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The Tax Censuses and the Decline of the Serf Population in Imperial Russia, 1833–1858

The demographic development of the serf population in imperial Russia, particularly its rate of natural growth during the thirty years preceding the emancipation in 1861, has been the subject of considerable controversy. On the basis of data from the tax censuses (*revizii*), abolitionists contended that the serf population was dying out, implying that the death rate consistently exceeded the birth rate. Many Soviet historians and demographers have subsequently advanced this view, seeing a demographic crisis as one dimension of the collapse of the feudal serf system. A Western scholar, Professor Daniel Field, has recently lent his support to this interpretation.¹ But was serfdom so socially oppressive or economically stifling as to affect natural population growth adversely? Other contemporary statisticians and later historians—either less opposed to serfdom or more skeptical about the accuracy of population data—have avoided the issue. Nevertheless, it has repeatedly been suggested that, of all segments of the population, serfs had the lowest—though not necessarily a negative—rate of natural growth.² In contrast, some of the officers of the general staff of the army and one obscure lord in southern Tambov province argued

1. N. Khr. Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslovnago sostava naseleniia Rossii v promezhutkakh vremeni mezhu 7 i 8, 8 i 9 reviziiami," *Ekonomicheskii ukazatel'*, no. 44 (November 2–14, 1857), pp. 1021–30; I. Gorlov, "Proteksionizm v Rossii i svoboda truda," *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 148 (March–April 1858): 189–90; V. I. Lenin, *Ekonomicheskoe sodержanie narodnichestva i kritika ego v knige g. Struve* (St. Petersburg, 1894) in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 55 vols., 5th ed. (Moscow, 1958–65), 1:481–84; N. Oganovskii, *Zakonomernost' agrarnoi evoliutsii* (Saratov, 1911), part 2, pp. 239–42; N. M. Druzhinin, *Gosudarstvennye krest'iane i reforma P. D. Kiseleva*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1958), pp. 294–95; A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811–1913 gg.)* (Moscow, 1956), pp. 4, 34–35; N. M. Shepukhova, "Izmenenie udel'nogo vesa chastnovladel'cheskogo krest'ianstva v sostave naseleniia evropeiskoi Rossii (XVIII–pervaia polovina XIX v.)," *Voprosy istorii*, 1959, no. 12, pp. 130–34; I. D. Koval'chenko, *Krest'iane i krepостное khoziaistvo v Riazanskoii i Tambovskoi guberniakh* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 168–70; I. D. Koval'chenko, *Russkoe krepостное krest'ianstvo v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1967), pp. 306–7, 327; V. M. Kabuzan, *Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleniia v Rossii v XVIII–pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 8–9; Daniel Field, *The End of Serfdom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), p. 29.

2. V. V. Trubnikov, "Rezultaty narodnykh perepisei v Ardatovskom uезде Simbirskoi gubernii," *Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii o Rossii*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1858), p. 366; A. Troinitskii, *Krepостное naselenie v Rossii po 10-i narodnoi perepisi* (St. Petersburg, 1861), pp. 55–56; P. N. Miliukov, "Krest'iane," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 16-A (St. Petersburg, 1895), p. 684; I. I. Ignatovich, *Pomeshchich'i krest'iane nakanune osvobodeniia*, 3rd ed. (Leningrad, 1925), pp. 68–69; Geroid T. Robinson, *Rural Russia Under the Old Regime* (New York, 1932), pp. 62–63; Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia* (Princeton, N.J., 1961), pp. 420–22, 469; A. L. Perkovskii, "Krizis demograficheskogo vosproizvodstva krepостного krest'ianstva Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX stoletii," *Brachnost', rozhdaemost', smertnost' v Rossii i v SSSR* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 188–90.

that the decline in the serf population was the result of sizable movements of serfs into other legal categories and not a function of the natural growth rate.³ Since the mid-1800s, only a few prerevolutionary scholars and one Soviet historian have supported this view.⁴ The research on which this article is based, grounded in part on data provided by the tax censuses, essentially supports this alternative analysis.

Given the absence of demographic studies using parish registers (*metricheskie knigi*), parish membership lists (*klirovye vedomosti*), governors' reports, or family records of individual serf estates, the tax censuses provide virtually all that is known about population movements in prereform imperial Russia.⁵ But the *revizii* are only summary totals of the population and therefore are of limited use to the historical demographer. In particular, it is not possible to compute birth rates, death rates, and thus rates of natural growth from the *revizii*. All previous analyses have relied not on these vital statistics, but on absolute and proportional changes in the legal composition of the total population.⁶ However, such changes are the result not only of natural population movements, but of mechanical (migratory) and legal movements as well. To determine even the approximate weight of each of these factors in the net decline of the serf population requires cautious use of the tax censuses and other available materials.

When Peter the Great imposed a soul tax early in the eighteenth century, he ordered the registration of all males in those legal categories which were to be taxed under the new law. The first tax census was taken in every village and town, and it provided the basis for assessing the soul tax from 1724 until 1747. During this period, the lists of names on the tax registers were not revised to take into consideration population movements. Thus, a "revisional soul" was no more than a unit of account for taxation and recruitment purposes. A person recorded in the *reviziia* did not need to be physically present, nor, as Gogol reminds us, even alive to be taxed.

3. Glavnyi General'nyi Shtab, *Materialy dlia geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannye ofitserami general'nago shtaba*, 25 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1860–68). (Each volume in this series was prepared by a different author and contains geographical and statistical material for a specific province, the name of which appears as its subtitle. Hereafter, separate volumes will be cited as *Materialy*, giving the authors and subtitles.) See M. Baranovich, *Materialy: Riazanskaia guberniia*, p. 156; M. Domontovich, *Materialy: Chernigovskaia guberniia*, pp. 160–62; A. Lipinskii, *Materialy: Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 266; I. Zelenskii, *Materialy: Minskaia guberniia*, pp. 514–15, 632–33; Kh. Kozlov, "O prichinakh ubyli pomeschich'ikh krest'ian," *Ekonomicheskii zapiski*, no. 49 (1857), pp. 387–90; Kh. Kozlov, "Neskol'ko slov o statisticheskikh dannykh otnositel'no uvelicheniia i umen'sheniia narodonaseleniia," *Zapiski Lebedianskago obshchestva sel'skago khoziaistva za 1858* (1859), part 2, pp. 153–61. See also A. Troinitskii, "O chisle krepostnykh v Rossii," *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, 1858, no. 5–6, p. 30 (hereafter cited as *ZhMVD*).

4. V. I. Semevskii, *Krest'ianskii vopros v Rossii*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1888), pp. 568–70; P. B. Struve, *Krepostnoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow, 1913), p. 145; A. Kornilov, *Kurs istorii Rossii XIX v.*, part 3 (Moscow, 1914), pp. 23–25; P. G. Ryndziunskii, "Vymiralo li krepostnoe krest'ianstvo pered reformoi 1861 g.?" *Voprosy istorii*, 1967, no. 7, pp. 54–70.

5. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii*, pp. 16–118.

6. Trubnikov did attempt to calculate vital rates (Trubnikov, "Rezultaty narodnykh perepisei," p. 365). His results, however, must be discounted because of the poor quality of the original data. For example, his figures show that the death rate for the population as a whole in Ardatovskii *uezd* was only slightly above that of modern Western Europe, but, undoubtedly, it was considerably higher.

To reapportion the tax burden as a result of population changes, in 1742 the senate ordered a new tax census to be taken, and it was henceforth to be repeated at fifteen-year intervals.⁷ The second *reviziia* took until 1747 to complete. Later *revizii* were conducted in 1761–67, 1781–82, 1794–96, and 1811, or roughly every fifteen years (the fourth [1781–82] was postponed five years because of administrative reforms and property disputes arising out of the General Land Survey).⁸ Four more *revizii* were gathered in the nineteenth century, but the practice of taking one every fifteen years was abandoned, and the requirement set down by the 1742 law was no longer mentioned in the *revizii* legislation.⁹ The seventh *reviziia* was taken in 1815–16, the eighth in 1833–36, the ninth in 1850–51, and the tenth in 1857–58. The soul tax itself was abolished during the years 1883–87.

Unfortunately, it is impossible for the modern scholar to verify the results of the *revizii*. Most of the original lists upon which they were based (*revizskie skazki*) have been lost. More important, there is no way of knowing if the original compilers of the *skazki*—whether lord, bailiff, local government official, or peasant functionary—recorded the information accurately. There was certainly a good reason for underestimating the male population and, given the inadequacies of local government administration, it was quite likely that this would happen. The female population was included in the *skazki* for only seven of the ten *revizii*, but frequently the government did not even bother to total the data or verify them by checking parish registers and lists, the procedure followed for males.¹⁰

Only two things can be learned from the ten tax censuses: (1) the approximate size of the male population for a particular administrative region at a given time, and (2) the approximate net growth of the male population between *revizii*. Even determining this information is difficult, however. Some of the *revizii* took a number of years to complete, not all areas of the empire nor all legal categories of the male population were included, local and provincial government reforms led to the redrawing of many administrative boundaries, and the empire itself expanded considerably.

One Soviet scholar, V. M. Kabuzan, using the summary lists (*perechnevye vedomosti*) and annual tax records (*okladnye knigi*) deposited in the archives of the Department of State Accounts of the senate and the Ministry of Finance, has done much to resolve many of the problems surrounding the *revizii*.¹¹ Using these documents, which take into account registered migration and some changes in legal status, along with periodically compiled verification lists which included many persons who had somehow escaped registration at the time of the *revizii*, Kabuzan has improved upon the figures that were published by the government

7. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii s 1649 goda*, 1st series, 45 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830–1916) (hereafter cited as *PSZ I*), vol. 11, no. 8,619 (September 17, 1742).

8. Because some *revizii* took a number of years to complete, the so-called basic year of a *reviziia*, used by scholars for computation purposes, does not always conform to the fifteen-year interval. Also, on some occasions, the government calculated the fifteen years from the onset of the previous *reviziia*; on others, from its completion.

9. *PSZ I*, vol. 15, no. 11,364 (November 28, 1761); vol. 31, no. 24,635 (May 18, 1811).

10. V. M. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX v. (po materialam revizii)* (Moscow, 1963), p. 77.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 99–104, 194–223. See also V. E. Den, *Naselenie Rossii po piatoi revizii*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1902), pp. 129–234 and appendix 3.

Table 1. *Total Male Population, Russia, 1719-1857*

Revizitsia (Basic Year)	Total Male Population ^a	TAXED						TEMPORARILY TAX EXEMPT		UNTAXED	
		Nonservi Peasant Population		Servi Population		Urban Population		Total	%	Total	%
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%				
1 (1719)	7,788,000	2,209,000	28.4	4,342,000 ^b	55.7	295,000	3.8	444,000	5.7	451,000	5.0
2 (1744)	9,095,000	2,546,000	28.0	5,247,000 ^b	57.7	355,000	3.9	451,000	5.0	293,000	2.5
3 (1762)	11,617,000	4,366,000	37.6	5,611,000	48.3	321,000	2.8	672,000	4.7	1,075,000	7.6
4 (1782)	14,205,000	5,878,000	41.4	6,714,000	47.3	421,000	3.0	1,121,000	6.0	1,775,000	8.5
5 (1795)	18,617,000	6,534,000	35.1	9,787,000	52.6	771,000	4.1	1,45,000	.5	2,584,000	9.1
6 (1811)	20,863,000	7,761,000	37.2	10,455,000	50.1	892,000	4.3	189,000	.6	2,886,000	9.7
7 (1815)	21,538,000	7,861,000	36.5	9,987,000	46.4	1,208,000	5.6	77,000	.4	1,775,000	8.5
8 (1833) ^c	25,957,000	10,628,000	40.9	10,963,000	42.2	1,689,000	6.5	99,000	.4	2,111,000	8.1
9 (1850) ^c	28,555,000	12,490,000	43.7	10,859,000	38.0	1,909,000	6.7	145,000	.5	2,584,000	9.1
10 (1857) ^c	29,608,000	13,220,000	44.6	10,795,000	36.5	1,843,000	6.2	189,000	.6	2,886,000	9.7

^a Figures include males in the regular army and navy. The Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Transcaucasus, and the territories of the Russian-American Company, though part of the Russian Empire, were not subject to the *revizitsia* and therefore are not included in the figures.

^b Figures include serfs belonging to the church.

^c After 1816-19, all serfs in the provinces of Kurland, Lifliand, and Estliand became free peasants.

Source: V. M. Kabuzan, *Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleniia v Rossii v XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX v.* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 59-181.

Table 2. Mean Annual Natural Growth Rate between *Revizii*, Total Male Population, by Sources (in percent)

Source	Seventh–Eighth <i>Revizii</i>	Eighth–Ninth <i>Revizii</i>	Ninth–Tenth <i>Revizii</i>
Ministry of Internal Affairs	0.54	0.63
Bunge	1.00 ^a	0.50 ^a	
Kabuzan	0.94	0.54	0.59
Hoch and Augustine ^b	0.89	0.57	0.56

^a Approximate.

^b Calculations are based on Kabuzan's data, but using different "basic years." We computed the intervals between *revizii* to be as follows: seventh–eighth *revizii*, nineteen years (Kabuzan, eighteen years); eighth–ninth *revizii*, sixteen years (Kabuzan, seventeen years); ninth–tenth *revizii*, seven and one-half years (Kabuzan, seven years). Our intervals seem to be more in accordance with Kabuzan's own comments in V. M. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII–pervoi polovine XIX v. (po materialam revizii)* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 72–76.

Sources: "Svedeniia o narodonaselenii imperii v 1836 godu," *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, 25 (1837), pp. lxxviii–xcvi; "Vedomost' o narodonaselenii Rossii za 1851, po 9 narodnoi perepisi," *ibid.*, 1853, no. 11–12, pp. 61–76; "Vedomost' o narodonaselenii Rossii po 10 perepisi," *ibid.*, 1860, no. 3–4, pp. 1–14; N. Khr. Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslovnago sostava naseleniia Rossii v promezhutkakh vremeni mezhdu 7 i 8, 8 i 9 reviziiami," *Ekonomicheskii ukazatel'*, no. 44 (November 2–14, 1857), p. 1027; V. M. Kabuzan, *Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleniia* (Moscow, 1971), pp. 5, 56, 57.

and by scholars in the nineteenth century. A summary of his data for the total male population is given in table 1.

Earlier works on the *revizii* do not contrast sharply with Kabuzan's results. In 1848, Peter Köppen, one of the founders of the Russian Geographic Society, published a brief article on the eighth *reviziia* (1833–36). Nine years later, he produced a very detailed study of the ninth *reviziia* (1850–51).¹² But Köppen was reluctant to move from statistical analysis to social analysis, preferring to present by guberniia the raw data for each of the over one hundred and ten legal categories included in the *reviziia*. Within a few months, N. Khr. Bunge, a professor of political economy and statistics at the University of Kiev and later the minister of finance, reorganized Köppen's data into ten social groups whose origins he traced back to the seventh *reviziia* of 1815–16. Bunge uncovered two striking but simple facts: the empire had experienced a sharp decline in the rate of population growth since the 1830s, accompanied by an even more startling decrease, both proportional and absolute, in the serf population.¹³ In spite of discrepancies in the data, all subsequent studies, including the most recent figures, have borne this out. In fact, data from the tenth *reviziia*, unavailable to Bunge, show the trend continuing up to 1857–58 (see tables 2 and 3).

12. P. V. Köppen, "Über die Vertheilung der Bewohner Russlands nach Ständen, in der verschiedenen Provinzen," *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, 6th series, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, 1848), pp. 401–29; P. Keppen [P. V. Köppen], *Deviatiaia reviziia: Issledovanie o chisle zhitelei v Rossii v 1851 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1857). See also P. I. Keppen [P. V. Köppen], "O narodnykh perepisiakh v Rossii," *Zapiski Imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva po otdeleniiu statistiki*, 6 (1889): 1–94 (hereafter cited as *Zapiski IRGO*).

13. Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslovnago sostava," pp. 1021–30.

Table 3. Total Male Serf Population, Russia, 1833–58

Source	EIGHTH REVIZIIA		NINTH REVIZIIA		TENTH REVIZIIA	
	Number of Serfs	Percent of Total Male Population	Number of Serfs	Percent of Total Male Population	Number of Serfs	Percent of Total Male Population
Ministry of Internal Affairs	10,914,000	42.9	10,805,000	38.2	10,772,000	36.2
Köppen	10,870,000	44.9	10,692,000	36.8		
Bunge	42.3	38.2		
Troinitskii					10,781,000	35.0
Kabuzan	10,963,000	43.0	10,859,000	38.8	10,795,000	37.3
Perkovskii	10,927,000	42.6	10,901,000	39.0		

Note: Percentages are based on total male population, excluding the regular army and navy. To be consistent with Kabuzan (*Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleeniia*, pp. 180–81), serfs have been restricted to lords' peasants (*pomeshchich'i krest'iane*), household peasants (*dvorovye liudi*), and persons ascribed to privately owned factories (*privisnye liudi*). Therefore, persons of special serf status (*na uslovnom prave*) or those who belonged to various private organizations are not included.

Sources: Ministry of Internal Affairs: as for table 2; P. V. Köppen, "Über die Vertheilung der Bewohner Russlands nach Ständen, in der verschiedenen Provinzen," *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg*, 6th series, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg, 1848), pp. 420–21, and P. Keppen [P. V. Köppen], *Deviataia reviziia: Issledovanie o chisle zhitelei v Rossii v 1851 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1857), p. 215 (except for *obiazannye* peasants); Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslavnago sostava," p. 1026; A. Troinitskii, *Krepostnoe naselenie v Rossii po 10-i narodnoi perepisi* (St. Petersburg, 1861), pp. 40, 47, 49–50; Kabuzan, *Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleeniia*, pp. 59–181, see also table 1; and A. L. Perkovskii, "Krizis demograficheskogo vosproizvodstva krepostnogo krest'ianstva Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX stoletiiia," *Brachnost', rozhdaemost', smertnost' v Rossii i v SSSR* (Moscow, 1977), pp. 176–77.

There are only three possible explanations for the decline in the serf population: (1) serfs had a lower rate of natural growth than the rest of the population, and in the worst case, a negative rate; (2) significant numbers of serfs were entering the nonserf population (in fact, using Kabuzan's figures, if legal movements alone were responsible for the decline, then approximately 1.7 million males registered as nonserfs in 1857–58 [tenth *reviziia*] were serfs in 1833–36 [eighth *reviziia*] or had male ancestors [fathers or paternal grandfathers] who were serfs); and (3) some combination of these two explanations.¹⁴

Bunge was the first to propose the idea of a negative rate of natural growth among the serf population, attributing this to the increasing demands lords made upon their serfs and to the effects of rural industrialization:

This decrease of 473,719 [male and female serfs between the eighth and ninth *revizii*] is especially striking as it cannot be explained either by the transfer [of serfs] into the status of state peasants or by manumissions. . . . In the first period [between the seventh and eighth *revizii*, the population] grew by 1% annually; in the second [between the eighth and ninth] by a little more than ½%. This cannot be attributed to fortuitous events—war or

14. There is no evidence to suggest that a massive emigration of serfs from imperial Russia took place.

epidemic illnesses; in both periods there were disasters of both kinds: in the first—war with Persia, Turkey, and the suppression of the Polish revolt; in the second—war with Hungary; in the first and second—a cholera epidemic. The sole reason, therefore, is the decline in the well-being of the rural population, in particular the serfs. This is not an unsubstantiated supposition but an unquestionable fact. . . . The fact which we have cited ought to attract attention. One segment of the population declines, and this loss is felt by the entire social organism as a decline in the rate of increase in the number of inhabitants.¹⁵

In the absence of reliable vital statistics, the problem of the decline in the serf population between the eighth *reviziia* (1833–36) and the tenth *reviziia* (1857–58) centers on the number of serfs manumitted or otherwise freed from servile status during this quarter-century. How many male serfs in 1833–36, along with their descendants, had been released from serfdom by 1857–58? Is it possible that as many as 1.7 million males were in this category? If so, then the serf population would have experienced a natural growth rate equal to that of the population as a whole.

Serfs were manumitted in a variety of ways. Table 4 presents a list of ways for which there are either exact figures or sufficient data to calculate reliable estimates. The many forms of manumission which, though important, cannot be included in the table because of the lack of adequate information will be discussed later in this essay. This essay will be concerned only with the manumission of serfs after the eighth *reviziia*. The figures in table 4 are of two kinds: Those not derived from the *revizii* (column 3) give only the number of serfs freed at the time of their manumission. The subsequent natural growth of these ex-serfs up to the time of the tenth *reviziia* is not included, although we shall try to estimate its effects later in the essay. In other words, if, in 1845, one thousand males were freed, to evaluate the full extent of the manumission it is necessary to know how many of these one thousand male serfs, along with their post-1845 male descendants, were registered in 1857–58 in the tenth *reviziia*. If these one thousand males had a natural growth rate of 5 percent annually, then by 1858 it would be as if one thousand sixty-seven males had been freed. The other figures (column 4) date from the time of the tenth *reviziia*, with only one exception.

The laws of 1803, 1842, and 1847 provided for the emancipation, under various conditions, of entire serf villages.¹⁶ Gifts of serf estates to charitable and educational institutions were another form of emancipation. In the twelve

15. Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslavnago sostava," pp. 1025, 1027, 1029.

16. *PSZ* I, vol. 27, no. 20,620 (February 20, 1803); *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, 2nd series, 55 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1830–84) (hereafter cited as *PSZ* II), vol. 17, no. 15,462 (April 2, 1842); vol. 22, no. 21,689 (November 8, 1847); V. Veshniakov, *Krest'iane-sobstvenniki v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1858), pp. 59–61, 70–71, 81–134; "Vedomost'," *ZhMVD*, 1860, no. 3–4, p. 4; N. I. Sergeeva, "Obiazannye krest'iane i reforma 19 fevralia 1861 g.," *Problemy obshchestvennoi mysli i ekonomicheskaiia politika Rossii XIX–XX vekov* (Leningrad, 1972), p. 82. Obligated peasants (*obiazannye krest'iane*) were serfs with fixed contractual obligations and therefore *na uslovnom prave*. They were not counted as *pomeshchich'i krest'iane* or *dvorovye liudi*, nor were they traditionally included in figures on the "serf percent." Therefore, they are part of the decline of serfs *na obshchem krepostnom prave*, to which our discussion is restricted.

Table 4. *Number of Male Serfs Entering Other Legal Categories between the Eighth and Tenth Revizii, 1833–58*

(1) Type of Manumission	(2) Years Manumitted	(3) Number Changing Legal Status	(4) Number Changing Legal Status with Nonserf Descendants
1. Law of 1803 (<i>svobodnye khlebovashtsy</i>)	1836–58	58,225	
2. Law of 1842 (<i>obiazannye krest'iane</i>)	1842–58	27,173	
3. Law of 1847 (<i>bezobrochnye krest'iane</i>)	1848–52	964	
4. Gifts of Serf Estates to Charitable and Educational Institutions	1835–45	8,987	
5. Manumission of Possessional Serfs	1840–51	19,309	
6. Registration as State Peasants of Males Illegally Counted as Possessional Serfs in Eighth <i>Reviziia</i>	1851	53,900	
7. State Confiscation of Estates of Nobles Convicted of Conspiracy	1839	4,794	
8. State Confiscation of Estates of Participants in Polish Revolt	1838–57	72,500 ^a	
9. Purchase of Serf Estates by Ministry of State Domains	1838–58	58,275	
10. Purchase of <i>Odnodvorcheskie Krest'iane</i> by Ministry of State Domains	1842–58	7,886	
11. Purchase of Estate of Count Orlov by State Horse Breeding Administration	1845	6,562	
12. Purchase of Serf Estates by the Crown (<i>Udel</i>)	1836–58	25,000 ^a	
13. Recruitment into Regular Army and Navy			433,750 ^a
14. <i>Kantonisty</i> , under Authority of Military Orphan Department			122,500 ^a
15. Criminal Exile to Siberia			60,000 ^a
	Total	343,575	616,250
	Presumed Natural Growth between Manumission and Tenth <i>Reviziia</i>	22,800	
	Total	366,375	
	TOTAL (col. 3 + col. 4)		982,625

^a Estimated.

Sources: See pp. 409–16 and notes 16–44.

instances we have found, the serfs became state peasants, and the institutions received an annual compensation out of general government funds.¹⁷ A number of possessional serfs ascribed to privately owned factories also obtained their freedom during the period under consideration. According to Köppen, in the 1840s about half of these factories ceased using possessional peasants, and the serfs attached to them were freed. However, Köppen's figure covers only the period 1840–50. We do not know if there were any additional cases between 1851 and 1858.¹⁸

17. Köppen, *Deviataia reviziia*, pp. 218–19; *PSZ* II, vol. 16, no. 14,669 (June 19, 1841); N. Mel'nitskii, *Sbornik svedeniï o voenno-uchebnykh zavedeniakh v Rossii*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1857–60), vol. 2, part 3, pp. 187 and 217; vol. 2, part 4, pp. 52 and 119; vol. 3, part 5, p. 141.

18. Köppen, *Deviataia reviziia*, p. 62.

At the time of the eighth *reviziia*, many privately owned mines had free workers (*nepremennye* or *urochnye rabotniki*) attached to them. In an attempt to deceive the government, some mine owners registered these workers as serfs. This fraud was only discovered many years later, and, in the legislation governing the ninth *reviziia*, mine owners were threatened with a fine of one hundred silver rubles for each soul thus misregistered. As a result, in Perm' guberniia, 53,900 males registered as serfs in the eighth *reviziia* were reclassified as state peasants in 1851.¹⁹

The estates of serf owners who were found guilty of crimes were subject to confiscation by the state, and a significant number of estates were seized for this reason. In 1839, for example, an undetermined number of nobles living in the western guberniias were convicted of conspiring against the state. Their estates, which included 4,794 souls, were seized, and the serfs became state peasants.²⁰ A much more significant instance of confiscation, however, occurred slightly earlier and requires some explanation.

On May 6, 1831, the government ordered the sequestration of the Belorussian and Little Russian estates of nobles who had participated in the Polish rebellion. Shortly thereafter, a special administrative body was set up to manage the estates, and the serfs living on the estates were declared state peasants. Confiscations were not limited to the immediate postrebellion period, however. In 1837, the government ruled that participants in the rebellion were to be disposed of any serfs later inherited, and restrictions designed to prevent disinheritance as a means of avoiding confiscation were placed on the ascendants of the would-be heirs. Only in 1859 did the government refuse to accept new cases of confiscation, and in 1862 all cases still pending were dropped.²¹ Neither the total number of serfs so seized nor, more important for our purposes, the number taken between the eighth and tenth *revizii* are known. But it is possible to make a conservative estimate based on the available data. Between 1831 and 1836, in Kiev and Podol'ia guberniias 80,543 males were seized; from 1831 to 1838, in seven other western guberniias 110,870 peasants on 315 estates were confiscated.²² For one guberniia, Minsk, it is known that of the total seizures between 1831 and 1857, 27.5 percent occurred after 1838.²³ Because legislation on this matter was uniform throughout the region involved, application of the same proportion to all nine guberniias would indicate that approximately 264,000 serfs were seized, roughly 72,500 of whom became state peasants after 1838. Although this procedure underestimates the total number of souls confiscated between the eighth and tenth *revizii* because it does not take into account those peasants taken by the state between 1836 and 1838, it does provide minimum approximation.

19. Ryndziunskii, "Vymiralo li krepostnoe krest'ianstvo," p. 66.

20. *PSZ II*, vol. 13, no. 11,572 (September 30, 1838); vol. 14, no. 12,964 (December 11, 1839).

21. *PSZ II*, vol. 6, no. 4,535 (May 6, 1831), no. 4,711 (July 17, 1831); vol. 12, no. 10,208 (May 4, 1837); vol. 34, no. 34,881 (September 8, 1859); vol. 37, no. 39,009 (December 6, 1862).

22. *PSZ II*, vol. 11, no. 9,053 (April 4, 1836); *Istoricheskoe obozrenie piatidesiatiletnei deiatel'nosti Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv, 1837-1887*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1888), part 2, p. 80.

23. Zelenskii, *Materialy: Minskaiia guberniia*, pp. 632-33.

Purchase by the state of nobles' estates with serfs attached was another means of manumission. When the Ministry of State Domains was established in 1838, it was given the right to buy serf estates under special conditions. In 1847, a new law compelled the ministry to bid for all Great Russian estates which came up for public auction. Altogether, from 1838 to 1855, 178 estates were bought. In 1855, the statute was changed, and thereafter mostly small estates were acquired.²⁴ In 1842, the ministry also began to buy *odnodvorcheskie krest'iane* (serfs of single homesteaders), who were among the poorest peasants in the empire. Up to the time of the tenth *reviziia*, almost eight thousand serfs became state peasants in this way and were resettled on state lands.²⁵ Finally, in 1845, the State Horse Breeding Administration in Voronezh guberniia bought the estate of Count Orlov and converted its serfs into state peasants.²⁶

Besides the state, the crown (*udel*) made some sizable purchases of serf estates, mainly to provide its own peasants with additional land. Between 1831 and 1860, the crown purchased fifty-two estates totaling more than four hundred thousand *desiatiny* (1.1 million acres) of settled land, about 95 percent of which was bought in the 1840s. Almost all of this land was in the provinces of Simbirsk or Orel. The number of serfs living on the estates is unknown, but in 1851, Simbirsk guberniia, which was less densely settled than Orel, had approximately one male per eight *desiatiny* of land. If it is assumed that the population density of the serf estates acquired by the crown was half of the norm—or sixteen *desiatiny* per male in the 1840s—then approximately twenty-five thousand males were purchased.²⁷ This figure, of course, is little more than a guess, although local archives probably contain exact information.

Thus, from sources not derived from the *revizii* (table 4, column 3), between the eighth and tenth *revizii* 343,575 male serfs changed their legal status. Seventy-two percent of this figure (for ten of the twelve categories) is derived from exact data, and the remainder (for two categories) is based on estimations. But how many of these males and their male descendants were present at the time of the tenth *reviziia*? If we assume that manumissions were equally distributed throughout the period, and, more important, that these former serfs had a natural growth rate equal to that of the population as a whole, then an additional 22,800 males should be added to the total. This adjustment is not very significant, since it yields only 6.6 percent in the total figure for column 3. The validity of these assumptions will be discussed later.

The data in column 4 of table 4, because they date from the time of the tenth *reviziia*, pose no problem as to the effects of natural growth after manumission. Other, more complex, problems are encountered, however.

24. "Obozrenie deiatel'nosti Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv," *Sel'skoe khoziaistvo i lesovodstvo*, 95, no. 4-6 (1867): 37; *Ocherk piatidesiatiletnei deiatel'nosti Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv, 1837-1887* (St. Petersburg, 1887), pp. 37 and 83.

25. *Ocherk piatidesiatiletnei deiatel'nosti*, p. 36; "Vedomost'," *ZhMVD*, 1853, no. 3-4, p. 64; "Vedomost'," *ZhMVD*, 1860, no. 3-4, p. 4. See also the annual reports of the Ministry of State Domains, published in its *Zhurnal Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv* (hereafter cited as *ZhMGI*).

26. V. Mikhalevich, *Materialy: Voronezhskaia guberniia*, p. 171.

27. *Istoriia udelov za stoletie ikh sushchestvovaniia, 1797-1897*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1901-2), 1:201-4, 2:119; Lipinskii, *Materialy: Simbirskaia guberniia*, pp. 307 and 339; Köppen, *Deviataia reviziia*, p. 126; P. Semenov, ed., *Geograficheskoe-statisticheskii slovar' Rossiiskoi imperii*, 5 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1863-85), 3:693-97, 4:587-94.

If a serf had the misfortune of being recruited into the regular army or navy, it is doubtful that he was consoled by the fact that he was no longer a serf.²⁸ But recruitment was the prime factor responsible for the negative net growth rate of the serf population.

In 1858, at the time of the tenth *reviziia*, there were 979,113 men in the lower ranks of the regular army and navy.²⁹ But how many of these soldiers and sailors were of serf origin postdating the eighth *reviziia*? The length of military service was twenty-two years for the guards regiments and twenty-five years for the army and navy. Thus the number of men present in active and reserve units in 1858 who were conscripted prior to the eighth *reviziia* can be considered negligible. But to determine the legal composition of the lower ranks requires some discussion.

How heavily did the recruitment process fall upon the serf population? Between 1836 and 1858, according to figures published by the general staff, 2,442,153 men entered the military, 81 percent of whom came as the result of general recruitment. The remainder came from groups subject to special recruit levies—*kan-tonisty*, Western *odnodvortsy*, military settlers, *Malorossiiskie* Cossacks, Jews, and Poles—and from volunteers.³⁰ We shall assume that none of these were serfs, although a very small proportion actually were. Within the rest of the population, many persons of free status were exempt from military service. In fact, the list of privileged legal categories is three pages long. No serfs enjoyed such exemptions, however. The pool from which general recruits were drawn was therefore considerably smaller than the total population, yet it included all the serfs.

One Soviet military historian, L. G. Beskrovnyi, has estimated that approximately 20 percent of the male population was exempt from military service.³¹ Actually, data from the general staff suggest that this figure should be slightly higher. Of the number of males entering the military through the process of general recruitment in 1868–70, 49 percent was of serf origin.³² Levies in these years were based upon the tenth *reviziia* of 1858, when serfs made up 37.3 percent of the total male population. By simple proportion, it would seem that almost 24 percent of the male population was exempt from the military. Assuming the same was true for the eighth *reviziia*, which governed recruitment levies for 1836–51, serfs would comprise 56.5 percent of the general recruits and 45.7 percent of all inducted men. For recruitments in the years 1851–58, based on the

28. *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, 15 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1832, 1842, 1857 [3 editions]). (Since we used three editions of the law code, hereafter we will cite this as *Svod zakonov* with the edition in which the articles referred to appear enclosed in parentheses following the article number.) The reference here is to *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, *Zakony o sostoianiiakh*, article 706 (1833), art. 1,087 (1842), art. 1,200 (1857).

29. L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke* (Moscow, 1973), p. 546; *Vsepoddanneishie otchety o deistviiakh Voennago ministerstva za 1858–1914*, 57 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1861–1917). (This was an annual publication, with the year treated given in the title. Hereafter it will be cited as *Vsepoddanneishie otchety za* and the appropriate year.) The reference here is to *Vsepoddanneishie otchety za 1858*, p. 1.

30. D. A. Skalon, ed., *Stoletie Voennago ministerstva, 1802–1902*, vol. 4, part 2, book 1, section 2 (St. Petersburg, 1907), pp. 80–151; Bogdanovich et al., *Istoricheskii ocherk deiatel'nosti voennago upravleniia v Rossii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1879), appendixes 11 and 14.

31. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot*, p. 70.

32. *Vsepoddanneishie otchety za 1868*, p. 255; *Vsepoddanneishie otchety za 1869*, p. 218; *Vsepoddanneishie otchety za 1870*, p. 194.

ninth *reviziia*, serfs would constitute 51 percent of general recruits and 41.3 percent of the military. Thus, for the entire period 1836–58, 44.3 percent of the regular army and navy consisted of former serfs. This means that at the time of the tenth *reviziia*, there were 433,750 soldiers and sailors in the lower ranks of the army or navy who had received their freedom after 1836 as a result of general recruitment.

This figure is far from complete, however, because some men freed by recruitment were no longer in the army in 1858. Several thousand draftees were assigned to nonmilitary service—railway militia, gendarmerie, and customs guards. Each year between two thousand and five thousand men deserted, and undoubtedly many of them succeeded in finding their way into the free population. Finally, although the length of service assures that most retired soldiers present in 1858 had entered the lower ranks prior to the eighth *reviziia*, some men were prematurely retired because they were no longer fit for service. How many of the 487,924 retired soldiers³³ recorded in the tenth *reviziia* were prematurely retired is not known, but the number certainly must have been substantial owing to the injuries and illnesses sustained during the Crimean War. In 1856, the only year for which figures are available, 68,812 men retired, 10,239 of whom were released before fulfilling the obligatory term.³⁴

After a man entered the lower ranks of the military, any male children he fathered—either legitimately or illegitimately—while in service or retirement became *kantonisty* and came under the authority of the Military Orphan Department.³⁵ If a *kantonist* was fit, he was obliged to enter the army at the age of twenty. *Kantonisty* born to fathers of serf origin would have been serfs if their fathers had not been drafted, and they were an important factor contributing to the decline in the serf population.

In August 1856, the tsar abolished military obligations for virtually all *kantonisty*. As a result, 378,000 were released, and a smaller number—11,350—were retained, and they eventually entered the army. In all, at least 389,350 *kantonisty* were present in 1856.³⁶

Only active, reserve, or retired soldiers could father *kantonisty*. Assuming these men were equally fertile, regardless of legal origins, the legal composition of the *kantonisty* would be identical to that of the lower ranks as a whole. Therefore, 44.3 percent of the *kantonisty* was of serf origin. Of these, however, many had fathers who had been recruited prior to the eighth *reviziia*, and consequently they are not relevant to this study.

At the end of 1835, 974,210 active, reserve, and retired men were included in the lower ranks of the military.³⁷ From 1836 to 1856, a total of 2,409,945 men

33. The figure includes their free sons.

34. Bogdanovich et al., *Istoricheskii ocherk*, appendix 15; see also Skalon, *Stoletie*, pp. 80–151.

35. The children of legally settled retired soldiers were free. In 1851, only 13 percent of all retired soldiers were in this category ("Vedomost'," *ZhMVD*, 1853, no. 11–12, pp. 70 and 73).

36. *PSZ* II, vol. 31, no. 30,877 (August 26, 1856); Bogdanovich et al., *Istoricheskii ocherk*, pp. 203–4 and appendix 14; Skalon, *Stoletie*, pp. 300 and 327.

37. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot*, p. 16; "Svedenie," *ZhMVD*, 1837, no. 25, pp. xcii, xciv; Skalon, *Stoletie*, p. 76. The figure for the military at the end of 1835 does not include the navy. But even if the navy were as large as one hundred thousand men, as it was on the eve of the Crimean War, this would have only a minimal effect on the results presented here.

became soldiers and sailors. Any of these 3,384,155 men could have produced a *kantonist* who was present in 1856. Since there are no data dividing *kantonisty* according to when their fathers were recruited, we shall proceed from the assumption that, since the 2.4 million post-1835 inductees comprised 71 percent of the potential fathers, they produced 71 percent of the *kantonisty*. Given the higher rate of fertility among younger males, the high rate of mortality in the army, and the high rate of infant and child mortality prevalent at the time, this procedure actually underestimates the number of *kantonisty* born to males recruited after 1835. Nevertheless, we estimate that 122,500 *kantonisty* whose serf fathers had been recruited after the eighth *reviziia* were present in 1856. Without recruitment, all of these *kantonisty* would have been serfs rather than part of the nonserf population.

This figure is incomplete, however. *Kantonisty* found unfit for military service had the right to register in the *meshchanstvo*, the legal estate which encompassed the lower groups of the urban population, and those who did so are lost from observation. Many peasants who did not want their sons to be registered as *kantonisty* practiced concealment and deception. An 1838 law describes how soldiers' wives "before giving birth, frequently leave their place of residence and return with newborn children, which they claim they have adopted or found abandoned . . . sometimes . . . they send their newborn sons to be brought up under other names in different villages or even different guberniias."³⁸ Fines of 25 rubles per month were levied for concealing a *kantonist*, and in five guberniias, over 340,000 rubles were owed as a result, although little was actually collected.³⁹ In 1833, on the estates of the Shepelev family alone, 404 concealed *kantonisty* were discovered.⁴⁰ In addition, in 1828, a retired soldier who had been wounded in service received the right to have one of his sons released from *kantonist* status and all its attendant military obligations. Later, this privilege was extended to sick and infirm retired soldiers, to soldiers' widows, and to retired soldiers who settled permanently in a city or farmed non-*pomeshchik* land.⁴¹ By the 1850s, more than 500 *kantonisty* were being released in this way each year.⁴² It should also be noted that the figure of 389,350 *kantonisty* present in August 1856 excludes all those born from that date to the time of the tenth *reviziia*, which was taken a year or two later depending on the locality. Assuming a traditional age structure, this could be a very significant number, although at present it is impossible to estimate.

Finally, a serf who was convicted of a crime and sentenced to exile in Siberia, despite his harsh sentence or penal servitude, became a free man, technically speaking, for upon arrival at his destination he was listed among the free population. Available data show that approximately six thousand males—43 percent of whom were serfs—were annually exiled to Siberia. This figure corresponds

38. *PSZ II*, vol. 13, no. 11,745 (November 14, 1838).

39. Skalon, *Stoletie*, pp. 312–13.

40. *PSZ II*, vol. 8, no. 6,323 (July 15, 1833). See also the annual *Otchet Ministerstva iustitsii*, 35 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1834–68) (hereafter cited as *Otchet MIu*).

41. *PSZ II*, vol. 3, no. 2,489 (December 6, 1828); vol. 11, no. 9,761 (December 6, 1836); vol. 17, no. 15,492 (April 10, 1842).

42. Skalon, *Stoletie*, pp. 295–302.

closely to their general proportion in the total population.⁴³ Because we have been unable to determine the number of male exiles present in Siberia in 1858, we shall use ninth *reviziia* data from 1851 even though these figures are low. In 1851, the five Siberian provinces held 140,000 male exiles, presumably 60,000 of whom were of serf origin.⁴⁴

Thus, it is clear from table 4 that almost one million males, either serfs or potential serfs, were released from servile status between the eighth and tenth *revizii*. Yet table 4 is far from complete. Within the fifteen forms of manumission included in the table, a large but unascertainable number of male serfs have certainly escaped our purview. More important, however, table 4 omits entirely many ways by which a serf could acquire the status of a nonserf. Because of the tax principles which governed the *revizii*, only scattered information was available for these other forms of manumission. Although a manumitted serf occasionally fell into a separate legal category based upon his tax privileges, more often he took up a legal or tax status which made him indistinguishable from the rest of the nonservile population. We shall now turn to these instances of manumission, for it is certain that very significant numbers of serfs were involved.

Although a lord could free his serfs with land only on the basis of the laws of 1803, 1842, and 1847, it was a very simple matter for him to emancipate a serf without giving him land. Until 1861, the law required only that acts of manumission which occurred during the lord's lifetime be registered with the appropriate civil authorities or that testamentary wills bequeathing freedom to the serfs be in proper legal order.⁴⁵ It is difficult to get an idea as to how frequently serfs were freed without land. Undoubtedly, the fact that the lord was responsible for the poll-tax obligations of the ex-serf until the next *reviziia* was a considerable drawback. But the law permitted the lord to set his own terms for freedom, and many private contracts of manumission required that the freed serf pay his own taxes.⁴⁶

Regardless of the specific circumstances of manumission without land, many peasants were freed in this manner. Instances were frequent enough to cause errors in handling the necessary documents to come to the attention of the senate. In 1843, the minister of justice noted that guberniia-level civil courts "extremely often" handed over certificates of freedom to the lords, instead of to the former serfs as was required.⁴⁷

43. E. N. Anuchin, "Izsledovaniia o protsente soslannykh v Sibir' v period 1827-1846 g.," *Zapiski IRGO*, 3 (1873): 71; N. M. Iadrintsev, "Statisticheskie materialy k istorii ssylki v Sibir'," *Zapiski IRGO*, 6 (1889): 346-47.

44. Given the large sex imbalance in the exiled population, the fact that few families accompanied convicts to Siberia, and the assumption that life expectancy at the average age of exile was less than twenty-two years, it is safe to conclude that only a negligible number of exiles of serf origin present in Siberia in 1858 had been sent there prior to the eighth *reviziia*.

45. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, arts. 674-80 (1833), arts. 1,148-84 (1857).

46. *PSZ I*, vol. 20, no. 14,294 (April 6, 1775); V. I. Semevskii, *Krest'iane v tsarstvovanie Imperatritsy Ekateriny II*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1903), pp. 389-90; Blum, *Lord and Peasant*, p. 474.

47. *PSZ II*, vol. 18, no. 16,849 (May 13, 1843).

In 1844, two new laws made it even more advantageous for a lord to free his household serfs (*dvorovye liudi*). One statute was not only flexible regarding the conditions upon which these serfs might receive freedom, but it relieved the lord from further responsibility for the payment of the poll tax or other dues. The ex-serf himself was also exempt from taxation and military recruitment until the next *reviziia*, unless he inscribed in the *meshchanstvo* to become a tradesman, in which case his tax exemptions were limited to six years. The second law made it easier—and in some cases financially worthwhile—for a lord to free some of his *dvorovye liudi* if his estate were mortgaged to certain public credit institutions.⁴⁸

Almost all serfs manumitted without land by their lords (*otpushchennye na voliu*) had the right to become *meshchane*. But those who were not freed on the basis of the 1844 *ukazy* were tax exempt only for two years.⁴⁹ According to Köppen, in 1851, almost eleven thousand *meshchane* in twelve guberniias were voluntarily manumitted serfs, enjoying temporary privileges.⁵⁰ But Köppen has no figures for other guberniias, for serfs who did not become *meshchane*, for those who had already exhausted their exemptions, or for the years after 1851.

From supplementary sources for other guberniias or for different years, it is clear that the data on voluntary manumission presented by Köppen are incomplete. In Ardatovskii *uezd* (in Simbirsk guberniia), 393 serfs were freed without land by their lords in the years between the eighth and ninth *revizii*.⁵¹ In the guberniia as a whole, at the time of the ninth *reviziia*, 124 males under the age of twenty-five who had been born to manumitted women had inscribed in the *meshchanstvo*.⁵² For Romanovo-Borisoglebskii *uezd* (in Iaroslavl' guberniia), 54 males and 178 females were emancipated during the last six months of 1852.⁵³ Voluntarily manumitted serfs were present in Kaluga and Minsk guberniias as well.⁵⁴ A study of the serfs of Riazan' guberniia (also not included in Köppen's figures) cites fifty-two cases of *dvorovye liudi* being granted freedom in the nineteenth century. This is not an exhaustive list, however, because the author was interested in examining the reasons for such voluntary manumissions, not the total number.⁵⁵ A similar study on Saratov guberniia reveals that during the 1850s almost seventy lords liberated serfs without land. However, many of these cases probably took place at the very end of the decade, after the tenth *reviziia*,

48. *Ibid.*, vol. 19, no. 17,977 (June 12, 1844), no. 17,985 (June 12, 1844). See also vol. 9, no. 9,637 (October 23, 1836).

49. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 5: *Ustavy o podatiakh*, art. 485 (1857); *PSZ* II, vol. 7, no. 5,842 (December 22, 1832).

50. Köppen, *Deviataia reviziia*, pp. 6, 7, 21, 62, 88, 95, 100, 127, 142, 144, 152, 159; see also p. 103 and Baranovich, *Materialy: Riazanskaia guberniia*, p. 144.

51. Trubnikov, "Rezultaty," p. 360.

52. Lipinskii, *Materialy: Simbirskaia guberniia*, p. 264.

53. "Romanovo-Borisoglebskii uezd, Iaroslavskoi gubernii," *ZhMVD*, 1853, no. 7–8, p. 8.

54. In 1857, there were 1,961 male serfs in Kaluga guberniia who had been freely manumitted or ruled free by a court (M. Poprotskii, *Materialy: Kaluzhskaia guberniia*, part 1, p. 284). Between 1855 and 1859, 709 serfs in Minsk guberniia were similarly freed (Zelenskii, *Materialy: Minskaia guberniia*, pp. 528–29); see also A. Korev, *Materialy: Vilenskaia guberniia*, p. 351.

55. A. Povalishin, *Riazanskie pomeshchiki i ikh krepostnye* (Riazan', 1903), pp. 159–74.

because in the autumn of 1857 the government announced its intentions to emancipate all serfs in the near future.⁵⁶

Aside from voluntary manumission, a serf could be released from servitude on legal grounds. The instances when this was possible are surprisingly many, although few figures are available in regard to the number of people emancipated in this manner.⁵⁷ The law was quite complex and extraordinarily detailed, but essentially a person was released if any of the following conditions were met:

1. If he could prove in court that he was of free origin or that he had been illegally bonded. Clergy, *odnodvortsy*, and retired soldiers could not be enserfed, and their descendants frequently brought suit on this basis. Illegal bonding involved being registered to a person who did not have the right to own serfs, being improperly sold, especially apart from one's family, or being otherwise illegally inscribed.
2. If he or the estate to which he was registered reverted by escheat to the state or was seized for lack of eligible heirs.
3. If a serf, now married, had fled with his parents or grandparents when he was under the age of fourteen or if he was born after flight. If a widow or girl in flight married a free man. Or if a serf fled to Novorossiia, Bessarabia, the lands of the Don Cossacks, or the Transcaucasus, and temporary laws exempted serfs from being returned to their lords.
4. If the recovery of state debts involved an insolvent lord who had no other property besides *dvorovye liudi* and landless peasants.
5. If, after 1841, a landless noble bought, inherited, or otherwise acquired *dvorovye liudi* or landless peasants, or if a landed noble failed to inscribe such newly acquired serfs to an estate.
6. If a lord sold or mortgaged his land separately from his serfs, leaving them with less than 4.5 *desiatiny* (12.2 acres) per soul for more than one year.
7. If a serf, while still a minor, accompanied his father who, by the process of general recruitment in 1840, had been taken from Voronezh, Kharkov, or Stavropol' guberniias or the lands of the Don Cossacks to the Transcaucasus.
8. If a serf owner was found to be abroad illegally, or if a state official was convicted of stealing state property, exchanging counterfeit notes, embezzling state funds, or other similar crimes. The owner's property then was partially or wholly confiscated.
9. If the wife of a serf who was convicted of a crime did not wish to follow her husband into exile, or if her husband was taken into the army, and she did not want to follow.

56. N. F. Khovanskii, "Pomeshchiki i krest'iane Saratovskoi gubernii," *Materialy po krepostnomu pravu: Saratovskaia guberniia* (Saratov, 1911), p. 158; see also pp. 60 and 75.

57. Recruitment, exile, purchase, and some confiscations—all belonging to this group—have already been discussed (see *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, arts. 1,200, 1,202–4, 1,205[2] and [6] [1857]).

10. If a serf had the right to commute his military obligations by a money payment to the state, after 1854, upon agreement with his lord, the same payment could be used to purchase freedom for himself and his family.
11. If a serf whose lord was a non-Christian converted to Orthodoxy.
12. If a serf was captured in war and taken abroad. Upon his return, he and his family were freed.
13. If a serf denounced his lord for treason or plotting against the life of the tsar, and the lord was found guilty.⁵⁸

Of course, some of these laws had little or no effect on the negative net growth rate of the serf population. But, as regards the first three conditions, the few figures available suggest that these forms of emancipation were rather significant.

It should come as no surprise that lords were guilty of widespread abuses involving the registration and sale of serfs. What is unexpected is the number of serfs who demanded their freedom and brought court suits against such lords. Between 1835 and 1858, the senate heard no less than 15,153 cases involving unlawful enserfment or illegal bonding, and guberniia courts handled over 20,000 suits.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, there is no record of how many similar cases came before *uezd* courts, the judicial authority of first instance in this matter.

Serfs awarded their freedom by a court (*otsuzhdennye*) enjoyed a five-year period of tax-exempt status.⁶⁰ According to Köppen, in 1851, 811 persons in twelve guberniias were in this position.⁶¹ But, as usual, the figures are incomplete. For Tambov guberniia, not included in Köppen's data, a partial index of the guberniia archive published in 1906 shows that 123 cases of this type were appealed to the senate. Although virtually all the cases appealed date from the nineteenth century, it is not known how many serfs or serf families actually gained their freedom as a result of their suits.⁶² The only indication of how successful serfs were in court is found for Saratov guberniia. Here again the list of cases is not exhaustive, but of 31 suits brought by serfs between 1800 and 1840, which claimed previous registration to persons who did not have the right to ownership, all but one were successful.⁶³ As a result, approximately one hundred twenty persons were freed. And of the cases against nobles, 26 out of 39 suits were decided in favor of the serfs, liberating at least ninety persons.⁶⁴

58. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, art. 957 V (1842), arts. 544, 1,040, 1,042(4), 1,078, 1,107, 1,185-97, 1,199, 1,201, and 1,205 (1857); *PSZ I*, vol. 30, no. 23,806 (August 24, 1809); *PSZ II*, vol. 2, no. 906 (February 15, 1827), no. 1,444 (October 5, 1827); vol. 3, no. 1,696 (January 10, 1828), no. 2,052 (May 24, 1828), no. 2,245 (August 20, 1828), no. 2,378 (October 25, 1828); vol. 7, no. 5,425 (June 9, 1832); vol. 8, no. 6,163 (May 2, 1833); vol. 10, no. 7,982 (March 20, 1835); vol. 11, no. 9,203 (May 21, 1836); vol. 16, no. 14,152 (January 2, 1841); vol. 23, no. 21,929 (January 26, 1848); vol. 24, no. 23,508 (September 20, 1849); vol. 29, no. 28,846 (December 20, 1854).

59. See *Otchet MIu* for the years 1834-58.

60. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, art. 1,193 (1857).

61. Köppen, *Deviataia reviziia*, pp. 7, 21, 62, 88, 95, 100, 103, 127, 142, 149, 152, 156.

62. *Izvestiia Tambovskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, 52 (1906): 1-76.

63. Khovanskii, *Pomeshchiki i krest'iane*, pp. 115-49.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-115.

Finally, the state itself brought a number of lords to court for seizing state lands and illegally claiming the persons registered there as serfs. In the six-year period prior to the establishment of the Ministry of State Domains, 1,940 serfs were awarded to the state. But the new ministry pursued such abuses more vigorously than had the Ministry of Finance, its predecessor in this matter. As a result, from 1837 through 1842, 4,876 serfs were ruled to be state peasants.⁶⁵

In a recent study based on archival materials, A. L. Perkovskii states that between the years 1826 and 1851 over 108,000 male serfs were either voluntarily manumitted by their lords or released from servitude by a court decision. Unfortunately, Perkovskii gives no details as to how he arrived at this number, but his figure at least suggests the dimensions of these two legal paths out of serfdom.⁶⁶

Another important form of emancipation for which almost no information is available concerns serfs who reverted to the state because their deceased lord lacked any heirs. As there was no demesne on state lands, when an estate escheated *dvorovye liudi* were allowed to enroll in the *meshchanstvo* with certain tax privileges.⁶⁷ All the serfs who worked the land, however, simply became state peasants, and they have left little trace. A similar situation arose when a lord left heirs who did not have the right to own serfs. Such estates were seized and the heirs compensated at a statutory rate per soul.⁶⁸ What is of great significance for our purposes is the probability that such seizures and escheats became more frequent during the last twenty years of serfdom. The law of 1841 prohibited landless nobles from inheriting landless serfs. As a result, by 1857–58 there were only 3,633 landless serf owners with 12,045 serfs, even though at the time of the eighth *reviziia* there had been 17,763 owners with over 62,000 souls. Undoubtedly, many of the serfs were sold to landed nobles, but some must have either been taken over by the state or manumitted without land.⁶⁹ Just as important in this regard was an 1845 statute which made it more difficult to become a hereditary noble. Since serf ownership was almost exclusively restricted to persons of this status, in all likelihood the new law reduced the number of nobles eligible to inherit serf estates.⁷⁰

According to the Ministry of the Interior, at the time of the eighth *reviziia*, there were 1,242 male and 1,455 female serfs in the escheat process awaiting final disposition.⁷¹ For the ninth *reviziia*, Köppen found 1,727 males in two guberniias in a similar position, but it seems unlikely that either of these figures is complete, unless the escheat was concluded very quickly.⁷² Between 1835 and 1858, the senate heard 1,818 cases on escheated estates, and the guberniia courts heard 1,431 cases. How many of these cases involved estates with serfs is not known.⁷³

65. "Iz vlechenie iz otcheta Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv," *ZhMGI*, 9 (1843), part 1, *Vedomost'* no. 8.

66. Perkovskii, "Krizis demograficheskogo vosproizvodstva," p. 189.

67. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, arts. 462–63 (1857).

68. *PSZ* II, vol. 11, no. 9,203 (May 21, 1836); vol. 14, no. 13,012 (December 20, 1839).

69. Troinitskii, *Krepostnoe naselenie*, p. 67. See also A. Shebunin, "K istorii bor'by po voprosu o prodazhe krest'ian bez zemli," *Arkhiv istorii truda v Rossii*, 10 vols. (Petrograd, 1921–23), 6–7:110–29, 8:104–20.

70. *PSZ* II, vol. 20, no. 19,086 (June 11, 1845).

71. "Svedenie," *ZhMVD*, 1837, no. 25, p. 3.

72. Köppen, *Deviataya reviziia*, pp. 113 and 138.

73. See *Otchet MIn* for the years 1834–58, except 1850.

In spite of all the legal paths out of serfdom, for the vast majority of serfs flight was the only recourse. At times they fled in extraordinary numbers, rarely to return.⁷⁴ Like deserters from the army, many simply evaded the authorities. Others, however, found it relatively easy to register as nonserfs in cities, towns, or state villages.⁷⁵ Moreover, serfs who fled to regions which the government was eager to settle were often permitted to remain there as free men. The government occasionally compensated lords for these serfs, although the available figures account for only an insignificant portion of the total number.⁷⁶

Of the remaining categories providing for the legal release of serfs, we were able to discover only a few isolated examples not worthy of note, but which may not at all reflect the number of serfs involved.⁷⁷

Having discussed those instances of serf manumission known to us, three questions remain: Was there any movement in the opposite direction—enserfment—which must be taken into consideration? Is there any evidence to suggest that the serf population did experience a lower rate of natural growth than other social groups? And, finally, if the legal transfer of serfs into free categories accounted for virtually all of the proportional decline in the serf population, why did population growth for the empire as a whole slow down in the years following the eighth *revizii*?

The first question is relatively easy to answer. During the reign of Catherine the Great, the legal means for enserfing free persons were severely restricted. An important exception in terms of numbers involved—the granting of settled state lands to private individuals—was discontinued by Alexander I in 1801.⁷⁸ By 1833, on the eve of the eighth *revizii*, the law was explicit: “No person of free status, of whatever sex, race or religion, and on whatever lands he has settled, can be enserfed or bonded to someone, even if he himself agrees to it of his own free will; all such contracts, agreements, obligations or title deeds must be recognized null and void.”⁷⁹ The only exception was for foundlings and vagabond children raised by persons having the right to own serfs.⁸⁰

The other two questions are more difficult to resolve. What does seem clear, however, is that the cholera epidemic which swept Russia in 1847–48 caused a disproportionately large number of serf deaths, although the reasons for this were geographic not economic. Official estimates, for whatever they are worth, put the number of cholera deaths for the two-year period at almost seven hundred eighty-

74. E. Kots, “Pobegi pomeshchich'ikh krest'ian v Nikolaevskuiu epokhu,” *Arkhiv istorii truda v Rossii*, 5:3–29; N. P. Semenov, *Osvobozhdenie krest'ian v tsarstvovanie Imperatora Alexandra II*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1892), part 2, pp. 392–93; Povalishin, *Riazanskie pomeshchiki*, pp. 292–300; Khovanskii, *Pomeshchiki i krest'iane*, pp. 149–57. See also any of the 25 volumes produced by the Glavnyi General'nyi Shtab (*Materialy*) cited in note 3.

75. *PSZ* II, vol. 14, no. 12,362 (May 19, 1839).

76. Kots, “Pobegi,” p. 23.

77. Many of the statutes first establishing these forms of manumission were actually extensions of specific rulings by the senate (see Blum, *Lord and Peasant*, p. 292).

78. Semevskii, *Krest'iane*, pp. 10–15.

79. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, art. 546 (1833).

80. *Svod zakonov*, vol. 9, arts. 543, 560 (1833). See also arts. 550–59 (1833), and *PSZ* I, vol. 21, no. 15,198 (July 28, 1781).

five thousand for both sexes.⁸¹ But not all regions of the empire were equally affected by the epidemic. Although cholera deaths were reported in every province of European Russia, there were relatively few deaths in the thirteen guberniias which comprised the entire northern tier (with the exception of St. Petersburg). In these thirteen provinces, with a male population of over five and one-quarter million, serfs constituted only 18.7 percent of the population, less than half the national average. In Siberia, with approximately one million persons and virtually no serfs, the population escaped the epidemic almost entirely. But all the other thirty-seven provinces of European Russia had from five thousand to fifty thousand cholera deaths each, according to official figures.⁸² Here serfs made up 45.5 percent of the total population at the time of the ninth *reviziia* just two years later. Unfortunately, the mathematical significance of the cholera epidemic in the proportional decline of the serf population is impossible to determine.⁸³

The cholera epidemic raises an important question concerning the usefulness of the *revizii*. Whereas the first six *revizii* were conducted at more or less regular intervals and, more important, at random points in time, the last four *revizii*, usually considered the most reliable, were all taken immediately after sudden and sharp demographic changes which had adversely affected population growth.

The *ukazy* which ordered the seventh *reviziia* in 1815 and the tenth *reviziia* in 1856 explicitly stated that new tax censuses were required in order to take into consideration the demographic effects of the Napoleonic and Crimean wars.⁸⁴ In regard to natural population growth, these wars had a dual effect: a rise in the death rate as a result of casualties and disease, and—probably of much greater significance—a decline in fertility caused by recruitment. During the period 1854–56, over six hundred seventy-five thousand males, the overwhelming majority in their early twenties, were recruited into the army. This is three times higher than the average annual recruitment levy for the years 1840–53.⁸⁵ Given a traditional age structure, the birth rate could have fallen by as much as half during the Crimean War years. If a boom then followed, most of it would have occurred after the tenth *reviziia*.

Both the eighth (1833–36) and the ninth (1850–51) *revizii* were preceded by cholera epidemics and crop failures. Little is known about the demographic dimensions of these disasters, although it seems the cholera pandemic of 1847–48 resulted in three or four times the number of deaths than that of 1830–32.⁸⁶

81. "Obozrenie khoda i deistvii kholernoii epidemii v Rossii v 1847 godu," *ZhMVD*, 1848, no. 9, p. 476; and "Obozrenie khoda i deistvii kholernoii epidemii v Rossii v techenie 1848 goda," *ibid.*, 1849, no. 9, p. 319.

82. "Obozrenie . . . 1847," pp. 476–82; "Obozrenie . . . 1848," pp. 319–28.

83. Kabuzan, *Izmeneniia v razmeshchenii naseleniia*, pp. 155–66. Our attempt to calculate this on the basis of the figures published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs revealed that serfs accounted for 43 percent of the cholera deaths, while on the eve of the epidemic they comprised roughly 39 percent of the total population. This would mean that disproportionately thirty thousand more serfs of both sexes died. There was no way, however, to test the validity of the original data, although urban deaths were probably reported better or more accurately than rural deaths.

84. *PSZ* I, vol. 33, no. 25,882 (June 20, 1815); *PSZ* II, vol. 31, no. 30,877 (August 26, 1856).

85. Bogdanovich et al., *Istoricheskii ocherk*, appendixes 11 and 14; Skalon, *Stoletie*, p. 209.

86. R. E. McGrew, *Russia and the Cholera, 1823–1832* (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), pp. 4–5.

Whether the poor harvests of 1833–34 and 1848–49 gave rise to subsistence crises is unclear. Prices for cereals doubled or tripled almost everywhere, although it should be noted that most grain was produced for consumption not sale. What is important is that the available evidence suggests that the years 1830–34 and 1847–49 witnessed the greatest demographic and economic crises in the first sixty years of nineteenth-century Russia. The government certainly recognized these years as such and enacted a whole series of extraordinary, often unprecedented, laws. Recruitment was interrupted, fines were cancelled for tax arrears and arrears themselves forgiven, customs duties were removed for imported cereals, the dates for filing *revizskie skazki* were changed, the salaries of government officials were temporarily increased because of the sharp rise in bread prices, peasants were permitted to hunt and sell wild fowl, payment of bank debts was postponed, and state-controlled salt prices were reduced.⁸⁷

In sum, using the figures from the last four *revizii* to calculate mean rates of natural growth for the population as a whole necessarily induces errors which distort the results. Therefore, any assertion that the rate of natural population growth declined sharply after the eighth *reviziia* is based, in part, upon such distortions in the data. A post-Napoleonic War population boom would have pushed the figures upward for the period between the seventh and eighth *revizii*. The 1847–49 crisis would have lowered the growth figures for the years between the eighth and ninth *revizii*. And the Crimean War, with its high recruitment levies, certainly reduced population growth between the ninth and tenth *revizii*.

Such sudden changes in population movements are commonly found in traditional societies. What is unique to imperial Russia is that population counts in the nineteenth century were taken immediately after these demographic slumps, and only then. Yet it was certainly a wise decision to undertake a *reviziia* immediately after a crisis. The new census redistributed the tax burden and provided relief to those regions which had suffered the greatest population losses. In addition, by conducting a *reviziia* at a time when the population was at a relative minimum, the government encountered less opposition from taxpayers or their lords.

87. *PSZ* II, vol. 5, no. 3,950 (September 24, 1830), no. 3,990 (October 10, 1830); vol. 6, no. 4,268 (January 17, 1831); vol. 24, no. 23,198 (April 25, 1849), no. 23,463 (August 19, 1849) (recruitment); vol. 6, no. 4,462 (March 30, 1831), no. 4,519 (April 28, 1831); vol. 9, no. 7,599 (December 1, 1834) (fines and arrears); vol. 8, no. 6,411 (September 1, 1833); vol. 9, no. 7,554 (November 19, 1834), no. 7,700 (December 28, 1834) (customs duties); vol. 8, no. 6,416 (September 10, 1833) (*revizskie skazki*). The *reviziia* legislation of June 1833 required that all *skazki* for European Russia be filed by May 1, 1834. After the crop failure in the autumn of 1833, the government delayed the beginning of the *reviziia* in eleven of the most affected provinces until September 1, 1834. But even in the provinces where the *reviziia* was not postponed, some of the effects of the poor harvest were undoubtedly felt prior to the registration of the population. See *ibid.*, vol. 8, no. 6,563 (November 12, 1833) (salaries); vol. 9, no. 6,950 (April 3, 1834) (hunting fowl); vol. 5, no. 3,903 (September 9, 1830), no. 4,051 (October 28, 1830); vol. 6, no. 4,715 (July 21, 1831); vol. 23, no. 22,483 (August 3, 1848); vol. 24, no. 23,182 (April 15, 1849), no. 23,299 (June 7, 1849) (loans); vol. 23, no. 22,912 (January 11, 1849) (salt). See also Arcadius Kahan, "Natural Calamities and their Effect upon Food Supply in Russia (An Introduction to a Catalogue)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 16, no. 3 (September 1968): 358–73.

The distortions, inherent in the later *revizii* as a result of their timing, mask actual changes in population movements, however. Unfortunately, it is impossible to correct the data and to compute more accurate rates. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that the distortions alone account for the entire change in the rates cited in table 2. The rate of natural growth for the population as a whole probably did decline during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century, although not nearly as dramatically as Bunge, Kabuzan, and others believed.

Clearly, this was not a result of the serf population dying out. With the exception of the effects of the cholera epidemic, virtually all the net decline in the serf population was due to changes in legal status. In light of all the paths to freedom which existed, it is certainly plausible that as many as 1.7 million male serfs (or would-be serfs) entered the nonservile population between 1836 and 1858. This would mean that changes in the rate of natural growth among serfs paralleled those for the population as a whole. In any case, the figures we have documented plainly show that the serfs had a positive rate of natural growth during the thirty years preceding the emancipation. In fact, should future archival research reveal that more than 1.7 million male serfs became nonserfs between the eighth and tenth *revizii*, this would indicate that the serfs had a rate of natural growth above the national average.

Because many ex-serfs became state peasants, the figures purporting to show that state peasants had a higher rate of natural growth are incorrect, since they include significant legal movements.⁸⁸ And, although much has been made of the fact that state peasants had larger land allotments and lower quitrents than serfs, the relationship between standard of living and the rate of natural population growth is far from clear.⁸⁹ At present, little can be said on this matter, because virtually nothing is known about age-specific fertility rates, marriage patterns, or mortality in imperial Russia, and how they differed according to region and social class.

The decline in the rate of natural growth for the population as a whole was probably attributable to a decline in fertility, though neither the dates nor actual mechanisms of this change are clear. Because the *revizii* are only touchstones in time, it is impossible to determine precisely when such a downturn began. Certainly the contention of many Soviet scholars that this occurred during the 1830s remains unproven, for on the basis of the information provided by the *revizii*, a change could have begun as much as a decade earlier or later.

In regard to the reasons for a decline in fertility, there is evidence for at least two parishes that the mean age at first marriage rose slightly during the first sixty years of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ Whether this was a widespread

88. Bunge, "Izmeneniia soslovnago sostava," p. 1029; "Sravnenie chisla gosudarstvennykh krest'ian po 8 i 9 reviziiam, v guberniakh evropeiskoi Rossii," *ZhMGI*, 54, no. 1 (1855): 17–27; "Dvizhenie narodonaseleniia gosudarstvennykh krest'ian i drugikh sel'skikh obyvatelei vedomstva Ministerstva gosudarstvennykh imushchestv s 9-i po 10-i revizii," *Materialy dlia statistiki Rossii*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg, 1861), pp. 124–37; Perkovskii, "Krizis demograficheskogo vosproizvodstva," pp. 178–86.

89. D. E. C. Eversley, "Population, Economy and Society," in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds., *Population in History* (London, 1965), pp. 66–67.

90. Il. Mechnikov, "Vozrast vstupleniia v brak," *Vestnik Evropy*, 1874, no. 1, p. 257; Peter Czup, "Marriage and the Peasant Joint Family in the Era of Serfdom," in David L. Ransel, ed., *The Family in Imperial Russia* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1978), pp. 111–12.

phenomenon, possibly tied to a series of statutes between 1830 and 1833 which raised the legal age for marriage, is unknown.⁹¹ In addition, recruitment levies increased substantially during the reign of Nicholas I, and this undoubtedly had an adverse effect on fertility. In 1834, the army established a reserve system whereby soldiers who had served twenty years were given permanent leave and permitted to live with their families; and in 1851, active service was reduced to fifteen years.⁹² To maintain the active army at a constant level, more young men were inducted—partially removing them from the reproductive process—while older men were released.

Thus, the last decades of serfdom were not accompanied by any long-run demographic crisis in the serf population. Rather, the government of Nicholas I, though often seen as rigidly preserving the status quo, in fact adhered to policies which substantially reduced the serf population. While much of this stemmed from military or political considerations, the government was well aware of the effects of recruitment and confiscation. Furthermore, no matter how undergoverned imperial Russia may have been during these years, the bureaucracy acquired a greater hold on society and more vigorously enforced the rule of law, much to the benefit of persons who had been wrongfully enserfed.

In fact, it is possible to detect a concerted effort on the part of the government to constrict the institution of serfdom. Manumission, especially of household serfs or those ascribed to factories, was made easier. Under Alexander I gifts of settled state lands were no longer made to private individuals, and under Nicholas I the government established a systematic—albeit limited—program of acquiring serf estates.

The net result was that serfdom was dying out, but that the serfs were not. It is obvious that the argument of a negative or depressed rate of natural growth among the serf population can no longer be used as evidence for the thesis that Russia underwent a profound crisis during the decades preceding the emancipation.

91. *PSZ* II, vol. 5, no. 3,807 (July 19, 1830), no. 3,981 (October 6, 1830); vol. 6, no. 4,277 (January 30, 1831); vol. 8, no. 6,668 (December 23, 1833).

92. Skalon, *Stoletie*, vol. 4, part 2, book 1, section 3 (St. Petersburg, 1912), pp. 255 and 263. See also *PSZ* II, vol. 9, no. 7,374 (August 30, 1834); vol. 26, no. 25,352 (June 29, 1851); and Perkovskii, "Krizis demograficheskogo vosproizvodstva," pp. 187–88.