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PRIVILEGE AND FREEDOM: THE EMANCIPATION DEBATE IN LIVLAND, 1817-1819*

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Background

Throughout much of the 18th century the topic of agrarian reform had been on the agenda of the Livland Landtag, mostly at the insistence of Russian imperial power. In 1739, the Imperial Russian Justice Committee had asked the Livland Ritter for clarification of the legal relations between landlord and serf in the particular areas of ownership, labor dues and corporal punishment. The response from the Ritter was the Rosen Declaration, an uninhibited statement of the unlimited power of the landlord over his serf. This early confrontation contained the pattern of future imperial and provincial interaction in agrarian reform. The intrinsic political element ensured that a dependent province would have to accede to the Empire but this was never done speedily or fully, especially as the Empire's involvement was sporadic.

In 1765, after a visit to the province, Catherine II issued stern warnings to the Landtag in Livland through Governor Browne, deploring the miserable oppression of the serf under the "tyrannical severity and dissolute despotism of its landowners."¹ The Ritter rebutted the Russian accusations

* This article is based mainly on arguments presented in the Livland press from August 1817 to June 1818. Twenty-seven articles, mostly from *Neue Inländische Blätter*, were collected and reprinted by Jégor von Sivers in 1878. Jégor von Sivers, *Zur Geschichte der Bauernfreiheit in Livland. Wiederabdruck einer Reihe von Flugschriften und Zeitungsartikeln aus den Jahren 1817-1818* (Riga, 1878). Further background to the debate, especially from the perspective of *Stand*, is provided by Gustav von Rennenkampff, *Bemerkungen über die Leibeigenschaft und ihre Aufhebung* (Copenhagen, 1818). For the debate in the Landtag, documents as reproduced in Reinhold Johann Ludwig Samson von Himmelstern, *Historischer Versuch über die Aufhebung der Leibeigenschaft in den Ostseeprovinzen in besonderer Beziehung auf das Herzogthum Livland*. Beilage zur Wochenschrift *Das Inland* (1838) were used.

of maltreatment of their serfs, arguing that since the serfs were part of the landed property, it was in their own economic interest to afford them fair treatment.² It was at the same Landtag that the landowners severely criticized one of their own members, Karl Schoultz von Ascheraden, who had introduced reforms on his own lands the previous year which were very similar to what Browne recommended.³ In trying to persuade his fellow Ritter of the need for reform, Schoultz drew on reasons of humanity and economic sense but underlined the most urgent reason of all: "If we do not set ourselves limits . . . nothing is more certain than that limits will be imposed on us."⁴ Browne had intimated that if the Ritter were not willing to take the necessary measures, Catherine was prepared to issue the law herself. There would be more imperial threats over the next hundred years.

In April 1765, the Landtag agreed to measures which would in part meet the expectations of the Russian government: the serf's right to own what he himself had acquired, the regulation of his dues and labor according to the *Wackenbücher*,⁵ a maximum limit on corporal punishment and incarceration and the peasant's right to complain about any infringements of these measures. These reforms fell short of what the serfs had enjoyed under Swedish rule in the previous century and were never fully implemented. In 1777, for example, Governor Browne chided the Landtag for lack of implementation of the 1765 measures. In 1800 Tsar Paul I threatened those landlords who did not adhere to the measures with confiscation of property.

As the 18th century drew to a close, pressure for change grew as publicists like Heinrich von Jannau and Garlieb Merkel became a factor in the dissemination of information and expression of criticism, as the ideas of the French revolution spread and as Russia continued to play its imperial role in Livland, especially in the period of Catherine's *Statthalterschaft* (1783-1796). It is worth noting that the voices raised in criticism of the Ritter's power over their serfs were supporters of Russia. Garlieb Merkel, for example, saw the very act of belonging to the Russian Empire as being of crucial importance for the peasants.⁶ Another non-Ritter force had benefited under Russia, the non-matriculated nobles. The *Landsassen* were granted representation on Catherine's Commission, the right to keep any noble estates in their possession and the right to representation on the Landtag, the political monopoly of matriculated nobles, in matters of tax.

Discord and uncertainty on the political level were intensified by the deteriorating economic situation. Centuries of serfdom, compounded by the effects of wars and imperial fiscal demands, had taken their toll on the economy. Landlord energies went into the supervision of an unwilling, unproductive labor force rather than into the rational management of their estates. Most landowners were financially unable to invest in better, labor-saving equipment and outdated methods together with the lack of rational

planning and the serf's attitude of minimal fulfilment of his labor dues turned once fertile fields into useless soil.⁷ Matters were exacerbated by the replacement of the land tax by Catherine's poll tax, which burdened both lord and peasant more. The labor norms agreed to in 1765 were increasingly arbitrarily exceeded. The 1798 labor norm was double that of 1760.⁸

The distilling of spirits had always been a popular side enterprise of the Ritter, especially since they had the monopoly on the sale of spirits, but it gained momentum at the end of the century with new chemical and technological advances and with imperial permission, granted in 1766, to sell to other countries. St Petersburg was an important market.⁹ By 1794, the price of a barrel of spirits was double the price of grain needed to produce it.¹⁰ The value of estates was dependent on the price of spirits and in the 1820s this dependency would be an important factor in the economic plight of the nobles.

The economic situation in Livland did not improve during the *Statthaltschaft*.¹¹ Landlord debt, in the absence of any credit institute,¹² continued to increase, estates were mortgaged, and bankruptcy and public auction were more frequent. In Livland eight estates were sold between 1765 and 1770. In the period 1796-1800 the number was eighty-four.¹³ By the end of the century, the Ritter were in debt to the amount of eleven million rubles. Despite the founding of the Society for the Public and Economic Welfare of Livland in 1792 and its physiocratic commitment to the improvement of agriculture as the basis of a nation's wealth,¹⁴ farming methods in the Baltic remained antiquated well into the 19th century.

In 1795, the Landtag broached the subject of agrarian reform under the guidance of Friedrich Wilhelm von Sivers, himself a member of the Society,¹⁵ "on his own initiative or under the orders of Catherine."¹⁶ On Sivers' invitation, the General Superintendent Pastor Sonntag, who had apparently used the writings of Garlieb Merkel, preached to the Landtag on the plight of the serfs. Thus the era of reform began with impulses from a variety of sources: the Empire, the Ritter, the clergy, the *Literaten* and the practically-oriented Society.

Sivers' proposals were discussed both in the Landtag and in imperially appointed commissions but were never actually ratified due to divisions within the Landtag. Rival factions, and in particular Sivers, turned to the Tsar to settle their disputes, thus implicitly assigning Russian imperial power an active role in the Livland reform process. The deaths of two Russian rulers¹⁷ slowed the process even more.¹⁸ The reform proposals did not add much to the 1765 measures.¹⁹ Labor dues, for example, were to be regulated where they had not been before, and a new date for submission of the *Wackenbücher* was set for August 1797, some thirty years after the first ultimatum. A new impulse was the proposal to set up peasant courts for the

settlement of peasant disputes and the compilation of a law book for these courts.

Sivers' proposals lay more or less dormant until resubmitted to Alexander I in 1802. They restarted the reform discussion but never actually became law.

The 1804 Reform as an Expression of Imperial Policy

The 1804 reform, the culmination of the reform process begun in 1795, was an imperial reform, neither drafted nor passed by the Livland Landtag. It was completely inconsistent with reform policy in Livland. In effect, it was the result of another failure on the part of the Livland Ritter to meet imperial expectations in agrarian reform.

Sivers' proposals had not met with imperial approval. In December 1802, Alexander wrote that "[the proposals] do not fully achieve the aim which one expects from the charitable intentions of the Livland nobility" and offered suggestions of his own which went beyond the proposals.²⁰ Sivers incorporated the Tsar's proposals but in February 1803 the Landtag, its members united, Alexander noted, only by their disunity,²¹ submitted a new draft reform which Alexander found unacceptable. The Tsar now deemed the Landtag incapable of coming up with a reform which would grant the peasant what Russia advocated: "a political existence, the right to property, and freedom from arbitrariness." "To achieve this," Alexander declared, "I deem it necessary to organize a committee under my own supervision."²² This was a serious blow to provincial autonomy. The reform which the ensuing imperial committee drafted was based firmly on the principle of protective rights for the peasant and "left nothing undefined in all the relations of the peasants to the landlords."²³ Measures which the Ritter had fought to avoid for decades were now imposed: peasant hereditary tenure of land was established and the peasant protected in his holdings; the peasant was given the right to acquire, buy, possess, sell and bequeath all kinds of property including land. These were perceived as serious encroachments on the Ritter's exclusive right to the land.

Landowner discontent was exacerbated by the administration of the reform. For peasant obligations to be properly quantified, estates had to be measured, a complex task since both the quantity and quality of land were to be taken into account, based on the Swedish method of taxation, a measure urged on the Ritter by Russia in 1765 but never properly implemented. The survey eventually begun in 1809 under the administration of the *Messrevisionskommission* would last until 1823 and would cost three million silver rubles. Despite increasing complaints from the Livland Ritter, Alexander sternly refused to consider any changes.²⁴

There were, in fact, clear indications that the imperial government approved enough of its own reform to apply it elsewhere. Estland had drafted a reform in 1804, which did not meet with unconditional imperial approval, and by 1810 imperial authorities were insisting on a new one based on the principles of the Livland reform. Unable to accept this, the Estland Landtag of February 1811 decided that the only way to avoid the Russian proposals was to free the relationship of lord and peasant from the constraints imposed by the Livland reform. The peasant would be liberated and the land would remain the unlimited property of the landowner. Mutual voluntary contracts would regulate the relationship between lord and peasant. The Tsar approved and the law was put into effect in January 1816.

There was a certain ambivalence in imperial policy. It supported both the Livland 1804 reform based on economic regulation and at the same time approved the Estland emancipation reform based on economic freedom. As late as August 1814, after he had already approved the Estland emancipation proposal in principle, the Tsar wrote to Governor General Paulucci: "In view of the measures now in force regulating the rights and duties of the Livland peasants, I find it necessary to establish a reform for the good of the peasants in Kurland."²⁵ The Ritter of Kurland understandably took this to be a recommendation of the 1804 Livland reform and were cautious about emancipation, declaring it "dangerous and disadvantageous."²⁶ The reform they drafted in December 1814, however, deviated in principle from the Livland model in that it proposed free contracts without a survey to regulate peasant labor dues and did not grant the peasants hereditary tenure but rather life-long tenure. Alexander stated quite clearly that a survey was an integral part of the Livland reform²⁷ and gave the Kurland Ritter the choice between the 1804 reform, presumably with a survey, and the Estland reform. Unwilling to take on the prohibitive costs of such a survey²⁸ and convinced by Paulucci that emancipation was the Tsar's will, the Kurland Ritter chose to emancipate their peasants. Imperial ratification followed in August 1817.

Although the Tsar supported the Livland 1804 reform and there was no indication of imperial pressure to replace it with emancipation, it was clear that the pressure of example in the neighbouring provinces would be strong enough to undermine the system in Livland. The Ritter were fully aware of the pressures.

[O]ur agriculture is threatened by a crisis which can only be solved by the freedom of the peasants; ...the spirit of our century cannot be resisted, it is our duty to take up problems which will otherwise fall on our children; this great step will not be against the will of our ruler, since our neighbouring province is involved in it with the highest permission; ... the inevitable cannot be avoided for long, sooner or later that must happen which will be salutary for all ...²⁹

The inevitable, however, was not necessarily the Estland emancipation model and while there were few voices raised against emancipation as such: there was disagreement about the actual modality of emancipation. There were those who believed a different model was necessary for Livland, one that had yet to be worked out. "... [H]ow shall it [emancipation] happen, how shall it be organized so that everything which has guaranteed our existence up until now will not be lost in chaos? ... No one has yet attempted to answer this question."³⁰ Heinrich von Hagemeister attempted an answer in August 1817 and the debate occasioned by his proposal continued vigorously in the press until the Landtag in June of the following year. At the core of the debate was the land question. As one landowner acknowledged openly, even at the end of the debate: "The right to serfdom is an inhuman one, which all landowners in Livland would renounce, if only there was no need to fear the loss of the all too human right to hard-earned property."³¹

Hagemeister and the majority of Livland landowners, like their counterparts in Estland, took for granted their unlimited right to the land, as reaffirmed in the Estland emancipation reform. Those few who openly questioned this right were not of the Ritter ranks. Garlieb Merkel did suggest that where once the peasant had belonged to the land, the land should now belong to the peasant.³² There was a suggestion published anonymously that the peasant should be allowed to purchase the land with the help of credit set up by the government, as in Denmark.³³ A surveyor of crown lands purported to speak for the peasants when he also suggested peasant purchase of land,³⁴ but these proposals were not taken up in the debate. The principle of landownership was never seriously threatened, especially since it was a privilege imperially upheld.

The landlord's exclusive right to the land, however, was incompatible with the principle of *laissez-faire*, which the Estland reform purported to represent. While the Estland reform process had concerned itself little with the fate of the peasants without land in a free market, the matter was a central point in the reform debate in Livland and the various proposals mooted in the press indicate attempts to reconcile incompatible elements, to mold *laissez-faire* into the strictures of landlord privilege or landlord privilege into the system of *laissez-faire*. One of the main reasons for concern in Livland about the economic plight of the freed peasant was the fact that the serfs there would be freed from a protected economic situation where they had secure hereditary tenure of the land. Although personally unfree, the Livland serf enjoyed a certain amount of economic security. The Estland reform would grant personal freedom and economic insecurity. There was also a political motive. The 1804 reform had been imposed imperially and as long as Russia showed no signs of wishing it replaced,

open criticism was not diplomatic. A new reform, however, would allow the Ritter to free themselves of the restraints imposed on them by 1804.

The Livland Emancipation Debate in the Press

In his attempt to answer the question of how emancipation should be dealt with in Livland, Hagemeister tried to combine economic protection with personal liberty. He was not an ardent supporter of 1804, pointing out that peasant discontent was a strong motive for a new reform,³⁵ and he fully subscribed to the principle of landownership as expressed in the Estland reform. "To each his own"³⁶ was the formula whereby he stressed that the landlord should keep the land and the peasant his labor. He did, however, believe that without security of land there were economic dangers in emancipation and supported peasant hereditary tenure, an integral part of the 1804 reforms. Hagemeister viewed 1804 as a preparation for freedom, as a bridge to emancipation, and as such an integral part of emancipation. If the Estland emancipation was applied, it would cancel 1804 completely and remove an economic right already granted to the peasant. "Free competition may be more applicable where hereditary use of the farm has not been granted to the peasant farmers by already existing laws."³⁷ Hagemeister also argued that emancipation without land security was not economically advantageous to the country. Limited leases would encourage the peasant to farm from a short-term perspective without long-term plans for land improvement. Good land would be systematically exhausted.³⁸ Other defenders of economic protection shared this view. "The shorter a lease, the greater the concern about immediate profit and the less attention paid to long-term agricultural planning."³⁹ Adam Smith had considered the French leases of 27 years too short. Leases, he said, should be granted for life.⁴⁰

The majority of Ritter were opposed to hereditary tenure, the basis of the 1804 reform. There were those who viewed it as a violation of the landowner's exclusive right to the land, as a subterfuge for forcibly taking the landlord's land from him to give to the peasant. "What is hereditary tenure (*Erbpacht*) really but a modified hereditary ownership (*Erbbesitz*)? ... Hereditary tenure is nothing more than a purchase, with the difference that the price will never be paid."⁴¹ Baron von Buxhövdén pointed out that possession of the land had been gained through the "most sacred contracts" and since the land was the incontrovertible property of the landowner, his free administration of it could not be limited by law.⁴² In May 1818, shortly before the Landtag discussed the issue, Buxhövdén spoke for many when he claimed that granting the peasants hereditary use of the land would cancel the property rights of the lord. Hereditary tenure had been acceptable under serfdom, since serfdom was the condition governing it. When this condition

was removed, the right to unlimited possession of the land should be restored to the landowner.⁴³

It was hardly surprising that hereditary tenure was a policy with little support. It had never received the vote of the Landtag. The 1803 reform draft had implicitly allowed appropriation of peasant land (although the Estland 1802 reform had supported hereditary tenure). It was the 1804 reform, drafted by imperial commission, which had established hereditary tenure of land for the peasants. A new reform would give the Ritter a chance to remove a policy they had never really supported.

The second consideration against hereditary tenure was stressed by the group led by August von Bock and motivated less by the perceived violation of landlord privilege than by economic considerations. For Bock, hereditary tenure was a privilege given to some peasants at the expense of the majority, whom it deprived of the prospect of land. This was what Denmark had experienced but Bock used the example of 1804. It meant that potentially good farmers were excluded from farming by often less able hereditary tenure holders.⁴⁴ This argument was also used by those whose primary concern was landownership. Buxhövdén, for example, who believed hereditary tenure was a violation of a sacred right, argued that “freedom does not mean making the farm-hand a slave of the farmer and creating two classes from one.”⁴⁵

Unlike Hagemeister, Bock was not disturbed by removing a right already granted. For him, 1804 was not a bridge to freedom. “I also think the present situation is a transition to something better, not in the form of a bridge, however, but much more in the form of a crutch which can be confidently thrown away as soon as one can and wants to walk on healthy feet.”⁴⁶ Bock firmly believed in Smith’s principle that free competition rather than laws must be the only economic regulator. “Free competition will help everywhere and where in force no-one who wants to work can end up in need ... privileges and monopolies suffocate generally all industriousness and seldom bear good fruit.”⁴⁷ Bock supported the Estland model by which the economic fate of the peasant and lord should be regulated by free contracts on a free market, but however much Bock subscribed to laissez-faire economic practice, he and other like-thinking Landtag members were firmly committed to Ritter privilege. “Prosperity founded on the destruction of another can never bring any good.”⁴⁸ Bock coined the phrase “Land mein Zeit dein” to summarize the fact that the land belonged irrevocably to the landowner, while the peasant was at liberty to hire out his time.⁴⁹ This was the only law necessary.⁵⁰ Other contributors stressed the economic wisdom of such an approach. It would work because the landowner and peasant were dependent on one another. “Whoever has

cultivable land needs, seeks and finds hands; whoever has free hands needs, seeks and finds cultivable land.”⁵¹

Not all opponents of hereditary tenure or other land security for the peasants⁵² were against 1804. One of the most prominent names in Baltic history, Reinhold Johann Ludwig Samson von Himmelstiern, had much praise for 1804.⁵³ Samson had studied law at Leipzig at the same time as Merkel, for whom he had a high regard. Samson, in his own words, was “vividly moved by *Die Letten*. Amongst the academic friends and countrymen a fraternity came into existence whose aim was to do everything possible in the future for the improvement of the peasant class.”⁵⁴ Samson believed that 1804 had already conferred freedom. “We can say out loud: the peasant is free, because he is.”⁵⁵ Due to regulated labor, hereditary tenure, protection of the law, the right to acquire and possess property, the serf was actually a “free *glebae adscriptus*,” deprived only of mobility.⁵⁶ If necessary, however, “let us free the bird, which prefers the blossoming spring at the top of its native tree to a delicate cage, the sparse nourishment of the open air to the ample food of an excellent dwelling, let us free him into God’s wide sky to rejoice in the spring, in his existence!”⁵⁷

The “delicate cage” was preferred by August von Siviers, who argued that there was no need for a new reform.

... [We] have no reason to allow changes, which would throw out everything that has gone before, immediately after the introduction of a new reform, which our monarch most certainly does not want to snatch away from us. What is driving us? Are the arrangements of the neighboring provinces really so beneficial to both sides? Why not wait to find out what results the gradual introduction of these arrangements will have at the end of the set time period of fourteen years? . . . Why should we rashly give away the certain good for the uncertain?⁵⁸

As far as August von Siviers was concerned, there were only two valid reasons for giving up 1804. One was the fear of peasant unrest, but Siviers considered this fear unfounded due to the gradual nature of the reforms in the neighboring provinces. He did not say what the second was. “I would rather not touch on the second reason.”⁵⁹ The imperial role was perhaps best not dealt with in the press.

August von Siviers was perhaps the only one in the debate whose argument had internal consistency. Those, like Hagemeister, in favor of hereditary tenure were trying to combine economic regulation with personal freedom. They refused to consider any land concession to the peasants and conveniently used the principle of free competition to support their arguments for continued privilege. Those more genuinely committed to

laissez-faire economic policy opposed hereditary tenure as outdated economic practice but upheld Ritter privilege in the form of landownership.

As long as the land belonged exclusively to the landlord, any attempt to apply Smith's theory would be inherently inconsistent. Supporters of his theory were forced to allow elements of not only regulated economy but of feudalism in its practice. Immediately after his poetic imagery of the freed bird, Samson, for example, asked the sober question: "But should the freed peasant stop *corvée* altogether?" Samson himself found *corvée* "a leftover from slavery" and echoed Adam Smith when he wrote that *corvée* was work badly and unwillingly performed, the most expensive form of labor and harmful to both peasant and lord.⁶⁰ Still, he conceded that "personal freedom and *corvée* are not incompatible." Free contracts could be based on labour, produce or money.⁶¹ It was obvious to most that free contracts in the free market would probably *have* to be based on *corvée* or kind rather than money since the peasants were not able to transform their labor or products into cash. Indebted landlords had no cash to pay for peasant labor or produce and the sparsely populated province did not have enough markets. One contributor to the debate noted that he had offered money rent to his peasants but they had refused because they would not know how or where to convert their products into money. In addition, currency in the early 19th century was far from standardized and there were many types of coins with different values in circulation.⁶² Peter von Sivers, however, had successfully employed farm laborers on a cash basis since 1805 and had published an article on this venture in 1816.⁶³

Another leftover from serfdom which many thought should be retained in the new economic system was the *Wackenbuch*, first introduced under Swedish rule, when it was deemed sufficient for each landowner to register peasant duties and dues. The *Wackenbuch* had been supported by Russia as a means to standardize what could be demanded from the Livland peasant. It was now proposed as a general guide, particularly for the peasants, for drawing up free contracts. Bock rejected the *Wackenbuch* regulations as the basis for free contracts. There could be no general norm to cover the "infinite" number of local variations. Only free contracts could regulate these.⁶⁴ The issue of *Wackenbuch* regulations forming the basis of free contracts would be an important part of the Landtag discussion. Rejecting the *Wackenbuch* would nullify the work of the *Messrevisionskommission*, a difficult move to support in view of the tremendous cost expended on it.

The one common element which united all these voices was the belief in the unlimited right of the lord to the land. In fact, there was the feeling that emancipation was the one sure way to imperial affirmation of the Ritter's land rights, rights which they perceived as limited by 1804. "Should the landowners of Livland renounce their right to the serfdom of their

peasants, His Imperial Majesty would restore to the landowners the unlimited exercise of their legally acquired rights to their properties."⁶⁵ This is the most convincing of all the arguments used in favor of emancipation: freedom of the serfs in return for unconditional disposition of property. Samson would later sum up this attitude from the vantage point of two decades hindsight: "The 1804 reform took from the landowner what he legally and justly had and unconditionally owned and gave him what he should never legally and justly had and unconditionally own. It took from him the free disposition of his property and left the peasant in bondage."⁶⁶ Emancipation would return to the landlord what was rightfully his, his land. The Livland Ritter were willing to accept emancipation as long as the hereditary tenure imposed on them by the 1804 reform was removed.

Gustav von Rennenkampff

The paradoxical interdependence of privilege and freedom is well represented in the debate in the press but also in a book published in May 1818 towards the end of the debate and just before the Landtag discussions.⁶⁷ The author, Gustav von Rennenkampff, had studied agrarian relations elsewhere, particularly in Denmark and Germany. Rennenkampff's proposals have been praised for displaying "a deep understanding of agrarian-political organization, a far-sighted view of what is worth striving for and what is practicable ..."⁶⁸ but like most of his fellow Ritter, he was an ardent supporter of Ritter privilege and sought to effect a reform which would fit into feudal concepts of right as well as nineteenth-century ideas of equality. Rennenkampff's ideas reflect the feudal corporate order,⁶⁹ the world of *Stand*, of which the Ritter were a perfect, if increasingly anachronistic, example. Rennenkampff criticized serfdom, using emotional arguments of moral indignation⁷⁰ as well as the more rationally expounded economic ones, but the society he envisaged was based not on equality but on *Stand*. "The servant should serve, the higher ranks should rule ..."⁷¹ Civil freedom should be enjoyed by all estates ...; but respect, power and influence should only be enjoyed by those who know how to use them in a salutary fashion. The appropriate regulation ... of the rights and duties of each *Stand* will protect against all restrictions and there will be no need for welfare measures to protect the supposedly weak against the strong. If there are clearly defined limits to the rights of each *Stand*, there can be no stronger or weaker, since only deficient laws make one *Stand* stronger than another, and not wealth, *Stand*, or property."⁷² Although the peasant should enjoy an increase in status, "anything which encourages him to raise himself above his *Stand* ... or allows him to think that he is the most useful and significant in the state, or justifies him in setting himself as his better's equals must all be

avoided.”⁷³ Treating a man higher than his station in life stems from “fanatic philanthropy, an evil which even the wisest governments have not always managed to avoid if it was part of the spirit of the times, like an epidemic disease in the air ...”⁷⁴

Not only was the status of the peasant strictly defined in terms of *Stand*, but his contribution to society was also defined. Every effort should be made to keep him to his, admittedly difficult and monotonous, work in the fields.⁷⁵ Rennenkampff believed Livland’s future economic well-being lay in agriculture. It could not compete with the established industries of England, France, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands since it had neither a surfeit of people nor money.⁷⁶ Agriculture was, as Adam Smith had said, the foundation of a nation’s prosperity. Rennenkampff’s proposal that Livland concentrate on agriculture and import what few luxury goods it needed⁷⁷ was also consistent with David Ricardo’s economic theory (1817) of a global division of labour. As long as land was of prime economic importance in Livland, the landowners would be the chief beneficiaries of economic progress.

Rennenkampff agreed with Samson that there was much to praise in the economic regulation of 1804. “Of the various transitions from serfdom to freedom which I know, I have never seen one that was more appropriate, a more perfect preparation for a peaceful, salutary changeover... we have only a very easy step to take to general freedom.”⁷⁸ This “very easy step,” however, involved the very difficult land question: how to keep the freed peasant bound to the land without giving him any. Like many of his fellow Ritter, Rennenkampff rejected hereditary tenure as synonymous with possession of the land and rejected emancipation with land security. Although he had experience of other emancipation models, he supported only those which upheld the principle of complete landlord disposition of land. The mistakes of other countries were to be avoided.⁷⁹ From the 1786 Danish Commission, he cited:

The peasant is a human being like others. He should be granted the rights which his class in other countries enjoys but one should not take from others to make him happy ... He must have freedom but his farm will not become his property. When he is given freedom, he will be like the farmer in England, a free contractor. ... If the landowner is to lose his right over the people, then he should be allowed unlimited rights over land and property ...⁸⁰

The emancipation model Rennenkampff found most appropriate was that of Germany. He was, however, aware that it worked in the landlord’s favor. “Without the example of Germany,” Rennenkampff reportedly claimed, “such a uniform decision in Estland or in Kurland or here in

Livland would not have come about ... One knew from experience that abolishing serfdom and releasing the peasants from the land in no way meant, as originally feared, that property, income from the land or credit were in any danger.⁸¹ Rennenkampff admitted the advantages of hereditary tenure were often obvious elsewhere⁸² but thought these advantages could be gained by methods other than those which infringed on landlord rights.⁸³ Hereditary tenure was in any case, he argued, economically harmful to the state since it encouraged indolence rather than productivity amongst the peasants, who could not be expected to value land simply given to them.⁸⁴ The peasants must be motivated by some sort of external force, and free competition would supply that force.⁸⁵

Like many of those involved in the emancipation discussion, Rennenkampff admitted that free contracts would have to be based on *corvée*. Even although it was one of the major disadvantages of serfdom, it could not be abolished along with serfdom since the peasant would be able to assess his contract only on the basis of what he had experience of.⁸⁶ He offered a compromise solution whereby the farmer would not have to do any more *corvée* than he could manage with the farm-hands he already had for his own needs. He should not have to hire more in order to complete his *corvée*.⁸⁷

Rennenkampff was not unaware of the economic dangers of free competition coupled with landlord ownership of the land and quoted the poverty in England as an example.⁸⁸ His alternative to hereditary tenure was the guarantee of a certain proportion — he originally proposed two-thirds⁸⁹ of peasant land for peasant use. The landlord would be entitled to sell, divide, give, or lease peasant land as he pleased, but would be prevented from adding more than one-third to the *Hofsland*.⁹⁰ This would protect the peasants from the fate of their German counterparts, where landlords had appropriated large tracts of peasant land, but in Livland, however, it would be a regressive step since landlords were forbidden to appropriate any peasant land. Before this was permanently fixed by law, as in Denmark where emancipation had forbidden landlord appropriation of peasant land with no chance for readjustment, Rennenkampff judged it wise to introduce some leeway for future adjustment. Expressed differently, his proposal allowed the landowner to appropriate up to one-third of peasant land. In addition, the landlord should be compensated for allowing two-thirds to remain in permanent peasant use by every peasant-farmer working three years for the landowner as a laborer.⁹¹

In addition to the appropriation restriction, Rennenkampff proposed setting a minimum and maximum farm size to protect the peasant. A farm should be large enough to support a family but not large enough to require the hiring of extra labor. In the latter case, the tenant farmer would become

more a manager than a practical farmer. The restriction also worked in the landowner's favor. Smaller farms were more easily managed, leased, controlled, or sold than large farms. It was not in landlord interest to have large tracts of "their" land owned by one person, possibly even burghers.⁹² Smaller plots would keep the farmer properly occupied in the landowner's interest.

Rennenkampff was very clear about the role the government should have in reform. The government should not interfere in economic relations. A general economic law could not be applied to widely varying local conditions, which were best regulated by independent economic laws. The government had a right to intervene in matters of human and political rights but not in economic matters.⁹³ Rennenkampff felt this warning was justified. The government should not be viewed as the representative of the lower classes in confrontation with the higher classes.⁹⁴ "As well as the indubitably great interest the government has in the farmer, it should not deny its deep interest for equally important classes (*Stände*), nor favor the former at the expense, or even ruin, of the latter."⁹⁵ Throughout Rennenkampff's book, there is an awareness of government pressure for emancipation and the fear that such pressure would result in reform detrimental to Ritter land privileges. The province knew that imperial policy firmly supported hereditary tenure.

The Landtag Debate

The public debate was brought to an official level on June 1, 1818 when Samson von Himmelstern formally proposed that, pending imperial permission, the Landtag should declare the peasants in Livland free.⁹⁶ Imperial wishes were conveyed the next day through the Governor General Marquis Paulucci, who unequivocally set the Landtag its aim by warmly recommending the example of Estland and Kurland.⁹⁷ The *Konvent*, the executive committee of the Landtag, however, recommended first seeking imperial permission to discuss emancipation in light of the fact that one reform was already in process. As long as one reform was valid, a new one could not be discussed without imperial cancellation of the first. This was not really obstructionist since a new reform would nullify the costly survey and the validity of the *Wackenbücher*, steps which could not be taken without guarantees. Paulucci's instructions, however, had made imperial wishes clear and the recommendation redundant. The majority of the *Konvent* were in favor of emancipation but, like the Kurland Ritter, decided to use the opportunity to gain some concessions from the imperial government.⁹⁸ Most of these concessions had been granted to the Kurland Ritter. The Livland Ritter wished exemption from paying state taxes for

their peasants, exemption from the state's estate sales tax, and a gradual introduction of the new law so that emancipation would be complete, as in Kurland, in 1831. Two other points were of importance and would cause much debate. The first was that the survey commission should continue its work until all peasant land was surveyed. This was in keeping with Samson's proposal which stipulated that emancipation should take place "as soon as the survey commission had completed all *Wackenbücher* for public and private lands."⁹⁹ In addition, the government should replace the three million rubles spent on the survey which would be made obsolete by free contracts. This was all the more necessary since landowner debt to the Credit Society amounted to 7.5 million rubles.

The matter of the survey reflects the ambivalence of the proposed reform model. On the one hand, it was argued that the survey should be halted at once since the free contracts of the new reform did not need it. On the other, it was argued that contracts needed norms and these could only be provided by a survey, especially since contracts would be mostly in labor or in kind. A survey would also help to estimate state taxes correctly and would enable the peasant to estimate his own abilities in drawing up a contract with his landowner. It would also be a reason to keep the peasant where he was rather than going off into circumstances with which he was economically unfamiliar. The majority of *Landräte*¹⁰⁰ and *Kreisdeputierten*¹⁰¹ were in favor of the survey being continued. Free contracts could then be based on the results but there would be no compulsion to do so.¹⁰²

A dissenting minority was led by August von Sivers in the *Kreisdeputiertenkammer*.¹⁰³ He repeated the arguments he had already published against a new reform. He still advised waiting to see how the reforms worked in Estland and Kurland, where reform had been necessary (since they had nothing comparable to 1804). Sivers' opinions are interesting from the political perspective of province/Empire. He was convinced the government would not force the new reforms on Livland. He was also convinced that the government would never violate the landowner's right to the land. He viewed fears of imperial intervention as the prime motivators of the reformers. He also felt that the reformers were using the opportunity of emancipation to secure from the Tsar their right to the land.

Sivers proposed to the *Kreisdeputiertenkammer* the rejection of Samson's proposal and Paulucci's directive. The Livland Ritter, he argued, should not suggest reform to the government but rather wait to see if the government would force the Estland reform on Livland. This proposal was supported by five other deputies, thus making six votes against and six in favor. The vote of the *Landmarschall*,¹⁰⁴ who chaired the Chamber, went to those in favor. The close vote allowed Sivers to propose that the whole Landtag vote the following day, June 27, 1818, on whether to change the

1804 reform or not. The vote also proved that there was a distinct possibility that the Landtag would vote for retaining 1804. In this case, emancipation would be rejected before it was discussed. Paulucci certainly saw this as a possibility and appeared unexpectedly at the Landtag before the vote took place. He gave the members the choice of voluntarily asking the Tsar for the Estland model of emancipation or accepting his resignation as Governor General.¹⁰⁵ The Landtag subsequently voted not to carry out the vote proposed by August von Sivers for that day, that is, to discuss whether the 1804 reform should be changed or not. This vote caused confusion. It was interpreted by some as a vote in favor of emancipation while others thought emancipation had still to be discussed. Samson, who was present at the Landtag, is unequivocal: "On June 27, 1818, the unanimous decision was made to declare the peasants free, pending imperial permission."¹⁰⁶ That the "unanimous decision" was actually a vote in favor of emancipation is made questionable by a proposal made on July 1 following much uncertainty and discussion. The Landtag would offer to emancipate their peasants if the Tsar so wished and if certain conditions were first¹⁰⁷ met. Despite objections raised by those, like Samson, who thought emancipation should be declared voluntarily by the Ritter and those, like August von Sivers, who opposed a new reform, the proposal was accepted.¹⁰⁸

The concessions requested¹⁰⁹ were mainly concerned with the tax exemptions already mentioned but there was a significant addition. The Ritter asked for the removal of the Committee for Livland Affairs, the upper authority for the survey, in both St Petersburg and in Riga. This was a political consideration. Since its creation in 1804, the Committee had gradually taken on the role of an imperial supervisory body for the affairs of the province and its absence would mean more political leeway for Livland. That this had more to do with political independence than economic activity is evidenced by the fact that the Landtag did not intend to propose halting the survey which the committee was supposed to supervise. The committee in Walk should finish the survey of private estates and the *Wackenbücher* would be ratified by the Governor General alone. This implied that the landowners intended to use the *Wackenbücher* as the basis for free contracts. They did not, as originally intended, ask the Tsar to pay the three million rubles the survey had cost, no doubt because they had not recommended to discontinue it. They did ask for a ten-year extension on their credit. They also asked for reorganization and higher salaries for the provincial authorities, whose duties would be increased by emancipation.

Paulucci was satisfied enough to guarantee the Tsar's acceptance of the proposal, which came on July 13, 1818, only one week after submission.¹¹⁰ The Tsar gave his permission for a committee to discuss any adaptations of the Estland and Kurland reforms necessitated by local conditions.

The committee, which began its work in October, had completed its draft by December 1818. In essence, it followed the Estland emancipation reform. The principle of free contract in a free market was upheld as the basis for reform. Rennenkampff, supported by Hagemeister, submitted his proposal that a proportion of peasant land be guaranteed to the peasants, but the committee considered this a violation of landowner rights and refused to discuss it. The Livland draft proposed a less complicated and shorter transitional period than in Estland and Kurland since the reform of 1804 had already prepared the peasants for freedom. The timing of emancipation was to be based on the completion of the *Wackenbücher*, which could then be used as the basis of free contracts. The survey was to be completed by April 23, 1823, when half of the peasant serfs would be freed. The second half would follow in 1824; by 1826 all domestic servants and laborers would be emancipated. They would not immediately have freedom of movement, however. Landlords were still afraid that freedom would encourage their valuable labor force to abscond. For the first three years the freed peasants were to be bound to their parish districts, the area of mobility being extended in the next three years and by 1832 (when Estland and Kurland serfs had been completely freed) Livland peasants would be allowed to move anywhere in the province.

The second modification of the Estland/Kurland reform was a major area of contention. At the time of emancipation, Kurland had cancelled all the debts that the peasants had incurred as serfs. In Livland, the serfs were also indebted to their landlords. In 1795, the landowner's duty to supply his serfs with grain in times of need was changed to supplying them with a store which they had to keep supplied. The onus was now on the serfs. In years of poor harvests, like 1807, the serfs became even more indebted to the landlord for grain supplies. The situation of peasant debt was complicated by the land survey. The 1804 statute had stipulated that unmeasured estates could use the 1784 estimates, but that if a landlord was dissatisfied, he could initiate a new survey. If the new survey showed peasant labor had been estimated as too low, then the landlord had the right of compensation from his peasants. Peasant compensation added to peasant debt. Landowners, however, were also indebted to their serfs. If the peasant quotas had been estimated as too high, the landowner was bound to compensate the peasant: there are several cases of this on record. In 1818, many of these compensation cases had yet to be settled. The Commission, believing that a peasant burdened with debts could not cope in a free state, recommended that all mutual debts between landlord and peasant incurred before January 1, 1818 be cancelled.

The Landtag, which met in December 1818 to ratify the Commission's draft, objected to the abolition of peasant debts. Rennenkampff, for his part,

viewed peasant debt as a separate issue from compensation. Those landowners who had managed their peasants well, and had not provided loans had, of course, no peasant debts, but they would lose what their peasants owed *them* in labor which had been underestimated.¹¹¹ Peasants who had accumulated no debts, but were owed compensation, would also suffer. It was Rennenkampff's opinion the peasant could not expect the rights of freedom without facing up to its duties — and debts.

Once again provincial dispute was settled by imperial intervention in the form of the Governor General. Paulucci maintained that debts contracted before January 1, 1819 must be cancelled if the situation of the peasants was not to be worsened by freedom. The Landtag succumbed, but with the compromise date of January 1, 1813. Thus, thanks to imperial intervention, the Livland serf escaped being emancipated landless and indebted.¹¹² The Tsar approved the emancipation reform on March 26, 1819.

The reform did not have an auspicious start. Although the debate about emancipation in Livland had begun in the provincial press and not by imperial order (as might have been expected after the Estland and Kurland reforms), the Landtag had not been enthusiastic about the emancipation reform. Later historiography has attributed this reluctance to factors other than lack of motivation. "If the Landtag negotiations were carried out hesitatingly and with many difficult interruptions and unclear points, part of the blame lies with the less than skillful chairmanship of Baron Schoultz ..."¹¹³ Were it not for Paulucci's timely interventions, the Landtag may have followed the advice of August von Sivers and decided to keep the 1804 reform until imperial dissatisfaction became evident. Paulucci certainly thought so. Once imperial wishes were made clear, however, the Ritter voted, as Samson said, unanimously for emancipation.

In his closing remarks to the Landtag, the Land Marshal Löwis of Menar voiced the general doubt and presaged the reform's future:

If the farmer peasants gain little more from this than the name of free people, at least the more numerous class of domestic servants and laborers will enter into a much better and happier situation. Perhaps the new road will at first seem rough to the peasants, humanity and cleverness will be needed to lead them with a fatherly hand along the unfamiliar path ... Some of us may doubt that the people for whose future happiness we have sacrificed will recognize with thanks what we have done for them! ... And if ingratitude should indeed be our reward, so let the knowledge that our intentions were genuine and good give us the courage never to regret what we have done.¹¹⁴

There would indeed be ingratitude and regrets, and there would be more imperial intervention as Russia sought to enforce the policy it had for

decades tried to enforce in the provinces: economic protection for the peasants. For the Ritter, emancipation was the alternative to imperial policy and the constraints of the Tsar's measures in favor of the peasants, which threatened their right to the land. Emancipation restored to the landowner his unlimited right over his land, allowing him to incorporate, appropriate, separate, sell or divide, as he wished; it removed hereditary tenure and all other land security for the peasant, delivering him to the free play of economic forces without land tenure or long-term leases.

After 1819

Emancipation started off on a favorable economic wave since grain prices had increased in the years 1816-1819 due to poor harvests in Germany. Livland had a particularly good harvest in 1819. Belief in the higher productivity of free labor seemed to be justified; however, due to plentiful harvests all over Europe between 1821 and 1827, grain prices fell again.¹¹⁵ By the end of the 1820s, of the 547 estates in Livland in noble hands, 477 were indebted to the Credit Society and had an annual interest payment of 492,000 silver rubles.¹¹⁶ Many landowners still relied on the distilling of alcohol as the quickest way to increase income. Of 736 estates in Livland, 600 were involved to some degree in distilling.¹¹⁷ In the mid 1820s market prices for alcohol began to sink. By the 1830s, the rye used to produce the spirits sold for more than the spirits it produced.

Landowners lacked the necessary economic background to make rational decisions and forecasts.¹¹⁸ There was still the belief that no special training was needed to manage an estate, while law or military service still provided the educational background of most landowners.¹¹⁹

Agricultural development was further hampered by the two feudal elements in the emancipation reform: lack of peasant land tenure and *corvée*. The reform of 1804 had given the peasant hereditary tenure of land and a reason to work the land well. 1819 had not only rendered him landless but had given the landowners the right to dispose of their lands as they wished. Appropriation of peasant land was not uncommon¹²⁰ and added to the peasant's insecurity. This was compounded by *corvée*, which was not only unproductive¹²¹ but rendered the guiding principle of the reform "Land mein Zeit dein" meaningless in practical terms since the peasant's time was in the hands of the landowner. The situation was also incompatible with rational agricultural methods and an effective division of labor, important elements in the Baltic area where most agricultural work had to be done during the short summer months. The peasants had to be closely supervised since they were free to leave at the end of their contracts, thus avoiding any consequences or penalties for work poorly done. In this respect, *corvée* was

more suited to serfdom than to free labor.¹²² The change to hired labor was not an easy one, especially where there was no money to pay wages. Without the means to make the necessary investments to hire labor, landlords were just as well off staying with *corvée*.¹²³ As late as 1845, the Livland Economic Society did not feel able to recommend wage-labor and in 1846 the Agricultural Society still maintained that well-managed *corvée* labor could still produce sizeable profits.¹²⁴ With the constant threat of expulsion, high labor demands and high labor costs, the peasant farmer was prepared to sign only short-term contracts, from one to three years, which were, as Adam Smith had pointed out,¹²⁵ unproductive. Short-term contracts were a major factor in the lack of agricultural growth in Livland during the period after emancipation.¹²⁶

The Russian government still advocated some form of land security for the peasant and in 1830 the Senate explicitly recommended hereditary tenure.¹²⁷ This did not influence the Livland Landtag, which voted against hereditary tenure in 1833. As Russian dominance in other areas increased, so did its insistence on land security for the peasants in Livland; however, the Livland Ritter would not change their support of the 1819 reform, even in the face of Count Uvarov's intimations of imperial intervention or centralization. The catalyst in the implicit confrontation came in 1841 when thousands of Baltic peasants streamed to Riga to take advantage of the rumored offer of land in a warm country for all those who accepted the faith of the Tsar. Whether this was the result of deliberate interference on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church, as the Livland Ritter claimed, or whether, as the Russian investigators maintained, the consequence of peasant dissatisfaction with oppressive economic conditions, the Ritter had to respond. In 1842, with much imperial guidance, a new reform was passed based on the protective principles of 1804, which Russian imperial power had always upheld. Russian disapproval of 1819 was public and official. Nicholas advocated "tying the peasant to the land" in order to avoid "the shortcomings of the reforms valid till now in the Baltic, reforms which have brought the peasant into the worst economic situation . . ."¹²⁸

Nicholas I, however, like his predecessors, did uphold the right of the nobility to the land,¹²⁹ which was a basic tenet of the 1819 reform, but not of the 1804 reform, implicitly upheld in 1842. The 1840s are characterised by attempts on both the imperial and provincial sides to come up with a reform formula that combined the landownership principles of 1819 with the protective elements of 1804. The decade was marked by complicated and confusing debates, amendments and decisions in the Livland Landtag, as its members sought a way to retain monopoly on the land and, at the same time, grant some concessions which would satisfy imperial will and also increase productivity by motivating the peasant to work rather than revolt.

The economic climate demanded reform, but did not provide the conditions for an auspicious beginning. Bad harvests resulted in famine in the winter of 1845-46 and Russian subsidies were necessary to overcome the crisis. The conversions of the beginning of the decade resumed on a larger scale. Between 1842 and 1846 their number had been estimated at 100,000,¹³⁰ from 1845 to 1847 at a minimum of 74,000,¹³¹ meanwhile, in 1848 alone at 106,080.¹³²

Reforms were passed and amended, the pendulum swinging between the protective principles of imperial policy and those of the 1819 reform upheld by the majority of the Ritter. By 1856, when Russian energies were directed towards the Crimean War, the Ritter were able to pass a reform which restored corvée labor, giving labor contracts preference over money contracts, and condemning peasant ownership of land, which had been advocated by Russia. Hereditary tenure was now accepted as the lesser threat.

In the post-Crimean reform phase, Russia was involved in drafting an emancipation law which would suit its own circumstances. There was little doubt about Russia's dissatisfaction with the Baltic emancipation reforms. The government had consistently exerted pressure on Livland to replace the principles of 1819 with those of 1804 and it was, therefore, never likely that the Livland emancipation would serve as a model for Russia, nor did the Russian Senate advocate the Russian reform for the Baltic provinces. Imperial supervision of events in the provinces continued parallel to the development and execution of the Russian reform. The Russian government continued to demand improvements in the Baltic reforms and the Ritter found it increasingly difficult not to concede in the face of the very real alternative of the Russian reform. Much as Ritter privilege had become an anachronism in the late 19th century, the Ritter remained convinced, as late as 1870, of the superiority of their reforms over the Russian model. Their privileges, they claimed, "contain a nucleus, the proper understanding of which can now, after 160 years, propel the people to greater freedom and morality than all the reforms that the humanity and enlightenment of the monarch provide for the remainder of the Empire."¹³³

Notes

1. Much of the text of Browne's speech to the Landtag, detailing the complaints and suggesting solutions, is given in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 49-57.
2. The Ritter's response to Governor Browne is given in *Ibid.*, 57-71.
3. Schoultz granted his serfs the right to own moveable property, hereditary use of the land, regulated dues, protection from being sold without consent and the right of complaint against their lord. The text of Schoultz's reform, originally in Latvian, is given in German Heinrich Johann von Jannau, *Geschichte der Sklaverey, und Charakter der Bauern in Lief-und Ehistland. Ein Beytrag zur Verbesserung der Leibeigenschaft nebst der genauesten Berechnung eines lifländischen Hakens* (Riga, 1786), Appendix I, 136-206. For a discussion of the various interpretative perspectives on Schoultz, see Hubertus Neuschäffer "Carl Fried Freiherr von Schoultz-Ascheraden: Ein Beitrag zum Forschungsproblem der Agrarreformen im Ostseeraum des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 1981), 318-332. The origins of interpretative disagreements are to be found in Ludwig Karstens-Hamburg, "Zur Vorgeschichte der livländischen Bauernbefreiung," in *Jomsburg I* (1937), 215-222.
4. Schoultz's address to the Landtag is given in Jannau, *Geschichte der Sklaverey*, 123-133 and in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 74-78.
5. Under Swedish rule, peasant dues and duties were registered in the *Wackenbuch*. The etymology of *Wack* is uncertain but in the thirteenth century it denoted an area of an estate; later it was used to describe the dues owed by the peasant to the lord of the estate. See Alexander Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung Livlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Riga, 1889) vol. I, 57.
6. Garlieb Merkel, *Die freien Letten und Esthen* (Riga 1820), 151.
7. For details see Alexander von Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse in Esth-, Liv- und Curland* (Leipzig, 1845), 106-107.
8. *Ibid.*, 112.
9. See Juhan Kahk, *Peasant and Lord in the Process of Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in the Baltic* (Tallinn, 1982), 31.
10. Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 112.
11. Julius Eckardt is one of the few to claim that the economy of the Baltic provinces improved under the *Statthalterschaft*. He attributes this to good harvests and favorable trading conditions rather than to any particular imperial policy. *Die baltischen Provinzen Rußlands. Politische und culturgeschichtliche Aufsätze* (Leipzig, 1868), 230-231.
12. A credit institute for the provincial nobility was not set up until October 1802, when Alexander I loaned the appropriate funds – half a million rubles at a rate of three percent, and two million at a rate of five percent. See Axel von Gernet, *Geschichte und Sytem des bäuerlichen Agrarrechts in Estland* (Reval, 1901), 110.

13. Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 112.
14. For details of the Society's work and members, see Hans Dieter von Engelhardt and Hubertus Neuschäffer, *Die livländische gemeinnützige und ökonomische Sozietät (1792-1939)* (Köln, 1983).
15. *Ibid.*, 33.
16. Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 93-94. Another source is more definite about Russia's role, claiming that Sivers presented his reforms "in fulfilment of the Empress's secret orders." A. Richter, *Istoriya krest'yanskogo sosloviya v prisoedinennykh k Rossii pribaltiskikh guberniyakh* (Riga, 1860), p.19.
17. Catherine II, November 17, 1796; Paul I, March 23, 1801
18. For the process of Sivers' proposals, see Maureen Maguire Bruns, "The Baltic Provinces and the Russian Empire: Provincial Privilege and Imperial Prerogative in the Process of Agrarian Reform in Livland, Estland and Kurland 1765-1849" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 1994). 187-196.
19. The text of the proposals, as presented to the Landtag in 1797, is given in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, Appendix B, 157-166.
20. The text of Alexander's letter is to be found in *Ibid.*, 93-94 and in Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 163.
21. In a letter 11 May 1803 to Kochubey, reproduced in full in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 101-102.
22. *Ibid.*, 102.
23. Cited in Juhan Kahlk, "K voprosu ob agrarnoi politike tsarizma v Liflyandi v nachale XIX stoletiya." in *Istoriya SSSR*, 2 (1962) 124-137, (p.130).
24. The text of Alexander's letter to this effect is reproduced in Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung* 220-221.
25. The text of the letter is given in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, p.121.
26. Cited in Tobien *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, p.328.
27. "Although I recognize the 1804 Livland plan as the basis of your plan ... it seems to me that the proportion of dues to be allocated the peasants on the basis of the composition of the plots cannot be achieved without a survey and evaluation of the land." The text of Alexander's letter of December 5, 1815 is given in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 121-122.
28. The Livland example was close to home and Adam Smith had referred to the "laborious and expensive" expedient of surveying and valuing land for tax purposes, warning that the survey and evaluation of all the lands in Bohemia was said to have been the work of a hundred years. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London, 1874) Book 5, Chapter II, Part II, 659.
29. Heinrich von Hagemeister, "Vorschläge, allen livländischen Gutsbesitzern zur Befragung empfohlen" (August 13, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, *Zur Geschichte der Bauernfreiheit in Livland. Wiederabdruck einer Reihe von Flugschriften und Zeitungsartikeln aus den Jahren 1817-1818* (Riga, 1878), 3.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Peter von Sivers, "Auflösung einiger Hauptknoten zur Auflösung der Leibeigenschaft in Livland" (June 1, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 167.

32. Garlieb Merkel, "Ansichten über die Art, wie die persönliche Freiheit den Bauren [sic] des Livländischen Gouvernements zu ertheilen wäre" (December 4, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 63. Merkel's ideas progressed with developments. In 1797, he had advocated a reform that would protect the right of the Ritter to the land. He had also supported hereditary tenure.
33. A.B.C. "Eingesandt" (May 11, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 147.
34. C.M.Schröder, "Ideen und Vorschläge zur Realisirung eines Grundeigentums für die Livländischen Bauern" (February 23, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 96.
35. Hagemeister cites the peasant opinion of the 1804 reform as "the same old horse with a new saddle." Hagemeister (August 13, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 2.
36. "Jedem das Seine." Ibid., 3. This would become a motto for those who strove to exclude the peasants from any land ownership at the expense of the landowners.
37. H. von Hagemeister, "Bemerkungen zu dem in Nr.9 der inländischen Blätter, unter der Ueberschrift: 'Lückenbützer,' enthaltenen Aufsätze" (March 23, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 113.
38. Ibid.
39. Karl von Bruiningk, "Einige Bemerkungen zu der in Nr.3 der Inländischen Blätter erschienen Gegenerklärung des Herrn Landrichters von Bock" (February 2, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 91.
40. *Wealth of Nations* Book 2, Chapter III, 299.
41. Gustav von Rennenkampff, *Bemerkungen über die Leibeigenschaft und ihre Aufhebung* (Copenhagen, 1818), 124-125. Jégor von Sivers includes an extract (2-56) which mainly reiterates the known arguments against serfdom rather than the specific economic suggestions to be found in the latter half of the book.
42. Peter von Buxhövdén, "Ein Wort über das Recht des Erbherren auf den Boden" (April 6, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 123-124.
43. Peter von Buxhövdén, "Gegenerklärung" (May 18, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 150-151.
44. Heinrich August von Bock, "Gegenerklärung auf die in Nr.30 der Inländischen Blätter v.J. erhaltene Erklärung der Herrn K.von Bruiningk" (January 19, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 74.
45. P.von Buxhövdén (April 6, 1818), Jégor von Sivers, 124.
46. H.A. von Bock, (January 19, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 76. Bock's choice of image was influenced, or enhanced, by the rhyme of *Krücke* (crutch) and *Brücke* (bridge). In his reply, Bruiningk wrote: "... in no way could I consider the good and salutary that we have, just because of a rhyme, as a crutch which can be thrown away." Bruiningk, (February 2, 1818), Jégor von Sivers, 92
47. H. A. Bock, "Noch einige Worte auf Veranlassung der von Hagemeisterschen Vorschläge" (December 8, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 68.
48. Ibid., 66.
49. Ibid.
50. Bock may have changed his views. Tobien mentions his commentary on the 1812 essay competition of the Free Economic Society, wherein he supposedly stated that a free worker with no land or property, living from hand to mouth, would have a less secure existence than a peasant tied to the land. The solution

would be a free peasant with the use of land paid in cash or kind. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 28.

51. "Lückenbützer zu einer vielbesprochenen Materie, an Niemand besonders gerichtet" (March 2, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 104.
52. Hereditary tenure was not the only form of economic protection proposed. Peter von Sivers, for example, recommended life-long rather than hereditary tenure (June 1, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 183. Kurland had also proposed life-long rather than hereditary tenure in their adaptation of 1804. Karl Budberg had suggested a compromise of 25 years of economic protection, based on the *Wackenbuch* regulations, before the introduction of free contracts. K. Budberg, "Ansichten über die Art, wie die persönliche Freyheit den Bauern des Livländischen Gouvernements zu ertheilen wäre" (October 9, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 23.
53. Samson would later judge 1804 much more harshly. In 1838, he wrote, "I recognize no merit whatsoever in the 1804 reform. I concede rather that it was the signpost to what eventually must come." *Historischer Versuch*, 149.
54. Jégor von Sivers, dedication to R.J. L. Samson von Himmelstiern, XII. The sixteen Baltic students at Leipzig with Samson and his brother, who might have formed the "fraternity," are listed in XI.
55. R.J.L. von Samson, "Über Herrn v. Hagemester's Vorschläge, allen Livländischen Gutsbesitzern zur Beherrigung empfohlen" (November 3, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 33.
56. *Ibid.*, 34.
57. *Ibid.*
58. August von Sivers "Ein Wort zu seiner Zeit" (January 26, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 81.
59. *Ibid.*, 83.
60. Samson (November 3, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 33. For Smith's opinion see, for example, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book 5, Chapter II, 657.
61. Samson (November 3, 1817) in Jégor von Sivers, 34.
62. A.B.C. "Eingesandt" (May 11, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 145-146.
63. Jégor von Sivers, XX.
64. H. von Bock, (January 19, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 75.
65. P. von Sivers, (June 1, 1818) in Jégor von Sivers, 176.
66. Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 148.
67. Gustav von Rennenkampff, *Bemerkungen über die Leibeigenschaft in Liefland und ihre Aufhebung* (Copenhagen, 1818).
68. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 342, 344.
69. See, for example, Dietrich Gerhard, "Regionalism and Corporate Order as a Basic Theme of European Histor," in *Studies in Diplomatic History*, ed. by R.Hatton and M.S.Anderson (London, 1970), 155-182.
70. It is these arguments which are represented in the extract in Jégor von Sivers, 193-23.
71. Rennenkampff, *Bemerkungen*, 206 footnote.
72. *Ibid.*, 206.
73. *Ibid.*, 208.

74. Ibid., 205-206.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 167.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 53-54.
79. Ibid., 62.
80. Ibid., footnote 146-147.
81. Jégor von Sivers, XX.
82. He claimed to be personally in favor of *voluntary* hereditary tenure. Rennenkampff, *Bemerkungen*, 137.
83. Ibid., 131.
84. Ibid., 136.
85. Ibid., 126-127.
86. Ibid., 144-145.
87. Ibid., 185.
88. Ibid., 158-160.
89. Ibid., 164.
90. Ibid., 161,164.
91. Ibid., 202.
92. "The larger a farm, the more work a tenant can free his own hands from, the more other people ... will be attracted to leave the cities and take up the comfortable life of such a tenant farmer; the industrious farmer will be pushed out by lazy, inexpert townsmen, the land will be flooded by bankrupt-headed farmers, the cities will be emptied ... the landowners will see their property devalued by lazy tenants and the state will be infinitely poorer..." Ibid., 183.
93. Ibid., 144.
94. Ibid., 204.
95. Ibid., 177.
96. The text of his proposal is in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 123-124; and Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 348-349.
97. The text is available in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 124-126.
98. See Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 350-351.
99. Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 124.
100. The twelve members of the *Landratskollegium*, the executive organ of the *Landtag*.
101. The twelve district deputies elected by the *Landtag*, who could be summoned to make decisions between *Landtag* sessions, which took place every three years.
102. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 351.
103. The Chamber of twelve district deputies.
104. The leader of the Ritter, elected by them for three years. His duties were to lead the *Landtag* discussions, oversee the execution of its decisions and to generally represent the Ritter, especially in St Petersburg. The office of *Landmarschall* has been viewed as the single most important position in provincial government. Edward Thaden, ed. *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland 1855-1914* (Princeton, 1981), 114.

105. An extract of Paulucci's speech is in Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 353.
106. Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 126.
107. The "first" was later eliminated.
108. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*.
109. Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 126-127.
110. The text of the Tsar's letter to Paulucci is given in Samson, *Historischer Versuch*, 127-128.
111. There may be a correlation here. Peasants who worked low labor quotas for the landowner had more time to work their own fields and therefore more chance of self-sufficiency.
112. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 349-357.
113. Jégor von Sivers, XXI.
114. Cited in Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 367.
115. Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 137.
116. For comparison, the imperial government collected 500,000 silver rubles from Livland's poll tax. *Ibid.*, 143.
117. Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 419, note 8.
118. Hueck, *Die landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 207.
119. C. Hehn, *Die Intensität der livländischen Landwirtschaft* (Dorpat, 1858), 71. He felt strongly enough about this to list as the first of his doctoral theses: "The study of law for future landowners is not to be recommended."
120. According to Tobien, the peasants benefited overall from landlord economic manipulation of land. From 1819 to 1846, 248 *haken* of peasant land were incorporated into *Hofsland* but in the same period, there was a total of 270 *haken* of new peasant plots on *Hofsland*. *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 417.
121. See above..
122. Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 172-173.
123. This is demonstrated by Yuhan Kahk in *Peasant and Lord*, 70-74.
124. *Ibid.*, 90.
125. See fn. 28 above.
126. Hueck, *Darstellung der landwirthschaftlichen Verhältnisse*, 178-180; Gernet, *Geschichte des Agrarrechts*, 165-166; Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, 417-419.
127. "...*Erbpacht* [untranslated in the original Russian text] is more suited ... to the needs of the State than emancipation without land." See Bernard Schallhorn, *Lokalverwaltung und Ständerecht in Rußland zu Beginn der Herrschaft Niklaus I Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, Vol 26 (Berlin, 1979), 220.
128. In a speech on March 30, 1842. See "Rede des Kaisers Nikolai des Ersten," in Tobien, *Die Agrargesetzgebung*, vol II, Beilage I, 379
129. The Tsar deplored the state of serfdom but considered it a greater evil to abolish it at that time. The correct way was "to open the way to a transitional stage, combined with the unshakeable right of the nobility to the land." *Ibid.*
130. K.I. Lander, "Pribaltiiskii krai v pervoi polovine XIX veka." Chapter IX in *Istoriya Rossii v XIX veke*, (Moscow 1909), 346.
131. Reinhard Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte: Die Ostseeländer Livland, Estland, Kurland 1180-1918* (Munich, 1954), 185.

132. Gert von Pistohlkors, *Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik zwischen Russifizierung und Revolution* (Göttingen, 1978), 110.
133. L. Pezold, *Die Öffentlichkeit in den baltischen Provinzen* (Leipzig, 1870), cited in Anders Henriksson, *The Tsar's Loyal Germans. The Riga German Community: Social Change and the Nationality Question, 1855-1905* (New York, 1983), 11.