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978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism

Peter Gatrell

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This book provides an economic historian's perspective on major questions that confront all students of Russian history: how stable were the economic and administrative structures of late-imperial Russia, and how well prepared was Russia for war in 1914? The decade following the Russo-Japanese War witnessed profound changes in the political system and in the industrial economy. The regime faced challenges to its authority at home from industrialists, caught in the throes of recession, and from parliamentary critics of tsarist administration. Against this domestic background, Russia participated in a frantic continental arms race. Peter Gatrell provides a comprehensive account of the attempts made by government and business to confront these challenges, examining the organization and performance of a key industry, and showing how decisions were reached about the allocation of resources, and the far-reaching consequences these decisions entailed.

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# **Government, industry and rearmament in Russia, 1900–1914**

**The last argument of tsarism**

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PETER GATRELL

*Department of History, University of Manchester*



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Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

Contents

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of tables</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xvii
<i>Maps</i>	xviii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
 <b>Part I    Defence imperatives and Russian industry,           1911–1907</b>	 <b>11</b>
1    Defence and the economy on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War	13
2    War and revolution, retrenchment and recession	65
 <b>Part II   Rearmament and industrial ambition</b>	 <b>115</b>
3    The defence burden, 1907–1914	117
4    The economics and politics of industrial recovery	161
5    The armaments industry: the search for identity and influence, 1908–1914	197
6    The economics and politics of defence procurement	260
	vii

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The  
Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

viii	Contents	
	<b>7 Military preparedness on the eve of the First World War</b>	<b>291</b>
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>323</b>
	<i>Notes</i>	330
	<i>Bibliography</i>	372
	<i>Index</i>	388

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The  
Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

Maps

1	European Russia in 1914 showing location of major enterprises	<i>page</i> xviii
2	Urals state ironworks in 1914	xix
3	St Petersburg in 1914 showing location of major shipyards and armaments factories	xx



Tables

1.1	Size and complement of the Russian fleet, 1899–1904	<i>page</i> 21
1.2	Baltic Shipbuilding Company, 1877–1903: selected indicators	32
1.3	Nikolaev Shipbuilding Company, 1897–1904: selected indicators	33
1.4	Net profits reported in iron and steel, 1901–1906	49
1.5	Total output and shell production at state ironworks, 1900–1908	50
1.6	Machine-building production, 1885–1913	53
1.7	Gross output of machine-building, 1900–1908	55
1.8	Net profits reported in Russian machine-building, 1901–1906	60
2.1	Foreign orders for military goods, 1904–1905	73
2.2	Projected expenditure on ground-based armaments, 1906	101
2.3	Performance of Perm Cannon Works, Motovilikha, 1905–1907	105
2.4	Gross industrial production, 1896–1910	108
3.1	Government expenditure, 1900–1913	140
3.2	The army budget: estimates and outlays, 1907–1913	146
3.3	The navy budget: estimates and outlays, 1907–1913	146
3.4	Government revenue, 1900–1913	150
3.5	Defence/national income proportions in Europe, 1913/14	154
4.1	Gross industrial production, 1908–1913	173
4.2	Industrial employment, 1900–1913	175
4.3	Iron and steel consumption, 1908	177
4.4	Consumption of iron and steel, 1913–1914	178
4.5	Production and sale of pig iron, 1908–1913	181
4.6	Gross output of machine-building, 1908–1913	187
4.7	Output of rolling-stock, 1900–1913	188

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The  
Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

List of tables		xi
5.1	Profile of the ‘New Admiralty’ yards, 1908–1912	203
5.2	Employment at state armouries, 1890–1914	207
5.3	Estimated expenditure on machine tools by GAU, 1908–1914	208
5.4	Total output and defence production, Urals ironworks, 1908–1914	211
5.5	The Russian arms trade, 1908–1913: selected indicators	219
5.6	Russian military shipbuilding, 1908–1913: basic indicators	227
5.7	Nikolaev Shipbuilding Company, 1904/5–1913/14	232
5.8	The labour force in the armaments industry, 1900, 1908, 1913	244
5.9	Turnover of workers at St Petersburg Tube Works, 1907–1914	247
5.10	Aggregate defence production in 1913	254
5.11	Defence production, 1908–1913	255
5.12	Armaments production, 1908–1913	255
5.13	Military shipbuilding, 1908–1913	256
6.1	Orders placed abroad by government departments, 1901–1910	276
6.2	Foreign share of military orders, 1907–1910	276
7.1	Munitions stocks at the outbreak of war, July 1914	299
7.2	Comparative military strength of the European powers, 1914	300
7.3	Stocks of military matériel, 1914	301
7.4	The Russian fleet, 1909–1917	303

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism

Peter Gatrell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

This study deals with the capacity of the tsarist regime to survive a challenge to its authority at home and to maintain its prestige abroad. The prerogatives of the imperial government to decide foreign and defence policy, as well as economic and fiscal policy, were called into question by the forces unleashed during war and revolution in 1904–5. After 1905, a struggle took place between state and society for control over fundamental issues of policy. This book concentrates upon one aspect of that struggle, by examining the organization, administration, finance and performance of the armaments industry in Russia from the turn of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War.

The first two chapters address the political, economic and defence imperatives before and during the years of upheaval in 1904–6. The final decade of the nineteenth century witnessed a series of important initiatives that had profound repercussions for the defence sector: Russia signed a military agreement with France, the tsarist government embarked on a programme of rapid industrialization, and significant reforms in the armed forces came to fruition. But none of these developments prepared Russia for what was to come as the new century dawned. The first crisis appeared in the industrial sector, where the basic industries that had flourished for a decade experienced instead a severe recession. Next, the war against Japan humiliated the Russian empire and exposed serious weaknesses in the system of military procurement. Much of the imperial fleet lay at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. To restore Russian pride and military might was costly; and the price of rearmament had to be reckoned along with the costs of the war. Finally, the ensuing revolution provoked profound changes in the political system, leading to the establishment of a form of parliamentary government. The Duma had no constitutional right of control over the armed services, but its budgetary powers allowed its members to exert some influence over

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978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism

Peter Gatrell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

xiv      **Preface**

---

defence spending, as well as over the administration of the state-owned arsenals and shipyards.

The resolution of these components of crisis forms the basis for the following three chapters, which detail the rearmament programmes, defence spending, the reform of procurement and the behaviour of the arms industry. As in the first chapter, the treatment of armaments industry is set in the context of the basic industries which provided the essential underpinnings for modern warfare, namely iron and steel and machine-building, and which themselves produced goods that were either destined to be used by the military or that could be adapted to military use. These form the subject of chapter 4, which considers the mainsprings of industrial growth on the eve of the First World War. This chapter also charts the uneasy relationship between industry and government, in the light of budgetary conflicts, market uncertainties and shifting defence priorities. Chapter 5 discusses in detail the emergence of the private arms trade in Russia, as well as the problems that beset the established state sector. It also considers the place of the armament industry in the Russian industrial economy. In chapter 6, attention turns to defence procurement, where the theme of an 'internal arms race' figures prominently. The aim is to ascertain the claims made by their supporters on behalf of rival forms of enterprise, as well as the relative performance of the two sectors. The study ends with a broadly conceived assessment of defence preparations and Russia's readiness for war in 1914.

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Peter Gatrell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46619-6 - Government, Industry and Rearmament in Russia, 1900-1914: The Last Argument of Tsarism

Peter Gatrell

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xvi      **Acknowledgements**

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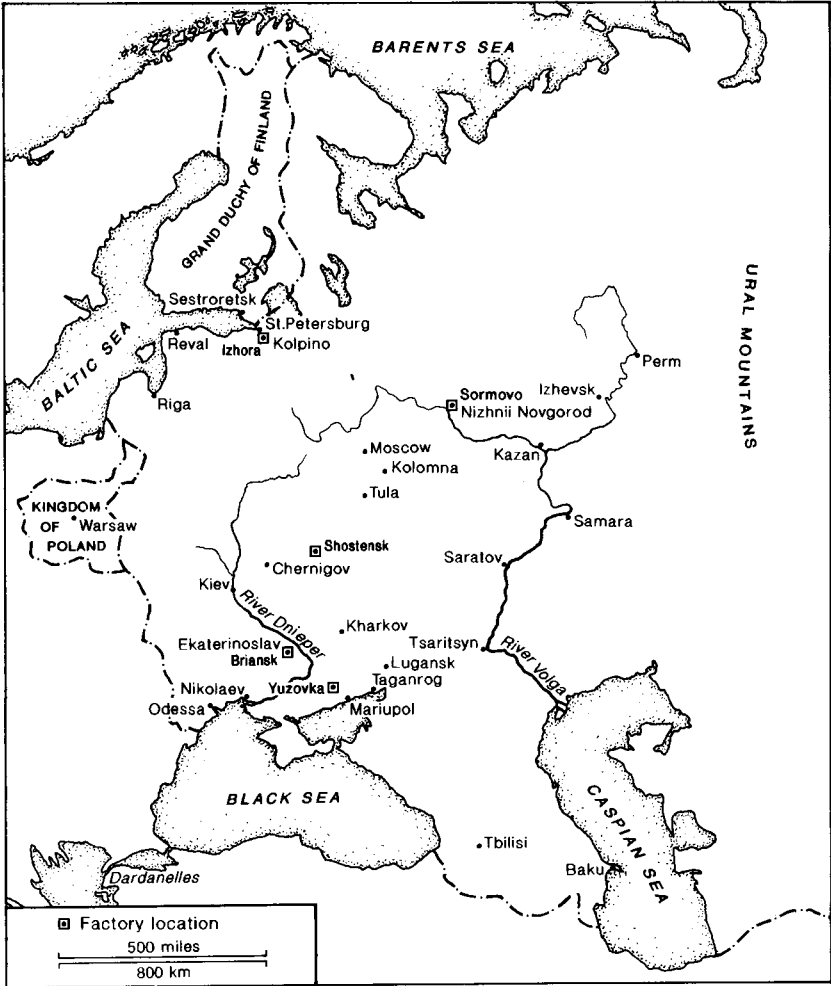
As always, my beloved parents and brother, Tony Gatrell, have followed my progress with keen interest.

It is hardest of all to find words to thank those who are so close and dear to me, and I shall not attempt to do this in print. I can do no better than to dedicate this book to Jane, David and Lizzy, with all my love.

# Abbreviations

d.	delo (file)
f.	fond (collection)
GAU	Glavnoe artilleriiskoe upravlenie (Main Artillery Administration)
GIU	Glavnoe intendantskoe upravlenie (Chief Quartermaster's Department)
GUKS	Glavnoe upravlenie korablestroeniia i snabzheniia (Main Shipbuilding Administration)
l.	list (sheet)
LGIA	Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Leningrad State Historical Archive)
ob.	obratnaia (reverse)
op.	opis' (inventory)
SGO	Sovet gosudarstvennoi oborony (Council for State Defence)
SOGD	<i>Gosudarstvennaia Duma: stenograficheskii otchet</i> (Stenographic report of the State Duma)
SOGS	<i>Gosudarstvennyi Sovet: stenograficheskii otchet</i> (Stenographic report of the State Council)
TsGAVMF	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv voenno-morskogo flota (Central State Archive of the Navy)
TsGIA	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Central State Historical Archive)
TsGVIA	Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (Central State Military-Historical Archive)
VOGK	<i>Vsepoddaneishii otchet gosudarstvennogo kontrolera</i>
VDMM	<i>Vsepoddaneishii doklad po morskomu ministerstvu</i>

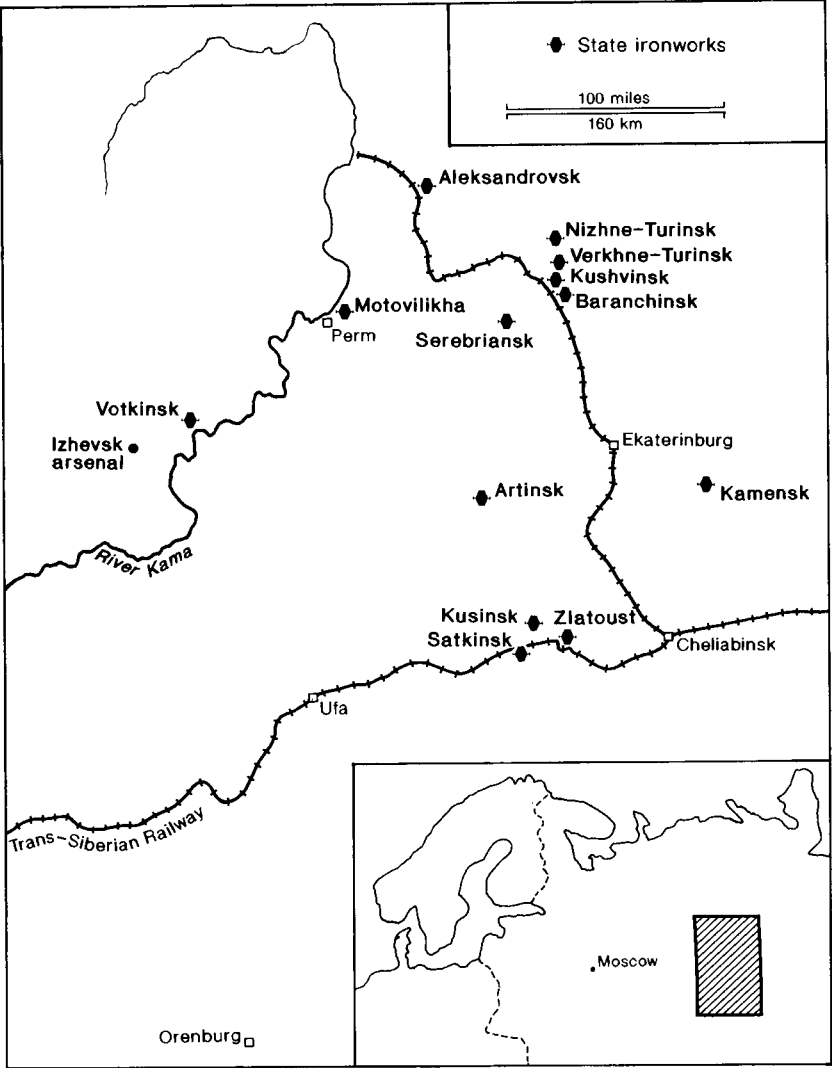
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Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



1 European Russia in 1914 showing the location of major enterprises.

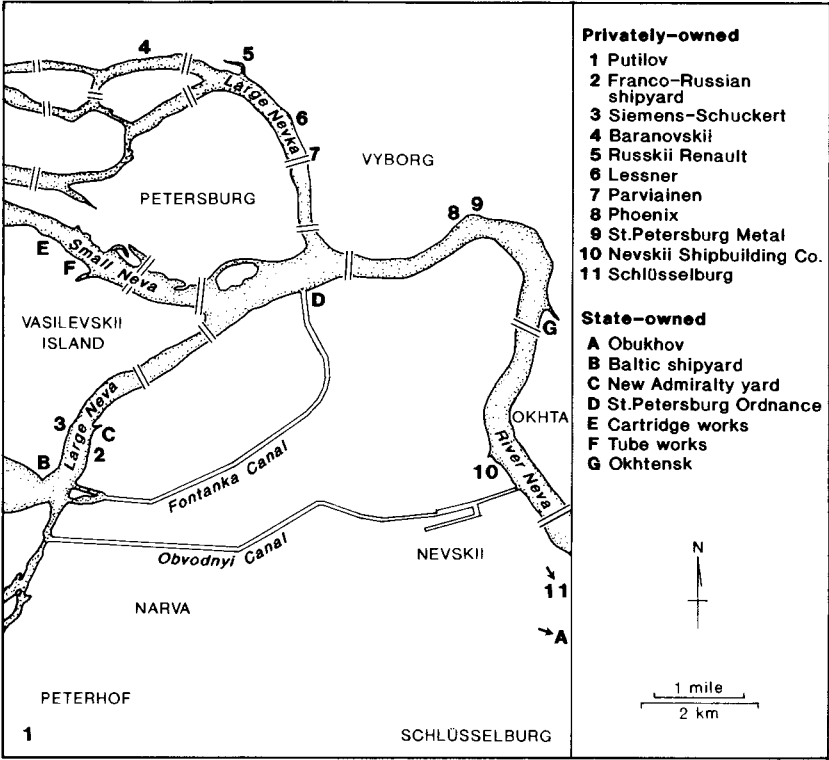


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Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



2 Urals state ironworks in 1914

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Last Argument of Tsarism  
Peter Gatrell  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



3 St Petersburg in 1914 showing the location of major shipyards and armaments factories