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RUSSIAN NATIONAL INCOME, 1885–1913

This book presents estimates of the growth of the tsarist economy during the “industrialization era,” 1885–1913. The economic performance of the tsarist economy is compared with that of Soviet Russia during the plan era and with other industrialized countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its main importance is to provide a frame of reference against which to contrast the Soviet performance. The author finds a stronger economic performance from the tsarist economy than the literature had led us to suspect, and he disputes several of the established views of economic historians concerning Russian agriculture and the Russian nineteenth-century business cycle.

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Dedicated to the memory of my father

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PREFACE

This monograph summarizes my work, begun more than a decade ago, on Russian national income. I attempt in this summary to describe the flaws, data problems, weaknesses, systematic biases, and sundry problems in the reported series. One must be realistic in these matters. These reservations most likely will be read in detail by only a few; most readers will want to turn to the summary results to answer one simple question: What was the rate of growth of the tsarist economy during its "industrialization era"? There is no simple answer to this question. What I present in this work is my "best estimate" of the tsarist growth rate. My estimates disagree with some past research; they agree with others. I would hope that my "best estimates" will be subjected to close scrutiny to determine whether they can be improved. No work of this sort is ever finished.

In the process of conducting this research, it was necessary for me to acquaint myself with the historical national income series of other countries. In reading this literature I became convinced that my series on tsarist Russia, despite its numerous flaws and weaknesses, is of comparable quality and reliability to those of the other major industrialized countries. It is this conclusion that has encouraged me to publish my results at this time.

The list of individuals and institutions that deserve my thanks and gratitude is long, and I would like to thank them all collectively. The National Science Foundation and the Humboldt Stiftung of Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Federal Republic of Germany, provided the financial support that made this project possible. Much of this research was conducted at the Institut für osteuropäische Geschichte und Landeskunde, Universität Tübingen, Dietrich Geyer, director. I wish to thank the staff of the institute collectively for their support. The Osteuropa-abteilung of the Staatsbibliothek Berlin also provided invaluable assistance, as did the interlibrary loan department of the University of Tübingen, which succeeded in obtaining valuable research materials

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Paul R. Gregory