality, grew and to some degree changed within the framework of a fluctuating economy and the transformations in their legal status and opportunities. In most cases the village was not just a group of huts clustered together but an integrated and often dynamic community.

The average Russian village could consist not just in a row of peasant huts but, depending upon the size of the village; a church, often a rented kabak, several workshops which provided services and jobs to the local people, a school or the home of a teacher, perhaps a mill, and the peasant homes the size of which could be a measure of wealth but was usually indicative of necessity or family size at least at some point since the erection of the structure. A large izba may be nine meters square for a family of three or may hold five or more members. Smaller homes were usually 8x7 or 7x7 for the same number of people. Most had several out-
buildings for storage. In the larger villages of the Black Earth provinces, the main occupation was farming but most peasants did not rely totally on the income from their nadels. Carting, rental land, jobs in workshops, income from sewing by the women of the household and migration to the larger towns or to large estates often by the younger members of the family all helped to maintain a certain economic viability. In the provinces closer to the industrialized areas, the opportunities were even more obtainable with factories and workshops within a few hours walk of the village. Though the peasant could not expect to make large sums of money, he could, under the right circumstances and in a good year maintain his family and pay his taxes. However again, competition was great and he usually had to contend with other peasants from his own and surrounding villages for the same trade or jobs.

The village of Spas' Temnia, Moscow guberniia is an example of a small village with some economic viability. In the late 1870s there were 69 adult workers living in 14 households. The peasants had their own church, a priest and deacon, a rental kabak which helped to defray community expenses, a pin factory which it shared with another village, workshops and homes of meshchani and of course, the peasant izbas. The village lay 85 versts from Moscow, 25 versts from
the nearest large town and 16 versts from the nearest railroad station. The peasants in Spas' Temnia had been state peasants but many of the same elements and problems experienced by the former serfs were evident. The village was active and there were several outside occupations available such as itinerant glass cutting and knife grinding but the economy fluctuated and in difficult times, the peasants were forced to return to agricultural pursuits and were never very far from devastation. On average, none of the families were able to supply themselves with sufficient grain from their nadel to last for an entire year. Most claimed that the grain lasted only into the new year or, at best until Easter and bread had to be purchased with cash in order to guarantee survival.\textsuperscript{35}

In a similarly sized village of 22 families in agricultural Kamynka, Iur'ev Uezd, Vladimir Gubernia all but one family worked its own nadel. However, there were two home workshops (\textit{Cvetelky}) and a threshing service employing village people. In order to increase income 13 of the families were engaged in tailoring, dressmaking or weaving either in workshops or in their homes. Since the village was small, home production like that of the surrounding villages was for outside consumption villages and the competition for productions and sales was surely intense. There is
no information on the amount of grain produced nor the period of time that the grain lasted before outside purchase was necessary but data from Voronezh and other agricultural provinces suggests that by early spring of any given year, most peasants had used up the supplies from the previous harvest. The information from both of these villages indicates that while agriculture was the mainstay of the area, other sources of income were necessary and if the number of producers in a family was large in relation to the non-producers, a certain degree even of wealth was obtainable.

The starosta (village elder) was elected to his post and was paid some stipend for his work depending on the availability of money in the village. In Spas'-Temnia, Gerasim Iakovlev held the post in 1878 and received 20 r., per year. He was rather prosperous with a family of five but with only two nadel. In order to make up the deficit he worked periodically in Moscow and his wife and daughter-in-law spun linen. As starost he was naturally not liked by all and he was often accused of being a "blood-sucker," a common term for those in authority, but he worked to improve local police representation and appears to have been generally regarded as a fair man despite his position. He was neither the richest nor the most esteemed member of the village but he was willing to take his turn as staro-
sta, a position that some of his neighbors refused.

Although the peasant commune appeared to have been egalitarian and has been depicted as presenting a unified front there were a number of chinks in the armor. The commune did not always run smoothly, the villagers were not always cooperative and the skod was not always fair in its decisions. Presented itself showed there was a real need for this equality. Skhod has often been portrayed as ruthless, drunken and totally unethical in its handling of its judicial tasks, there seems to have been, in most villages, a real attempt to satisfy the legal requirements of the government while maintaining a position of leadership and fairness in the village. Under the law, the skhod and starosta could be called upon at any time to defend their decisions before the volost' court and it was expected that most of those decisions would be in writing especially where a well-educated pisar was available. In questions of fiscal responsibility, the skhod had to keep a set of books for all expenditures and if the starosta or anyone else was diverting money to his own use, he could be called to account. The starosta was also forbidden to engage in collusion with village money and he could be put on notice that this activity would not be tolerated. It was not uncommon for villagers to file complaints in the volost' courts.
against decisions of the \textit{starosta} in money matters. In Vladimir the \textit{volost}' court was presented with a petition from five peasants claiming that their \textit{starosta} had forced them to pay arrears which were not just. The problem was carried by the court to the Uezd Congress of Peace Mediators who ultimately assessed responsibility for 88 r., 18 k. against the now former \textit{starosta} and also sentenced him to other unnamed punishments. Peasants not satisfied with the actions of the \textit{starosta} and the \textit{skhod} could appeal to the \textit{volost}' court for a hearing, to the Justice of the Peace or ultimately to the peace mediator. In one such case in Talitsk Volost, Vladimir in 1872, the Justice of the peace presented the complaint of two peasants against unfair treatment by the \textit{starosta}. He had seized clothing valued at eight rubles from a peasant and the \textit{skhod} had refused to pay the sum of 16 r., 27 k., to another peasant. Based on the written records of the \textit{skhod}, the \textit{volost}' court found that the actions of the \textit{starosta} were unfounded but they refused to rule without an appearance by the guilty party. They delayed their decision until all parties could be present. In this case there was no immediate decision but it is an indication of the peasant right to appeal a decision of the \textit{skhod} and to hold the \textit{starosta} responsible for its actions.\textsuperscript{38}
The actions of the skhod were not limited to fiscal matters but also to any actions affecting community stability. If the muzhik drowned his sorrows in vodka and became quarrelsome, he risked censorship by the committee of elders. If he beat his wife in the privacy of his own home, a practice which he deemed educational, then his wife could complain to the starosta who would mete out a punishment, if he so desired, to the muzhik. If a peasant stole from a fellow villager, the offense became a community problem. Any and all actions which disturbed the ability of the individual to work to his fullest was considered to be a matter for the skhod. Total compliance with the communal will and the established norms of the group was the only viable way in which the peasant could survive in the village, and, indeed, the commune could survive. But in these personal matters, the villagers and the skhod could show a great deal of cruelty.

When a villager was caught stealing from a neighbor, the injured party carried his complaint to the skhod but he also made sure that the rest of the village would turn out to take part in the complaint. It became a festive affair with the guilty party usually flogged to the laughter and merriment of the crowd. In Novgorod Guberniia, a muzhik had fought with the village shepherd, hitting him with a knife and wounding
him in the arm. The shepherd collected a crowd and complained to the skhod that his assailant should be arrested. The starosta and the elders tried to forge an agreement between the two men but the herdsman was unyielding. At this point the peasant realized that punishment was in order, and requested that he be flogged by his own neighbors rather than to carry the complaint to the volost' court where he would be surrounded by strangers. The group agreed and the shepherd got the right of laying on the 25 lashes prescribed for fighting. This was an example of peasant justice carried out by an unofficial court of peers in which the villagers determined the guilt and punishment of their fellow peasant. Since he had no witnesses on his behalf and the wound of the shepherd was obvious then further proof of guilt was unnecessary. It fell to him to admit his guilt and to plead for mercy from his neighbors. For whatever reason, the villagers rejected any pleas for mercy and his sentence was carried out in short order. Perhaps this man had created other problems in the village, perhaps he had used his knife in threats against others, the circumstances surrounding the case will never be known. Suffice it to say that his treatment at the hands of his neighbors was merciless.39

This samosud or self-justice, was a practice that
could take several forms. In Vologda, some of the men drank too much vodka in celebration of a holy day and a brawl ensued. Stones were thrown and the perpetrator of the fight had three teeth broken. There was no need to further punish the offender, samosud had already taken place. But usually in cases of skhod sanctioned samosud the carrying out of the punishment was enjoyed by all. On establishment or even suspicion of guilt in a theft not only was the guilty party paraded through the streets for all to see, punch and shout at, but some of his property was taken to be sold for vodka, ostensibly to appease his neighbors and the skhod. Mikhail Bukharin was brought before the skhod and accused of the theft of some oats. When questioned, the alleged thief became entangled in contradictions and there was no consensus from the members of the skhod as to his guilt or his possible punishment. The elders then dismissed Mikhail, telling him that they required time to deliberate his case. At this, Mikhail dropped to his knees and begged forgiveness claiming that "the devil made me do it," and offering to bring a half pail of vodka to soften the hearts of the elders. When the pail was finished, Mikhail still did not have an answer and the elders demanded another pail. Unfortunately, though, the vodka did not appease the elders and they determined to punish Mikhail based
on the fact that the oats had been stolen and that acceptance of this kind of behavior was not good for the village economy or the morale of its people. The crowd cried for punishment: "Beat him in the ears," but Mikhail ran from the hut and hid in his izba where the elders, drunk with vodka, attempted to break down his door, demanding more vodka. The poor thief, at this point claimed that he had no more money at which time the crowd took the wheels off of his cart and sold them for more vodka. Not finished with Mikhail they then forced him to carry the bag of oats through the village to the jeers of his neighbors. Again, they demanded vodka with the promise that this would settle accounts and this time Mikhail complied. The final part of his ordeal consisted in the elders forcing him to eat a lump of dirt and to promise, "If I at another time take to stealing then I will be as black as this mother earth." Later, the starost warned the villagers: "If someone from our mir steals from his village, and he does not ask for charity then his actions will be punished 20 times worse than Mikhail Bukharin.41"

The treatment given Bukharin pointed up the worst aspects of samosud or village judgements but it is easy to get caught up in the demands for vodka and to bypass an essential ingredient of samosud in that it not only punished a crime which affected the entire village and
a criminal that obviously could not be trusted but it
demonstrated both formal and informal social control
and levelling techniques such as neighborhood sanctions
against the offending party. The peasant accused of
theft pleaded for mercy but his pleas were not plain-
tive enough nor, apparently were they sincere in the
eyes of his fellow villagers. It therefore was claimed
that he was not sufficiently humble and needed to be
taught a lesson. In effect, he had to be "brought down
a peg." How this lack of sincerity was ascertained is
a question that is not answered in the available date.
But at several points in the punishment, the thief was
given the opportunity to present a more repentent face
and it appears that the matter could have been handled
much easier had the thief performed in the prescribed
manner, accepting the original punishment and allowing
his ears to be boxed. But his very resistance to this
angered his fellow villagers to the point of an extreme
reaction.

Samosud knew no gender in its ferocity. A peas-
ant, Anna Akyliucheva was accused of stealing a piece
of linen. Although she denied the charge, the peasants
were convinced of her guilt and decided to parade her
through the village with the linen tied to her back,
and to sell some of her property for vodka. This would
Teach future thieves a lesson. The treatment given
Anna was indeed severe. Her hands were dipped in pine-tar and wiped on her scarf; she was led through the village behind two peasants who beat an oven door with a stick in order to create a cacophony of sound not only generating a carnival atmosphere but drawing the neighbors from their homes. But Anna showed no remorse, she held her head high and refused to acknowledge the mockery of her fellow villagers. The peasants were astonished that she still smiled through all of this treatment, women were, after all, supposed to be humiliated by such handling. To force a resolution, Anna was then taken to the river where she was soaked. Finally, she was returned to her home. Anna however was not to be taken lightly, she immediately grabbed a chain with a hook and began to flail at all those within her immediate vision. The starosta ordered her arrested for three days for this offense. Again Anna fought back. On advice from neighboring villagers, she carried her complaint to the Zemskii Nachalnik who questioned the starosta. The elder admitted his actions but claimed that this was done in accordance with tradition, as it had always been done in the countryside. The starosta was warned that samosud would not be tolerated in the future and he was placed under arrest for two days in the volost' jail. At this point, neither side would give up; the villagers and
the skhod because they saw their control over fellow villagers being eroded by the actions of the Zemski Nachalnik, and Anna because she still maintained her innocence and refused to submit to local threats and punishments. Again she was brought before the skhod who ordered that her own husband beat her into submission. He attempted, but Anna fought and several peasants were needed to force her to the ground while her husband administered 30 lashes. The men, then proceeded to her house to claim her trunk which could be sold for vodka, but Anna had already removed her belongings to her parents' home in anticipation of this action. Dissatisfied and unfulfilled, the villagers then began to treat Anna with contempt, scorning her and ostracizing her. Small children threw stones when she went out into the village streets. Finally, Anna was able to convince her husband to give her a passport and she left the village of Meshchakov, going first to Orel and later to Odessa where she lived for some time. The story of Anna Akylichev has been recounted numerous times in recent literature with the view that it demonstrated community ethics and solidarity and that the barbarous method of punishment served as a necessary warning to other potential criminals who violated the accepted rules of behavior. This is obviously true. But the treatment given to Anna was certainly out of
proportion to her crime which was never proven, and which she repeatedly denied. It is necessary to look deeper for the reasons for community censure. Obviously, Anna's response to the punishment was the main source of hatred among the villagers. Perhaps Anna had been guilty of arrogance in other situations. And, at least on this occasion she manifested a strong, individualistic personality which did not meld with the communal mentality. It is also highly possible that Anna, for some reason, was not a valued member of the community. Since women were important as workers perhaps she was not viewed as an effective member of the village or of her husband's household. This assumption cannot be based on readily available data but must be viewed on the basis of an internal stratification which undoubtedly existed in the villages. When Anna refused to be bowed by the public treatment of her, the villagers resorted to a common levelling technique, they ostracized her finally giving her the silent treatment. The ability of the community to maintain a certain standard of behavior and the acceptance of punishment when that behavior fell short of community expectations were seen as important components of control. Had the accused meekly admitted guilt, accepted her punishment and begged for mercy, the matter may soon have been forgotten. But Anna
chose to take the matter farther. The introduction of the Zemskii Nachalnik into a local matter was totally unacceptable because it violated the rule of the commune and ultimately of the people and injected the jurisdiction of the Greater Society into the local village. Such actions left the skhod and the villagers in the position of censorship by the government and despite the fact that the starosta continued to punish Anna outside the view of the authorities there still existed a certain fear on the part of the skhod that government control could encroach on their jurisdiction and that they could be held accountable for their actions.

The reports of this type of treatment are indeed sensationalistic but it is questionable whether this type of punishment was widely used especially after the creation of the volost' courts and it is doubtful that all starosty and village skhody were so venal. Such stories exist in ethnographic records but are notoriously absent in the volost' court records which do at times mention complaints against the skhod but not to the extent seen in this case. It is possible that the villagers bonded together to form a veil of secrecy when such actions take place. After all, these are seen as closed village matters, not ones for governmental interference. However, it is unlikely that all
victims accepted this treatment and refused to seek revenge through the courts. The ferocity of the punishments and the apparent acceptance of them by the majority may indicate that these forms of discipline were reserved for only certain villagers, either repeat offenders or those that the villagers particularly disliked. It would appear that this approach would be counter-productive if used against a villager who supported a family and paid his taxes on time. In such circumstances, the villagers probably would not have called for severe punishment nor would they have shown such relish in the condition of the defendant. Nevertheless, the possibilities did exist for such excesses and the village skhod along with the member families exerted tremendous influence over the villagers.

However, it was in the best interest of the group to solve problems through arbitration rather than by disciplinary actions. Thus a common method of settling complaints was through the unofficial courts; family courts, neighbor courts, starost courts, and courts of elders which served mainly as courts of arbitration. To this end these informal courts served to bring justice and also to defuse any potentially dangerous confrontation between neighbors. For example, the starosta would be approached to adjudicate a problem between two neighbors. He, in turn, would gather the
neighbors to serve as witnesses and to assist him in assessing damages if any existed. Perhaps a man's cow had invaded another man's garden, the evidence was obvious and the owner of the cow did not deny the intrusion. In this case, the neighbors were asked to assess the damages done to the land and the cost of replacement. The final decision was made by the starost and the elders and could include the past history of the defendant in terms of his relationships with his neighbors. When the decision was made, the conciliation segment of the case went into effect. The theory was that it was far better to reach an agreement and to solve the problem through restitution than to punish an offender. If agreement was reached then the matter was ended without a written decision. However, if either party was dissatisfied with the outcome, he could carry his case to the volost' court and the starosta and neighbor-witnesses would go with him. Family courts were called into use when a minor problem could be solved by cooperation between neighbors or when the threat of being hailed into court could act as an incentive for a settlement. On the 17th of August after the celebration of the Assumption in the village of Pokrovsk the villager Dmitrii Grigoriev arrived at the home of Nikefor Trefonov with the complaint that his son, Mikhail, had beaten up his son, Dmitrii during the
festivities. Grigoriev stated: "I do not want to go to court, but you must punish your son or I will be in court." The family sent for the grandfather who lived with another son. When he appeared Nikefor related the problem to him and said: "What shall we do with this scoundrel uncle?" The old man jumped up on the bench over the stove with unusual haste. He grabbed his pugnacious grandson and began to give him two shakes after taking and pulling his hair. The grandson did not complain nor did he challenge the treatment. The old man, after administering justice climbed down from the bench and the case was closed. Grigoriev was satisfied that the offense against his son had been punished and he no longer considered taking the case to court. It is interesting to note that the father of the errant boy did not take upon himself the punishment of his son. This could indicate that the father was weak and could be challenged or ignored or it could mean that the grandfather as head of the family commanded the most respect in cases where the family was dishonored by the actions of one of its members.

This whole concept of a communal society that guarded the economic structure of the village and also mediated its moral and ethical behavior was central to peasant life. This was what the muzhik and his family were accustomed to and in the period after the emanci-
pation it lent a certain security to the peasant family. The obshchina however could not totally control the growing individualism of the peasants which was apparent not only in their increased use of the purely peasant volost' courts as a counter-balance to the village courts but in the escalating movement of peasant family members into the work force in the larger towns and cities. Even though the commune was responsible for the issuance of passports and relied, sometimes heavily, on the rubles sent back to the villages it attempted to retain its hold on its members of the peasant class by cancelling passports and recalling workers. As the peasants expanded their opportunities though, the number of cases tried before the volost' courts increased. As has been stated, often these complaints had been made to the local skhod as a first step but the peasant then retained the option to appeal the decision of the skhod to the volost' court. Just as frequently the local starosta carried complaints of failure to pay taxes, drunkenness and family divisions to the court for settlement. In some volosti, especially in Tambov gubernia, all cases of arrears were to be handled at the local level but in most cases the volost' court was approached when all other means had failed or when large numbers of the village population were guilty. In Moscow province, Serpukhov uezd.
court cases revealed that as many as 37 householders were in arrears in their taxes. Some were brought in large groups before the courts, others were treated as individual cases and in the majority of instances, the arrears were the result of drunkenness and negligence on the part of the peasants. Indigence brought on like this could not be tolerated in a society that valued unity of purpose and hard work. It can be assumed however, that attempts were made at the village and communal levels to solve the problem but they were unsuccessful. The last resort, then, was the volost' court.

At the volost' court, there was some attempt to comply with the written law but from the point of view of strict legalists the courts were unsatisfactory manifestations of a peasant justice system which failed to meet the criteria of the accepted legal practices mandated by the government. Much of the confusion and disagreement on this matter were rooted in the use of customary law alongside of the written law. The law had given peasants the right to use customary law when the volost' courts were initiated but the two sometimes conflicting codes often blurred litigation causing legalists to complain of illegality and the peasants to complain of injustice. Investigations by the Trudy Kommissii which included interviews with the Justices
of the peace in the local uezdy elicited complaints of illiterate judges, corrupt pisari, bribery, interference and attempts to influence the decisions of the judges by volost' starshinas and mir starosts. All of these were complaints were undoubtedly valid in some areas and at some time. But, since these were peasant courts, presided over by elected representatives of the peasants, deciding on peasant complaints we must look at how the peasants viewed them. While there were certainly many imperfections and weaknesses endemic in the volost' court system, to a great extent the courts answered a need in the countryside. They provided a mantle of legality, an assurance that peasant complaints would be heard by an authoritative body which would make use of the law as the peasants saw it. It was quite common for the complainant to voice his charge and then to ask for "justice under the law." Of course the peasant was not always satisfied with the decision rendered under the law and would often complain bitterly or file succeeding complaints to force justice in his favor. But much of the efficiency of the courts and the acceptance of their judgements were dependent upon the expectations of the people.

In areas of educated state peasants where the starshina and the judges were literate, the judgements appear to have been reasonable. For example, in Chern-
ianov volost', Tambov gubernia there resided 4248 former state peasants, all primarily involved in agriculture. Education was considered to be somewhat important since there were four schools with 40-50 male pupils in each one. Girls received no formal education but were trained in needlework. The starosta was literate and had held the position for some time. Before that he had served as a pisar' and therefore we can assume that he brought a degree of experience to the task. Two of the judges were also literate which may shed some light on their informed treatment of at least one of the cases brought before the court. A soldier's wife complained that she was mentally and physically abused by her husband. She protested that the treatment was unwarranted and she asked the court to take action against her husband or to allow her to live separately from him. Her family agreed with the complaints and claimed that she had been a good wife. They charged that her husband suffered from delusions brought on by his drinking and general stupidity. At night he walked through the village singing and had, at least on one occasion, broken the locks on the barn. His wife feared him and with good reason. The court ruled that the defendant was guilty but rather than arrest or administration of the birch rod, it was decided that he should be seen by a doctor for an
evaluation of his mental condition. The follow-up to this decision was to be in the hands of the starost who would then render the final decision. Of course not all of the courts were so enlightened but whether the decisions rendered prescribed the birch rod, arrest or or arrest with fines, a real attempt seems to have been made in many cases not only to satisfy the legal requirements but to bring justice tempered with reason to the offending person.48

For the most part, the courts appear to have tried to rely on written law but they did fall back on customary law especially in deciding matters of family division of property, neighbor divisions and petty crimes. Obychnoe pravo, however, appears to have been little more than common sense applied to certain potentially volatile situations. The common sense of the use of customary law lay in the necessity to protect the individuality of the obshchina as a peasant unit and to insure that judgments would take into consideration the role of the peasant members in the commune. Before the advent of the volost' courts and written laws which would force the jurists to account for their actions, customary law had served well and it continued to serve in those cases where disputes could be diffused by the agreement of both parties to follow procedures that had been used in the villages for centuries.
Informants consistently claimed to ethnographers that customary law or "local law" was not used, but in Gorel'ski Volost, Tambov Gubernia as well as many other volosts surveyed, the statement was made that rulings were according to the law and "conscience." This term "conscience" was the keyword to an indication that obychnoe pravo was serving as a counterpoint to written judicial law. One of the hallmarks of customary law was the system of "grekh popolam." In other words to "split the difference." For example, the debate over the questioned ownership of certain property between two neighbors. Neither side is able to present documentation of ownership yet both plaintiffs are men of good character, there does not appear to be any evil intent and both are considered to be members in good standing of the obshchina. The ownership of the property is simply a matter of perception. The judge, in this case, unable to make an objective decision using written law, reverts to subjective law, the common sense approach of obychnoe pravo and asks the participants to take an oath as to the truthfulness of their statements; this done, the oaths are accepted and an agreement is reached. The property or debt is divided in half with neither party able to claim victory or vindication. To the jurist it was a solomon's choice but it was also a matter of understanding peas-
ant legal views which supported these actions.

In criminal cases where proof was established, the volost' courts could proceed according to the written law. But, when there was no singular evidence to support a criminal complaint they again had to rely on conscience and their knowledge and understanding of the peasants' legal views. In Bogolubovsk volost', Vladimir gubernia, the volost' court heard a complaint from a peasant against his neighbor who had called him a robber before the mir court in 1866. The defendant denied the accusation, but witnesses attested to the slander. After examination the court decided that the plaintiff's behavior was good and that the name "robber" carried a connotation of evil behavior. As a result the defendant was placed under arrest for seven days on bread and water. The matter was referred to the court of appeals and it was upheld. A peasant of Serpukhov uyezd, Moscow gubernia complained that her son-in-law had broken into her trunk and had stolen her belongings and she demanded that the starosta investigate. The members of the skhod went to the izba but found no damage to the trunk and upon opening it they found only a floor mop and some trash. They could not decide if there had been a theft at all. The volost' court representatives met with both the defendant and the plaintiff who claimed that he was innocent. Howev-
er, the court ruled that he was repeatedly in trouble and therefore he was subject to arrest for three days. Both of these cases involve "conscience" or obychnoe pravo since the decisions were based not totally on evidence but on the personalities, character and past records of the plaintiffs and the defendants. This was indeed subjectivism in the court system as opposed to the objectivism of the written law which in the view of the peasants was outside their cultural milieu, not essentially Russian law but an adoption and adaptation of foreign principles.

The courts also relied on subjectivism in deciding the punishment to be meted out for offenses. Discipline depended on the status of the criminal and the effect it would have on him, his family and his community. There was no desire to ruin a man economically or socially. This could bring retribution against the complainant thereby continuing a possibly volatile situation. The sentence or punishment was one that should address the crime directly and immediately, taking into consideration his family responsibilities, his economic solvency and his obligations. To arrest a man in the middle of planting season, a man whose family relied on his work, was unacceptable in view of the communal necessity of dependence on the economic viability of the family. It was also out of the ques-
tion to fine a criminal to such an extent that he would impoverish himself and his family and thereby be unable to pay his taxes and other obligations. The decision lay, then not in making the punishment fit the crime alone but in also making the punishment fit the individual. It had to be sufficient as a deterrent to future crime, but not so harsh as to ruin a man or woman. Although most court informants denied that punishment with the birch rod was frequent or even desirable, this appears to have been a much used choice in all matters. It was performed in view of the court, it was quick and it allowed the matter to be settled in short order.

The peasant view of justice was a simple one. Everyone should be treated the same and given the same punishment for the same offense. After, of course, all the variable were taken into consideration. It was an "I" system of justice. If "I" have been punished in one manner, then my rival or neighbor should be treated the same. Although peasants were most anxious to see that justice was carried out for violations of the law they did not appear to have been vindictive after the problem had been settle in what they felt was an equitable manner and the punishment was not excessive in relation to the crime.

There has always been connectedness and solidarity
in the countryside. The years of serfdom united the peasants in a class apart from the rest of the country and forced them to look to their own resources for assistance and solidarity and for the maintenance of what they saw as traditional Russian culture. When the emancipation edict of 1861 was enacted the peasantry saw little of the hoped for improvement in their economic status but, faced with the changes instituted by the government, they dealt with the new freedoms in a time honored fashion and retreated within their own culture, strengthening their existing institutions and relying on practices and ideal that had been in use for generations. The quasi-political institutions such as the commune and the village were now enhanced by the ability of the people and their elected bodies to determine land divisions, agricultural systems and economic organization. The *volost'* court, although initiated by the government, was a peasant court whose judges were elected by the people and treated peasant matters with a mixture of written law and peasant customary law, a combination which satisfied the peasants to some degree. The peasant idea of justice was not understood outside of the village gate because it was geared not to the familiar written law which was supposed to apply to everyone based on the crime but because it provided justice both penal and restitutive
to the individual based on the individual and his place in village society. Fines and jail sentences were handed out subjectively determined by the usefulness of the punishment in relation not only to the crime but to the economic status of the defendant. While the authorities outside of the villages contested the efficacy of the judges and the ultimate legality of the judicial processes which combined written and unwritten law, the average peasant appeared to have received the decisions of the court with a certain equanimity. He was, for the most part, far more comfortable with judgement by his own peers than with verdicts rendered by outsiders who would not understand all of the ramifications of those opinions.

A far more dangerous method of justice lay in the use of samosud or self-justice, a practice which had been in existence for as long as anyone remembered and was carried out strictly away from outside intervention. It was forbidden by the government yet it continued in some villages because it dealt with internal problems immediately and effectively. Secrecy and the assent of the villagers was necessary to preserve this totally peasant activity since reports to the Justice of the Peace or other local authority would bring swift reprisals against the local starosta. This use of samosud also pointed up to some degree the status of
individual villagers and the relationships among neighbors. The activity itself became a festival combining physical punishment with verbal abuse and denigration. The peasants appeared to have enjoyed the situation to such an extent that it is questionable whether the same punishment would have been applied to upstanding and successful members of the commune. It can be argued that these "good" peasants would not find themselves in such a position, accused of a crime against a neighbor but in the case of Anna, no proof was given as to her guilt nor did she admit a crime. What then made her neighbors turn against her in the first place? Was she disliked for some reason? Did she fail to understand her position in the village either in relation to her husband or to her neighbors? These questions cannot be answered based on the existing data only assumptions can be made based on what we can call "human nature."

In a society in which internal cohesion was necessary the unifying features of peasant life were important particularly those that addressed the immediate needs of the people. For example, pomoch' was an integral part of life. In a society in which, for the most part money was in short supply and basic labor was a necessity, true pomoch' filled a void with its accent on reciprocal help and food and entertainment as payment rather than wages which were in most cases unaf-
fordable. This feature of peasant life could not be translated into urban use where money was the mainstay of the economy. In a city environment where each person is preoccupied with his own subsistence, помочь would have many more limitations than in the village. There would be little communality in times of need nor any governing agent which would be able to rally the people to help an individual family.

The commune, the village, the skhod, volost', obychnoe pravo, samosud and помочь were all centripetal forces in the countryside which drew the peasants together in solidarity and separated them from the outside world. They were important to the peasants because in the years immediately following the emancipation these factors gave stability to the villagers who often could not relate to or interact with the other classes of society. Of course, even these strong forces could not provide complete protection from "them" and the outside world could not be ignored for an indefinite period. Economic considerations and military service especially had to be recognized. But the village institutions provided the peasants with the opportunity to maintain their rural communality while taking the necessary steps of association with the outside. In effect they allowed the peasants to keep one foot in the village, a situation which often creat-
ed a precarious balancing problem. The solution to this problem was for the people to adapt their behavior to both sides of the village gate bowing to and cajoling those they considered their betters and returning to their accustomed mien when surrounded by members of their own class in a more comfortable environment. But, as stated above, the peasant also had to contend with difficult situations even in his own environment. He had to get along with his neighbors, yet attend to his own family and his own self interests which meant improving his economic status. These factors and others such as alcoholism created natural tensions in the village and precluded the idealized picture presented by many of the intelligentsia of the 19th century.

On the surface the commune was egalitarian but beneath this thin veneer of equality the peasants had their own attitudes toward each other. Within the commune there was stratification, tension, and the human need to control one's own life by whatever means. What was presented as equality was for the benefit of the outside world. It was used within the village when the peasants had to present a united front and when their economic well-being required it.
1. Lo Preato, Peasants No More. Lo Preato, in his assessments of the Italian peasants sees social stratification in the villages based on whether a family has had contact with the outside world through work, education or the efforts of family members.

2. For a more complete assessment of peasant land acquisition after the emancipation and the intricacies of the settlements see Sergei Zaionchkovsky, The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia, ed. and trans. by Susan Wobst (Florida, 1978).

3. Trudy komissii vol. 1, p. 59. This citation particularly refers to Perkinsk volost, Tambov gubernia but the same can be found in the data supplied by informants of all other gubernias. Traditional law was used, for example, when there was a death in the family and the heirs received specified shares of the land. The object was not to impoverish any member of the commune but neither to waste the assets of the commune. Therefore women were not usually given control.

4. Spas'-Temnia, pp. 2-4.

5. Gromyko, p. 95.


7. Ibid., pp. 60-61.


10. Trudy kommissii. There are numerous cases throughout the volost court records of peasants who did not pay their taxes due to drunkenness and neglect of duty. See, for example, Volokolamsk Uezd, Bukholovsk volost, Moscow Gubernia, March 15, 1871. p. 334. For similar reactions see Bailey, in Peasants and Peasant Societies.


17. Gromyko, p. 35.


20. The *Trudy kommissii*, reports a number of these complaints especially in Moscow province.


24. Ivan Turgenev, *Sportsmens' Sketches*, 1885. Turgenev and other writers and intellectuals of the period relied heavily on the work of Baron von Haxthausen, *Studies on the Interior of Russia* for their view of the peasantry. von Haxthausen "discovered" the communal system of peasant living which he viewed as a basis for total equality among the peasants. He also attributed various ideals to the rural people among which were extreme politeness even in arguments.


28. Spas'-Temnia, p. 10.


30. Engel'gardt, p. 144.

31. Lo Preato, p. 72

32. See Oscar Lewis, Tepoztlan, p. 40 for specific attitudes on this topic. Lo Preato also refers to these viewpoints.

33. The correct measure of size is not given in the statistics. It may be a sashin or a meter. I have chosen to use the term meter since it is a close proximation of sashin and is more easily understood.

34. Spas'-Temnia, pp. 1-38.

35. Ibid.


37. Spas'-Temnia, pp. 1-6


40. Ibid., p. 38.

41. Ibid., p. 38-39.
42. Ibid.

43. See Stephen Frank, "In Defense of Community: Popular Justice and *Samosud* Among the Peasantry, 1872-1900," Conference on the Peasantry of European Russia 1800-1917 (Boston, 1986). Professor Frank's paper is still the most definitive study of *samosud* and peasant self-justice.

44. Ibid. p. 63.

45. *Trudy Komissii*, vol. 1. Informants to the commission stated that arrears were a village problem. Nonetheless, the records show that they were taken to the *volost* court.

46. Ibid., vols 1 and 2.

47. *Trudy Komissii*, vol. 1, p. 36-38.

48. Ibid., p. 39.

49. Tenishev, p. 65.


51. Ibid. p. 176.
CHAPTER IV
TENSIONS, CRIMES AND VILLAGE DISUNITY

The centripetal or unifying forces in the countryside were a counterweight to the disruptive pressures which were also at work in individual villages, communes and volosti. It would be unwise to assume that the peasants responded to all of the formal and informal controls of the communities with complete equanimity and passivity or that they meekly accepted the actions of all of their neighbors. As in any society where neighbors lived in close proximity, where economic and social ties were pervasive, there were tensions -- jealousy brought on by economic and social insecurity, resistance and antipathy to the authority of the governing body or skhod, fights between neighbors, theft and alcoholism. Distrust of fellow villagers was a significant component of village life in peasant societies and given the tensions of rural life we can assume that the same applied to the Russian village where despite an overall appearance of unity against the greater society, neighbors were seen as potential competitors. Each household was, of necessity, motivated by self-interest as individual producers
or households. No one could be allowed to achieve economic or social success at the expense of his neighbors. On the other hand the members of the peasant community put aside their own suspicions and distrusts against their neighbors in order to form a bond against outsiders. The family circle provided the most security at least where basic sustenance was concerned. But sometimes not even family members could be relied upon emotionally or physically.

In interpersonal relations of any kind, insecurities, fear, animosity and distrust appear to have been common. These problems could have upset the equilibrium and unity of the village and crimes that gave expression to these insecurities such as fights, rampant alcoholism, theft and complaints of fraud had to be addressed by the village members and the governing body. The question is what kind of response did the villagers make? And, given their semi-isolation from the rest of society, did they deal with all problems within the village at the time they arose? At what point did individual villagers seek outside legal assistance? When and at what juncture did the starost and the skhod decide that they could no longer handle certain difficulties? Unfortunately, a complete log of the deliberations of the various skhody is unavailable. However, by looking at the records of the volost'


courts which adjudicated many of the disputes between peasants, certain conclusions can be drawn. Namely, that the skhod neither settled all peasant problems nor did it attempt to, and that the peasants came increasingly to make use of the volost' courts which, although they were still peasant courts, covered a wider jurisdiction than the local villages.

But when societal tensions spun out of control, the first response came from the village itself where courts of arbitration on the order of family courts, neighbor courts and courts of elders were called into use. In cases of theft and violence which could affect large segments of the village and which could not be solved through arbitration, the skhod pronounced a verdict based on their own investigation or other considerations and punishment was meted out under the control of the elders. These informal courts and the extra-judicial treatment of the accused all constituted what Russian peasants called self-justice (samosud) which, although it was often arbitrary, adhered to time honored village practices.

Peasant justice sanctioned or unsanctioned by the elders was often described as physically violent but this was not always the case. It often involved the use of non-violent but very effective informal social controls: slander, ostracizing, threats of legal action
and spurious accusations of wrong doing by fellow villagers who disapproved of or felt wronged by the actions of an individual and/or his family. In some cases, these informal actions were unfair by village standards and the victim could seek redress in the courts or at the skhod but often they were tacitly sanctioned by the elders and were highly useful in establishing domination over a recalcitrant peasant who, faced with the censure of his neighbors, quickly mended his ways or at least attempted to make peace.

Samosud or self-justice was a unifying force in the village in that it provided for a moral cohesiveness, but the reason for its existence was to counteract the disruptive forces which were manifested in crimes against fellow villagers. It was also used effectively against outsiders who came unwelcome into the villages and who were suspected of crimes or even criminal motives. The ultimate aim then of peasant self-justice was protection against any and all who would disturb the stability of the village both from within and from without. A villager from another community suspected of theft could be caught and punished at will. Such was the case of a "fool" who made a living begging in a number of villages. Once he wandered into a village where he was unknown and strayed into the first barn he came across in order to spend the night. In the morn-
ing, cold and frightened, he entered the first house in the village. Finding it empty, he climbed up on the stove for warmth. In a short time, the baba of the house returned to find the stranger, and sounded the alarm through the village. The neighbors rushed to her aid. Upon finding the fool, they assumed that he was a thief and began to question him roughly. But the fool was so frightened that he was unable to talk and probably would not have been understood had he attempted. Without questioning him further or attempting to find out the reasons for his muteness, the villagers beat him with an iron hoop and tied his legs together in order to parade him through the village. But the fool died before the celebration began thereby depriving the locals of a good time.¹

This type of samosud was not unusual and we can decry the cruelty and lack of human kindness found in this story but we must look at the reason for such brutality. In difficult economic times the number of robberies increased. Highwayman worked the roads outside villages at night and stories of their tortures were rife. In one instance it was rumored that an old man and woman were knifed to death for their few kopecks.² Whether these stories were true or whether they had been magnified as they were passed from village to village, as was common, will never be known but
the fact remains that the peasants believed the stories and were suspicious of strangers. Reactions of this kind were not unusual given the economic situation in most villages and the fear among the peasants that not only their lives but everything that the families had worked for could be lost. Noting the isolation of the rural communities in those times, it was necessary that the peasants have some sort of mechanism to mete out immediate justice without the need to consult the governmental authorities, volost' court or anyone else. Besides, there was usually little patience in this type of threatening situation for jailing a suspected criminal to await the decision of an impartial judge. But, despite the fear of outsiders and the desire among many peasants to deal with a situation when it occurred, this was not usually the rule when the problem came from within a village itself. Some crimes could not be dealt with effectively at the village level.

In cases where there were a number of people involved or where the villagers had tried and failed to solve the problem themselves, the elders were forced to look elsewhere for help. and for confirmation of its actions. In September, 1868, in the village of Rechitsy, Bronnitsk uezd, Moscow gubernia, the elders complained of a particularly destructive element in the community. Seven young men were terrorizing the vil-
lage and were accused of idleness, drinking, setting fires and robbing the peasant huts. The villagers had reached the end of their tolerance since neither village punishment nor censure had any deterrent effect. The elders then appealed to the Justice of the Peace for assistance with the recommendation that the seven be removed from the village and sent to Siberia for punishment. None of the men worked and it was alleged that their money came from robberies on the highway and the extortion of fellow villagers who were forced to pay lest their homes be burned. Apparently they had not been caught in the acts but seven suspicious fires in two years led the elders to believe that the young men were responsible. The local priests concurred with the suspicions of the villagers, claiming that the men spent their time in the local kabak and sometimes went into the homes of prosperous villagers impudently demanding food or money. In the event that they were refused, they threatened to burn the home. Obviously this type of activity could not be tolerated in the village but the peasants were apparently unable to put a stop to it and radical action had to be taken. However, it was rare that such drastic steps would be taken by an entire village to solve a problem since on the whole the peasants were unwilling to seek outside help for what could be termed a discipline problem.
Their petition for removal of the men to Siberia was sent to the Moscow guberniia department of peasant affairs along with the reports of the local police and the Justice of the Peace and we can assume that the exile was carried out.3

Although local village systems of justice usually served many purposes there was often a question of fairness in their administration and therefore, there was a point at which the peasants turned to outside legal sources. In large villages where not everyone knew his neighbors, the wealthier and more esteemed members were often able to sway the skhod not only in village economic matters but also in the solution of judicial problems. And there were, almost certainly, networks of friends and relatives, some in high village positions who would take a biased position in favor of their own clan. As stated previously, it would also appear that marginal members of village society did not have the same prestige and therefore the same access to impartial judgement as did those who were respected members of the community. Therefore, the volost' courts were more objective sources of justice for many in the village who did not trust the skhod or who felt that they were not treated in an objective way by their neighbors. The courts also gave an appearance of "legality" to the proceedings, a concept that the peas-
ants held in high esteem as can be seen from their frequent references to the "law". It would be unrealistic to claim that the average villager understood the written law and all of its ramifications but the peasants had an innate sense of fairness and logic when it came to the law. As a result, an increasing number of cases reflecting village problems were taken before the volost' courts in the years between 1862 and 1872.

The volost' courts were created to bring codified law to the peasant class and to encourage participation in the governmental legal processes which, it was hoped, would eventually supersede local, peasant justice. Made up of elected peasant officials for the purpose of dealing with peasant problems, the courts were a unifying factor in the countryside. However, they also served as a buffer between governmental authority and peasant tradition. The volost' courts were established in 1862 and records published by the Trudy Komissii po preobrazovaniu volostnykh sudov show that although initially the number of cases treated by them was small, within a few years of their establishment the volume of cases increased tremendously. As can be seen from the tables the majority of the cases studied occurred between 1870 and 1872 and shows an upsurge in peasant interest and confidence in the courts after an initial reluctance to make use of
the courts outside the mir or village. The Trudy Kommissii, for the purposes of investigation and publication ceased its study with the year 1872 and therefore we are unable to see if this rise in the use of the courts continued exponentially. The growth in the number of cases brought before the courts in three provinces can be seen in the following chart.

TABLE I

YEARLY INCREASE IN CASE LOAD OF VOLOST' COURTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tambov</th>
<th>Moscow</th>
<th>Vladimir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>1869</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The information on the cases brought before the volost' courts between the years 1862 and 1872 is undoubtedly incomplete and in Tambov and Moscow not all volosts have been indexed since a cross-section of cases has been adequately presented. However, the number of cases offered is sufficient to show the types of disputes that arose in the village and the disposition of those litigations. The study of village problems can be best seen through the records of these courts since they provide a human view of the villagers—describing them, their families and their villages. Mathematical statistics can be calculated and would more accurately depict the numbers and types of village problems but, on the other hand, they are dehumanizing and fail to render a complete picture. For this reason, I have chosen to formulate my arguments by using the records of the court proceedings.

The three provinces chosen for comparison are Tambov, Vladimir and Moscow. In Moscow province the rural areas, in which the majority of peasants were plowmen, have been used as counterweights to the more urban areas in order to ascertain the importance of the peasant mir in solving problems and also the strength of the patriarchal household in maintaining discipline and respect. In Tambov, a mainly agrarian province far from the center of government, the inference is that
the types of cases brought before the courts would be slightly different in that they would have a more rural focus and that more traditional methods of problem-solving would be in force. The patriarchal family, it would be supposed, still retained more importance in Tambov than those in more industrialized areas where many peasants left the villages to work in factories. Vladimir is presented as almost totally industrial with the peasants employed either in factories or in local workshops.

The types of disputes have been divided into seven categories ranging from family and neighbor conflicts to violent crimes, thefts and complaints by and against the mir. Although family disputes on property divisions and violence are presented in the overall statistics, a fuller discussion of family tensions can be found in chapter two.
TABLE 2

TYPES OF DISPUTES FOUND IN VOLOST COURT RECORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tambov</th>
<th>Moscow</th>
<th>Vladimir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Arguments</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family divisions or money</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor Arguments</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor Arguments/Money</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thefts</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights/Violence</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints by/against Mir</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

675 595 325
TABLE 3
DISTRIBUTION OF CASES BROUGHT TO VOLOST COURTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tambov</th>
<th>Moscow</th>
<th>Vladimir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Money</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Arguments</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbor Arguments</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments\money</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thefts</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights\violence</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By or against Mir</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These percentage distributions give a fairly reliable picture of the kinds of crimes most often committed in these three provinces and the disparities between regions.

In order to study the types of cases brought before the volost courts and their disposition, it is necessary to look at the three provinces separately and from there to make a comparison of the similarities and differences among the villages of the three diverse areas. For example, in Tambov arguments between neighbors represented 21% of the cases brought before the courts while in Vladimir, it was only 13%. Were there
fewer village tensions in Vladimir? In Moscow province 23% of the complaints were brought either by the mir or by peasants against the actions of the mir as opposed to Tambov where only 16% concerned the mir. Family arguments were fewer in Tambov than in Moscow or Vladimir. Was this because the family was still patriarchal and therefore more unified? All of these questions cannot be answered definitively but certain suppositions can be made based on the lifestyle of the peasants. Proximity to the city, as in Moscow and Vladimir, allowed the villagers to vary their occupations and to leave the villages for work. This may have defused certain types of problems such as neighbor arguments. In Tambov, the family economic unit was mainly engaged in agriculture with the traditional approach to the family as a business. While this system showed fewer family arguments, there were a larger number of arguments with neighbors, thefts, fights and violence.

One of the most rural provinces in the Empire, Tambov lay 200 versts or approximately 133 miles southeast of Moscow. The three uezdy studied, Morshansk, Shatsk and Kozlov had volosti ranging in size from Ot'iansov, Morshansk with 680 members in one village obshchestvo to Gradso-Strelets in Shatskii volost' with 4700 male peasants divided into nine village
obshchestva with approximately 520 male peasants in each village.\textsuperscript{6} The density of population in the province varied. While some uezdy were made up of small villages, others were quite large. For example, the 4689 peasants in Algasovsk, Morshansk uezd were distributed among only three obshchestva for an average of 1229 members per village commune.\textsuperscript{7} The 27 volosti studied showed that the main source of income was from agriculture. In several volosti master craftsmen, carpenters, shoemakers, tanners and wheelwrights were noted and in large volosti there were up to 400 passports issued each year for work outside the village, most notably in the Don and Novocherkassk in the winter.

Vladimir with the smallest number of volosti reporting court cases also had the smallest volosti. There were no large village obshchestva and some with as few as 100 males in the village. For example, Stavrovskaja volost' in Viazinkovskii uezd had a population of 4800 males living in 46 village obshchestva. As can be seen in a comparison with Tambov, the size of the villages in Vladimir were smaller. They were divided among former private peasants, temporarily-obligated and state peasants often within the same volost' and separated by residence in the obshchestvo. In Bogorodskii volost', for example, there were 788 male
souls divided between former private peasants and temporarily-obligated peasants. There were five village obshchestva, one for the temporarily obligated and four for the former private peasants. Most of the villagers were employed in factories and workshops as icon painters, tailors, cotton-spinners, slate and stone masons. There was also a large contingent of workers dyeing and printing calico. Of the eleven volosti surveyed only four were engaged in agricultural pursuits along with the industry. The remaining seven were entirely industrial either in the village itself or in nearby cities. There was a somewhat different complexion to the cases brought before the volost' court than was found in Tambov. Surprisingly, arguments between neighbors involving either money, land or other personal disputes accounted for a slightly fewer number than found in Tambov. In Tambov 44% of the cases were neighborhood arguments while in Vladimir they accounted for only 38% of the altercations. Thefts also showed a lower rate (3% in Vladimir as opposed to 7% in Tambov) and the same applies to fights or physical violence which represented only 2% of the court cases as opposed to 8% in Tambov. The notable increase came with complaints by and against the Mir where there was a differential of 4%. In Vladimir 20% of the cases brought before the court were either
initiated by the mir starosta or were complaints against the actions of those starosty. These figures would seem to indicate that the volosti in the more industrialized areas were less inclined to settle all problems within the confines of the mir and that availability of interaction with outside forces promoted somewhat of an erosion of village legal authority. Peasants were not isolated in their villages engaged in agriculture but had a degree of freedom to pursue work in factories away from the tensions of the closed village. This is not to say that factory workers had fewer pressures than their agricultural counterparts. Indeed they suffered their own tensions in the work place but they were of a different sort. But the degree of freedom experienced by the factory workers may indicate that they were less inclined to accept the total domination of the village in all of its aspects and that the patriarchal home was losing some of its strength. The fact that they relied on the starosta for passports and permission to work outside the village notwithstanding, these workers had at least one foot in the other world beyond the village gates and were, in the 1870's becoming, acculturated into the greater community.

The statistics for Moscow gubernija mirror to some extent those in Vladimir. However, the mixture of
agriculture of factory work was more evenly divided. Of the 13 volosti studied, nine were principally involved in agricultural or truck farming and four, mainly in Serpukhov uezd, were composed solely of industrial workers or traders. As in Vladimir 40% of the cases brought before the courts were neighbor related, but only 3% were accusations of thefts and 4% indicated violence of some kind. Like the peasants of Vladimir, the Moscow villagers showed little reluctance to complain about the village obshchestvo to the volost' court and 23% of the complaints were either by or about the mir. The skhod obviously did not handle all of the village problems with samosud and on occasion appealed to the volost' court to punish villagers who ignored the rulings of the elders. To many then, the volost' courts represented both sides of the peasants' conflicting attitudes toward justice. They could handle problems of the village according to customary law and they could also deal somewhat with the intricacies of a more urban situation where factory wages and other urban problems were presented.

The number of volost' court cases studied indicates that given the population represented in the volosti the peasants were not especially litigious at least where the volost' courts were concerned. Possibly many of the cases had been resolved in the village
courts of arbitration before further action was required and the volost' court would, from time to time, refer a case back to the village courts for justice or arbitration if the matter could not be solved handily at the volost' level. However, in Tambov the number of disputes especially between neighbors which reached the courts requires investigation. In the uezdy studied 300 of the 675 cases presented (44%) had to do with neighbor relations, either arguments over such staples as the ownership and treatment of farm animals, land use, insults and child related misdemeanors or over money which could include unpaid loans, broken contracts or disputes arising over non-payment of specific debts.

Neighbor arguments did not necessarily lead to violence and could take interesting turns as evidenced by the complaint of one villager in Perkinskoi volost' who claimed that his neighbor had attempted to kill his pig in the threshing barn, beating it severely and causing injury. The accused admitted that he beat the pig with a stick because the pig was on his property despite repeated requests that the owner keep the pig at home. The pig, contrary to allegations that it was dead, was now healthy and was back with the herd. A witness agreed that he saw the pig beaten but could not corroborate the story further. A second witness, the son of the plaintiff, agreed. The court, based on the
evidence, ruled that the pig was now healthy and that the plaintiff had been forewarned by the defendant. Therefore his complaint was denied. It would seem that a problem of this nature could have been solved at the village level. However, anger was high, obviously, and arbitration was unacceptable to the plaintiff. The plaintiff demanded "justice under the law" despite the fact that he had suffered no loss of anything but his pride.

Such neighborhood disagreements presented to the courts could be drawn out through several sessions if the plaintiff or defendant so chose. In Piterksk volost', the plaintiff Korshunov accused his neighbor Verenkin of piling up trash, cursing him and calling him a thief for setting fire to the rubbish. Verenkin insisted that the litter was not cast off but valuable goods. Witnesses gave differing accounts of the event. One claimed that Verenkin had called the plaintiff's son a thief, the other claimed the slander was aimed at Korshunov. On October 29, 1871 the court ruled in favor of the complainant. Verenkin was to pay three rubles for the insult according to the 1861 law code. On that same day Korshunov presented another case against Verenkin for unlawfully piling trash outside his izba which then fell on his neighbor's property hampering the growth of his apple tree. Investigation
by the elders showed that the apple tree belonged to Verenikin and that it was within four arshins (approximately 112 inches) of Korshunov's home. Korshunov, however, demanded that rent for the land covered by trash be paid to him. The court ruled that the continued complaints of Korshunov had no validity. Between the two neighbors there were constant arguments concerning the usadba. If the two persisted in arguing, they were told, they could take their complaints elsewhere. The tensions between these two neighbors was obvious but the court sensed that arbitration would serve better than enforced fines or other punishments. In close societies these kind of stresses are quite common and in this case the courts chose to ignore the claims and place the burden squarely on the peasants to settle their difference with other means.9

Tensions also ran high when children were involved as in Mokrinskoi volost', Elatemskii uezd. The peasant Khor'kov complained that he had gone to the neighboring street where he encountered the child Ryzhova, age seven, who was playing and began to make fun of Khor'kov. Khor'kov ran after him but was unable to catch him and the youngster then carried the complaint to his father who became infuriated. In the meantime Khor'kov went home to dinner unaware that Ryzhov was looking for him. Ryzhov found his house and began to knock on the
window. Khor'kov, hearing the voice of Ryzhov, opened the lock and thrust out his head. Ryzhov raised his fist and beat him on the face leaving him broken and bloody. Based on article 518 of the village law code, Ryzhov had to pay damages in the amount of one ruble for the offense and a fine of 50 kopecks for the use of the volost1 government in the dispute. The decision was to be enforced by the starost. No punishment was deemed necessary for Khor'kov since chasing the child ultimately was not harmful to anyone. However, the violent reprisals of Ryzhkov could not be tolerated under village law.10

The division between neighborhood arguments and disputes between neighbors involving money is sometimes blurred. Often a case would be brought before the court because a claimant was looking for monetary damages especially in cases of slander or violence. In Algakovskii volost1 the peasant Petushkin asked for damages in the amount of ten rubles for insults to his wife Stepanova whom he claimed was beaten although without injuries. The defendant Asoskov stated that he did not beat Stepanova but merely held her to keep her out of a fight between the men. Witnesses, however, confirmed Petushkin's claim. The court determined that Asoskov was indeed guilty but that the sum of ten rubles was too high for the offense and reduced the
claim to three rubles. Both sides accepted the agreement peacefully. In this case there was no specific argument over money but in what can probably be termed a lawsuit the peasant Petushkin saw the opportunity to reap some economic benefit from an unfortunate situation and to soothe his feelings of injustice at the same time. There were, however, a number of legitimate suits involving non-payment of loans for services and goods.

Unpaid debts and broken contracts were major sources of contention the countryside and a number of these cases were brought before the volost' courts for settlement. In Tambov, the number of adjudicated contracts was far smaller than those in guberniias of the central industrial zone which often involved wage labor disputes with workshops and factories. However, in Ot'iasovski a small obshchestvo of temporarily obligated agriculturists there was a need for skilled labor in such areas as the building of new izby and the laying of stoves. The landless peasant Molchanov was apparently wealthy enough to hire local peasants for construction work but according to the court records, he was either a tough businessman or one who was willing and able to cheat his employees. In June, 1871, the temporarily obligated peasant Klimachev complained to the court that he had contracted with Molchanov to
make six windows and one door for the cost of eight rubles silver, and was to be advanced 55 kopecks for eight days of work. But, when he asked for his money, Molchanov denied it to him at which time he refused to work. Molchanov finally agreed to pay him a total of four rubles. The defendant explained that he had contracted the work for the amount of eight rubles but that Klimachev did not finish the work and had left the site without permission. For this, Molchanov claimed a loss of ten rubles in the completion of the work. The court took into consideration the suppliers of materials who were unpaid and the original agreement and found Molchanov guilty of cheating the hired man. Klimachev was awarded four rubles for his work.

The same day, Molchanov complained to the court that he had hired the peasant Krysanov to put together two stoves, one Dutch and one Russian, for nine rubles, 25 kopecks. Krysanov was paid one ruble in advance and then asked to go home. According to Molchanov he did not return. The defendant agreed with the specifics of the case but claimed that he did not return because it was impossible to work for Molchanov who hampered and harassed him at work. "You put together and he breaks apart" was Krysanov's explanation. By this time the volost' court was weary of Molchanov and decreed that his repeated trips to the court at public expense and
his arbitrary failure to provide proof in matters of litigation coupled with his continued neglect of honorable wages and debts would no longer be taken seriously. To bring home the extent of the court's anger he was sentenced to 20 lashes with the birch rod. The fact that many of the villagers worked in trades or, in the case of Vladimir guberniia, in factories made imprisonment an economic hardship not only on the prisoner but on his family and on the village who needed his income for taxes. If a man was imprisoned he ran the risk of losing his job and thereby becoming a pariah on the community. Therefore, the quick execution of the birch rod was more expedient.

In Mokrinsk volost', Tambov guberniia the protest was more of a domestic nature when the widow Semina complained to the court in April 1872 that she had lived with the peasant Tifonov for two years, taking care of him and his daughter. During this period she had apparently received no wages or compensation. She appealed to the court to examine the situation and determine wages. The court ruled that she was owed for ten days of work in April, rye flour for three months, three puds of wheat in three sets for two years and one pud of flour and one of wheat monthly. This would suffice from the first of April 1872 to the first of April, 1874. She should also be paid five rubles,
silver for three months from July of 1872 to October 1. As of January 1, 1873, her salary would go to six rubles silver. The decision of the court in this case appears to enhance the role of the housekeeper in that it gives weight to the vital importance of a woman in the home. There is no indication of the economic status of the peasant Tifonov but we can assume, based on the court ruling, that he could afford the payment in rubles to Semina. \(^{13}\)

In Vladimir, unlike the more rural areas, money disputes often arose over housing rentals and purchases indicating a more fluid population which would free up housing for immigration into the area. In Ivanov volost\(^{1}\) a complaint was made by a peasant woman that she had paid a peasant 26 rubles for a life-long use of a small room to live in but now he was turning her out. The defendant could not produce documents that the izba belonged to him but the witnesses showed that it was rebuilt by the plaintiff. The court determined that the living space belonged to the plaintiff and ruled in her behalf. \(^{14}\) It would appear that there was a market for new tenants and perhaps more money could have been gained by renegotiations on the part of the owner either with the plaintiff or with new lessees. The sale and purchase of homes was not a simple task even in the more industrialized area since it involved not
just the transaction itself but the approval of the skhod the elders of which could, if it was in their best interest, delay the exchange indefinitely.

An incident in Kovrovski uezd provides an insight into the attempts of the mir to control the peasants even though the individual had the alternative of carrying his case to the volost' court which would possibly overrule the mir. The plaintiff testified that he had bought the home of another villager for 60 rubles and that this had been agreed upon. The starost had agreed to the sale but the mir in which the village of Zybkhinoi lay insisted on making use of the home under the excuse that the home could not be transferred until there was a guarantee that the taxes of the previous owner were paid. The plaintiff countered that those arrears should not be attached to his home and that the sale should not be nullified. In the interim period the home remained in the hands of the former owner. The volost court disagreed with the mir and contended that its actions were illegal. Since the starost had approved the sale it should stand as such. 15

Economic arguments in Vladimir often hinged on work-related problems and the amounts of money in question ranged from a few rubles to more than 250. The performance of an individual at his factory job was
also taken into consideration. In Stavrov a peasant complained that her neighbor owed her ten rubles, 25 kopecks for pasturing his cows. He was avoiding her so as not to pay the debt and she was demanding that the court force the payment. Witnesses explained that the defendant also worked at a local factory and that he often neglected his job and frequently was away without leave. This, to the witness indicated a lack of responsibility. Therefore the court ruled that the defendant had to pay not ten rubles but 18 rubles and for neglect of his factory job he was punished with 15 lashes. In the same volost' in 1871 another peasant woman complained that the peasant U. owed her 85 rubles for goods which she took on account in her shop and two rubles for her tutoring of a neighbor. The tutoring is not defined so I assume that it referred to literacy. The court ruled that both the 85 rubles and the two rubles were fair debts. Underpayment for work performed was another a cause for litigation. In Vsegodichi-cheskaia volost' a peasant complained in the court that he had been underpayed for field work. He had contracted to do the work for six rubles, but his employer refused to pay. The court ordered the employer to pay the debt but considered the six rubles to be in excess of the worth. A settlement of five rubles silver was eventually reached.
Unlike Tambov where economic arguments between neighbors hinged for the most part on minor agricultural matters and the compensation requests were for relatively small amounts, the peasants of Vladimir with their access to the urban, industrialized community were more inclined to be involved in the commercial markets and therefore to bring claims for larger amounts. From the number of cases in this small sampling of the volost' court records it is obvious that there was indeed a very vital money economy in the countryside even in rural areas. Most of the claims were for amounts of up to 20 rubles silver, but could run as high as 250 rubles in the more industrialized areas, and represented disputes over rentals, merchandise purchased from shops, wages and services. In some cases the court records do not show the source of the debt only the specifics of the amount, the date of the transaction and the testimony of the participants. But the courts appeared to have dealt seriously with these claims and often reduced the amount of damages if regarded as excessive.

In most cases the starosta was then given the responsibility of carrying out the judgements of the court. There were no punishments in these claims merely a straightforward determination of liability even though a litigant may accuse his adversary of
criminal intent. In Algasov volost', the peasant Voevodin claimed that he was owed eleven rubles, 55 kopecks for work performed in the interest of the peasant Kulemin. The defendant explained that he owed only four rubles. Unfortunately the available information does not state the nature or duration of the work, but the court ruled that its worth was nine rubles and the principles eventually agreed. The starosta Fedota Mylukin was charged with carrying out the ruling. In a dispute over land on which hemp had been sown, the petitioner, Nazarov, claimed damages of ten rubles from the peasant Bogdanov. The court agreed with the complainant and recognized the guilt of Bogdanov but decreed that the injustice was worth only seven rubles. In Pitersk volost' in 1871 the peasant Ryzhov complained that he was still waiting for the peasant Ivanshina to pay him ten rubles, 50 kopecks for a contract made in 1865. The defendant claimed that it had been paid in full. However, witnesses disagreed with both, maintaining that the debt had not been paid and that at any rate it was not ten rubles, 50 kopecks, but nine rubles, 90 kopecks. The court found in favor of Ryzhov at the reduced amount. Unless the dispute involved peasants from another village or volost', it would seem that most of these complaints could have been solved by the village courts
of arbitration. Either this route had already been taken and no agreement had been reached or the litigants proceeded to the volost' court because they felt a more equitable decision could be obtained at that level. However, the peasants were also very quick to accuse their adversary of criminal intent and therefore would refuse to submit to an arbitration which could reduce their damage claims. The peasant insistence in filing these claims also indicates that they not only were well aware of the value of money but that they had no problems with simple arithmetic when it was necessary.

There was another approach that could be taken by the courts in cases of monetary disputes. It was applied only when both sides agreed and when both litigants were considered to be of high moral conduct. For example, Mstersk volost', Vladimir guberniia was an area of 1168 male souls, most of whom were engaged in iconography. In 1871, the peasant B. complained in court about the failure of the peasant S. to pay 19 rubles, 30 kopecks for icons produced by B.'s son. The defendant explained that he did owe the money for the icons but only six rubles. In this case the court applied grekh popolam, a system by which fairness was dictated by the past history and morals of both the plaintiff and the defendant. Neither side was consid-
ered to be guilty as such. Using this system the court ruled that the defendant must pay not six rubles but 12 rules, 65 kopecks which was in effect, splitting the difference.\textsuperscript{22} The key to this solution, of course, lay in the character of the parties involved. It was necessary that they be trustworthy people who, it was assumed, would not lie about the facts in the case. Even under these circumstances, the parties were expected to swear that their statements were truthful. Normally, swearing to the truthfulness of ones statements was not considered necessary or even desirable in the volost' courts. But, in litigations where grekh popolam was exercised the competing parties were deemed to be honorable men who would place a great deal of importance on the oath. This system would, therefore, never be used in obvious criminal cases where damage had been done and punishment was necessary.

Retribution and some form of punishment were clearly necessary in cases of where neighborhood arguments escalated into violent confrontations. However, by and large, the culprit was usually alcohol and normally the offender would admit to being drunk but rarely would he admit to fighting while under the influence of alcohol. He usually claimed that he could not remember the specifics of the complaint. In Tambov, at least, 52\% of the criminal cases brought by neighbors or
fellow villagers were defined as alcohol related. In a number of others the spontaneity of the crime, particularly beatings, could have been caused by vodka but are not specified as such. Alcohol was widely used, particularly by the men of the village for a number of reasons. As seen in the preceding chapter it was an integral part of pomoch' and as Engel'hardt indicated in his "Letters from the Villages" vodka was used as a panacea for all kinds of stomach ailments especially upset stomachs.\(^{23}\) For many, the day began with vodka for breakfast and continued into the evenings after dinner. Even those who professed to be moderate drinkers reserved a portion of vodka for Sundays and holiday celebrations. The kabak was an important gathering place for villagers and despite the fact that many reformers decried the proximity of the village tavern, the fact that the kabak paid a large share of the village taxes helped to appease many, allowing the drinking to continue unabated for those who were so inclined.

But this constant use of alcohol on a sometimes daily basis undoubtedly led some peasants to alcoholism which then led to fights and violence, to neglect of duty, disregard for one's land and ultimately to the inability of the family to meet the tax obligations of the village. While the fights were often an accepted
part of life, the failure to meet monetary obligations could not be tolerated since the equality of taxation within the commune required that all members accept a share in the economic burdens of the group. If a peasant reneged on his taxes for whatever reason, it placed an additional burden on co-villagers.

The reports of violence attached to use of alcohol were not always clear cut and the volost' courts often responded only to the complaint of a beating and side-stepped the issue of alcohol since in itself it was not a crime. In Gorel'sk volost' the state peasant Makarova brought a complaint against two men, Betin' and Byzhanov for beating her while they were drunk. This happened on the Monday of Maslenitsa week. She also claimed that while she was the first to attack, it was justified because the men had played a variety of tricks on the local women and had subjected them to numerous verbal obscenities. The defendant Betin' admitted that he was drunk and remembered nothing but claimed that the fight was really between Byzhanov and Makarova. Witnesses for Makarova testified in her behalf that the men had brutally beaten her apparently under the belief that she held magical powers. Despite the testimony of the witnesses, the court ruled that the fight had been mutual between Byzhanov and Makarova. However, Betin' was fined ten rubles to be paid
to Makarova for his insults and was forced to serve a three day sentence in jail. There was no mention of his alcoholic state.  

In another case the Kulebatovsk volost' court heard a complaint from the peasant Zarubin that he had suffered a beating by the peasant Korolev at a local pub in the village of Zaitsev while in the presence of the starosta. Korolev stated that he was only attending a meeting of the skhod and that he had simply called Zarubin a suspicious man and had waved his arms while smoking his pipe. Witnesses claimed that Korolev had indeed struck the complainant for some unexplained reason, and that he was drunk. On January 30, 1871 the court heard the complaint and determined that Korolev had been drinking and therefore was not responsible for his acts. They therefore denied Zarubin's complaint. There is no explanation given for that decision but apparently the court saw little harm done to Zarubin and viewed the complaint as spurious.

In cases of this nature, the volost' court sometimes became the court of next resort to peasants who would not accept the decision of the mir. One such case in Morshansk uezd involved the beating of a peasant woman and the theft of her scarf by a fellow villager. The culprit was accused not only of the beating and theft but of selling the scarf for vodka at the
local kabak. The starosta was called upon to decide the issues in the case but chose only to fine the defendant a quantity of vodka to be used by the skhod. But the complainant refused to accept this and carried her case to the volost' court which, while not rescinding the rule of the mir, also attached a fine of two rubles to the sentence.25

Although the mir and the volost' gave little weight to crimes committed by intoxicated peasants, they both placed a great deal of importance on the disruptive actions of peasants who were chronically intoxicated. If a peasant was disorderly on a regular basis, the mir often complained to the volost' and, in effect, asked for help in dealing with the situation. The court, acting on the recommendation of the starosta would either arrest, fine or apply the birch rod to the offending man. But this was usually the last resort of authorities who had apparently used other methods in the village. The mir and the volost' court, however, took a dim view when it came to dereliction of duty and unpaid taxes due to alcoholism. In Vanovsk volost', the state peasant Marochkin, 45 years old was brought before the court for non-payment of taxes due to habitual drunkenness. In a quick decision, the court ruled that he was to receive 15 lashes with the birch rod. The same court meted out 19 lashes to the state peasant
Koldaev aged 41 years for the same offense. This type of punishment was not uncommon since the accused was unable to pay either a fine or his back taxes in his present condition and an arrest would merely have prevented him from working to clear his debts. It was then, a common sense approach that was characteristic of the peasant courts. Vanovsk volost laws specifically forbade the punishment of those who did not pay their taxes. It was considered to be a village problem. However, if neglect of duty due to alcoholism was claimed, then the courts were entitled to punish the culprit freely, usually applying the birch rod.

It is interesting to note that the courts often dealt with problems of alcoholism in a paternalistic manner. In the case of a twenty year old peasant from Kazachinsk volost who was found guilty of harmful drinking and consorting with bad characters, the court sentenced him to 20 lashes with the birch rod. There is no indication in the records that any crimes were committed by the youth while under the influence of alcohol or that his friends had any control over his actions. Perhaps the mir referred this case to the court because the elders saw the youth falling into a pattern of irresponsible behavior and they chose to exercise control and take action before the problems escalated. On the other hand in the case of the peas-
ant Bulaev, age 84 years, who was convicted of using his fists to beat a neighbor and her daughter, the court relied on written law which called for compromise. Neither side wanted an agreement. Normally the culprit would have been subject to the birch rod but since he was over 70 years of age, that approach was forbidden. He was placed under arrest for seven days. While the rod was often applied in cases of violence involving those between the ages of 17 and 70, the punishment meted out to thieves was usually the birch rod. Cases of theft were given the highest priority because the average peasant household owned so little in the way of material assets. Animals, grain, money and private possessions could not easily be replaced by a family teetering on the brink of poverty and the losses could seriously endanger their economic stability.

The number of thefts brought before the volost courts in both Vladimir and Moscow was smaller than in Tambov. This was one crime that could not and would not be tolerated in the countryside and justice was swift and harsh. In the provinces of Vladimir and Moscow, however, the smaller number of thefts reported may be an indication that the looser restrictions on movement and the availability of work outside of the village eased some of the tensions of jealousy and
greed seen in the tighter knit villages. However, there were obviously thefts. In most cases, the birch rod was applied immediately in front of the court with no chance for appeal and then restitution was made. In Algasovski volost, a rather complicated case was brought before the court in July of 1870. It was reported by a neighboring volost government that in April of that year a horse collar and saddle had been stolen from the home of V. Demakin. In May of 1870 they were sold at the bazaar in a local village to the peasant Veterkova for four rubles, 50 kopecks. The peasant Ia. Demakin appeared in court and claimed that the goods were given to him by the peasant Lamakin as a gift. The court was unable to fathom the true story and conducted research into the case. Upon completion it was decided that the stolen goods had changed hands three times and that all who took part in the theft and resale of the collar and saddle were guilty except for the last buyer who was left with nothing. All were sentenced to lashes with the birch rod immediately and the original thief was forced to pay four rubles and 50 kopecks to the innocent victim. Theft was considered such a serious offense that it was not uncommon for the courts to track down the stolen merchandise and to punish all involved in the theft and resale.

In this particular volost the punishment for
theft was usually accompanied by samosud, and surprisingly, it was admitted to by the informants. The village skhod was expected to punish the offender by tying the stolen merchandise around the necks of the culprits and marching them through the village to cacophony of dissonant noises produced by the banging of pots and pans or other instruments. This practice had the effect of shaming and humiliating the offender in front of his family and neighbors. However, in this case, the theft had occurred in another volost', and even though it had to be treated with at the volost' level, it was not considered as serious by the members of the culprit's village as it would have had it occurred at home. It is also noticeable that the 20 lashes given by the volost' court were far less painful and humiliating than the justice that would have been administered at the village level. When thefts were committed among neighbors in a specific village the reaction of the peasants was much more drastic than when the theft occurred in another village.

Although most volosti denied the frequent use of the birch rod, it appears to have been the punishment of choice for a number of offenses especially in cases of theft. In Elatem uezd, it was claimed that the birch rod was never ordered. The informants stated: "We have not heard of the birch rod." They claimed that it
was better to entirely abolish corporal punishment for the peasants and to do away the birch rod since it had not been used in two years. However, in that same uezd in 1871 the keeper of the local ale house, the peasant Murzin, stated that the peasant Nesterov and his son Ivan came into his establishment and threatened arson. The father began to tear the sheepskin jacket from Murzin while the son jumped on the counter and attempted to remove the cast iron stove. During the fracas his children broke into the store room with boards and stole three puds of biscuits. In this case the court ruled that the accused had to repay one ruble, 60 kopecks for each pud of biscuits and one ruble, 80 kopecks for a vedro of stolen wine. For the insult to the owner of the ale house, each received 20 lashes with the birch rod. Punishment was justified, according to record, by the severity of the case presented. And, notwithstanding the disclaimers of informants on the use of the birch rod, theft and serious crimes such as the destruction of property were characteristically dealt with immediately and effectively by corporal punishment.

The punishment was often the same when the theft was work-related as in the case of the factory owner who claimed that a peasant stole 19 arshins of calico from his weaving factory. The defendant did not deny
the theft but claimed that he was a dupe of another peasant to whom he gave the stolen merchandise. He claimed that he was drunk and remembered nothing. The court decided to punish the thief with 19 lashes and the alleged instigator was imprisoned three days for drunkenness. While the factory or shop owner may have been wealthier than the average peasant family and therefore better able to absorb his losses, we have no proof for that assumption. The court records do not give specifics in the cases but since the punishment was usually geared to suit the individuals in the case, it is possible that the harsh penalty given the peasant who stole the calico was justified by the economic condition of the shop owner.

Complaints in the volost' courts by and against the mir were not uncommon especially in the more industrialized areas which is an indication that the peasants were not particularly cowed by the possibility of village reprisals. Nor were they loathe to take their cases to the Justice of the Peace or the to the Guberniia committee on peasant matters. In one interesting case, five former serfs complained that their starosta had demanded arrears from them that were in excess of their actual debt. One peasant claimed that his debt was only one ruble, 22 kopecks while the starosta claimed a total of 19 rubles, 54 kopecks.
They had been unable to get satisfaction from the volost' court which had apparently upheld the accounting of the starosta. The Congress of Peace Mediators overturned the decision of the both the starosta and the volost' court and ruled that the money was taken illegally and that the starosta was responsible for the entire amount to be repaid to the peasants. But in Serg'evsk volost', the peasant D. complained that the village obshchestvo had wrongly demanded 13 rubles from his son who was absent in the city. The representative of the village showed that he had arrears of 12 rubles, 30 kopecks. The court upheld the rebuttal of the obshchestvo in the amount of the 12 rubles. A widow complained against the obshchestvo that she and her husband owed 31 rubles in arrears. On the death of her husband, she sold her property for 100 rubles which the village then claimed. She did not deny the arrears but wanted to be reimbursed for the 69 rubles remaining and not owed to the village. The court agreed to her satisfaction.

While Vladimir peasants apparently did not hesitate to bring complaints against the mir, the elders conversely often made use of the same courts against the individual peasant. Non-payment of arrears, disruptive behavior, violence and drunkenness were again the main sources of complaints by the mir and their
disposition mirrored the same type of cases found in Tambov. The birch rod was used unsparingly despite protestations to the contrary from the informants. Often this use of the birch rod was selective as one peasant from the village of Kuznetsova complained. He had been punished by the birch rod for non-payment of a debt to a fellow villager. However, the court had come to this decision in advance of the court hearing. It had been written down in the court records (probably by the pisar') that the plaintiff was a vicious fellow and that he was to be punished despite the debt. The Justice of the Peace ruled that the court didn't use common sense in this matter and appealed to the volost' court to rescind the order. The court, however, despite this rebuff, decided that it had the full authority to take such action and upheld the punishment.37

In Bukholovsk volost' in Moscow province, the court was called upon to mediate a dispute between one of the local skhody and a recalcitrant peasant and his wife. The peasant had not appeared at the summons of the skhod but his wife came in his place and proceeded to verbally abuse the elders with insults. She had broken the rule of silence for women at the skhod and therefore she and her husband should be punished. The court questioned the husband who claimed that his wife was unaware of what she was doing and was therefore not
guilty. Because she had broken the rule of female silence at the skhod, the court ruled that the wife was to be placed under arrest for one day with the firm suggestion that in the future she stay at home and never again appear at the skhod. 38

The volost' courts also handled family arguments that could not be mediated at the local level. In the Moscow districts despite the rural appearance the incidence of complaints was higher (16%) in the than in Tambov. This percentage, though not excessive, gives an indication that the patriarchal authority was breaking down. Many of these complaints claimed that the children, especially the sons, lacked the necessary respect for their parents. While this charge was also made by parents in Tambov, the number in Moscow and Vladimir suggests that the sons were beginning to show a certain freedom from parental authority. The availability of jobs in the city meant that the young men no longer had to rely on farming and the family enterprise for subsistence but could leave the village. With these job opportunities available, the consent of his family and the required passport from the skhod, the son could break away from his family home and establish his own independence. For example, in Sudnikov volost' a peasant brought a complaint that his son did not give him the respect and obedience owed to him and had
beaten him. The son, denied the accusations and added: 
"...if I would have taken a birch rod to him then it 
would be visible." However the son was impudent in 
both words and actions and the court found him to be 
menacing in his demeanor. Therefore, the court ruled 
in favor of the father and the son was sentenced to ten 
lashes and forced to leave the home of his father. 
In another case of physical violence against a parent, 
a father complained that his son had given him a cruel 
beating. In this case the son admitted the offense but 
claimed that he was justified because his father had 
neglected the family business. Despite this, the court 
sentenced him to 12 lashes.

The nature of the complaints lodged by the star-
osty were the same in the three provinces investigated 
in that drunkenness and failure to pay taxes accounted 
for the majority of the litigations. The problems with 
these offenses were of some magnitude in Ryzsk uezd 
where three village starosty in Sudnikov volost brought 19 peasant homeowners before the court for 
constant drunkenness, disruption of the other peasant 
households in the villages and failure to pay their 
taxes on time. None could offer any defense and all 
were sentenced to 19 lashes. In the same volost, 
two more village starosty brought 12 peasants who were 
guilty of drunkenness, disturbing the peace and failure
to pay taxes before the court. Each was found guilty and sentenced to 19 lashes. The problem of arrears in taxes was common but failure to pay taxes was not a criminal offense. If a family worked hard but simply could not meet its obligations property was sold or other methods were used to ensure payment. However, the head of a household who failed to accept his responsibilities to the state, the zemstvo, the commune and the village because of laziness or alcoholism was considered a criminal and was judged accordingly.

Punishment for offenses ranged from arrest to fines to lashes of the rod. As noted above, most volost' informants claimed that the rod was rarely, if ever, used and then it was reserved for serious cases which upset both the economic and moral pinnings of the village, but the truth lies somewhere in the middle. The rod appears to have been a major method of punishment. It was seen in many cases as more of a deterrent to crime or insubordination than arrest. A stay in the volost' jail meant that the prisoner was confined to a small room for the allotted amount of time. His meals and all other necessities were supplied by his family. If his crime was alcoholism he still had access to vodka through his family and he could normally serve out his time with little more discomfort than was found in the peasant izba. If a man was guilty of failure to
pay his taxes or dereliction of duty, his jail sentence probably had little effect on his behavior. He was not apt to work anyway. This also held true for rural peasants found guilty of a crime and sentenced to jail during the winter months when agricultural work was almost non-existent. But if the peasant was a normally productive member of the community and the fields had to be tended, the time spent in the jail was difficult.

In the Central Industrial Region, particularly, the idea of arrest was often counter-productive. Most of the peasants in villages where industrial work or trade was the mainstay of the economy depended on the steady work of the residents. When arrest intervened for some crime be it theft, failure to pay legal debts or fighting, the guilty party was unable to work and ran the possibility of losing his job. Besides the birch rod, the only other choice of punishment was to assess a fine against the guilty individual. However, this approach was undoubtedly ineffective. In most cases the offender had little or no money. If he was charged with dereliction of duty and failure to pay his taxes, he obviously was unable to pay a fine. The most practical solution then was the application of the birch rod which punished the offender quickly and efficiently. In the eyes of both the courts and the villagers, once the sentence had been dictated and
carried out, the problem was solved and there were no further recriminations on the matter. Despite the refusal of the volost' informants to acknowledge use of the rod, it was very much in common practice.

While the majority of the cases brought before the courts were of a criminal nature i.e. unpaid debts, theft and violence, a surprising number dealt with slander. Back-biting and slander in general are found in all peasant societies as a method of informal social control or as a means of revenge for some offense either real or imagined. This approach, surprisingly, often eases a difficult situation and releases tensions since not only are there no overt confrontations which could be the cause of a family vendetta, but because everyone accepts these actions as normal. For example, malicious gossip can be carried on without any actual proof of wrongdoing. Neighbors can censure a recalcitrant peasant without actually ruining his livelihood and revenge by the victim is fruitless. Sometimes the root cause is jealousy, sometimes the basic motive has been lost in the passage of years and may have originally presented itself in a long ago argument between families or neighbors. Neighbors and families in peasant societies tended to align themselves with other like minded individuals to the exclusion of certain other neighbors and families, especial-
ly in large villages. While I am unaware of a Russian term that illustrates this attitude, the French peasants refer to it as brouilles. This formation of a friendship bond meant that others outside of the circle were fair game for slander and ostracization or could be merely ignored. Rarely are members of a particular friendship or kinship group attacked from within. According to antropologist, George Foster, one of the root causes for these acts lies not only in family or neighborly arguments or in basic meanness but also in the peasant view of the good life. It is posited by Foster that the good things of life are limited in quantity and static in growth. Therefore if follows that those who have more land, economic success or even good luck have attained that good fortune through the losses of another. In times of particular hardship, the poorer members of the community usually look to their economic betters as responsible for their misfortune assuming that the wealthier peasant has cheated others in order to attain his prosperity. In this situation, jealousy is a common emotion and the successful peasant becomes fair game for verbal abuse, ridicule and gossip.

Since the very nature of the commune was symbolized by equality, no one could be allowed to "get above himself." In order to insure that individual members
of a community did not exceed their limits of good (or wealth), a certain degree of supervision and, if necessary, levelling had to take place. This informal social control could take the form of back-biting and slander or go one step farther and include accusations of theft and general character assassination which were often difficult to prove in a court setting but which could be devastating to the victim. Complaints of this type of behavior are widespread in the records of the volost' court. But while we cannot prove that these complaints were based on levelling techniques used by fellow villagers, the fact that these were common methods found in other peasant civilizations makes this a plausible assumption. Groundless accusations of theft were a common complaint in the volost' court records. The trick was to put an enemy on the defensive by not only accusing him but by making a public statement as to his guilt. When a peasant was denounced for theft he could either fail to respond, settle the score with his accuser or take the case to the court in the hope that he would be publicly vindicated. One such complaint was brought in Khotevtsovskii volost' where a peasant had spread a story blaming a fellow villager, of stealing one half chetvert' of rye. There was no proof of the crime and the witness claimed that he had no facts in the matter, he had heard only the accusa-
tion the defendant. The court ruled that it was clearly a slanderous statement with no basis in fact and that it had probably been motivated by revenge for an earlier fight between the men. The perpetrator was fined three rubles for the insult.45

It is obvious in some cases and assumed in others, however, that those complaints brought before the courts were already treated with by the skhod through the courts of arbitration and that no agreement had been reached between the parties. The majority of the cases involved either accusations of theft which were usually unproven or unprovable or allegations of sexual misconduct. Surprisingly, in the cases reviewed, several also referred to a failure to properly practice Orthodoxy.

A common slanderous statement involved the sexual practices of a member of the plaintiff's family. In Moscow gubernija, a peasant complained that a neighbor had accused him of a sexual encounter between himself and his daughter-in-law (snokhozhichesvo). But the complainant could produce no proof and no witnesses to alleged accusation. In expressing his complaint to the court he used unacceptable language which forced the court to question his reliability. Based on character judgement he was found guilty of the offense and was placed under arrest for three days.47 In Khotevtsovski
another peasant complained that his neighbor had plotted to get him drunk on a Sunday, insulted him with swear words, and bragged to him that he had had sexual experiences with both his wife and his daughter. The defendant agreed that he did drink with the plaintiff but that he had had no immoral encounters with his wife and daughter. The defendant was, therefore, found guilty of slander and was punished with 20 lashes.48 Accusations of slanderous statements were taken seriously by the court especially if they sought to damage the good name of the plaintiff. In another case of slander in Tambov, three peasants accused a neighbor of theft. The three had plotted their actions in advance hoping that the accused, one Neystryev, would be punished for the supposed theft with the birch rod. But the court found Neystryev innocent of all the charges and the three conspirators guilty of premeditated slander. Under the law they could be subjected to the birch rod. However, the victim saw no reason for bodily punishment and agreed to accept a monetary compensation. Each of the perpetrators was forced to pay one ruble.45

While these malicious acts were a cause for concern among the peasants they were usually carried out by a few persons against one individual or his family. However, censure by the entire village was not easily
removed. Anna Akliucheva whose case history was presented in the previous chapter was an example of the strength of village censure. According to her accusers, she had committed theft but refused to admit to the crime and would not take her punishment quietly. Instead, she denied the theft and maintained a demeanor of arrogance during her punishment. This attitude could not be accepted in a village where community standards of behavior and subservience to majority rule had to be upheld. In retaliation she was condemned by the villagers and her isolation was made so complete that she was forced to ask for a passport to leave the village. In one sense this was an effective levelling technique but it was by no means informal control in which the guilty party was expected to mend his ways. It appears to have been just as formal as the decisions of the skhod and it is doubtful whether any future actions of Anna could have changed the censure.

In a number of the above mentioned cases, the character of both the plaintiff and the accused were taken into consideration which indicates that to some extent customary law was being used to supplant a written law that would demand testimony of witnesses and depositions. However, the use of customary law by the courts has proven to be a nebulous area of research. In certain cases it is easy to detect its
usage and the threads run through many of the volost' court proceedings. Despite the fact that some use of customary law was permitted, local judges feared censure by higher authorities if the decisions were appealed. In that case, the courts of appeals would deal with the case using legal written statutes without recourse to peasant individuals and their status in the community. Therefore we rarely find in the court records a specific reference to the use of obychnoe pravo (customary law) as a method of deciding cases. As cited above, informants from the various volosts throughout Tambov, Vladimir and Moscow provinces refer only to "conscience." The term "according to local law" is another clue to the possible use of customary law but this usually applies to cases of family property divisions which were the sole purview of the village.

The necessity for punitive samosud, the courts of arbitration and the volost' courts most certainly give indications that there were tensions in the villages that had to be resolved. The economic status of the villagers in a semi-closed but competitive society gave rise to numerous problems which had to be solved or at least mediated by the elders or the volost' authorities. But, the close proximity of the villagers to each other, the often unrestrained use of alcohol and
the natural suspicions of interrelated people created a sometimes explosive situation. Equality existed in the communes on a varying scale. In the matter of distribution of land there was a degree of fairness but this did not extend to all facets of village life. Those who were "proper" peasants, good khozians were more equal in the scheme of the village than those who shirked their responsibilities and their taxes. Those who took an active part in the work of the skhod were more inclined to reap the benefits of the skhod than those who alienated themselves from the skhod and the rest of the village. There was indeed stratification in the countryside both economically and socially and the desire to maintain position or achieve greater prestige lent itself to just those problems recorded by the volost courts. Until the 1860's the peasants had always dealt with the problems of the villages in time-honored ways; the skhod, samosud and the use of social control but the emancipation allowed greater opportunities for work, new alliances outside of the village and more freedom from the constraints of village life which enabled the villagers to look beyond the village gate for solutions or decisions on their problems. The volost courts provided to some degree an outside settlement to village problems. Although the courts were peasant oriented and the judges were peasants,
there was still a link with the wider world. Crimes, misdemeanors, contracts and family divisions no longer had to be settled within the village where there was a possibility of bias in the decisions. Peasants could take their complaints to a larger court and hope that they would receive an impartial judgement. Of course, despite the attempts to make use of written law, no peasant would consider a negative judgement to be impartial.

Tensions always exist in society and they exist in a greater degree when that society is separated from the outside world. By the late 19th century, many village obshchestva no longer seemed to be able to fill the growing needs of the more outward looking peasants and so the volost' courts began to come more into play not only as a source of justice but as a step towards uniting the vast numbers of peasants with the rest of Russian society. The records of these courts can provide the researcher with a wide view of peasant society in the years from 1862 to 1872. Through reading and attempting to analyze the court cases we can gain a better understanding of peasant life and peasant problems and the solutions reached by the peasants themselves.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 6. These stories are told as facts, but the sources of the tales are not noted and it is probable that while they may have some basis in fact they have been expanded through rumor.

3. TsGIAM, g. Moskvy, f. 66, o.6, ed. xp. 36. Note that the volost court did not rule in favor of exile. This decision was left in the hands of the guberniia department for peasant affairs.

4. Trudy Kommissii, These figures have been compiled from the available date presented by the commission for selected gubernias and volosts.

5. These tabulations are my own based on the records for the three provinces and the volosty surveyed and are as accurate as possible given the incomplete records and the unreliability of some of those records.

6. Information is taken from the volost informants questioned by the researchers for the Trudy Kommissii, vol.1, 1872.

7. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 100-101. Note that the numbers given apply only to male souls and do not include women and children.

8. Ibid., p. 75.

9. Ibid., p. 91.

10. Ibid., p. 137.

11. Ibid., p.104.

12. Ibid., p.79.

13. Ibid., p. 138.

15. Ibid., p. 74.
16. Ibid., p. 55.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 72.
19. Ibid., p. 111.
20. Ibid., p. 112.
21. Ibid., p. 93.
22. Ibid., p. 48.
23. For Engel'gardt's views on the use of vodka, see pp. 144 and 237.
24. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 23.
25. Ibid., p. 54.
26. Ibid., p. 105.
27. Ibid., pp. 193-194.
28. Ibid., p. 154.
29. Ibid., p. 158.
30. Ibid., pp. 103-104.
31. Ibid., p. 124.
32. Ibid., p. 136.
34. Ibid., "Obozrenie del' i postanovlenie c'ez-dov' mirovukh' posrednikov' Vladimirskoi gubernii," p. 88.
35. Ibid., p. 34.
36. Ibid., p. 34.
37. Ibid., p. 84.
38. Ibid., p. 337.
39. Ibid., p. 355.
40. Ibid., p. 364.

41. Ibid., p. 353.

42. Ibid.

43. See John Messenger, Inis Beag Isle of Ireland, pp. 66-67 and Frederick C. Gamst, Peasants in a Complex Society, pp. 42-43. For some other approaches to social controls such as witchcraft see I. M. Lewis, Social Anthropology in Perspective: The Relevance of Social Anthropology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 80-81.

44. Wylie, The village in the Vaucluse, pp. 196-205.

45. Foster, Peasant Society, pp. 300-323.


47. Ibid., p. 354.

48. Ibid., p. 364.

49. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 106.
Between the Emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the advent of the zemskii nachalniki in 1889, the Russian peasants led a fairly free existence. Despite the heavy burdens of land payments and the initial compensation to the former landowners in either obrok or barshchina, the peasant was allowed to work his own land, make decisions on his life in concert with his co-villagers and employ whatever means were at his disposal to increase his income. For the former serfs this was an unprecedented experience. One for which he had to rethink his goals and make use of previously untapped physical and mental resources to cope with the changes both as an individual and as a member of a commune.

Among the first transformations to take place was the broadening of the powers of the skhod which, while it had been in existence for some time, was now charged with greater duties under the new laws. The villagers, in partnership were responsible for taxation by the state, zemstvo, and village, the issuance of passports for work in the cities or in other rural areas, and the distribution of the land which was now held jointly.
The skhod, as a peasant institution, was to oversee all phases of peasant life and work, to mediate disputes, and to assure that cohesiveness existed among the village households for the good of the entire village.

To further encourage peasant participation in the legal processes of the state, the volost' courts were initiated. These judicial bodies made up of peasant judges were empowered to adjudicate village problems using a mixture of written law approved by the state and obychnoe pravo (customary law) with which the peasants were familiar. Their brand of justice was highly individualistic and subjective but it also appears to have been effective in settling both village and family problems. Although the peasants did not immediately make use of these courts, in the years following their inception the number of cases increased markedly and the villagers began to see them as sources of fairness outside of the immediate villages. While the local courts of elders, family courts and village courts could hardly have been impartial given the structure of village society, the volost' courts covered a wider area and were less likely to be influenced by certain individuals and their families or their status in the village.

On the whole, the two most important quasi-political institutions most associated with rural Russia, the
skhod and the volost' courts fulfilled very meaningful roles. The skhod was the organ of consolidation, unifying the peasants and producing a viable entity responsible for taxes and for the movements of its members. Although it did judge villagers for their criminal or moral actions the volost' courts came to be seen as the organ for problems of disunity which were frequent and of great importance in the villages.

While the Russian villagers have been celebrated by historians for their unity of purpose and equality in the village, the fact remains that this was not always the case. There was, of necessity, a great deal of cohesiveness. Without it life would have been intolerable and economic success or even subsistence would have been impossible. But with all of this unity there were also tensions in the countryside. Poverty, illiteracy, alcohol and the close and stifling atmosphere of the peasant izba created divisiveness among villagers and even among family members. Theft, violence, jealousy, slander and back-biting became manifestations of those internal tensions. And all of these problems belied the outward cohesiveness of the villages. But, we cannot deny their existence and still portray peasant society with any degree of reality since these are problems common to humanity not just the of the Russian peasants. To take a step over into the discipline of
psychology, we can say that they are representative of human nature regardless of time and place.

Internal stratification existed in this society, as it does in all societies. It may not have been immediately visible to ethnographers and zemstvo statisticians who plied the peasants with questions but it was evident to all villagers. Rather than the total equality so often celebrated, there were wealthy peasants and poor peasants, ones with some education and those with no literacy but with relatives who were learned and could therefore bring increased prestige. The networks of families and kinship seems to indicate that the peasants were very much attuned to increasing their prestige if not their economic status among their fellow villagers.

Unfortunately, the archival records and the judicial reports do not yield the specifics of these relationships in any organized way and it requires much research on specific questions to find the traces of these attitudes among the villagers. However, it is hoped that this information will be forthcoming in the future as we gain greater access to archival material. Quantifying material on the nineteenth century peasant villages is also extremely difficult, if not impossible. Zemstvo researchers performed their tasks during several decades in the nineteenth century but rather
than to pursue the same peasants in the same villages, they varied their locations. Therefore, a time line cannot be drawn for any particular village or family. Family studies especially are filled with snares and traps since surnames were still an innovation in this time period, and most villagers still used only first names and patronymics forcing the researcher to make educated and often erroneous guesses. But there is another major drawback to quantification of material in that the human being and the human voice can be lost in the plethora of numbers which define his existence statistically.

This dissertation is an attempt to look at the post Emancipation Russian village and family from a human viewpoint with both the good and the bad of rural life highlighted. Historians have been well aware of the village institutions for some time but not of the people who worked within these institutions. We have been made aware of village festivals, ceremonies and habits but not of the discordant notes that often accompanied these rites and actions. These are all topics for research in the near future. The study of the Russian peasant villages must be an ongoing inquiry into the lives of the people not only for historians but for anthropologists and sociologists as well.
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GLOSSARY

RUSSIAN TERMS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS

Arshin: A measure of length equal to about 28 inches
Chetvert: Unit of measure equal to 2.4 bushels.
Dvor: Peasant homestead
Guberniia: Province
Kustar: Cottage industry
Mir: The administrative commune.
Obshchestvo: Unit containing several villages for administrative purposes.
Obshchina: The commune as an economic unit or the community in general as defined in modern terms.
Pisar: Scribe or secretary who recorded village, mir and volost proceedings.
Pud: A dry measure equal to 36 pounds. Usually used to measure grain.
Starosta: Elder in the village or commune
Starshina: Elder at the volost level
Uezd: District or county
Usadba: Property of peasant family for home and vegetable garden.
Vedro: Unit of measure equal to 3.25 gallons
Volost: Territorial commune
Zemstvo: The elected assembly of an uezd or gubernia after the Emancipation.