



Social Misfits: Veterans and Soldiers' Families in Servile Russia

Author(s): Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Apr., 1995), pp. 215-235

Published by: [Society for Military History](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2944572>

Accessed: 26/11/2012 16:22

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Society for Military History is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Military History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Social Misfits: Veterans and Soldiers' Families in Servile Russia*



Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter

BEGINNING with the reforms of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century, the unprivileged elements of Russian society were identified first and foremost by their obligations to the state, specifically liability for military service and the capitation (poll tax).¹ To impose these obligations effectively, the government needed to register each and every male in periodic censuses, which then served as the basis for collecting taxes and selecting recruits.² The very process of registration—particularly the assignment of individuals, based on heredity, to the appropriate category and place of residence—was supposed to ensure a precise accounting and delineation of social groups and communities. Registration and the official policies it served thus played a significant role in the formation of legally defined social categories.

This article examines the relationship between military service and social categorization in Imperial Russia prior to the introduction of universal conscription in 1874.³ Focusing upon the lower military ranks and the role of service obligations and opportunities in blurring social bound-

* Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the U.S. Department of State. None of these organizations is responsible for the views expressed. A highly condensed discussion of some material presented here appears in chapter four of my book, *Structures of Society: Imperial Russia's "People of Various Ranks"* (DeKalb, Ill., 1994).

1. Serfs, of course, also owed labor and other feudal dues to their lords.
2. The first census associated with implementation of the capitation was conducted between 1718 and 1727.
3. The data examined here relate only to the regular standing army. The social history of the navy, which was administered and operated separately, requires additional research—research that no scholar has yet undertaken.

aries, it analyzes the ambiguous status of retired soldiers, soldiers' wives, and the illegitimate children of the latter, with an eye toward the larger problem of social definition. State building in the form of military and civil service played a crucial role in the development and delimitation of social categories. It not only created new service nobles, free lower-class elements, educated and semieducated elites; but also contributed to a host of social welfare problems, including poverty, bigamy, and illegitimacy. The social and legal status of discharged soldiers is an important and previously ignored aspect of military-civilian relations.⁴ Without greater attention to retired servicemen, historians cannot fully understand the army's impact on social development. Nor can they adequately analyze the relationship between military and societal institutions.⁵

Russia's quasi-reserve, semistanding army—established by Peter the Great and not significantly altered until the Great Reforms of the 1860s

4. For a brief treatment, see Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier* (Princeton, 1990), 33–35; John L. H. Keep, "Catherine's Veterans," *Slavonic and East European Review* 59 (July 1981): 385–96.

5. There is a considerable literature devoted to "military society" and the functioning of the army as a social institution. Historians also have paid significant attention to the "burden of defense" and conscription. There is, however, little understanding of the social condition of discharged soldiers before the revolutionary and Soviet periods. The participation of retired soldiers in peasant rebellions of the early nineteenth century represents the one limited exception. The best general studies of the Russian military include: Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992); William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York, 1992); John L. H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia, 1462–1874* (New York, 1985); Dietrich Beyrau, *Militär und Gesellschaft im Vorrevolutionären Russland* (Cologne, 1984); Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700–1800* (London, 1981); and John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Army under Nicholas I, 1825–1855* (Durham, N.C., 1965). On the social condition of the common soldier, see Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*. On conscription and the costs of defense to civilian society, see David Moon, *Russian Peasants and Tsarist Legislation on the Eve of Reform: Interaction between Peasants and Officialdom, 1825–1855* (London, 1992); idem, "Russian Peasant Volunteers at the Beginning of the Crimean War," *Slavic Review* 51 (Winter 1992): 691–704; Rodney D. Bohac, "The Mir and the Military Draft," *Slavic Review* 47 (Winter 1988): 652–66; Steven L. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe, a Village in Tambov* (Chicago, 1986); Walter M. Pintner, "The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia, 1725–1914," *Russian Review* 43 (July 1984): 231–59; Emanuel Flisfish, *Kantonisty* (Tel Aviv, 1983); L. S. Prokof'eva, *Krest'ianskaia obshchina v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII-pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Leningrad, 1981); Henry Hirschbiel, "The District Captains of the Ministry of State Properties in the Reign of Nicholas I: A Case Study of Russian Officialdom, 1838–1856," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1978); and V. A. Aleksandrov, *Sel'skaia obshchina v Rossii (XVII-nachalo XIX v.)* (Moscow, 1976). On the role of retired soldiers in peasant uprisings, consult M. A. Rakhmatullin, *Krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v velikorusskikh guberniakh v 1826–1857 gg.* (Moscow, 1990); idem, "Soldaty v krest'ianskom dvizhenii 20-kh godov XIX v.," in *Voprosy*

and 1870s—depended upon conscripts drafted primarily from the servile population of serfs, state and church peasants, and townspeople.⁶ Because conscription brought juridical emancipation, whether from the authority of the landlord or from the tax and service obligations imposed through rural and urban communities, it represented a fundamental change in the legal status of individual recruits.⁷ At the same time, this newly acquired freedom was not implemented as long as a soldier remained in active service. Given the lengthy term of service—initially for life, but reduced to twenty-five years in 1793 and to twenty in 1834—recruits could not possibly view conscription as a path to liberation. For their families and communities of origin, the legal and socioeconomic consequences of freedom were more immediate. Each conscript represented a lost laborer, taxpayer, father, husband and/or child. Whatever the impact on a specific household, and experiences varied, the recruit's family and by extension the larger community remained liable for his share of the capitation until the next census. Equally problematic, his wife, children, and elderly parents posed a potential welfare burden. Beyond the loss of an able-bodied laborer, the land allotment of a recruit's family also could be reduced, according to the number of male souls in a household. Legally and practically, the conscript and his wife, if he had one, were at the moment of induction not “emancipated” but rather excluded from membership in the local community.

Governmental Policy

Once soldiers retired from service, they entered the category *raznochintsy* (literally, “people of various ranks”), though local officials

voennoi istorii (Moscow, 1969), 351–58. On the relationship between military service and the development of Muscovite society, see Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago, 1971). On the revolutionary and Soviet eras, see John Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905–1906* (Bloomington, 1985); Allan K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1980–87); Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca, 1990). On military-civilian relations in ministerial politics, see William C. Fuller, Jr., *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton, 1985).

6. In 1850, prior to the military build-up associated with the Crimean War, the Russian army numbered 859,000 troops. Curtiss, *The Russian Army*, 108. For a comprehensive long-term treatment of Russian military capability, see Fuller, *Strategy and Power*.

7. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the introduction of universal conscription in 1874 fundamentally altered the legal parameters of military service. On the “semi-standing army,” see Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*.

tended to identify them separately as “military ranks.”⁸ Free from the capitation and subordinate to offices of provincial administration, they occupied an indeterminate position in a social structure designed to achieve full registration of the entire population. Although authorities hoped that retired soldiers would settle permanently (i.e., register) in an urban or rural community, they were not required to do so. Legally, they could move as they pleased or as the need to provide for themselves dictated, on the condition only that they not fall into a life of crime or vagrancy.⁹ Despite prescribed rights and privileges that identified them as members of a fiscal-administrative category, at the moment of retirement they were men without ties to any formally or informally constituted community.

Unlike uprooted peasants and townsmen who entered military service, discharged soldiers did not have immediate or guaranteed access to an occupation or other means of subsistence. The army released them with a small sum of money, barely enough to reach their destination, a passport, and the clothes on their back.¹⁰ After a virtual lifetime of service and membership in a structured collective, they at last became truly free—free to return to family and friends, to establish themselves on a new and independent basis, to rely on church or public assistance, or to suffer loneliness and hunger. Actually, there were significant opportunities available to retired soldiers, who pursued a range of occupational and life choices. Yet their poverty and generally sad plight remained a chronic social problem, one repeatedly recognized but only putatively addressed by high-level officials.

8. The first empire-wide census in Imperial Russia was conducted only in 1897. Consequently, there are no comprehensive data on the number of retired soldiers, especially in light of the fact that they were not subject to the capitation. Local statistics could be used to arrive at some tentative calculations. According to one source, 656,476 soldiers were discharged from service between 1840 and 1870. Fedor Enskii, *Otstavnye soldaty* (St. Petersburg, 1873), 162. The St. Petersburg city census for 1869 included 15,333 retired soldiers, which probably represented the largest concentration of such men in the empire. *Sankt Peterburg po perepisi 10 dekabria 1869 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1872) vypusk 1, 110–11. On the *raznochintsy*, see Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, and “Problematics of Status Definition in Imperial Russia: The *Raznochintsy*,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 40 (1992): 319–39.

9. They were required to have their passports stamped by the appropriate authorities in any locality where they took up residence. On the right of retired soldiers to change their place of residence, see *Prikazy voennogo ministra* (hereafter PVM), 9.I.1843, 4. On the right not to choose a permanent residence, see Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv goroda Moskvy (hereafter TsGIAgM), fond 32, opis’ 12, delo 386.

10. PVM, 17.VII.1842, 90. Some soldiers may have had shares of collective monies (*artel’nye den’gi*) that became their personal property at the time of retirement. Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 79.

Well before the reforms of Peter the Great, Russia's rulers introduced measures to meet the needs of retired, disabled, and infirm military personnel. In pre-Petrine Russia the relatively limited and temporary mobilizations of the traditional militia or new-model forces facilitated the reintegration of former soldiers into civilian society. Permanently engaged in economic pursuits and quickly disbanded following military campaigns, numerous categories of Muscovite servicemen provided for themselves and their families as regular members of identifiable communities.¹¹ During the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645–76), the church operated a few almshouses for feeble and disabled soldiers who could not work. Wounded servicemen also enjoyed priority in appointments to state administrative posts, while widows and orphans received shares from the land entitlements (*pomestnye oklady*) of their husbands and fathers. In addition, the government of Fedor (1676–82) distributed land allotments (*nadely iz pomestii*) to combat veterans and outright grants or entitlements (*oklady*) to the wounded.¹² Because military service was only a part-time occupation, resettlement was relatively easy.

The military policies of Peter the Great, particularly the creation of a standing army and the lifelong term of service, in effect created the "soldier question." All non-noble veterans from the lower ranks enjoyed the same legal rights and privileges. Still, individual experiences could vary enormously, depending on physical capacity and the ability to restore, or establish anew, stable family and community ties. Monasteries and a few military almshouses provided for the infirm and disabled. Each provincial government (*guberniia*) also was supposed to maintain an almshouse, but at the beginning of Anna's reign (1730–40) only four existed (military almshouses in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kazan and a church almshouse in Novgorod). It is unclear who benefitted from these institutions. Petrine legislation prohibited entry to soldiers who had a family, residence, or trade. Yet in 1731 one hundred and thirty-nine persons who possessed homes or had relatives were discovered in almshouses. Although a new law confirmed the earlier prohibitions, the individuals in question claimed that they could not sustain themselves and so were permitted to remain. In most cases, however, married soldiers lived in suburbs (*slobody*) near monasteries and received the same support as single soldiers who lived within the cloister. Overall, the cost and burden of care fell on church institutions.¹³

11. Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change*; Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, part one.

12. Captain Rossov, "Istoricheskii ocherk prizreniia otstavnykh voennykh chinov v proshlom veke i v nachale nyneshniago stoletii," *Voennyi sbornik* 30 (April 1863): 376.

13. Ibid., 375–79.

After Peter's death the Synod sought with little success to limit the responsibility of the monasteries. Although Elizabeth's government (1741–61) made a serious effort to establish military almshouses financed from provincial sources and supervised by local governors, effective change came only in the reign of Catherine the Great (1762–96).¹⁴ In 1764 monasteries received partial relief from the obligation to provide for retired soldiers, though the new College of Economy continued to finance their upkeep and pensions with revenues generated by former church peasants.¹⁵ Catherine's legislation also increased significantly the number of funded vacancies for retirees beyond the "portions" that monasteries had been able to maintain. In addition to military and church almshouses, specific urban communities were designated as "veterans' towns." In return for providing retired soldiers with housing, the residents of these towns were exempt from any obligation to quarter troops.¹⁶ Like their counterparts in almshouses, the soldiers also received salaries. According to one account, by the middle of Catherine's reign the revamped institutions accommodated 9,349 infirm and disabled soldiers. Still, overpopulation remained a problem. In both almshouses and veterans' towns the number of needy soldiers generally surpassed the available spaces, though the excess veterans did receive reduced assistance until vacancies occurred.¹⁷

On paper at least, governmental care of retired soldiers reached a high point in the 1790s when Catherine the Great and Paul (1796–1801) decreed pensions for all soldiers who completed twenty-five years of service. This effort quickly faltered. For during the first half of the nineteenth century, the army grew far too quickly to allow assistance to keep up with demand, which even at the peak of state assistance had not been fully met.¹⁸ Veterans' companies located in district capitals and institutions maintained by the public welfare boards provided for feeble soldiers. Others lived in rural villages or towns, received limited pensions, and enjoyed free access to public pasturage and forests. There also were

14. Ibid., 378–85. On the continuing importance of monasteries even in the reign of Catherine the Great, see TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 753, delo 1112 (1758 g.); Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (hereafter RGADA), fond 291, opis' 1, chast' 4, delo 16133 (1770 g.).

15. Church lands were secularized in 1762, and church peasants effectively became state peasants.

16. As late as 1860 only about 28 percent of Russian troops lived in barracks. Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 81.

17. Rossov, "Istoricheskii ocherk prizreniia otstavnykh voennykh chinov," 385–96; TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 1685.

18. Increasing numbers of veterans resulted from continual growth in the size of the standing army, not from any improvement in medical services. Rossov, "Istoricheskii ocherk prizreniia otstavnykh voennykh chinov," 396–98; Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 26–32.

a few private veterans' homes and local fund-raising efforts to supplement the meager public resources. The authorities granted pensions gingerly on a case by case basis, which clearly left many needy persons without any support.¹⁹ The only wholesale granting of pensions occurred in the 1850s and applied to soldiers who re-enlisted after twenty-five years of service or came out of retirement to rejoin the army during the Crimean War.²⁰ Because the treasury always was short of revenue, even the most liberal advocates of greater assistance for servicemen did not suggest the possibility of providing adequate pensions for all retirees. They did, however, denounce governmental measures as paltry and ineffective.²¹ Despite some official claims to the contrary, continual efforts to alleviate the plight of retired soldiers produced meager results.²²

The Return of Discharged Soldiers

Poverty and reintegration into civilian life were the most pressing problems faced by discharged soldiers and the officials who addressed their needs. Whether one considers informal socioeconomic networks or formal fiscal-administrative categories, these problems tended to be mutually reinforcing. Already in the early eighteenth century, introduc-

19. Rossov, "Istoricheskii ocherk prizreniia otstavnykh voennykh chinov," 398; *Russkii invalid* (hereafter *RI*), 5.II.1820, 28, 110; 14.II.1820, 36, 142–43; 26.III.1825, 74; 9.XI.1829, 285, 1138; *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter *SZ*) 15 vols. (1842) tom 12, razdel 1, otdelenie 5, stat'i 83–88; *PVM*, 16.IV.1841, 33; 20.IV.1841, 37; 14.VII.1842, 84; 30.VIII.1855, 178; *Svod voennykh postanovlenii* (1838) chast' 2, kniga 1, razdel 4, glava 2, stat'i 1442–92; kniga 2, razdel 2, glava 3, stat'i 622–43, 796–832; glava 4, stat'i 856–63. Russia lacked an institution comparable to the Hotel des Invalides, which provided stable social security for significant numbers of French veterans. Isser Woloch, *The French Veteran from the Revolution to the Restoration* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

20. The legislation also provided special assistance for the wives and children of these soldiers. *PVM*, 3.IV.1850, 24; 2.VII.1853, 47; 15.III.1854, 31; 13.IV.1854, 45; 13.V.1854, 57; 6.IX.1854, 91.

21. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (hereafter GA RF), fond 1150, opis' 1, delo 185a, 186; Enskii, *Otstavnye soldaty*; N. K. Mikhailovskii, "Iz literaturnykh i zhurnal'nykh zametok 1874 goda," *Sochineniia N. K. Mikhailovskogo*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1896), 583–600; P. Mart'ianov, "Obezpechenie nizhnikh chinov po otstavke," *Voennyi sbornik* 47 (1866): 123–31.

22. For a glowing report on the condition of retired soldiers in Rybinsk (Iaroslav province), which is, however, contradicted by other accounts, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter RGIA), fond 1287, opis' 39, delo 36 (1842–50 gg.). Cf. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter RGVIA), fond Voенно uchenyi arkhiv, delo 19188 (1846 g.). On retired soldiers and soldiers' wives among the urban poor: "Vsepoddanneishii otechet Moskovskogo komiteta o prosiashchikh milostyniu, za 1841 god," *Zhurnal ministerstva vnutrennikh del* (hereafter *ZMVD*) chast' 43 (February 1842): 221–61.

tion of the capitation raised questions about the legal and social status of soldiers. During the late 1720s the Senate repeatedly received petitions from retired soldiers who had been registered in the tax rolls and forced by local officials to pay the capitation, simply because they possessed arable land. Their children also had been inscribed, including some in active service. As members of Muscovite military categories, many of whom had served in the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich, they had received their land as salary and might even own homes. Still, they claimed to be too feeble to sustain themselves. Some continued to serve the state as couriers and guards, and yet they too had been registered in the urban taxpaying community. Others depended on charity, and as one group of petitioners reported, "many of our brothers" had starved to death. All felt they should be exempt from the capitation, and despite varied civilian occupations, they identified themselves in collective terms.²³

According to a petition submitted to the Senate in 1727, forty retired servicemen in Velikoluki had been held under guard and beaten for failing to pay the capitation over a four-year period. They received no governmental assistance, their children had been sent to the army or local garrison school, and they themselves were employed in trade, the sale of food items (fish and meat), crafts, and unskilled labor. Those unable to find work had left for other cities. Some relied on sons serving in nearby military units for sustenance, and still others had died. Infirm, wounded, and aged (all had served for thirty or forty years and had combat experience), they asked to be released from the capitation. In considering the petition, the Senate reviewed a series of ambiguous decrees, issued between 1722 and 1727, that defined the status of former servicemen, *raznochintsy*, and their children. Retired soldiers, established in trades and crafts, actually were supposed to be registered in an urban taxpaying community. This explains why the petitioners, all urban residents with diverse occupations, had been included in the formal community by local authorities. Those from the peasantry were not, however, liable for the capitation, which could explain why the retirees believed they too should be exempt. The law also prescribed that their children, if physically fit, enter military service. Otherwise they were registered in an appropriate taxpaying category. In view of their poverty, frailty, and previous service, the Senate decided to exclude the petitioners from the tax registers. Citing a decision of 1727, based on decrees of 1722, the Senate clearly ruled that retired soldiers with proper documentation of their service were not to be inscribed in the tax rolls, unless they possessed sufficient capital to qualify as merchants.²⁴

23. The outcome of these petitions is not indicated. RGADA, fond 248, kniga 727.

24. RGADA, fond 248, kniga 703, listy 27–31.

In the 1720s there was nothing unusual about the confusion surrounding the formal status of retired soldiers, particularly those of Muscovite origin. The new Petrine categories, called into being by the introduction of the capitation, disrupted classifications and boundaries throughout society. More significant and enduring was the economic plight of these servicemen, and the difficulty of placing them in the fiscal-administrative structure that formally defined social boundaries. Leaving aside the truly disabled who depended upon public and church institutions, discharged soldiers returned to civilian life in several ways. Appointment to state service represented one of the simplest transitions. Those assigned to service usually worked as guards, couriers, fire-fighters, and policemen. A few who were literate or trained in crafts might find work as administrative clerks or state artisans.²⁵ Occasionally a retired soldier took monastic vows or worked as a nonecclesiastical employee of the church.²⁶ Access to service was itself an important privilege. In fact, except for former military conscripts, the law forbade persons from categories liable for the capitation to enter the free untaxed ranks of state servicemen.²⁷ For soldiers who married and had children after retirement, appointment to service was the only way to protect their progeny from a military career or from registration in a taxpaying category. At best it took two or three generations of unblemished service for a family to attain hereditary nobility; but for men at least (women also could rise through marriage), the army and bureaucracy offered the only prospects for permanent, formalized mobility.²⁸

After the Catherinean reforms of 1775–85, registration in a merchant guild also could bring mobility. Merchants now were exempted from the capitation and from liability for conscription, but their privileges depended upon wealth and were not automatically inherited by their offspring. Those who ultimately were unable to pay the prescribed fees moved down the formal social ladder into lower-class categories that carried poll-tax and recruitment obligations. A few retired soldiers did manage to register as merchants, and others established themselves as independent craftsmen.²⁹ The fictional memoirs of one Jewish service-

25. Wirschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 34–35, 73; RGADA, fond 291, opis' 1, chast' 1, dela 621, 3733; RGIA, fond 1284, opis' 17, delo 54, list 10–10ob.; fond 1287, opis' 39, delo 36, listy 240–43; *RI*, 9.XI.1829, 285, 1138; *PVM*, 3.I.1840, 1.

26. TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 746, delo 138; opis' 753, delo 247.

27. In practice this restriction was not always upheld. John P. LeDonne, *Abso-lutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700–1825* (New York, 1991), 58–60.

28. Ennoblement was automatic upon promotion to the lowest commissioned officer rank (rank fourteen) in military service. After 1845 ennoblement occurred only at rank eight (colonel).

29. RGADA, fond 291, opis' 1, chast' 4, delo 16133.

man, who returned home after fifteen years to find his family and domicile gone, describe how he journeyed to St. Petersburg, became a book-binder and opened his own workshop with four laborers.³⁰ Most however, who were identified as having trades and crafts, did not employ laborers or produce for special orders. More likely, they worked in towns as petty artisans, hawkers of secondhand goods, or purveyors of foodstuffs. Among the poorest members of urban society, they simply crafted or obtained what goods they could and hopefully sold enough to sustain themselves and their families.³¹

Despite the juridical freedom and formal social separateness of retired soldiers, a significant number returned to their families and even to farming. For them, and from the official viewpoint as well, the familial hearth provided the best means for re-entering civilian life. For the soldier facing old age and sickness, it meant greater economic security and the comforts of family relationships. For the government, it brought reduced public expenditures; forestalled vagrancy, begging, and presumably crime; and facilitated resettlement, which in turn promised to augment the ranks of future farmers, taxpayers, and recruits. Still, when a soldier returned to his village or town of origin, he was not a taxpayer. Nor was he entitled to an allotment of communal land. Rather, the military authorities released him to the care of relatives or former landlords, upon whom he depended for shelter and sustenance.³²

30. V. Nikitin, "Vek perezhit'—ne pole pereiti (iz razskazov otstavnogo soldata)," *Evreiskaia biblioteka* 4 (1873): 164–213. On the significant presence of retired Jewish soldiers in St. Petersburg, see N. V. Iukhneva, "Evrei Peterburga v period reform 1860-kh godov: sotsial'no-demograficheskaia kharakteristika," in *Peterburg i guberniia: istoriko-etnograficheskie issledovaniia* (Leningrad, 1989), 81–112. A handful of retired soldiers and soldiers' wives also owned small manufacturing enterprises, artisanal workshops, and commercial establishments in Moscow. V. Androssov, *Statisticheskaiia zapiska o Moskve* (Moscow, 1832), 180–82.

31. In 1846 retired soldiers in Rybinsk (Iaroslav province) reportedly earned about fifteen rubles a year as shoemakers, tailors, and joiners. RGVA, fond Voenno-uchenyi arkhiv, delo 19188, listy 176ob.-177. Also: RGADA, fond 540, opis' 1, delo 1553; RGIA, fond 1287, opis' 8, delo 65; TsGIAgM, fond 32, opis' 17, delo 5876; *Sbornik Imperatorskogo rossiiskogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* (hereafter *SIRIO*) 8: 102, 43: 333–34, 115: 215–20; "Vsepoddanneishii otchet Moskovskogo komiteta o prosiashchikh milostyniu." On the registration of a retired soldier and his three sons in the category of townspeople, see "Opis' del Permskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi kommissii vyslannykh iz Senatskogo arkhiva," *Trudy Permskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi kommissii* vypusk 3, otdel 2 (Perm, 1897): 15.

32. Local archives contain numerous official records indicating that discharged soldiers were expected to return to their families: RGADA, fond 441, opis' 1, dela 379, 774; TsGIAgM, fond 32, opis' 12, delo 386; fond 54, opis' 1, dela 1194, 1501, 1795. On the acceptance of returnees by peasant communities and on their easy integration into the social order of western Siberia, see N. Cherniakovskii, "Statisticheskoe opisanie ishimskogo okruga Tobol'skoi gubernii," *ZMVD chast' 2* (1843): 251–52.

It is difficult to determine exactly how many discharged soldiers settled with family members. According to data from Smolensk province, averaged for the years 1854 to 1856, 34 percent of 22,986 retired soldiers and their wives and daughters were sustained by relatives or local communities. Fifty percent supported themselves in "service and various jobs," 15 percent in agriculture and 1 percent in trade.³³ Based on comparable data from the years 1847 to 1857, soldiers on indefinite leave, who had completed twenty rather than twenty-five years of active service, were much more likely to return to their families and farming.³⁴ Over a nine-year period, an average of 68.4 percent farmed with relatives, and another 3.1 percent on their own.³⁵ The occupational distinctions between soldiers who had retired permanently and those on indefinite furlough, who theoretically might return to active duty, remain problematic. The length of time away from home, potentially a five-year difference, seems insufficient to account for such wide variation in the ability or desire to restore familial ties. One explanation may be that the soldiers on indefinite leave had not in fact served a full twenty years. Some may have received early discharges following the Crimean War. Whatever the reason, even the 34 percent of fully retired soldiers who lived with relatives or were cared for by local communities is significant, especially in light of the public image of these men as unfortunate outcasts, vulnerable to impoverishment, vagrancy, and starvation.

Despite the widespread desire to return home, retired soldiers frequently discovered that their loved ones had died or moved. Others had no relatives in the first place and were formally discharged "to earn their own living" (*na svoe propitanie*). In these circumstances their best options were to seek employment in a city, often Moscow or St. Petersburg, or to request assignment to a veterans' company. If all else failed, they could rely on charity.³⁶ The career of one former serf who entered military service in 1756 illustrates these possibilities. In 1782 Kozma Rezvikov, a combat veteran wounded in battle, received a discharge from

33. The actual numbers of retired soldiers were 4,458 in 1854; 4,457 in 1855; and 5,094 in 1856. There were, then, many more soldiers' wives and daughters than veterans. *Materialy dlia geografii i statistiki Rossii. Smolenskaia guberniia* (St. Petersburg, 1862), 132–64.

34. After twenty years of active service, soldiers on indefinite furlough remained liable for call-up for another five years. The army began to grant indefinite leaves only in 1834.

35. In 1857 there were 14,593 soldiers on indefinite leave. *Materialy dlia geografii*, 132–63.

36. TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, dela 1501, 1585, 1795; Nikitin, "Vek perezhit." In 1773 one former serviceman from the category soldiers' children requested assignment to a veterans' unit, noting that he had no family and since retiring from the army in 1765 had depended on charity. RGADA, fond 441, opis' 1, delo 788.

the army at age sixty, because of "old age and illness." His passport indicated that he was to return to his village to live with relatives. If his family could not support him, then a retired ensign in Moscow had agreed to provide for him. (Presumably Rezvikov would become his servant.) Upon arrival in Moscow he learned that all his relations had died. His protector also eventually died; but Rezvikov and his wife continued to live in Moscow and "various places," where he supported them by his own labor. Finally in 1798, because of "extreme old age," he requested that the Moscow provincial administration place him in a state almshouse and give his wife a passport that would permit her to live anywhere in Russia.³⁷

When a return to family and community proved impossible, the government encouraged retired servicemen to settle on vacant state lands. Until legislation of 1867 required that recruits remain members of the communities from which they were drafted, a primary feature of official policy to assist discharged soldiers was resettlement.³⁸ Eighteenth-century legislation clearly favored settlement that served the interests of imperial expansion along the Volga and Siberian defense lines.³⁹ Settlers received land in hereditary tenure but were forbidden to sell or mortgage it. Those who fathered sons in retirement selected one to inherit the farm, while any others were entitled to receive their own plots. If there were no male heirs, daughters could inherit the land, though only if they married soldiers' sons.⁴⁰

In the nineteenth century, the inducements to resettle were even more broadly conceived. Decrees concerning resettlement were read aloud to the troops, and special publications written for soldiers advocated a return to farming.⁴¹ Legislation from the reign of Alexander I also required cities to assign retired soldiers plots of urban land where they could build a house and maintain a garden. To assist them in constructing homes, the soldiers received fifty paper rubles (*assignaty*) from the local treasury. In a related measure, former state peasants were entitled to land allotments in their native villages, except in localities where shortages prevented the fulfillment of minimum norms. The government

37. The archival record does not indicate the official response, if any, to this petition. TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 1363.

38. Enskii, *Otstavnye soldaty*, XXXVII–XXXVIII.

39. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter *PSZ*) (I) vol. 10, 7399; vol. 22, 16046.

40. Male children born to retired soldiers were included in the poll-tax registers either as state peasants or urban residents, depending on settlement and occupation.

41. *PVM*, 21.IV.1841, 36. "O tom, kakoi rod khlebopashstva dlia khoziaina vygodnee. (Nastavlenie soldatam, vozvrashchaiushchimsia s sluzhby na rodinu)," *Chtenie dlia soldat kniga 1* (1849): 73–95

of Nicholas I expanded this effort in 1841 by also prescribing monetary benefits from provincial sources to facilitate resettlement.⁴²

Like registration policies in general, measures to assist retired soldiers sought to promote “a settled way of life” (*osedlost*) and hence to eliminate idleness and increase the pool of potential taxpayers and recruits. There are no precise data on where veterans settled but it is clear from legislation and high-level official discussions that the results of such policies were limited, and from the state’s viewpoint totally inadequate. Because former soldiers were free to choose a place of residence, it was difficult to induce them to settle on empty lands in sparsely populated areas. A retired soldier such as Kozma Rezvikov, aged sixty at the time of his discharge, was not likely to embrace the life of a frontiersman. Nor was a younger soldier, who only would have been discharged for physical reasons, a likely candidate. In addition, despite various exemptions from taxation and conscription, the former landlords, native villages, and urban communities of retired servicemen were not necessarily eager to see them return. They did not pay the capitation and could easily become dependent on public assistance. As the Minister of Finance noted in 1831, the plots of former state peasants who tried to return to their villages already were being cultivated by others who bore the full complement of tax and public service obligations.⁴³ Social conflict and land disputes also erupted when settlers moved into areas inhabited by established communities.⁴⁴ In a very real sense, it was not only the long term of service but the very privileges and freedoms enjoyed by retired soldiers that deterred massive resettlement. This was true despite the fact that any children born to them in retirement would be registered as full members of the taxpaying community.

Soldiers’ Families

Although the anomalous legal position of soldiers, in service and retirement, can easily be overdrawn, it is crucial to understanding the larger problem of social categorization. For it had broad consequences

42. The army did not maintain data on where veterans settled. At the time of discharge, they were identified as “released for settlement,” “released to live with relatives,” or some such formulation. RGIA, fond 571, opis’ 1, delo 1437; *RI*, 9.XI.1829, 285, 1138; *PVM*, 16.IV.1841, 33; 30.VIII.1855, 178; *SZ* (1842) tom 12, razdel 1, otdelenie 5, stat’i 83–121; *PSZ* (II) vol. 7, 5842; vol. 15, 13443, 13957, 14041; vol. 16, 14464; vol. 26, 25015; vol. 28, 27225; Enskii, *Otstavnye soldaty*, 111–32.

43. RGIA, fond 571, opis’ 1, delo 1437, listy 23–27ob. On the need to secure the permission of a landlord before returning to a private village, see also TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis’ 1, delo 1602, listy 6–7.

44. Cherniakovskii, “Statisticheskoe opisanie ishimskogo okruga,” 251–52; *SIRIO*, 115: 220; 147: 198–200.

that extended beyond the boundaries of the military domain. It is a universal truism that armies, regardless of time and place, create welfare problems in civilian society. Equally problematic is the need to integrate soldiers and their families into the larger social framework. These issues were particularly acute in Imperial Russia, where the formal status of wives and children derived from that of husbands and fathers, where the boundaries separating military from civilian society were irregular, and where the long term of service left dependents abandoned and vulnerable. Except for noblewomen who did not face derogation as a result of marriage to commoners, the formal status of wives throughout Russian society corresponded to that of their husbands. Soldiers' wives thus became legally free at the time of a spouse's induction. As "free" women who no longer belonged to the landlord or taxpaying community, they came under the military authorities and in theory—but rarely in practice—could live with their husbands.

There are no comprehensive data indicating how many soldiers or veterans were married.⁴⁵ Regardless of numbers, it is clear that official measures to assist soldiers' wives barely existed, as both the army and civilian society successfully avoided responsibility. Commanders did little to provide them with either shelter or employment, and actively sought to limit their numbers by forbidding marriage among enlisted men. Only on rare occasions did specific measures designed to meet the needs of soldiers' wives enter the legal-administrative records of the military. Beginning in the reign of Catherine the Great, widows were entitled to a single monetary payment, though there was no effective mechanism to ensure that a soldier's wife ever learned what had become of her deceased husband. A few wives also were able to live among the troops, most likely if their husbands served in fortresses and garrisons. Yet only in 1841 did legislation affecting state peasants include provisions that allowed the wives of recruits to continue farming their husbands' plots. Even so, they were required to pay the various state and communal taxes, unless the village decided to reduce their share of the burden.⁴⁶ On private estates soldiers' wives had neither formal nor cus-

45. To uncover this information would require examination of provincial recruitment records and regimental service lists, both of which are on the whole poorly preserved. Marriages among discharged soldiers would appear only in individual parish records, scattered haphazardly across the vast Russian empire. Unverified archival data from the early 1840s (the exact year is not given) indicate that of 142,618 married privates serving in combat units, only nine percent lived with their wives. Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 35–38. For data on the number of married recruits, see *ibid.*, 37.

46. Rossov, "Istoricheskii ocherk prizreniia otstavnykh voennykh chinov," 388–89; SZ (1842) tom 12, razdel 1, otdelenie 5, stat'i 105–21.

tomary rights to land. Still, individual masters, communities, and families often provided for them, especially if they had male children.

In addition to remaining dependent upon the economic largesse of relatives, the landlord, or the community, soldiers' wives were free to obtain passports that allowed them to move in search of employment. They maintained a visible presence in towns where they became involved in petty trade, prostitution, and the trafficking of unwanted children between foundling homes and the countryside. A few even owned artisanal workshops or commercial establishments.⁴⁷ Like other persons forced by economic pressures to seek the protection of employers, soldiers' wives were vulnerable to unlawful enslavement. In one case, a state official who had employed a soldier's wife and fathered her illegitimate children, claimed that she was the wife of his household serf and sold her to another noble. The woman eventually was freed after her original owners testified that she was indeed a soldier's wife. Her children, however, remained serfs; for they had been raised and fed by her first employer and registered to him in the sixth census.⁴⁸

The nineteen-year-old sergeant's widow, Martona, in M. D. Chulkov's *The Comely Cook*, explained the anomalous position of these unfortunate. Although she bore the title of sergeant's wife, she had no source of sustenance; for her husband was neither a noble, nor a landowner. In describing her lack of preparation for the circumstances in which she found herself, she noted, "My misfortune seemed to me unbearable; for I knew nothing of human relationships and could not find for myself a place (*mesto*); and so I became free (*vol'noi*), because they did not assign us to any official position (*dolzhnost'*)."⁴⁹ Martona's description is

47. Androssov, *Statisticheskaiia zapiska*, 181–82. On soldiers' wives as prostitutes and traffickers in foundlings, see David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, 1988), 21–22, 154–58. The wives of retired soldiers, former wards of Imperial foundling homes, and state administrative employees faced similar problems and also could receive passports permitting free residence when their husbands died, disappeared, or no longer were able to provide for them. TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, dela 809, 901, 1486, 1795, 2479. In 1799 authorities in Moscow refused to grant a passport to a woman who claimed to be the legal wife of a former ward of the foundling home. Although she presented a statement from a priest verifying her marriage, she could not document where she had lived with this alleged husband, who had been sent to a workhouse (*smiritel'nyi dom*). Ibid., delo 1602.

48. V. I. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uездnogo suda, 1804–1847," *Deistviia Nizhegorodskoi gubernskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii* (hereafter DNGUAK) vypusk 6 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1889): 270–71. Similarly, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uездnogo suda," DNGUAK vypusk 5 (1889): 188; V. I. Snezhnevskii, "K istorii pobegov krepostnykh v poslednei chetverti XVIII i v XIX stoletiiakh," *Nizhegorodskii sbornik* 10 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890): 566–67.

49. M. D. Chulkov, *Prigozhaia povarikha ili pokhozhdienie razvratnoi zhen-shchiny, in Khrestomatiia po russkoi literature XVIII veka*, ed. A. V. Kokorev (Moscow, 1965).

not entirely accurate. As a widow, she could remarry and hence regain a position in society. But for the soldier's wife who could not remarry legally without proof of her husband's death, the conditions of life were likely to be even more dreadful and uncertain.⁵⁰

The same Petrine service categories that effectively provided manpower for the standing army also produced significant numbers of illegitimate children. The uncertain status of children born to soldiers' wives illustrated with particular clarity the larger problem of illegitimate births—a problem that was especially complex in a society where social affiliation corresponded to that of the father at the moment of birth. According to the law, any male child, legitimate or not, born to a woman after her husband entered active service, belonged to the military domain and was registered in the category "soldiers' children" (*sol-datskie deti*).⁵¹ Even when these boys did not enter the special schools for soldiers' sons at age seven, they were expected to begin service at age eighteen. Although the law was quite clear as to what their legal-administrative status should be, they and their mothers occupied a precarious social position—a position characterized by endless disputes between the government, landlords, and parents.

Nobles frequently had illegitimate soldiers' children ascribed to them in the poll-tax registers. If a landlord did in fact support one of these children, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century legislation permitted enserfment. But landlords were responsible for them only when their parents or relatives could not provide subsistence. The distinction was virtually impossible to enforce, and the government admitted as much when a law of 1816 ruled that any soldiers' children (legitimate or not) erroneously inscribed in the civil domain or to a landlord in the first six censuses should remain in their present status.⁵² Moreover, decisions

50. Elise Kimerling [Wirtschafter], "Soldiers' Children, 1719–1856: A Study of Social Engineering in Imperial Russia," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 30 (1982): 61–136; Wirtschafter, *Russian Soldier*, 35–38; Beatrice Farnsworth, "The Soldatka: Folklore and Court Record," *Slavic Review* 49 (Spring 1990): 58–73.

51. The correlation between illegitimate birth and indeterminate social status obviously was not limited to cases involving soldiers' children. But because the government was interested in these children as a source of manpower for the army—legally they belonged to the military domain—the documentation for this group is abundant. In 1856, when the formal category was abolished, there were 378,000 pupils registered to the schools for soldiers' sons. For comprehensive treatment, see Kimerling [Wirtschafter], "Soldiers' Children." For the larger problem of unwanted children, see Ransel, *Mothers of Misery*.

52. For detailed discussion of the legislation, see Kimerling [Wirtschafter], "Soldiers' Children." For the petition of a household serf who discovered he was the illegitimate child of a soldier's wife and believed, as a result, that he was entitled to choose a station in life (i.e., register in a taxpaying category), see TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 2021.

from the Arzamas district court (Nizhnii Novgorod province), dated 1790 to 1838, indicate that wrongful registration continued.⁵³ The government, always interested in manpower for the army, sometimes managed to uncover the ruses of a landlord. When this happened, the offender risked losing not only the soldiers' children who were claimed unlawfully, but also the spouses and offspring of any who might have married.⁵⁴

As so often occurred in Imperial Russia, the exposure of abuses was sporadic and difficult. One suggestive case came to light only after a village belonging to Princess Golitsyna drafted both illegitimate sons of a soldier's wife. Unlike the first son, the second, when he was called to the levy, requested freedom from servile status on the grounds that his father was a soldier. The Arzamas district court agreed, noting that as a soldier's son he automatically was required to serve. Princess Golitsyna appealed the decision to the Senate, which confirmed it in 1808 and also fined her for submitting an inappropriate petition.⁵⁵ To be fair, one should note that soldiers' sons, in order to avoid the army, and their mothers, in order to remarry, often concealed their identity. Thus a landlord did not necessarily know when the offspring of a serf and his bigamist wife were in fact illegitimate soldiers' children. To be sure, landlords also had an interest in forcing or abetting these unlawful marriages, especially if they already had produced children; though presumably they would have preferred to find women of servile status to marry their serfs.⁵⁶ Moreover, despite legal clarity, sons of retired servicemen and unfit recruits, who clearly did not belong to the military, were known to have been enrolled in garrison schools by mistake.⁵⁷ Regardless of intentions, the status of soldiers' children obviously bred conflict and confusion.

Even where the law was precise, as in the case of children born to retired soldiers, the social reality could remain ambiguous. In disputes with parents or the government, where the authority of a landlord was denied, soldiers' sons usually were sent to the army. A revealing case considered by the Arzamas district court illustrates this point. The

53. "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda," vypusk 5 (1889): 178, 186, 195–96; Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda, 1804–1847," 254; idem, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda," *DNGUAK* tom 1, vypusk 7 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890): 288, 299.

54. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda, 1804–1847," 259–60, 265.

55. "Opis' del Permskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii vyslannykh iz Senatskogo arkhiva," 56–57.

56. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda, 1804–1847," 266. On efforts of soldiers' wives to conceal their illegitimate sons, see TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 1478; Kimerling [Wirtschafter], "Soldiers' Children."

57. RGADA, fond 441, opis' 1, delo 946; TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, dela 1662, 2060.

court's decision resulted from the petition of a serf who requested emancipation on grounds of illegal enserfment. The son of a soldier's wife and her second husband, a retired soldier, the petitioner had been registered to a landlord as an illegitimate soldier's son. In 1807 the court agreed that he had been enserfed illegally, but then proceeded to assign his entire family to the military domain.⁵⁸ Because his mother's second marriage was not recognized, he was in fact the illegitimate child of a soldier's wife and thus belonged to the army.

The parents of soldiers' daughters were more likely to get a happy result, though their daughters still remained vulnerable to forced marriages. As an example, one soldier who returned to his native village in 1842, after twenty-five years of service, found that his daughter, born only three months after he was drafted, had been registered as a serf in the eighth census (1834) and then sold to another landlord. At the soldier's request, a local court emancipated her, noting that the legitimate daughter of a soldier was legally free and should not have been enserfed.⁵⁹ Not all cases involving soldiers' daughters ended so satisfactorily, for landlords could easily return these girls to servile status by forcing them to marry serfs. Although church and state law prohibited forced marriages, they were impossible to prevent.⁶⁰ In addition, significant numbers of illegitimate births made illegal marriages and unlawful enserfment even more difficult to expose. Moreover, if male children were involved, it was equally unsatisfactory from a parent's perspective to discover that a son would be "freed" from feudal servitude only to be obliged to join the army.

Consequences and Implications

The social condition of soldiers and their families offers a concrete example of the administrative and human dimensions of formal categorization in Imperial Russia. Aside from the obvious problems of poverty and subsistence, the manpower needs of the army required constant changes in formal status, which in turn generated new social categories (e.g., soldiers' wives and soldiers' children) and increased the uncertainties of social definition. This was not a situation limited to the military

58. He was married and the father of three children. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda, 1804–1847," 255–56.

59. V. I. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam vasil'skogo uezdnogo suda," *DNGUAK* tom 1, vypusk 7 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890): 317.

60. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delam arzamasskogo uezdnogo suda," tom 1, vypusk 7 (1890): 280–81. On canon law and marriage policy, see Gregory L. Freeze, "Bringing Order to the Russian Family: Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, 1760–1860," *Journal of Modern History* 62 (December 1990): 709–46, esp. 726–27.

domain. Personnel needs of the civil service and the church created similar problems. The secular authorities regularly recruited the excess progeny of clergy for service in the army, bureaucracy, and state schools. Some also requested and received discharges from the church domain, because they lacked the skills or education needed for a religious career. Most of these sought to enter state service; but a few became merchants, townspeople, and even state peasants. Still others were expelled for behavioral problems.⁶¹ Similar discharges and expulsions occurred among unranked administrative employees.⁶² In state service, shortages of personnel, rather than overabundance, were more likely to be the norm and sometimes even forestalled the dismissal of troublemakers.⁶³ The crucial point here is that service—whether military, administrative, or ecclesiastical—generated subcategories of individuals who crossed social boundaries and changed formal statuses through a variety of legal and illegal channels.

One witnesses in the spawning of subcategories an important phenomenon that obviated the precise delineation of social boundaries: the

61. On levies of excess clergy, the social condition of ecclesiastical ranks, and the institutional needs of the church, see Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton, 1983); idem, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977). For petitions requesting assignment to state service, submitted by sons of priests, sacristans, and administrative employees of the church, see TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 753, dela 162, 295, 1011; opis' 754, dela 554, 1060, 1061; RGADA, fond 291, opis' 1, chast' 4, dela 20388, 21399. For the petition of a deacon's son whom the Moscow consistory refused to discharge in 1761, see TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 753, delo 1442. For the case of a sexton sent to the army in 1785 for refusing to go to church, see TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 754, delo 1007. On the priority accorded the military in assignments of excess sacristans, see TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 2718. On the release and subsequent acceptance of ecclesiastical progeny and employees into the townspeople and merchant categories, see TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, dela 911, 1831. On a sacristan who became a state peasant because he could not obtain an official church position, see "Opis' del Permskoi uche.i oi arkhivnoi kommissi vyslannykh iz Senatskogo arkhiva," 16. On the appointment of seminarians to teaching positions in state schools, see V. I. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' zhurnalami nizhegorodskogo namestnicheskogo pravleniia (za 1781–83 gg.)," *DNGUAK. Sbornik statei, soobshchenii, opisei, del i dokumentov* tom 3 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1898): 216, 233.

62. The unranked administrative employees were officials, clerks, and copyists who occupied positions that were not included in the Table of Ranks established in 1722.

63. On state administrative employees discharged from service for incompetence or unacceptable behavior, see TsGIAgM, fond 54, opis' 1, delo 1907; V. I. Snezhnevskii, "Opis' delami makar'evskogo uezdnogo suda (1750–1806)," *DNGUAK* tom 1, vypusk 8 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1890): 368; idem, "Opis' delami i dokumentami nizhegorodskogo gorodovogo magistrata, 1782–1786," *DNGUAK* tom 1, vypusk 12–14 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1894): 113; idem, "Opis' zhurnalami nizhegorodskogo namestnicheskogo pravleniia (za 1781–83 gg.)," 102–3, 105, 108, 142, 180, 200.

existence of multiple statuses within a single family. The legal position of a soldier's wife was entirely different from that of her spouse or children. Ecclesiastical families presented a similar picture: a daughter who married a peasant or unranked official; a son who received a secular education or pursued, not always voluntarily, a career in the military or civil service; a father or grandfather who was an ordained priest or church employee. Members of urban families—be they registered as merchants, lesser townspeople, nobles, peasants, or civil servants—also could occupy multiple statuses. And even an individual, as opposed to the members of a single family, could be registered in more than one category.⁶⁴ Despite the ambiguous condition of service families, the popular image of retired soldiers as rootless outsiders, potential troublemakers, or victims of public indifference requires considerable qualification. Soldiers and their families appeared in the records of Moscow churches as parishioners, spouses, parents, godparents, friends, and employees.⁶⁵ They were not, simply by virtue of poverty and insecurity, societal outcasts. No matter how dire their economic straits, no matter how worthy of greater assistance they may have been—they generally found at least irregular employment, and many even possessed homes. One blind soldier, described in 1873 by the liberal noble Fedor Enskii, actually lost his pension, because his wife owned a house that provided annual earnings of two rubles forty kopecks.⁶⁶ While such a meager income was painfully inadequate, the person in question was not without a place in society.

The retired soldier was an outsider from the fiscal-administrative point of view. From the perspective of liberal reformers and radical journalists, he was a person who deserved to live without fear of poverty and want. However precarious his economic condition, he nonetheless was integrated into Russian society. His outsider image resulted not from tangible social barriers but from the inability of governing and educated elites to regularize and regulate chaotic socioeconomic development—development that violated virtually all formal boundaries and contributed to pervasive insecurity. The same may be said of soldiers' wives and their illegitimate children who, while vulnerable to poverty and unlawful exploitation, themselves sought both to evade and make good

64. In the instructions to the Legislative Commission from the city of Nizhnii Novgorod, five copyists requested that the merchants who served as permanent members of the magistracy receive a salary and be excluded from the poll-tax registers so that they no longer would be formally registered as merchants. *SIRIO*, 134: 15–16.

65. These data are discussed in Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, chapter three.

66. Enskii, *Ostavnye soldaty*, 105–11.

67. TsGIAgM, fond 203, opis' 733, delo 687.

68. On "the outsider as insider," see Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York, 1968).

use of their special legal position. Impostors also took advantage of social ambiguities to establish new identities. In one case from the mid-eighteenth century, the wife of an employee of the Moscow police office deserted her husband and succeeded in marrying a church printer by posing as a soldier's daughter, one of the few free statuses available to an unmarried woman.⁶⁷ There was sufficient flexibility in the official framework of juridically defined social categories and sufficient economic dynamism throughout society to ensure that beyond administrative boundaries, in the arena of spontaneous societal development, outsiders became insiders in a larger struggle to survive.⁶⁸