Sytin learned the ropes of the publishing trade and familiarized himself with popular reading tastes. In 1879 he became an independent publisher, moving into quarters across the Moscow River from the Kremlin. Over the next four decades Sytin’s fortunes grew, along with the scope of his publishing activity. Targeting newly literate peasants as his audience, he turned out pictures, booklets, cheap versions of the classics, and a phenomenally successful line of calendars (by 1893, his company could take credit for 70 percent of all calendars published in Russia). Hoping to improve his reputation among the intelligentsia, he joined forces with Tolstoi to provide the masses with good books through the Mediator (Posrednik) series. He also began to publish school textbooks, eventually capturing more than one-fifth of the domestic market.

Sytin’s most challenging enterprise was the newspaper Russian Word (Russkoe slovo), which he founded in 1894 and gradually transformed into a large-circulation, progressive daily, edited for a time by the Marxist economist N. V. Valentinov. Its growing influence guaranteed official harassment. With a circulation approaching one million, Russian Word grew increasingly critical of the autocracy during the First World War and, according to the author, “unquestionably played a major role in spreading disaffection with the imperial regime.”

On the eve of the 1917 Revolutions, Sytin was responsible for printing one-quarter of Russia’s books. Within a few months, his publishing empire had ceased to exist. The Bolshevik government confiscated his property, turning the Russian Word plant over to Izvestiia, and even briefly jailed its former owner. Lenin’s utilization of old-regime expertise enabled Sytin to work for Gosizdat and later undertake a couple of overseas fundraising missions. The post-Leninist Soviet state, however, had no use for Sytin. He endured its abuse until his death in 1934.

Ruud’s biography benefits from crisp writing and thorough research, much of it in Soviet archives. It tells the story of a Russian Horatio Alger, a canny muzhik who spiritually enriched his homeland while materially enriching himself. To what degree Sytin acted out of selfish motives, and to what degree out of altruistic ones, may well be impossible to determine, but the author carefully considers the possibilities throughout the book. Equally praiseworthy is his attempt to place Sytin within the context of a country, and an industry, that were experiencing the pangs of modernization, and indeed whose modernization Sytin himself advanced. (The publisher faced labor unrest as as his enterprises grew but defused it with policies wiser and more generous than those of his government.) Sytin’s relations with the celebrities of his era also receive due attention, including not only Tolstoi but also Chekhov, Gor’kii, Alexander III, Nicholas II, and even Rasputin, whom the publisher detested. Ruud might have done more in applying the concepts of Joseph Schumpeter to explain Sytin. Nevertheless Russian Entrepreneur assumes a prominent place amidst the growing scholarship on Imperial Russia’s social and cultural history.

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This is a fine collection of essays on peasant life in the period between the emancipation and the revolutions of 1917. All the essays have appeared previously as arti-
cles or parts of books, but to have them together in an affordable paperback provides
great opportunities for classroom use and for catching up on one's readings in peasant
studies. The essays are well chosen to provide many perspectives on peasant life, and
most are excellent in their own right.

Having read through this book, I pulled down my much-used The Peasant in
Nineteenth-Century Russia, edited by Wayne S. Vucinich, to compare the two. While
some of the earlier essays stand up very well, my general impression is that Russian
studies in the U.S. have made great progress in twenty years. Most of the newer essays
have a tighter focus than the more general essays of the Vucinich collection, but
nonetheless provide a clearer and more comprehensive view of peasant life. Several ex-
plore areas that had not been studied in English twenty years ago.

Boris Mironov's essay on the post-emancipation commune leads off. Beginning
with a succinct description of the types of communes, Mironov then examines leader-
ship and the role of custom in communal governance, communal economics and social
mobility. He concludes by focusing on change in the post-reform era and explores rea-
sons for the durability of the commune. Several points merit special comment. Most
nineteenth-century observers of peasant life, including government commissions, and
most recent historians have found evidence for the gradual impoverishment of the peas-
antry in the decreasing size of land allotments after the emancipation. Several of the
other contributors to this collection share that view and conclude that this drove peas-
ants to seek supplementary employment off the land. Departing from this, Mironov
finds that the "clearing" of redemption payments and an increase in land value made
farming "profitable," and the peasants no longer tried to free themselves of the land
and abandon the village." (p. 30) Moreover he claims that in the late 1870s (it is un-
clear if he meant then and thereafter) an oversupply of peasant labor reduced opportuni-
ties for employment away from the village. Insofar as it is accurate, this seems a valu-
able corrective to our standard view. And it seems to be substantiated at least in part by
other evidence that several of these essayists mention but do not link to the possibility
of peasant well-being. The rapid growth of the peasant population after the emancipa-
tion does not accord well with general, if gradual, impoverishment. Something sup-
ported those extra mouths. Mironov's other major conclusion that the gap between city
and village widened in these decades and became an important cause of the twentieth-
century revolutions seems less well supported. Other essays in this collection show
quite the opposite, that peasants in larger numbers went to the cities and urban culture
made its way increasingly to the villages. There were other, better reasons for the rural
revolutions.

The next three essays treat overlapping areas. Rose Glickman's "Peasant Women
and their Work," is a readable survey of women's place and labor in the peasant family
and village. Barbara Engel explores the lot of peasant women whose men
"outmigrated" to find work, and finds many small differences from the peasant norm
described by Glickman. Since the village needed the income of the men who left to
find work, most were married to village girls, many apparently before they were per-
mitted to leave. Engel discovers that the rate of marriage was higher than usual in areas
of heavy outmigration and that village girls preferred the men who left to the men who
stayed to farm. Some combination of urbanity, higher income and absence made their
hearts grow fonder. Because their men returned only infrequently, wives of migrants
had more work to do, but on the other hand they enjoyed greater prosperity and com-
fort, suffered less from physical abuse, had fewer pregnancies and lost fewer babies, and