Whence came Catherinian urban reforms? Did Emelian Pugachev's rebellion do more than merely lead to the torture, hanging, beheading, and disemboweling of hundreds of nobles and townsmen? Did it not also stimulate Catherine the Great, having witnessed the near destruction of her empire under this assault of Cossacks, peasants, and tribesmen, to complete plans for a program of forced modernization or, more precisely, Europeanization of Russian society? If the behavior of the townsmen, both before and during the Pugachev rebellion, invigorated Catherinian urban reform, what specific behaviors, or lack thereof, were responsible for the empress' Charter to the Towns of 1785, the final step in her urban reform efforts? Did she believe that, when implemented, this reform would help bring socio-economically backward Russia closer to the level of development found in the West, and make the country, for the first time, truly governable, safe from a repetition of the Pugachev horrors?

This study proposes a reevaluation of the empress' motivations in promulgating this seminal piece of urban reform legislation. Delving as it does into the question of intent, much that the study presents must remain speculative, which is not to say idle. For far too long our analysis of Catherinian Russia has been hindered by the mental domination of conventional wisdoms. Wisdoms because the interpretations of Catherine's motivations consistently fall into two major schools of thought: liberal and Soviet Marxist. Neither school, despite its popularity, adequately treats the question of Catherine's purpose in producing this legislation. This is true because neither actually focuses on the legislation itself. Protagonists from each, rather, artificially force the law into preconceived molds and in the process "prove" their assumptions while losing sight of what the leg-
islation actually attempts to enact. It is time, therefore, for some textual criticism within the Charter's historical context; in particular, we need to focus on the 40 percent of the Charter, the Artisans' Statute, which because of the limitations on analysis imposed by our intoxication with conventional macrotheories, has remained outside the mainstream of our conceptual framework. I propose that viewing the Charter from the perspective of the empress' lifelong commitment to social engineering, specifically, transforming Russia's urban population into the stuff of progress, will provide new insights into Russia's urban history and the efforts of the country's elites to complete a program of revolutionary social reorganization.

But before launching into these uncharted seas, we need first to appreciate the limits imposed on our analysis of Catherine's motivations by the dominant schools of thought. Liberals interpret the Charter in accordance with their basic premise of the failure of self-government potential to develop in Russia; the Soviets treat the law within the framework of an assumed struggle by a developing bourgeoisie to gain additional political power. The liberal school ultimately rests on the work of the two leading historians of the eighteenth-century town, I. I. Ditiatin and A. A. Kizevetter. It is thus worthwhile to review their assumptions and conclusions. Both maintain that the Charter's guiding principle was the unification of all permanent residents possessing immovable property, regardless of estate, into a single urban society. This would create an urban citizenry unbounded by estate barriers, the basis, they believed, for the evolution of truly representative urban democracy. The second assumed goal was the creation of urban independent self-government.1 Neither goal being successfully implemented, the Charter, to their way of reasoning, represents yet another failure of the evolution of democracy within the political desert of autocracy. According to this view, the peculiarities of Russia's socio-political development account for this tragic failure. Social unification was successfully thwarted by the Russian nobility's disdain to cooperate

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1. I. I. Ditiatin, Ustroistvo i upravlenie gorodov Rossii, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Tip. P. P. Merkul'eva, 1875-77), I, 415-60; A. A. Kizevetter, Gorodovoe polozhienie Ekateriny II 1785 g.: Opys istoricheskogo komentar'ia (Moscow: Tip. I. Moskovskogo universiteta, 1909), pp. 321-473. The nineteenth-century Russian liberals viewed the Charter from a narrowly political-administrative perspective. In particular, that section of the law pertaining to the General Town Council is singled out for special attention. This over-concentration on the political is curious in view of the fact alone that in legislation containing 178 sections, with one of those sections, remeslennoe polozhenie, containing an additional 117 paragraphs, only 23 sections are devoted to this executive organ.