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978-0-521-19448-8 - The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom

Tracy Dennison

Excerpt

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## 1 Why is Russia different? Culture, geography, institutions

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Russia has long been viewed as fundamentally different from western Europe. This difference was not only among the main preoccupations of nineteenth-century Russian novelists and social thinkers, but it has often been invoked by historians to explain the failure of economic reforms in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and also to account for the peculiarities of the Soviet experiment. This view of Russia as different has persisted and is now often adduced to explain the failure of the Russian transition to a modern democratic state. Thus the rule of law, for instance, has failed to take hold in post-Soviet Russia because it is a peculiarly western idea, while Russians have deeply rooted anti-legalistic attitudes.<sup>1</sup> The transition to a market economy has faltered due to the incompatibility of western incentives and Russian culture.<sup>2</sup> And parliamentary democracy has failed to take root because Russians have always preferred authoritarianism.<sup>3</sup>

But which differences exactly are relevant here, and can account for such strikingly divergent outcomes? The most popular answer to this question, both inside and outside of Russia, and perhaps the most prevalent among historians, is that the differences in question here are ultimate and irreducible. They are rooted in folk memory and folk culture, and are reflected perhaps most obviously in the organisation of rural society before industrialisation. Russian peasants, this view holds, were culturally imbued with fundamentally different behaviour patterns from western or central European tillers of the soil. Konstantin Levin, the idealistic landlord in L. N. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, gives classic expression to this view when, after various attempts to improve productivity on his estate, he

<sup>1</sup> M. Newcity, 'Russian legal tradition and the rule of law', in J. Sachs and K. Pistor (eds.), *The rule of law and economic reform in Russia* (Boulder, 1997), pp. 41–53.

<sup>2</sup> U. Procaccia, *Russian culture, property rights, and the market economy* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> N. P. Popov, *The Russian people speak: democracy at the crossroads* (Syracuse, 1995), esp. pp. 123–6. Even Herzen saw Russians as fundamentally illiberal (see, for instance, his essay 'The Russian people and socialism: an open letter to Jules Michelet', reprinted in *From the other shore & The Russian people and socialism* (repr. Oxford, 1979).

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concludes that European approaches to agriculture are of no use in Russia. English ploughs are ‘useless’ in the hands of Russian peasants (p. 320), and European works on political economy are inapplicable to the Russian case (p. 342).<sup>4</sup> Russian peasant society has its own logic – a logic that has little in common with that of Europe. For this reason Levin decides that European books on agricultural methods ‘had nothing to tell him’.

He saw that Russia had splendid soil and splendid labourers, and that in some cases . . . the labourers and land produced much: but in the majority of cases, when capital was expended in the European way, they produced little, and that this happened simply because the labourers are only willing to work and work well, in the way natural to them, and that their opposition was not accidental but permanent, being rooted in the spirit of the people. (p. 342)

The spirit of the Russian people, on this view, is reflected in practices that were more ‘collectivist’ than those in western societies. Communal justice, it is claimed, substituted for a formal system of courts.<sup>5</sup> Collective responsibility for taxes, feudal dues, and village maintenance outweighed the importance of individual obligations to landlords, state officials, and the community.<sup>6</sup> Extended-family households and kinship networks played a more central role in the culture and economy of rural Russia than nuclear families and individual contractual relations.<sup>7</sup> Land, above all, was held in communal rather than individual tenure. Thus Alexander Herzen, one of many nineteenth-century admirers of the peasant commune, noted that Russian peasants, unlike those in western Europe, had a strong aversion to private property and legal formalities; ‘[c]ontracts and written agreements’, he claimed, ‘were [among Russian peasants] quite unheard of’.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘spirit of the people’ or *mentalité* thus described becomes an ultimate court of explanatory appeal in this approach to Russian difference; we can trace the history of that fundamental difference but it is a black box whose inner workings remain invisible. Uriel Procaccia, in a recent book, argues that this mentality has deep cultural roots: Russia, he claims, is an inherently collectivist society, steeped in Orthodox beliefs which are

<sup>4</sup> These page numbers refer to the Oxford Paperbacks edition, translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude, repr. 1992.

<sup>5</sup> See discussion in chapter 1 of J. Burbank, *Russian peasants go to court: legal culture in the countryside, 1905–1917* (Bloomington, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> An overview of *krugovaia poruka* can be found in D. Moon, *The Russian peasantry: 1600–1930: the world the peasants made* (London, 1999), pp. 207–11.

<sup>7</sup> For a comparison of the Russian and ‘European’ household formation systems, see J. Hajnal, ‘Two kinds of preindustrial household formation system’, *Population and Development Review* 8 (1982), pp. 449–94.

<sup>8</sup> Herzen, ‘The Russian people and socialism’, p. 183.

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hostile to western-style legality, and especially to contractual exchange, while western Europe is inherently individualistic and legalistic.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Michael Newcity argues that lawlessness in modern Russia has its roots in Russian culture and Orthodox values, which ‘long pre-date the [1917] Revolution’.<sup>10</sup>

But this is not the only way of explaining the obvious differences between Russia and the west. Another approach invokes the vast expanses of Russia, even European Russia, in comparison to the relatively small land areas of European states, and explains the attributes reviewed above by reference to the differences in soil productivity, the problems of state formation over such a large area, and the challenge to the development of unified markets under conditions of high transportation and communication costs. L. V. Milov, for instance, sees such geographical factors as the main determinants of Russia’s historical ‘peculiarities’ (*osobennosti*), including serfdom and communal land tenure.<sup>11</sup> This view is also shared by Jeffrey Sachs, who maintains that Russia’s size and climate have shaped its fate. Sachs notes that

Russia is a high-latitude country, marked by short growing seasons and an often forbidding climate. Population densities throughout Russian history have been low because food production per hectare has also tended to be low. As a result, during most of Russian history more than 90 per cent of the population lived as farmers in sparsely populated villages, producing food with very low yields. Cities were few and far between. The division of labor that depends on urban life and international trade were never dominant features of social life.<sup>12</sup>

This geographical view makes the differences between Russia and the west just as fundamental and unbridgeable as the cultural one; geography, presumably, cannot be changed.

A third approach takes a more sceptical view of cultures and mentalities, regarding them as artefacts, not of geography, but of underlying institutional differences. Tolstoy’s ‘spirit of the people’, in this view, is not a deep-rooted cultural invariant, but the result of incentive structures brought about by contingent, sometimes unintended, and comparatively recent political developments. Unlike the deep and immobile cultural roots of Russian difference posited by the first view, then, and the iron

<sup>9</sup> Procaccia, *Property rights*, see pp. 1–31 for an overview of the argument.

<sup>10</sup> Newcity, ‘Russian legal tradition’, p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> L. V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar’ i osobennosti rossiiskogo istoricheskogo protsessa* (Moscow, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> J. Sachs, *The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time* (New York, 2005), pp. 146–7. Geographical explanations are also discussed in D. Engerman, *Modernization from the other shore: American intellectuals and the romance of Russian development* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), esp. pp. 3–4.

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geographical determinism of the second view, this third approach does not regard Russian difference as written in stone; it is historically contingent. In other words, the differences are bridgeable; there is nothing fundamental about the differences between Russia and other places. This view is, in recent historiography, associated mainly with the economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron, who attributed Russia's economic 'backwardness' to institutional constraints imposed by serfdom in the period before 1861, and then to the codification of communal land tenure in the post-reform period. According to Gerschenkron, these institutions constrained labour mobility and undermined the development of private property, which in turn hindered industrial development in the pre-revolutionary period.<sup>13</sup> This view was never the dominant one in the historical literature for reasons outlined below, but since Gerschenkron's death in 1978 it has even more thoroughly fallen from favour.

This book seeks to revive the institutional approach, but from a perspective not available to Gerschenkron himself, one that involves, above all, a different empirical understanding of the pre-Emancipation Russian countryside.<sup>14</sup> Even Gerschenkron, it will emerge, was too willing to accept the account of the pre-1861 Russian peasantry he had inherited from his predecessors – essentially the view associated above with Herzen and Tolstoy. He accepted, for instance, that Russian peasants did not engage in markets, that they had only 'very vague views of proprietary rights',<sup>15</sup> and that for either 'religious reasons or because of tenacity of collective memories carried over from the pre-serfdom era, the peasants regarded the land as under no human ownership ("the land is God's")'.<sup>16</sup> The primary flaw of the 1861 Emancipation Act, according to Gerschenkron, was its failure to introduce modern economic concepts, such as private property, into the Russian rural economy. But as we will see, such concepts were amply in evidence among the serf population before 1861, wherever there was institutional scope for them, and 1861 appears to have been not just a missed opportunity, as Gerschenkron thought, but possibly even a step *backwards* in this respect. Still, this book will make the case that

<sup>13</sup> A. Gerschenkron, esp. *Economic backwardness in historical perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), and *Continuity in history and other essays* (Cambridge, MA, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> This is not meant to imply that only Gerschenkron held this view or even that he was first to express it. There were certainly critics of serfdom and the commune in pre-Emancipation Russia and, as noted in the preface, many modern-day social scientists are concerned about the role of institutions. But in the more recent Russian historiography, Gerschenkron was among the most prominent proponents of the view that rural institutions hindered industrialisation and economic development.

<sup>15</sup> A. Gerschenkron, 'Russia: agrarian policies and industrialization, 1861–1914', in *Continuity in history*, p. 157.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

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Gerschenkron's stress on institutions as the primary determinants of Russian difference is more in accord with available evidence, especially the evidence that has come to light since his death, than the explanatory frameworks that have enjoyed the limelight for so long.

All debates on Russian economic development ultimately come back to the question of communal land tenure – the feature of Russian rural society that has widely been held to distinguish it most sharply from western rural society, and perhaps in some way to underlie all the other differences. While peasants in western Europe held their land in individual tenure, Russian peasants lived in 'repartitional communes', where arable land was held in collective tenure by the community and allocated to member households on the basis of their production capabilities and consumption needs. The amount of land allocated to a household was supposed to be adjusted, or 'repartitioned', in response to life cycle changes. When a son married and brought his wife into the household, additional land was allocated to it by the commune. When an adult male died, land was taken away and allocated to a household whose labour force had grown. This communal allocation of land is supposed to have enabled peasant households to balance their land and labour requirements without the use of markets. Herzen, like many of his contemporaries, thought the land commune would enable Russia to avoid the sort of 'proletarianisation' experienced in England and Europe during industrialisation,<sup>17</sup> by making it possible for Russian peasants to remain self-sufficient. There was no need to engage in labour markets, since allotments were adjusted in accordance with household size, and there was no need to engage in land markets, as land was provided to all. Furthermore, communal allotments could not be sold by individual households, making it very difficult for a peasant to cut his ties to the land. Even if a peasant were to leave the commune temporarily to work elsewhere, he was supposed to have retained his rights to a share of the communal land. As a result of such practices, wrote Herzen, 'a rural proletariat was not possible'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, because the land was held communally and all member households were, in principle, entitled to some portion, he saw this system as more egalitarian than that found in western Europe. The repartitional commune, he argued, provided peasants with a guaranteed minimum subsistence. In Herzen's words, the 'economic principle of the commune

<sup>17</sup> A. Herzen, 'O sel'skoi obshchine v Rossii', in *Sochineniia v devyati tomakh* (Moscow, 1956).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 509. This strongly echoes the view of Haxthausen, as discussed in T. K. Dennison and A. W. Carus, 'The invention of the Russian rural commune: Haxthausen and the evidence', *Historical Journal* 46, 3 (2003), pp. 561–82.

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[was] entirely at odds with the renowned views of Malthus: the commune extended to everyone, without exception, a place at its table'.<sup>19</sup>

Gerschenkron can hardly be blamed for accepting this account, especially of the pre-Emancipation Russian peasantry, because it was accepted by just about everyone else. It was hardly questioned; it had acquired the status (which it still maintains, to a surprising degree) of a set of hard stylised facts, taken for granted as the starting point of any inquiry. One of the aims of this book is to question this mythical peasant culture, which sets the economic, social, and demographic behaviour of peasants apart from that of other groups in a society. Such an apparently narrow focus, in a book devoted to the entire institutional structure of pre-Emancipation Russia, becomes more easily comprehensible as a response to the thoroughgoing institutional reductionism prevalent among historians who follow in the footsteps of Tolstoy's 'cultural' approach to Russian rural society.<sup>20</sup> Major components of the pre-Emancipation institutional structure, even including serfdom itself, are often brushed aside as, in the words of one historian, 'merely something draped over an ecology, a demographic regime or social order, a thin, translucent cover sufficient only to distort our view of the inner workings of Russian peasant society'.<sup>21</sup> To understand the role and workings of the commune within the overall institutional configuration of Russian serf society before 1861, we must first understand the degree to which nearly all empirical work to date on this period has been deeply coloured by the 'Peasant Myth', as it will be referred to henceforth. The task of freeing ourselves from the grip of this nineteenth-century ideology, and gaining a more empirical perspective on the institutional configuration of this society, requires certain very specific kinds of evidence, and a very specific approach to them. In the two sections that follow, this myth and a method for addressing it are highlighted in turn.

### 1.1 The Peasant Myth

The overwhelming popularity of Tolstoy's and Herzen's cultural explanation of Russian difference has deep roots in nineteenth-century debates about land reform and the organisation of rural society in the post-Emancipation period. The new legal framework created by the Emancipation Act of 1861 was designed to preserve the Russian peasant

<sup>19</sup> Herzen, 'O sel'skoi obshchine v Rossii', p. 508.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, the discussion below on the cultural determinism implicit in the work of the 'moral economy' school of peasant studies.

<sup>21</sup> S. L. Hoch, 'The serf economy and the social order in Russia', in M. L. Bush (ed.), *Serfdom and slavery: studies in legal bondage* (London and New York, 1996), p. 311.

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commune, which was seen by many reformers as an organic institution with a long history.<sup>22</sup> The authors of the Act assumed, like Herzen (and perhaps partly due to his influence), that Russian peasant society before Emancipation had been organised around the commune, essentially as Herzen had described it. Its functions included the allocation of communal resources among member households, the provision of relief for the indigent, and the administration of justice on the basis of communal customs and norms. Worried that these institutions, perceived as ancient and deeply rooted in peasant culture, might break down as a result of Emancipation, the authors of the Act decided to turn the commune into a formal legal entity, on which they conferred many of the powers granted previously to landlords.<sup>23</sup> This codification of communal institutions was designed to ensure that the integration of former serfs into market society was a gradual process. By retaining organic peasant institutions such as the commune, the authors of the Act hoped to avoid the ‘proletarianisation’ that had characterised agrarian reform in western Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Since 1861, the terms of the Act and its impact on various aspects of Russian rural society have been hotly debated by historians and other social scientists. Even before the Act came into existence, its terms had been passionately thrashed out in the Russian press. Reformers across the political spectrum, though they disagreed about the pace at which changes should be made to the rural constitution, had uniformly discouraged too sudden a disruption to the existing communal order and communal ownership.<sup>25</sup> ‘Everything we see, hear, and know in our villages rests on this principle’, was a typical claim, ‘Its abolition would require a transformation of nearly the whole of Russia.’<sup>26</sup> The outpouring of opinion from all

<sup>22</sup> C. Goehrke, *Die Theorien über Entstehung und Entwicklung des ‘Mir’* (Wiesbaden, 1964); J. von Keussler, *Zur Geschichte und Kritik des bäuerlichen Gemeindebesitzes in Rußland*, 3 vols. (Riga, Moscow, and Odessa, 1876–87), vol. I; S. G. Pushkarev, *Krest’ianskaia pozemel’no-peredel’naia obshchina v Rossii* (repr. Newtonville, MA, 1976); V. I. Semevskii, *Krest’ianskii vopros v Rossii v XVIII v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (St Petersburg, 1888).

<sup>23</sup> See the discussion in C. Gaudin, *Ruling peasants: village and state in late imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> T. Emmons, *The Russian landed gentry and the peasant Emancipation of 1861* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 55; D. Saunders, *Russia in the age of reaction and reform, 1801–1881* (London, 1992), pp. 226–30.

<sup>25</sup> This is not to imply there were no dissenting voices. The liberal ‘westernisers’, the most renowned of whom is probably Chicherin, were vocally opposed to the retention of communal land tenure; e.g. G. M. Hamburg, ‘Peasant emancipation and Russian social thought: the case of B. N. Chicherin’, *Slavic Review* 50 (1991), pp. 890–904. But this group lost the debate, whose somewhat mysterious course is the subject of my current research.

<sup>26</sup> A. Koshelev in his commentary on an article by the Slavophile Beliaev of 1856, quoted by Keussler, *Gemeindebesitz*, vol. I, p. 114.



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quarters on this subject in 1857–9,<sup>27</sup> though, was characterised by an almost complete absence of empirical evidence. Johannes von Keussler, surveying this literature in the 1870s, regretted that ‘it completely lacks *any basis in positive facts*. In great detail and sleep-inducing repetition, the same abstract arguments [on both sides] are brought forward again and again . . . But there are no *facts* on the basis of which a judgment could be formed about what the effects of communal ownership, especially the economic ones, really are.’<sup>28</sup>

The status of the rural commune was one of the central questions in Russian politics between 1861 and 1917. Lenin himself notoriously weighed in with his anti-populist book of 1899 on *The development of capitalism in Russia*, as well as a number of later analyses that targeted the programme of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, which repaid him and other Bolsheviks in kind. Once again, all sides in these vituperative, and not terribly fact-oriented, debates took for granted that the institutional framework codified by the Emancipation Act had existed throughout rural Russia before 1861. Indeed, this is still taken for granted, more than a century after Lenin’s book. The evidence for the nature and role of communal institutions in the pre-Emancipation Russian countryside remains largely unexamined. As B. N. Mironov has pointed out, much of the enormous literature on the rural commune is focused on some specific aspect of communal life, such as land repartition or *krugovaia poruka* (collective responsibility for taxes and dues), rather than the broader context in which communes were situated.<sup>29</sup> Without knowledge of this larger institutional context, it is impossible to form a just appraisal of the impact of the Emancipation Act on Russian society. And without evidence for the nature of the *status quo ante*, we are in no position to say what the 1861 Act actually changed.

This book will argue that we still have only very limited information about pre-1861 Russian rural institutions; the knowledge that has almost universally been taken for granted consists largely of a politically convenient nineteenth-century myth and rests on very little solid evidence.<sup>30</sup> The book is an attempt to begin filling this void by providing some positive evidence for one particular region of rural Russia, and, on the basis of this evidence, sketching an account of the rural institutional framework, which might provide a kind of benchmark to which future studies of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113–81. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>29</sup> B. N. Mironov, ‘The peasant commune after the reforms of the 1860s’, in B. Eklof and S. Frank (eds.), *The world of the Russian peasant: post-Emancipation culture and society* (Boston, 1990), p. 33 (n. 4).

<sup>30</sup> Dennison and Carus, ‘The invention’.



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## The Peasant Myth

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other regions can index their findings. No claim for definitiveness would be appropriate in such a first attempt, especially in a country as huge and regionally differentiated as imperial Russia. This study is intended, rather, to make a beginning, in the hope that further studies of other regions can complement, complicate, and possibly even refute the findings reported here.

Still, it is reasonable to ask whether long-held views of the Russian peasantry can be discredited on the basis of a single local study. The answer to this question has two sides: first, in the remainder of this section, to show that the Peasant Myth, despite its venerable pedigree, has no solid empirical foundation; second, in the following section, to understand how a local study can be brought to bear microcosmically on larger and more general questions about the structure of Russian rural society.

To call something a myth that generations of social thinkers, legislators, scholars, historians, and literary figures have believed is, admittedly, to make a strong claim. Yet the political motivations of the Peasant Myth, in its first incarnation, were as clear as the evidence for it was flimsy. The Peasant Myth was not a folk tradition; it was imported to Russia from outside by the tsarist government. It was formulated in the 1840s by a German Romantic social writer, August von Haxthausen, a Catholic nobleman known up to then mainly as a favourite of the Prussian crown prince (later Wilhelm IV) and the Prussian agrarian conservatives. His writings had argued for the preservation of traditional forms of ownership and customary law. He was invited to travel through rural Russia by the tsar, in the hopes he would write a book to counter the negative propaganda of the Marquis de Custine<sup>31</sup> and give a positive spin to rural institutions then still widely regarded in the west as barbaric and reactionary. In this public relations project, the tsar's government succeeded beyond its wildest hopes.<sup>32</sup> Haxthausen's book not only gave a vivid picture of a country largely unknown to western Europeans (or even to educated Russians), but glorified the Russian village commune as an ideal for the rest of the world.<sup>33</sup> According to Haxthausen, Russia had no need of Saint-Simon or other utopian schemes, as its existing rural society already realised the ideals expressed in such utopias. He saw in the Russian peasantry the simplicity and integrity he thought northern Germany was in danger of losing to western-style industrialisation and urbanisation, and he wished

<sup>31</sup> Whose book *Russia in 1839* (also called *Letters from Russia*) was published in 1843, though rumours of its likely contents circulated in Russia before this date.

<sup>32</sup> P. Blickle, *Kommunalismus: Skizzen einer gesellschaftlichen Organisationsform*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> More details on Haxthausen's trip and his book can be found in Dennison and Carus, 'The invention'.

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to save the Russian countryside from a fate like Germany's. His book was received with great enthusiasm by Russian intellectuals across the political spectrum, from Slavophiles like Aksakov to Socialists like Herzen, who welcomed it for widely different, indeed incompatible, reasons.<sup>34</sup> None paused to note the slender basis of evidence on which Haxthausen's wide-ranging claims rested. Though he had spent more than a year in Russia, Haxthausen had only been on serf estates for a few days during that time. He knew no Russian, relied on interpreters for all his information, was under constant government surveillance (unbeknownst to him), and had come to Russia with a strong predisposition to find there precisely the institutions he already associated, before his trip, with a primordial 'Slavic' village settlement and property-holding pattern he had previously projected on to parts of Germany – though he had been able to find no more than anecdotal evidence for them there, either.<sup>35</sup> Because his story was so convenient to so many different political programmes in Russia, though, it was in no one's interest to subject Haxthausen's theory of rural institutions to even the most superficial cross-examination. A hard set of stylised facts had been launched into circulation. This new stylised account of the Russian peasantry quickly displaced an earlier tradition of Russian writing about rural society, exemplified by the *Encyclopédie*-inspired St Petersburg Free Economic Society.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the publication of Haxthausen's book represents a major discontinuity. Herzen would later remark that 'it took a German to discover the Russia of the people, which before him was as unknown as America before Columbus'.<sup>37</sup>

The Peasant Myth did not remain confined to a small group of social and political commentators. It soon became a central preoccupation among Russian literary figures. Haxthausen's book was avidly discussed among the dissident intellectuals of the Petrashevsky Circle in St Petersburg; Dostoevsky, for instance, thought it very important.<sup>38</sup> The best-known literary manifestation of the Peasant Myth is to be found, as we have seen, in the writings of Tolstoy,<sup>39</sup> whence it reached a western audience far larger than Haxthausen's book had ever had. Its acceptance among literary figures, though very widespread, was not universal. I. A. Goncharov's

<sup>34</sup> Goehrke, *Theorien*, pp. 23–5, 29–41.

<sup>35</sup> Dennison and Carus, 'The invention', pp. 566–7.

<sup>36</sup> M. Confino, *Domaines et seigneurs en Russie vers la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: études de structure agraires et de mentalités économiques* (Paris, 1963), esp. chapter 1.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted by Goehrke, *Theorien*, p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> J. Frank, *Dostoevsky: the seeds of revolt, 1821–1849* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 255–6.

<sup>39</sup> Konstantin Lieven (*Anna Karenina*) is the most obvious mouthpiece for this view. But in other novels, too – e.g. *War and Peace*, or *A Landlord's Morning* – Tolstoy portrayed Russian peasants as exemplars of a better and more harmonious life than any model available under western capitalism.