A Little-Known Project of Public Modernization of Russian Countryside: The New Generation of Russian Intelligentsia and the New Peasantry, 1907-1917

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If any continuity exists between the Russian countryside at the beginning of the twentieth century and the current rural situation, it is the persistent problem of a modernization strategy. Indeed, after all the radical transformations of the previous century – The Stolypin reforms, the 1917-1921 revolution, the 1929-1932 collectivization, huge investments into agriculture during the Brezhnev era, – the Russian countryside once again, as a century ago, constitutes a world *sui generis*, both economically and culturally isolated from the modernized urban world. It seems that all previous attempts at imposing modernisation strategies "from above" have resulted in failure, whatever the political orientation. In this paper we will discuss a completely different project for Russian agricultural modernisation, advanced during the interrevolutionary decade 1907-1917 by a large group of rural professionals (agronomists, economists, educators). Unlike other modernization campaigns, this project assigned the governmental agencies virtually no decisive role choosing instead to make the educated society (*obshchestvennost'*) of rural specialists the main protagonists in modernization.

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The institutional setting for this efficient public modernization campaign emerged as a result of the abortive revolution of 1905-1907, and the Stolypin agrarian reform. The alleged defeat of the revolution led the Russian intelligentsia to question the traditional world view and its political radicalism and con-

tempt for routine socioeconomic reformatory activity.[1] The profound crisis demoralized the ideological vanguard of educated Russian society, thus allowing the traditionally under-appreciated programs of "small deeds" and economic reformism to acquire a more prominent position among the Russian public.[2] For many members of the intelligentsia, the Stolypin reforms were a victory for reaction as they provoked wide-scale protests in society, but also channeled an unprecedented influx of finance into agricultural reform. These developments took place against a backdrop of growing interest in agriculture among the educated Russian public, reflected in the well-documented dynamics of agriculture-related periodicals.[3]

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1 The anatomy of that crisis is shown in: Marina Mogilner, *Mifologiia "podpol'nogo cheloveka:" radikal'nyi mikrokosm v Rossii nachala XX veka kak predmet semioticheskogo analiza* (Moscow: New Literary Review, 1999).

2 In the words of a contemporary Russian historian, "'The small deeds theory' of Ia.V. Abramov, which substantiated the necessity of cultural work in zemstvos, significantly changed the ideological orientation of Populism. The idea of an apolitical 'going to the people' was central in the selecting of its forms, ways, and character, and it was realistic." See V.V. Zverev, "Marksizm i genezis neonarodnichestva: Po materialam perepiski V.M. Chernova s N.F. Danielsonom v kontse 90-h godov XIX v.," in N.V. Samover, ed., *Rossiia i reformy: Sbornik statei,* Vyp. 4 (Moscow, 1997), pp. 123-124. Ia.V. Abramov was one of the original ideologists of the "small deeds," see his *Chto sdelalo zemstvo i chto ono delaet* (St. Petersburg, 1889).

3 By the end of the first century of the Russian agricultural press' existence, in the 1860's, there were some 20 periodicals in the entire Russian Empire dedicated to various aspects of land tilling: farming, stock-breeding, and forestry. See: M. Vit-", "Sel'skokhoziaistvennaia pechat' v Rossii (k ee piatidesiatiletiiu)," *Agronomicheskii zhurnal* 7-8 (1915), p. 75. Characteristically enough, until the 1890's the majority of these periodicals targeted a very narrow circle of readers interested in theoretical aspects of agriculture. Few titles were published by the government, most of the others were published by Imperial societies specializing in separate branches of the rural economy (sheep-breeding, forestry, etc.), and during the last third of the century by zemstvos. It was, probably, the impact of the 1891 famine and the united relief efforts by the intelligentsia that changed the face of agrojournalism (as it changed the pattern of public activity of the entire "educated society"). See Richard G. Robbins Jr., *Famine in Russia 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis* (New York and London: Columbia University Press,

Table 1.
The Number of Agricultural Periodicals in Russia, 1907-1914.[4]

Year:	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914
Number of titles:	96	101	120	129	150	177	186	352

The actual figures may vary depending on the criteria of selection adopted by different statisticians, but other sources confirm the basic trend. By 1917 almost half of all agricultural periodicals were less than 5 years old, and 75% of all publications were founded after 1905.[5] If we equate the number of specialized periodicals with the popularity of their topic, we can reconstruct the Russian press charts. In 1911 agrojournalism accounted for 5.5% of the periodicals published in the Russian Empire, which gave it an honorable third place among 28 other topics.[6] By 1912 its share had grown to 6.8%. Agricultural periodicals held a firm third place, creating a niche of their own.

If professional periodicals were read predominantly by specialists, there was an intermediate range bridging the world of

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1975), pp. 176-183; W. Bruce Lincoln, *In War's Dark Shadow: The Russians Before the Great War* (New York: The Dial Press, 1983), p. 26; Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986), p. 97; David Kerans, *Agricultural Evolution and the Peasantry in Russia, Tambov Province, 1880-1915* (Ph.D. dissertation; University of Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 432.

In the 1890's, a number of new, mainly weekly, periodicals appeared that targeted a new type of reader: still highly educated and well-to-do, but also having a practical interest in agriculture (hence the spread of weekly editions in contrast to the monthly and even yearly publications of previous epochs). At this stage, local zemstvos and provincial agricultural societies were the leading investors in the agricultural periodical press, demonstrating the decentralization of the emerging public discourse on the agrarian question.

4 Based on data derived from: Vit-'', "Sel'skohoziaistvennaia pechat' v Rossii," p. 76; V.V. Morachevskii, ed., *Agronomicheskaia pomoshch' v Rossii* (Petrograd: Department of Agriculture, 1914), p. 344.

5 V.V. Morachevskii, ed., *Spravochnik po sel'skokhoziaistvennoi pechati. 1916* (Petrograd: Spravochno-izdatel'skoe biuro pri Departamente Zemledeliia, 1916), pp. xxii-xxiii.

6 I.V. Vol'fson, ed., *Gazetnyi mir na 1911 god: Adresnaia i spravochnaia kniga* (St. Petersburg, no date), columns 329-330.

professionals and that of the broad public. This range consisted of a considerable number of items on agrarian themes in general periodicals, affecting even those readers who were not professionally engaged in agriculture. There are statistics available on the number of publications on agricultural issues that appeared every year in late imperial Russia.[7] According to the data collected by A.D. Pedashenko, the peak of public interest in agriculture occurred in 1913 when more than 23.5 thousand articles and essays on different aspects of the agrarian question were published in various periodicals, that is, a new piece on agriculture appeared every 22 minutes. The seemingly permanent growth of public interest in agriculture was brought to a halt by the outbreak of the war, but it was not until 1916 that the steady decline in the number of publications turned into a virtual collapse.

After 1905, there was a growing consensus among the educated public that the way out of the agrarian crisis was the "road - little known to... the farmers, but well studied by people of science and rational practice."[8] By which they meant the intensification of production, a diversification of cultivated crops, and the introduction of a multi-field crop rotation scheme. Russian rural professionals came out with a prescription for modernizing the peasant economy. They believed that by changing only one element of the old vicious circle – the three-field, rye-

7 For over 35 years, until his death in 1925, A.D. Pedashenko composed lists of all published pieces on agriculture, regardless of the source of publication: A.D. Pedashenko, *Ukazatel' knig, zhurnal'nykh i gazetnykh statei po sel'skomy khoziaistvu za... god* (St. Petersburg/Petrograd). Alexander Pedashenko classified all agriculture-related publications into 22 categories, and with such a tight net it is not likely that many of those publications had escaped his attention. He also made lists of periodicals that published articles on the topic during a given year. Some of those periodicals appeared only occasionally on his list, for their interest in the topic was only temporary. Still, their presence is very important as an indication of public involvement in the discourse on agriculture.

8 F. Sev, "K voprosu o merakh uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva (Doklad 4-mu Samarskomu gubernskomu agronomicheskomu soveshchaniiu)," in *Otchet o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.)* (Samara, 1914), p. 183.

centered crop rotation scheme – then the whole peasant economy would be turned upside down. The multifield system of growing labor-consuming diversified cultures, including root crops, corn or flax, would protect peasants from total harvest failures, provide their cattle with much needed fodder, and their fields with natural fertilizer. This intensification of production could ease the peasants' hunger for land and directly involve them in the national market system.

> And no matter how long peasants stubbornly continue to believe that the three-field system has existed almost from the creation of the world, they will [eventually] have to introduce a new order and move to grass-cultivation and the multifield [system of] production.[9]

This was a really good plan, promising to solve Russia's most burning political and economic problems by means of a purely technical procedure, perceived by its supporters as quite realistic and effective. There was only one "but" in this plan: how to compel millions of peasants to adopt it. The "Archimede's lever" had to be found, to turn the peasant world toward modernization. It was clear that peasants would never do so on their own:

> Totally isolated from the entire world by high levels of illiteracy and age-old superstitions, Russian Villages could not change their ancient customs and practices alone and unaided. An outside force was necessary.
>
> The intelligentsia and the specialists who have devoted their efforts to the village can and should come to help the peasantry, to give them at least an opportunity to become familiar with rational management, to help with purchasing the necessary tools and seeds, and to provide them with good breeding stock. All this is possible.[10]

It was expected that the help the intelligentsia would offer the peasantry would not be limited to direct intervention in local

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9 M. Frankfurt, "Zanimaites' skotovodstvom (Pis'mo k krest'ianam iugavostoka Rossii)," *Samarskii zemledelets* 19 (October 1, 1916), p. 517.

10 V.V. Ferdinandov, "Neskol'ko slov o melkikh sel'skokhoziaistvennykh obshestvakh," *Veterinarnaia khronika Voronezhskoi gubernii*, Publication of the Voronezh province zemstvo board 3 (March 1905), pp. 143, 144.

affairs. In the public discussions of the first decade of the twentieth century, it was seen as a more complicated task: "For the sake of mass improvement in peasant husbandry, it is necessary to involve the agricultural population themselves in activity in that direction."[11] Echoing the famous slogan of a great theoretician of radical populism, Petr Tkachev, later repeated by Vladimir Lenin, "Learn, learn, and learn!," the Doctor of Veterinary Science of the University of Bern, K. Sakovskii, urged in 1907: "we need schools, once again schools, and again schools."[12] While the revolutionaries Tkachev and Lenin called on their followers to learn how to destroy the old world altogether, the professional *intelligent* Sakovskii saw schooling as a vehicle to elevate the archaic peasants to the standards of modern civilization, so they would be able to improve their situation and eventually the national economy. When in December 1909 Petr Struve stated that "The question of Russian economic revival is first of all a question of making the new economic man,"[13] he merely summed up public discussions of the previous half decade.

Hence, in contrast to the classical revolutionary-inclined intelligentsia, the new post-1905 generation of Russian intelligentsia that was shaped by the collective experience of the disillusionment in revolution, was composed of people who saw their task as assisting the presumably archaic peasants to integrate into the modern society and economy:

> If before the introduction of the constitutional regime, progressive elements of society, including many even bourgeois elements, were thinking in a revolutionary way, now an evolutionary point of view has begun to prevail where hitherto it was imagined that even the most radical solution for the agrarian question would take a lifetime of a generation to achieve.[14]

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11 K.K. Sakovskii, "K podniatiiu i uluchsheniiu nashego zhivotnovodstva," *Vestnik obshchestvennoi veterinarii* 7-8 (1907), column 239.

12 Ibid.

13 P.B. Struve, "Ekonomicheskie programmy i 'neestestvennyi rezhim'," in P.B. Struve, *Patriotica: politika, kul'tura, religiia, sotsialism* (Moscow: Respublika, 1997), p. 96.

14 "Vnutrennee obozrenie," *Agronomicheskii zhurnal* 8 (1913), p. 121.

As a matter of fact, the agenda of this emerging New Generation of Russian intelligentsia was a program of modernizing the peasant *mentalité*, rather than public institutions.[15] The role of the New Generation was, then, the role of decisive "instigators of modernization" or *Kulturträgers* in the Germanized language of that epoch,[16] who, working as rural professionals, attempted to stimulate mechanisms for self-propelled modernization among the peasants. The classic hypotheses of this program were produced in 1911 by a prominent representative of the New Generation, Alexander Chaianov. In a speech delivered at the Moscow regional congress of rural professionals, he suggested that all of them should strive "[b]y means of impacting upon the mind and will of the economic people [*khoziaistvennykh ludei*], to awaken initiative in their milieu, and... to direct this initiative in a most rational manner. In a word, to change old ideas into new in the heads of the local population."[17] In a few years Chaianov would become a leader of the Organization-Production school in Russian rural studies, the school of

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15 For a sociologicaly and historically grounded model of the New Generation of Russian intelligentsia see my Ph.D. thesis: *The New Generation of Russian Intelligentsia as Actors of Modernization: Facing the Countryside (1907-1917)* (Rutgers University, 1999).

16 The following passage is dedicated to agronomists who constituted the front line of the New Generation in its efforts to modernize the peasantry, but the same can be repeated about the entire project of the New Generation: "An agronomist is a Kulturträger, and probably even more so than anyone else - for instance, a teacher, or a physician. This is determined by the fact that an agronomist stays... much closer to the psychology of the population than all other Kulturträgers. An agronomist in his work penetrates to the very essence of peasant life - to agriculture, producing creative work both in the peasants' minds and in the economic regime of their farms." A.I. D'iakov, "Iz zemskoi agronomicheskoi deiatel'nosti," *Zemskii agronom* 1 (1915), p. 7. Anatolii D'iakov had graduated from a mid-level agricultural college in 1912 and in 1915 was working as one of eight precinct agronomists in the Belebei district of the Ufa province. See M.M. Glukhov, V.V. Zaretskii, and V.N. Shtein, eds., *Mestnyi agronomicheskii personal, sostoiavshii na pravitel'stvennoi i obshchestvennoi sluzhbe 1 ianvaria 1915 g. Spravochnik* (Petrograd, 1915) p. 413.

17 *Moskovskii oblastnoi s''ezd deiatelei agronomicheskoi pomoshch'i naseleniiu. Trudy S''ezda* 1 (Moscow, 1911), pp. 50-51.

thought which shaped the methodological framework and theoretical premises of the New Generation of Russian intelligentsia as a social movement.[18]

Although the New Generation modernization project focused on the transformation of mental rather than institutional structures, it still needed certain institutional frameworks for its implementation. The ideal model was found initially in the Italian *Cattedra Ambulante di Agricoltura* (pl. - Cattedre Ambulanti),

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18 The Organization-Production School (OPS) in Russian economic thought, attracted the attention of Western and Russian scholars at different points of time and for different reasons. The Western scholars who re-discovered the OPS in the 1960s were fascinated by the economic concepts of this group as opposed to those of Marxist scholars in the 1920s. These debates resembled disputes between the Marxists and non-classical theorists of the 1970s. See Naum Jasny, *Soviet Economists of the Twenties: Names to be Remembered* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 196-204; Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class; Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia, 1910-1925* (Oxford, 1972); Susan Gross Solomon, *The Soviet Agrarian Debate: A Controversy in Social Science, 1923-1929* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977); Susan Gross Solomon, "Rural Scholars and the Cultural Revolution," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 129-153; etc.
Soviet historians in 1987-1991 tried to interpret the political declarations of the *Chaianovists* in support of NEP as grounds for Perestroika's legitimization (V. Barnett recently came to the same conclusion in Vincent Barnett, "Recent Soviet Writings on Economic Theory and Policy from NEP," *Coexistence* 29:3, /1992/, pp. 257-275.). As a rule, both historiographical movements ignored the pre-Revolutionary half of the Organization-Productive School's activity and the social position and views of its members. In recent years, this situation has been changing in the historiography, as its main focus shifted toward the genesis of the OSP as a phenomenon *sui generis*. See, for instance: S.D. Domnikov, *Mirovozzrenie A.V. Chaianova* (Avtoreferat dissertatsii kandidata istoricheskikh nauk; Moscow: Institut istorii RAN, 1994); Alessandro Stanziani, "Russkie ekonomisty za granitsei v 1880-1914 gg.: Predstavleniia o rynke i tsirkuliatsii idei," in Iu. Sherrer and B. Anan'ich, eds., *Russkaia emigratsiia do 1917 goda – laboratoriia liberal'noi i revoliutsionnoi mysli* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii Dom, 1997), pp. 157-175; I.V. Gerasimov, *Tvorchestvo A.V. Chaianova v otechestvennoi i zarubezhnoi istoriographii* (Avtoreferat dissertatsii kandidata istoricheskikh nauk; Kazan: Kazan University, 1998); Alessandro Stanziani, *L'Économie en révolution: Le cas russe, 1870-1930* (Paris: Albin Michel S.A., 1998).

or the mobile consulting bureaus staffed with two or three specialists in agriculture.[19] This mobile agricultural office would stay at a place for a few years, establishing contact with the population and propagating rational techniques of agriculture. To adopt the advanced techniques and to purchase "the necessary tools and seeds, ...good sires," the poor peasants needed money, which they could not obtain through ordinary bank loans. Hence, mobile bureaus organized agricultural cooperatives among the propagated peasants, and taught them how to run those organizations. Cooperatives as registered corporations could guarantee the repayment of loans and hence accumulated much needed money at a modest rate. Furthermore, buying wholesale was cheaper, and the quality of goods was ensured by official contracts. When, after a few years the cycle of teaching-organizing-and implementation of the new lessons was completed, a mobile bureau moved to a new location, where the fame of its accomplishments had already prepared the ground for a new magical transformation.[20]

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19 The first *Cattedra Ambulante di Agricoltura* was established in Rovigo in 1886. By the turn of the century, there were 30 mobile bureaus of agriculture in Italy, and in 1910 - 112 bureaus with 79 additional branches. In 1910, mobile bureaus employed 309 specialists in agriculture, 95% of whom had received agricultural education in the institutions of higher learning. See V. Sazonov, "Populiarizatsiia sel'skokhoziaistvennykh znanii v Italii," *Sel'skokhoziaistvennoe obrazovanie* 1 (1914), p. 10.

20 This is how contemporary British observers described the Cattedre Ambulanti which they translated as the Traveling Schools: "...the Traveling Schools..., subsidized to some extent by Government, but founded by private initiative and chiefly supported by the Provincial Councils and private Savings Banks, are bringing a very practical kind of teaching to the peasant's door. Entirely the creation of the last ten years, they number thirty-nine, chiefly in the North, but including a few in the Center and South. The duties of the traveling teacher are myriad. He gives fifty or sixty lectures in the year in different centers; he gives practical demonstrations; he supervises experimental plots; he sits in his office every market-day for oral consultation; he has classes in special subjects, such as grafting and pruning; he trains elementary teachers to lecture in their turn on agricultural subjects; sometimes he publishes an agricultural journal; he keeps look-out for phylloxera and superintends the measures to stamp it out, if it appears; sometimes he has nurseries to supply American vine-stocks, or introduces bulls and rams of improved

Contemporary statistics showed the remarkable effectiveness of *Cattedre Ambulanti*, so Russian intellectuals found them to be the key to success in modernizing the peasantry.[21] Thanks to the mobile agricultural office, the knowledge of the few was able to change the lives of the many. The secret was in awakening the initiative of the masses, in mobilizing them by means of cooperative organizations. A.I. Chuprov, a Russian economist and a prominent public figure, introduced the Russian *obshchestvennost'* to the phenomenon of the *Cattedra Ambulante di Agricoltura* in 1900 in a series of articles published in the liberal newspaper *Russian News*.[22] At that time the idea of the *Cat-*

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breeds; he organizes fruit shows; he introduces, where he finds it possible, Village Banks and Cooperative Dairies, or preaches the advantages of joining the local Syndicate. It is a work, that probably has no parallel either in France or England, and its practical usefulness is matched by its popularity. The cost of each 'chair' varies between Ł 184 and Ł 750." See Bolton King and Thomas Okey, *Italy Today* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Limited, 1901), pp. 188-189.

21 Cf.: Stanziani, "Russkie ekonomisty za granitsei v 1880-1914 gg.," p. 165; Stanziani, *L'Économie en révolution: Le cas russe, 1870-1930*, p. 136.

22 These articles were later included by Chuprov in a collection of his essays on the agrarian question. See A.I. Chuprov, "Reforma zemledeliia v Italii (1900)," in A.I Chuprov, *Krest'ianskii vopros: Stat'i 1900-1908 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo br. Sabashnikovyh, 1909), pp. 1-43. See also: A.I. Chuprov, "Agronomicheskaia pomoshch' naseleniiu v Italii (1901)," in A.I Chuprov, *Krest'ianskii vopros...*, pp. 44-79. In 1900, Alexander Chuprov wrote enthusiastically to A.F. Koni: "The most interesting part of my travels in 1900 was a trip in May to Northern Italy.., by no means did I expect to encounter so much that was curious and to receive so many vivid impressions. In the person of professors of the so-called 'mobile bureaus of agriculture' in Padova, Parma, and Verona I encountered true enthusiasts, saintly people who gave themselves entirely to serving the people. They are like our zemstvo agronomists, only with a much broader and more active role." Quoted in A.F. Koni, "Iz vospominanii ob A.I. Chuprove," in A.F. Koni, *Rechi i stat'i* 3 (Moscow, 1909), pp. xxxii-xxxiii. Chuprov's publications on the Italian experience of public (i.e., non-government) agricultural assistance became truly archetypal for the New Generation of Russian intelligentsia, who were literally brought up on these essays. As late as 1912, they were still recommended to a younger cohort of agricultural specialists as a sacred testament of the New Generation, as a "handbook that every agronomist must have." See *Zhurnal zasedaniia gubernskogo agronomicheskogo*

tedra Ambulante in Russia could only be regarded as another beautiful day-dream of the intelligentsia, which had no chance of ever coming true. Nothing could move freely around the pre-Revolutionary Russian countryside, and certainly authorities would not allow *intelligent* to propagate new ideas among the peasantry from the *cattedra*.

Yet the idea was not forgotten. In the spring of 1905 another distinguished rural scholar, D.N. Prianishnikov, decided that it was the right moment to return to the issue of the Italian mobile bureaus. In a few issues of the special weekly *Messenger of Agriculture* he published an article in which he drew direct parallels between the Italian experience and the Russian reality.[23] As it turned out, the attempt misfired due to the wave of agrarian disorders in the Russian countryside which put the issue of legal initiatives among the peasantry on hold for a while. It took a new generation of rural scholars to put the idea of mobile bureaus of Agriculture into practice. During his trip to Italy, Alexander Chaianov, a pupil of Professor Prianishnikov at Moscow Agricultural Institute, received first-hand experience of what he had read about in the writings of his tutors. In 1908, he published an article in which he put together a draft of the Russian countryside's modernization program, and a description of the Italian mobile bureaus as a model of the institution that would carry out this program.[24]

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soveshchaniia Kazanskogo gubernskogo zemstva 7 sentiabria 1911 goda (Kazan, 1912), p. 242.

23 D.N. Prianishnikov, "'Zemskaia agronomiia' v Italii," Vestnik sel'skogo khoziaistva 17-21 (1905).

24 A.V. Chaianov, "Stranstvuiushchie kafedry v Italii," *Vestnik sel'skogo khoziaistva* 33 (1908), p. 6. At this point we contradict the statement of George Yaney that "...the [agricultural] specialists set out to 'improve,' despite the fact that no one, least of all their supervisors, had any concrete, generally accepted idea of what the process of improvement entailed." George Yaney, *The Urge to Mobilize: Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1861-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 347. His otherwise fundamental study actually ignores the level of the public's own modernization movement which, besides having a tremendous potential of its own, was one of the major factors behind the government's "urge to mobilize" the countryside.

Even after the partial democratization of the Russian political regime brought about by the 1905 Revolution, the mobile bureaus project could not be implemented in Russia in its original version. No independent public association could afford thousands of mobile bureaus, while the state was not interested in supporting such an initiative. The institutional vehicle necessary for the implementation of the mobile bureaus project was found in the agronomy precinct network.

The agronomy precinct network project planned to multiply the number of zemstvo agronomists by dividing each district (*uezd*) into a number of precincts. The precinct agronomist was supposed to follow the program used by the *Cattedra Ambulante,* except that they would stay in the same place and gradually expand their influence over the neighboring villages. That was the most ambitious "small deeds" project Russian *obshchestvennost'* ever devised.[25] During the last decade of Imperial Russia, the precinct agronomist became a synonym for the progressive representative of *obshchestvennost'*, an emerging new ideal of the *intelligent*: a professionally trained person, who applied the received knowledge to serve the people. The seemingly obscure profession of the precinct agronomist, who was supposed to live and work in the depth of rural Russia far away from the city centers that formed public opinion, became highly prominent during the inter-revolutionary period. To a great extent, the high visibility was produced by the sheer numbers of precinct agronomists, or, more precisely, by the rapid increase. Between the First Russian Revolution and the First World War, the number of precinct agronomists increased 64 times, as can be seen in the following table:

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25 As a matter of fact, the very idea of concentrating the work of agronomists over one or two counties (volosti) had already been expressed in 1888 at the agronomist conference of Perm' province. In 1889, the Province zemstvo board had passed the appropriate resolution, but nothing happened for the next ten years, until Vladimir Vargin became the Provincial Agronomist. Even then, the system of District Agronomist's deputies, adopted by the Perm' zemstvo, was not exactly an example of precinct agronomy neither in the principle of organization, nor in the quantity of agronomists.

Table 2.
The Number of Agronomy Precincts in Russia, 1906-1913.[26]

Year:	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Number of precincts:	27	56	109	177	395	760	1139	1726

Despite the general agreement about the aims and basic principles of precinct agronomy, every provincial zemstvo had to decide many practical questions in accordance with local conditions. By 1912, observers distinguished three major forms of precinct agronomy organizations. The agronomists of the Ekaterinoslav province were known for their high public activism. They dedicated the majority of their efforts to propagating rational techniques among peasants and organizing peasant cooperatives. The Kharkov agronomists represented another type, focusing on work with individual farms or particular sectors of agriculture. Finally, Moscow province's precinct agronomists were distinguished by their "communal" spirit: they worked on improving organization plans for entire peasant communes.[27] Doubtless, the ideological preferences of the local zemstvo and employees had a great impact on which of these main models they chose. The case of Kazan and Samara provinces can give us an insight into the medial approach toward precinct agronomy, characteristic of many zemstvos.

Precinct agronomy was introduced in Kazan province in 1910, but it was not until the summer of 1911 that the detailed guidelines for this institution were elaborated by the conference of provincial agronomists and the representatives of the zemstvo board. It was decided that in future Kazan province would be divided into 56 agronomy precincts, each precinct not to ex-

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26 Based on the data derived from E. Zaremba, "Uchastkovaia agronomiia v Rossii," *Agronomicheskii zhurnal* 1 (1914), p. 143; Morachevskii, ed., *Agronomicheskaia pomoshch' v Rossii*, p. 168.

27 A. Iaroshevich, "Osnovnye printsipy uchastkovoi agronomicheskoi organizatsii," *Bessarabskoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo* 8 (1912), p. 229; I.I. Shtutser, "Polozhenie uchastkovoi organizatsii i ee zadachi v Kazanskoi gubernii," in *Zhurnaly i postanovleniie predvaritel'nogo soveshchaniia agronomov pri Kazanskoi gubernskoi zemskoi uprave 26-27 iiulia 1911 g.* (Kazan, 1911), p. 17.

ceed 1000 square *versts* (439.6 sq. miles) and to have no more than 100 villages. It was to be staffed with an agronomist with the education of no less than a mid-level agricultural college, and a deputy agronomist. The precinct agronomist should assist all zemstvo taxpayers indiscriminately, including members of communes and those who left the commune under the provisions of the Stolypin land reform. Precinct agronomists were also to help individuals seeking professional consultation, but their main educational activity was to be concentrated on the collectives of initiative peasants, i.e. the cooperatives organized with their assistance. Agricultural cooperatives were supposed to become the means for agronomists' mass intervention into peasant affairs.[28]

Precinct agronomists lived in villages alongside the peasants, renting cottages or, sometimes, only part of a cottage. During the winter, from November to February, agronomists lectured in the villages about the most urgent issues of local agriculture. For instance, Samara agronomist Kiselev visited 20 villages of his precinct, where altogether 2,740 peasants listened to his explanations of how to minimize the impact of drought on their crops. Hence, during one winter he managed to visit 30.43% of the villages and speak to 26% of the homeowners of his precinct. He even managed to sell 187 books on agriculture, and distributed 70 more for free. This was a rather successful season for the agronomist Kiselev, and much of this success can be attributed to the fact that his precinct was the central one in the District, neighboring the city of Samara. The peasants of this precinct were involved in market relations to a greater degree than the peasants living in the southern part of Samara district. They approached Aleksei Kiselev asking for his help to change their crop rotation scheme, and enthusiastically organized cooperatives.[29] In a word, this was almost an ideal of the project of the precinct agronomy.

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28 *Postanovleniia predvaritel'nogo soveshchaniia agronomov pri Kazanskoi gubernskoi zemskoi uprave 26 i 27 iiulia 1911 goda* (Kazan, 1911), pp. 3-5.

29 "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Krasnoiarskogo uchastkovogo agronoma A.A. Kiseleva za 1909-1910 god," in *Uchastkovaia agronomicheskaia orga-*

The young agronomist Andrei Ryshkin was less lucky. 1910 was his first year as a precinct agronomist. His precinct was larger than the Kiselev's and located on the eastern outskirts of the Samara District. The description of his first year experience contains invaluable psychological details of what faced a rural professional at the beginning of his work among the peasants.

> From the very beginning, I encountered a wall of mistrust from the peasant's toward any new person dressed in civic clothes, [the wall] that does not disappear even after a close acquaintance, and which doomed many initiatives.
> [...] I visualize my precinct as a huge enemy territory, where every inhabitant is locked up in his own fortress. Each fortress has its own peculiarities, its weak points. The attacking agronomist must study all the peculiarities of those fortresses and start with the weakest, and only then after joining forces with the defeated attack the stronger.
> [...] I have experienced all these discomforts of a beginner agronomist, and I would not like to experience the role of a newcomer in a new place again.[30]

Ryshkin discovered that the peasant audience was not prepared to be lectured in the way he and his fellow *Kulturträgers* had been during their school years. Peasants eagerly supported any conversation on a concrete topic, but his attempts to generalize, to present his vision of a rationally-organized farm to them, usually estranged his audience. Following the recommendations of his city educators, Ryshkin tried to catch the peasants' attention by showing slides with a "magic lantern", but he soon found that the slides were too abstract to be of any help in supporting his point of view, with the added disadvantage of attracting lots of children, for whom it was pure entertainment. Unlike Aleksei Kiselev, Andrei Ryshkin did not find the peasants to be particularly interested in books.

Despite all these handicaps, Ryshkin managed to deliver 21 lectures – the same number as Kiselev – which were attended

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nizatsiia Samarskogo uezdnogo zemstva za 1910 god (Samara, 1912), pp. 109-119, 156-157.

30 A.A. Ryshkin, "Otchet raionnogo agronoma po Zubovskomu uchastku," in *Uchastkovaia agronomicheskaia organizatsiia Samarskogo uezdnogo zemstva za 1910 god* (Samara, 1912), pp. 54, 55, 56.

by some 1,500 peasants. When in spring all precinct agronomists began distributing agricultural machines from zemstvo warehouses and renting centers, peasants from Ryshkin's precinct demonstrated an incredible demand for seed-drills and harvesters.[31] Hence, although deaf to certain prophecies or prophets, peasants learned practical things very fast. As it turned out, in summer, those peasants who plowed up their fallow lands upon the recommendation of their agronomist, harvested crops 2-4 times higher than the average.[32]

At this point we approach the crucial problem in any modernization campaign: whether or not such a modernisation program will be taken on board by it's intended recipients, and if it is, to what extent will it be acted upon. The infamous cholera riots of the 1890's, when peasants murdered physicians suspected of causing the disease, and the occasional refusal of peasants to let agronomists into their villages – all contributed to the creation of the image of the dark and inert peasantry that dominated public discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century. What, then, gave the rural professionals hope that peasants were able to understand their modernization sermon and respond adequately? Rather than enclose the intellectuals' pessimistic characterization of the peasantry with numerous meaningless inverted commas, as some historians do (apparently hinting that the opposite was the case),[33] let us look at the phenomenon of a new

31 Ibid., pp. 76-80, 89.

32 K.N. Mukhanov, "Samarskaia uezdnaia uchastkovaia agronomicheskaia organizatsiia za 1910 god," in *Uchastkovaia agronomicheskaia organizatsiia Samarskogo uezdnogo zemstva za 1910 god* (Samara, 1912), p. 10.

33 For instance, Yanni Kotsonis in the essay characteristically titled "How Peasants Became Backward: Agrarian Policy and Co-operatives in Russia, 1905-1914" explicitly states that 'backwardness' and 'benightedness' were but intellectuals' "constructions". Unfortunately, neither in this essay, nor in his doctoral dissertation or the subsequent book, did Y. Kotsonis prove or at least state explicitly that the peasants were actually neither 'backward', nor 'benighted', and that their inferior socioeconomic and cultural position was but a construction of the intellectuals. See his "How Peasants Became Backward: Agrarian Policy and Co-operatives in Russia, 1905-1914," in Judith Pallot, ed., *Transforming Peasants: Society, State and the Peasantry, 1861-1930. Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), pp. 15-36.

generation of peasants, which became junior partners in the New Generation of Russian intelligentsia and a new generation of enlightened or liberal bureaucrats[34] in their modernization efforts:

> ...in contrast to medical services or public education, economic policies required a certain intellectual level on the part of peasants – they had to understand the advice given to them and be ready to assume the risk of innovations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a new generation of peasants educated in zemstvo schools took central stage in Russian rural life, and zemstvo activists who organized these peasants into rural credit cooperatives found it possible "for the first time" to oppose an "organized conscious nucleus" to a benighted (*temnye*) unorganized mass.[35]

Following Kimitaka Matsuzato, we would argue that rural professionals made their wager on this group of new peasants, more dynamic and responsive than the conservative bulk of villagers. According to the 1911 Zemstvo Survey, 16.5% of rural teachers thought that schooling made their pupils more socially aware. Among those respondents, 216 teachers specifically stated that educated peasants had closer relations with the local intelligentsia.[36] We can estimate the number of representatives of "a new generation of peasants," who not only adequately responded to the modernization efforts of the agricultural specialists, but actively participated in this work.[37]

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34 David A.J. Macey, "Agricultural Reform and Political Change: The Case of Stolypin," in Theodore Taranovski, ed., *Reform in Modern Russian History: Progress or Cycle?* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 169, 170-172.

35 Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Fate of Agronomists in Russia: Their Quantitative Dynamics form 1911 to 1916," *Russian Review* 55 (April 1996), p. 173.

36 Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, pp. 429-430.

37 In the words of Scott Seregny, "Socially and culturally, these 'conscious' peasants remained more closely tied to the village than many teachers of peasant origin and as such occupied a strategic position as intermediaries between the rural community and outsiders." See Scott J. Seregny, "Peasant Unions During 1905," in Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter, eds., *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of Imperial Russia, 1800-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 353.

These peasants composed the majority of the voluntary correspondents of the zemstvo statistical bureaus. In 1909, when the New Generation's movement was launched, the 14 oldest provincial zemstvos alone had almost 17,000 full-time village correspondents,[38] some 64% of whom were peasants.[39] Their task was to report a few times a year about the prospective and actual harvest, the prices of land, grain, its transportation and, in some provinces, even the dynamic of the local markets.[40] This alone made the voluntary correspondents the most economically conscious part of the peasantry, thinking in terms of market

38 V.V. Morachevskii, ed., *Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel'nosti zemstv po sel'skomy khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god)*, p. xxx. This edition provided information about the statistical organizations of 22 out of 34 zemstvos, wich altogether had over 19,000 voluntary correspondents. The total figure of correspondents must be somewhere beyond 30,000, for such "peasant-dominated" provinces as Viatka or Olonets must have had many hundreds of correspondents. There is indirect evidence that Pskov province alone had over a thousand correspondents, although the exact figure was not reported. See Morachevskii, ed., *Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel'nosti zemstv po sel'skomy khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god)*, p. 424.

39 In the Moscow province, there were 374 voluntary correspondents: 240 peasants (64.17%), 63 clergymen (16.84%), and 39 teachers (10.43%). In the Iaroslav province, figures were almost identical: 64.2% of 800 correspondents were peasants, 18.8% were members of the clergy. See Morachevskii, ed., *Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel'nosti zemstv po sel'skomy khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god)*, pp. 252, 568. In 1913, in the Samara province 65.7% of the 1,813 correspondents were peasants - members of the commune, and 8.4% were the individual farmers. Altogether, peasants accounted for 74.1% of the Samara statistical bureau's voluntary correspondents. See A.V. Teitel', "Chto govorit naselenie Samarskoi gubernii o zemskoi agronomii," in *Trudy 4-go Samarskogo gubernskogo agronomicheskogo soveshchania 16-20 dekabria 1913 goda* (Samara, 1914), p. 172.

40 Morachevskii, ed., *Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel'nosti zemstv po sel'skomy khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god)*, pp. 35, 127, 175, 568. Some zemstvos provided correspondents with special notebooks with questions to be answered during a year, and a timetable for them. The Kazan zemstvo notebook for 1915, for instance, included 64 questions, which were more or less evenly distributed from January to December. See *Zapisnaia knizhka korrespondenta statisticheskogo otdeleniia na 1915 god* (Kazan: Statisticheskoe otdelenie Kazanskoi gubernskoi zemskoi upravy, 1914), pp. 6-8.

conjunctures and regarding agriculture as a phenomenon of "production" rather than as an element of the traditional peasant way of life. The common practice of the zemstvo to reward the voluntary correspondents with agricultural periodicals and popular brochures only reinforced the position of village correspondents as an "outpost" of rural modernization. Thus, a few tens of thousands of peasants, the voluntary correspondents, constituted the basis for the productive efforts of the agricultural specialists, and the bulk of peasant readers of agricultural periodicals.[41]

Indeed, it was very important to rural modernizers to sustain *rapport* with their readers, and especially with peasants, to be assured that the people, whom they were about to assist, were actually interested in modernization. Sections like "Questions and Answers" in periodicals checked the "pulse" of intelligentsia-peasant communication on a regular basis, while special, usually annual, surveys among the subscribers provided a complex sociological map of the readers. We shall take a closer look at the audience of the magazines *Samara Agriculturist* and *The Peasant Cause*, which represented two major types of agricultural periodical for peasants and rural intelligentsia: a local publication with the run of 1,000 to 1,500 copies, and a central (usually Moscow) periodical, publishing very prominent agricultural specialists, with a run of over 2,500 copies.

The *Samara Agriculturist* was published by the Samara Society for Improving the Peasant Economy (SOUKK) with an average run of 1,300 copies. Subscription covered only half of the publishers' expenses,[42] hence the primary goal of the maga-

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41 Each correspondent annually received agricultural periodicals and literature worth two rubles on average. Very often, zemstvos gave correspondents free subscriptions to their own publications (thus, 1,000 Kazan correspondents received free subscriptions to the *Kazan Gazette*), or to a major provincial agricultural periodical (in 1909, 1,300 Poltava correspondents were made subscribers to the weekly *Farmer* of the Poltava Agricultural Society). This way, the peasants received free access to quality and relevant regional information, while the publishers increased the ranks of their subscribers.

42 *Otchet o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.)*, p. 25.

zine was to enlighten its readers. It regularly published replies to the peasant's letters, who actually read the magazine and even wrote to the editorial board: 99 replies in 1911, 247 in 1912, 415 in 1913.[43] The majority of subscribers lived in Samara province, but the magazine also circulated in neighboring Saratov, Simbirsk, Ufa, Kazan, Orenburg and Astrakhan provinces. According to surveys conducted by the editorial board in 1911 and 1913, the majority of their readers (at least, their most active ones) were peasants. In 1911, 39% of those who returned the questionnaires were peasants, while in the 1913 survey their share increased to 54%.[44]

The Moscow *Peasant Cause* was a private enterprise, and hence could not afford a charitable attitude toward its readers, but with an average run of 3,000 copies it could sustain the same low subscription fee as the *Samara Agriculturist*.[45] Unlike the regional Samara magazine, *The Peasant Cause* was read all over European Russia. The map of its subscribers published in August of 1911 showed that the magazine had the same number of readers in the central Moscow province as in the distant Perm' province (together accounting for 30% of all subscribers). There were equal percentages of subscribers in neighboring Kaluga province and in Viatka province, some 700 miles away from Moscow.[46] Among the readers who answered the magazine's questionnaire in 1911, 56% were peasants (which is close to the 54% of the *Samara Agriculturist*'s survey in 1913).[47]

The rural modernizers were quite concerned about the accessibility and comprehensibility of their publications. Throughout the period under consideration, intellectuals often discussed advice and recommendations on how to write for the peasant

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43 Ibid., p. 24.
44 Ibid., pp. 26, 28.
45 GA RF, f. 102 Departament politsii, D-4, Op. 119, d. 237 "O proizvedeniiakh povremennoi pechati, izdavaiemykh professional'nymi organizatsiiami," l. 16.
46 *Krest'ianskoe delo* 14 (August 1, 1911), cover page.
47 "'Krest'ianskoe delo' i ego chitateli," *Krest'ianskoe delo* 14 (August 1, 1911), p. 289.

audience,[48] educational literature was thoroughly reviewed prior to being recommended for mass distribution among peasants,[49] and special lists of popular books on various aspects of agriculture were distributed.[50] As readers' replies indicated, the peasants understood the intelligentsia *kulturträgers*, and appreciated their efforts.

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48 In 1909, at the beginning of the New Generation's campaign, a revolutionary-turned-cooperative ideologist, V.V. Khizhniakov, explained to the educators: "Writing popularly is not as easy as many authors of 'books for the people' think. Besides a complete knowledge of the question and general ability to express one's thoughts, it is also necessary to know the psychology of the audience; it is necessary to have much intuition to speak with this audience not only in a comprehensible language, but also using understandable images and examples, and an adequate system of thinking." See V.V. Khizhniakov, "Bibliografiia i literaturnoe obozrenie," *Vestnik kooperatsii* 2 (1909), p. 167. Eight years later, on the eve of the February Revolution, the editorial board of the magazine *The New Spike* urged their contributors: "Our first plea – write simply, using foreign words and complex phrases only if absolutely necessary, and always with explanations. Remember that almost all our readers are genuine peasants, who will not understand a foreign word... It is not so hard to write simply: there is no necessity to emulate folk speech. ...The second plea – do not write at great length. ...Write no more than four pages of a usual sheet [format] (always on one side of it). Thus, do not write in an involved and lengthy manner, but *simply* and *briefly* – this way you will help the *New Spike* to become a truly *popular* magazine sooner." See Redaktsiia, "K sotrudnikam 'Novogo kolosa'," *Novyi kolos* 5-6 (February 15, 1917), p. 1.

49 For instance, in 1911-1912, a special commission of Kazan agricultural specialists chaired by the provincial agronomist I.I. Shtutser reviewed 600 brochures on various aspects of agriculture, and found only 228 of them appropriate for distribution among the peasants of the province. See *Zhurnal zasedaniia gubernskogo agronoicheskogo soveshchania Kazanskogo gubernskogo zemstva 7 sentiabria 1911 goda*, pp. 149-341.

50 Some of those lists were designed to keep local rural specialists posted on the latest publications available for distribution among peasants, others targeted popular village libraries organized and patronized by the local "village intelligentsia". In the latter case, lists of suggested literature indiscriminately covered a broad spectrum of topics but differentiated by cost among the suggested sets of books. Thus, there were lists costing 10, 25, and even 100 rubles. See *Spisok knig dlia narodnykh sel'skokhoziaistvennykh bibliotek. Sostavlen Komissiei o merakh sodeistviia ustroistvu narodnykh chtenii po sel'skomu khoziaistvu* (Petrograd: GUZiZ, Departament Zemledeliia, 1914).

While the Moscow *Peasant Cause* was viewed by the peasants as a kind of general sociopolitical publication, a source of information about the State Duma and current agricultural policy (despite many special articles on agricultural topics),[51] the regional *Samara Agriculturist* was read for its practical advice.[52] These were two different types of *kulturträger* narrative, for whereas a peasant accepted the general character of reports on recent Duma decisions, he demanded utter specificity from the publications on how to actually improve the efficiency of their farms.[53] Many peasants even suggested that the *Samara Agriculturist* should publish articles written by those peasants who were successful in introducing certain kinds of improvements, because they did not think that examples from large estates were of much use to them.[54]

In general, despite the discursive projections of the rural intelligentsia and even of some better educated peasants,[55] peas-

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51 Ibid., p. 290.

52 *Otchet o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.)*, p. 29.

53 In 1913, a peasant of the village of Semenovka, Novouzensk district, commented on the publications in the *Samara Agriculturist*: "in general, we understand articles in the *S.A.*, particularly by the agronomist Sev, but the thing is, everything in those articles is not about our district, and other localities are alien to us, the people of Semenovka." See *Otchet o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.)*, p. 29.

54 Ibid.

55 In 1911 and 1913, a few dozen respondents to the *Samara Agriculturist*'s survey speculated that while they perfectly understood the magazine's publications, their "content is unclear for a peasant, who only graduated from a primary school, due to the number of incomprehensible foreign words and intellectual expressions." "I understand, but for the peasant it should be written in a more popular style." See *Otchet o deiatel'nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest'ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.)*, pp. 26, 28. It is worth noticing that among those, who were concerned about the common peasant's ability to grasp the sense of "too intellectual" publications, there were at least four better educated peasants (33% in 1911). This makes the essence and configuration of the boundary between the modernizers and the peasants as

ant readers of the agricultural press were able to react adequately to the appeal of the New Generation of Russian intelligentsia even in its most abstract written form. In fact, the actual number of peasant readers of the agricultural press was many times higher than the mere quantity of peasants-subscribers, because usually every issue was read by all the literate and interested neighbors of the actual subscriber.[56] The agricultural press stimulated the "new peasants" to stick together, forming the nucleus of a peasant branch of the emerging rural public sphere.[57]

As the New Generation's modernization project was formulated on the precinct agronomy model, it reserved an auxiliary role for the agricultural press, while putting major emphasis on the personal educational efforts of rural professionals. Those efforts were institutionalized in two major forms: one-day village lectures by a precinct agronomist or an agricultural specialist on a particular subject, and short-term (usually fortnight) courses taught by a number of specialists. Between the First Russian Revolution and World War I, the funding for such educational activities increased almost 40 times.[58] In 1913, some

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their "objectified class *par excellence*" more complicated than Pierre Bourdieu and his disciples among the historians of Imperial Russia used to think. Apparently, discursive projections on and for traditional peasantry were not an exclusive privilege of the educated city elite; rather, every participant in a cultural dialogue sooner or later discovered that in their isolation from the outer world, traditional peasants were "semiotically invisible", and thus semantically marked by the others – until the moment when they would speak out for themselves.

56 According to the 1911 survey of the magazine *The Peasant Cause*, the majority of respondents shared every issue of the magazine with 5 to 50 people. Even more people read every single issue of the magazine when it was subscribed to by a teahouse, agricultural cooperative, or a civic-minded deacon. See "'Krest'ianskoe delo' i ego chitateli," pp. 289-290.

57 The emergence of reading circles among the peasants testified to the beginning of this process: 26 farmers of Mogilev province together subscribed to a number of magazines, including *The Peasant Cause*; in the Tetushi district (Kazan province), the growing circle of 20 peasants subscribed to a few periodicals together. See "'Krest'ianskoe delo' i ego chitateli," p. 289; N. Iakushkin, "Iz krest'ianskikh pisem," *Krest'ianskoe delo* 20 (November 1, 1911), p. 451.

58 A. Lazarenko, "Rasprostranenie sel'skokhoziaistvennykh znanii vneshkol'nym putem," *Sel'skokhoziaistvennoe obrazovanie* 10 (1915), p. 485.

1,580,782 peasants attended 43,763 one-day lectures in 11,762 villages.[59] During the same year, almost 100,000 peasants studied in 1,657 short-term courses, and in 1914, there were 2,500 courses planned (because of the war, only half of them actually took place).[60] These impressive figures are an important indication of the rural professionals' role in the modernization of peasants, and as evidence that in a single year, a dozen thousand agricultural specialists and their assistants were able to reach a very significant section of the peasantry.

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This inevitably sketchy presentation of the modernization campaign by the agriculturally concerned Russian intelligentsia during the interrevolutionary decade 1907-1917 demonstrates the complexity of the topic and how difficult it is to study. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the following crucial differences between the bureaucratic (administrative) modernization programs and public (non-government) initiatives for economic and social mobilization:

1. Unlike the bureaucratic, detailed to the point of redundancy programs of the government-initiated institutional modernization campaigns, the public modernization movement's program of action is a matter of social consensus, it is spread through public; yet when "distilled" from such mass sources as professional and general periodicals, it appears no less clear than governmental decrees.

2. The activities of public modernizers are only possible within the context of a constant dialogue with their clients, which implies two necessary prerequisites: 1)the modernizer's ability to accommodate the unpredictable reality beyond the debate and ideological slogans; 2) the client's ability to respond to the modernizer's message.

3. The results of these public campaigns are measured not by the percentage of people who changed their legal status or

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59 Ibid., p. 487. If every peasant represented one household, then agricultural specialists directly contacted 6.5% of all farms.

60 Ibid., pp. 490, 493.

the terms of their propriety possession, but by changes in thinking and in the psychological climate [zeitgeist]. If the peasants adopted, even a small proportion of the recommended improvements in their technique, or experimented with crop rotation schemes, changed the traditional calendar for agricultural work, or made first steps in marketing their products, – the efforts of rural professionals (agronomists, economists, educators) were productive.

While the administrative measures seem radical, fast, and unified, they cannot change the economic man, and consequently, the pattern of economic and social development. World War I and the revolutionary upheaval of 1917 interrupted a decade of Russia's rural professionals' efforts, which makes it difficult to assess the results of this movement. However, even a limited success in those efforts seems worth studying, particularly because the decades of Soviet state socioeconomic engineering have yielded quite unimpressive results.