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Politics and the War Effort in Russia: The Union of Zemstvos and the Organization of the Food Supply, 1914–1916

Russian liberals can easily be cast as weakhearted idealists, devoted to Western notions of fair play and moderation and naïvely optimistic of the chances of seeing those principles brought to life in their own country. As the opposing forces of the state and the revolution build toward their climax in 1917, the liberal Hamlets often appear incapable of seizing the moment. Yet consider the efforts of the “public organizations”—the War-Industry Committees, the Union of Zemstvos, and the Union of Towns, as well as the Progressive Bloc in the Duma—to take over the practical matter of running Russia’s war effort during the First World War. Prince George Lvov, head of the Provisional Government until the July Days of 1917, seems to personify this stereotype of well-meaning yet tragically ineffective liberalism on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, but it was this same figure who energetically directed the Union of Zemstvos during the war.

There is a pertinent account of a meeting of the Zemstvo Union’s Central Directorate at the Union’s headquarters in Moscow. Discussions had dragged on late into the evening over a trivial issue of whether to include a kitchen in the new quarters for the staff of one department. Becoming impatient, Lvov turned over the chair to an aide and retired to his chambers to make a telephone call. After the meeting adjourned, Lvov took his aide (who was the Union’s treasurer) aside and instructed him to prepare six million rubles for the purchase of some factories. Astonished by Lvov’s sudden decision, the aide reminded him of the need for official authorization: “Where is the order from the Central Directorate? This issue hasn’t even been discussed . . . I can’t do things this way.” To this Lvov replied, “Well, we will fill out the forms afterward. The transaction has been settled. Just congratulate the Zemstvo Union for its cheap acquisition, and get the money ready.”¹ Lvov’s boldness in this incident belies the image of a weak man in troubled times, and beckons us to look more deeply into the actions of his organization.

Recently, the resurgence of scholarship on Russian liberals during the war has tended to emphasize the failings of the public organizations. Michael Hamm describes the program of the Progressive Bloc as too narrow-minded and cautious to solve the pressing social problems created during the war;² William Gleason agrees with this interpretation, criticizing the mayors who dominated

1. Tikhon Polner, *Zhiznennyi put' kniazia Georgiia Evgen'evicha L'vova* (Paris, 1932), p. 188.

2. Michael F. Hamm, “Liberal Politics in Wartime Russia: An Analysis of the Progressive Bloc,” *Slavic Review*, 33, no. 3 (September 1974): 462.

the Union of Towns for their resistance to appeals for democratic reform;³ and, most damning of all, Norman Stone argues that the War-Industry Committees and the Zemgor (the organization uniting the Zemstvo and Town unions) were more a nuisance than anything else.⁴ Because the liberal groups had earlier been treated as saintly heroes in the standard works by Florinsky and Pares,⁵ it is only natural that scholars now attempt to balance the picture by emphasizing the inadequacy of the public organizations' contribution to Russia's war effort.

Nevertheless, some gaps remain in our understanding of the Russian government and public during the war. For one thing, the imperial bureaucracy has been treated much too frequently as a monolithic machine; as P. A. Zaionchkovskii and his students have shown for an earlier period in Russian history, one must be more sensitive to the conflicts between the various ministries. Second, the political mentality of the liberal groups remains largely unexplored. Historians today generally agree that the responsibilities of these organizations expanded enormously during the war—the author of a dissertation on the two unions writes that they became “de facto governments within the official government”⁶—but the reasons behind that expansion are not yet understood. A controversy developed right in the midst of the war over the motivations behind the unions' involvement in the war effort, and it is time for this debate to be reexamined. The conservative argument, most persistently articulated by the Empress Alexandra, accused the zemstvo and town organizations of entering into the war effort in order to take all credit for saving Russia and thereby force political concessions from the government after the war.⁷ In reply, liberal spokesmen deplored the government's distrust of the public, claiming the unions were motivated not by a thirst for political gain but by a patriotic sense of duty to country.⁸

The liberal view has found its way into some secondary treatments of the period,⁹ but the notion of a suspicious government curbing the efforts of the altruistic unions raises certain questions. If the government was so consistently

3. William E. Gleason, “The All-Russian Union of Towns and the Politics of Urban Reform in Tsarist Russia,” *Russian Review*, 35, no. 3 (July 1976): 295–302.

4. Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), pp. 202–4.

5. Michael Florinsky, *The Fall of the Russian Empire* (New Haven, 1931); Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (London, 1939).

6. William E. Gleason, “The All-Russian Union of Towns and the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos in World War I: 1914–1917,” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1972), p. 245.

7. *Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar 1914–1916*, with an introduction by Bernard Pares (London, 1923), pp. 167 and 175; see also V. N. Shakhovskoi, “*Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*” (*Tak prokhodit mirskaia slava*) 1893–1917 gg. (Paris, 1952), pp. 77–79, 111–12.

8. B. B. Grave, ed., *Burshuaziia nakanune fevral'skoi revoliutsii: Tsentrarkhiv: 1917 god v dokumentakh i materialakh* (Moscow, 1927), pp. 49–51; Tikhon Polner et al., *Russian Local Government During the War and the Union of Zemstvos* (New Haven, 1932); Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, p. 195; and Paul Miliukov, *Political Memoirs, 1905–1917*, ed. Arthur Mendel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 313.

9. Florinsky, *Fall of the Russian Monarchy*, pp. 125–33; Marc Ferro, *The Russian Revolution of February 1917*, trans. J. L. Richards (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 22–26; Gleason, “The All-Russian Union of Towns and the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos,” pp. 15, 30, 257. A notable exception to this otherwise uncritical acceptance of the liberal position is George Katkov's *Russia 1917: The February Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), chapter 8.

distrustful of the public, how did the unions manage to increase their duties so remarkably during the war? Was it only selfless love of the fatherland that led them to take on their new responsibilities?

The involvement of the Zemstvo Union in the organization of the food supply offers an appropriate perspective from which to examine these issues. The Zemstvo Union was chartered at the beginning of the war only to involve itself in "Red Cross activities" (medical relief for the sick and wounded). Initially, therefore, it had no business in food matters, yet by the end of 1916 the food supply had become probably the single most important sector of the Union. This study will show the divisions within the imperial bureaucracy which made possible the expansion of the Union's food duties and which were subsequently deepened in response to the zemstvos' increasing responsibilities, and it will show the combination of sincere patriotism, bureaucratic pragmatism, economic self-interest, and partisan politics that underlay the Union's decision to strengthen its own role in the food organization.

We must begin by examining the government's program to cope with the food problem, which involved the tasks of producing enough food and distributing it to consumers. On the supply side, the main problem was that fewer laborers and agricultural supplies were available. The mobilization of several million peasants into the army deprived large grain producers of the necessary labor, while difficulties with industry and the sharp drop of imports caused a shortage of implements and fertilizers. As a result, the area under cultivation began to decrease, and observers feared that Russia would face a scarcity of grain. Offsetting this was the blockade of Baltic and Black Sea ports which, because Russia no longer exported grain, left more cereals for domestic consumption. The demand for grain increased significantly during the war, however, largely because of the army's policy of feeding its soldiers more and better food than they had been accustomed to eating as peasants before the war.¹⁰ To meet the great demand for food, the decrease in cultivated acreage had to be reversed; to do this, organizers had to find new sources of agricultural labor and supplies.

A graver problem lay on the side of distribution. Because of its inadequate development before the war, Russia's railway system could not support the volume of traffic which was required of it during the war. Military shipments took priority over provisions for the towns, and consequently some areas did not receive enough food. Prices rose and, predictably, food traders began to speculate. Thus, not only did the available rolling stock have to be used more efficiently, but a way also had to be found to bypass the profiteering middleman. A well-planned program was required to locate food supplies and consumers and to coordinate the efforts of the many organizations involved in the food trade. But instead of developing such a program, the government only made things worse. For the first two years of the war, the government slowly adopted one measure after another on an ad hoc basis and concerned itself only with feeding the army, leaving the civilian population at the mercy of an unregulated market.

10. A Duma report of February 15, 1916 discussed the rising demand for food (see *Prilozhenie k stenograficheskim otchetam Gosudarstvennoi Dumy: Chetvertyi sozyv, sessiia chetvertaia, 1915-1916 gg.*, vol. 2 [Petrograd, 1916], pp. 1-2).

To provision the army, the government authorized troop commanders in the military zones (*voennye okrugi*) to prohibit the export of food from specified areas until the quartermaster had bought as much as was needed; behind the military zones, the Ministry of Agriculture created a network of agents to stockpile grain for the army (*upolnomochennnye po zakupke khleba*). As food prices began to rise under the pressure of the army's enormous demand and the speculators' efforts to withhold produce from the market, the government responded on February 17, 1915 by issuing a price control ordinance. It permitted troop commanders of the zones, upon agreement with local officials, to fix food prices and, if necessary, requisition the needed goods. Then the government attempted to create a unified command to manage its army food program: the law of May 19, 1915 established a Central Food Supply Directorate under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This agency never materialized, and on August 17 the government created in its place a Special Council on the Food Supply, organized under the Ministry of Agriculture. In the fall of 1915, the Special Council was authorized to set up its own network of stockpiling agents, *upolnomochennnye po prodovol'stviu*, who worked independently of the Ministry of Agriculture's agents *po zakupke*. These institutional changes were followed by new price policies: fixed prices, which at first affected only the zones, were now extended to the home front, yet they applied only to sales of food to the army. Prices were fixed for oats on October 5, for rye on December 6, for wheat on January 3, 1916, and for barley on February 6, 1916.¹¹

This was the way the situation stood in the spring of 1916, when the Zemstvo Union began to assert its own role in organizing the food supply. Part of the Union's justification for taking on this new task was that the government had no well-conceived plan for combating the food problem, and this criticism was well founded. In general, the government's program had two major defects: its price policy only encouraged speculation, and it failed to coordinate the many independently operating institutions involved in food matters.

The flaw in the price policy was that it created two distinct markets, one for the army, regulated by official agencies, and another for civilians, distorted by wartime conditions but without any state control. When troop commanders prohibited the export of food from designated areas, the exchange of goods was disrupted and the economy was fragmented into small territorial units. Whenever the government fixed prices for army purchases, food prices on the unregulated civilian market skyrocketed.¹² It was only in September of 1916 that officials became aware of the folly of influencing both halves of the market but controlling only one.¹³

11. *Sobranie zakonov i rasporyazhenii* [hereafter cited as SUR], articles 551, 1169, 1760 (1915); and N. S. Kondrat'ev, *Rynok khlebov i ego regulirovanie vo vremia voimy i revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1916), p. 143.

12. Naum Jasny [N. Iasnyi], *Opyt regulirovki snabzhenia khlebom* (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 9-14.

13. On September 9 the Ministry of Agriculture decreed fixed prices on all food transactions. K. Kovalenskii, a leading figure in the government's food organization, explained the problem in a memo of September 24, 1916 to A. D. Protopopov, minister of internal affairs (see A. M. Anfimov, ed., *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii nakanune Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsii: Dokumenty i materialy* [Leningrad, 1967], part 3, pp. 166-67).

Inexperience with this type of problem was one reason for the government's shortsighted policy. No one anticipated either a prolonged war or the food difficulties it would entail. But this excuse was no longer valid by 1915, when officials finally did realize that the war would continue for some time.¹⁴ The cautious attitude of A. V. Krivoshein, the first chairman of the Special Council, who refused to use the broad powers authorized by the law of August 17, 1915,¹⁵ also hampered the development of an effective policy. He disagreed with the principle of extensive government intervention in the economy and considered this to be the concern not of his own department but of the Ministry of Transportation.¹⁶ Even this, however, does not completely explain the government's ineffectiveness, for Krivoshein's successor to the Ministry of Agriculture, A. N. Naumov, was unable to improve the situation despite his determination to regulate the economy more forcefully.

Thus the second flaw in the government's program, its inability to establish centralized control, is also a factor in the explanation of why the state could not respond effectively when the first major food crisis developed in late 1915. In the first year of the war, troop commanders, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Union of Towns, and the zemstvos all worked independently to organize the food supply. The greatest competition raged between the Ministry of Agriculture and the military. Both conducted stockpiling operations on their own, and sometimes the army sent agents into southern and central Russia to buy products that the Ministry of Agriculture should have stockpiled. Confusion between these two bodies was finally cleared up in late 1915 after Naumov complained to the General Staff and the tsar about the military's independent actions,¹⁷ but by then a new source of bureaucratic chaos had arisen: the Special Councils.

The creation of the Special Councils illustrates a theme that appeared frequently after the summer of 1915, the intrusion of political partisanship into the running of the war effort. Following the disasters of the Galician campaign in the spring of 1915, the minister of war, General A. A. Polivanov, introduced a bill to create a single Special Council, under his ministry, to organize the war economy. But the Duma, reluctant to allow Polivanov to become the economic and military dictator of Russia, split the body into four separate Special Councils.¹⁸ Each of these councils was involved in matters that touched closely

14. A. N. Naumov writes that on January 17, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov mentioned his expectations that the war would continue for at least a year. On February 3, 1915 the government, now expecting a prolonged war, called a special conference on the food problem (see A. N. Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii, 1868-1917*, vol. 2 [New York, 1955], pp. 278-80).

15. The statute empowered the chairman to inspect commercial enterprises, repeal the orders of local authorities, and coordinate the activity of his Special Council with that of the troop commanders (*SUR*, article 1760, statutes 1, 5, 7, 16, and 17 [1915]).

16. K. A. Krivoshein, *A. V. Krivoshein (1857-1921 gg.): Ego znachenie v istorii Rossii nachala XX veka* (Paris, 1973), pp. 283-85; Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, p. 469; A. V. Inokhodtsev, "Voprosy tyla: Bez programmy," *Russkie zapiski*, no. 11 (1915), p. 293.

17. Ia. M. Bukshpan, *Voenna-khoziaistvennaia politika: Formy i organy regulirovaniia narodnogo khoziaistva za vremia mirovoi voiny 1914-1918 gg.* (Moscow, 1929), p. 383; Kondrat'ev, *Rynok khlebov*, pp. 99-104; Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 1 (New York, 1955), p. 292.

18. A. A. Polivanov, *Iz dnevnikov i vospominanii po dolzhnosti voennogo ministra i ego*

upon the workings of the others. The Special Council for Defense began to compete for railway shipments with the Special Council on the Food Supply, and an inter-Special Council Commission had to be created to discuss railway matters¹⁹—even though a Special Council on Transportation already existed! Not only did the Special Council on the Food Supply have to compete with other institutions, it also lacked the internal cohesiveness necessary to act decisively. Naumov likened his Special Council to a small debating society composed of diverse interests—ranging from rural producers to urban and military consumers—and incapable of adopting timely measures.²⁰

The absence of a well-coordinated policy paralyzed the efforts of the imperial bureaucracy to control the food problem. By mid-1915, signs appeared that the economy was falling into disarray. Transportation began to worsen as a great deal of rolling stock was devoted to military purposes. Grain shipments in 1915 fell to 65.4 percent of the 1913 level.²¹ Speculation became commonplace, yet the government's myopic policy only stimulated hoarding and inflation. Townspeople began to complain as early as the spring of 1915, and by autumn the situation prompted the empress to write to her husband that "for rich people even it is hard living."²² Some officials, such as Naumov, recognized the need to revise the food program, but because no central coordination existed, they were powerless to act. Disunity within the imperial apparatus created a vacuum into which a determined and resourceful organization—such as the *zemstvos*—could penetrate.

Ironically, it was the government itself which first encouraged the *zemstvos* to become involved in food matters during the war. It turned over most of its local work in supplying the army to the *zemstvos* in the countryside (as well as to the municipal institutions in the towns). When the Ministry of Agriculture organized its agents *po zakupke*, chairmen of the provincial *zemstvo* boards (*upravy*) manned most of the posts. In the first stockpiling campaign, begun in the fall of 1914, the agents *po zakupke* included twenty *zemstvo* members, out of a total of forty-one agents.²³ By contrast, the governors dominated the Special Council's apparatus, representing half of the agents *po prodovol'stviiu*, whereas *zemstvo* members held slightly fewer than one-third of the posts.²⁴ But even in cases where the governors manned the agent positions, the *zemstvos* assumed an important role in the local food councils.²⁵

pomoshchnika, 1907–1916 gg., vol. 1 (Moscow, 1924), pp. 200–202; Shakhovskoi, "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi," pp. 122–23; and P. B. Struve et al., *Food Supply in Russia During the World War* (New Haven, 1930), p. 10.

19. Bukshpan, *Voенно-khoziaistvennaia politika*, p. 383.

20. Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 2, p. 346.

21. Kondrat'ev, *Rynok khlebov*, p. 54.

22. *Letters of the Tsaritsa*, p. 214.

23. Kondrat'ev, *Rynok khlebov*, p. 80.

24. Bukshpan, *Voенно-khoziaistvennaia politika*, p. 385.

25. An extreme example in which the *zemstvos* practically ran the government's food organization can be found in Kostroma province, where the chairman of the provincial *zemstvo* board served as the agent *po prodovol'stviiu* and where *zemstvo* officials (along with members of the town organization and the War-Industry Committee) held six of the seven posts on the government's food council. *Zemstvo* business was actually conducted at this council, and the council's communications were published not in a government journal but in the *zemstvo's* own local *Bulletin* (see *Izvestiia Kostromskogo gubernskogo zemstva*,

There were several reasons why the government turned to the zemstvos to conduct its local food activities. The first two ministers of agriculture and chairmen of the Special Council on the Food Supply—Krivoshein and Naumov—looked favorably upon the zemstvos and recognized their crucial role in local agricultural affairs (Naumov himself was a zemstvo official). Although the army may not have shared the sympathy of Krivoshein and Naumov for the public organizations, the General Staff delegated much of its stockpiling work behind the zones to the zemstvos, and the military highly praised their work.²⁶ Liberals in the Duma saw an advantage in relying on the zemstvos instead of agencies run by the central government in the fact that the zemstvos held closer ties with the local population.²⁷ The main reason the government turned to the zemstvos, however, was probably convenience. By using the zemstvos, the government was spared the bother of creating a new organization and could profit from the zemstvos' long experience in rural affairs.

Contrary to the stereotype of hostility between the bureaucracy and the zemstvos, practical cooperation was evident between the two forces during the war. In late January of 1916, Minister of Internal Affairs A. A. Khvostov demonstrated the convenience of using the zemstvos when, in an effort to locate shortages of refugees assigned to field labor, he telegraphed the governors with the request that they turn to the *uezd* (county) zemstvo boards for assistance.²⁸ On the whole, however, it was the Ministry of Agriculture which consistently relied on the zemstvos. When this ministry first set up two high commissariats to organize its purchases of grains and dairy products, it turned to the Zemstvo Union's food expert, P. B. Struve (or to the Polytechnical Institute—the source is unclear) to recommend candidates for the post.²⁹ When the ministry decided to carry out a mass requisition of cattle in the spring of 1916, it entrusted the matter to the zemstvos. The Special Council (chaired by the minister of agriculture) bewailed the absence of detailed, reliable agricultural statistics and organized an empire-wide agricultural census, which was conducted by the zemstvos.³⁰ In late 1916, the new minister of agriculture, A. A. Rittikh, prepared a mass grain levy for the winter, and, as before, turned the project over to the zemstvos.

1915, no. 8, p. 2; 1916, no. 1, p. 278, no. 3, pp. 23–29, and no. 4, pp. 20–21, 24). Much the same was true for Moscow and Tambov provinces, the two areas besides Kostroma where local sources were available to me (see A. Chaianov, ed., *Materialy po voprosam organizatsii proizvod'stvennogo dela*, vol. 2: *Organizatsiia proizvod'stvennogo dela v Moskovskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1916), p. 47; and vol. 3: *Organizatsiia zagotovki khleba v Tambovskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1917), pp. 30–33).

26. M. Lemke, *250 dnei v tsarskoi stavke (25 sent. 1915–2 iulia 1916)* (Petrograd, 1920), pp. 471 and 825; Iu. N. Danilov [Daniloff], *Dem Zusammenbruch entgegen* (Hanover, 1928), pp. 75–76; and Iu. N. Danilov, *Rossiiia v mirovoi voine, 1914–1915 gg.* (Berlin, 1924), pp. 117–18.

27. *Prilozhenie k stenograficheskim otchetam Gosudarstvennoi Dumy: Chetvertyi sozvyv, sessiia chetvertaia*, vol. 5 (Petrograd, 1916), no. 299, p. 4.

28. Anfimov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii*, part 3, p. 33.

29. Betty A. Laird and Roy D. Laird, eds., *To Live Long Enough: The Memoirs of Naum Jasny, Scientific Analyst* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), p. 18.

30. Osoboe Soveshchanie dlia obsuzhdeniia i ob'edineniia meropriiatii po proizvod'stvennomu delu, *Predvaritel'nye itogi vserossiiskoi sel'skokhoziaistvennoi perepisi 1916 goda (po podshchetam, proizvedennym mestnymi perepisnymi uchrezhdeniiami)*, 1: *Evropeiskaia Rossiia: Pouezdnye, pogubernskie i poraionnye itogi* (Petrograd, 1916), pp. i–xii.

The government also supported the zemstvos by paying most of their bills during the war.³¹ Of course, the zemstvos had their own funds, but the combination of wartime inflation and expanding zemstvo operations meant that the only way they could finance themselves was through the state. At the beginning of the war, the Union received nearly 12 million rubles from the Treasury; by June 26, 1915 that figure had risen to 72 million, and by January 1, 1916 it stood at 187 million rubles.³²

Another way in which the government facilitated zemstvo involvement in food matters was by allowing them, and the Union of Towns, a virtual monopoly over the civilian food organization. At first, the zemstvos had mirrored the government in overlooking the civilian food supply, but by the spring of 1915, when rising food prices first aroused concern, individual county zemstvos began to intervene. They stockpiled large quantities of sugar, salt, and other essentials and stored them in their own warehouses. Then they either distributed the goods, usually through local cooperatives, or sold them on the market at wholesale, at a savings of up to 30 percent.³³

Local zemstvos also undertook, on their own initiative, to assist agricultural production by aiding families of conscripted soldiers, who were deprived of the labor of their fathers and sons. In the first two years of the war there was little uniformity among county zemstvos in the handling of this matter: some did nothing, whereas others provided cash subsidies to help the families hire rural laborers and even distributed implements and seeds.³⁴ Nevertheless, an institutional mechanism was being set in motion. On the top stood the provincial zemstvos, which received funds from the state and private sources; these funds were then relayed to the county zemstvo boards, which bought up large quantities of materials and, with the aid of the cooperatives, distributed these materials to needy estates.³⁵

At the same time, local zemstvos also took the initiative in providing the army with food. Even though these zemstvos were performing much of the local army supply work organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Special Council, they were also feeding the army independently of the government. (Thus the absurd dimensions of the bureaucratic chaos begin to come into full view: the army fed itself [through troop commanders in the zones], the Ministry of Agriculture fed the army, the Special Council on the Food Supply [chaired by the minister of agriculture] fed the army, the zemstvos and the towns fed the army both through the Ministry of Agriculture and on their own.) The county zemstvos bought food and established supply centers at railway

31. This embittered many state officials. Naumov, among others, complained that the Union failed to account for their expenses and consequently wasted millions of government rubles (see Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 2, p. 458). The empress sought to ensure that the public realized to what extent the government was subsidizing zemstvo operations, so that the zemstvos could not claim to have single-handedly saved Russia from disaster (see *Letters of the Tsaritsa*, pp. 350 and 415).

32. Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, p. 185.

33. Vserossiiskii Zemskii Soiuz pomoshchi bol'nym i rannym voenam, *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 30–31, pp. 243–44; and *Izvestiia Kostromskogo gubernskogo zemstva*, 1916, no. 6, pp. 50–55.

34. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 30–31, pp. 220–21; no. 34, pp. 152–54; nos. 35–36, pp. 304–9.

35. *Ibid.*, no. 33, pp. 161–64; nos. 35–36, pp. 300–302, 310–11; nos. 37–38, pp. 108–12.

terminals to ship it to the front.³⁶ On the central level, the Union set up a Central Food Supply Warehouse, which began operating in June of 1915. By that autumn, the Union had created four more departments, each working independently to supply food and fodder to the front.³⁷

These minor achievements represent the sum of the zemstvos' efforts in the first phase of their involvement in food matters, before they began to reassess their operations. The zemstvos, in this period, mainly adopted measures haphazardly and responded to previous difficulties rather than anticipating future needs. Moreover, neither the Zemstvo Union nor the provincial zemstvos made a significant attempt to coordinate the work of the individual county zemstvos, where the bulk of the zemstvos' food efforts was concentrated. As long as the stockpiling-storing-distributing operations were confined to the local level, the actions of county zemstvos were doomed to failure, because local zemstvos did not work closely with each other. Each was pursuing its own course of action, and, consequently, supply efforts in particular areas were being crippled by shortages elsewhere. The Central Food Supply Warehouse marked an early attempt to deal with this problem, but on the whole the central body was still quite passive and disorganized.³⁸

In short, the zemstvos were committing the same errors as the government—there was no plan to regulate the food supply systematically, and the work of county zemstvos went uncoordinated. Unlike the government, however, zemstvo leaders were able to realize their errors and make necessary corrections. The change began in late 1915, when zemstvo officials became aware of the defects of the government's food program. In November, the Union's Central Directorate began printing articles in its *Bulletin* criticizing the government's price policy.³⁹ At a meeting of the Special Council on the Food Supply in December of 1915, Struve, who represented the Zemstvo Union on the Council, proposed that food prices on the civilian market be regulated, but this was voted down.⁴⁰ At the same time, zemstvo leaders were becoming aware of their own defects. The provincial zemstvos of grain-rich Kharkov and Tauride complained that individual zemstvos could not possibly organize the economy by themselves, and called on the Union to intervene. To help make this possible, the Iaroslavl' provincial assembly suggested that a convention of provincial delegates be held to discuss the need for "all-state" measures to tackle the food problem.⁴¹ The Union's Central Directorate responded to these appeals for "all-state" measures by creating on December 4, 1915 a Stockpiling Commission to unite the activities of the various zemstvo agencies supplying the army. This new agency was to encounter difficulties by the spring of 1916, for it did not function in practice as well as it looked on paper, but it did represent the Central Directorate's initial effort to coordinate zemstvo food operations.⁴²

36. *Ibid.*, nos. 30–31, p. 57; no. 33, pp. 148–51.

37. *Ibid.*, no. 28, p. 24; no. 29, pp. 51–57; nos. 30–31, pp. 57–63; no. 33, p. 32.

38. A chronicle describing the great variety among the practices of the county zemstvos can be found in the *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, no. 29, pp. 190–96.

39. *Ibid.*, no. 28, p. 26; nos. 30–31, pp. 62–63, 262–63.

40. Struve et al., *Food Supply in Russia*, pp. 51–57.

41. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 30–31, p. 261; no. 34, pp. 160–62; nos. 35–36, pp. 21–22.

42. *Ibid.*, no. 29, p. 240; no. 32, pp. 34–36.

The real reform came in the spring of 1916 when the Union created two powerful departments to manage food matters. The most significant one was the Economic Department, proposed at the Moscow assembly of provincial zemstvo delegates which was convened on March 12 in response to the Iaroslavl' appeal for an all-zemstvo conference. When the Economic Department finally came into existence on April 6, two of its features attested to the zemstvos' progress toward forming an elaborate food organization. First, the Economic Department was to gather data on agricultural conditions, distribute prisoners of war, refugees, and student brigades to compensate for the loss of rural labor, and dispatch agricultural supplies to producers. (Obviously, the central organization was learning from its local units, for these were all measures practiced by county zemstvos to prevent a reduction of cultivated area.) Second, a great deal of emphasis was placed on planning. The Department was to design programs to regulate food exchange between regions of production and consumption, and use its statistical data to predict bad harvests and supply emergency rations wherever and whenever they were needed.

After setting up the Economic Department, the Central Directorate created the Department of Supply, which was to oversee work in provisioning the army. Earlier, the Stockpiling Commission had been established for this purpose, but the boundaries of its competence had been poorly defined. The old Stockpiling Commission, incorporated within the Department of Supply, now had a very precise relationship to the other units within the Union serving the army: the Stockpiling Commission was to buy the goods, the Warehouse Division was to store them, and the Transport Division was to deliver them to the front.⁴³ Thus the Department of Supply functioned as one huge army wholesaler in an effort to eliminate the middleman.

Part of the reason for creating the two new departments was quite practical—problems had arisen, and institutional changes were devised to solve them. On the other hand, there was also a political motive involved in these reforms. Consciously or not, zemstvo leaders had made a choice in the spring of 1916. They needed a central organization to unify their food operations and to plan for future needs. They could have asked the government, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, to assume this role of unifying and guiding; instead, they chose to do it themselves.

Seeking government direction may not seem to have been a viable alternative, but it could have been tried nonetheless. An example of the way this might have worked can be seen in the handling of German and Austrian prisoners of war. The Ministry of Agriculture received POW's from the army; the prisoners of war were then sent to the provincial zemstvos which, in turn, distributed them to the large estates that had suffered from losses of rural laborers.⁴⁴ The ministry served as the central agency, and the provincial and county zemstvos served as its local branches. Considering the extensive cooperation between the ministry and the zemstvos, and the trust the ministry placed in them, it would seem reasonable to argue that the zemstvos could have reciprocated by asking the ministry to serve as their central food agency. This would

43. *Ibid.*, no. 40, pp. 14–29.

44. A. M. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 95 and 195.

have offered the significant advantage of avoiding the problem of bureaucratic competition which so plagued the other sectors of the war organization.

There was, however, a tremendous disadvantage to this option from the zemstvos' point of view. By asking the Ministry of Agriculture, or any other ministry, to serve as the central agency in their food work, they would be endangering their own autonomy vis-à-vis the government, and rendering the work of the central Zemstvo Union superfluous. The Union encountered a similar dilemma in the autumn of 1915 when the government threatened to intrude on their handling of the refugees fleeing from western Russia. Four days after Prince Lvov proposed to the Special Council on Refugees that the Union's refugee organization serve as liaison between the central bureaucracy and the provinces (which would have placed the Union in control of the refugee relief program), the Council of Ministers countered with a ruling that the zemstvo refugee organization turn over its financial accounts to the governors. Realizing that submission to the governors would undermine the authority and *raison d'être* of the Union, Lvov refused to comply. On November 28, 1915 the Union formally withdrew from the Special Council on Refugees.⁴⁵

Fear of becoming part of the government and of losing their independence led zemstvo leaders to make the necessary changes on their own, without involving any ministry in their creation of a central food agency. Three forms of evidence can be cited to support this interpretation. First, there is the absence of any zemstvo criticism of the bureaucratic disorganization in the government's food program. The zemstvo leaders quickly spotted flaws in the price policy, but were silent on the government's failure to unite the many groups involved in food matters. When the question of establishing a central zemstvo food agency was raised, no one warned of the dangers of adding to the chaos by building up a separate zemstvo apparatus.⁴⁶ Second, there is the effort by the Central Directorate in early 1916 to secure greater financial independence from the state. In January of 1916 it called on the provincial zemstvos to find new sources of money so that they could become less dependent on the state. The end of the war was not in sight, the appeal read, and since the war had gone on for so long, they should not limit themselves to activities prescribed in August of 1914.⁴⁷ This tactic succeeded at least in Iaroslavl' province, where the governor found the zemstvos' work too valuable to refuse their demand to raise their taxes above the 3 percent maximum fixed by law.⁴⁸ Finally, there are the statements by Prince Lvov attesting to his disillusionment with the government and the

45. For more on this, see William E. Gleason, "The All-Russian Union of Towns and the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos," pp. 151-60. According to Gleason, Lvov withdrew from the Special Council in order to prevent domestic politics from diverting attention from the war effort. Gleason sees this as an indication of Lvov's abhorrence of politics. I, on the contrary, see it as Lvov placing zemstvo autonomy ahead of the practical matter of assisting the refugees. To paraphrase Bismarck, politics were primary.

46. The only zemstvo comment I have seen on the problem of institutional parallelism appears in Veselovskii's monumental history of the zemstvos, where the author criticizes the Ministry of Agriculture's meddling with the zemstvos in the implementation of the Stolypin reform. Veselovskii concludes that the zemstvos, not the government, should have monopolized "the entire business of rendering agricultural assistance to the population" (V. V. Veselovskii, *Istoriia zemstva za sorok let*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg, 1911), p. 124.

47. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 30-31, pp. 257-59.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-43.

priority he attached to the zemstvos' institutional autonomy. To understand his sentiments, one must appreciate the long tradition of confrontation between the zemstvos and the government, particularly in the decade leading up to 1905. When Finance Minister Sergei Witte issued a law in 1900 restricting zemstvo powers of taxation, many zemstvo leaders considered limiting their expenditures rather than yielding to the government.⁴⁹ And the prominent role played by zemstvo personnel in the liberation movement in 1904–5 is well known. The zemstvos and the government did declare a truce upon the outbreak of war in 1914, but this harmony wore thin after the disastrous Galician campaign in 1915. By June, a certain "leftist group" within the Zemstvo and Town unions sought to criticize the government for its mismanagement of the war and the economy, and place supply matters in its own hands.⁵⁰ On June 5, N. V. Teslenko, formerly a member of the Moscow zemstvo and now a Kadet in the Duma, suggested that the public organizations compete with the government, instead of working within the framework set by the state, in order to demonstrate to the country the difference between themselves and the government: "He who knows how to work will be the master of the country. . . . The first place to start is in the stockpiling for the army and the food supply campaigns."⁵¹

At first Lvov, like the majority of Union leaders, rejected such conspiratorial tactics. At a meeting of the Progressive Bloc on August 15, he cautiously emphasized the need to avoid issuing ultimatums to the government.⁵² The events of the next month, however, changed his mind. First the tsar took over supreme command of the army. Ten out of the twelve ministers protested this decision, and the Progressive Bloc appealed for a government which would enjoy the confidence of the nation. In reply, Nicholas prorogued the Duma and later dismissed seven of his ministers. Politics dominated the atmosphere of the assemblies of the Zemstvo and Town unions, held concurrently in Moscow in early September; it was here that Lvov proclaimed: "we have already departed from our position of passively being governed."⁵³ At a Progressive Bloc meeting of October 25 M. V. Chelnokov, Lvov's counterpart in the Union of Towns, endorsed Teslenko's earlier suggestion by proposing an alternative to a direct confrontation with the government: "The Unions can gain direct results: working in our *own* direction. . . . [We can have] a serious discussion with Goremykin [chairman of the Council of Ministers]—only after the war."⁵⁴ Lvov continued along these lines when A. I. Shingarev, a Kadet in the Duma, proposed an open conflict between the Zemstvo Union and the government. No, replied Lvov, we have already taken that path, and it could lead to disaster. But there is an alternative: "Work, important in its political results. . . . Not struggle, but self-defense."⁵⁵

Although Lvov is imprecise in describing what the political advantages of practical work could be, he and the other leaders of the Progressive Bloc most

49. Polner, *Zhiznennyi put'*, pp. 58–59. Polner contrasts Lvov with this group; this may have been true for 1900, but not after 1915.

50. Grave, *Burzhuziia nakamune fevral'skoi revoliutsii*, pp. 33–34.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

52. "Progressivnyi Blok," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 50–51 (1932): 138 and 144.

53. Shakhovskoi, "Sic Transit Gloria Mundi," p. 133.

54. *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 52 (1932): 147.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–51.

likely meant that by involving themselves increasingly in the war effort, the Zemstvo and Town unions could place themselves in good position to force constitutional reforms upon the government after the war.⁵⁶ (This, by the way, is exactly what the empress accused Lvov of attempting to do.) This conjecture is supported by Lvov's statements in 1916. A theme found repeatedly in Lvov's messages to his followers in the Union's *Bulletin* was his characterization of the zemstvos and other public organizations, in contrast to the government, as the *true* servants of Russia; in effect, this was Lvov's justification for the zemstvos' presumed right to involve themselves as deeply as possible in the war effort. In his speech before the March assembly of provincial zemstvo delegates (where the idea of the Economic Department was being considered), for example, he described a ship in distress. "The Fatherland is in danger. . . . The regime is not guiding the ship of state." Nevertheless, he reassured the audience:

the ship is holding steadily to its course, and work aboard has not stopped. The ship's crew is preserving order and self-control. We shall not stop, and we shall not fall into confusion. In our possession is a trusty guide—love for the homeland.

Earlier in the speech, Lvov had praised the Russian people's relentless will for victory, "its will to develop state-like might" (*volia k razvitiu gosudarstvennoi moshchi*).⁵⁷ On several other occasions, he used the word "state" (*gosudarstvo*) to describe the actions of the zemstvos,⁵⁸ which further suggests his vision of the public organizations as the legitimate government of Russia. He came closest to articulating this view in the autumn of 1916 when he wrote that, whereas at the beginning of the war it had been the zemstvos' patriotic duty to serve the tsarist government obediently, their duty now was to defend Russia, whether or not they came into conflict with the present regime.⁵⁹

One could even make the case that Lvov and the leadership of the Zemstvo Union, far from innocently attempting to assist the army and government, were actively engaged in a conspiracy to take over the running of Russia's war effort. From reports by the secret police one could construct the following explanation of the zemstvos' involvement in the food supply: Teslenko suggests in June of 1915 the possibility of exploiting the food issue as a means for subverting the government; on the eve of the September 7 assemblies of the two unions,

56. George Katkov, using different evidence, arrives at the same general conclusion. As I explain below, however, I do not share his willingness to accept police reports of a public conspiracy (see Katkov, *Russia 1917*, pp. 155–60, 172).

57. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 35–36, pp. 25–26. Guchkov sketched a roughly similar picture, using the image of a speeding car driven by a mad chauffeur (see Katkov, *Russia 1917*, pp. 178–79). The difference between the two images is subtle yet significant. Guchkov, writing in September of 1915, places the public in the back seat, helplessly wondering how to stop the mad driver. Lvov, speaking five months later (after the zemstvos had begun to expand their involvement in the food supply), sees the public firmly in control of the situation, safely guiding the vessel while the mad captain stands aside.

58. He wrote, for example, that "the Russian public has acquired state-like qualities [*rusaskaia obshchestvennost' stala obshchestvennost'iu gosudarstvennoi*]" (*Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 37–38, pp. 1–2). Later he called upon the zemstvos to resolve the dispute over the meat supply between the town and the village from a "supreme, state-like point of view [*vysshhaia, gosudarstvennaia tochka zreniia*]" (*ibid.*, no. 39, p. 2).

59. *Ibid.*, no. 51, pp. 1–2.

Lvov, Chelnokov, and other leaders discuss the existence of a "Black Bloc" of Germanophiles at the court working to force the emperor to sign a separate peace with Germany and thereby strengthen the autocracy; thereafter Lvov discusses the Black Bloc with other zemstvo leaders at the assembly, and his remarks have a shattering impact; one delegate to the assembly attempts to halt the political discussion, labeling it an illegal bid for power (*samoupravstvo*), but he is shouted down by his colleagues; political discussions then intensify at the March 1916 assembly of provincial zemstvo delegates, and measures for the Union's food program are drafted; the assembly closes by sending a telegram to the assembly of the Union of Towns, proclaiming that a decisive victory achieved through the work of Russia's public forces can open the way to a "free and joyous future." The police reports end with the claim that oppositional circles in the public organizations attempted to implement their political plans after the March assemblies, but became discouraged once they realized that the government was aware of their "conspiratorial schemes."⁶⁰

The problem with this evidence is that it is too vague and lacks any firm verification by sources other than the secret police, who could have been serving their own interests by fabricating the idea of a zemstvo conspiracy. Lvov did send a letter to M. V. Rodzianko, chairman of the Duma, affirming the zemstvos' readiness to battle the autocracy, but the letter was written in the fall of 1916, long after the Union had intervened in supply matters; indeed, the only police report explicitly mentioning a zemstvo "conspiracy" was written after Lvov's letter, and probably projected the liberals' despair of late 1916 back to the previous year. For these reasons, the most prudent conclusion is that leaders of the Zemstvo Union decided to strengthen their food organization not out of a deliberate conspiracy but rather out of an unconscious assumption that the autocratic regime was corrupt and that only the public organizations could save Russia.

It is less clear whether zemstvo officials in the provinces and counties shared the concern of the Union leadership for zemstvo autonomy vis-à-vis the government. The ties between the Union on the one hand and the provincial and county zemstvos on the other were weak, particularly before 1916.⁶¹ The notorious Kursk provincial zemstvo refused to have anything to do with the Union. Moreover, there were so many local zemstvos that it is impossible to take the statements of any individual one as indicative of the sentiments of the zemstvo constituency as a whole. Nevertheless, one can find telegrams in the *Bulletin* explicitly endorsing the independent activity of the Union and enthusiastically encouraging it to expand its responsibilities as much as possible.⁶² More important, however, were the *actions* of individual zemstvos—for example, in their implementation of the government's cattle requisition program in the summer of 1916—which demonstrated their desire to operate independently of the state.

When local zemstvos received the government's instructions on requisitioning in March of 1916, many of them vigorously protested the way the state

60. Grave, *Burzhuaziia nakanune fevral'skoi revoliutsii*, pp. 20, 33–34, 47–48, 52–53, 150–51.

61. The Union made a determined effort to strengthen the ties in 1916 by sponsoring all-zemstvo conferences and sending out questionnaires to promote communication within the zemstvo hierarchy (*Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 52–53, pp. 25–26).

62. See, for example, the greetings addressed to Lvov in January of 1916 from the chairman of the Ekaterinoslav provincial zemstvo board (*ibid.*, nos. 30–31, p. 260).

wanted the job done. The program was to begin on April 1, and nearly every zemstvo complained that there was insufficient time to prepare for it. Furthermore, the government had set its cattle quotas at dangerously high levels which, according to most zemstvos, would ruin the local economy by killing off too many dairy and beef cows. Therefore, the zemstvos decided to circumvent the state's instructions. Some postponed the program until the spring sowing had been completed. Others, such as the Voronezh provincial zemstvo, disregarded the instructions entirely and drew up their own plan. They surveyed local agricultural conditions and drafted tables on which kinds of cattle to take and on what prices would be fair. To prevent competition for the livestock, many zemstvos issued decrees prohibiting the army quartermaster, the War Ministry, or other organizations from interfering in the cattle purchases. To prevent speculation, nearly all zemstvos prohibited shipment of cattle to areas outside the province.⁶³

Underlying the diverse actions of these zemstvos was one unifying theme, namely, a desire to take responsibility into one's own hands, even if it meant closing off the borders of one's province and depriving other buyers of access to one's cattle. This self-assertive action mirrored the decision of the Union's Central Directorate to organize its food agencies without involving the government. Altogether, the zemstvos were claiming for themselves an increasing role in the organization of the food supply. This could not fail to attract the attention of conservative officials in the government, who began to campaign against the zemstvos in the summer of 1916.

The conservative reaction to the expansion of zemstvo responsibilities involved an attempt to shift control of the food supply away from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture, as noted earlier in this paper, had been cooperating extensively with the public organizations, and those officials who distrusted the unions wanted food work to be transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the bastion of conservatism in the bureaucracy. Traces of this clash between the two ministries had appeared earlier, when N. A. Maklakov, minister of internal affairs until August of 1915, criticized Krivoshein for his willingness to work with the unions. When Naumov succeeded Krivoshein in the autumn of 1915, he encountered similar pressures from A. N. Khvostov, minister of internal affairs. By late 1915, Naumov sensed that his rival was working to take over food matters so that the public groups could be eliminated altogether. In early May of 1916, Russia's governors held a conference where they discussed, among other things, the zemstvo challenge to their authority. After the conference, B. V. Stürmer, the new minister of internal affairs, wrote to the tsar of the threat posed by the zemstvos' "antigovernment mood" and claimed, with some justification, that the zemstvos were more concerned with politics than with practical work.⁶⁴ Other officials agreed that the unions were acquiring too much power in running the war effort and were thereby undermining the authority of the state.⁶⁵ After discussing the problem with Stürmer,

63. *Ibid.*, no. 40, pp. 185-92; no. 41, pp. 189-94; no. 57, pp. 69-72; and Anfimov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozenie Rossii*, part 3, pp. 102-3.

64. For background on this, see Krivoshein, *A. V. Krivoshein*, pp. 221-24; Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 2, pp. 284-85, 418-19, 462, 562; and "Soveshchanie gubernatorov," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 33 (1929): 147-51.

65. P. G. Kurlov, *Gibel' imperatorskoi Rossii* (Berlin, 1923), p. 165; *Padenie tsarskogo rezhima*, vol. 4 (Leningrad, 1925), p. 72.

Empress Alexandra wrote to Nicholas on June 9 that the unions were becoming a political threat and must be stopped; "otherwise too many things will come at a time to settle [*sic*]." ⁶⁶ On June 23 she wrote two letters to the tsar, in each case warning him about Naumov because he "thinks too much of the Duma's opinion and the Zemstvo Union" and "trusts their work better than the governments [*sic*]." ⁶⁷ She and Stürmer won a partial victory on July 29 when a Special Committee to Fight Inflation was created under Stürmer. ⁶⁸ The next month Naumov was fired.

Clearly the tide was now turning against the zemstvos. In September Alexandra and Rasputin convinced the tsar to appoint A. D. Protopopov as the new minister of internal affairs in order to silence the Duma. ⁶⁹ (Stürmer was promoted to become the chairman of the Council of Ministers.) Alexandra, Rasputin, Stürmer, and Protopopov prepared for the final push in October. On October 5 the *Code of Statutes and Orders* reprinted the act of April 5, 1905 for the creation of a special food agency under the Ministry of Internal Affairs; ⁷⁰ presumably this was to prepare the ground for a rightward shift in the state's food organization. The final document placing full responsibility over the food supply in Protopopov's ministry was completed on October 30 and sent to the tsar for his signature. ⁷¹ Nicholas replied by ordering Stürmer to issue the law under Article 87, which allowed the bill to take effect when the Duma was out of session.

Everything was now set, but at the last moment the plan was abandoned for fear of unrest. Protopopov refused to issue the act on November 1, the day his nomination was to be confirmed by the Duma, for he suspected that the Duma might become so antagonized that it would reject his appointment. After a two-week delay, Stürmer spoke with Protopopov's assistant, General G. P. Kurlov, who warned that if the public heard of the Duma's protests concerning the new law, disorders could break out, and he could not guarantee that they could be contained. Shortly thereafter, Protopopov and Stürmer shelved the plan. ⁷²

While the Ministry of Internal Affairs was attempting to monopolize the food organization, the Ministry of Agriculture was doing its part to keep things under its own control. V. A. Bobrinskii, Naumov's replacement and a former assistant minister of internal affairs, issued two decrees which threatened to shackle the zemstvos' freedom in food work. The decree of September 9 required zemstvo officials to obtain government approval before they stockpiled food; the decree of October 10 created local food councils in which the zemstvos participated, but it allowed the agents *po prodovol'stviu* (the majority of whom were governors) to promulgate decrees without consulting these councils. ⁷³

66. *Letters of the Tsaritsa*, p. 350.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 360–61.

68. Naumov, *Iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 2, p. 562.

69. *Letters of the Tsaritsa*, pp. 394, 395, 398. On September 9 Alexandra wrote to her husband, "Please, take Protopopov as minister of the interior, as he is one of the Duma, it will make a great effect on them and shut their mouths."

70. *SUR*, article 2120 (1916).

71. *Letters of the Tsaritsa*, p. 428.

72. Kurlov, *Gibel'*, pp. 208–9; V. S. Diakin, *Russkaia burshuaziia i tsarizm v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny, 1914–1917* (Leningrad, 1967), p. 240.

73. *SUR*, article 1914, no. 2 (1916); article 220, section 3, no. 31 (1916).

The maneuverings by the two ministries so outraged the zemstvos that they now prepared for open resistance. At the conferences of September 27 and October 25–27, 1916 zemstvo spokesmen harshly criticized the camarilla's efforts to destroy the work of the public groups. Passions reached their peak at the October meeting, at which provincial delegates agreed to write their colleagues urging a united protest to the government. Lvov wrote to Rodzianko of the 'delegates' unanimous conclusion that the government was under the influence of "dark forces hostile to Russia . . . was incapable of running the country and was leading her on a path of destruction." He closed by affirming the zemstvos' readiness to stand alongside the Duma in its decisive struggle to create a popular government to lead Russia to victory.⁷⁴ Specifically in reply to Bobrinskii's decrees, the conference called for a merger of the two types of *upolnomochennye* into a single food agent, elected, of course, by the provincial zemstvos.⁷⁵

Each group was thus moving in a different direction to promote its own role and keep the others out of the food organization. The outcome was a deadlock. Stürmer and Protopopov abandoned their plans. Bobrinskii ordered the agents *po prodovol'stviu* "temporarily" not to implement the October 20 decree which would have transferred food responsibilities from the zemstvos to the governors (in fact, it never did go into effect).⁷⁶ And the zemstvos failed to gain control over elections of the agents *po prodovol'stviu*.

In the midst of this bureaucratic infighting, the Ministry of Agriculture began to push for greater regulation of the grain market. Bobrinskii's decree of September 9 extended government control to the civilian market by fixing prices on all food transactions, but the plan did not eliminate the inconsistencies in the food program, for it designated the harvests from the grain-rich region of southern Russia exclusively for the army, and affected only two cereals, wheat and rye.⁷⁷ Then in November A. A. Rittikh replaced Bobrinskii and launched an ambitious grain levy program that met with little success. Rittikh's plan applied only to the army's supply, and its official prices were often changed (a fact which did not escape the attention of speculators). The government even declared a moratorium on collecting grain over Christmas, and traders wasted no time in removing their produce from the market. By early 1917 the government had received only around 25 percent of the amount ordered.⁷⁸

74. Grave, *Burzhuaziia nakanune fevral'skoi revoliutsii*, pp. 145, 150–51. The evidence clearly indicates that in the few months before the overthrow of the monarchy Lvov was at least toying with the idea of a coup. V. I. Gurko reports that "in the fall of 1916" Lvov and Chelnokov told a meeting of the Progressive Bloc that Russia's only hope of salvation lay in a revolution (V. I. Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past* [Stanford, 1939], p. 582). S. P. Melgunov published a report of a coup planned by Lvov and four others in December of 1916 to force Nicholas to abdicate in favor of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, allowing Lvov to become premier (S. P. Melgunov, *Na putiakh k dvortsomu perevorotu* [Paris, 1931], pp. 91–111).

75. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, no. 48, pp. 122–23; no. 50, pp. 36–44; no. 56, pp. 43–44.

76. *Jasny, Opyt regulirovki*, p. 103. It is unclear why Bobrinskii changed his mind on the local food organizations.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–70.

78. Struve et al., *Food Supply in Russia*, pp. 89–97; A. L. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 486–91; *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, no. 56, pp. 90–95; no. 57, pp. 84–88.

The failure of the grain levy reflects the chaos surrounding the organization of the food supply. After the February revolution, Protopopov testified that the situation had deteriorated in 1916 to the point that "no one was handling the food supply in Russia."⁷⁹ Shingarev had a similar view:

I do not know who is in charge of the food supply, for I do not know to whom to turn with this question. I do not know the condition of the food supply, for no one can make sense of the problem. I do not know who will solve it, for no one knows to whom the matter has been entrusted.⁸⁰

The zemstvos contributed to the organization of Russia's food supply in a variety of ways and with varied success. Of least significance was their stockpiling campaign. As of July 1916 only about one-fourth of the public stockpiling agencies were run by the zemstvos (compared to 65.2 percent run by the Union of Towns), and the zemstvo and town organizations together stored only 16 percent of the total grain reserves in Russia (compared to 35 percent held by peasants and 30 percent held by private traders).⁸¹ Much more valuable were zemstvo efforts to gather statistics on agricultural conditions in order to distribute prisoners of war to compensate for labor shortages. Before local zemstvos compiled their agricultural census in the summer of 1916, no reliable figures on food supplies had been available;⁸² this census is now one of the best sources on Russian agriculture before 1917. Their work to relieve labor shortages was also invaluable. In two years of warfare, nearly ten million peasants were recruited into the army, which meant a loss of approximately one-third of the male work force in the countryside. Peasant farms were not seriously affected by this, because women and children filled in for the men, but the large commercialized estates were vulnerable indeed to labor shortages. Although these landlord enterprises occupied only one-tenth of Russia's cultivated land, they provided an average of 28 percent of marketed grain during the war. The prisoners of war and refugees whom the zemstvos distributed comprised 27 percent of the total work force on these estates, and, because of this allocation of labor, the area under cultivation fell from the 1914 level by only 2 percent in 1915 and by another 8 percent in 1916.⁸³ At the same time, the zemstvos were able to requisition 2.8 million head of livestock from April to December of 1916, filling four-fifths of the orders placed by the army.⁸⁴

The above contributions are commonly acknowledged; what is not generally known is the wisdom of zemstvo food specialists during the war. Struve stands out as the most famous, but faceless experts within the Economic Department also deserve praise for their understanding of what ailed the wartime

79. *Padenie tsarskogo reshima*, vol. 5 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1926), p. 284.

80. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, no. 50, p. 118.

81. Kondrat'ev, *Rynok khlebov*, pp. 85 and 134; and Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia*, p. 309.

82. Naumov, *iz utelevshikh vospominanii*, vol. 2, p. 469.

83. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia*, pp. 191, 195, 280; R. Claus, *Die Kriegswirtschaft Russlands* (Bonn, 1922), pp. 129-30, 133; and P. B. Volobuev, *Ekonomicheskaia politika Vremennogo pravitel'stva* (Moscow, 1962), p. 388.

84. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia*, p. 321.

economy. Struve read a paper before the March 1916 assembly in which he attributed the food shortages to problems of transportation and distribution. He criticized the government's railway policy, which subordinated civilian needs to military interests, and the inconsistent price policy.⁸⁵ Economists in county zemstvos offered a similar critique of the food problem.⁸⁶ Following the October 25–27 assembly on the food supply, the Central Directorate's *Bulletin* printed a number of articles analyzing the situation in even greater detail. They cited several reasons for the food crisis: the fixed prices did not remain steady enough to inspire confidence, and they were set too low to encourage producers to market their supplies; the fixed prices affected only food and not all other consumer items; peasants were amassing great savings during the war and had few goods to buy in exchange for their produce; and, finally, there was no strong *apparat*, composed of people familiar with local food conditions and enjoying the confidence of the public, to take control over the entire exchange network.⁸⁷

The zemstvo analysis of Russia's food problem is impressive. Writing in the midst of the war, zemstvo food experts were able to come up with an explanation upon which modern historians have not significantly improved. Struve's comments on the price policy have, however, provoked some controversy. Norman Stone has recently claimed that Struve misunderstood "the heart of the problem,"⁸⁸ and Naum Jasny, formerly a food expert in the town organization, has insinuated in his memoirs that advocates of high fixed prices were selfishly striving to make a profit.⁸⁹ Jasny's criticism cannot be dismissed out of hand, because most local zemstvo officials did have agricultural interests to protect, but the high-ranking economists of the Zemstvo Union generally lived in Moscow off their salaries. Their representatives to the Special Council on the Food Supply did indeed argue with representatives of the Union of Towns over the issue of fixed prices (not surprisingly, the town spokesmen pushed for the lower prices),⁹⁰ but Struve's reasoning is sound: although high fixed prices burdened urban consumers, particularly the poor, the alternative of absolute food shortages would have been worse. Evidence to support Struve's position can be found in a report presented by S. N. Prokopovich, food minister under the Provisional Government in the autumn of 1917. Prokopovich found that his stockpiling campaign in September of 1917 yielded 2.25 times as much grain as the 1916 campaign because official prices had been doubled.⁹¹ On the other points of the zemstvo critique of the government's price policy—that

85. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 35–36, pp. 128–35. Struve's comments in 1916 on the food supply can be found in Richard Pipes, ed., *P. B. Struve: Collected Works in Fifteen Volumes*, vol. 11: *War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914–1920* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1970), nos. 500, 501, 504, and 515, which essentially repeat the themes he outlined in his conference report.

86. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, nos. 41–42, pp. 231–33; *Izvestiia Kostromskogo gubernskogo zemstva*, 1915, no. 7, pp. 41–48; and no. 8, pp. 1–4.

87. *Izvestiia Glavnogo Komiteta*, no. 50, pp. 49–57, 115–21; and no. 56, pp. 43–44.

88. Stone, *Eastern Front*, pp. 297 and 329. It is difficult to follow his argument, since he writes in a different passage that price controls could have worked if accompanied by subsidies (pp. 288–89).

89. Betty Laird and Roy Laird, *To Live Long Enough*, p. 21.

90. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii*, p. 490.

91. Forty-three million poods, as opposed to nineteen million in the previous year (Anfimov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii*, part 2, p. 356).

the fixed prices were not held steadily enough and they did not apply to all items involved in the food exchange—nearly all observers are in agreement. Speculation was one of the major causes of the food crisis.⁹²

Some controversy also surrounds the zemstvo contention that peasant incomes were rising and that, because of the shortage of consumer items to exchange for their produce, peasants lost an incentive to market their grain. Stone labels this view “bizarre,” but the argument upon which his claim is based, A. M. Anfimov’s study of the countryside during the war, is unconvincing.⁹³ The very least one can say in defense of the zemstvo position is that contemporary economists whose authority on wartime conditions is respected—Claus, Kondrat’ev, and Prokopovich—also endorsed it.⁹⁴

All of the above would lead one to conclude that the zemstvos, because their assessment of the food problem was basically sound, might have been able to solve, or at least to minimize, the crisis had they only held the power to carry out their plans. On the other hand, they overlooked one aspect of the problem, the organizational chaos underlying the food crisis. A. L. Sidorov, probably the most knowledgeable Soviet historian on the war economy, makes much of the competition between the food agencies, showing how agents *po zakupke* would requisition supplies that agents *po prodovol'stviiu* had spent so much effort trying to purchase.⁹⁵

The fighting between zemstvo, town, and army stockpilers represents a situation that became all too typical during the war. The Ministry of Agriculture practiced some cooperation with local zemstvos, but by mid-1916 this harmony was overshadowed by the more characteristic institutional competition: one provincial zemstvo versus another; the Zemstvo Union versus the Union of Towns; the unions versus the government; and the Ministry of Internal Affairs versus the Ministry of Agriculture.

92. Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia*, p. 310. A report by the director of the State Bank of Ekaterinoslav in October of 1916 illustrates the problem of not fixing prices on all items. He wrote that peasants agreed to comply with fixed prices, but only if prices were also fixed on textiles, iron goods, nails and the like. R. Claus (whom Stone considers one of the most astute of the foreign observers of the Russian economy in these years) supports Struve’s position on the price policy (Claus, *Kriegswirtschaft*, p. 140).

93. Stone, *Eastern Front*, p. 297; and Anfimov, *Rossiiskaia derevnia*, pp. 243–69. Anfimov holds that expenses for poor and middle peasants were rising faster than their income. His claim that salaries paid to the families of soldiers did not cover the costs of sending a peasant to the recruiting office is unsatisfactory, for it does not calculate the income the family received after their man had reached the front; similarly, his argument that the number of jobs for hire was reduced is incomplete, for he does not consider that fewer peasants were in the fields looking for work. He acknowledges that rent was falling, but denies the importance of this by asserting, without offering any evidence, that this benefited only the “kulaks” (a category whose boundaries he does not define). He notes the declining number of peasant households engaged in handicrafts, and attributes this to their supposedly falling wages, instead of considering the more likely possibility that this was attributable to the surge of rural labor into the army and the war industries. Finally, Anfimov bases his argument that the lower and middle strata of peasants did not market enough grain to benefit from the rising food prices on figures presented by Stalin in his 1928 article, “On the Grain Front,” which attempted to justify the initial collectivization drive by claiming that “kulaks” were the only village group that marketed their grain.

94. Claus, *Kriegswirtschaft*, pp. 138–40; Kondrat’ev, *Rynok khlebov*, pp. 48–49; and S. N. Prokopovich, *Voina i narodnoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow, 1917), pp. 130–42.

95. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii*, pp. 490–91.

Thus, too many groups competing for too few resources resulted in chaos. Individual zemstvos came into conflict with each other during the requisitioning of 1916 because each was pursuing what was best for its own interests. Zemstvo delegates to the Special Council disagreed with town delegates over fixed prices, because each represented different constituencies. And the Zemstvo Union built up its central food apparatus—and thereby came into conflict with the government—partly in an effort to correct its defects. But there was also a political reason behind the centrifugal tendencies in the organization of the food supply. Historians have already shown the political tensions which divided the government and public during the war. Their attention, however, has been too exclusively focused on the “headline news,” such as the formation of the Progressive Bloc, the tsar’s closing of the Duma, or Miliukov’s impassioned “Treason or Stupidity?” speech before the Duma. This study has attempted to show how these sensational events in Petrograd influenced the mundane yet highly significant matter of organizing the food supply in Kharkov, Samara, or Voronezh. It comes as no surprise that the court and the Ministry of Internal Affairs attempted to wrest control of food matters away from the public; what is less widely known is that the zemstvo central leadership was guilty of this same political partisanship.

Like many government officials, Lvov and his coterie truly were patriots, doing what they felt was best for Russia; but by identifying themselves with the public and not the government during the war, the zemstvo leadership lost an opportunity to cooperate with the state and thereby avoid the institutional parallelism that hurt Russia’s war effort. The Zemstvo Union and local zemstvos assumed enormous responsibilities during the war, but they still insisted on seeing themselves not as a part of the imperial bureaucracy—which, by their functions, they in fact were—but as representatives of public Russia, working independently of, and sometimes in opposition to, the government. A “we-they” consciousness was in the minds not only of Alexandra, Rasputin, and Nicholas, but of the zemstvo leaders as well. Both sides were battling over control of the food organization, but as long as this struggle raged Russia’s food crisis could not be solved.⁹⁶

96. After this study was completed a new essay on the Zemstvo Union in World War I has come to my attention. Presented at the Stanford Conference on “The Zemstvo: An Experiment in Local Self-Government” on April 14–15, 1978, William Gleason’s paper significantly revises the position he originally took in his dissertation. Using police records in the Soviet archives (which are the only sources for tracing the growth of hostility between the Union’s gentry leadership and the professional specialists serving the Union), Professor Gleason now emphasizes the social tensions within the Union. The article should appear in a book to be published in the future, under the editorship of Wayne S. Vucinich. Professor Gleason and I now agree that the Union truly represented a source of opposition to the autocracy, but we disagree over the extent to which it exploited its potential for subverting the regime. He questions why the Union failed to employ tactics such as work-stoppage or strikes to assault the state, and insists that Lvov refused “to use the organization for partisan ends.” I am grateful to Professor Gleason for showing the conflicts within the Union, something which my own sources were unable to reveal, but I disagree with his assumption that the mundane aspects of running the war effort were divorced from high politics. For more on the political potential underlying the public’s organization of the war effort, see my review of E. D. Chermenskii’s recent book on the Fourth Duma in *Kritika*, Winter 1978, especially pp. 71–72.