Chapter 1

Second Serfdom and Wage Earners in European and Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to the Mid-nineteenth Century

The Eighteenth Century: Forced Labor between Reform and Revolution

The invention of backwardness in Western economic and philosophical thought owes much to the attention given to Russia and Poland in the beginning of the eighteenth century.[1] The definitions of backwardness and of labor—which is the main element of backwardness—lies at the nexus of three interrelated debates: over serfdom in Eastern European, slavery in the colonies, and guild reform in France. The connection between these three debates is what makes the definition of labor—and the distinction between free and forced labor—take on certain characteristics and not others. In the course of the eighteenth century, the work of slaves, serfs, and apprentices came to be viewed not just by ethical standards, but increasingly by its efficiency. On that basis, hierarchies were justified, such as the "backwardness" of the colonies relative to the West, of Eastern relative to Western Europe, and of France relative to England.

The chronology is striking. Criticisms of guilds, serfdom, and slavery all hardened during the 1750s; Montesquieu published *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1748, which was soon followed by the first volumes of the *Encyclopédie*.[2] In these works the serfdom of absolutist and medieval Europe was contrasted with the free labor of Enlightenment Europe. Abbé de Morelli took up these themes in 1755, condemning both ancient serfdom and modern forms of slavery, in both the colonies and Russia. The advances of the Enlightenment contributed to the invention of a

historiographical break between "enlightened France" and old France on the one hand, and between Western and Eastern Europe on the other. These two "inventions" mirror each other, e.g., in the fact that serfdom could be found in Eastern Europe as well as in medieval Europe. Eastern Europe was therefore not a special case, just simply backward on a developmental scale that was common to all countries.

At about the same time as Morelli, the physiocrat Mirabeau, in *L'ami des hommes* (1756–58), addressed the issue of slavery in the colonies, which he criticized in human terms as well as in terms of its profitability.[3] These authors came together in the same circles and journals as Quesnay (whose *Tableau économique* also dates from 1758) and other physiocrats, who associated labor restrictions such as slavery and serfdom with the constraints of Old Regime regulations and guilds.[4] A shared way of thinking thus developed around the status of labor: a group of authors of differing backgrounds looked into slavery in the colonies, serfdom in Russia, and guild labor in France in order to prove a "natural right" to freedom and, for some, the unprofitability of unfree forms of labor.[5] This circle of reformers established a journal, the *Éphémérides du citoyen*, in 1766. Over time, its publications reinforced the discussion of the status of labor and the political and intellectual ties between slavery, serfdom, and guilds. As Abbé Baudeau made clear, the still-enslaved peasants and the Africans were enslaved for the same reason.[6] On the other hand, this same author praised the Russian system of colonization by free settlers, which he contrasted with Western oppression in the colonies.[7]

Historical narrative became an increasingly common form of justification for these analogies. Thus in 1770, Anne Robert Jacques Turgot—one of the leading economists of the time and future comptroller-general (i.e., finance minister of France)—who had read the accounts of travelers to Russia closely,[8] likened the idea of the "serf to the land" (*serf de la glèbe*, the famous expression popularized by Montesquieu twenty years earlier) to the Russian serf and to the slave, in a letter to Dupont de Nemours; he even spoke of slavery to the land. In France, serfdom to the land belonged to the past. Likewise, the slave in the colonies and the Russian serf would soon become vestiges of the past, though at that time they remained justified by the backwardness of the colonies and Russia.[9]

Economic rhetoric was now ready to take on a major normative role. The next year, in issue 6 of *Ephémérides*, another physiocrat, Dupont de Nemours, calculated the economic losses that the slave inflicted on property and on the whole economy when compared with free wage labor. The normative ambitions of political economy seemed to be borne out by the interest with which enlightened monarchs in France and Russia read these works. Voltaire completed his history of Peter the Great in

1763 and sent a copy to Catherine II.[10] In this work, as in his letters to Catherine, Voltaire adopted a cautious attitude toward Russian serfdom, indicating that it would be premature to emancipate the people without first enlightening them.[11]

For his part, Diderot, who was flattered by Catherine's attention, wondered: "Does the servitude of the peasants not influence [their] culture? Doesn't the lack of peasant property have a negative effect?" His response was laconic: "I don't know whether there is any country where the peasant loves the soil and his home more than in Russia. Our free provinces do not have much more grain than those that are not free."[12] Diderot believed at the time in the reforming potential of Catherine and the French monarchy; based on this belief, he distinguished between nations that had already achieved their highest level of civilization and were starting to degenerate and those that remained closer to nature and could strive for a higher level of order and morals while avoiding the evils of civilization. He placed America and Russia among the latter.[13]

A similar movement made itself felt in France, where, in accordance with the wishes of the physiocrats, the grain regulations and hindrances to the production and trade in wheat were dismantled in 1763. In erudite circles—among the *philosophes* and their physiocrat friends—the feeling was that a new, reforming era had begun. This initial foray by the enlightened monarchs called for moderation in the pace of further reforms, namely the abolition of serfdom, slavery, and, finally, the guilds in France. The changes were necessary, they said, but they required time so that those affected by the changes could adjust their conduct to the new circumstances. These hopes seemed close to fulfillment when Louis XVI's ascent to the throne in 1774 brought Turgot's appointment as comptroller-general; he immediately proclaimed free trade in grain and the abolition of guilds and their *jurandes* (officials).

Yet the year 1774 did not mark the start of a new period of reform; instead, the preceding wave crested and began to recede. The Pugachev uprising in Russia and the protests by masters and apprentices against the abolition of the guilds in France rapidly led to a revision of the enlightened monarchs' projects, both in France and Russia. The guilds were restored in 1776, the same year that the United States declared its independence and Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*. With slave revolts in the colonies and the end of Catherine's reforms, a new alignment of forces seemed to be taking shape. Voltaire, whose thought had been close to the thinking of the physiocrats, began to attack Necker and Quesnay, questioning the idea that economic liberty equaled justice.[14]

The 1780s therefore brought a radicalization of the *philosophes'* positions on the French monarchy, Russia, and ultimately slavery. Rather

than trusting reforms implemented by monarchs, who were henceforth regarded as despots, it was now considered better to place one's trust in popular movements. Now radicalized philosophers celebrated the slave revolts and the 1780 edition of Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* clearly incited the slaves to revolt. A revolutionary outlook took the place of reformism.

From the 1780s on, Diderot and Condillac associated their skepticism about enlightened despotism[15] with a more general criticism of European civilization. As Condillac suggested, "Too much communication with Europe was less likely to civilize [*policer*] the Russians than to make them adopt the vices of civilized nations."[16] From this point of view, the Russian reforms called for similar reforms in France and its colonies. The majority of the *philosophes* held this attitude.[17] As Diderot and Raynal asserted in their 1780 edition of *L'Histoire des deux Indes,* the return of the guilds and the riots in the colonies simply bore witness to the fact that Europe had nothing to teach Russia. Rather than enlightenment, it was barbarism that was spreading, and only Great Britain and the United States seemed to be advancing in the right direction.[18] The publication of the first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in 1776, and its success in France testifies to the same interest in signs of decline, not reform.

To sum up, during much of the eighteenth century, the attitudes of the French *philosophes*, economists, and travelers toward forced labor (serfdom and slavery) were nuanced by considerations both economic (forced labor is advantageous in certain situations) and political (reforms have to be gradual, and both owners and slaves must be educated before the system is abolished). These positions only became radicalized in the 1780s. In conjunction with this evolution, another development became apparent: the priority given to economic over political and ethical considerations, previously held only by a few physiocrats, became widespread. From that point on, more and more economists and *philosophes* accorded a cognitive and normative priority to pure economic calculation; however, this association came quite late and was not representative of eighteenth-century economic and philosophical thought. In contradiction to the retrospective image created from the nineteenth century on, almost all of these authors, aside from a few physiocrats, still linked economics and ethics.[19]

This chronology is also important, because it reveals a strong link between three objects of debate—Russia and its reforms, the colonial question, and the guilds in France. These three topics were connected because of the authors who wrote about them and the topics' intrinsic intellectual and political significance, and also because of the close

association between economics, philosophy, and politics in the culture of the era. It was not by chance that French authors often used the words *serf* and *slave* interchangeably. The difference we recognize—that the slave can be sold without land while the serf is attached to it—is a political and historiographical construct, mostly of the nineteenth century. In the late eighteenth century, philosophers and economists conflated the two phenomena, mainly to contrast them with free labor. This construct also responded to a particular intellectual and political context, namely the question of the status of labor in France.

In light of all this, with eighteenth-century thought ultimately quite uncertain in its view of (forced) labor, one can hardly say that the Russians misinterpreted these approaches and reshaped the liberalism and enlightenment of Europe into reforms that aimed to reconcile serfdom and the market, autocracy and reform. Indeed, the question for Russia was the same as for France: Should the legal status of the serfs be abolished entirely or only modified? And furthermore, should free-market economics alone determine the political and social status quo, or should it form part of a more complex political and moral order?

Enlightenment and Serfdom in Russia

No doubt we can also see the influence of more radical, even revolutionary, thinkers on that careful reader of Raynal—Aleksandr Radishchev.[20] Even so, it is worth noting that the most radical Russian approaches to serfdom often came from analyses of the American experience rather than of the French or European.[21]

However, because Catherine and hence the censors were reticent, even hostile, and because of the leanings of the Russian reformers and the Enlightenment philosophers who inspired them, this kind of radical outlook remained in the minority in Russia. Catherine instead encouraged her collaborators and young economists to familiarize themselves with and disseminate the ideas of the physiocrats. Mikhail Shcherbatov was not entirely wrong in claiming to be inspired by the French *philosophes* when he suggested keeping Peter the Great's Table of Ranks.[22] Like Voltaire and Diderot in the same era, he emphasized that the peasants were not yet ready for freedom and that, under certain circumstances, serf labor was not necessarily less productive than free labor, because it protected the serf from economic and climatic hazards. Even Vasilii Tatishchev, though distant in many ways from Shcherbatov, took up the argument (dear to Enlightenment philosophy) about the education of the peasant, which, he concluded, would eliminate the threat of revolts even while ensuring a more rational organization of labor.[23]

While the heritage of the physiocrats (the notion that agriculture and large-scale farming were the driving force of the economy) and of the moderate *philosophes* (support for education and a partial reform of serfdom) is apparent, Shcherbatov and Catherine were also inspired by German cameralism, which spread in Russia through the intermediary of the German economists in the Academy of Sciences and at Moscow University.[24] Thus August Ludwig Schlözer, in Russia since 1757 and an adjunct at the Academy of Sciences since 1762, approached his first lectures from a comparative perspective, as we can see from the questions he used as lecture titles: "How Great Is Russia in Comparison with Germany and Holland?" and "What Is a College of Justice [*iustits-kollegiia*]?"[25] He advocated a partial and gradual reform of serfdom and, like the German cameralists, strongly qualified the physiocratic critique of political arithmetic, which was rightly or (more often) wrongly associated with the policies of mercantilism and absolutism. Schlözer accepted the principles of political arithmetic that had guided economic and political reforms, first in England and then in France, in the first half of the eighteenth century. The strength and wealth of a country were identified with demographic growth, and the monarchy, aided by economists and appropriate statistical tables, could support this expansion. Because political arithmetic was harnessed relatively late in Russia, as it had been in Prussia, this intellectual current did not have the same revolutionary potential as it had had in England at the start of the century, when demographic increase was connected with free labor and reforms of laws on inheritance, the transmission of goods, and the status of the nobility.[26] In Russia, by contrast, a watered-down version of political arithmetic was proposed by German-born authors who sought and obtained resources to conduct statistical studies but did not connect these studies with reforms of the legal and economic system that underlay demographic changes.[27]

These studies became an instrument of propaganda for reforms rather than criticisms of their course. Thus, to the great pleasure of Catherine and her successors, several German and English journals published data on the Russian population, showing that the rate of infant mortality was lower in Russia than in Sweden.[28] The conclusion was that Russian economic and sanitary conditions were continually improving and the reforms already begun were working. Christian Schlözer, who succeeded his father, August, at the Academy of Sciences and then at St. Petersburg University, could not have been more explicit: the well-being of a people did not lie in its wealth, nor even in its power or the extent of its empire, but in "wise laws, princes, and magistrates who respect and observe them themselves, subjects who are united with their prince and each other, active virtue and instruction. . . . It is the confluence of these

things that results in the good use of power and wealth and in the happiness of a state."[29]

At the same time, Christian Schlözer, Karl Hermann, and Wolfgang Ludwig Krafft translated Smith, whom they read in a spirit close to German cameralism. In their rendering, Smith's invisible hand looked much like the visible hand of an enlightened monarch, while the ethic that was supposed to qualify pure utilitarianism lay less in providence than in the clear rules of a society of orders. The division of labor was accepted, but only within limits imposed by serfdom and by existing technical methods, which were themselves connected with the way society was organized in both the country and the city.[30] Among economists, Storch was undoubtedly the one who most violently criticized the system of slavery, and this despite his role at the University of St. Petersburg and the Academy of Sciences. A disciple of both Smith and political arithmetic, he attacked the cumbersome guild system in Europe, as well as forced labor in the colonies, Russia, and the United States. His criticism was based more on economics than morals: "Slaves have no incentive to apply themselves with zeal to labor to which they are forced; from this it follows that such labor produces very little." Moreover, he claimed, "Managing land that is cultivated by slaves involves arduous efforts and the burdensome obligation to be in residence." The problem was that "in general, slave masters are as much poor entrepreneurs as their slaves are poor workers," and he concluded, "only in Eastern Europe has the improvement of their lot been delayed by the slowness with which progress has occurred in the growth of wealth and civilization; but as these are everywhere advancing at a rapid pace, it is probable that here too, little by little, slavery and serfdom will disappear." Nevertheless, Storch opposed the immediate abolition of serfdom, which he believed would provoke riots, as well as bring about the collapse of Russia's economy and society. Instead he envisioned gradual reforms, beginning with giving the serfs more responsibility by assigning them a share of the revenues, expanding the use of *obrok* (quitrent) at the expense of *barshchina* (corvées), and, most of all, better educating the landowners about new management techniques. This process, he held, could progressively create the material and cultural conditions for emancipating the serfs.[31]

The sources and wide distribution of Storch's writings confirm the breadth of the debate about labor and serfdom that took place across Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century. Like the other German cameralists, Storch was not only well versed in Smith's work and an advocate of his ideas, he also drew inspiration from the reforms being undertaken in the German lands, where, as recent research shows, the evolution of serfdom had begun before the arrival of Napoleon's armies and the

civil code.[32] Storch argued that appropriately modified legal rules could support these transformations of serfdom. In this belief he was inspired by the monumental work of the Brandenburg landowner and lawyer Karl von Benekendorff, who compiled eight volumes of his insights on estate management and the historical evolution of the system of domains, as well as on the way that nobles and peasants used the law to regulate their relations.[33] Translated into various European languages, Storch's work was widely used by Jean-Baptiste Say, generations of the German historical school, and lastly the principal Russian economists of the turn of the twentieth century.[34]

According to these German economists in Russia, agricultural reform thus ought to consist of measures that favored investment and involved the large noble landlords but that did not touch the essentials of serfdom or the system of ranks. Arguably, it was precisely the emphasis on agricultural techniques and the organization of communal property that made it possible to relegate the question of labor and serfdom to the background. The works of French and English agronomists were widely disseminated among Russian reforming nobles. Confino illustrates this phenomenon perfectly, in both its momentum and its limitations, showing how noble landowners often undertook "reforms" by resorting to the customary methods of coercion to overcome the peasants' resistance to change. The nobles' written administrative instructions (*instruktsii*), which sought to regulate affairs on the local level, testify to this attitude.[35]

Even taking into account the role of cameralism and Russian conditions (such as the peculiar status of economists and academics and the persistence of serfdom), such an approach would have been inconceivable without similarly ambivalent attitudes within all tendencies in Enlightenment thought concerning labor, the relationship between law and economics, and the notion of educating peasants and workers.

These factors help explain contemporary observers' and later historians' drastically dissimilar assessments of Russia's economic development during this period. Depending on one's choice of estates and regions, one can highlight either stagnation or agricultural growth;[36] this scale effect testifies to the diversity of individual situations but also to the complexity of the system. As Confino has shown, the difficulty of transmitting new agricultural techniques was not only connected to the close link between these techniques and the social organization of the village and of Russia in general. Rather the complexity of the laws of the time is also reflected in the fact that the extent of the serfs' duties on the estate, and even the relative degree of their involvement in domestic, agricultural, and (proto-)industrial activities, was negotiable. Although there were no purely formal limitations, the laws governing serfdom

(especially the legal character attributed to the *instruktsii* that were issued by the landowners and enforced through the intermediary of village elders and heads of families)[37] allowed room for negotiation that in turn was responsible for the differences between regions and between estates.[38] In other words, a mix of incentives and constraints, not simple coercion, prevailed in the economy and society of eighteenth-century Russia. This period thus marks, if not the creation, then the reinforcement, of a direct connection—in ideas as well as economic and political practice—between Russia and various Western countries. Slaves in the colonies, apprentices in France, and serfs in Russia and Prussia all raised the same issue, namely the question of the relation between laborers' legal status and their economic condition. Precisely because this intellectual and economic wave affected both sides is why it would be a mistake to speak of "liberal" attitudes rooted in Western culture that in Russia were changed into merely partial reforms imposed from above. Quite the contrary: uncertainty about the status of labor and whether it made sense to preserve forced labor or the guilds, at least temporarily, was just as apparent in Russia as in France, Great Britain, and Germany; in all four countries, doubts persisted about the economic efficiency and social justice of a free market in both goods and labor.

In this context, some believed that economic conditions could be improved without touching the legal status quo, while others argued that only a radical overhaul of the law (suppressing serfdom, slavery, and the guilds) would ensure both social justice and economic growth. The former had little faith in the laws of the market, while the latter (following Adam Smith) saw Providence itself at work in them. These two positions served as a basis for all the discussions in the nineteenth century about the problems of proletarianization and of liberty versus new serfdom.

The Proletarians Are the Real Serfs: Utopian Socialism, Christian Socialism, and Radical Thought

In France as in England, in Russia as in Germany, the first half of the nineteenth century was distinguished by interest in a question that, while partly inherited from the preceding period, would intensify throughout the century (especially after 1850): should wage labor and industrialization be judged as progress and freedom from serfdom, or should it be seen as a new slavery? This debate over the rapid growth of wage labor and the condition of the worker was in fact at the heart of a discussion about the values of bourgeois and capitalist society. The critiques of wage labor as a new form of slavery spanned the continent and the political and intellectual landscape. They could be found among both Utopian and

Christian socialists, French ultra-Catholics, and, finally, in Marx. All spoke of wage labor as a new form of slavery, with minors and children held up most often as evidence. The criticism of a capitalism that lacked morals and restraints served to justify calls for the creation of cooperative and fraternal organizations, a return to Christian morality, or a critique of both capitalism and the regimes that emerged from the French Revolution.

While positions of the economists who connected slavery and wage labor were criticized as unscientific, even Marx ultimately succumbed to this rhetoric. He thus equated modern domestics with the house slaves of ancient times,[39] described industrial child labor as veritable slavery, and argued that under capitalism, slavery was barely veiled.[40] As a result, slavery was distinguishable from wage labor only in the way that surplus value was extracted.[41]

Nor, lastly, were the liberals and utilitarians any clearer. Jean-Baptiste Say morally condemned slavery but added that the right of slave ownership imposed restraints on the master as well as the slave, particularly against encroachments by the master and against any injury to the slave's capacity for labor. He also saw slavery as beneficial to the division of labor and to productivity.[42]

Though paradoxical at first glance, we also find this criticism of wage labor—and hence a certain rehabilitation of serfdom or slavery—in authors who, unlike Marx, Say, or Ricardo, put ethical considerations first. Thus, in one of the letters Frédéric Le Play wrote to his sister in 1844 from Nizhnyaya Salda, he marveled at the beauty of nature and the conditions of the serfs: "The peasant serfs in this part of Russia, and particularly on this estate, enjoy a well-being of which French peasants and workers have no idea. Every family possesses for its property a house and a garden as large as the family could desire. In the same enclosure, there is, apart from the house and garden, a courtyard and a building for the animals and provisions."[43]

The Russian case is precisely what strengthened Le Play's convictions about industrialization in France and the West: individualism and the accumulation of wealth degraded men, negating their humanity, and formal freedoms did not prevent material servitude. This point is crucial for all Utopian socialist and Christian socialist literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, which argued that formal liberty counts for little if industrialization creates material subjugation. At a certain point, economic laws become more powerful than juridical laws, so the only possible solution is to moralize the economy.

These observations can also be found among French travelers of the time. Thus between 1819 and 1824, Émile Dupré de Saint-Maure discussed serfdom in Russia while really thinking about Napoleon and

the revolution. He emphasized that "the thought that there are still, in Europe, Christians who are tied to the land is as burdensome to the imagination as it is to the heart." Yet he added that freedom should not be granted too abruptly, or "there will be more opposition from the peasants than among the nobility." He cited the liberation brought by Napoleon and how the peasants themselves had asked to return to their previous condition once the French army had left. In his eyes, these reactions were explained by the advantages of serfdom: "The Russian peasant is less subject to anxieties and fears of impoverishment than those of other countries. The landowner is completely responsible for the existence of those who cultivate the fields. . . . Accidents, drought, or winter do not bother the peasant, because the master will take care of [these problems]." Likewise, he claimed that in industry, where "the number of arms often exceeds the need for them . . . the worker is never plagued with fatigue, he does his job peacefully, like our day laborers in France, who do things at their own relaxed pace. One never sees, as with us, women working laboriously in the vineyards or handling a spade or children degrading their nascent strength through premature toil." Finally, he thought, one should not believe that large French farms that relied on wage labor were more profitable than Russian estates, as supervisors could not really keep watch over the workers, and once their eyes were turned, the workers would stop working.[44]

Returning to the old Enlightenment arguments of the 1780s, Custine and Jean-Baptiste May argued that while serfdom might be repugnant to the Christian soul, it should not be abolished in one blow, both because the Russians were not yet ready—in Custine's view, "It will take a century and a half to reconcile [their] national customs with European ideas"—and because such a step risked leading Russia onto the perverse European path of industrialization.[45] The critiques of industrialization and of revolution were ultimately the same: "It is to Russia," Custine observed, "that one must go to realize how terrible it is when European ideas are combined with Asia. . . . Is revolution as tyrannical in Paris as despotism is in St. Petersburg?"[46] And it fell to Balzac to conclude that "the Russian peasant is one hundred times happier than the twenty million Frenchmen who make up the [common] people. The Russian peasant is protected [and] would refuse his freedom."[47]

This image apparently contrasts to that of Britain, where pamphleteers, jurists, newspaper editors, and geographers presented their country as an island of liberty in a world full of slaves. There were Polish and Russian peasants who were mere slaves; there were beautiful Caucasian slaves, Christian slaves in the Ottoman Empire, galley slaves in France, and European slaves in North Africa.[48] In 1772, Arthur Young estimated

that of 775 million people on the face of the earth, only 33 million possessed freedom.[49]

Still, anti-slavery sentiment in Britain, although undoubtedly with a greater public resonance than in France,[50] had important limitations expressed not only in political and philosophical thought, but in the attitudes of justices and the law, as well. The following chapters will discuss these matters in detail. Before that, the questions posed by different currents in Western economic thought in the first half of the nineteenth century can be summarized as follows: The issue of the time was whether or not forced labor could be profitable. For those who thought it could be, there was the question of deciding between purely economic criteria and ethical ones. Some held that slavery should be suppressed even if it was more productive, while others raised doubts about this conclusion, as many eighteenth-century *philosophes* and physiocrats had. The debate about slavery was inseparable from the one about wage labor. It was precisely the reflection on the permissibility of forced labor and slavery that led several economists to question the exploitation of children, women, and wage laborers in general.

All the same, in Russia, during the first half of the nineteenth century—especially during the reign of Nicholas I—Russian reformers and intellectuals often shared the tendency of some Western economists to relativize the opposition between free and forced labor. Proletarians became slaves, while serfs enjoyed quite reasonable living and working conditions. From there it was but a step to not seeing any opposition between changes from below (through the education of nobles and peasants) and reforms imposed by force, from above. Both methods could coexist perfectly, just as incentives and constraints could both serve to regulate labor. This is also why there was no pro-serfdom movement in Russia of the same magnitude as the one defending slavery in the United States. Kolchin explains these different attitudes by the fact that in the United States the opposition between master and slave was rooted in race and not legal status (as in Russia), and that American slave owners lived on their estates, whereas Russian nobles were absentees. But that is only part of the argument. In Russia, the debate on serfdom was but one of a number of changes to take place in the country during a period of dramatic social and political upheaval. Like Russia's political and intellectual elites, its nobility were ultimately less afraid of the peasants' emancipation than of their proletarianization; and as the latter issue became the focus of the discussion, the nobles gradually came to accept the abolition of serfdom. At some point, the idea that wage labor was the worst form of slavery was accepted by much of the Russian elite. That is why in the twenty years preceding emancipation, the debate on serfdom intersected with that about the

commune and then about Russia's "uniqueness" vis-à-vis the West.[51] It was not so much the abolition of serfdom that was discussed, but the when and how, and consequently the status of the commune and of property. The emphasis on the commune and private property made it possible to relegate to the background the details of what emancipation was supposed to mean and just what kind of labor contract and labor relations would be put in place after the emancipation.[52]

Confirmation of this argument can be found in the way that Russian liberal thinkers envisioned labor in these years. Consider the case of Ivan Vernadskii, Professor of Political Economy and Statistics at the University of Kiev and then at the University of Moscow, and his wife Mariia.[53] Their starting point was the Adam Smith exalted by nineteenth-century liberal thinkers, namely, the theorist of the division of labor. Mariia Vernadskaia echoed Say's interpretation of Smith: that since the division of labor is the core principle of the economy, it is the basis on which all forms of organization, including slavery and serfdom, should be judged. As we saw earlier, Say concluded that serfdom should be condemned solely for moral reasons, despite sometimes being advantageous by strictly economic calculations. Vernadskaia arrived at the same conclusion and argued that East Indian plantations were an example of efficient division of labor.[54] From there it was but a step to asking first how to implement emancipation and then how to supervise and control the freed laborers.

Conclusion

Several general conclusions present themselves. In looking at the nineteenth as in the eighteenth century, it is difficult to speak of a "distortion" of Enlightenment and (later) liberal philosophy by Russian economists and administrators whose thinking supposedly continued to be influenced by the management of forced labor. On the contrary, as the cases of Say or Le Play demonstrate, the same ambivalence about forced labor—measuring it sometimes against moral principles and at others solely by a rational economic calculus—was widespread in Europe. This confirms a much more fundamental dilemma that extended beyond nineteenth-century liberal thought and concerned the freedom of labor and its relationship to morality and ethics, as well as politics. The dilemma involves the status of "free" labor and the role of law in relation to the economy. The economic rationality that issued from the French Revolution and was further developed over the first half of the nineteenth century had trouble reconciling these elements. That is why in the United States, even more than in Russia, it was the moral and

political arguments—particularly in the context of the shifting political balance in Congress—and not the strictly economic arguments, that enabled the victory of abolitionism.[55]

The relationship between labor and authority is central in this context. In Russia, as in Europe and the United States, the entire debate centered on the question of knowing how to increase productivity, whether through tighter controls or enhanced worker incentives. These were seen as the two available options, but it was not possible to entirely link either one to forced labor or wage labor. Although it might seem that serfdom involved constraint and wage labor involved freedom, the debates show precisely the opposite, for the partisans of a reformed (but not abolished) serfdom advocated giving the serfs more responsibility; they maintained that free wage labor entailed far greater supervising costs. Conversely, the most radical reformers considered coercion and serfdom to be less profitable than free labor, but paradoxically they did not hesitate to adopt coercive methods in order to impose reforms. This also tells us that the boundary between free and forced labor is not defined in some abstract and timeless way; rather, it is historically specific, and through discussions and practices it is continually brought back into play.

Of course, within this shared problematic and chronology we also find specificities. Thus the French images of Russia and serfdom were rooted in the difficult evolution from the guilds to the labor market and in the abolition of slavery. Later, after the revolution, the role of labor in capitalist society and of the peasants in Russia became connected to the memory of the revolution and to the character of the new political system, but also to the discipline of the markets. In Russia, these same debates about labor were rooted both in the relations between the nobles and the tsar and in the social position of knowledge and intellectuals. Both issues were at stake as the various parties discussed the status of serfs and workers. The solution was found in a particular plan that aimed to suppress serfdom without letting the peasants fall to the status of proletarians. Although this plan has been held up repeatedly as a case in point of Russian uniqueness, in reality it responded perfectly to utopias that were shared not just in Russia but also, and indeed especially, in the West, at that time. The dream of the Enlightenment in the mid-eighteenth century, but also of Le Play and many others, was precisely to link the reform of the Old Regime with measures to avoid the pauperization, proletarianization, or exploitation—the terms varied from one period to the next—of the mass of urbanized former peasants. Another dimension of this same utopia involved laborers who were inventive and free yet disciplined and bound by clear relations of subordination. That knot remains to be untied even now. But this attitude in Western thought, contrary to the received

wisdom, drew its inspiration less from Smith than from Bentham. It is now time to turn to the history of the Panopticon.

Notes

This chapter is a revised version of my article "Free Labor-Forced Labor: An Uncertain Boundary? The Circulation of Economic Ideas between Russia and Europe from the Eighteenth to the Mid-nineteenth Century," which appeared in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, 1 (2008), 1–27. I would like to express my gratitude to *Kritika* and the Muse project for granting the permission to reproduce it.

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3. Victor Riqueti Mirabeau, *L'ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population* (Avignon: no publ., 1758), 177.
4. Edward D. Seeber, *Anti-slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Studies, 1937); Henri Sée, "Les économistes et la question coloniale au XVIII^e siècle," *Revue d'histoire des colonies* 1 (1929): 381–92; André Labrouquère, *Les idées coloniales des physiocrates* (Paris: PUF, 1927).
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7. Baudeau published four articles about Russia in *Éphémérides du citoyen* 6, 5 (1766), 65–80; 6, 6 (1766), 81–96; 6, 7 (1766), 97–112; 6, 8 (1766),133–28.
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9. A. R. J. Turgot, *Oeuvres et documents le concernant*, 5 vols., ed. Gustave Schelle (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1913–23), 2:375. See also Turgot, "Plan de deux discours sur l'histoire universelle," in Turgot, *Oeuvres et documents le concernant*, 1:275–324.
10. François-Marie Voltaire, *Histoire de l'Empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (Paris, 1763), reissued in Voltaire, *Oeuvres historiques*, ed. René Pomeau (Paris: Pléiade, 1957).
11. Voltaire, "Letters to Catherine II of 1762, 1765, and 1766," in François-Marie Voltaire, *Correspondance*, 107 vols., ed. Théodore Bersterman (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1953–65).
12. Denis Diderot, "Propriété des terres et agriculture: 4 questions," and "Questions à Catherine II sur la situation économique de l'Empire de Russie," in *Diderot et Catherine II,* ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1899), reproduced in Denis Diderot, *Mémoires pour Catherine II* (Paris: Garnier, 1966). The quotation is from the 1899 edition, 813–17.
13. Denis Diderot, "Observations sur le Nakaz de Catherine II," in Denis Diderot *Oeuvres politiques* (Paris: Garnier, 1963), 365.

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16. Bennot-Etienne, abbé de Condillac, *Oeuvres de Condillac*, 23 vols. (Paris: C. Houel an VI [1798]), 20:63–64.
17. Yves Benot, "Condorcet journaliste et le combat anti-esclavagiste," in *Condorcet mathématicien, économiste, philosophe et homme politique*, ed. Pierre Crépel and Christian Gilain (Paris: Minerve, 1989), 376–84; Joseph Jurt, "Condorcet: l'idée de progress et l'opposition à l'esclavage," in Benot, *Condorcet mathématicien*,," 385–95.
18. Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes,* 10 vols. (Neuchatel and Geneva: Librairies associées, 1780).
19. Jean-Claude Perrot, *Histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique* (Paris: EHESS, 1992).
20. On the influence of Raynal on Radishchev, see Vladimir I. Moriakov, *Iz istorii evoliutsii obshchestvenno-politicheskikh vzgliadov prosvetitelei kontsa XVIII veka: Reinal' i Radishchev* [On the history of the evolution of the sociopolitical orientations of institutors during the eighteenth century: Raynal and Radishchev] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1981); Allison Blakely, "American Influences on Russian Reformists in the Era of the French Revolution," *Russian Review* 52, 4 (1993): 451–71. On Nikolai Novikov, see editor's note of 1784, reproduced in Nikolai.I. Novikov, *Izbrannye sochineniia* [Selected works] (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1951), 562.
21. On the impact of the American case on Russia in this era, see Blakely, "American Influences on Russian Reformists"; Max Laserson, *The American Impact on Russia: Diplomatic and Ideological, 1784–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); and Richard Hellie, *Slavery in Russia, 1450–1723* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). This link between events in the United States and radical reform survived to the start of the nineteenth century, when the slave revolt in Santo Domingo of the 1970s excited Karamzin. See Nikolai Karamzin, "Khronika," *Vestnik Evropy* (1802): 83–84; and Nikolai Karamzin, *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, ed. Richard Pipes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 45.
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48. Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 17.
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50. Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*.
51. Andrzej Walicki is one of countless authors who have analyzed the debate between the Slavophiles and Westernizers during this era. See A. Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). For an examination of the economic debates on this subject, see Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West*, and my *L'économie en revolution. Le cas russe, 1870–1930* (Paris: A. Michel, 1998).
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Boris N. Chicherin, *Sobstvennost' i gosudarstvo* [Property and the state], 2 vols. (Moscow, 1882–83; new edition, Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkoi Khristianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii, 2005).

53. See the following works by Vladimir Vernadskii: *Politicheskoe ravnovesie i Angliia* (Moscow: Univer. tipografiia, 1854); *Ocherk istorii politicheskoi ekonomii* (Saint Petersburg: Red. Ekon. Uzak.,1858); and *Prospekt politicheskoi ekonomii* (Saint Petersburg: Red. Ekon. Uzaz., 1858). On Vernadskii, see V. N. Rozental', "Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia programma russkogo liberalizma v seredine 50-kh godov XIXe veka," *Istoricheskie zapiski* 70 (1961): 197–222.
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55. Kolchin, *Unfree Labor*.