

# THE RUSSIAN PEASANT MOVEMENT OF 1905-1907: ITS SOCIAL COMPOSITION AND REVOLUTIONARY SIGNIFICANCE \*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REVOLUTION OF 1905 LAY IN THE FACT THAT it represented, for the first time in Russian history, a simultaneous attack on autocracy from all levels of society — sectors of the professional and commercial middle class, the radical and liberal intelligentsia, the urban workers, and the peasantry. The causes of such widespread discontent were to be found in the complex of interrelated social and economic changes which followed the Emancipation of the serfs in 1861. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the impact of Vitte's policy of rapid industrialization at the expense of agriculture was making itself felt in a wave of agrarian disturbances in the south and a militant strike movement in the towns. Thus when the scattered socialist groups of the 1880s and 1890s united to form two major revolutionary parties, the Social Democrats in 1898 and the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1901, a potential mass base of support had already been created. Student unrest, and the formation of a radical liberal movement around the "Liberation" group of 1902, intensified the social ferment. In the face of a growing domestic political crisis, the Russian government in 1904 engaged in war with Japan, believing, in the words of Pleve, that "in order to hold back the revolution, we need a short victorious war".<sup>1</sup> The disastrous course of the war in the Far East precipitated a revolutionary situation in which the Russian peasantry was to play a major rôle. This paper will attempt to assess that rôle in terms of the social composition of the participants in the peasant movement, and the extent to which they were influenced by the revolutionary forces in the towns.

By the provisions of the Emancipation Act, the Russian peasantry received less land than they had previously used under serfdom.<sup>2</sup>

\* This article is based on a paper read to the seminar on "The Leadership of Peasant Movements", in the series "Peasant and Farmer in Europe", held at the University of Birmingham on 26-7 March 1971.

<sup>1</sup> Cited in S. Yu. Vitte, *Vospominaniya* [Memoirs], 2 vols. (Berlin, 1922), i, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> The classic English-language study of the pre-revolutionary peasantry is G. T. Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime* (London, 1932).

An unprecedented increase in the size of the rural population in the second half of the nineteenth century intensified the problem of "land-hunger". Heavy redemption payments on their communal holdings, in addition to an onerous burden of taxation, increased the impoverishment of the peasantry. The inadequacy of his allotment to meet his obligations forced the peasant either to rent or purchase land from the gentry, or to seek off-farm wage-labour in agriculture or industry. The pressure of population increase, however, pushed up land prices and rents, and kept wages low. The economic dependence of the peasantry on the gentry landowners was therefore on the increase in the decades after Emancipation. Those of the gentry who retained their land at the end of the century<sup>3</sup> either rented their estates to the neighbouring peasantry, or went over to more capitalistic methods of farming. Although in many areas the system was a mixed one, forms of renting, including money-rent, labour-rent and share-cropping, predominated in the central agricultural areas of the Black Earth and Volga, whereas capitalist agriculture, with the estates being worked for money-wages by a landless or near-landless agricultural proletariat, was developing mainly on the western periphery — the Baltic provinces, Belorussia, the south-west Ukraine and Novorossiia.<sup>4</sup> In areas where this transition to capitalist agriculture was taking place, the peasants were deprived not only of the opportunity of renting land, but also, in many cases, of their traditional rights of access to resources such as forest and pasture. The overall effect of these developments was the same — the progressive impoverishment and pauperization of the mass of the Russian peasantry.

In the post-Emancipation period industrialization, and the creation of an industrial labour force, went hand in hand with the development of the agrarian crisis. The government's policy of financing industrialization through fiscal pressure on the peasantry forced millions of peasants to find work in the towns. The phenomenon of the "peasant-worker", who saw his labours in the factory primarily as a means to the end of consolidating his family's economic position in the village, played an important rôle not only in determining the social consciousness of the urban proletariat,<sup>5</sup> but also in channelling

<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that the gentry sold nearly one-third of all their lands between 1877 and 1905: see Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-1.

<sup>4</sup> S. M. Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie v revolyutsii 1905-1907 gg.* [The Peasant Movement in the Revolution of 1905-1907], (Moscow, 1956), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> See. T. H. Von Laue, "Russian Peasants in the Factory, 1892-1904", *Jl. Econ. Hist.*, xxi (1961), pp. 61-80.

urban ideas and attitudes to the countryside. A general improvement in communications in the second half of the nineteenth century was helping to break down the isolation of the peasants in their communes, and to extend their experience beyond the immediate horizon of the village. The growth of railways made it easier for peasants to travel hundreds or even thousands of miles in search of work; and the increase in literacy in the countryside following the educational reforms of Alexander II made newspapers and books more accessible to the peasantry. An important educational rôle was played by the *zemstvos*, the local government bodies established in 1864 with broad responsibilities for social welfare in the countryside. The professional employees of the *zemstvos* constituted a new "rural intelligentsia" of teachers, doctors and nurses, lawyers, agronomists and statisticians, often sharing a populist ethos of service to the people through "cultural enlightenment", who introduced the peasants to secular urban intellectual values which were very different from those traditionally conveyed by the priests and local state officials.<sup>6</sup>

The generation which participated in the peasant movement of 1905 was therefore somewhat different in outlook from that which had responded so apathetically to the Populist "movement to the people" of the 1870s. There was a growing awareness and resentment of the fact that Emancipation had brought, not the longed for "land and liberty", but a progressive deterioration in the economic condition of the peasantry. At the same time, the traditional values of religion and loyalty to the Tsar, which had, with a few exceptions, made passive resignation to fate the major characteristic of the Russian peasantry throughout the nineteenth century, were gradually losing their hold over the peasant imagination. The economic independence which the young attained through wage work was eroding the patriarchal structure of the household and village, with obvious implications for the equally patriarchal structure of church and state.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult, however, to assess the extent and

<sup>6</sup> N. Cherevanin, "Dvizhenie intelligentsii" [The Movement of the Intelligentsia], in L. Martov, P. Maslov and A. Potresov (eds.), *Obshchestvennoe dvizhenie v Rossii v nachale dvadtsatogo veka* [The Social Movement in Russia at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century] (St. Petersburg, 1909-14), i, pp. 259-90; A. Potresov, "Evolyutsiya obshchestvenno-politicheskoy mysli v predrevolyutsionnyu epokhu" [The Evolution of Socio-Political Thought in the Pre-revolutionary Epoch], *ibid.*, i, pp. 538-640.

<sup>7</sup> The difference in peasant attitudes was noted by an old Populist returning to European Russia in 1896 from Siberian exile: E. K. Breshkovskaya, "Vospominaniya i dumy" [Memoirs and Thoughts], *Sotsialist-Revolyutsioner* [The Socialist Revolutionary], iv (1912), pp. 117-19.

significance of such changes in peasant attitudes. Certainly the mood of the countryside was rebellious: the revolutionaries who went to the peasantry at the beginning of the twentieth century were gratified to find a ready response to their advocacy of direct action to achieve land and liberty, which contrasted with the passive millenarian expectation of "the Tsar's favour" encountered by their Populist predecessors.<sup>8</sup> Yet the events of 1905-7 were to show that the old ideas were still strong; many agrarian disturbances were triggered off by rumours of the appearance of an Imperial Manifesto granting a general redistribution of the land.<sup>9</sup> The Russian peasantry in 1905 was still very much a "traditional" peasantry, but a traditional peasantry which was increasingly being affected by the modernization of Russia — a process of which they were the first victims. If its causes lay in the process of modernization, however, the forms which the peasant movement assumed were essentially traditional, directed primarily against the traditional enemies of the peasantry at the local level, rather than at the national centre of power embodied in the Tsar.

The agrarian unrest of 1902-3, which had died down somewhat in 1904, flared up again at the beginning of 1905, sparked off by the wave of strikes which followed the "Bloody Sunday" massacre in St. Petersburg, and continued throughout 1906 and 1907.<sup>10</sup> Tables 1-3 show the main forms of the movement, and its regional distribution.<sup>11</sup> The movement was predominantly directed against

<sup>8</sup> Accounts of peasant receptivity to revolutionary propaganda at the turn of the century can be found in Breshkovskaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-7; V. M. Chernov, *Zapiski Sotsialista-Revolyutsionera* [Notes of a Socialist Revolutionary], (Berlin, 1922), pp. 245-339; S. Nechetnyi, "U zemli" [On the Land], *Vestnik Russkoy Revolyutsii* [Herald of the Russian Revolution], ii (1902), section 2, pp. 37-82; I. Rakitnikova, "Revolyutsionnaya rabota v krest'yanstve v Saratovskoy gubernii v 1900-1902 gg." [Revolutionary Work among the Peasantry in Saratov Province in 1900-1902], *Katorga i ssylka* [Penal Servitude and Exile], xlviii (1928), section 1, pp. 7-17.

<sup>9</sup> P. Maslov, *Agrarnyi vopros v Rossii* [The Agrarian Question in Russia], 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1905-8), ii, pp. 159-60.

<sup>10</sup> Dubrovskii calculates that 50 instances of peasant unrest were reported in 1901; 340 in 1902; 141 in 1903; 91 in 1904; 3,228 in 1905; 2,600 in 1906; and 1,337 in 1907. These figures are based on a study of central archive materials, especially police reports, and the national press, and do not claim to be exhaustive (*op. cit.*, pp. 38-9).

<sup>11</sup> The sources for the Tables used slightly different classifications for the forms of the movement, and different criteria for assessing its strength. Shestakov, in common with most pre-revolutionary and Soviet works, refers to the number of districts (*uezd*) affected. Dubrovskii, whose little book provides probably the most systematic account of the movement, uses the more accurate measure of the number of incidents reported; unfortunately, however, he does not provide a breakdown of his data in terms of both form and regional distribution.

the landowners: conflicts with police and troops usually developed as a consequence of their intervention in the movement against the landowners. In many areas, the peasants replaced with their own freely elected representatives village and rural district (*volost'*) elders and other officials whom they considered to be simply the puppets of the state bureaucracy. Refusals to pay taxes were also common. The movement against state intervention in peasant affairs was particularly strong in Georgia, where virtual anarchy reigned in the countryside for much of 1905 and 1906.<sup>12</sup> The forms assumed by the movement against the landowners were determined primarily by the system of land-tenure and agrarian relationships in each given locality. The movement was strongest in those areas, such as the Central Black Earth, the Volga and the Ukraine, where the exploitation of the peasant renters by the gentry landowners was greatest, or where the severest hardships had been caused by the transition from renting to large-scale capitalist farming. Here the predominant form of the movement was the attack on the landowner's estate. This often involved the destruction of the manor house and outbuildings, to ensure that the "master" would never return, and the seizure of the estate lands and property by the peasants. In some areas, such as those in the west, where the estates were worked by an agricultural proletariat, strikes for better wages and conditions were common.<sup>13</sup> The aims of the movement therefore ranged from straightforward demands for the amelioration of economic conditions, as in the strike movement, to a much more far-reaching social goal, "black repartition", involving the total abolition of gentry landholding, and the implementation, *de facto*, at local level, of the deeply rooted peasant belief that only they, who worked the land with their own labour, had any right to it.<sup>14</sup>

Differences in the social structure of the countryside were reflected in the composition of the peasant movement in its various manifestations. In spite of the widespread prevalence of the repartitional commune with its equalizing tendencies,<sup>15</sup> the peasantry was far from being a homogeneous mass, and the sectional interests of the

<sup>12</sup> Dubrovskii, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-83; A. Shestakov, *Krest'yanskaya revolyutsiya 1905-1907 gg. v Rossii* [The Peasant Revolution of 1905-1907 in Russia] (Moscow, 1926), pp. 51-3.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the "labour principle" in peasant customary law and in the peasant movement of 1905, see K. R. Kachorovskii, *Narodnoe pravo* [The People's Law] (Moscow, 1906).

<sup>15</sup> More than three-quarters of all peasant households in 1905 belonged to communes which were at least nominally repartitional: Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

TABLE 1

## FORMS OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA IN 1905-7\*

Form of movement	No. of instances	Percentage of Total	Total no. of instances	Percentage of Total
Action against landowners:				
Arson	979	18.1		
Destruction of estates	846	15.7		
Illicit wood-cutting	809	15.0		
Strikes by agricultural workers	723	13.4		
Seizure of meadows, pasture, etc.	573	10.6		
Withdrawal of labour from estates	474	8.7		
Seizure of foodstuffs and fodder	316	5.8		
Seizure and tillage of arable land	216	4.0		
Rent conflicts	211	3.9		
Conflict with landowners and estate officials	205	3.8		
Conflicts over boundaries	52	1.0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5404</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5404</b>	<b>75.4</b>
Conflicts with state officials, police and troops			1041	14.5
Conflicts with kulaks			97	1.4
Conflicts with clergy			33	0.5
Other (attacks on traders, usurers, liquor shops, etc.)			590	8.2
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>7165</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* The Table covers all regions of European Russia except the Baltic and Transcaucasian provinces. The Table is based on data in S. M. Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie v revolyutsii 1905-1907gg.* [The Peasant Movement in the Revolution of 1905-1907] (Moscow, 1956), pp. 65, 67.

TABLE 2

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT OF 1905-7\*

Region	No. of instances	Percentage of Total
Central Black Earth	2196	30.6
South-West	985	13.7
Little Russia	850	11.8
Mid-Volga	724	10.3
Belorussia	655	9.1
Central Industrial	482	6.7
Novorossiya	468	6.5
Lower Volga	244	3.4
Lakes	235	3.3
Lithuania	168	2.3
Urals	104	1.5
North	54	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>7165</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* Source: S. M. Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie v revolyutsii 1905-1907 gg.* [The Peasant Movement in the Revolution of 1905-1907] (Moscow, 1956), p. 60.

TABLE 3  
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF FORMS OF PEASANT MOVEMENT OF 1905-7\*

Region	Total no. of districts	No. of districts affected	% of total	Forms of movement													
				Destruction of estates		Illicit wood-cutting		Strikes		Seizure of pasture and fodder		Illicit tillage		Seizure of grain from fields		Rent Conflicts	
				No. of districts	% of districts affected	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Central Black Earth	75	68	90.7	54	76.5	45	66.2	46	67.6	47	69.1	7	10.3	18	26.5	28	41.2
South-West	36	35	97.2	9	25.7	19	54.3	31	88.6	22	62.9	8	22.9	5	14.3	8	22.9
Little Russia	41	41	100.0	26	63.4	28	68.3	35	85.4	29	70.7	5	12.2	11	26.8	26	63.4
Mid-Volga	51	45	88.2	30	66.7	39	86.7	16	35.6	26	57.2	18	40.0	14	31.1	12	26.7
Belorussia	43	39	90.7	6	15.4	33	84.6	25	64.1	6	15.4	5	12.8	—	—	—	—
Central Industrial	71	45	63.4	4	8.9	38	84.4	8	17.8	19	42.2	7	15.6	—	—	3	6.7
Novorossiya	39	32	82.1	19	59.4	16	50.0	17	53.1	13	40.6	17	53.1	7	21.9	22	68.8
Lower Volga	17	9	52.9	7	77.8	6	66.7	1	11.1	7	77.8	4	44.4	2	22.2	4	44.4
Lakes	34	23	67.6	3	13.0	20	87.0	10	43.5	12	52.2	2	8.7	2	8.7	4	17.4
Lithuania	23	17	73.9	—	—	18	76.5	14	82.4	10	58.8	4	23.5	2	11.8	—	—
Urals	29	11	37.9	1	9.1	10	90.9	—	—	2	18.2	—	—	—	—	—	—
North	19	9	47.4	—	—	9	100.0	1	11.1	2	22.1	1	11.1	—	—	2	22.1
TOTALS	478	374	78.2	159	42.8	281	75.1	204	54.5	195	52.1	78	20.9	61	16.3	109	29.1

\* Based on a table in A. Shestakov, *Krest'yanskaya revolyutsiya 1905-1907 gg. v Rossii* [The Peasant Revolution of 1905-1907 in Russia] (Moscow, 1926), p. 52.

various strata often came into conflict in the course of the movement. The most obvious example of such conflict was the case of the kulaks, or rich peasants, whose farms were sometimes the object of attacks similar to those on the gentry estates.<sup>16</sup> The problem of the "true" nature of the peasant movement was the topic of much lively debate among contemporaries, especially within the rival socialist parties, who believed that the socio-political character of the revolution would be determined by the aspirations of the peasantry. The Social Democrats saw the peasant movement as essentially a conflict between the peasantry as a whole and the gentry landowners, a conflict which contained within this first anti-feudal bourgeois-democratic stage the seeds of the future class-struggle between the rural proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie.<sup>17</sup> The Socialist Revolutionaries, on the other hand, considered the movement to be both anti-feudal *and* anti-capitalist, part of the general struggle "of the poor against the rich, of those who labour against those who do not, of the exploited against those who extort surplus value",<sup>18</sup> which united the peasantry with the urban proletariat and the socialist intelligentsia in the "working people's revolution" (*narodno-trudovaya revolyutsiya*). In order to assess the relative merits of these rival views, and to achieve a better understanding of the complex character of the Russian peasant movement and its relationship to the revolutionary movement as a whole, a detailed study is required of the degree of participation in the movement by the different social groups within the peasantry, and also of the extent and nature of external influence.

Probably the most valuable source for any study of the peasant movement is the survey conducted by the Imperial Free Economic Society, a learned body with broad liberal and even radical sympathies. About 20,000 copies of a detailed questionnaire on the nature, causes and effects of the movement were sent in 1907 to correspondents and contacts of the Society in forty-seven out of the fifty provinces of European Russia. Of the 1,400 replies received, 702 contained positive information concerning the existence of

<sup>16</sup> Dubrovskii, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-3.

<sup>17</sup> This analysis is developed in V. I. Lenin, "Agrarnaya programma russkoy sotsial-demokratii" [The Agrarian Programme of Russian Social Democracy], *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works], 5th edn., 55 vols. (Moscow, 1958-65), vi, pp. 303-48, and in his "Proletariat i krest'yanstvo" [The Proletariat and the Peasantry], *ibid.*, ix, pp. 341-6.

<sup>18</sup> "Kharakter sovremennago krest'yanskogo dvizheniya" [The Character of the Contemporary Peasant Movement], *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], xiii (1902), p. 5.

peasant unrest in the correspondent's locality. According to the editors of the survey, these correspondents were:

representatives of very heterogeneous strata of the population, various political tendencies and social trends, peasants and landowners, teachers and estate stewards, priests and state officials, extremists of the left and of the right, participants in the movement and police officers, victims of political repressions, and victims of agrarian destruction.<sup>19</sup>

The questions on the survey form included detailed requests for information on the participation of peasant and non-peasant elements in the movement, for example:

Was there any influence from outsiders? How was it expressed?

Which strata of the village took part in the movement: poor peasants, middle peasants, or the prosperous? What was each stratum's attitude towards the movement? What was the attitude of the peasants who had purchased land?

Was any part played by peasants engaged in off-farm wage work in factories and towns? If so, what?

Was any part played by soldiers and reserves returning from Manchuria? If so, what?

What part was played by the young men? By the old men?

What was the attitude of the women?<sup>20</sup>

The form in which the results of the survey were published makes it difficult to attempt a precise analysis of the informants' answers to these questions. The compilation of a digest of the returns for each region was entrusted to separate editors, who were granted considerable freedom in their approach to the materials. The quality of the editors, like that of the informants, varied considerably: some provided much more detailed and systematic analyses than others.<sup>21</sup> The editors' stated aim was "not to draw any final conclusions or generalizations, but to set out, systematically and objectively, all the data obtained from the survey, as material which should serve as one of the sources . . . for subsequent scientific study of the agrarian movement".<sup>22</sup> No attempt was therefore made in the published results to present an overall picture of the movement in any of its aspects: what follows represents this author's personal analysis of the evidence in the regional digests concerning the social composition of the participants in the movement. Table 4 provides a summary of the findings.

<sup>19</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1905-1906 gg.* [The Agrarian Movement in Russia in 1905-1906], (*Trudy Imperatorskago Vol'nago Ekonomicheskago Obshchestva* [Transactions of the Imperial Free Economic Society], 1908, nos. 3, 4-5), 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1908), i, p. vi.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. xv.

<sup>21</sup> The editors included such noted economists as V. G. Groman (Novorossiia), P. P. Maslov (Lower Volga), S. N. Prokopovich (Central Black Earth and Urals) and B. B. Veselovskii (Belorussia).

<sup>22</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie . . .* [The Agrarian Movement . . .], i, p. ix.

TABLE 4  
PARTICIPATION IN THE PEASANT MOVEMENT OF 1905-6\*

REGION	No. of provinces	No. of reports	PARTICIPANTS																					
			Outside Agitators		Rural Intelligentsia	Peasant-Workers	Peasant-Soldiers/Sailors	Socio-economic strata			Village Peasantry		Age groups											
			+	-				Poor	Middle	Rich/prosperous	Women	Young	Middle-aged	Old										
Central Black Earth	6	74	5	4	+	6	1	+	5	6	4	2	5	+	—	—								
South-West	3	54	2	3	—	3	1	—	2	1	3	3	2	—	—	—								
Little Russia	3	183	1	1	—	3	2	—	3	3	3	2	3	—	—	—								
Mid-Volga	5	74	7	2	—	3	1	—	4	3	3	2	3	—	—	—								
Belorussia	7	70	7	1	—	7	3	—	7	6	4	2	5	—	—	—								
Central Industrial	6	70	3	1	—	5	1	—	2	1	2	2	—	—	—	—								
Novorossiya	6	54	4	1	—	2	1	—	1	4	1	3	—	—	—	—								
Lower Volga	3	28	1	2	—	3	2	—	3	2	3	3	1	—	—	—								
Lakes	4	71	3	2	—	2	1	—	1	3	2	3	1	—	—	—								
Urals	3	12	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—	—	—								
North	1	12	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—								
TOTALS	47	702	27	14	12	—	34	11	27	10	33	11	30	—	33	36	22	13	26	2	4	—	6	16

\* Based on data from *Agrarnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1905-1906 gg.* [The Agrarian Movement in Russia in 1905-1906] (St. Petersburg, 1908).

Note: 1. Figures under the heading "participants" indicate the no. of provinces from which the participation (columns headed +) or non-participation (columns headed —) was reported of members of the social group in question.

2. Regions are composed of the following provinces: Central Black Earth — Kursk, Orel, Ryazan', Tambov, Tula, Voronezh; South, West — Kiev, Podolia, Volyn'; Little Russia, Chernigov, Khar'kov, Poltava, Mid-Volga — Kazan, Nizhni Novgorod, Penza, Saratov, Simbirsk, Belorussia — Grodno, Kobres, Minsk, Mogilev, Smolensk, Vilno, Vitebsk, Central Industrial — Kakhla, Astrakhan, Moscow, Tver, Vladimir, Yaroslavl; Novorossiya — Bessarabia, Dni, Ekaterinoslav, Kherson, Kaban, Tauride; Lower Volga — Astrakhan; Urals — Orenburg, Samara; Lakes — Novgorod, Olonets, Pskov, St. Petersburg; Urals — Perm, Ufa, Vyatka; North — Vologda (see Map opposite).



Although external influence was frequently cited by correspondents as a factor contributing to the outbreak of peasant unrest, it was by no means a universal factor. Agitation and propaganda in the countryside by non-peasant elements often served as a precipitating factor for the movement, but there were also other precipitants, of which news and rumours of the revolutionary events in the towns, and the occurrence of peasant disturbances in neighbouring localities, were probably the most important.<sup>23</sup> Even if the movement was sparked off by external factors, however, it was usually fuelled by grievances which were peasant, and often purely local, in character. As Groman noted in his introduction to the reports from Novorossiia, the influence of "outside agitators" was more likely to be claimed by correspondents hostile to the movement than by sympathisers.<sup>24</sup> This phenomenon would appear to be a reflection of the conservative predilection for the "conspiracy theory" of history, with its corresponding reluctance to admit that social unrest might have its roots in genuine problems and hardships. This is not to say, of course, that "outside agitation" was simply a figment of the imagination of reactionary Tsarist officials and landowners. Revolutionaries of all parties — or of none — flocked into the countryside from the early summer of 1905. Their influence, however, was not always inflammatory; in some cases they tried to divert the violent direct action of the spontaneous movement into more peaceful political channels. The following extract from Groman's introduction to the digest of reports from Novorossiia gives a good survey of the views of various categories of correspondents concerning the nature of the influence of "outsiders":

Persons hostile to the movement talk about "the intoxication of the people by agitators, Jews and students", or talk about "the leadership of an organization in Geneva"; those who are neutral divide into two groups: one (the smaller) also says that the disturbances were incited by Jews and vagabonds who threatened with bombs, but the other group (the larger) either simply notes the fact of agitation and the distribution of proclamations, or reports "public readings, which attempted to restrain the populace from violence". The authors of reports sympathetic to the movement define the external influence as follows: "at the meetings the incomers said that the peasants should organize, but not commit robbery or destruction"; "the outsiders advised that a strike should be organized if the demands were not met"; "if the movement owed anything to outsiders, as it undoubtedly did, it was only its organization and the conscious formulation of its aspirations".<sup>25</sup>

The outsiders were usually described in the reports only generically,

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 48 (Central Black Earth), 173 (Lakes); ii, pp. 8 (South-West), 289-90 (Little Russia), 418-9 (Novorossiia).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 417-8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 418.

as "agitators" or "revolutionaries". Sometimes the party organizations they represented were specifically mentioned: the Social Democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries, the Jewish Bund, or the Peasant Union.<sup>26</sup> The social groups from which the agitators were recruited were rarely mentioned, or mentioned only in terms — such as "Jews and long-haired students"<sup>27</sup> — which for the Russian conservative were virtually synonymous with "revolutionary agitators".<sup>28</sup> The influence of local factory workers was rarely mentioned: nor was it always welcome. Striking railwaymen in Pskov province who tried to enlist peasant support suffered severe beatings for their pains.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to this predominantly urban category of complete outsiders, frequent mention is also made of the rôle of the rural intelligentsia as agitators and conductors of revolutionary ideas to the peasantry. The groups most often cited in this connection were village teachers, members of the clergy, medical workers, and employees of the local *zemstvo* organizations. From Voronezh province it was reported that: "agitation was conducted by psalm-readers and seminary students, medical assistants and nurses (*fel'dshera i fel'dsheritsy*), doctors and midwives, and railway guards".<sup>30</sup> The report from Penza noted that priests were very rarely the object of the movement "because in many cases the priests themselves were 'the sources of propaganda', 'in particular their children: seminary students, teachers and schoolmistresses'."<sup>31</sup> The rôle of the intelligentsia as intermediaries between the town and countryside was also noted, as in a report from Pskov that the local intelligentsia, who distributed pamphlets and leaflets to the peasantry, had been "infected" from the town.<sup>32</sup> In some case, a literate stratum of "peasant intellectuals" (*intelligentnye krest'yane*), especially peasant artisans, performed a similar function to that of the non-peasant intelligentsia.<sup>33</sup> It was reported from Kursk that: "in this locality there were no agitators, but the peasants themselves frankly pointed

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 363 (Belorussia).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 480 (Kherson).

<sup>28</sup> In 1905 the peasants themselves came to use the word "student" to refer to anyone, including peasants, with radical or oppositional views. "The term 'student' is losing its academic character and is becoming a political category. Of the inhabitants of a whole number of villages it is said that they 'have gone and turned into students'". V. G. Tan, *Novoe krest'yanstvo* [The New Peasantry] (Moscow, 1905), p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie . . .* [The Agrarian Movement . . .], i, p. 217.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 87.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 217.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 58 (Kursk).

to their own literate fellows, who had read to them from the 'Russian Word', a newspaper widely distributed in our district, the proceedings of the Peasant Congress in Moscow".<sup>34</sup>

An important part in the movement was played by those peasants who had experience of the world outside the village, as seasonal workers in agriculture and industry. In some cases these peasant-workers, returning to their villages in the course of 1905 to help with the harvest, or because of unemployment and the strike movement in the towns, served simply to spread the general revolutionary mood from the factories to the countryside; in other cases, their influence was more consciously political. The editor of the reports from the Central Black Earth region described the nature of their influence as follows:

The "ferment" or "brain" of the movement — as the correspondents phrased it — were the peasants on side-earnings in the factories, in the mines and in the towns. As more developed persons, they naturally became the leaders of the movement; in some cases they brought into the countryside — along with the newspapers — news about the agrarian and the workers' movement in other places, and unconsciously propagandized the idea of the agrarian movement.<sup>35</sup>

In the Lakes region, peasants working in the towns were said to play an important part as "conductors of new ideas and trends".<sup>36</sup> In Pskov province, where many peasants went to work in St. Petersburg, correspondents wrote that: "those who had been in the factories in the city urged on the movement, and said that only thus could we achieve equal rights with members of the other legal estates,<sup>37</sup> and obtain the land"; "those on side-earnings were insistent that the laws be worked out according to a new system"; and "an important part was played by the distorted rumours and gossip which were brought by those returning from side-work, who had been influenced by the propaganda of the various revolutionary parties".<sup>38</sup>

A similar rôle to that of the peasant-workers was played by the peasant soldiers and sailors returning to their villages from the Russo-Japanese war. Although in many areas the movement in the countryside had begun before the troops in the Far East were

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 174.

<sup>37</sup> Pre-revolutionary Russian society was divided into a number of legal estates (*soslovie*), enjoying various degrees of privilege. The most important were the gentry (*dvoryane*), the townsmen (*meshchane*) and the peasantry (*krest'yane*).

<sup>38</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie . . .* [The Agrarian Movement . . .], i, pp. 218-19.

demobilized, "with their arrival the movement intensified".<sup>39</sup> In some cases, the troops were active conductors of revolutionary agitation, representing the "most liberal and aware (*znayushchii*)" element in the countryside,<sup>40</sup> and "broadening the political consciousness of the peasantry";<sup>41</sup> in other cases, their tales about the military fiasco in the Far East served simply to fuel the existing flames of discontent in the villages. The soldiers' grievances were often the result of unfavourable comparisons with the Japanese. From Poltava it was reported that: "those who had been prisoners of war in Japan made a strong impression on their audience in general with their tales about the culture (*kulturnost'*) of Japan".<sup>42</sup> A correspondent from Pskov wrote:

The reserves returning from the Manchurian campaign had seen better order in the Japanese forces than in ours; they had seen that our commanders were weaker and more cowardly, and were thrashed not by the Japanese enemy, but by their own subordinates; and most likely the campaign was lost through internal enmity.<sup>43</sup>

There was a widespread belief amongst the soldiers that the Tsar should reward them for the hardships they had suffered by granting them more land. A hostile report from Ryazan' claimed that:

The soldiers returning from Manchuria — most of whom were liars — exaggerated their hardships, expressed dissatisfaction with their commanders, talked about various abuses of state funds, and extolled their difficulties, for which they said the state was obliged to reward them by giving them the land for nothing.<sup>44</sup>

The troops often returned to find their farms run down, which gave them an added material incentive for revolt. It was reported from Saratov that:

In some places the soldiers returned from Manchuria during the movement, and intensified the general excitement. They found their economy devastated: "there was nothing for them to eat, and no fuel for them to heat their huts". And then they learned that their wives and families had received no allowances, or had received them only at irregular intervals. The discontented soldiers adhered to the movement and demanded land, saying, "Why have we spilt our blood, if we do not have the land?"<sup>45</sup>

In other cases, however, the soldiers "returned from Manchuria with money, feeling fine, and paid no attention to the entire movement".<sup>46</sup> In one case reported from Novgorod, the soldiers,

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 93 (Mid-Volga).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 137 (Saratov).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 336 (Poltava).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 336.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 219.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 66.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 147.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 371 (Chernigov).

after an initial expression of support for the movement, thereafter reverted to their traditional repressive rôle, "turning into watchmen on the invitation of the police; at present they enjoy almost universal hatred from the peasants".<sup>47</sup>

Let us turn now to the question of participation in the movement by the village peasantry themselves.

In most cases, the peasants participated in the movement as an entire village or commune,<sup>48</sup> with all socio-economic strata taking part. A typical report is that from the Lakes, where:

The internal stratification of the peasantry in terms of property status did not substantially influence the participation in the movement of the various elements in the village. In the majority of cases, peasants of all strata took part in the movement.<sup>49</sup>

In many individual cases, however, some strata are reported to have been more active than others, and some are more regularly said to have been active rather than passive. Table 4 shows that the most varied evidence concerns participation by the two extreme categories, the rich and the poor. The evidence suggests that participation by these two strata was determined primarily by local conditions, and by the forms assumed by the movement in individual localities.

A considerable proportion of replies depicts the poor and landless peasants as the most active participants in the movement. The reasons for this are usually considered to be self-evident, in that these peasants had "nothing to lose", and everything to gain, from the movement.<sup>50</sup> There were some forms of the movement, however, from which they were barred by virtue of their poverty: a peasant with no cow could not engage in illicit cattle-grazing on the landowner's meadow, and a peasant without a horse was at a disadvantage when it came to carting away timber from the master's forest, or plunder from his manor.<sup>51</sup> Even in wage-strikes, the form of the movement in which the poor were most likely to participate, they sometimes found themselves restrained. A correspondent from Podoliya reported that:

The leaders of the movement were the more prosperous peasants (none are rich); the most timid were the landless, because they cannot exist without their daily earnings, and they were soon compelled to bring the strike to an end, to avoid starvation.<sup>52</sup>

In exceptional cases, however, the poorer peasants were subsidized

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 298.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 21 (South-West), 290 (Little Russia).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 175.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 120 (Penza).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 77 (Tambov), 109 (Nizhnii Novgorod); ii, p. 335 (Poltava).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 59.

during a strike by their more prosperous fellows.<sup>53</sup> The poorer peasants, too, were most dependent for their livelihood on the local landowner, and therefore the most vulnerable to retaliatory measures. Realization of this could sometimes serve as a deterrent against participation in the movement, as noted by a correspondent from Ufa:

The meetings are attended mostly by the prosperous and middle peasants. You ask why Savelii, say, (a poor peasant) was not there. Well, they say, he rents land from the landowner, and if the latter got to know that he had been at a meeting, then very likely he wouldn't let him have any land, or would only give him some piece of rutted ground.<sup>54</sup>

In areas of capitalist farming with an extensive landless agricultural proletariat (*batraki*), solidarity with the local communal peasantry was most noticeable when the labourers were recruited from the neighbouring villages; where the work force on the large estates consisted largely of immigrant labour from other areas, as in Novorossiia, conflicts of interest often arose:

In those cases where the peasants aimed to obtain all the land, they frequently demanded the removal of the immigrant workers, or even made the latter lay off work, so that the landowner could not conduct his enterprise, but sometimes the peasants restricted themselves to demanding that local workers be hired instead of immigrants.<sup>55</sup>

The rich peasants, especially those who had purchased land as their individual private property, and those who employed the labour of others, usually remained aloof from the movement, although it was only in rare cases that individual peasant proprietors were themselves the victims of the movement (see Table 1). Explanations of the passivity of the richer peasants were usually in terms of their general distrust of attacks upon property, which might easily be directed against themselves.<sup>56</sup> More rarely, the non-participation of the richer peasants was attributed to their very affluence. A correspondent from Pskov, describing a local case of illicit wood-cutting, wrote: "Of course, most of the disturbances were by the land-hungry peasants; they are short not only of land, but also of firewood. As for the rich, why should they take part, if they have enough as it is?"<sup>57</sup> In cases where the rich peasants participated in the movement, however, their avarice, and the fact that they possessed the means of gratifying it, were often attributed as an important motive. This was particularly true when the movement assumed the form of

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 23 (South-West).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 164.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 409.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 58 (Kursk), 398 (Kovno); ii, p. 306 (Khar'kov).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 220.

pillaging the large estates. A report of an incident of illicit wood-cutting in Penza implies that the rich peasants benefited not only from their ownership of horses and carts to bear away the timber, but also from the services of their hired workers: "they had the most horses and the greatest labour force, and therefore enjoyed the greatest advantage".<sup>58</sup>

In some cases where the rich participated in the movement alongside the other strata of the village, it appears that although they had purchased land, they still felt themselves to have more in common with their fellow-villagers than with the landlord, and shared common grievances against him. A correspondent from Kherson reported that:

Poor, middle and prosperous peasants took part. Their attitudes were identical, because although the prosperous peasants had bought land through the bank, they had paid dearly for it, and it still did not suffice, and therefore they too were obliged to rent land for 15-18 roubles a *desyatina* from the landowners and the big commercial renters.<sup>59</sup>

A correspondent from Volyn' explained that although the local movement had been initiated by the poor and middle peasants, "the rich took part, as they considered that the landowner had unjustly forbidden cattle-grazing in a certain part of the forest".<sup>60</sup> An interesting distinction between private peasant landownership and the landownership of the gentry, serving to justify the alignment of the peasant proprietors with the communal peasantry rather than with the gentry, was provided in a report from Novgorod:

All took part in the movement, including the prosperous and those with purchased land. The latter had the same attitude as the poor peasants, saying that they alone had worked for the land they had bought, so that it should not be taken away from them, although it could be taken from others.<sup>61</sup>

A similar distinction, based on the "labour principle", was reported from the Central Black Earth region:

The movement, in the words of a correspondent from Kozlov district, was directed against "those in general who owned or rented land, but did not work it with their own hands, without distinction as to estate (*soslovie*) or rank". Therefore peasant farms worked by family labour were not included amongst the objects of the movement.<sup>62</sup>

In a few cases, participation in the movement on the part of the richer peasants was the result of pressure exerted by the poorer strata for a demonstration of solidarity. The generally ambivalent

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 129.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 476.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 144.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 300.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 51.

position of the prosperous peasantry was exemplified by a report from Saratov that:

The tone of the movement was set by the poor peasants. Sometimes, depending on the circumstances, they would compel the rich to participate in the movement, threatening to deal with them "like with the gentry landowners". At other times they would not permit them to take part in the movement, because they took too much of the landowners' property for themselves. "Sometimes, when the prosperous peasants were away raiding elsewhere, their property would be burned down in their absence".<sup>63</sup>

Finally, in some individual cases, factors other than socio-economic, such as the influence of ideas, or generational differences, might impel richer peasants to take part in the movement. From Ekaterinoslav it was reported that: "In those villages which did not act with total solidarity, it was the poor and middle peasants who participated, and from the prosperous only individuals for whom the political and social slogans of the epoch served as the impulse".<sup>64</sup> From Tambov, the interaction of age and economic factors was noted: "The large landowners amongst the peasants prepared to defend themselves, but the smaller landowners fell into two categories: the older ones protected their property, but the young men joined in with the others".<sup>65</sup>

The middling peasants, who shared all of the advantages and none of the disadvantages of the poor and rich strata for participation in the movement, were the group whose active rôle was most consistently stressed. According to one report from Chernigov: "The poor peasants could not take part in the wood-cutting movement, because they had no horses, and the prosperous peasants feared repressions, but the middle peasants said that they would be no worse off in prison, so the wood was chopped by the middle peasants".<sup>66</sup> A similar report came from Podoliya:

The rich peasants and the poor peasants did not sympathize with the strikes, although they did not display any energetic opposition. The principal strikers were the middle peasants, who had enough work on their own fields, and could therefore hold out for higher wages without suffering particular losses themselves. The poor peasants were especially in need of earnings, and therefore did not sympathize with the strike.<sup>67</sup>

In other cases, however, the middling peasants were less involved in the strike movement, as in this report from Kiev:

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 146.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 448.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 78.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 371.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 59.

The strike was conducted with solidarity on the basis of class enmity (towards the gentry landowners). But all the same, the active elements were the young and the poor. The middle peasants were not particularly interested in the strike, because they do not go to work on the large estate, neither do they hire workers themselves, but manage their own fields.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that it is very difficult to generalize concerning the differential participation in the movement by the various strata of the peasantry, even if it were possible to establish specific criteria for classifying a peasant as "poor", "middling", "prosperous" or "rich" — for it seems that no uniform definitions were applied by the correspondents who contributed to the survey materials. The form of the movement, and the extent of social differentiation within the village, appear to have been major factors in determining the nature of the alignments in individual localities. Middling, poor and landless peasants, with the occasional exception of the most destitute, were most likely to take part in wage or rent strikes and boycotts, whereas the prosperous and rich, if they took part at all, were more likely to do so in cases of pillage.<sup>69</sup>

Whether the richer peasants, and especially those with purchased land, participated in the movement, stood aloof, or were themselves the victims, appears to have depended on the extent to which the process of social differentiation in the countryside was reflected in the peasants' "class-consciousness".<sup>70</sup> Where the prosperous peasants saw themselves, or were seen by their fellow-villagers, as representing simply the most fortunate and successful stratum of the communal peasantry, they would be more likely to participate in the movement, to defend common peasant interests against the gentry landowners and other non-peasant commercial farmers. To the extent that the kulaks saw themselves as a distinct socio-economic group, with similar economic interests to the gentry landowners, from whom they were distinguished only in terms of their ascription to an inferior legal estate, they would be more likely to remain apart from the movement, or be themselves the object of attack. Factors which might influence the categorization of the richer peasant in the social consciousness of the village would include: the proportions of

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 106.

<sup>69</sup> These findings correspond in general terms with those of the comparative studies by H. Alavi, "Peasants and Revolution", *Socialist Register* (1965), pp. 241-77, and E. R. Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1971), pp. 289-93, both of which stress the revolutionary rôle of the middle peasantry in comparison with the ambivalent position of both the poorer and the richer strata.

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion of the manner in which patterns of socio-economic mobility within the Russian peasantry impeded the crystallization of class-consciousness, see T. Shanin, *The Awkward Class* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 137-41.

his land which were purchased, as opposed to his share in the communal holdings; the degree to which his farm was worked by hired rather than family labour; the extent to which his land was rented to or from others; whether his farmstead was in the village or separate; his commercial interests outside agriculture; and the nature of his life-style.

The ambivalent position of the richer strata of the peasantry constituted a major problem for both revolutionary parties in their attempts to define the class nature of the peasant movement — a problem which neither satisfactorily resolved. In Social Democratic theory, cases in which the kulaks were aligned with the rest of the peasantry represented the first stage of the revolution in the countryside; incidents in which the kulaks were themselves the objects of the movement belonged to the second, socialist stage.<sup>71</sup> This analysis, however, failed to account for the fact that most of the attacks reported on kulaks came, not from the rural proletariat, as the two-stage theory strictly required, but from the same communal peasantry as attacked the gentry landowners.<sup>72</sup> The movement against the kulaks was perhaps more adequately explained by the Socialist Revolutionary view of the class struggle in the countryside between the exploited and the exploiters; but the Socialist Revolutionaries in turn faced a problem in explaining those cases in which the kulaks displayed solidarity with the rest of the village. They explained such conflicts between the kulaks and the gentry landowners as “an enmity purely between legal estates, not a class enmity, not a form of the conflict between labour and capital, but rather a form of the conflict of capital against land-rent and the monopolies of the feudal serf-owner”.<sup>73</sup> In other words, the anti-feudal bourgeois-democratic character which the Social Democrats attributed to the movement of the peasantry as

<sup>71</sup> This view is still accepted by Soviet historians. See Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanское dvizhenie . . .* [The Peasant Movement . . .], p. 65.

<sup>72</sup> While not denying this, Dubrovskii claims that the movement against the kulaks occurred in areas where social differentiation within the peasantry was greatest (*op. cit.*, pp. 82-3). See also his article “K voprosu ob urovne razvitiya kapitalizma v sel'skom khozyaystve Rossii i kharaktere klassovoy bor'by v derevne v period imperializma (dve sotsial'nye voyny)” [On the Question of the Level of the Development of Capitalism in Russian Agriculture and the Character of the Class Struggle in the Countryside in the Period of Imperialism (Two Social Wars)], in *Osobennosti agrarnogo stroya Rossii v period imperializma* [Features of the Agrarian Structure of Russia in the Period of Imperialism] (Moscow, 1962), pp. 5-44, in which he clearly — if perhaps unintentionally — demonstrates the problems involved in applying the two-stage Leninist analysis in concrete historical circumstances.

<sup>73</sup> “Chto delaetsya v krest'yanstve” [What is Happening among the Peasantry], *Revolyutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], xxi (1903), p. 14.

a whole, the Socialist Revolutionaries attributed solely to the kulaks; the anti-capitalist, pro-socialist character which the Socialist Revolutionaries attributed to the "working peasantry" as a whole (excluding the kulaks), the Social Democrats attributed solely to the rural proletariat. Overall, the conflicts and confusions in the revolutionary parties' analyses derived from the complexities of the patterns of behaviour of the various strata within the peasantry — complexities which the crude generalizations of party political formulae could not easily account for. In a period of transition, when the commune was increasingly under pressure from economic factors leading to greater social differentiation in the countryside, it was hardly surprising that alignments within the peasantry should be in a state of flux.

The question of peasant participation in the movement was further complicated by the influence of other factors which modified the impact of purely socio-economic characteristics. Of these, socio-biological criteria, such as age and sex, were probably the most important.

As might have been expected, given the generally subordinate position of women in Russian peasant society, the women as a rule played a more passive part in the movement than the men, although it was only in isolated cases that they actually acted as a restraining influence. Where the women did oppose the movement, this was usually explained in terms of their lack of awareness. From Ryazan', a correspondent reported that: "the general mass of women and girls are so undeveloped that they can hardly understand the meaning and significance of the movement".<sup>74</sup> A similar report came from Tula, where "the majority of the women have difficulty in understanding the movement, and restrain it".<sup>75</sup> More often, however, the women shared the attitudes of the men. In the words of a peasant correspondent from Novgorod, "the women too sympathized with the movement — they live in the same huts as their husbands".<sup>76</sup> In some cases, the women not only participated along with the men, they were even "more ardent".<sup>77</sup> Frequently, although the women did not actually participate themselves, they spurred on their menfolk with taunts and reproaches. A correspondent from Voronezh reported that: "Anyone who didn't go and pillage was reproved by his mother or his wife, saying that their neighbour was bringing back a lot of goods, whereas he, her husband or son, did

<sup>74</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie . . .* [The Agrarian Movement . . .], i, p. 66.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 71.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 299.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 61.

not care about his home and family".<sup>78</sup> In the south, where the women were extensively engaged in agricultural wage-labour, they took an active part in the strike movement, sometimes acting as initiators of a wider movement, as in this report from Kiev:

At first the participants in the movement were exclusively women and adolescents, but later the whole village joined in. Because the cultivation of sugar-beet employs predominantly female labour, and both the poor and prosperous women do this work, then of course they found support for their demands from all members of their families.<sup>79</sup>

In other instances where women and children are reported to have been in the van of the movement, however, it seems that it was not so much a case of the women taking the initiative and setting an example, but rather a tactical device adopted by the peasants to explore the ground by sending ahead an advance party composed of the weakest elements of the community, against whom the authorities would be more reluctant to initiate punitive action. This would appear to be the most likely explanation for reports such as one from Voronezh that: "The course of the raids was almost identical throughout the district: first went the young lads and girls, and the women; they rushed into the orchard to pick the fruit, and later they were joined by the adults, and the pillaging began".<sup>80</sup> and a report from Kiev that: "The movement began with the children going ahead, followed by the young girls and the old women, then by the young lads and the old men".<sup>81</sup>

The young men of the village usually took a more active rôle in the movement than their elders. Where explanations were considered necessary for the militancy of the young, these were often in terms of the greater literacy and general awareness of the generation which had had the advantage of the expansion of primary education at the end of the nineteenth century. The teenage lads, too, were more likely to engage in seasonal wage work in the towns, and to be influenced by urban attitudes.<sup>82</sup> Also, a young single man had much less to lose, in case of failure, than men with family responsibilities. According to evidence from Podoliya, the last two factors were more important than the first:

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 87.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 106.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 87.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 107.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, i, pp. 71 (Tula), 123-4 (Penza), 164 (Ufa). For the hypothesis that peasants affected by "modernizing" factors such as education and the influence of the towns are most likely to participate in peasant movements, see H. A. Landsberger, "The Role of Peasant Movements and Revolts in Development; an Analytical Framework", International Institute for Labour Studies, *Bulletin*, iv (1968), pp. 55-8.

The most active stratum during the movement, according to the majority of correspondents, were the young. However, the reports connect this not with the greater development and education of the young, but rather with their greater fondness for diversions, or with their position as the group which plays the greatest part in hired labour, or which in general has not yet settled down, in contrast to the proper householders.<sup>83</sup>

Of the two cases in which the young men were said to have played a more passive rôle than their elders, the first apparently referred to the Finnish peasantry in St. Petersburg province, where: "The young men and the old men stood aside, for the local peasants do not permit their youth to do much, and are prompt to subdue them. They do not even give them a right to vote, neither do they give this right to the women".<sup>84</sup> A report from Perm, however, paradoxically explained the aloofness of the young peasants in terms of their greater political awareness:

According to one correspondent, it was mainly the middle-aged peasants who took part in the movement: "the young and the old considered such risky action by their middle brothers to be incorrect; the young realized that freedom does not consist in seizing the property of others, while the old men still remembered serfdom, when their burdens were even greater, and they were in bondage to Count Stroganov".<sup>85</sup>

The old men were usually more passive than the young or middle-aged peasants, but, as with the women, it was only in rare cases that they actively opposed the movement. In Tula province, all the peasants took part in the movement, "up to and including the old women of seventy-five years";<sup>86</sup> in other cases, the old sympathized, without taking an active part,<sup>87</sup> and in Tver' the old men "moved significantly leftwards" in the course of the movement.<sup>88</sup> Evidence is contradictory concerning the nature of the influence of serfdom on the older generation. In contrast to the report from Perm cited above, a correspondent from Tambov noted that support for the movement came from "the old women in particular, who had experienced the oppression of serfdom".<sup>89</sup> In other cases, the hostility of the older peasants was explained in terms of the natural conservatism of the aged. It was reported from Pskov that: "the old men are opposed to everything, and say that they lived and were satisfied without all these movements", and that:

<sup>83</sup> *Agrarnoe dvizhenie* . . . [The Agrarian Movement . . .], ii, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 341.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 165.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 71.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 18 (Vladimir).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 78.

Many of the young sincerely believe in the imminence of a new, more perfect and just system of land use, "but the old men, who are generally sceptical about anything new, did not believe in the possibility of a total transfer of the land into the hands of the peasants, and not only did they not believe in it, but neither did they desire it, feeling that the peasants could not cope with this land".<sup>90</sup>

The survey materials therefore show that the participation of the peasantry in the movement was determined primarily by the social structure of the countryside and the immediate economic interests of the various strata; other sociological variables, however, such as age and sex, modified the impact of purely socio-economic factors. Access to knowledge about revolutionary unrest elsewhere played an important part: hence the rôle of those groups — such as peasant-workers, peasant-soldiers, and the literate — who served as intermediaries between the village and the world outside, and contributed to the diffusion of the revolution from the towns and armed forces to the countryside, and from one area to another. External influence on the movement was usually confined to the information function of such marginal groups: in some cases, however, where the outsiders belonged to one or other of the revolutionary parties, their rôle was more consciously political. We shall therefore turn now to a more detailed study of the parties' attitudes towards the peasantry in 1905-7.

Before 1905, the Social Democrats had adopted rather a cautious attitude towards the peasantry. Marxist analysis saw the peasantry as petty-bourgeois: in Russian conditions, the peasantry as a whole had a stake in the anti-feudal bourgeois-democratic revolution, but a revolutionary force for socialism could develop in the countryside only after the peasantry had become differentiated into a class of capitalist farmers, on the one hand, and a landless rural proletariat on the other. The attitude of the party towards the aspirations of the peasantry would therefore be different at the two stages of the revolution. According to Lenin's formula:

The proletariat must lead the democratic revolution to its conclusion by uniting to itself the mass of the peasantry, in order to crush by force the resistance of the autocracy and paralyse the irresolution of the bourgeoisie.

The proletariat must complete the socialist revolution by uniting to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, in order to smash by force the resistance of the bourgeoisie and paralyse the irresolution of the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 219.

<sup>91</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Dve taktiki sotsial-demokratii v demokraticeskoy revolyutsii" [Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution], *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works], xi, p. 90. The passage is in italics in the original.

The Second Party Congress of 1903 concentrated on the agrarian programme for the first stage. "With the aim of eliminating the remnants of serfdom . . . and in the interests of the free development of the class struggle in the countryside", the Congress advocated the return to the peasantry of all the lands they had lost at Emancipation, and the removal of all legal and fiscal discrimination against the peasantry.<sup>92</sup> The programme called for the establishment of peasant committees to achieve these aims, but there is little evidence of such committees existing on a large scale before 1905. At this period, according to a recent study, "outside the towns Social Democracy was weak; peasant support was miniscule and such groups as existed in the countryside were mainly in village factory settlements or formed of expatriate town workers".<sup>93</sup>

In 1905, however, on Lenin's prompting, the party adopted a more radical policy. The Third (Bolshevik) Congress resolved to support all revolutionary measures undertaken by the peasantry, including the confiscation of the lands of the large estates.<sup>94</sup> In an article defending this resolution against the charge of opportunism, however, Lenin emphasized that the party did not necessarily support the transfer of the confiscated lands to the small peasant proprietors.<sup>95</sup> The Congress resolution made it clear that at the same time as the peasantry as a whole was engaged in conflict with the gentry landowners, the Social Democrats should be preparing the way for the second, socialist stage of the revolution, by organizing the rural proletariat separately, and explaining to them "the irreconcilable contradiction between their interests and the interests of the peasant bourgeoisie".<sup>96</sup> A similar, but more cautious resolution, supporting land seizures but condemning agrarian terrorism, was passed by the Menshevik conference in Geneva.<sup>97</sup>

Soviet sources claim that the Third Congress gave the impetus to a wave of intensive propaganda and organizational activity in the countryside by Social Democratic, and especially Bolshevik committees, although the documentary evidence for this, as they

<sup>92</sup> *Vtoroy s'ezd RSDRP; protokoly* [The Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party; Proceedings] (Moscow, 1959), pp. 423-4.

<sup>93</sup> D. Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism* (Assen, 1969), p. 207.

<sup>94</sup> *Tretii s'ezd RSDRP; protokoly* [The Third Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party; Proceedings] (Moscow, 1959), p. 454.

<sup>95</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Otnoshenie sotsial-demokratii k krest'yanskomu dvizheniyu" [The Attitude of Social Democracy to the Peasant Movement], *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [Complete Works], xi, pp. 215-24.

<sup>96</sup> *Tretii s'ezd . . .* [The Third Congress . . .], p. 454.

<sup>97</sup> *Pervaya obshcherusskaya konferentsiya partiinykh rabotnikov* [The First All-Russia Conference of Party Workers] (Geneva, 1905), pp. 21-3.

themselves admit, is slight.<sup>98</sup> Dr. Lane's study of local Social Democratic organizations in the 1905 revolution suggests that their influence on the peasantry was limited.<sup>99</sup> It was spread primarily through the party's contacts with the workers, and appears to have been confined to areas closely linked with industry. According to Dubrovskii, the party's rural cadres "were usually formed of urban workers connected with the countryside, workers in enterprises located in the countryside, proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the countryside, the progressive rural intelligentsia, and so on".<sup>100</sup>

Whereas the Social Democrats' interest in the peasantry appears to have been more theoretical than practical until the spring of 1905, the Socialist Revolutionaries had been consciously devoting their energies to revolutionary agitation in the countryside for several years before the revolution. They rejected the Social Democratic view of the peasantry as petty-bourgeois, arguing that the economy of the small peasant producer was qualitatively and not just quantitatively different from that of the bourgeois capitalist. For the Socialist Revolutionaries, class allegiance was determined less by relationship to the means of production (as in the Marxist analysis) than by relations of distribution, that is, by source of income.<sup>101</sup> On the basis of this criterion the working peasantry was grouped together with the industrial proletariat and the intelligentsia as classes which supported themselves exclusively by their own labour, physical or mental (*trudyashchiesya*), and comprised a revolutionary triple alliance against the exploiting classes. The Socialist Revolutionaries believed in the socialist potential of the mass of the working peasantry; they argued that the development of capitalist agriculture was not inevitable in the Russian countryside, and that the repartitional commune represented an institutional basis for the transition to socialist agriculture through the "socialization" of the land.<sup>102</sup>

In 1902, after the outbreaks of peasant unrest in Little Russia and on the Volga, the party formed its own Socialist Revolutionary

<sup>98</sup> Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie* . . . [The Peasant Movement . . .], p. 163.

<sup>99</sup> Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism*, p. 210.

<sup>100</sup> Dubrovskii, *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie* . . . [The Peasant Movement . . .], p. 143.

<sup>101</sup> "K teorii klassovoy bor'by" [On the Theory of the Class Struggle], *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], xxvii (1903), pp. 10-15, xxxiv (1903), pp. 5-9. The Socialist Revolutionaries argued that their analysis was in fact more "Marxist" than that of the Social Democrats, being derived from the third volume of *Capital*.

<sup>102</sup> The party programme was published in *Protokoly pervogo s'ezda Partii Sotsialistov-Revolutsionerov* [Proceedings of the First Congress of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries] (n.p., 1906), pp. 355-65.

Peasant Union, with the aim of organizing the peasantry on a political basis.<sup>103</sup> The Socialist Revolutionaries believed that the socialization of the land should be achieved by political means, and they saw it as their task to divert the spontaneous, anarchistic, revolutionary energy of the peasantry into conscious and organized political channels. To this end, they devoted a considerable proportion of their propaganda effort to the countryside. An analysis of the biographies of over two hundred Socialist Revolutionary activists in the countryside shows that the most important social groups engaged in peasant propaganda were: members of the minor professions, such as teachers; workers and artisans; peasants; and students. More than half of the manual and clerical workers were themselves of peasant parentage (Table 5). The Socialist Revolutionaries found that the rural intelligentsia provided a valuable source of revolutionary cadres in the countryside, and in 1903 the party formed its own Socialist Revolutionary Union of Primary Teachers, one of the stated aims of which was the dissemination of party propaganda among the peasantry.<sup>104</sup> By 1905, the party had established a widespread network of peasant "brotherhoods" belonging to the Socialist Revolutionary Peasant Union, and it had considerable success in recruiting peasant support, especially in the Central Black Earth region and on the Volga.<sup>105</sup>

In 1905, the party was divided on the attitude it should adopt towards the outbreak of the spontaneous peasant movement. The semi-anarchist faction of Maximalists or agrarian terrorists considered that even the most violent, *jacquerie*-type aspects of the movement should be encouraged, since they made a positive contribution to the destruction of the old régime. The official party leadership, however, headed by Chernov, held that the party should endeavour to restrain the more destructive aspects of the movement, and impose upon it consciousness and organization.<sup>106</sup> Spontaneous land seizures were welcomed as an indication of the revolutionary mood of the peasantry, but the Socialist Revolutionaries emphasized that the

<sup>103</sup> The formation of the Socialist Revolutionary Peasant Union was announced in a special issue of the party newspaper, *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], viii (1902), devoted to the outbreak of the peasant movement in Little Russia. The issue also contained a statement of policy from the Peasant Union.

<sup>104</sup> "Iz partiynoy deyat'nosti" [On Party Activity], *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], xxx (1903), p. 20.

<sup>105</sup> *Rapport du Parti Socialiste Révolutionnaire de Russie au Congrès Socialiste International d'Amsterdam* (Paris, 1904), p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> For the debates on this issue at the First Party Congress, see *Protokoly pervago s'ezda . . .* [Proceedings of the First Congress . . .], pp. 89-96, 314-38.

socialization of the land would be the result, not of land-grabbing, which amounted simply to "the arbitrary seizure of individual parcels of land by individuals", but of an organized process of "revolutionary expropriation" by organized peasant unions, which would hold the land until a democratically elected Constituent Assembly approved legislation for its egalitarian distribution on a national scale.<sup>107</sup>

TABLE 5  
SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDISTS, AGITATORS AND ORGANIZERS  
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, c. 1900-1907.\*

Occupation	Parentage			Total
	Peasant	Non-peasant	Not known	
Peasant cultivator	42	1	—	43
Worker or artisan	32	25	—	57
Clerical or shop worker	11	10	2	23
Minor professional†	19	37	4	60
Professional‡	—	4	—	4
Student	6	32	2	40
Other	—	2	—	2
Not known	3	—	3	6
Totals	113	111	11	235

\* Based on data in: *Politicheskaya katorga i ssylka; biograficheskii spravochnik chlenov Obshchestva Politkatorzhan i Ssyl'no-poselentsev* [Penal Servitude and Exile for Political Offences; a Biographical Handbook of Members of the Society of Political Prisoners and Exiles] (Moscow, 1934). This work lists the biographies of about 4,000 individuals who had been exiled for political offences before the First World War, most of them as a result of the 1905 revolution, and who became members of the Society of Former Political Prisoners in the twenties. Over 1,000 of these were Socialist Revolutionaries, of whom 235 had engaged in revolutionary activity in the countryside.

† The "minor professional" category consists of 50 teachers, 4 medical assistants (*fel'dsher*), 2 midwives, an agricultural technician, a druggist, a pharmacist and a journalist.

‡ The "professional" category comprises an agricultural expert, a *zemstvo* statistician, a forestry expert and a lawyer.

In the course of 1905, another body claiming the leadership of the peasantry was established. The initiative for the organization of an All-Russia Peasant Union came in May 1905 from a group of *zemstvo* liberals who sought to involve the peasantry in the campaign for the formation of national trades and professional unions which was playing

<sup>107</sup> "Reaktsionnaya demagogiya i revolyutsionnyi sotsializm" [Reactionary Demagoguery and Revolutionary Socialism], *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* [Revolutionary Russia], lxxvii (1905), p. 3.

a major rôle in the revolutionary movement at that time.<sup>108</sup> The Peasant Union held two Congresses, in July and November 1905, at which about four-fifths of the delegates were peasants, the rest members of the intelligentsia.<sup>109</sup> At the Congresses, resolutions were passed in favour of the abolition of private property in land, and the declaration of all land to be "the common property of the entire people", with exclusive rights of use for those who worked it with their own labour.<sup>110</sup> In contrast to the demands of the revolutionary parties, however, the majority of delegates to the first Congress were prepared to have compensation paid for the alienation of the gentry estates and the purchased lands of the peasantry.<sup>111</sup> Politically, the Union demanded a constitutional monarchy, with a Constituent Assembly to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage: a Bolshevik proposal that the programme should insist on a democratic republic was rejected on the grounds that this would offend the monarchist sentiments of the mass of the peasantry.<sup>112</sup> On the question of the means which the peasants should employ to achieve their ends, the Peasant Congresses were far from explicit. They agreed that the ultimate solution of the land problem must come from a democratically elected Constituent Assembly, but there were bitter debates at the second Congress as to whether political freedom should be gained by peaceful means or by violent action. The resolution finally adopted was a compromise which gave priority to peaceful means, but reserved the threat of an armed uprising if these should fail.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>108</sup> A comprehensive account of the Peasant Union is provided in E. I. Kiryukhina, "Vserossiyskii Krest'yanskii Soyuz v 1905 g." [The All-Russia Peasant Union in 1905], *Istoricheskie Zapiski* [Historical Transactions], I (1955), pp. 95-141.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 115.

<sup>110</sup> *Protokol uchreditel'nogo s'ezda Vserossiyskogo Krest'yanskogo Soyuza* [Proceedings of the Founding Congress of the All-Russia Peasant Union] (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. 38; "Postanovleniya delegatskogo s'ezda Vserossiyskogo Krest'yanskogo Soyuza" [Resolutions of the Delegate Congress of the All-Russia Peasant Union], in N. Karpov (ed.), *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie v revolyutsii 1905 goda v dokumentakh* [The Peasant Movement in the 1905 Revolution in Documents] (Leningrad, 1926), pp. 77-8.

<sup>111</sup> The debates on this issue are reported in *Protokol uchreditel'nogo s'ezda* . . . [Proceedings of the Founding Congress . . .], pp. 26-38.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-6; Kiryukhina, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

<sup>113</sup> The debates are reported in *Materialy k krest'yanskomu voprosu; otchet o zasedaniyakh delegatskogo s'ezda Vserossiyskogo Krest'yanskogo Soyuza 6-10 noyabrya 1905 g.* [Materials on the Peasant Question; an Account of the Sessions of the Delegate Congress of the All-Russia Peasant Union, 6-10 November 1905] (Rostov, 1905), pp. 55-66. The text of the resolution appears in Karpov (ed.), *Krest'yanskoe dvizhenie* . . . [The Peasant Movement . . .], p. 78.

Between July and November 1905 the Peasant Union succeeded in establishing a network of local organizations throughout most of European Russia.<sup>114</sup> Although the original impetus for the formation of the Union had come from the liberals, a major rôle in the creation of the local organizations was played by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, who could work from their own organizational base in the countryside. A recent Soviet study of the local organizations of the Peasant Union shows that the rural intelligentsia played an important part in their creation (Table 6). The Peasant Union, however, never achieved the significance in the countryside that the workers' soviets attained in the towns, and following the arrest of the leadership soon after the November Congress, the organization of the Union gradually disintegrated, although its policies continued to find expression, for instance through the Labour Group (*trudovaya gruppya*) of peasant deputies in the Dumas.

TABLE 6

LOCAL PROPAGANDISTS AND AGITATORS OF THE PEASANT UNION, 1905\*.

Peasants:	
Peasants	30
Kulaks	3
Village elders	5
Rural district ( <i>volost'</i> ) elders	4
	Total
	42
Rural intelligentsia:	
Teachers	43
Doctors	13
Clerks ( <i>pisar'</i> )	7
Priests	2
	Total
	65
Others:	
Students	9
Socialist Revolutionaries	6
Social Democrats	5
	Total
	20
	TOTAL
	127

<sup>114</sup> E. I. Kiryukhina, "Mestnye organizatsii Vserossiyskogo Krest'yanskogo Soyuza v 1905 godu" [Local Organizations of the All-Russia Peasant Union in 1905], *Uchenye Zapiski Kirovskogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta* [Learned Transactions of the Kirov Pedagogical Institute], x (1956), pp. 83-157.

\* Source: E. I. Kiryukhina, "Mestnye organizatsii Vserossiyskogo Krest'yanskogo Soyuza v 1905 godu" [Local Organizations of the All-Russia Peasant Union in 1905], *Uchenye Zapiski Kirovskogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta* [Learned Transactions of the Kirov Pedagogical Institute], x (1956), p. 138. The figures are based on incomplete data on village and *volost'* organizations in about twenty provinces of European Russia.

For all the parties, the problem of organizing the peasantry for political action proved insurmountable. The task of mobilization over the vast geographical extent of the Russian countryside was beyond their resources; and they had difficulty, too, in making their programmes and tactics meaningful to the peasants, who, with some justification, placed greater reliance on their "own means" of local direct action than on preparations for the elusive national armed uprising which was promised by the revolutionaries. The mass of the peasantry apparently still believed in 1905 that "land and liberty" could be achieved within the framework of Tsarism; they saw no need for the removal of the autocrat, and ignored the socialists' call for a boycott of the elections to the First Duma, in the belief that this body would represent a true "union of Tsar and people", giving the peasants' elected representatives direct access to the Tsar, without the hostile intervention of the landowners and officials.<sup>115</sup> These hopes, however, were soon disappointed. Largely because of the radical proposals for agrarian reform put forward by the peasant deputies, the First and Second Dumas were dissolved, and the introduction of a new electoral law in June 1907 marked the triumph of counter-revolution. The peasant movement was brutally suppressed by military punitive expeditions, but the government realized the need for concessions to the peasantry if the stability of the countryside was to be preserved. Redemption payments were cancelled, certain legal restrictions abolished, and the activity of the Peasant Bank extended. The most significant response by the government to the lessons of 1905, however, came in the legislation of 9 November 1906, which facilitated the peasant's withdrawal from the commune and his establishment as an independent individual smallholder. This was Stolypin's famous "wager on the strong", designed to replace the old communal peasantry, with its dangerously egalitarian notions, by a class of petty capitalist farmers with a healthy respect for the institution of private property. Although they gave greater economic freedom to the more prosperous peasant entrepreneurs, the Stolypin reforms did little to alleviate the problems of the great mass of the Russian peasantry: as the events of 1917 were to prove, the land-hungry communal peasantry remained a major revolutionary force.

Although the events of 1905-7 failed to achieve more than a fraction of the aims of the revolutionary parties, the rôle of the peasantry was decisive for the attainment of such concessions as were made by the

<sup>115</sup> Maslov, *Agrarnyi vopros* . . . [The Agrarian Question . . .], ii, pp. 266-316.

Imperial government in 1905. The forces of law and order, engaged simultaneously on three fronts — the Far Eastern, the urban and the rural — were severely over-extended, and it was only the prompt conclusion of the Japanese war and the return of loyal troops to European Russia after October that restored the upper hand to the government. Yet the weaknesses of the revolutionary forces, too, were considerable. The socio-economic development of Russia in the post-Emancipation period was such as to guarantee the simultaneity of revolutionary action by the proletariat and peasantry in 1905; her political and cultural development, however, was insufficient to ensure conscious co-ordination between town and countryside, or much awareness of common revolutionary goals. In a situation where the coercive power of the state had already collapsed, as in 1917, this lack of co-ordination mattered little; in 1905, however, it was a fatal weakness. The peasant movement of 1905-7 was partly related to, partly independent of, the parallel movement in the towns. The peasants pursued their own sectional interests, largely unaware of the broader social and political implications of their actions: the revolutionary significance of their movement derived not from the level of political consciousness of the participants, but from the fact that the iniquities against which they rebelled were, in the words of Eric Wolf, but “parochial manifestations of greater social dislocations”.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Wolf, *Peasant Wars . . .*, p. 301.