from 5.27 rubles per person in 1885 to 9.51 rubles in 1904, then dipped in 1905-08 but rose again to 9.27 rubles in 1913. In this category, defense spending devoured the largest share, as it increased from 2.65 rubles per person in 1885 to 5.67 rubles in 1913, far more than 0.90 rubles per person devoted to health and education in 1913. The collapse of the railroad network in World War I comes as no surprise in view of the low per capita amounts of investment in transportation and communication, which rose slowly after 1885 to 2.30 rubles in 1899 but then declined to 1.40 rubles in 1913.

Moreover, Gregory finds that both the tsarist and Soviet economies "relied heavily on extensive growth, that is, growth based on the expansion of factor inputs." Before 1917, 70 percent of new production came from this source, compared to 84 percent thereafter. Although these figures indicate that "tsarist productivity appears to have grown faster than Soviet productivity" (p. 134), the inability of the tsarist economy to apply modern technology capable of squeezing rapidly increasing returns out of stable levels of inputs suggested the persistence of inherent problems in that system as well.

A careful reading of the author's relatively positive assessment of the tsarist economy therefore reveals some somber aspects. The same could be said for his treatment of NEP. The crucial question now is whether the freedom recently accorded to entrepreneurship can compensate for the administrative strictures that clumsily defended the Russian economy from foreign competition in the past few centuries. It is also unclear whether the population will tolerate the new hardships caused by market reforms. However the great drama turns out — and most experts predict decades of painful adjustment even if the political environment remains favorable, a most doubtful assumption from the perspective of early 1995 — Gregory's analysis of the Tsarist, NEP, and Stalinist systems is simply essential for an understanding of Russian economic trends in the past century.

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Having this nineteenth-century classic in a paperback translation is a great gift to teachers and their students. Contained therein is an entire world, several perhaps. First, some facts. Engelgardt was a progressive chemist and agronomist from St. Petersburg who in 1871 was exiled to one of his family estates in Smolensk province, apparently for having been present at a social gathering where politically suspect sentiments had been expressed and reported — a depressingly familiar sequence of events, though at that time the consequences seem refreshingly humane. Remaining there until his death in 1893, Engelgardt wrote his famous letters over a fourteen-year span — eleven of them for the populist journal, Otechestvennye zapiski, the twelfth for the liberal Vestnik Evropy.

At the time, these letters from the country were read largely as a first-hand account of rural and peasant life in the aftermath of the emancipation, a subject of intense interest and concern to Russia's educated classes. But they are also a fascinating account of the confrontation between town and country, populist intelligentsia and narod, in the form of one urban, educated and progressive individual's commitment to this world and his highly personal reaction, which
ranged from utopian optimism, to alcoholism and pessimism, and finally to a more realistic pragmatism. In retrospect, meanwhile, what these letters reflect more than anything else is the intellectual assumptions and limitations of post-Emancipation Russia's educated classes; for Engelgardt never seems fully to escape the paternalistic dirigisme of his class, never seems to understand the world he has been thrust into and ends up partly embracing. As such, these letters represent a marvelous means of access to the illusions of Engelgardt's world.

What the letters can tell us about the world of the peasant is more problematical, however. To be sure, our observer has made valiant efforts at understanding rural Russian life, and he is well aware of and levels much sarcasm at many of his own and his class' misconceptions. And while the letters provide interesting and perhaps even realistic pictures of peasant life, they are also filled with descriptions whose veracity remains hard to determine because of their stereotypical characteristics: for example, the kulak exploiter, the baba as virago, the chaotic communal assembly, the universal dependence on vodka as a medium of economic and social exchange, the peasants' fatalism, their skepticism towards proposals for agricultural change, the valuation of livestock over children, Russian toilets or the lack thereof, and so on. Such reservations do not, however, mean that Engelgardt's account lacks value — only that it is always mediated through the prejudices of an urban intellectual who does not seem to grasp quite what he sees.

Central to the entire story is the clash between what might be termed the peasants' individualism or perhaps opportunism and adaptability and Engelgardt's own commitment to a socialist or communalist ideology. And while he never abandons his convictions, he does come to understand, I think, that they do not conform to either peasant beliefs or rural realities. Yet he remains passionately critical of the peasants' "individualism" — trapped in a polarized view of the world that does not understand the nature of the economic and social processes which bring the peasants' so-called collectivism or individualism to the fore. He also seems unaware of the central role paternalistic coercion plays in preserving the extended peasant family — and by extension the commune — though such a conclusion follows from his evidence. On the other hand, his opposition to individual peasant family farms is accompanied by an astute observation that private property ownership alone can not change peasant consciousness.

Engelgardt's attitude towards the market and rural capitalism is, meanwhile, almost schizophrenic — on the one hand effectively allying with government officials in criticizing their role in breaking down traditional peasant society — itself a product of serfdom and hence hardly something to wax nostalgic about — and, on the other hand, blithely using such quintessentially capitalist criteria as profit and loss to determine what he considers successful economic activity. And, like all members of educated society at the time, whether populist or government, his image of the ideal peasant life is of the peasant as exclusively an agriculturist, even as he praises entrepreneurial rural artely that have broken with agriculture. Ultimately, however, Engelgardt seems to accept the inevitability of the expanding market and of the peasants' "individualism" by returning to his own roots, reinvolving himself in the "small deeds" of professional agronomy and experimenting with chemical fertilizers. Yet this response represents more a continuation of his utopian and somewhat impatient search for some kind of panacea, or miracle, that will provide a quick fix for what supposedly ails peasant agriculture rather than any kind of commitment to a more gradualist and evolutionary approach to rural development.